'Unlearning' hegemony:
An exploration of the applicability of
Alain Badiou's theory of the event to informal learning
through an examination of the life histories of South African
social movement activists

By
Anne Harley

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Abstract

This thesis argues that it is both necessary and possible to change the world. Changing the world requires engaging with, to try to understand it from the basis of lived reality, and then acting. Our ability to do this is, however, affected by hegemony, which attempts to convince us that the way things are is either normal and natural and the only possible way they could be, or that it is impossible to change them. Nevertheless, there is always resistance to this, and I suggest that we might learn something useful by examining how this happens.

The thesis thus explores Gramsci's theory of hegemony, and its applicability to our current world; and also considers resistance to this. I argue that the nature of capitalism has shifted, and discuss how this shift has impacted on hegemony, identifying three current interlocking hegemonic ideologies. I consider current resistance to this hegemony, including the role of social movements. Much resistance, and many social movements, I argued, cannot properly be called counter-hegemonic in that, although it/they may critique the dominant economic system, it/they remain trapped within hegemonic logic. However, it is clear that there is existing truly counter-hegemonic resistance, including some social movements, and I argue that Abahlali baseMjondolo is one such counter-hegemonic movement. Thus it is possible that those who join/align themselves with this movement might be considered to have 'unlearned' hegemony and be useful subjects for this study. I thus consider the life stories of seven people who have aligned themselves to this movement, in order to determine whether they have indeed 'unlearned' hegemony, and if so, how.

I discuss relevant and appropriate theory for examining this phenomenon, including experiential learning, transformative learning and Freirean emancipatory learning. I argue

that whilst these theories of learning are helpful, they cannot entirely account for unlearning. I then turn to the theory of the event of Alain Badiou as a possible complementary or alternative way into thinking about unlearning. I apply both the learning theories and Badiou's theory of the event to the stories, all of which show strong evidence of unlearning,, and consider how useful the theories are in understanding this.

I conclude that all of the theories help to some extent in understanding the unlearning in stories. There are, however, fundamental differences between the learning theories on the one hand and Badiou's theory on the other. I construct a model showing that the basis of the difference between the adult learning theories and Badiou's theory of the event rests on the locus of the trigger for transformation. I argue that Badiou's theory provides a very useful additional perspective to adult learning theory; but that it cannot be considered to have replaced existing theories in understanding how people learn informally to think and act in counter-hegemonic ways.

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List of Acronyms

AbM...............Abahlali baseMjondolo
AFRA.............Association for Rural Advancement
ANC...............African National Congress
APLA.............Azanian People's Liberation Army (armed wing of PAC)
BEC...............Branch Executive Committee (of the ANC)
CCS................Centre for Civil Society
COSAS...........Congress of South African Students
COSATU........Congress of South African Trades Unions
DRC...............Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSTV.............Digital Satellite Television
ECC...............End Conscription Campaign
GATT.............General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GDP...............Gross Domestic Product
GEAR.............Growth, Employment and Redistribution (policy)
HSRC.............Human Sciences Research Council
IFP.................Inkatha Freedom Party
IMF................International Monetary Fund
KRDC ....Kennedy Road Development Committee
KZNCC..........KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council
MEC...............Member of the Executive Committee (of a Province)
MST...............*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (Landless Workers' Movement)
NGO..............Non-governmental organization
PAC...............Pan Africanist Congress
PACSA..........Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (now
                  Pietermaritzburg Association for Community Social Action)
PMB...............Pietermaritzburg
RDP...............Reconstruction and Development Programme
RMT...............Resource Mobilization Theory
SABC.............South African Broadcasting Association
SADF.............South African Defence Force (under Apartheid rule)
SANCO...........South African National Civic Organisation
SAPs...............Structural Adjustment Programmes
SMI................Social Movements Indaba
SRC................Students' Representative Council
TNC...............Transnational Corporation
UCT...............University of Cape Town
UDF...............United Democratic Front
UDW..............University of Durban-Westville
UNDP ....United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO........United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA............University of South Africa
USAID...........United States Agency for International Development
WSSD.............World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO...............World Trade Organisation
YCW...............Young Christian Workers

Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale for this study

Our world is burning and so we need another world (Figlan et al, 2009, p. 49)

1.1. Change is necessary

Our current context is one of growing inequality, rampant violence, environmental destruction, "the mutilation of human lives by capitalism" (Holloway, 2010a, p.1). How do we respond to this? Mulenga (2001) argues that there are three possibilities - do nothing about it; engage with and accept it; or resist it and build alternatives. Which we choose has a lot to do with where we are situated: "Our understanding of the world is closely tied to our interests and our experience, and...there is nowhere outside this "radical sociality" where we could stand" (Cox, 1998, The Politics of Research section, para.1).

I am a member of academic staff in the discipline of adult education in an institution of higher education; and this is an academic thesis. What, then, is my particular role in the political project of transforming the world? Edward Said (1994) distinguished between academics and intellectuals. His characterization of an intellectual (as opposed to an academic) was of an exile, marginal, amateur, author of a language that tries to speak truth to power:

> I think the major choice faced by the intellectual is whether to be allied with the stability of the victors and rulers, or - the more difficult path - to consider that stability as a state of emergency threatening the less fortunate with the danger of complete extinction. (Said, 1994, p.26)

It is, of course, debatable whether the stability of which Said spoke continues; it seems to me that this is increasingly fragile. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter (and this thesis) says, the world is burning. However, Said's choice remains the same. Said (1994) argued that academics are pressurized to professionalize, specialize, to become an expert, to drift towards

power and authority. To counteract this, he said, we need amateurism, fuelled by care and affection. We need to ask "*the* basic question for the intellectual: how does one speak the truth? What truth? For whom and where?" (p.65).

D'Souza (2009), writing 15 years after Said, argues that we need to be focusing not on the 'role' of academics in universities and society, but on the 'objectives' the academic qua citizen wishes to achieve through scholarship, and the practices ramified in the theories they produce - i.e. knowledge for what, for whom, for what kind of activism; thus (closely echoing Said) D'Souza says:

> The quality of knowledge produced by scholarship needs to be evaluated on the basis of its transformative potential - i.e. its capacity to transform unjust and inequitable relationships in the world as it is today *as well as* radically transform the structures that generate oppression, inequality and injustice. (p.20)

Foley (1999), an adult education theorist, urges adult educators to choose a side; and the side of capitalism, he says, is evil.

I have made the choice. I have, in the words of Alain Badiou, whose theory is the focus of this thesis, made "a permanent commitment" (2008, p.133). According to Said, I need to be fuelled by care and affection. According to D'Souza, I need to ensure that this scholarship that I produce has transformative potential. According to both, I need to be concerned about questions concerning knowledge and truth, and who creates these, and how, and for whom. D'Souza (2009) says that, in the first instance, this involves "[making] explicit that which is implicit in [my] theories and in [my] practices" (p.28).

Thomas Kuhn, in his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (published in 1970), argues that in any science, in any era, a particular conceptual framework or paradigm is dominant (there may be different competing paradigms, but one dominates). This framework/paradigm defines how knowledge is constructed and thought about. Thus knowledge is never pure or objective; it is constructed (Foley, 2004). In education, positivism was the dominant framework for the first half of the twentieth century; Foley argues that the

interpretive paradigm now dominates (albeit with a growing body of work within a critical frame). Over the last few decades, there have been a proliferation of paradigms (Lather, 2006), including post structuralism, chaos theory and systems frameworks, many of these influenced by the emergence of a deconstructivist approach (discussed more fully in the next chapter).

Within the interpretive frame, knowledge is seen as subjective and socially constructed - different individuals understand the world differently. The focus is on the interaction of the individual with social structure and culture. Foley (2004) argues that this has been the dominant paradigm in adult education in the West for the last 50 years. Adult education research and scholarship has tended to focus on individual learning and formal education: "Its theorising has frequently been trivial and politically timid" (Foley, 1999, p.138).

There is, however, a tradition of adult education that Jackson calls 'adult education of engagement': "it originated in the struggles of ordinary people to make their own claim to citizenship" (Martin, 2000, p.13). In 2000, Martin (2000) argued that there was little evidence of this tradition, and that the time had come to reoccupy this space, "the creative space between the personal and the political dimensions of our lives, between difference and solidarity" (p.13). It was urgent, he argued, to reassert "our capacity to choose to intervene and act in order to make a difference" (Ibid.). Since then, whilst there has been work broadly within this area (see eg. Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Cooper, 2005; Kane, 2001;), it remains a relatively unrepresented field - Nesbit (2011), for example, says that "social class is rarely evident in adult education discourse" (p.215), and his list of examples include only a handful published within the last 15 years. Foley (2004) thus argues for adult education research and scholarship within a critical frame, focusing on the relationship between knowledge, power and ideology (Foley, 2004, p.14). Foley stresses that a critique of capitalism must be at the heart of emancipatory adult education theory.

My first decision, then, is to frame this thesis within a critical paradigm, which I discuss in Chapter 2. I consider myself to fall within what could broadly be termed the Marxist humanist tradition. I believe, with Foley, that this is an under-represented frame within the field of adult education. There was the beginnings of a body of such work in the 1980s (eg.

Thomas' (1982) *Radical Adult Education: Theory and Practice* and Lovett's (1988) *Radical Approaches to Adult Education: A Reader*, and this was further developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, most notably by Allman (1999), Mayo (1999, 2004, 2012), Youngman (2000), and Foley (1999; 2001; 2004) himself. However, since then relatively little has emerged when compared to other work in the field. I will thus make a critique of capitalism the 'heart' of this study; and consider the relationship between knowledge, power and ideology. My second decision is to focus rather on informal learning than formal education. Fortunately, since Foley wrote (and largely inspired by him), there has been a growing interest in non-formal and informal learning, particularly in the area of struggle, and I locate myself within this.

However, as Mulenga argued, the choice is not just about resisting, but about building alternatives, about changing the world. And that requires firstly the faith that it is possible to change it.

1.2. Change is possible

History may be understood as

> nothing other than the product of human activity; and, more specifically, ...the product of collective human action, articulated in conflicts which encompass the totality of society and in turn define that totality; conflicts which are not only grounded ultimately in the material activity of human beings but are at the same time conflicts over how that activity is to develop. (Cox, 1998, The Heraclitean perspective section, para.3)

In other words, we made the world, and we can change it, as Marx always insisted. However, part of the nature of the world we currently live in is precisely that which would have us believe that change is neither necessary nor possible.

As I discuss more fully in Chapter 3, Antonio Gramsci sought to explain why it was that the ruling class in capitalist societies was able to maintain power with so little use of physical force. His answer was hegemony - the use of ideology to persuade the working class that existing power relations were not only inevitable, normal, natural, but for the greater good. Although we live in very different times to those during which Gramsci lived and wrote, Gransci's theory of hegemony is as apt now as ever. Currently, we live in a world dominated by neoliberal ideology (discussed in Chapter 4), which argues that a particular development path, founded on capitalism, will benefit everyone, and to which, we are assured, "There is no alternative"[1]. Arguably (and I discuss this more fully in that chapter), this aspect of hegemony - that there is no alternative - has become a more important ideological tool in retaining advanced capitalism than claims that those who have the power and the wealth deserve it.

And yet despite this hegemony (and brute force, which arguably currently plays as important a role in maintaining neoliberalism), there is resistance, as there was in Gramsci's time; there is an attempt to create a counter-hegemony. As I explore in Chapter 5, Gramsci himself argued that this is inevitable, because hegemony is a process which has constantly to be remade in response to resistance. Resistance to neoliberal hegemony has happened, is happening, in multiple ways in multiple locations, as Holloway (2010b) has recently shown; and many so-called new social movements have played a pivotal tole in this. I consider this in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

So, if we believe that change is both necessary and possible, the issue then is how to change it, and to what.

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[1]   This was famously said by Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to justify the neoliberal policies she implemented in the late 1970s.

1.3. So how do we change the world?

1.3.1. By trying to understand it

D'Souza (2009) argues that "For academic scholars the starting point is the world "out there" and the problems therein that need fixing through their research" (p.30). She identifies two kinds of scholarship (and activism) in response - one, which she calls 'proactive', starts with the ideal, and how to get there; the other, 'reactive', starts with the real existing conditions of life perceived as intolerable and oppressive - i.e. with what Holloway (2010a) calls 'the scream'. 'Proactive' scholarship first points to gaps between the reality and the ideal, and is primarily involved in an empirically grounded critique. Action in response is primarily about free or political will. Holloway (2010a) argues that the ideal (as per 'proactive' scholarship) is not actually a necessary precursor to scholarship, to thought:

> We need no promise of a happy ending to justify our rejection of a world we feel to be wrong....That is our starting point: rejection of a world that we feel to be wrong, negation of a world we feel to be negative. This is what we must cling to. (p.2)

However, much academic discourse and scholarship is, in fact, about negating this starting point, about dissipating it:

> they urge us (and we feel the need) to study society, and to study social and political theory. And a strange thing happens. The more we study society, the more our negativity is dissipated or sidelined as being irrelevant. There is no room for the scream in academic discourse. More than that: academic study provides us with a language and a way of thinking that makes it very difficult for us to express our scream. The scream, if it appears at all, appears as something to be explained, not as something to be articulated. The scream, from being the subject of our questions about society, becomes the object of analysis....why is it that *they* scream? (Holloway, 2010a, p.3)

'Reactive' scholarship, on the other hand, seeks to explain the social order as it is. This points to possibilities and constraints imposed by the context to help (or hinder) activists (D'Souza, 2009). D'Souza gives as an example of this kind of scholarship Marx's analysis of capitalism; and indeed, many activists have tended to work from a reactive position - Gramsci, Fanon, Cabral, and, to some extent, Guevara. Fanon (1952/2008), in *Black Skins, White Masks*, insists we return to reality to get to source of the problem. Cabral (1979) said:

> it is impossible to wage a struggle under our conditions, it is impossible to struggle effectively for the independence of a people, it is impossible to establish effective armed struggle such as we have to establish in our land, unless we really know our reality and unless we really start out from that reality to wage the struggle". (p.44)

However, Marx did not simply start from factual observation and abstract from them - rather, "Marx argues that beginning with the 'real and the concrete' is a superficial exercise as objects of observation are only apparently concrete but in actuality are abstractions" (Harvey, 1990, p.45). What was needed was a dialectic approach, moving between the abstract and the concrete.

1.3.2. By thinking something new

As Neocosmos (2009b) points out, "Descriptions and analyses of what exist are important but certainly not sufficient. We also need to understand what could be" (p.25) (which is why faith in the possibility of change is so crucial). Neocosmos calls this the 'politics of the possible' (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.266), although, drawing on the work of Sylvain Lazarus, Neocosmos (2009a) argues for this as necessarily outside of the extant, rather than emerging from it. The point of departure of the 'politics of the possible' is thought; "the possibility exists that people's subjectivities - thought - can assert something different from what is, an alternative to existing" (p.285).

For thought to create something new, something different from what is, it needs to be based on struggle, but imagine the different. Holloway (2010a) argues that our anger in response to the reality of the world as it is - our scream - is the necessary beginning for thinking about it:

The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle. It is from rage that thought is born, not from the pose of reason, not from the reasoned-sitting-back-and-reflecting-on-the-mysteries-of-existence that is the conventional image of 'the thinker'. (p.1)

So we start our thinking from the (specific) actual reality within which we live, and our utter rejection of this; and our (specific) struggle for something new; but a struggle that is for everyone, everywhere (i.e. universal). Harris (as cited in Gibson, 2008) argues for a kind of "philosophy born of struggle" (p.684) (also giving Marx as an example). Since this struggle is waged by those who experience "the mutilation of human lives by capitalism" (Holloway, 2010a, p.1), thinking must start with them, as a number of what D'Souza (2009) would call 'activist scholars' have pointed out. At end of the *Wretched of the Earth*, for example, Fanon (1961/2001) says the working out of new concepts cannot come from the intellectual's head alone, but must come from dialogue with common people; and Gibson (2006) argues that "theoretical intervention necessitates a critique of how knowledge is produced, as well as overturning of the division between those who are supposed to do the thinking and those who are supposed to do the acting" (p.42).

1.3.3 By acting

The world will never be changed unless we act - so rejecting the world, and thinking a new one, is only the starting point, it is not in itself sufficient, as Marx pointed out. However, Holloway (2010a) asks, "Fine, but what on earth do we do?" (p.216). Holloway is insistent that this is not a question for the future, but a question of how we think and act now. For Holloway, this starts simply with a No, a refusal, an insubordination - indeed, with many No's, refusals, insubordinations. He points out that these actually exist, all over the place, individually and collectively; indeed, his latest work, *Crack Capitalism* (2010b), is about the countless cracks or fissures in capitalism today. Holloway argues that every such act of refusal is an act of self-determination, and every act weakens capital. What Holloway's argument allows for is the possibility not just of change, but that anyone, anywhere, can begin this right now.

A number of writers have pointed to the dialogic relationship between thought and action; indeed this is implicit in the argument made above about thinking born of struggle. Barker and Cox (2002) argue for the inseparability of thought and action: "thought...is grounded - directly or indirectly - in activity, and forms an integral part of human agency" (p.21). So thinking against hegemony is itself an act towards changing the world; and one that leads to further action, as Colectivo Situaciones, a collective of students and movement intellectuals that emerged in the late 1990s in Argentina, suggest in their argument for what they call 'militant research'. They distinguish this from academic research or political activism or the work on NGOs: "Militant research is used as a concept-tool that works on the premise that all interpretations of the world are linked to some kind of action" (Cardoso, n.d., Militant Research section, para.1).

1.4 Therefore, this thesis

As stated above, I have made the decision to reject the world as it is, to say No, to refuse it, to participate in building a better world. I accept the need to act in the world with care and affection, as an intellectual, rather than an academic (in Said's terms); and, as part of this, to ensure that the knowledge I produce is transformative, including making what is implicit explicit in my theory and practice. I accept the need to begin this process by trying to understand how the world actually is, and why; and I accept the concomitant need to start with the actual, lived experiences of ordinary people, and their struggles, and their thinking.

A number of years ago, I became aware of the social movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo (literally, 'the people of the shacks'), through a colleague at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Abahlali is a social movement of shackdwellers which grew organically out of struggle; it first emerged out of a road blockade by residents of the Kennedy Road shack settlement in the middle-class suburb of Clare Road in Durban. At the time I became aware of it, Abahlali had really only just begun to emerge (it was launched at the end of 2005), and was considered by many to be yet another example of the growing 'service delivery' protests occurring in the country at that time. My colleague, however, was intrigued by some of the things the movement was reported to be saying. At the same time, my partner, and the organisation he did occasional work for, came into contact with Abahlali, and they were

likewise convinced that there was something interesting about this new movement. I started reading press statements of the movement, and speeches made by Abahlali leaders, and was struck by the analysis that was being made by the movement itself, which seemed more insightful than much more 'academic' work I was reading. In 2006, I attended a meeting at which the then President of Abahlali, S'bu Zikode, spoke, and was hugely impressed by his assertion that everyone counts, equally; by his analysis; and by his insistence on the acknowledgement of ordinary people's thinking. Some while later, I was lucky enough to teach some of the movement comrades, then attending one of the programmes we offered at the university.

It became very clear to me that members of the movement were analysing the reality that is South Africa, and is Durban, in remarkable ways; and thinking a new way of struggling - what they call 'a living politics'. I was convinced that here was an example of a truly counter-hegemonic movement (something I argue in detail in Chapter 7); and that exploring how this had come about might be an exciting and useful thing to do. It was also clear that some of the adult learning theory I knew of, and had taught, was useful in doing this (and I look at this in Chapter 8).

At about the same time, I became aware of the work of Alain Badiou (see eg. 2003b, 2003c, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2009b, 2009c) which, to my knowledge, has not been explored in the field of adult education, although recently some of his work has been applied to formal schooling (see eg. Den Heyer, 2010). Badiou argues for the existence of the 'event', something that points to the possibility of something different, an alternative, a new world. Fidelity to this event is 'sustained investigation' (reflection) of the event and its implications, an attempt to sustain the consequences of the event in thought. This fidelity results in the construction (not discovery) of truth, which is universal, and which creates an entirely new situation/world (I consider Badiou's theory of the event in detail in Chapter 9). It seemed to me there were possible synergies between what Badiou has argued and adult learning theory, but that Badiou might allow us to further extend our understanding of adult learning, and particularly 'unlearning', as Foley (1999) puts it, and the link between this and social change - something which, I would argue, adult learning theory has not yet adequately dealt with.

There is a growing body of extremely useful work on learning in social movements. What is useful about this work is that it is explicitly looking at learning related to social change; and, very often, at informal learning. However, as Foley (1999) argues:

> While economic and political changes may create the material conditions for social movement activity, these changes do not necessarily generate such activity. For people to become actively involved in social movements something must happen to their consciousness - they must see that action is necessary and possible. (p.103)

Since current hegemony precisely negates this - that action is necessary and possible - Foley suggests that people must have 'unlearned' at least something simply in order to join the movement in the first place. Thus I think there is 'step-before' the learning within social movements - that is, the unlearning that happened *before* the social movement. And in particular, of course, what happened before the truly emancipatory social movement.

Whilst clear links have been made between education and social change/the counter-hegemonic project, this has almost invariably been at the level of non-formal (and to some extent, formal) education; i.e. where the role of an 'educator' is pivotal. However, this cannot explain the creation of counter-hegemonic forces, such as social movements, in the absence of such education. What is it that leads certain people to critique the existing, hegemonic system? How does this process of 'conscientisation' occur in the absence of an 'educator'?

This thesis thus considers the lived experience of seven people who have aligned themselves with what I argue is a truly counter-hegemonic social movement in South Africa, Abahlali baseMjondolo - in other words, people who have apparently consciously adopted a counter-hegemonic position, who have 'unlearned' the current hegemony; and then gone on to think of something new, and acted on this. I discuss appropriate adult learning theory, and Badiou's theory of the event, to explore the usefulness of Badiou's theory in understanding the role of learning/unlearning in social change.

My research questions are thus:

1. Why have the activists considered in this study joined/aligned themselves with Abahlali baseMjondolo?
2. Have these activists 'unlearned' the hegemony of our current context, and if so, how?
3. To what extent was their 'unlearning' of hegemony informal, and how did this happen?
4. What does Alain Badiou's theory of event-fidelity-truth contribute to understanding this process?

In trying to understand how the 'unlearning' came about, I have used a life histories approach as the most appropriate methodology. I thus used in-depth interviews with the seven, asking about their lives up until the point of making the decision to align themselves with Abahlali. The seven people were selected to ensure a spread across gender, age, race, class, and physical location, and four of them are not members of the movement itself. The in-depth interviews were then analysed, using my research questions and thematic and event analysis. My methodology in undertaking this research is discussed fully in the following chapter.

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next chapter, I discuss how I undertook the research I present in this thesis. This chapter thus considers paradigms in research, and why I have situated this research within a critical paradigm, before turning to the narrative or life history method and its implications for collecting and analysing data. The chapter also explores issues of research quality, and ethical issues related to this method. Whilst I recognise that the placing of this chapter is unusual, I have chosen to discuss this before embarking on the five chapters that comprise the rationale and basis for my overall argument, viz. the theory of hegemony (Chapter 3) and how it applies to our current context (Chapter 4); how current hegemony is resisted at an ideological and material level (Chapter 5); and the role of social movements in general (Chapter 6) and Abahlali baseMjondolo in particular (Chapter 7) in this resistance.

Having reached the point where I am able to argue that Abahlali is truly counter current hegemony, and thus acts as a 'marker' for counter-hegemonic thinking, I then turn to

possible theoretical explanations for how such thinking might have come about - i.e. how 'unlearning' hegemony might happen. Firstly, I consider adult learning theory that helps us understand 'unlearning' of current hegemony, particularly informally, and possible weaknesses in this in understanding process. In this, I look in turn at experiential learning theory, transformative learning theory, and emancipatory Freirian learning theory (Chapter 8). I then consider Badiou's theory of the event, and how this relates to 'unlearning' theory, and how it might help to understand how 'unlearning' might happen. (Chapter 9).

Having discussed possibly useful theory in some detail, I then present the life histories of the seven activists as discussed above (Chapter 10). An analysis of these is presented in Chapter 11, which seeks to answer my research question using the data, and thus includes a discussion of how useful Badiou's theory is in helping us understand the 'unlearning' of those allying themselves to Abahlali. I present my conclusions in Chapter 12.

Chapter 2: Research methodology

2.1 Introduction

As argued in Chapter 1, I have made the decision to reject the world as it is, and to work for a new one; including through my thinking and writing of this thesis. In doing this, I need to be concerned about questions concerning knowledge and truth, and who creates these, and how, and for whom; and part of this involves making explicit my own theory and practice. In this chapter, I will thus discuss how I have chosen to do the research for this thesis, and why.

No research is value-free, as Etherington (2006) has pointed out:

> Behind every piece of research, even research described as objective or positivist, there is a human being, or several human beings, who have chosen to design or undertake research for their own purposes, whether personal or professional [or political], and whether they are aware of that choice or not (Devereux, 1967; Ellis & Berger, 2003). (p.77)

Thus we all carry with us a conceptual framework, which helps us to make sense of our world, and which we carry into our research. Leshem and Trafford (2007, p. 99) argue that a conceptual framework integrates theory and the issues one is looking at, providing a scaffold. There should be, they argue, a traceable connection between the underlying theoretical perspective behind a piece of research, the research strategy and design, the fieldwork, and the conclusions drawn. According to this, how I do research must link to my theoretical perspective. As I have argued in Chapter 1, this research is quite explicitly located within a particular political (and hence theoretical) framework, viz. emancipatory/Marxist. This necessarily impacts on the research design, in terms of the research paradigm within which I am working (critical/emancipatory); the approach I have chosen (qualitative); and the methodology I have used (narrative). All of these are discussed in detail below, explaining why I believe them to be suitable for this particular study.

2.2 Research paradigms

Research paradigms relate to how we see the world; they frame our understanding, they mark the boundaries (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). Underlying these paradigms are understandings about epistemology, ontology, hermeneutics, and worldview (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Whilst there is a plethora of paradigms, as mentioned in Chapter 1, and these are categorized in a variety of ways, I think that Lather's (1991) suggestion that these be broadly grouped into four approaches is a useful one. Lather draws on Habermas' (1971) thesis of the three categories of human interest that underscore knowledge claims, to which she adds postmodernism's deconstruction premise. This way of categorising has also been adopted by Constable and Sipe (1997), and recently updated by Lather (2006), who now adds some suggestions about what might be future paradigms. Below I consolidate Lather and Constable and Sipe's categorisations, recognising that any such broad categorisation results in some reduction of complexity and nuance (for example, that discourse analysis might be adopted in a range of paradigms):

Table 1: Categorisation of research paradigms

Positivism	Postpositivist inquiry		
Predict	Understand	Emancipate	Deconstruct
positivism	interpretive naturalistic constructivist phenomenological ethnographic symbolic/interaction interpretive mixed methods	critical neo-Marxist feminist praxis-oriented educative Freirian participatory action research Gay & Lesbian theory critical ethnography	post structural postmodern queer theory discourse analysis postcolonial post-humanist post-critical complexity theory chaos theory

As argued above, each broad category has a different conception of reality, of the individual, and of knowledge and truth, and this impacts on the way each sees research (thus, for example, a specific paradigm might move across categories if it begins in one but then is

dramatically changed to 'fit' another (Lather, 2006)[2]:

Table 2: Characterisations of research paradigms

Conception	Predict (positivist)	Understand (Interpretive)	Emancipate (Critical)	Deconstruct (Postmodern)
conception of reality	There is an objective reality, independent of individual perception, which can be 'found', measured, and controlled. There are universal laws governing this.	There is no objective reality; rather, reality if subjective and constructed by individuals.	Reality can only really be understood as historically constructed primarily on the basis of power.	There is no objective reality, and reality itself is ultimately unknowable.
conception of the individual	Individuals have an essential identity.	Individuals have an essential identity, and make sense of their world, often using language or other signs and symbols.	Individuals have an essential identity, and are the agents responsible for social transformation.	There is no unitary and coherent self; the individual is better understood as multiple and continually under construction.
conception of knowledge	Objective reality is knowable; but the only valid knowledge is that acquired through science.	Knowledge is subjective and socially constructed - different people understand the world differently, depending on who they are.	Knowledge is affected by power and ideology; it is not enough to look only the relationship between the individual and society.	There is no universally valid knowledge; all knowledge claims are relative.

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[2]   This can lead to some debate about where certain paradigms 'fit' - see for example, Morçöl (2001). In Table 1, I have used the generally accepted understanding of the paradigm concerned at the point it emerged.

conception of truth	There is 'a' truth	There are many truths - truth is constructed by humans within an historical moment and social context.	A critical analysis of society using the lens of power is a better 'truth' than one which does not recognize power relations. There is a difference between 'scientific truth' and 'ideology'.	There is no such thing as 'truth'; rather, truths are socially constructed. Any claims to 'truth' involve the enforcement of a single point of view.
implications for research	It is possible to undertake 'objective' research to find 'the truth'. Generally, this requires quantification and controlled-experiments.	The focus is thus on the individual and his/her interaction with the world, and how he/she makes sense of it; but knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and participant. Methods are generally qualitative.	The focus is on underlying power relations. This can be uncovered through researcher/ participant dialogue. Uncovering subjugated knowledge helps. The intention is to act on this for a more just world.	Because there is no universally valid knowledge or truth, this approach calls into question the possibility of asking or answering big questions.

Source: Elliott, 2005; Foley, 2004; Hammersley, 1995; Harvey, 1990; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lather, 2006.

It is clear from this that the critical paradigm best fits my own personal philosophy (as discussed in Chapter 1), and the broad intention of this study, with its emphasis on the relationship between power, ideology and knowledge, and its belief that it is possible to act to change the world to one which is more just.

The ideas underlying the different paradigms - and hence research paradigms themselves - have shifted over time. Broadly, the positivist consensus that had dominated Western understandings, collapsed during the 1950s (Hammersley, 1995), accompanied a growing critique of the Enlightenment project as a whole (Weiler, 1988; Lather, 1991). Etherington (2006) argues (as did Harvey, 1990) that much of this critique, at least at the level of research, was initiated by the Women's Movement. In the 1970s and 1980s, Etherington argues, the Women's Movement began challenging the assumptions of the positivist

tradition, arguing that women's ways of knowing and relating were different from men, and that issues of power relations within research needed to be challenged. Feminist researchers emphasised the need for greater equality in research relationships, requiring different ways of collecting and representing data. Researchers were called on to make transparent their values and beliefs, rather than pretending to some kind of 'objectivity' from where they supposedly made 'expert' interpretations (Ibid.).

Whilst the Frankfurt School had been doing critical research since the 1930s, and interpretive research had its roots in the previous century, the final decades of the 20th century were characterised by the appearance of alternative positions on a scale greatly exceeding what had been the case before, in particular the interpretive and critical approaches, the latter strongly influenced by Marxism and the critical theory that was emerging in Western Europe. As suggested in Table 2 above, part of this involved a different understanding about the nature of knowledge - about how knowledge is generated, and how it is legitimized, and the implications of this:

> We live in a world in which knowledge is used to maintain oppressive relations. Information is interpreted and organized in such a way that the views of a small group of people are presented as objective knowledge, as "The Truth". (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.15)

Existing research paradigms were seen as complicit in unequal power relations. Maria Mies (1983, cited in Kirby & McKenna, 1989), for example, argued that research was largely an instrument of dominance and the legitimation of power elites; and Kirby and McKenna argued that for many 'on the margins' research and knowledge simply didn't reflect their lived experiences. Rather, research was about "engineering...consent" (p.23). Weiler, Lather, Kirby and McKenna and many other feminist scholars thus argued for a new kind of research:

> We believe research must begin to reflect the experience and concerns of people who have traditionally been marginalized by the research process and by what gets counted as knowledge. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.22)

A new 'critical research' emerged, which saw knowledge as a dynamic process rather than a static entity, and one which was integrally bound up with power relations:

> At the heart of critical social research is the idea that knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations. The aim of a critical methodology is to provide knowledge which engages the prevailing social structures. (Harvey, 1990, p.2)

Thus critical research drew on the tradition of Marx and Gramsci:

> For Marx...science as the basis for the understanding of the social world was not the construction of causal laws, but of a deeper understanding, arrived at through the process of deconstruction and reconstruction, in which the part is dialectically related to the whole. (Harvey, 1990, p.46)

In this tradition, "theory and history dialectically inform each other" (Harvey, 1990, p.47), and praxis becomes a critical component. "Praxis is what changes the world" (Harvey, 1990, p.22), so the point is not simply to find out about the world, and truly understand it in terms of power relations, but to change it. And this change is not just at individual level, but at a societal one.

This new emancipatory research was thus seen as research aiming to cause some kind of change for the benefit of the oppressed. Issues of class, race, gender, but also colonialism, imperialism, agism, disability, sexuality, etc. have all contributed to the field of critical inquiry. "For critical social research....an analysis of oppressive social structures is in itself a political act" (Harvey, 1990, p.23).

Arguably, the greatest influence on the emerging critical theory was feminism. Whilst I have not adopted an overtly feminist approach in this study, the feminist paradigm has contributed significantly to my overall understanding of the emancipatory tradition, and in particular its insistence that the *process* of the research is critical, not in the positivist sense of ensuring 'objective' findings, but in the sense that it is this very process which leads to emancipation. Thus how the research is done, and who the researcher is, becomes critical to the success of

the research project. Kathy Weiler (1988), for example, identifies the critical departure point of feminist research as not a focus on gender, but rather that women researchers must begin by defining themselves as women:

> This starting points reflects central insights about the relationship of power, knowledge and language and calls into question the intellectual tradition not only of positivism, but of Western thought. (p.58)

Thus the methodology, assumptions and language of the male intellectual tradition (i.e. Western positivism) all came under increasing scrutiny by feminist researchers.

Weiler identifies three major themes in this new feminist methodology. Firstly, feminist researchers begin their investigation of the social world from the grounded position of their own subjective oppression. Thus they have a sensitivity to issues of power which comes from being subordinate. Secondly, feminist researchers emphasise lived experience and the significance of everyday life, expressed in the famous feminist slogan, "the personal is political". This emphasis led to a rejection of positivism and a new interest in social interactionist approaches, focusing on the relationship between the woman researcher and the woman subject. Feminist research should thus emphasise the everyday experiences of women, and should locate the researcher herself in terms of her own subjectivity. Thirdly, feminist research is politically committed:

> In rejecting the possibility of value-free research, feminists instead assert their commitment to changing the position of women and therefore to changing society. (p.59)

Weiler argues strongly that a feminist methodology needs to consider intuition, emotions, and feelings, in both the researcher and the researched as resources. This is clearly a major departure from traditional male positivist research which rejects emotion as subjective and hence "unscientific". Weiler argues that this methodology is a useful tool in examining the relationship between structural oppression and the realities of individual lives, and thus has far wider applicability than merely studying gender oppression. She adds the warning that in

grounding feminist research in gender, feminist researchers should not lose sight of other oppressions, in particular race and class.

Whilst feminism was also manifest within interpretivist and post-structural traditions, and there are of course a range of positions within feminism, feminist research had a profound effect on the critical research tradition. And, as Marx argued, it's not enough to undertake research; one must act on it (Kirby and McKenna (1989). Maria Mies (1983, cited in Kirby & Mckenna, 1989, p.25) argues that separation from praxis has been "one of the most important structural prerequisites" of the academic paradigm; "Within the institutions of western education we are trained as spectators or commentators, to absorb experience, not to act on it" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.25); something which echoes Holloway's argument as stated in Chapter 1.

However, as Harvey (1990) notes, not all research looking at critical issues (such as gender, colonialism etc) is critical. To be critical, research needs to consider the wider context and link the issue under consideration with social structures and historical analysis.
More recently, a new approach has arisen with the emergence of poststructuralism/ postmodernism. This arose out of critical theory and its rejection of positivism, but also calls into question the possibility of asking or answering big questions (Harvey, 1990). Much of this movement emerged in response to criticisms that orthodox Marxism was unable to adequately explain, for example, racism and imperialism, particularly in the context of the Cold War. Post-Marxist, post-structuralist trends argued that Marxism needed to develop along decentralized, self-critical and pluralist lines (Harvey, 1990) and was strongly critical of critical theory's "totalizing" "metanarratives" and "metatheories" (such as patriarchy or Marxism) (Hammersley, 1990). As can be seen in Table 2, the postmodern perspective rests on very different ontological assumptions from the critical/emancipatory paradigm: "Post-modern writers....have questioned the traditional assumption that the individual should be understood as the creative force behind society, and in response...there has been something of a decline in the belief in a unitary and coherent self" (Elliott, 2005, p.123). In this view, individual do not have "a fixed identity that is ontologically prior to their position in the social world" (Elliott, 2005, p.124), and is better understood as multiple and continually under construction.

It is clear that the deconstructivist approach within research has made a useful contribution, most notably in 'unsettling' existing ways of doing things by asking some hard questions. However, whilst many writers who had positioned themselves within the critical tradition adopted the deconstructivist approach (including many feminists) and largely rejected the critical approach, many neo-Marxists, feminists, and others within a broadly emancipatory/critical tradition, question the ability of postmodernism to adequately explain oppression. Kelly (2006), for example, argues that "Postmodernism's refusal to analyse society as an entity and its determination to concentrate on the local situation means it is unable to understand women's oppression" (p.8). Lather herself attempted to straddle the emancipate/deconstruct divide, adopting an approach that would allow her to remain committed to the emancipatory tradition whilst embracing aspects of the postmodernist tradition, despite its "irredeemable political ambivalence" (Lather, 1991, p.31). Many have called for openly partisan or ideological research, explicitly oriented to emancipatory political goals (Hammersley, 1995), since, as Lather (1986) points out, openly ideological (emancipatory) research is no more or less ideological than positivism. Within the last decade, a number of writers have argued that positivism is on the ascendancy again, particularly in educational research (Clough, 2002; Lather, 2006).

2.3 Research method

Many of the emancipatory research paradigms which have emerged in the last four decades have argued for particular research methods as well as a particular (emancipatory) approach. In particular, qualitative methods are held to be more appropriate than quantitative, and qualitative methods (in-depth/open-ended interviews and questionnaires, focus groups, and participatory research methods) have become increasingly popular, with interpretive research, neo-Marxist critical theory, phenomenology, ethnography, cultural studies, action research and feminist research all contributing to the development of such methods (Hake, 1999, p.137).

There is something of a debate about the extent to which particular research methods and methodologies are in and of themselves ideological - i.e. pertain to a particular paradigm or theoretical framework. Thus Harvey (1990), for example, argues that "while some methods

lend themselves more readily to certain epistemological perspectives, no method of data collection is inherently positivist, phenomenological or critical" (p.1), Kirby and McKenna (1989) assert the opposite:

> While some researchers may argue that research methodologies are like a set of tools from which you can pick or choose depending on the circumstances, we believe that different methodologies carry with them specific underlying assumptions which will shape the way information is gathered and the kind of knowledge created. (p.26)

If Kirby and McKenna are correct, then choosing a particular method can be fraught with problems, particularly because certain methods become popular at certain times, and are in and of themselves interesting and alluring, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) report was their own experience:

> ....we had to fight against an urge to lose ourselves in the wonders and complexities of the various methods. There was a kind of seductiveness that threatened to wrap us into the ideas and concepts that drove the method. It was difficult to keep before us our research puzzles about experience when the methods seemed to interesting in their own right. (p.128)

Lather (1986) argues that within emancipatory research, methods need to be empowering, or at least non-alienating. She contrasts this with what Reinharz (1979, cited in Lather, 1986) calls the 'rape model' of research, whereby social scientists advance their careers using alienating and exploitative methods. However, to some extent at least, the impact and effect of a method depends on how you use it; and the "major ontological differences within the broader field of qualitative inquiry" (Elliott, 2005, p.116) (as discussed above) have a major impact on how methods are used. Just as it is possible to look at a critical issue in a way that is not critical, one can use a critical method in a way that is not (Harvey, 1990); and, as Elliott (2005) argues, there's no inherent reason why qualitative methods should be less exploitative that quantitative.

I have chosen to use a qualitative approach because it allows for a more in-depth understanding of social processes over time, closer scrutiny of the relationship between the individual and society, and greater exploration of people's own understanding of this, than quantitative methods allows (Babbie, 2004). However, as suggested above, I have been mindful of the possibility that such an approach can be used in ways are that exploitative; i.e. inconsistent with my own political position, and have thus endeavoured to avoid or overcome the possible contradictions. This has been particularly the case in applying my chosen method: narrative inquiry.

2.3.1 The narrative or life history method

The narrative or life history method has become an increasingly popular method within qualitative research (although it has also been widely used within a quantitative frame) (Elliott, 2005) since the mid-1980s.

A narrative is a story, an arranging of a sequence of events into a whole, showing the connection between them. There are three main features of narrative:

1.   Temporality, that is it happens at a particular time, or over time; it is time-bound;
2.   Causality (what happened and what caused it to happen), often referred to as the plot;
3.   Interpretation or evaluation of the events narrated, by the teller and the listener.

Narratives also happen within a particular social context - someone tells the story, for a reason, under certain circumstances, to someone else. Stories are also told from a particular point of view/perspective, called positionality. So stories are always told under particular social conditions and constraints; they are a social transaction between teller and listener (Davis, 2002). Stories may simply reflect society, but there are also 'counternarratives' (Steinmetz, 1992 cited in Davis, 2002), or what Ewick and Silbey (1995, cited in Davis 2002) call "subversive stories' - stories against or as alternatives to dominant social narratives.

These key features - temporality, causality, evaluation, poisitionality and situatedness - are what make narrative inquiry an interesting and useful research method, and one which is particularly suited to my study.

The ability of narrative to reveal what has happened over time allows researchers to consider processes and change over time (Elliott, 2005). One's understanding of people and events changes, and narrative can capture the temporal nature of experience and analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest that "Narrative is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.1). They point out that learning is a change process that happens over time, so using a method that can deal with this is important. "[The] subtle connection with construction of knowledge through experience allows narrative to be associated as a tool of research in conjunction with contemporary learning theories" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.20).

Temporality links to causality and evaluation: "Stories are a reflection of the fact that experience is a matter of growth, and that understandings are continually developed, reshaped and retold" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.13). Webster and Mertova cite Dewey as saying that narrative is an avenue into human consciousness. In telling a story, people select some events, and leave out others. Some events are given prominence. The events are put into some kind of order or "plot". "Plot transforms a mere succession of events into a configuration" (Davis, 2002, p.14). Stories thus document the innermost experience of individuals, including how they interpret, understand and define the world around them:

> In stories...the meaning of events is created by showing their temporal or causal relationship to other events within the whole narrative and by showing the role such events play in the unfolding of the larger whole...The order and position of an event within a story explains how and why it happened. (Davis, 2002, p.13)

Thus a critical feature of narratives is that they impose meaning on events and experience (Elliot, 2005); as Polkinghorne (1988, quoted in Davis, 2000) says, narrative is "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (p.1). So narratives are a useful method for gathering information about lived experience *and* about "the meaning given to the experiences by those participants" (Trahar, 2006, p.15). Narrative research "allows us to see lives as simultaneously individual and social creations, and to see individuals simultaneously as the changers and the changed" (Personal Narratives Group, cited in Watson, 2006, p.61).

Thus the method can focus on the individual, and (too) often does; but it can equally focus on power and ideology.

Many writers have suggested that narrative is particularly useful in gathering the experiences and meanings given to these experiences of those who are often left out of research; i.e. it can focus on the stories of "those whose voices might otherwise go unheard or unnoticed" (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p.28). In fact, as Elliot (2005) has argued, a desire to empower research participants, and allow them to contribute to determining the most salient themes of the research, is a common theme in research using this approach, as is an interest in self and representations of self (particularly so within the deconstructivist approach), and an awareness that the researcher is also a narrator.

This emphasis within narrative inquiry, on allowing participants the opportunity to participate in framing the research uncommon in many other research methods, and being consciously reflexive as researcher, has a crucial effect on shifting power relations within research and potentially on the possibility of social change. Watson (2006), for example, looks at how indigenous people in New Zealand have used the method to actively reclaim their right to conduct their own research, 'regarding the dominance of white researchers as another form of colonisation' (Trahar, 2006, p.16). Watson argues that narrative research is especially respectful of people with a strong oral tradition, and that "the value of narrative research is that it can elicit evidence of the variety of constructions and responses made by human agents that can indeed change conditions, or enable people to resist changes imposed on them" (p.62). However, as Elliott (2005) argues, the method is no less exploitative than other methods, depending on how it is used.

Clearly, then, the method is useful to me in this study for a number of reasons. I am trying to answer, inter alia, the question of what leads certain people to critique the existing, hegemonic system. I am thus looking at the lived experience of people who have, I believe, 'unlearned' the hegemony of a particular historical and social frame (neoliberal ideology) by interpreting, understanding and accounting for the way the world is - in other words, have created alternative or 'subversive' stories. So I am looking at processes of change, of learning (and 'unlearning'), of the link between individuals and society. I am attempting to account

for how and why any unlearning has happened, including trying to unpack their own understanding of it (the meaning they give to what has happened) - in other words, dealing with issues of consciousness. I am also trying to test theory; and the notion of 'events' having significance within narratives also sits well with Badiou's theory of the event, which, as I have argued in Chapter 1, may have some usefulness in understanding the process of 'unlearning' hegemony.

However what I am clearly interested in are particular stories (life stories) of particular people. Within the narrative approach, biography is a particular kind of narrative, focusing on the story of a person's life. Life history is a particular type of biography, focusing on an individual's life, and how it reflects cultural themes of society, personal themes, institutional themes and social histories (Creswell, 1998). Life histories allow us to look at the connection between people's lived experiences and social and institutional structures (Dex, 1991, p.1), because "individuals' experiences reflect the structural facts which impinged upon them and troubled or constrained their experiences and actions" (Dex, 1991, p.2). In addition, "the life story method is based on a *combination* of exploring and questioning, within the context of a *dialogue* with the informant" (Thompson, 1981, p.294), and thus allows for both the expected and unexpected. A life history approach can bridge the gap between psychological theories (which look at the individual), and sociological theories, such as Marxism (which look at social control, class conflict, change etc. at a societal level) (Thompson, 1981).This allows both theory building and theory testing at the same time (Thompson, 1981; Dex, 1991). The life history method is thus particularly relevant for my study for three reasons:

1.   A life history approach focuses on experience and reflection - both, as we will see, critical elements of transformative/experiential learning;
2.   According to Badiou, only the person who has experienced an 'event' (i.e. acquired agency) would know this; thus we would need their word for it that they had experienced this at all. A life history approach allows this;
3.   As Watson (2006) suggests, a life history approach is 'especially respectful'; it captures 'those voices that might otherwise go unheard/unnoticed' (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). This approach thus fits with the political positioning and intent of Alain Badiou, of Abahlali baseMjondolo, and of this study.

However, what is also potentially valuable about a life history approach in my case is it's potential synergy with my own political position, and my own concerns about how research is often conducted. As Thompson (1981) argues, "the life history method at least makes us confront the violence that can be done to other people's consciousness by imposing our own terms on it" (p.293). The method can allow the participant to set the overall framework within which information is given, rather than the researcher.

This suggests that a narrative/life history approach is appropriate within a critical frame. Is this in fact so? What about the discussion above about the ways in which methods are 'situated' within particular approaches or paradigms?

Etherington (2006) argues that narrative research emerges from the postmodernist paradigm:

> The narrative 'turn' is away from reification of grand narratives or dominant discourses and towards the valuing of local stories; away from the idea that there is a single 'right' way to approach social research and towards a pluralist tradition and multiple ways of knowing and learning (including multiple ways of understanding and conducting narrative research and reflexivity). (p. 79)

It is certainly true that there has been a "great flowering" in writing about narrative in the last few decades (Davis, 2002, p.3), which, as Webster & Mertova (2007) argue, has largely been a response to the constraints imposed by conventional research methods, and the emergence of postmodernism and its interest in the individual and the influence of experience and culture on the construction of knowledge. The methods's interest in, and helpfulness with, uncovering and understanding meaning also makes it popular within an interpretive paradigm. However, the use of a narrative approach began long before the emergence of postmodernism/deconstructive paradigms, and its roots lie far more in the emancipatory tradition, for example, in the oral history of humanist Marxist historiography. Daniel Bertaux's 1981 *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach to the Social Sciences*, for example, includes a number of chapters from a broadly neo-Marxist perspective. Bertaux himself, in his introduction to the book, says that he was a Positivist who had been radically altered by the events of May 1968 (Paris). Bertaux traces a history of the life history

approach, and argues that it was critical to transcend the functionalism, structuralism and orthodox Marxism dominant at the time, to allow "a more dialectic and humanist look at our changing world" (p.7). The key theoretical issue, for Bertaux and the authors of the chapters in the book was "what is the relationship between the individual and collective *praxis* and sociohistorical *change*?" (p.6). It is clear how a narrative approach would be useful in this regard. Narrative\life history approaches were also strong within a social history approach in both the United Kingdom and South Africa in 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Grumet (1987) argues that the Marxist "understands story telling as a negotiation of power" (p.320). It matters who is telling the story, and how and where, not just because of what it says about the teller, but because our stories shape us. "The politic of narrative is not then, merely a social struggle, but an ontological one as well. We are, at least partially, constituted by the stories we tell to others and to ourselves about experience" (p.322). Grumet's observations suggest why the method came to be seen as so useful to those working within a deconstructive frame, with its emphasis on the individual as always under construction (particularly by discourse).

However, the emancipatory tradition emphasises the relation between the individual and social structures of power, and it is for this reason that its exponents see narrative as a useful tool. Franco Ferrarotti (1981) thus argues that narrative/life stories are the only means available to explore the link between the individual/micro (the area of psychology) and society/macro (the area of sociology):

> We must look for the epistemological foundations of the biographical method...in a dialectical reason capable of understanding the reciprocal synthetic praxis which governs the interaction between an individual and a social system...Only dialectical reason allows us to interpret the objectivity of a fragment of social history on the basis of the non-evaded subjectivity of an individual history. Only dialectical reason gives us access to the universal and to the general (society), starting from the individual and the singular (a given man) (sic). (pp.20-21)

In his argument for the narrative method, Ferrarotti is influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he quotes:

> A man (sic) is never an individual; a better term would be a *singular universal*; having been totalized, and thus universalized, by his epoch, he retotalizes it by reproducing himself into it as a singularity. Being at once universal through the singular universality of human history, and singular through the universalizing singularity of his projects, he needs to be studied from both perspectives simultaneously. And this calls for an appropriate method. (Sartre, quoted in Ferrarotti, 1981, p.21).

Sartre felt that this method was the progressive-regressive method - a horizontal and vertical reading of the biography of the individual and the social system. Drawing on Sartre's argument that one individual is not all individuals, that "the individual is not the founder of the social, but rather its sophisticated product" (Ferrarotti, 1981, p.26), the true element of analysis is not the individual, but the primary social group to which the individual belongs. If this is so, then:

> the renewal of the biographical method may necessitate a new theory of social action. This theory would not be based on the action of one or more individual agents, but rather on the action of a *social totality*, the *small group*, read through non-mechanistic, 'anthropomorphic' models. (Ferrarotti, 1981, p.26)

Elliott (2005), however, suggests that a narrative/life history approach is not necessarily useful within an emancipatory tradition, because "it can be very difficult for women and members of other disadvantaged groups to see and understand general systems of inequality from the perspective provided by their own everyday lives" (p.145). Ewick and Silbey (1995, p.212, quoted in Elliott, 2005, p.146) say "our stories are likely to express ideological effects and hegemonic assumptions....[our stories] often articulate and reproduce existing ideologies and hegemonic relations of power and inequality". So, "narratives that individuals tell can be understood as profoundly implicated in constituting and reinforcing...hegemony" (Elliott, 2005, p.146). Ewick and Silbey (1995, cited in Elliott, 2005), however, argue that narratives

can be hegemonic; but can also be subversive. Often those who are the at margins of society are more likely to produce counterhegemonic/subversive stories.

Thus narrative research has been shaped by the broader debates and concerns about knowledge, knowledge production, and research over the past few decades. Casey (1995) argues that narrative research is "both pervasive and elusive" (p.211), and is "in all of its various manifestations,...deeply implicated in contemporary conflicts over theory, methodology, and politics in scholarly investigation" (Ibid, p.211). It is not surprising, then, that narrative research can be claimed by both Marxists and postmodernists. Interpretivists, with their emphasis on subjective meaning-making and multiple truths, are also inclined towards narratives. What is clear is that the assumptions and theories underlying a particular way of viewing narrative research needs to be made clear by whoever is using it - as Chase (1995, quoted in Watson, 2006, p.62) argues, "narrative research must be grounded in a particular theoretical commitment". This commitment then shapes how the method is used to gather data, how this data is analysed, and how it is written up. Recently, however, the method appears to have been uncritically adopted, as if it is simply a technical method that can be used at will, rather than one which shifts and changes depending on the underlying epistemological and even ontological beliefs of the user.

In the discussion below, I have drawn on literature from both frames, as appropriate; but have not included references to literature that is from a wholly postmodernist perspective/counter critical research, since this is contra the paradigm within which I am working. For example, discussions about data collection are fairly useful across both the emancipatory and deconstructivist approach; but analysis tends to be very different, because the different understandings of reality, knowledge and truth, and the different intentions of the approaches.

2.4 Using the life history method

Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that at the moment, there is no single narrative inquiry method; and this is not surprising, given the discussion above. Webster and Mertova also suggest that very little further contribution has been made to the method since the mid-1990s (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

2.4.1. Data collection

Elliott (2005) citing Graham (1984), Mishler (1986) and Riessman (1990) says that interviewees are likely to spontaneously provide narratives about their experiences unless they are prevented from doing so: "Most people like telling stories and with a little encouragement will provide narrative accounts of their experiences in research interviews" (Elliott, 2005, p.29). This is particularly the case when power is shifted to the participants. This suggests that the researcher need do little other than set up some kind of opportunity for story telling, and then record it in some way. However, even Elliott concedes that there are certain things the researcher can do to encourage story telling and ensure the rich, thick data are obtained; and many writers have considered this in some depth.

Whilst it is generally acknowledged that different data gathering methods, both quantitative and qualitative, can be used within a narrative approach (surveys, observations, interviews, documentation, conversations, journalling) (Plummer, 1983; Webster & Mertova, 2007), most writers argue for the use of an open-ended interview schedule. In this case, the questions are crucial - they must relate to the life experience of the participants, allowing them a chance to tell their stories. So learning how to ask questions is critical (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). Bryman (2008) gives the following guidelines in formulating questions in general:

- don't use ambiguous terms;
- don't ask long questions;
- don't ask two questions in one;
- don't ask very general questions;
- don't ask leading questions;
- don't ask yes/no questions;
- don't use technical terms.

Many writers suggest asking simple questions that clearly relate to life experience, for example, asking people to talk about specific times and situations/experiences, rather than asking broad questions about life over a long period of time, to encourage recall and reflection (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, cited in Elliott, 2005; Elliott, 2005; Webster &

Mertova, 2007). Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest as an example, "Think about one memory you have of X; tell me about it". Most writers also emphasise the importance of being a good listener, and not interrupting.

Elliot (2005) suggests that in a life history approach, it can be very difficult for people to respond if they are just asked to give an account of life. She suggests using some kind of grid to record life events, together with the participants, and then using this as basis to recount story of their life (Elliott, 2005).

In my interviews, I asked only five main (sets of) questions: about growing up and family; about school; about after school (work, marriage etc.); about learning; about Abahlali (see Appendix 2). I used only open-ended questions, and tried to phrase the questions in simple terms. The interviews were really more conversations than anything else; I asked for more information, or for an explanation of things asked, as the interview progressed. I was only really aware of the extent to which I was present in the interviews at the time of transcribing; but I think the nature of the interviews was in fact fairly typical within the life history approach (as discussed further, below).

Because of the kind of interview required in the method, many writers have talked about the duration of interviews, and the number of interviews. The length of interview can obviously vary a lot, but several authors say about 90 minutes is optimal; the important thing is to make the timing clear at the start of the interview (Elliott, 2005). Some writers, however, have suggested that on the whole respondents are not very sensitive to time, and do not mind how long it takes; in fact, participants often greatly enjoy it (Dex, 1991) (something that I found in my own interviews).

Many writers suggest that if more time is needed, one should rather have further interviews; but writers differ in their suggestions about how many interviews are needed. Seidmann (1998, cited in Elliott, 2005), for example, says do three interviews, whereas Hollway and Jefferson (2000, also cited in Elliott) argue that two are enough. Seidmann argues for one (the first) focusing on the participant's broad life history leading up to the topic/event of interest; a second looking at the person's concrete experience in relation to the topic or event;

and a final interview reflecting on this experience. Hollway and Jefferson suggest doing the initial interview; listening to the tape and reflecting on the interview; getting comments from other researchers; going through notes; and then doing the second interview, a week later, following up on issues or gaps raised in the first interview. They agree that more than one interview is important, since this build the relationship between the researcher and participant, and tests the internal validity of the data.

Obviously, recording the interview in some form is important. Increasingly, writers suggest tape-recording, not simply to ensure a complete record, but also because this allows the researcher to pay close attention to the participant. "Recording is...now generally thought to be good practice in all qualitative interviewing" (Hermanowicz, 2002, quoted in Elliott, 2005, p.33). It is also generally recognised that trying to include other things, such as intonation and body language, can be important.

I did only one interview with most of the respondents. This was for three reasons - I already had an established relationship with all of them, so building this up was not really necessary. I also felt that asking the participants to reflect on something they had talked about some time ago was probably breaking a synergistic process; it felt far more natural for them to reflect as they recounted, and to assist with this by asking appropriate questions as we went through the interview. Finally, I felt that asking participants for more than one interview was possibly taking advantage of them. I did suggest at the beginning that it might be necessary, but that I hoped it would not be; and I did give an approximate guide as to how long the interview would take at the time I asked them if they would be prepared to be interviewed. In the event, the 90 minute guide worked fairly well for most of the interviews. Not surprisingly, I found that the interviews with the younger participants went slightly quicker; those with older participants tended to be longer. In one case, a second interview had to be scheduled, because we had not completed the interview in the time we had. I tape recorded all of the interviews, after asking for permission to do this; but also took copious notes during most of the interviews, primarily because I was concerned about a failure of technology, but also to try to capture, for example, body language where this struck me.

2.4.2 Analysis

As Watson (2006) points out, "collecting autobiographical stories is really only data collection: something needs to be done with the data to clarify and find meaning" (p. 63). However, because "the construction of knowledge [is] a political process" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.27), analysis is also a political process:

> The act of interpretation underlies the entire research process. The act of interpretation is not something which occurs only at one specific point in the research after the data has been gathered; rather interpretation exists at the beginning and continues throughout the entire process. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.23)

So how one does the analysis is a crucial point.

Another issue is the sheer quantity of data the narrative process can generate; generally, you end up long and/or multiple transcripts (McCormack, 2004). Elliott (2005) suggests that each interview generates about 15 000 to 20 000 words, or 20-30 pages of text - although this is really a function of a more deconstructivist approach, in which every word, every pause, every element of discourse, is captured. Thus how you prepare and transcribe data is connected to method of analysis (Elliott, 2005). This is always a compromise: "It is now widely recognised that it is all but impossible to produce a transcription of a research interview....which completely captures all of the meaning that was communicated in the encounter itself" (Elliott, 2005, p.51).

As Elliott (2005) points out, there is no one method for doing analysis within narrative research - a lot depends on the approach and intention of the research. Thus there are significant differences between those working within in a more critical frame, and those working within a more postmodernist one, for example. Polkinghorne (1995, cited in McCormack, 2004) identifies a fundamental difference between 'analysis of narrative' (in which stories are looked at as data), and 'narrative analysis' (in which actions and events are looked at as data, and are used to generate stories). Elliot (2005, p.38) categorizes the possible methods as content vs structure vs interactional context, something which Riessman

(2004) has also done, although he adds an additional category:

1. Thematic analysis. This emphasises the content and recurrent or underlying themes within/across the stories. Such themes may be derived either from the research questions and theoretical framework, or from the data itself.
2. Structural analysis. This focuses on how the story is told, and the narrative mechanisms or techniques used by the storyteller.
3. Interactional analysis. This focuses on the interaction between the teller and the listener, with the meaning of the story being co-constructed through dialogue.
4. Performative analysis. The emphasis here is the narrative as performance, and includes the response of the audience.

Other possible methods that are discussed in the research literature include fractal analysis (Cross, 2006, cited in Trahar, 2006), and storying stories (McCormack, 2004), which involves viewing interview transcripts through multiple lenses - active listening, narrative processes, language, context, moments - to highlight both individuality and complexity.

Many of these really apply to a more deconstructivist approach, in which the researcher is interested in the nature of identity and the constitution (and reconstitution) of the individual's subject positions. In my case, analysis focusing on what happened and why (in the stories, rather than in the interviews) was what was required, and I thus chose methods appropriate for this.

Thus, in transcribing the data, I recorded only the story itself, and not my questions and comments. I also cleaned up the transcript to make it easier to read (Elliott, 2005) - I removed pauses and hesitations and repetitions where these did not add anything substantive. I also re-ordered certain things where chronological order helped to make the story more coherent or understandable, and also to check my understanding of what happened when. However, I used only the actual words of the participant throughout.

In thinking about the analysis process before I embarked on the research, I had always assumed that a first level of analysis would be done by the activists themselves, in my

interviews with them. This was because, as discussed above and further below, it had struck me that Abahlali was an unusually reflective movement, and my prior knowledge of the people I was intending to interview led me to believe that they were reflective individuals; but also because the open-ended nature of my interview schedule allowed me to probe responses, as well as specifically asking them to reflect on their learning and on the movement (thus helping to answer my research questions 1-3). However, I had initially also considered the possibility of involving those I interviewed in the overall, secondary, meta-analysis process (i.e. the extent to which adult learning theory, and Badiou's theory of the event, could explain processes of unlearning), and had included a focus group to do precisely this in my research proposal. This felt to me at the time consistent with the political intent of the research. However, as the research progressed, this began to feel to me to be an unfair and potentially dishonest move on my part. Firstly, it would require me to 'teach' a large body of theory to the activists for no real gain on their part; and secondly, it would relocate, at least in part, the ultimate responsibility of this analysis from me, who was after all, hoping to achieve a doctoral qualification.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warn that one can "fall in love with participants", and want to let them speak for themselves; however, they insist, there must be analysis and interpretation by the researcher - what is the meaning of this? What is its social significance? So this is what I have attempted to do. As Clandinin and Connelly point out, this is not actually easy, it is very complex, it is not a series of steps. They assert that it is important to keep asking questions about meaning and significance - looking for patterns, for narrative threads, for tensions, for themes either within or across individuals experiences and social settings. In doing this, I have used thematic and event analysis.

2.4.2.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis involves coding data for specific themes. The themes could be determined before coding begins, or could be generated during the process of analysis, from the data; or a combination of both.

Marshall (2002) comments that "textbooks make coding sound relatively straightforward" (p.56) - in fact, it is messy "dirty" process. Coding, in her experience, is "mental chaos [accompanying] physical mess" (p.57), and giving rise to elation, frustration, hope and despair. This is largely because qualitative data is frequently complex and voluminous, and is hard to manage, let alone code. She also argues that in fact the rules for coding are not clear - "data analysis in general [can] be a miserable experience involving frustration, confusion and self-doubt" (p.60). Key issues are often how much time it takes, and the fact that a research usually keeps coming up with new codes, and then has to go back and recode; and being unsure about when to stop the process, because there is in fact no logical end - it is always possible to find something more. In addition, the technical process of coding can in fact prevent a researcher from really thinking about, and engaging with the data.

Marshall (2002, pp.63-67) suggests a number of possible solutions to the problems associated with coding, allowing a mix of order and creativity:

- being reflexive. The researcher needs to keep moving between data and theory, between the technical process of coding and the reflexive process of thinking about what the codes and data mean. Thus coding is not a preliminary stage of analysis, but part of the analysis itself.
- Take time and time out. Marshall proposes that the researcher accept that the process is slow and repetitive, and is careful not to rush the process, or worry that he/she has not coded perfectly the first time round. Time spent coding should be limited, for example, to an hour at a time. The researcher should take breaks from coding, and do something else (preferably creative) for a while.
- Work with the unconscious. Allow things to surface, for example, a feeling that one aspect of the interview is more important than others.
- Break up the coding into steps. For example, a researcher could first identify the key themes; then divide the time available for coding by these themes; code broadly for that theme, noting any new ideas/themes as s/he goes; then do a finer level coding within that broad theme. Categories should be refined as the process unfolds.
- Be systematic.
- Record and file ideas, insights etc. as they occur. This is a critical part of the analysis process.

I used my four research questions as the basis for a first level of analysis of the stories. Once I had analysed the transcripts very broadly by research question, I then undertook a thematic analysis, using themes generated from the discussion in various chapters of this thesis. For example, in coding instances of hegemony, I used Gramsci's assertion that people 'learn' hegemony from family, Church, media and school, and coded for family, Church, media, school. This allowed me to see both whether this had in fact occurred as Gramsci claimed; but also where it might not have happened, or have been resisted. Similarly, I used key ideas from Badiou's work to code the transcripts for instances of how they might relate to Badiou's theory. I thus had some a priori categories, from my research questions, but my analysis was guided through interaction with data. I thus used an iterative and dialogic process; going constantly backwards and forwards between the stories, the context, and the theories.

2.4.2.2 Event analysis

Webster and Mertova (2007) argue for event analysis, "the highlighting and capturing of critical events contained in stories of experience" (p.71). They argue that narratives are inherently event driven, because:

> specific events are key determinants in how we recall our life experiences...As we recall experiences we unfold the story of those experiences. The story, in turn, is associated with a memorable event. That event has carried with it a development of a new understanding as a consequence of the particular experience. (pp.71-73)

Within life stories, there may well be particular events, what Webster and Mertova call 'critical events' that are more just important events in a life story. Rather, a critical event is a change experience, because it almost always comes about when "storyteller encounters some difficulty in integrating their idealised worldview with the reality of their experience" (p.75). So a critical event is not extraordinary in terms of content (though it might be); rather, it is important because of "the profound effects it has on the people involved" (Woods, 1993b, p.356 cited in Webster and Mertova, 2007, p.78). "A critical event as told in a story reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.73).

Clearly, critical event analysis is highly relevant to my study because a. if critical events are about something to do with understanding/worldview, particularly in relation to lived experience, this can help explore learning and unlearning hegemony; and b. there is obvious synergy between critical event analysis and Badiou's theory of the event.

According to Webster and Mertova (2007), the process of analysis begins with identifying events. Once these have been identified, the researcher then works out an initial set of categories, tests these, works out a process for classifying these, and then uses content analysis to actually classify them. Webster and Mertova propose categorising all events identified into 'critical', 'like' and 'other' events.

How does one do this? Obviously, the nature of critical events give one some indicators for identifying them. A critical event "is almost always a change experience, and it can only be identified afterwards" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.74) Critical events are "unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled" (p.77). There could be traumatic component to the event, so critical events are not necessarily positive. The longer the time lag between when the event actually happened, and when it is recalled, the more critical the event is likely to be. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest making a brief description of scene, plot, key characters, places, major events - a critical event will often stand out. Webster and Mertova suggest the following as strong indicators of a critical event:
- they exist in a particular context;
- they impact on the people involved;
- they have life-changing consequences;
- they are unplanned;
- they may reveal patterns of well-defined stages;
- they are only identified after the event;
- they are intensely personal with strong emotional involvement.

Once critical events have been identified, 'like' and 'other' events can then be classified. A 'like' event is similar to a critical event in that it repeats the context, method and resources of a critical event, thus reinforcing or confirming the critical event itself, or broadening the issues it raises. An 'other' event is a "further event that takes place at the same time as

critical and like events" (p.79), in other words, at the same time, or in the same place, or in the same context. 'Like' and 'other' events can be used to check the verisimilitude of critical events.

A critical event is not necessarily the specific incident itself; rather, "critical events lie between the flash-point incidents and the long-term consequences". Woods (1993a, p.357, cited in Webster and Mertova, 2007, p.84) says they are those which "illuminate in an electrifying instant some key problematic aspect...and which contain, in the same instant, the solution". Though they occur within a structure, "critical events will always contain something that is at the same time outside and beyond the structure" (p.83). As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9, there is thus considerable synergy between this 'critical event' and Badiou's 'The Event'.

I followed Webster and Mertova's method fairly closely in my own analysis. I analysed significant events in each respondent's life, including family events (births, deaths and marriages; moving place, either of themselves or of family members where this affected them); formal education (where this happened, what it involved, how well they did, etc., for both school and post-school formal education), and where this was specifically mentioned, non-formal educational experiences; and work experiences. I then identified particularly traumatic or important events. My events analysis of each participant's life was then compared to those of the other participants; and logged against significant national and local events (eg. the states of emergency in the 1980s, the political violence; 1994). This allowed me to see, firstly, the extent to which the respondents had experienced stability or instability of home circumstances, education, working life (and how these coalesced); but secondly to compare life histories with other respondents by identifying common elements.

Finally, I identified 'critical events', using Webster and Mertova's (2007) framework for identifying these. I also identified 'like' and 'other' events. These helped me to confirm my findings.

2.5 Validity and trustworthiness

Like all research methods, the narrative/life history method is not without problems, many of them related specifically to the method itself. Webster and Mertova (2007) identify the following risks in narrative research:

1.   Intersubjectivity (slipping into a narrative plot, without the appropriate reflection and analysis)
2.   Smoothing (a positive response is invoked despite the data)
3.   External constraints (cultural, institutional, time, state of mind of the participants).

Some of these are obviously potential problems in any research, using any method. However, narrative/life history research has its own specific risks, discussed below.

2.5.1 Memory

Life history research is about asking people to talk about, and thus recall, their lives or certain aspects of these. This raises the issue of memory: "How far can you ask people to recall their past on the basis of memory? What sort of biases will their memory be subject to? Is recollection of the past also affected by current or present experiences and circumstances?" (Dex, 1991, p.2). Cortazzi and Jin (2006) also raise this issue: "...remembered accounts may be shaped by distortions of time, by rationalisations from present perspectives, and by changes in the teller's sense of identity" (p. 32).

Portelli (1991, cited in Elliottt, 2005), however, argues that although life stories may contain many factual errors, this adds meaning to the accounts: "Oral sources....are not always reliable in point of fact. Rather than being a weakness, this is however their strength: errors, inventions and myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings" (Portelli, 1991, p.2 quoted in Elliottt, 2005, p.26); and, after all, in the narrative method, meaning is what it's often about; it's a main reason for using the method in the first place.

Where accuracy of recall is really important, this can be influenced by technique - the structure of a questionnaire, the ordering of questions.

2.5.2 Bias

Bias is clearly a concern in any research undertaking. As seen in the discussion about memory, the issue of bias has frequently been raised within the field of narrative inquiry in relation to the participant. However, it relates to the researcher, as well. Narrative, by its very nature, is subjective - which stories should be included, which left out - and can be distorted to create "a happy ending". There is also the issue of concealed/distorted messages/ perspectives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). There is a danger in treating the stories uncritically. It is thus important to be aware of any underlying motives of the narrator. Watson (2006) emphasises that the researcher must be aware of multiple realities and the 'political' aspects of explanation - which versions is being privileged by the teller. Cortazzi and Jin (2006) argue that the researcher's identity is extremely important in narrative research. Researchers can (and do) impose their own understandings or interpretations, even restructuring stories. They give an example of researchers restructuring indigenous people's stories to, for example, create a chronology that was not originally there, thus missing crucial issues raised by the stories. They warn that research participants often know of this tendency of researchers, and quote one community member as saying, "That's not what really happened. That's only what we tell the anthropologists so they'll go away and leave us in peace" (p.32).

Again, as with memory, the issue of subjectivity and bias is not always a weakness - narratives "illuminate the real life experience of learners and at the same time are sensitive to the broader connections to the individual's worldview" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.20). Bias tells us something.

In my own study, I was not particularly concerned about the accuracy or truthfulness of what people said; although, where possible, I did check within and between stories to pick up any errors of memory or fact (and found very few). For my purpose, I was interested rather in how people interpreted various experiences, in their analysis of things. Thus I did not find either recall or bias to be a major limitation in my study.

2.5.3 Trustworthiness

All researchers need, as Lather (1991) argues, to ensure that their research does not take the concept of subjective research too far, does not simply become the expression of the researcher's own complex internal narrative (or political project). It thus requires some kind of validation. Lather (1991) uses Guba and Lincoln's (1981) minimum requirement of triangulation, reflexivity, and face validity/member-checks, but adds to this a fourth requirement in testing for validity, that of catalytic validity. So although Lather (1986) makes a strong argument for openly ideological research, she insists that this be rigorous. If we are not rigorous, then our work will not be considered legitimate; but also, "we will fail to protect our work from our own passions, and our theory-building will suffer" (p.78).

Within narrative research, one of the early writers on the method, Plummer (1983), argues that because the method focuses on the subjective reality of the individual, the limitations of the method include issues of reliability and validity. Since then, many writers have addressed these issues, and there is some disagreement in the field.

Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that you cannot use the same criteria in narrative research as in other methods. Reliability, as it is generally understood, cannot be applied to narrative inquiry, since the same questions asked to different people will get different answers, because they each had different experiences. Thus reliability, as the consistency and stability of the measuring instrument, does not apply (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative research, reliability thus relates to the dependability of the data, whilst validity relates to the strength of data analysis, the trustworthiness of the data, and the ease of access to the data (Polkinghorne 1988 cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007). Webb (2006), however, is critical of attempts by qualitative researchers to reconfigure reliability and validity to fit their purpose, and proposes that the underlying principles of trustworthiness, relevance and honesty are more useful tools; as is the concept of 'good' (i.e. useful) research.

Polkinghorne (1988, cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.22) suggests we abandon reliability altogether, and rather judge using trustworthiness, whilst Clandinin and Connelly (2000), also arguing that reliability, validity and generalizability are not really appropriate for

narrative inquiry, suggest that good *narrative* has an explanatory, invitational quality, authenticity, adequacy and plausibility. Good *inquiry*, on the other hand, comes from wakefulness (discussed further below).

Huberman (1995, cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007) suggests the following measures:

- access (to context, process and construction of knowledge; and to research notes, transcripts and data);
- honesty (asking questions like, how can one establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings? How can one determine the extent to which the findings are applicable elsewhere? Are any patterns emerging? Are the conditions of the inquiry influenced by biases/motivation/interests of the inquirer?);
- verisimilitude (the stories should resonate with the experience of the researcher; they should appear to have a level of plausibility; they should be confirmed by like and other events, in Webster and Mertova's (2007) understanding, as discussed above);
- authenticity (the researcher has provided enough information to convince the reader that the story is told in a serious and honest way; there should be narrative coherence)
- familiarity (the familiar needs to be made strange, so that it is not 'dulled' and you do not see particular things).
- transferability (you must be able to compare the story with other situations); and
- economy (there is often a huge amount of data; thus one needs to be efficient and economical in a way that will not compromise the integrity of the data or findings).

I tried to use all of these measures in undertaking this study, as will hopefully be apparent in the following chapters.

2.5.3.1 Triangulation

Triangulation refers not just to multiple measures, but also to multiple data sources, methods, theoretical schemes. The point of triangulation is to look for counter-patterns as well as convergences (Lather, 1986, 1991). Babbie and Mouton (1998, p.285) suggest, as well as getting the person who told the story to read the transcript, and provide an autocritique, the following three validity checks:

- comparing the data with other sources collected by other methods;
- comparing with official records;
- comparing with other informants.

Not surprisingly, some of the literature from a more deconstructivist approach rejects the applicability of triangulation to narrative (eg. Webster & Mertova, 2007), on the grounds that it is almost impossible within the method (given that one is asking individual people to tell their individual, entirely subjective, entirely unique, stories), and because triangulation is about searching for an ultimate truth that does not exist.

Given that I am working within a critical paradigm, and mindful of Lather's warnings about not protecting my research from my passions, I have tried to use triangulation as far as possible. Although I have only used one method (in-depth interviews), I did get the participants to read and check the transcribed interviews, and checked across different people, looking for patterns (including counter-patterns). Where other interviews with the same people are publically available (as is the case with some of the participants), I also checked my interviews against these; and I checked those experiences/events recounted in the narratives against other accounts of the same experience/event. I looked at the stories from the perspective of a number of different theories (hegemony and counter-hegemony; different learning theories; Badiou's theory of the event); and also used multiple theories to check whether the one I'm interested in - Badiou's - can add anything new.

2.5.3.2 Reflexive subjectivity

Reflexivity relates to the researcher, and how s/he thinks hard about his or her assumptions. "...[R]esearcher reflexivity is...the capacity of researchers to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which are usually fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry" (Etherington, 2006, p.81) Obviously, this is a critical issue if one accepts the notion that all research is fundamentally ideological: "Emancipatory social theory requires a ceaseless confrontation with the experiences of people in their daily lives in order to stymie the tendency to theoretical imposition which is inherent in theoretically guided empirical work" (Lather, 1986, p.67). Reflexivity must thus be built into all stages of the

research, from deciding on what to study, to how to do it, to actually doing it, and finally to its final representation (Etherington, 2006).

Many writers, across paradigms, agree that reflexivity on the part of the researcher is an essential part of doing 'good' (rigorous) research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call this 'wakefulness': "A language of wakefulness allows us to proceed forward with a constant, alert awareness of risks, of narcissism, of solipsism, and of simplistic plots, scenarios, and unidimensional characters" (p.182).

Part of being reflexive is, as I have already discussed, being open about our own position, and accepting the possibility that this might bias our research. It also means asking ourselves hard questions about how and why the research is being done. Lather (1991) argues that researchers needs to operate within a conscious context of theory building, and constantly probe and question theoretical assumptions, asking questions such as "Where are the weak points of the theoretical tradition we are operating from within? Are we extending theory? Revising it? Testing it? Corroborating it?" (p.67). We have to guard against allowing our theory impose or subsume counter-patterns, so we need to empirically ground our theory: "Empirical validation requires a critical stance regarding the inadequacies of our pet theories and an openness to counter-interpretations" (Lather, 1986, p.76).

Webster and Mertova (2007) also insist on the importance of asking ourselves questions. They cite Strauss and Corbin (1998) as saying that there are three different kinds of questions we need to ask:

1. Sensitising questions - what is going on here? (Issues, problems, concerns). Who are the actors? How do they define the situation? What does it mean to them?
2. Theoretical questions - what is the relationship between one concept and another? How do events and actions change over time?
3. Practical and structural questions - which concepts are well developed/which are not? What, when, how are data gathered for an evolving theory? Is the developing theory logical?

Etherington (2006) argues that "reflexivity can create a bridge between researcher, practitioner and new knowledge, thus enhancing trustworthiness" (p.81).

I am acutely aware of where I stand, and why I am doing this research, and have tried to make this transparent from the start both in this thesis, and to the research participants (and to Abahlali. Clearly, my position has influenced how I have done the research (as discussed in the chapter); and could potentially affect my findings. However, although I am testing theory in this study (Badiou's theory of the event, and the extent to which it can help explain 'unlearning'), although it is a theory I am interested in, I came into this research with its usefulness as on open-ended question. This is because I also have concerns about the theory; for example, that it does not appear to allow enough for agency. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 9. I thus looked at the issue (of whether this is a useful theory) in both considering the theory qua theory, and in looking at the data. My ultimate finding was unexpected. As discussed above, I also used other strategies to mitigate against my own bias.

I have also undertaken to present this research, including my theorising and findings to Abahlali; this will also, of course, test my research.

2.5.3.3 Face validity

Also known as 'member-checks', face validity involves giving the research back to at least some of the respondents, by recycling categories, emerging analysis, and conclusions back to participants (Lather, 1986). Lather herself is slightly ambivalent about this in her work. For example, in her 1986 article on openly ideological research, Lather is very critical of neo-Marxist research that assumes that the research subjects cannot interpret the data correctly because of false consciousness, and thus the researcher/intellectual needs to do this. However, in the same article she argues that "Our common-sense ways of looking at the world are permeated with meanings that sustain our powerlessness" (Lather, 1986, p.76); and thus we cannot only use member-checks/face validity and catalytic validity. In her 1991 book, she also points out that 'false consciousness' can limit the extent of usefulness of this process, since participants may be unable to move beyond the hegemonic determination of their own beliefs and attitudes.

Nevertheless, most writers in the field of research methodology consider face validity/'member-checks' as a minimum requirement for trustworthy research.

In my study, I gave the participants my transcriptions of their stories so that they could add/change/delete, and edited the transcriptions as they appear in Chapter 10 accordingly. In point of fact, these related almost entirely to typographical errors.

2.5.3.4 Catalytic validity

Lather's (1986, 1991) final requirement for rigorous research is catalytic validity - documenting that the research process led to insight and activism of respondents, "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms "conscientization", knowing reality in order to better transform it" (Lather, 1986, p.67). Lather recognises that this is an extremely unorthodox guideline for validity, because it is so clearly contra the idea of researcher neutrality, and rather insists that good research must necessarily lead to emancipatory action. I am not aware of other writers accepting this guideline, except in so far as those within an emancipatory approach argue that emancipatory research must deal with the issue of praxis (as discussed above). Whilst Lather's writing appeal to me on many levels, this is one area where I have a problem with her. In her argument for catalytic validity, Lather assumes that people need the researcher/me to help them 're-orient, focus, and energize' them ('conscientize' them); and they do not. My study is premised on this assumption.

2.6 Ethical issues

Because research always impacts on the process it studies (May, as cited in Webb, 2006), ethical issues are always raised in any research project. This is particularly the case where human subjects are involved (Elliott, 2005). As Trahar (2006) points out, "in spite of the desire for research to be beneficial to participants, we as researchers instigate and direct it" (p.17), and this inevitably raises ethical issues.

However, above and beyond this general issue of research ethics, there are a number of ethical issues related specifically to a life history approach; although "as yet there has been relatively little discussion of the specific ethical issues that are raised by the use of narrative in research" (Elliott, 2007, p.134). Elliott (2007) suggests that we need to look at two aspects - 'ethical' (the impact the research may have on participants); and 'political' (the impact the research may have on society or a specific subgroup in society) - although these are often linked.

Nearly all writers on the subject emphasise that although ethical issues might be most evident in the data collection stage, we need to think about ethics in relation to analysis and dissemination as well (Elliott, 2005), since "ethical matters shift and change as we move through an inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.170). Bond and Mifsud (2006) argue that the very nature of narrative research means that one cannot anticipate many of the ethical issues that may arise, so these need to be dealt with continuously as they arise throughout the research process.

Webb (2006) says that being ethical is not straightforward - in fact it is messy and emotional, and it can take a researcher time to realise that there is an ethical dilemma. "The qualities needed for all this are humility, openness to seeking and receiving feedback, transparency, self-awareness, sense of perspective, sensitivity to others' needs, sense of humour and patience" (Webb, 2006, p.237), and empathy, respect and genuineness.

Webster and Mertova (2007) cite Miles and Huberman's list of things researchers should consider with regards to ethics:
- informed consent
- harm and risk
- honesty and trust
- privacy, confidentiality and anonymity
- intervention and advocacy.

I discuss these in more detail below.

2.6.1 Informed consent

A number of writers have suggested that the notion of informed consent does not sit easily with the narrative approach. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that the notion of informed consent arises from a particular (traditional) view of research and research participants, in which "participants are seen as subjects in need of protection in research undertaking" (Ibid., p.173), and Elliott (2005) agrees with this. However, in the narrative approach, you develop a relationship with the participants; this means the real guide is your conscience, not informed consent (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Bond (as cited in Webb, 2006) also argues that it is trust, rather than informed consent, that sits at the centre of ethical research practice. This is because more than most approaches, narrative research "requires on-the-spot decision-making between participants and researcher" (Webb, 2006, p.222). Thus participants need to be well-informed, and researchers need a strong sense of ongoing responsibility and competency.

In Webb's view, the necessary fluidity of narrative research problematises normal 'ethical' procedures:

> Institutional procedures, such as applications to ethics committees, risk working against an understanding of the organic nature of the narrative process, given that the exploratory nature of such work tends to lead to a fluid research design (Pugsley & Welland, 2002, quoted in Webb, 2006, p.225)

There is also a danger that once the 'obstacle' of the ethics committee has been cleared, the researcher sees ethical issues as resolved (Webb, 2006).

In this study, I obtained ethical clearance as per the usual procedures of my university. However, before I even submitted my proposal to undertake this research, I consulted Abahlali about what I was thinking of doing. I only proceeded with my proposal after they had discussed it and agreed. As per the requirements of UKZN's ethical procedures, I did obtain informed consent from each of the participants.

2.6.2 Harm and risk

Webb (2006, p.233) argues that to be truly ethical requires a commitment not to do harm to participants or the context under study; and the principal of doing no harm is generally considered a basic principle for all research. This issue is somewhat heightened in narrative research because, in the narrative approach, you develop a relationship with the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In some respects, this might make it harder for researchers to act in ways which are harmful or put the participants at risk; but, as Elliott (2005) points out, "the *potential* for exploitation is just as great" (p.135). Whilst many have argued that the life history approach can be empowering in allowing people to talk about their lives, because interviews can become like intimate conversation between friends, participants may reflect on things they have not thought about, or talked about, before. "Once interviewees are given the space to provide stories about their experiences some unexpected distressing accounts can emerge" (p.136). This can be therapeutic for participants, but can also be stressful for both the participant and researcher. Researchers need skill and experience to deal with these kind of situations (Ibid.).

Outside of the interview itself, "the way in which the researcher interprets and analyses the narratives produced in the interview also may have an impact (positive or negative) on the interviewee" (Elliott, 2005, p.141). Presentation and distribution also carry the potential for harm. Webb (2006) argues that interpretation is a key issue in narrative research if the researcher is attempting to value and equal relationship between the researcher and the researched, and Cortazzi and Jin (2006) give an example of white researchers distorting local stories by imposing their own cultural frame of reference, 'using the language of the colonial narrator to sustain hegemony" (Trahar, 2006, p.15). When participants see what has actually been written by the researcher, they may see elements of dishonesty or duplicity. Thus handing over a transcript of an interview that has been taped needs to be handled with particular care (Webb, 2006). Discussion of the transcript thus needs to be encouraged. In addition, extracting pieces of transcript and placing them in an academic text also needs to be handled with care and respect, with research participants being warned beforehand. Finally, the distribution of the research may put people at risk, particularly if they are identifiable in the research - an issue which is discussed in some depth below.

Most writers insist on clear communication with the participants about the research process throughout, including explaining to the interviewee what research is about before beginning the interview, and how you plan to analyse the data. Above all, researchers need to consult their consciences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and to be empathetic, because this ensures that participants' interests are safeguarded (Webb, 2006).

I find many of the ethical issues involved in undertaking research troubling. In this case, I already had a relationship with all of the participants, and this was important to me. Indeed, I valued the continuing relationship more than the research, and thus tried to act in ways that would be true to that relationship and ensure its continuation after the research. I was helped in this by my political convictions - that everyone matters, that everyone counts, that everyone must be treated as if they were *already* equal (which they are). As already mentioned, I discussed my research plan with Abahlali before I even submitted the proposal for this study, and also explained what the research was about, and what it was for, with each participant before the interview began.

2.6.3 Honesty and trust

As already discussed, some writers have proposed that trust lies at the heart of ethical research practice. Because narrative research rests to such a degree on the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the issue of trust becomes even more pivotal. The process of communicating in depth, at length, creates a bond. Participants can disclose information or attitudes they normally would not, because they like the person who is listening to them, and they trust them. They are not usually thinking in terms of someone else reading what they have said (Webb, 2006). Thesis writers in particular can feel like they are co-opting/using participant voices for researcher ends (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Webb (2006) argues that because narrative research asks and takes a lot, there needs to be some kind of reciprocity. This means in the first instance that the research must be useful to the participants, and, for example, a copy of the research report should be given to the participants.

It was clear to me that the people who agreed to participate in this study do indeed trust me, and believe that the research will be useful. As already mentioned, I will present this study, the stories, and my analysis, to Abahlali in January 2013.

2.6.4 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Whilst ensuring anonymity and privacy of participants, and guaranteeing confidentiality, are basic tenets of research ethics, many writers have raised concerns about the possibility of this within the narrative method. They argue that it is not at all certain we *can* guarantee anonymity in any meaningful way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webb, 2006), since "once a combination of attributes and experiences is ascribed to a particular case in a research report it can be very difficult to ensure that the case does not become recognizable" (Elliott, 2005, p.142). Even if names and details are changed, participants are likely to be recognized at least by family and friends.

For this reason, there is general agreement that it is very important to discuss the dissemination of research with participants, and to gain explicit approval for stories to be made public (Elliott, 2005; Webb, 2006). Such a discussion needs to include not only the risks that the participant could be recognised, but what this might mean for others (Webb, 2006). However, Trahar (2006) asks "Who decides what may disclosed to whom? How can one be respectful to the storyteller and at the same time mindful of the audience for the story?" (p.21).

Some writers have also suggested participants may in fact *want* to be recognised. They may ask to be named. This can be ethically troubling, if the researcher believes that there may be repercussions for them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, as Mishler (1986, cited in Elliott, 2005) suggests, enforcing anonymity and confidentiality might make people feel that their voices have been taken away.

I complied with the ethical requirements of my university's ethical committee by discussing this issue with each of my participants both prior to and after the interview. The fact that they would usually be provided with a pseudonym was discussed with them, as was the possibility

that I would change details within their stories in order to disguise their identities. I did, however, make it clear that this was a *choice*; their choice. In the event, one participant chose to be given a pseudonym at the time of the interview; and one other asked that s/he be allowed to make this decision after the interview. The remainder were quite clear that they did not wish to be 'hidden'. When I gave the participants the transcription of my interview with them, I again checked whether they would like a pseudonym - none of them changed their minds. I did, however, remove all references to the names of other people they had mentioned, unless these were the names of other participants who had specifically requested that they not be hidden.

2.6.5 Intervention and advocacy

Miles and Huberman used the term "intervention and advocacy" to refer to the issue of whether or not a researcher should intervene at any point; but I would suggest it also refers to what Elliott (2005) calls the 'political' aspect of ethics, as discussed above. Clearly, within critical research with it's emphasis on praxis, this is an important ethical issue.

As I have already discussed, the narrative approach is often popular because it can give voice to the most marginalized, and because of its political potential: "The popularity of narrative approaches among many social scientists may also lie in its potential to be subversive and transformative" (Elliott, 2005, p.144). This is why, for example, it has been so heavily used in feminist research. However, as we have seen, Elliott argues that the method is no less exploitative than other methods, depending on how it is used. Exploiting participants for political purposes remains unethical.

Grumet (1987), drawing on his analysis of how stories are about power, reminds us that "an interrogation tactic of the police state is the refusal to tell the one who is questioned what the questioner is looking for" (p.324). This is something researchers are also often guilty of.

> In a research paradigm that denies the agency of the subject, researchers are often
> afraid to announce what they are looking for because they are afraid of prejudicing
> the subject's responses. In such cases, the question and, ultimately, the answer both

belong to the researcher and the subject of the research is merely the medium through which the question finds the answer. (p.324)

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered the issue of research paradigms, and argued why I believe the critical paradigm to be the most appropriate within which to locate this study, because of its political intent, and because its ontological and epistemological assumptions match my own position, as discussed in Chapter 1. I then explored the narrative method within this, and its strengths as a method for exploring the 'unlearning' of hegemony. I also looked at issues related to validity and trustworthiness, ethical issues related to the use of the method, and potential problems and pitfalls in using the method, and how I have attempted to overcome these.

I now turn to an examination of hegemony as conceived by Gramsci.

Chapter 3: Hegemony

3.1 Introduction

As I have argued in Chapter 1, changing the world requires a belief that change is both necessary and possible; and Gramsci argues that this is precisely what (capitalist) hegemony negates. Gramsci sought to explain why it was that the ruling class in capitalist societies was able to maintain power with so little use of physical force, despite the obvious suffering of so many. His answer was hegemony - the use of ideology to persuade the working class that existing power relations were not only inevitable, normal, natural, but for the greater good. Hegemony, however, is never total; it is a process which has constantly to be remade in response to resistance. I suggested in Chapter 1 that, although we live in very different times to those during which Gramsci lived and wrote, Gramsci's theory of hegemony is as useful now as ever. In this chapter I thus explore Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and the Marxist theoretical tradition he drew on in developing it.

3.2 The concept of hegemony and Antonio Gramsci

One of the greatest theorists of hegemony was Antonio Gramsci, born in 1891 in Sardinia. He joined the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1913, becoming a full-time journalist on its paper *Avanti*. After the 1917 Russian revolution, he became more active, especially in the Factory Councils Movement. Gramsci saw these as potentially replacing the now-bureaucratic and elitist Trade Unions. Gramsci co-founded and edited the journal *L'Ordine Nuovo*, and was a founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1921, when it split from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) over disagreements about the relationship between the party and the masses, most notably the conception of soviet democracy. He became the leader of the PCI in 1923, remaining so until 1926, when he was imprisoned by the Fascist government. Gramsci died in 1937, aged 46, still technically in prison.

Although Gramsci wrote a number of articles prior to his imprisonment, it is his *Prison Notebooks*, some 400 pages long, which constitute his major body of work. There has been some debate about how 'easy' it is to read Gramsci, and to understand what he was actually

saying. A number of theorists (eg. Mouffe, 1979; Allman, 1999) have argued that, because he was writing in prison, and subject to censorship, he 'disguised' some of his thinking, and this has made some of his work obscure or confused. Lears (1985), for example, says that Gramsci's argument concerning traditional versus organic intellectuals is incoherent. Various writers have proposed different ways to deal with this - Mouffe (1979) has used an Althusserian approach in reading Gramsci, looking at each contradiction abstractly in conceptual independence from others. Allman (1999) has proposed reading Gramsci with an understanding of Marx's dialectical theory of consciousness in mind (which she believes to be the 'bedrock' of Gramsci's thinking), and looking for the 'guiding thread' in Gramsci's work as whole (i.e. the opposite of Mouffe's method).

However, others, such as Geras (1987), totally reject claims that Gramsci is obscure or unclear, arguing that what Gramsci says is perfectly clear, and the claim of 'difficulties' in reading him is a result of attempts to 'misread' him to say things he did not actually say. He is particularly scathing of Mouffe's (1979) interpretation of Gramsci, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The translators and editors of Gramsci's prison notebooks claimed in their introduction in 1971 that "Gramsci has perhaps suffered more than any Marxist writer since Lenin from partial and partisan interpretation, both by supporters and opponents" (Hoare & Smith, 1971, p.xciv) - I would suggest this has happened to an even greater degree since then, particularly by Laclau and Mouffe (1985).

What is agreed is that Gramsci's ideas were very much founded within his particular historical circumstances - i.e. within the material reality of Italy and Western Europe - and this is critical to understanding them: "Any theorisation of Gramsci's work must seek to set it firmly in its true historical context" (Hoare & Smith, 1971, p.lxviii).

Marx had argued that proletarian revolution was an inevitable result of the contradictions of capital (discussed further below). As capital organized the working class in order to facilitate industrial production, so the working class also became increasingly alienated, and increasingly aware of this alienation. The intensification of these contradictions within capitalism would lead the proletariat (now understanding themselves as the working class) to "a revolt to which it is forced by the contradiction between its *humanity* and its situation,

which is an open, clear and absolute negation of its humanity" (Marx quoted in Haralambos, 1985, p.541). In his writing Marx suggested that such a revolution was imminent.

This argument had become a doctrinaire economist position within the Second International by the time Gramsci was writing. The Second International position argued that, as the proletariat grew in numbers, and class contradictions also necessarily grew, so too would socialist consciousness - i.e. socialist consciousness (and revolution) was a function of capitalist relations. The collapse of capitalism was thus inevitable (Mouffe, 1979).

However, this collapse of capitalism had not yet happened, other than in Russia; and then not through the proletarian revolution that Marx had anticipated. Thus what Gramsci sought particularly to do was to explain why it was that the Russian revolution had not led to more widespread revolution within the Western European states. In addition, the Russian revolution suggested an important role for specific political intervention, rather than simply the mechanical unfolding of economic forces as argued by the Second International (Mouffe, 1979). Gramsci argued for an international perspective in thinking this through, but from a national point of departure (i.e. Italy) (Wenman, 2009).

From his analysis, Gramsci argued that no regime (and particularly Western parliamentarian regimes) can sustain itself primarily through force. He thus identified two distinct forms of political control - domination, by which he meant direct physical coercion by the police and armed forces; and hegemony, by which he meant ideological control and consent.

> By hegemony, Gramsci meant the permeation *throughout* society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations. Hegemony in this sense might be defined as the 'organising principle' that is diffused by the process of socialisation into every area of daily life. To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalised by the population it becomes part of what is generally called 'common sense' so that the philosophy, culture and morality of the ruling elite comes to appear as the natural order of things [Boggs 1976, p.39]. (Burke, 2005, Ideological Hegemony section, para.4)

How did hegemony actually work in practice?

To understand this, it is necessary to look at Gramsci's thinking about the state and civil society, and about ideology and consciousness; and this requires a consideration of the ideas to which Gramsci was responding to and developing, in particular the ideas of Karl Marx.

3.3 Marx

One of the greatest writers on Marx, David McLellan, reminds us that Marx's ideas changed and developed over time (McLellan, 1980b). In addition, his writings were happening at particular historical moments - things were happening all around him that influenced his theorising - the 1848 Paris Revolution, the creation of the Communist League and the arrest and trial of most of its leaders, his own political harassment and exile; and, of course, the publication of other people's ideas to which he felt compelled to react. However, Marx's body of work is by no means contradictory - rather, it shows a clear development of certain key ideas. Above all, Marx was a humanist - he saw people as the basic factor in society (Ibid.) (although many writers have disputed this, accusing Marx of economic determinism, which will be discussed further below).

Marx argued that it was impossible to understand society if one looked at its parts in isolation - one needs to see the interrelationship between these. I would argue the same holds true for Marx's ideas, and will thus consider his key arguments and ideas in more detail below.

At the time Marx began writing, the work of Hegel was increasingly prominent. Many of Marx's key ideas appear first in his critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, written in 1843 (McLellan, 1980b). Marx had aligned himself with the 'Young Hegelians' - the term used for the radical disciples of Hegel, who, unlike Hegel, saw religion as essentially irrational. He was strongly influenced by another Young Hegelian, Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach argued that it was human needs that determined consciousness, not human consciousness that dominated life and existence (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004; Mclellan, 1980b). Feuerbach thus asserted that 'man' had created God, out of a need for love. Whilst accepting Feuerbach's suggestion that human needs determine consciousness far more than the other way around,

Marx, however, rejected Feuerbach's emphasis on individuality - rather, people are social beings. He thus extended Feuerbach's reasoning beyond religion to society as a whole, within an historical frame (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004); and applied Feuerbach's reasoning to Hegel's political philosophy. In this, he saw the sphere of economics as critical, arguing that what humans are coincides with what they produce, and how.

In *The German Ideology* (1846), Marx and Engel (with whom Marx was now frequently collaborating) made their first concise statement of the idea that came to be called historical materialism (although Marx himself never used this term (McLellan, 1980b). After a discussion of the history of humankind's development, they state:

> The first premise of all human history, of course, is the existence of living human individuals. The first fact to be established, then, is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relationship with the rest of nature....He begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to produce his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organisation. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself.

> The way in which man produces his food depends first of all on the nature of the means of subsistence that he finds and has to reproduce. This mode of production must not be viewed simply as reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of their activity, a definite way of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life*....The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions which determine their production.

> The fact is, then, that definite individuals who are productively active in a specific way enter into these definite social and political relations. The social structure and the state continually evolve out of the life-process of definite individuals, but individuals not as they may appear on their own or other people's imagination but rather as they really are, that is, as they work, produce materially, and act under definite material limitations, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will. (Marx & Engels, 1846/1977, pp.160-161)

The division of labour, leading to private property, created social inequality and the emergence of different classes and struggle between them (Ibid.). So "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p.222).

This basic argument became the guiding theme in all of Marx's work, which he later summed up in his *Critique of Political Economy* in 1858. In this Marx argued that the way people organise their production for subsistence, and the instruments they use in doing this, constitute the real basis of society. On this arises a legal and political superstructure which corresponds to particular forms of social consciousness. Thus the whole social, political and intellectual life is conditioned by how the means of subsistence is produced (Marx, 1858/1977). These ideas can be summarised in the following diagram:

Figure 1: Marx's base - superstructure model
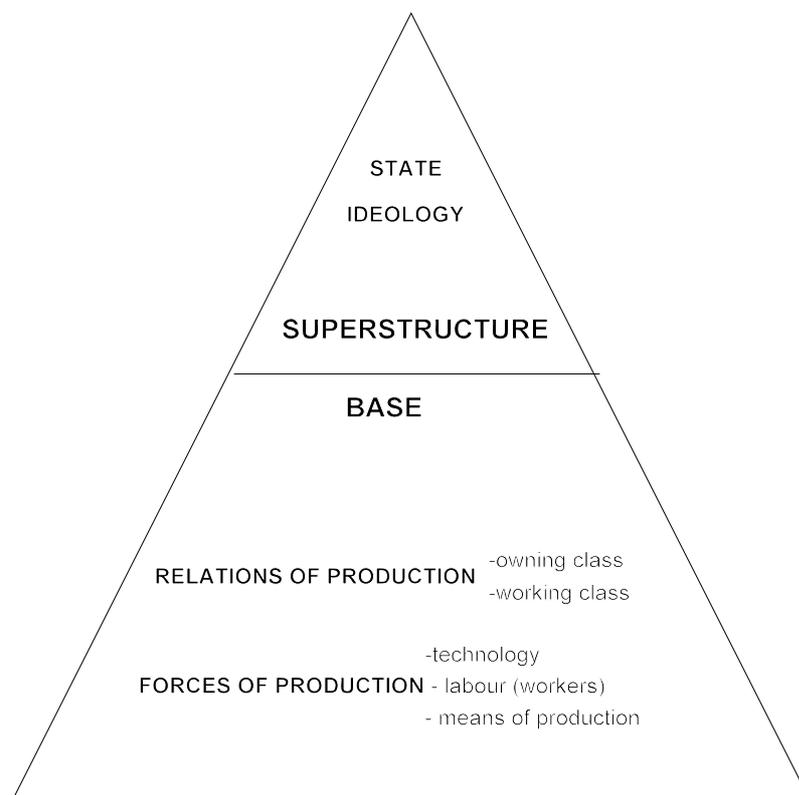
The critical point here (and one which I would argue often seems to be ignored in discussions on Marx's ideas) is that it is *people* who change the mode of production (Marx & Engels, 1846/1977; Marx, 1847/1977). People change the mode of production; social relations change as the mode of production changes; so people produce social relations. People then produce the principles, ideas, and categories that conform with those social relations. So ideas are historical and transitory, as are social relations (Marx, 1847/1977). Thus "consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness" (Marx & Engels, 1846/1977, p.164).

There has been considerable debate about the level of determinism Marx was arguing. Some commentators have accused Marx of being too determinist and reductionist (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004; McLellan, 1980b). Many others, and I would agree with them, have suggested that this is a misreading of Marx's work. As I have suggested above, if it is people who create the economic base (since they create the mode of production), then logically the creation of social structures (and thought) is never out of the hands of people. As Fine and Saad-Filho (2004) argue, "human consciousness is critical in Marx's thought, but it can only be understood in relation to historical, social and material circumstances....Consciousness is primarily determined by material conditions but these themselves evolve dialectically through human history" (pp.3-4). So for Marx, the material world and human consciousness were dialectical, and changed over time and space (Allman, 1999). Engels himself suggests that the level of economic determinism was over-emphasised by others, but accepted that some of the responsibility for this lay with Marx and himself:

> Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-á-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place, or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. (Engels quoted in McLellan, 1980b, p.136)

However, he argued, in their historical analyses, they had made their argument clear; and he thus expressed a degree of anger in the way they had been interpreted. In a letter written only a few years after Marx's death, he said:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining moment is ultimately the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into a statement that the economic moment is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. (Engels quoted in Gramsci, 1971, p.427 fn.74)

McLellan (1980b) himself argues that claims of economic determinism and reductionism are unfair, and arise largely from extracting particular phrases; it is "illicit to generalise such phrases and credit Marx with a theory of 'technological determinism'" (p.137), and Fine and Saad-Filho (2004) asserts that "Marx himself could not reasonably be accused of these shortcomings" (p.168).

The issue, of course, is how people (and which people) change the mode of production (and hence the superstructure) - that is, the issue is about power. As we have seen above, Marx argued that "the social structure and the state continually evolve" out of changing relations of production. Thus Marx had a particular understanding of the state.

Bobbio (1979) argues that, prior to Marx's analysis of the state, the state was seen invariably as a positive moment, in contrast to the 'natural state' of man, although for different reasons. In the Hobbes-Rousseau conception, the state provided an alternative to the 'natural state', which was brutal and competitive. Because the state of nature was 'war of every man, against every man', as Hobbes described it, almost any kind of sovereign power (even an absolute one) was better, because it would control the natural state. John Locke, in contrast, saw the state not as an alternative, but rather as perfecting the 'natural state', by regulating it (Bobbio, 1979). Locke believed that 'men' gave up their natural power (to judge or punish breaches of the laws of nature to protect life and property), which was given to them by God, to a higher power, viz. the state. The state thus fulfilled a regulatory function, but did not have powers greater than the natural powers granted by God to humankind, and God was ultimately the reason why men form societies (Holst, 2002). Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke argued for the idea of a 'social contract', what rational individuals would agree to be the acceptable powers of the state. Rousseau took this the furthest, arguing that the only really valid social contract would be one where individuals were subject only to laws that they had made and agreed to.

Hegel, in contrast, did not begin by looking at the natural state; rather, he said that the state was a combination of the two aspects of human being, the subjective will and the rational will. This reflects his idealist ontology and his understanding of history as a progressive realisation of freedom. The state is not the result of a social contract in which individuals give up freedom so that everyone has the same freedom; rather, individuals are free precisely in that they recognize the universality of freedom, as embodied in the state. The modern state thus 'contained' the 'natural state' (which he called civil society) (Bobbio, 1979), and was both logically prior to, and ethically superior to, its two constituent elements, family and civil society (McLellan, 1980b, p.206). It was precisely this that Marx was reacting to in his early work. In his critique of Hegel, Marx argued that Hegel "proceeds from the state and makes man (sic) into the state subjectified" (Marx, 1843/1977, p.28), whereas it should be the other way around; people (or at least some of them) makes the state.

Far from the state freeing people, in fact, "the political state disappears in true democracy" (Marx, 1843/1977, p.28). This was because, for Marx, logically, the state was an expression and instrument of class struggle, operating on the side of, and behalf of, the owners of the means of production. In Marx's thought, "in the course of history each method of production gave rise to a typical political organisation furthering the interests of the dominant class" (McLellan, 1980b, p.209). Under capitalism, the State had thus become the domain of the bourgeoisie (the owning class):

> ...the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p.223)

Marx thus argued that the most essential part of the modern state apparatus was the bureaucracy; a very different view to that of Hegel. Marx argued that because Hegel had presupposed a gap between State and civil society, he saw institutions as a bridge between the two. Rather, institutions were cloaks for particular interests in civil society (McLellan, 1980b). What did Marx understand by civil society?

Notions of 'civil society' largely derive from/complement understandings of the state. Thus for Locke,

> civil society is a society that is civil in that it has a political formation in which individuals, who have divinely bestowed characteristics and powers in the state of Nature, mutually decide to relinquish this power to the state for the good of all. (Holst, 2002, p.58)

So in Locke's conception, civil society exists only when men have given their natural power to the state. Hegel, however, argued that civil society ('natural society') was a place "of dissoluteness, misery and physical and ethical corruption" (Hegel quoted in Bobbio, 1979, p.28), which thus needed to be regulated by the state. Individuals were a totality of wants, a mix of caprice and physical necessity (Holst, 2002), with each individual finding satisfaction by means of others, or the 'universal' - the "universal interest of all is tied to the particular interest of each individual operating in civil society" (Holst, 2002). So civil society is the realm of the particular, whilst the state is the realm of the universal (Ibid.). Civil society, in Hegel's conception, grew out of the family, fitting between the family and the state, and included the sphere of economic relations, the administration of justice, and the creation of the police and of corporations. It was the sphere in which classes were born (Bobbio, 1979).

Marx used actually lived lives (rather than the 'Idea', as he claimed Hegel kept doing) to look at civil society, and, like Hegel, viewed civil society historically. Not surprisingly, Marx's analysis of civil society rested on his dual system of superstructure (state) and base (the economy), rather than the trichotomous system of Hegel. Marx saw civil society as "the ensemble of relations embedded in the market; the agency that defines its character is the bourgeoisie" (Mamdani, 1996, p.14). So civil society was part of the economic base, and essentially bourgeois, being premised on private property (as was Locke's conception; his 'natural powers', given by God, include defence of property (Holst, 2002)).

Thus civil society played a crucial role, because it determined both the forces of production and hence social relations:

The form of intercourse determined by the existing productive forces at all previous historical stages, and in its turn determining these, is *civil society*....Civil Society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, in so far, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality and inwardly must organise itself as State. (Marx, 1846/1977, pp.38, 76)

So civil society is both beyond the state (i.e. cuts across nations), and organised as the state. One of the roles played by civil society within hierarchical social relations was the creation of ideology, which Marx understood as specifically the ideas propagated to serve a particular class interest: "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 1848). This prevailing ideology of the dominant class is constantly represented through institutions such as the church, school, courts, family, etc. Thus the dominant view is legitimated as natural whilst supporting the existing structure. "Ideology thus served not only to reify social relations but also to conceal their real nature" (Harvey, 1990, p.48). Marx distinguished between ideology (partial or determinate) and true consciousness. Since ideology was in fact bourgeois thought, it led to a partial consciousness, which could never truly explain the world (because it reified and concealed what was really happening) (Allman, 1999).

Marx argued that one of the ideas that bourgeois ideology had created within the capitalist mode of production was the notion of rights of man. "For Marx, the rights of man were the rights of the atomised, mutually hostile individuals of civil society" (McLellan, 1980b, pp.20-21):

The right of man to freedom is not based on the union of man with man, but on the separation of man from man. It is the right to this separation, the right of the limited individual who is limited to himself....It leads man to see in other men not the realisation but the limitation of his own freedom, (Marx, 1844/1977, p.53)

Marx's understanding the civil society and the state, and how these related to economic modes of production, meant that he had a very different understanding of social change than many thinkers of his time. Because the state is simply the tool of the owning class, real social change could not happen within the state; and certainly not, as we have seen, through any guarantee of rights: "all struggles within the State....are nothing but the illusory forms in which the real struggles of different classes are carried out among one another" (Marx & Engels, 1846). So for Marx, "any worth-while conception of democracy had to go beyond the political state" (McLellan, 1980b, p.28). In his *On The Jewish Question* (1844), Marx argued that political emancipation would never liberate humankind; human emancipation would only be achieved through the disappearance of the state. Marx argued for "true democracy" - when the state is gone, "we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p.237f).

True democracy would come about as a result of a real social revolution. Marx argued that this was historically inevitable, precisely because of the nature of the capitalist mode of production. Within this mode of production, the bourgeoisie, who had historically been the most revolutionary class, could no longer survive without constantly revolutionising the means of production; and in this laid the seeds of their own destruction (Marx, 1848/1977). Because capitalism rested on profit, which was created only through the value of surplus labour, "capital is contradiction embodied in a process, since it makes an effort to reduce labour time to the minimum, while at the same time establishing labour time as the sole measurement and source of wealth" (Marx, 1858/1977, p.380). In his third volume of *Capital*, Marx argued that the contradiction between the need for consumption of capitalist production, and the inevitable poverty and restricted consumption of the masses, is the ultimate cause of all real crises (McLellan, 1980b, p.98).

This contradiction is inherent in capitalism, and will inherently worsen over time because the accumulation of capital means an accumulation of misery. As the number of magnates of capital decrease (an inevitable development within capitalism), so there is an increasing mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation. Ultimately, this will lead to a revolt of the working class, which is always increasing in numbers, and is increasingly disciplined, united and organised by capitalist production itself (Marx, 1866/1977). Finally,

the working class reaches breaking point, and then will be revolution. For this to be successful, it must be a proletarian revolution. This because what is needed is

> a class in civil society that is not a class of civil society, of a social group that is the dissolution of all social groups, of a sphere that has a universal character because of its universal sufferings and lays claim to no particular right, because it is the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general. This class can no longer lay claim to a historical status, but only to a human one. It is, finally, a sphere that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating these other spheres themselves. (Marx, 1843/1977, p.69)

This can only be the working class; they are the only group that meets these criteria. Marx argued in *The German Ideology* (1846) that "Each new class which puts itself in place of the one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to try to carry through its aims, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society" (Marx, 1846/1977, p.169). This had never really worked in the past; however, in the coming revolution, the working class really would represent the interests of society as a whole, because of their sheer numbers, and because under capitalism, the class system had been simplified into only two: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx, 1846/1977). (In other writing Marx frequently mentions other classes as well, such as the petty-bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the lumpenproletariat; as McLellan (1980b) points out, he is not always very clear about this, and tends to use the term, as many did at the time, as a synonym for group or faction). The point is, however, that revolution is made by people; and this requires praxis:

> The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men....The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary praxis. (Marx, 1845/1977, p.156)

After the proletarian revolution, "public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class oppressing another" (McLellan, 1980b, p.48). Because the working class represents everyone, after the working

class win, the conditions for class antagonism will end (as will class). Ultimately, so too will the state, since the only point of the state is to represent class interests. "The working class, Marx argued, must dismantle the state, not just take it over" (Harvey, 1990, p.35). So for Marx, the state was not a final moment in an historical process, but rather a transitory one - through the development of a society based on the universal values of the working class, the state would ultimately wither away/be abolished (although a necessary step in this process would the dictatorship if the proletariat). Marx was not very clear about how this would happen, although in his work he usually talks about the state's 'abolition' (McLellan, 1980b). Then "we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p.273f).

3.4 Gramsci

Harvey (1990) argues that by the time Gramsci was writing, Marxism had developed along two different lines: those that argued that Marx's analysis of capitalism and the role of the working class was essentially correct (Luxemburg, early Lenin, Stalin), or that his analysis had been correct at the time, but needed revision because of changed social and economic circumstances (Lenin, Bukharin); and those that felt that his original analysis was flawed and needed rethinking, especially because of changing circumstances.

Harvey located Gramsci within the second position. Whilst it is certainly true that Gramsci differed from Marx in certain key respects, and I discuss these in detail below, it is also true that Gramsci was entirely in agreement with the fundamental principles of Marx's theory. Thus, like Marx, Gramsci argued that the way people organise their production for subsistence, and the instruments they use in doing this, constitute the real basis of society. On this, a social superstructure emerges; but the process is dialectical. The division of labour, and social inequality created thereby under capitalism, led to the emergence of different classes and, inevitably, a struggle between them. Ultimately, a proletarian revolution would be needed to create a classless society in which everyone would be equal. Again like Marx, Gramcsi emphasised the role of praxis in this.

Indeed, a great deal of his *Prison Notebooks* consist of reasoned arguments against certain forms of Marxism what emerged by the time he was writing; and in particular what he called 'vulgar materialism' of current Marxist orthodoxy (as discussed above). Throughout his work, Gramsci kept referring back to the "philosophy of praxis" of Marx, and arguing for a return to what Marx actually said:

> The claim, presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combatted in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx. (Gramsci, 1971, p.407)

> The philosophy of praxis has been a "moment" of modern culture. To a certain extent it has determined or enriched certain cultural currents. Study of this fact, which is very important and full of significance, has been neglected or quite simply ignored by the so-called orthodoxy. (Gramsci, 1971, p.388)

Ultimately, for Gramsci, "the will and initiative of men themselves cannot be left out of the account" (Gramsci, 1971, p.244). This insistence on human will and initiative profoundly affected Gramsci's thinking on the state, civil society and ideology, ultimately in ways that differed from Marx, and led to Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony.

3.4.1 Gramsci's conception of the State and civil society

Gramsci's thought marked an important shift in the theory of the state. Whilst agreeing the state was both a negative moment (an instrument of the bourgeoisie), and transitory, Gramsci suggested that the relationship between the state and the economic base was an altogether more complex one. Gramsci thus differed from Marx and Engels' analysis in terms of the structure of the state, and in particular, its relation to civil society, and allowed for a relatively independent role for the state. Some commentators have suggested that "Gramsci did not succeed in finding a single, wholly satisfactory conception of 'civil society' or the State" (Hoare & Smith, 1971, p.207). I am not entirely convinced of this; I think it is important to note that, like Marx, Gramsci used a comparative approach in his thinking and

writing; thus he frequently contrasted different states; so at different points in his notebooks he is discussing entirely different actual states. Gramsci argued that he had access to different information from Marx; since Marx's time, different states had emerged, and he could thus draw on different data (Gramsci, 1971). Mostly, I think, he was attempting to show the dialectical relationship between base and superstructure, and between state and civil society.

For Gramsci, a key role of the state remained that of securing the interests of the ruling class; but it was also important in uniting the ruling class, and thus cementing relations between State and civil society:

> The historical unity of the ruling classes is realised in the State, and their history is essentially the history of States and of groups of States. But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political (though such forms of unity do have their importance too, and not in a purely formal sense); the fundamental historical unity, concretely results from the organic relations between State or political society and "civil society".

> The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States. (Gramsci, 1971, p.52)

Unlike Marx, who as we have seen placed civil society within the economic base, Gramsci placed civil society not in the base, but in the superstructure. Gramsci divided Marx's superstructure into the state, which he also called political society, and civil society:

> What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural "levels": the one that can be called "civil society", that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the State". These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government. (Gramsci, 1971, p.12)

Political society included those institutions which he saw as overtly coercive, viz. government, police, armed forces, and the legal system. Civil society, on the other hand, consisted of those institutions which are essentially non-coercive, viz. Churches, schools, trade unions, political parties, cultural associations, clubs, the family, and so on (Burke, 2005) - institutions commonly thought of as private or non-political (Mastroianni, 2002). So civil society, for him, was not the market, but public opinion and culture: "for Gramsci civil society includes not 'the whole of material relationships' [a la Marx], but the whole of ideological-cultural relations; not 'the whole of commercial and industrial life', but the whole of spiritual and intellectual life" (Bobbio, 1979, pp.30-31).

This does not mean that civil society had nothing to do with economic relations; of course it did - and part of the State's role related precisely to this:

> Between the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society....The State is the instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structure, but it is necessary for the State to 'be willing' to do this; i.e. for the representatives of the change that has taken place in the economic structure to be in control of the State. (Gramsci, 1971, p.208)

So the relationship is dialectical. However, the relationship between political and civil society is also dialectical - sometimes, they act together. Thus Gramsci speaks of the State being both political and civil society: "by 'State' should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the 'private' apparatus of 'hegemony' or 'civil society'" (Gramsci, 1971, p.261); but sometimes the State and civil society appear separately: "the State presents itself in the language of specific epochs: i.e. as civil society and as political society" (Ibid., p.268), in other words, with separate functions, but ultimately the same purpose - to cement ruling class control. Thus in a capitalist mode of production, the bourgeoisie needed to control the State in order to mobilise (and unite) civil society to serve a capitalist mode of production. This included uniting the (competing) members of the bourgeoisie; but also, persuading other classes to join this enterprise. So one of the State's

most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. (Gramsci, 1971, p.258)

In this, Gramsci argued, the bourgeois class had been different from any other historical classes:

The previous ruling classes were essentially conservative in the sense that they did not tend to construct an organic passage from the other classes into their own; i.e. to enlarge their class sphere "technically" and ideologically: their conception was that of a closed caste. The bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level. The entire function of the State has been transformed; the State has become an "educator", etc. (Gramsci, 1971, p.260)

Thus Gramsci sees a somewhat different role for the State, including as 'educator'. What did Gramsci mean by this?

[The State's] aim is always that of creating new and higher types of civilisation: of adapting the "civilisation" and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production; hence of evolving even physically new types of humanity. But how will each single individual succeed in incorporating himself into the collective man (sic), and how will educative pressure be applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into freedom?. (Gramsci, 1971, p.242)

It is at this point that we need to consider Gramsci's ideas about ideology.

3.4.2 Gramsci's conception of ideology and consciousness

As we have seen, Gramsci argued that "the will and the initiative of men themselves cannot be left out of the account" (Gramsci, 1971, p.244), and wanted a return to the "philosophy of praxis" of Marx. Gramsci argued that "the philosophy of praxis represents a distinct advance and historically is precisely in opposition to Ideology" (p.376). "Ideology", in terms of philosophy of praxis, is a superstructure. However, Gramsci argued, ideology could not only be seen as bad - and he constructed an argument to show how spurious this argument is. In this, Gramsci was concerned precisely by orthodox Marxism's 'vulgar materialism', by the notion that ideas had no place in political change (although he was also concerned to avoid any undialectical separation between ideas and economics). Rather, he insisted, ideologies could play both a positive or negative role:

> To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is "psychological"; they "organise" human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. (Gramsci, 1971, p.377)

So Gramsci broadened and deepened Marxist notions of ideology[3]. In Gramsci's conception, ideology is not only a system of beliefs reflecting specific class interests as Marx had claimed (Lather, 1986; Mouffe, 1979); rather, it is 'spontaneous philosophy', which is contained in language; in 'common sense' (conventional wisdom) and in 'good sense' (empirical knowledge); and in popular religion, including the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things, etc. (Lears, 1985).

For Gramsci ideology is intimately connected to consciousness; and thus, because 'man' is "always mass-man or collective man" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324), is a collective, not individual, enterprise. In this, he draws on Marx's assumptions about what it means to be human, and what it could mean to be human - that we do not exist prior or outside of our relationships

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[3] Allman argues (1988) that Gramsci was the first Marxist in the twentieth century to expand the concept of ideology to include not just ideas and thought, but material relations, practices and the very fabric of society (although this reading has been disputed by others).

with others and our historical, material circumstances, but are rather a process of our actions, of our active relations with other people and with nature (Allman, 1999). Gramsci, like Marx, thus saw different types or levels of consciousness. Gramsci distinguished between common sense, ideology, and the philosophy of praxis. Essentially, Gramsci argued that we are all philosophers, because we all have some kind of conception of the world. However, this common sense view of the world is fragmented because of the contradictions and limitations of our lived relations (i.e. our historic and materialist context). Ideologies of the bad kind can offer partial explanations, with sufficient coherence to cement the hegemony of the particular ruling group. A philosophy of praxis, in contrast, provides true coherence, since it is scientific (Allman, 1999). Gramsci did, however, warn that "even the philosophy of praxis tends to become an ideology in the worst sense of the word, that is to say a dogmatic system of eternal and absolute truths" (Gramsci, 1971, pp.406-407).

Thus for Gramsci ideological struggle is concerned with consciousness-transformation, rather than consciousness-raising. This consciousness-transformation (i.e. to a socialist consciousness) must arise from actual working lives, and is thus not the intellectual realm of the elite (Burke, 2005): "...the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is..." (Gramsci, 1971, p.324).

3.4.3 Gramsci's conception of hegemony

This brings us to Gramsci's notion of hegemony. As we have seen, Gramsci argued that a key role of the capitalist State was to unite both the bourgeois class and the subordinate classes to serve the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence the interests of the ruling class (the bourgeoisie). Part of the way the State did this was by persuading the subordinate classes that, whilst it is an organisation of one group, it is good for everyone. This was:

> The "spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
> (Gramsci, 1971, p.12)

Gramsci referred to this process of manufacturing consent as hegemony. However, if this process failed, the State would resort to force: "The apparatus of State power ...'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (Ibid.). Gramsci argued that Western regimes maintained power through a combination of force and hegemony, although hegemony was often used to make the use of force appear appropriate, 'common sense':

> The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary régime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force dominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion - newspapers and associations - which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied. (Gramsci, 1971, p.80)

Gramsci drew his ideas about hegemony from Lenin (he argued that hegemony was Lenin's greatest theoretical contribution (McLellan, 1980a)), but greatly expanded it during the course of his work. Lenin had seen hegemony as political leadership of the working class. Gramsci inverted this, arguing for a conception of hegemony which also had to do with the ways in which the working class 'consented' to their own domination. Thus Gramsci used hegemony in two different senses - in a largely negative sense of hegemony buttressing the power of the bourgeoisie; and in a more positive sense (a la Lenin) to refer to 'moral and intellectual reform' (which Bobbio interprets as meaning cultural leadership, as opposed to political leadership (Bobbio, 1979)), a strategy of the working class. In this, his ideas about the dual nature of ideology (as potentially both positive and negative) are clear, as is his desire to combat 'vulgar materialism' (which he also called 'economism': "It is therefore necessary to combat economism....also and especially in the theory and practice of politics. In this field, the struggle can and must be carried on by development of the concept of hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971, p.165).

Capitalist hegemony is

a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meaning and values - constitutive and constituting - which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. (Williams, 1977, p.110)

We *learn* hegemony, so "[e]very relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (Gramsci, 1971, p.350); hegemony is precisely the process referred to above in which "educative pressure [is] applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into 'freedom'" (Gramsci, 1971, p.242). This is where Gramsci's notion of political and civil society becomes crucial - because it is civil society which must largely play this hegemonic role on behalf of the bourgeois state. The most important instruments for securing the commitment of the masses to needs of the productive forces, and hence the interests of the ruling classes, are the education and legal system, but "a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end - initiatives and activities which for the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes" (Gramsci, 1971, p.258):

> The State does have and request consent, but it also "educates" this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class". (Gramsci, 1971, p.259)

Thus the dialectical relationship between political and civil society is clear; both are there to act in the interests of the ruling class:

> In the West, [where] there was a proper relation between State and civil society...when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks. (Gramsci, 1971, p.238)

Gramsci argued that, as long as capitalist hegemony persists, the proletariat would be largely unaware of the contradictory nature of capitalist society and the possibility of changing it. This is because of the ability of the capitalist class to represent its own interests as those of

society as whole (McLellan, 1980a), or make corporate sacrifices to take into account the interests and tendencies of the groups over which it wants to exercise hegemony (Mouffe, 1979). Thus the working class 'consent' to its own oppression. However, this is a highly complex and contradictory mental state (what Gramsci called 'contradictory consciousness') because the working class' own material reality meant that it has its own conception of the world, whilst at the same time, adopting the conception proposed by bourgeois hegemony. Thus consent is never complete (Lears, 1985).

So hegemony is complex and contradictory, and never crass. "As Gramsci understood, the hegemonic culture depends not on the brainwashing of "the masses" but on the tendency of public discourse to make some forms of experience readily available to consciousness while ignoring or suppressing others" (Lears, 1985, p.577).

Williams (1977) warns that hegemony is too easily seen as static, as a system or structure, and it is never that: "A lived hegemony is always a process" (p.112). And although hegemony by definition is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. Indeed, this is something that Gramsci emphasized - that hegemony has to be constantly remade; partly because it is constantly challenged. Ruling class hegemony "does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own" (Williams, 1977, p.112).

So hegemony is constantly open to negotiation and renegotiation, constantly being renewed and contested; it is incomplete; and there are moment wherein the whole process undergoes a crisis. So there are always sites and pockets (often within dominant institutions) where hegemonic arrangements are constantly being renegotiated and contested (Mayo, 1999).

It is thus clear from Gramsci's work on hegemony that he presupposes conscious human agency, and, critical of both 'economism' and 'ideologism', accorded far more 'will' in political activity than many classical Marxists had prior to this (McLellan, 1980a, p.184). Agency for change lay primarily with the workers, not the peasantry, but not exclusively, and thus other groups and movements were also seen as important (Mayo, 1999, pp.42-3).

However, transformation from capitalism to socialism must happen though the masses; it could not be done by an elite group acting for the working class (Burke, 2005, p.3).

This would not happen, Gramsci argued, if the proletariat remained unaware of the contradictory nature of capitalism, because then they would remain unaware of the possibility of changing it. And this was thus the primary role of both hegemony (to prevent them becoming aware), and of the Marxist project (to ensure awareness):

> Thus the centre of interest for Gramsci was less on the economic substructure of society than on the means by which the proletariat could attain to an understanding of the socio-economic relations of capitalist society and on the political means necessary to overthrow it (McLellan, 1980a, p.184).

As we have seen, Gramsci argued that "hegemony is a process which has constantly to be remade and is therefore always susceptible to contestation and challenge" (Crowther, 1999, p.34). Gramsci used the concepts of 'war of manoeuvre' and 'war of position' to explain how he thought the proletariat might successfully overthrow Western capitalist regimes. By 'war of manoeuvre", Gramsci meant direct confrontation of the state. He felt this would not work against Western capitalist governments. Rather, the working class must engage in a 'war of position', of "wide ranging social organisation and cultural influence" (Mayo 1995, p.38; 1999, p.38).

As we have seen, to establish hegemony, a class needs to articulate the interests of other classes and groups to its own interests. However, in the case of ruling-class hegemony, this was inherently fragile. Firstly, because such hegemony was based on material conditions of dominance/subordination, people could become consciously aware of these, and it could thus lead to expressions of resistance in practice. Secondly, the capitalist class could never actually go so far as threaten its own class interests, so its ability to articulate the interests of other groups to its own was limited. In times of economic crisis, the ethical and moral bases of their interests (domination) show up. Thus, Gramsci argued, a working class hegemony would be better able to articulate the interests of all groups, because it would not be based on exploitation (Allman, 1988, p.100).

Because of the tendency for ruling class interests (as opposed to working class interests) to be revealed in times of crisis, Gramsci argued that the war of position could most usefully happen at times of crisis within the system[4], and that it should happen within that terrain that supported dominant hegemony - i.e. within civil society (Mayo, 1999, p.38). So for Gramsci civil society is a site of struggle. In his understanding of war of position and war of manoeuvre, Gramsci reveals his other sense of hegemony, a 'hegemony of the proletariat' that allows for the elaborating and propagating of a new conception of society (Bobbio, 1979), which can then lead to the creation of such a new society. This is because (unlike in Lenin's conception) the moment of force is instrumental, or subordinate to, the moment of hegemony, and so the conquest of hegemony must precede the conquest of political power (Bobbio, 1979). In this process, the working class will present itself as the guarantor of the interests of society as a whole. This has been frequently interpreted as meaning that Gramsci argued that there must needs be socialist hegemony before actually taking power; some writers, however, believe that this is not in fact what Gramsci argued (Allman, 1999, p.119).

Thus Gramsci agreed with Marx that ultimately, the state would cease to be - i.e. that it is transitory; and that this was absolutely necessary for true emancipation - it was impossible, Gramsci argued, to have complete and perfect political equality without economic equality; and under capitalism, this was clearly impossible. Like Marx, he believed that it was only the proletariat that could accomplish true emancipation: "in reality, only the social group that poses the end of the State and its own end as the target can create an ethical State - i.e. one which tends to put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled, etc., and to create a technically and morally unitary social organism" (Gramsci, 1971, p.259). Once working class hegemony becomes universal, coercion will be superfluous (since the interests of the working class are universal interests), and the state will be unnecessary - i.e. political society will be absorbed into civil society.

Gramsci's dual/dialectic understanding of hegemony, and its always uncompleted nature, has led many writers to refer to 'counter-hegemony' - a term which, in fact, Gramsci never used

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[4]   Hence the need for the system, as is currently the case, to pretend that there is no crisis - an important role of ruling class hegemony (but one which is becoming harder and harder to fulfil, as I will discuss in the next chapter).

(Allman, 1999; Holst, 2002), preferring the term 'hegemony of the proletariat' or 'proletarian hegemony'. As we have seen, Gramsci also argued that Marx's "philosophy of praxis" was precisely in opposition to Ideology. Williams (1977) has argued that it is often precisely through 'counter-hegemonic' struggles that it is possible to identify the dominant hegemony; but also that hegemony will always attempt to neutralize opposition - 'the decisive hegemonic function is to control or transform or even incorporate [alternatives and opposition]"(p.113). Gramsci himself was very interested in the ways in which dominant culture incorporates areas of popular culture as a means to establishing hegemony (Mayo, 1999).

Gramsci's political strategy involved the conversion of capitalist hegemonic ideology and 'common sense' into a the hegemony of the proletariat, a philosophy of praxis:

> A philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of 'common sense' basing itself entirely, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that 'everyone' is a philosopher. (Gramsci, 1971, p.330)

This final assertion - that everyone is a philosopher - clearly has major implications for who does the work of creating counter-hegemony.

3.4.4 The role of intellectuals

Gramsci's conception of state/civil society/hegemony/ideology clearly allows for far more agency than the economic determinism of Marxist orthodoxy at the time he was writing, and he is thus seen as marking a decisive break with official Marxism of the time (Mayo, 1999). Although an attempt has been made to interpret Gramsci to allow for a different 'privileged' historical actor (eg. by Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), it is clear that Gramsci himself believed that only the party of the organized proletariat was the true historic agent of change (Geras, 1987; Allman, 1999), by initiating alliances between the working class and those who were potential candidates for exploitation (i.e. peasants), as well as middle-class intellectuals who

had committed class suicide (Holst, 2002). Thus Gramsci did allocate agency to other actors, in particular intellectuals.

Gramsci's work on intellectuals has perhaps been the area of greatest debate in considerations of his work. As cited above, Lears (1985) has claimed that Gramsci is incomprehensible in this area, but most writers have claimed to discern a particular line of argument. The majority view in this area agrees that Gramsci accorded intellectuals a key role in both the creation and maintenance of hegemony, and in the 'war of position'. Thus intellectuals are people who influence consent through their activities (Mayo, 2005). So, who are the intellectuals?

In the first instance, Gramsci (1971) insisted that everyone is an intellectual: "although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist" (p.9). So Gramsci saw everyone as doing intellectual work:

> Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a "philosopher", an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, to bring into being new modes of thought. (Ibid, p.9)

However, not everyone "[has] in society the *function* of intellectuals" (Grasmci, 1971, p. 9, my emphasis). Gramsci identified two kinds of intellectuals who have this function - what he called traditional intellectuals and organic intellectuals. By traditional intellectuals, Gramsci meant those in society who see themselves as of an intellectual class, as autonomous or independent, and who are often seen as such by other sectors of society. He divided this group into two, the 'great' intellectuals, and subaltern intellectuals, like teachers, priests and functionaries (Mayo, 1999). By organic intellectuals, he meant those who emerge 'organically' from within their own class, of their own class.

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. (Gramsci, 1971, p.5)

Gramsci argued that most organic intellectuals are from the dominant class, and are produced by the educational system to perform a function for this group - that of maintaining ruling class hegemony: "The intellectuals are the dominant groups 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" (Gramsci, 1971, p.12). However, "in response to a particular historical development" (Mayo, 1999, p.41), organic intellectuals could emerge from the working class. In addition, the working class needed to bring over a significant number of 'traditional' intellectuals to the revolutionary cause (Burke, 2005, pp.4-5; Mayo, 1999, pp.41-2). Intellectualism, however, must be grounded in everyday life, derived from actual working lives (Burke, 2005, pp.4-5).

Most readers of Gramsci have interpreted him as arguing that it is these organic intellectuals of the working class (plus traditional intellectuals, or middle class intellectuals who have joined the cause) who are the agents who help convert 'common sense' into a philosophy of praxis - i.e. into a conscious understanding of the historically specific nature of current relations, so that, with others, we can create new relations (Allman, 1999).

Allman (1999), however, has argued that in fact reading Gramsci for logical coherence across his work, and using Marx's dialectical theory of consciousness, it becomes clear that Gramsci was in fact including *everyone* in this task: "It seems quite clear to me that if Gramsci is being consistent/coherent, the intellectuals or original philosophers of praxis are not the "renovators" or the "makers" but, rather, everyone is" (p.115).

3.5 Conclusion

Thus, drawing on Marx's ideas about the role of the state and civil society in maintain ruling class power, Gramsci developed a notion of capitalist hegemony as the process by which we are *taught* that the way things are is 'common sense'. However, since we are able to carry out intellectual activity, the potential exists for us to 'unlearn' this. I have argued in Chapter 1 that Gramsci's theory of hegemony remains relevant today; and indeed this underpins my suggestion that people may have 'unlearned' hegemony. In the next chapter I will explore this further, and consider what, under our current circumstances, constitutes hegemonic thinking; in other words, what is it that people have 'unlearned'.

Chapter 4: Hegemony in the current context

4.1 Introduction

I have argued in Chapter 1 that our current context is marked by "the mutilation of human lives by capitalism" (Holloway, 2010a, p.1). However, fundamentally, the capitalist mode of production was created by people; and hence people can change it. In Chapter 3, I looked at Marx's and Garsmci's arguments about this, and also their arguments about the ways in which society is structured by the class which benefits most from capitalism - the bourgeoisie - precisely to make change difficult (but never impossible).

In Chapter 1 I looked at what was needed to change the world - a belief that it is necessary (something which few people would dispute today); a belief that it is possible (something which, I argue later in this chapter, we are strongly discouraged from believing in a variety of ways); and then acting. Acting requires first that we try to understand as fully as possible what is actually going on, and also try to think something different. In the previous chapter I looked at how hegemony, as Gramsci conceptualised it, is precisely about trying to negate all of these. Hegemony, as we have seen, is "the permeation *throughout* society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations" (Boggs, 1976, p.39, quoted in Burke, 2005, Ideological Hegemony section, para.4). Hegemony is part of what the state uses to 'educate' the consent of the subordinate classes to conform "to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes" (Gramsci, 1971, p.258) (the other part, of course, is force).

I have suggested that Gramsci's idea of hegemony is useful to us today in understanding what is happening in our world; and in this chapter, I will consider this in some detail. From a Marxist humanist perspective, which is where I have located myself, this requires first a class analysis of political and economic change (Kane, 2001, p.146), which is what I will undertake first. However, as Kane insists, it also requires a belief that human subjectivity is an important factor in change, and that subordinate classes must be the prime agents of radical social change. The discussion below in no way suggests that I consider current

capitalist hegemony to be monolithic; in fact, I think it is in a state of crisis, because of the extent of resistance there is in the world today, as well as perhaps internal contradictions within the system (as witnessed by the state having to bail out banks). This resistance is precisely by the 'subordinate classes', including Abahlali baseMjondolo, and includes attempts to understand what is really going on, think something different, and act on this. As Butler (in Butler and 100 others, 2007) comments, after running a number of workshops with communities in the town where I live, "What I have heard are not just people's testimonies about the brutal inhumanity of inequality, poverty and domination of the poors in post-apartheid South Africa - though it certainly is that. What I heard are the possibilities (and the challenges) of freedom and transformation in the hands and minds of those poors" (p.4). I consider this in detail in the next chapter.

4.2 Changes in the economic base

As discussed in the last chapter, according to Marx and Gramsci there is a dialectic relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, including the state. The superstructure is primarily determined by the relations and forces of production, so ideas and institutions do not arise in a vacuum but within an historically specific social environment on a particular economic base. The critical thing to remember here is the *point* of the capitalist state, its relationship with civil society, and the role of hegemony. The role of state, Gramsci argued, was to secure the interests of the ruling class, by uniting the (competing) members of the bourgeoisie and mobilising subordinate classes to serve the capitalist mode of production. It does this through a combination of force (primarily the role of the State) and hegemony (primarily the role of civil society); but will always prefer to use hegemony rather than force, and when force is used to attempt to ensure (through hegemony) that most of society considers its use legitimate. The actual content of hegemony, the relationship of civil society to the state, etc., shifts as economic relations shift; it is also different in different nations. It is complex and contested.

However, in general, changes in the economic base (relations and forces of production) over time and space will impact on the superstructure - on ideas (individual psychologies, cultural values, social ideologies such as religion, prejudices, political views), and on institutions

(government, family, the education system, churches, the legal system, political parties, the media, etc.). Again, this is not a crass, deterministic process, but rather a complex and often contested one.

In my discussion below I consider briefly the ways in which capitalism has developed over the last century, and why (i.e. changes to the economic base), before focusing on the current form of capitalism, neoliberalism. I then consider how this has affected the superstructure of institutions and ideas, including the role of state and civil society, obviously in dialectic relationship with the economic base. Finally, I discuss in detail what I consider to be the current set of hegemonic ideas. In this, I am mindful of the fact that, as Gramsci argued, "hegemony operates at the multiple levels of ideology, culture, politics and the economy" (Cooper, 2005, p.13).

4.2.1 Economic crisis

The very nature of the capitalist mode of production requires that capital grow "no matter what the social, political...or economic consequences" (Harvey, 1989, p.180 quoted in Foley, 1994, p.127). Thus "crisis is defined as lack of growth" (Ibid.)[5].

As discussed in Chapter 3, Marx showed that the inherent contradictions in the capitalist mode of production create inevitable crises, and capital thus needs to restructure itself from to time in order to overcome these. In particular, the crisis of over-production, in which the ratio between paid and unpaid/surplus labour changes and the rate of profit falls, is an inherent and recurrent feature of capitalism, and requires reorganisation. Marx argued that despite such restructuring, the inherent contradictions in capitalism would intensify and ultimately lead to the collapse of capitalism, because the increasingly organized proletariat would revolt. Many Marxist thinkers have subsequently argued that such a collapse is imminent (McLellan, 1979), particularly in the light of developments in capitalism arising from periodic crises; and thus many Marxists have subsequently sought to explain how

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[5]   This is, of course, crisis as defined by capital - as Holloway (2010a) points out, real crisis is "the falling apart of the social relations of capitalism" (p.204); capitalist reorganization, as discussed below, does not necessarily solve this problem.

capitalism has in fact survived (Harvey, 2003) (Gramsci, as we have seen, developed his theory of hegemony partially to do just this).

Obviously, capitalism has survived, having undergone further crises, and further reorganisation, leading to what is now commonly referred to as 'advanced' or 'late' capitalism, generally agreed to be "an historically distinct phase of capitalism" (Albo, 2005, p.246). Ernest Mandel (cited in Jameson, 1984) has argued that it is the 'purest' stage of capitalism to date). This has had profound impacts on the forces and relations of production in the period since Gramsci was writing.

Historically, capitalism has dealt with periodic crises in three ways:
1. Devaluation/destruction of productive capacity or the money value of commodities, through, for example, depression/recession, banking crashes, inflation, plant shutdowns, war;
2. State planning and regulation;
3. Temporal or spatial displacement (Foley, 1994, 127).

All of these can be detected in the process that has unfolded over the last century, and which so significantly impacts on us now. One of the key aspects of this has been the globalisation of capital. Marx argued that the development of the world capitalist system was inevitable, but also necessarily uneven since capital will always move to the area of greatest profit, and there will thus be geographical (and historical) variations. This has certainly been the case. Harvey (2003, pp. 76-77) argues that there have been three main phases in capitalist restructuring:

- the nationalist project (of colonialism) which lasted roughly until 1945.
- the subsequent phase led by the United States of America in order to establish a global compact, and allow for the systematic geographic expansion of the capitalist system. This phase was thus characterised by United States' insistence on decolonization and 'developmentalism'. In this period, accumulation by dispossession was relatively muted, and there was (as always) resistance - the national liberation movements, dependency theory as a counter to modernization, etc.
- this phase broke down in the 1970s, because a number of problems, including the Vietnam war, inflation, increasing class struggle within the core (Western) countries,

etc. resulted in eroding profit. This meant that new markets needed to be forced open, and this was done using neoliberalism, the IMF, etc. Transnational corporations (TNCs) were a critical agent in this new phase, which saw new kinds of accumulation through dispossession, such as structural adjustment programmes (SAPs).

Each of these was accompanied by changes in the superstructure, including state and civil society, and was accompanied by a set of hegemonic ideas (and, of course, resistance to this), discussed further below.

4.2.2 Colonialism

The first phase of imperialism, the nationalist project, was explored in detail by Gramsci's near contemporaries, Lenin and Luxemburg. Luxemburg (cited in Harvey, 2003) argued that there were two aspects to capital accumulation, which were 'organically linked'. The first was within the commodity market and the place where surplus value (through the exploitation of labour) was produced - i.e. the factory, mine, agricultural estate etc. On the surface, this aspect presented peace, prosperity and equality. The second aspect was quite different:

> Its predominant methods are colonial policy, an international loan system...and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting are openly displayed without any attempt at concealment, and it requires an effort to discover within this tangle of political violence and contests of power the stern laws of the economic process (Luxemburg in Harvey, 2003, p.73).

According to Lenin, the highest stage of capitalism is imperialism; but this creates a third contradiction to capitalism:

1. The contradiction between labour and capital. Capital must exploit labour, since this is the basis of profit; so this contradiction is necessary and inevitable, but obviously also the basis for conflict.
2. The contradiction between those who compete for control of resources. Again, this contradiction is both necessary and inevitable.

3.   The contradiction between the Western industrial nations and those of the Third World. This contradiction is created because imperialist countries must industrialize Third World countries in order to properly exploit them; thus creating new revolutionary classes within them (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, pp.2-3).

So for both Luxemburg and Lenin imperialism allowed capitalism to extend its lifespan, but this created its own terminal contradictions, and thus simply delayed the inevitable - they thus saw imperialism as marking the final stage in capitalist development (McLellan, 1979; Harvey, 2003).

During the nationalist (colonialist) phase, imperialism operated primarily as a means of capital accumulation through dispossession - as Amilcar Cabral (1979) observed, "imperialism is piracy transplanted from the seas to dry land" (p.127); and more recently, Bond (2004) has asserted "Africa was and remains the world's leading example of accumulation by appropriation and dispossession" (p.212).

Not surprisingly, the structural changes involved in the colonialist capitalist project impacted significantly on the superstructure, and created, as Marx predicted, geographical and historical variations. Mahmoud Mamdani (1996) argues that the colonial state was considerably more complex than the Western state. Unlike the Western capitalist state, it involved both direct and indirect rule of the 'uncivilized'. Direct rule was unmediated, centralised despotism, and operated primarily in urban areas. Indirect rule was mediated and decentralised despotism. This occurred primarily in rural areas as a form of control over the 'free' peasantry, primarily through customary law exercised by tribal authorities. The colonial state was thus bifurcated: "two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition" (p. 18); but the *purpose* of the state, however, remained the same - to consolidate the power of the ruling class. Civil society in the colony was also different from in the West, in that, whilst it remained the purview of the bourgeoisie, it was racialised. It was first and foremost the society of the colons, and primarily a creation of the colonial state, which protected it.

Whilst colonialism was primarily about accumulation through oppression, as argued above, it was not of course presented as such; rather, it was accompanied by an ideological argument to secure consent - in other words, hegemony. As Cabral (1979), speaking of the horrors of Portuguese colonialism, said, "All this was and still is perpetrated in the name of 'Civilization and Christianity'" (p18). Colonialism consisted of a package of Christianity, capitalism and state-law (materially, via the missionary, the merchant, and the magistrate and 'mercenary'), rationalized as a civilising mission to those who were 'unenlightened', pagan, uncivilized etc. (Shivji, 2006). Frantz Fanon's work shows how deeply ideological the colonialist project was, including as a pivotal element the destruction of selfhood of the colonized, and the recreation of what it means to be black: the black "is a product of [the] cultural situation", which "slowly and subtly - with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio - work their way into one's mind" (Fanon cited in Gibson, 2003, p.106). The coloniser becomes everything good, human, alive - the colonized, everything bad, brutish, inert (Gibson, 2003, p.106). This works to justify the colonial project (as 'civilising mission') to both the colonized and the coloniser.

Of course, the colonial project was deeply contested and resisted, inter alia by national revolutionary struggles within the colonies, within which such writers as Guevara, Cabral and Fanon were involved.

4.2.3 Decolonisation and developmentalism

As we have seen, Harvey (2003) argues that the second phase of capitalist reorganization involved a process of decolonisation and developmentalism, largely driven by the United States of America in the post-World War II period. Whilst many commentators saw the end of the colonial period as the end of imperialism, many writers (particularly those from the colonised nations) understood that the struggle for national liberation did not end imperialism, primarily because of the creation of a national bourgeois class during colonialism that continued to operate after the colonial power left; in other words, the ruling class continued to dominate. Mamdani's (1996) analysis, discussed above, shows how the capitalist project within the colonial states was racialised. This affected how the superstructure changed with capitalist reorganization in this phase. The first moment of

anticolonial struggle, Mamdani argues, was the struggle of the embryonic native middle and working class for entry into (white, colonial) civil society - i.e. exactly as is necessary to secure the interests of the ruling class. This initial anticolonial struggle thus created an indigenous civil society (separate from that of the colons) - but, since the state remained racialised, this was of little significance. The second moment of anticolonial struggle was for the state. Whilst many anticolonial struggles successfully deracialised the state, very few succeeded in deracialising civil society. Indeed, more often, the indigenous civil society was collapsed into government, leaving a racialised civil society. The intent was the same - the securing of bourgeois interests - but the form was different from that in the West.

Che Guevara (2002), in a speech to the Afro-Asian Conference in Algeria in February 1965, said that "as long as [capitalist] imperialism exists it will, by definition, exert its domination over other countries. Today that domination is called neocolonialism" (p.23). This had resulted in the development

> of a parasitic bourgeoisie that adds nothing to the national wealth of their countries
> but rather deposits its huge ill-gotten profits in capitalist banks abroad, and makes
> deals with foreign countries to reap more profits with absolute disregard for the
> welfare of the people. (Guevara, 2002, p.23)

Amilcar Cabral (1979), writing at much the same time as Guevara, also spoke of the illusion of independence in 'neocolonial' states, in which political power was held by native agents of the colonial powers, especially the local bourgeoisie. However perhaps the most brilliant analysis of the post-colonial (capitalist imperialist) state is that of Fanon. In Fanon's analysis:

> The beginning period of decolonization brings emergent contradictions. It is the
> reformist parties and the new classes they represent that set great barriers to full
> decolonization. Instead of promoting real social change, violent speeches and
> symbols operate as a new type of sublimation, masking accommodationist politics
> which put a brake on mass activity. In place of a precise political or social program,
> they offer "dreams", often couched in xenophobic or racial language....They attempt
> to appease the people while appealing to the colonialists. (Gibson, 2003, p.112)

> At the decisive moment, the colonialist bourgeoisie, which up till then has remained inactive, comes into the field. It introduces that new idea...non-violence. In its simplest form this non-violence signifies to the intellectual and economic *élite* of the colonized country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as them and that it is therefore urgent and indispensable to come to terms for the public good. (Fanon, 1961/2009, p. 48)

Meanwhile, Harvey (2003) argues, the decolonisation process was accompanied by a particular set of hegemonic ideas to do with development, from the West. This was by no means a new phenomenon - Gramsci (1971), for example, had argued that "A particular ideology born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations" (p.182). In the post-colonial period, the former colonies were encouraged to follow an economic and development path which assumed that the Western history of development was the best (in fact the only possible) pattern for poorer countries to follow, and that the aim of development was to achieve a Western-style capitalist society and economy. This approach to development came to be called 'modernisation' (Youngman, 2000). The argument of modernisation theorists was that the underdeveloped regions were simply at the early or 'traditional' stage of development. The transfer of knowledge, technology and capital, through, for example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), from the 'advanced' societies to less advanced ones would speed up their advance through various stages of development. These transfers would bring 'backward' societies to a point of economic 'take off' after which progress would be self-sustaining, and a high-consumption, welfare-type society would emerge as it had done in the advanced Western/Northern countries (Ibid.). In fact, of course, this was simply the further expansion of the capitalist mode of production, largely (although not only) to the benefit of the United States of America and national bourgeoisies.

Modernisation suggested a particular role and structure of the state. Drawing on Lenin's work on imperialism, African scholar Samir Amin (1997) argues that the classical form of capitalism, developing out of the industrial revolution in Europe, crystallised the Northern countries into national autocentred bourgeois states, whilst further pushing to the periphery Africa, Latin America, and Asia (other than Japan). Peripheral nations were advised to adopt

both the industrialisation process, and the bourgeois state, as their model for development (i.e. to undergo 'modernisation'). The post-World War II period (the period of heightened 'modernisation') thus saw the industrialisation of countries in the periphery, *and* the dismantling of the autocentric national production systems of the West/North nation states, particularly as globalization deepened and these economies became integrated into the world production system.

Meanwhile, in the West, the structural changes in the West/North between 1945 and the early 1970s, created liberal-democratic welfare-state consensus in Western Europe and North America (Offe, 1985, cited in Welton, 2001, p.153). Within this system, trades unions (and other specialized interest groups) and political parties emerged as the dominant collective actors (Welton, 1993). During this period, most countries in the West/North had integrated projects for national development, and the welfare state reigned supreme (Touraine, 2001)[6].

By the mid-1960s, 'modernisation' theory was coming under increasing attack from the post-colonial counties of the South. They argued that the newly independent states could not develop along the same model as Europe and North America had because the 'Third World' countries were poor and powerless *as a result of* the West's own development processes, which had exploited the 'Third World' countries, and made them even less developed - in other words, underdeveloped. The very things that had contributed to the West's development were the main causes of 'Third World' misery. This was an important insight because it recognised that being 'underdeveloped' was not a passive situation that was just an accident of history but rather precisely the result of (capitalist) 'development' processes happening elsewhere in the world. Many of these theorists thus argued for breaking the relationship of dependency on the developed North (although this was not always a break with capitalism per se) (Youngman, 2000).

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[6] Whilst the welfare state is sometimes used as an argument against Marx's claim that the state acts on behalf of the ruling class, in fact it was built on segmenting the workforce, and the super-exploitation of women, ethnic groups and immigrants (Foley, 1994).

4.2.4 Neoliberalism

However from the mid-1970s, there was a gradual (and inevitable) fall in the rate of profits, because of a crisis of over-production (Mayo, 1999, p.1). Bond (2000) argues that in this period, improved technology replaced paid labour, thus squeezing the potential for profit (which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is only derived from unpaid/surplus labour), whilst decreasing the market (fewer workers means fewer earners means fewer people able to buy) - exactly as Marx predicted. Meanwhile, production increased. There was thus overproduction. Other Marxists (eg. Harvey, 2003, 2011) have argued similarly.

Thus, as Foley (1999) has argued, "The real crisis of our time is a crisis of capitalism as it undergoes one of its periodic restructurings in order to become yet more exploitative, productive and profitable" (p.135). The restructuring we have seen is called neoliberal globalization. What neoliberalism really is is capitalism's response to the crisis of overaccumulation since the mid-1970s:

> To ignore underlying class struggles is to see neo-liberalism as a de-politicised, technical development plan which is failing to deliver (and therefore needs to be adjusted) rather than a set of policies deliberately promoted by particular classes to defend their own economic interests (and therefore needing to be completely rejected) which, in its own terms, is working very effectively (Kane, 2001, p.147).

Neoliberalism is a set of economic 'rules'; but, as with colonialism and developmentalism, it is much more than that, because it is accompanied by a whole system of institutions and ideas. Giroux (2005), for example, has asserted that "Neoliberalism has to be understood and challenged as both an economic theory and a powerful public pedagogy and cultural politics" (p.14). Thus neoliberalism exists in both the economic base and the superstructure, containing a complex set of interlocking institutions, ideas and practices. A growing number of left theorists have argued over the last two decades that neoliberalism, as an idea, has become hegemonic (see, for example, Payne, 1995; Mayo, 1999; Neocosmos, 2009a; etc.). This is symbolised by TINA, which stands for "There is no alternative", which is what Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, said when she justified the

neoliberal polices she implemented in England in the late 1970s; or, in French, as 'la pensée unique' (the one - or only - way of thinking). (Although, as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, this is not uncontested, and indeed resistance is growing).

Neoliberalism has been highly influential since the early 1980s, gaining considerable ground under the Thatcher, Reagan and Kohl regimes in Britain, the USA, and Germany respectively. The monetarist domestic policies instituted by these regimes became influential throughout the advanced capitalist countries during the 1980s; and through bilateral aid policies and "massive intervention....in the internal policy-making of governments in the Third World" (Youngman, 2000, pp.68) by the World Bank and IMF, in the rest of the world. In 1995, the World Trade Organisation was established as an international regulatory institution specifically to promote neoliberal goals.

Neoliberalism is underpinned by the same fundamental beliefs as all variations of capitalism - that economic growth is necessary, and that there can be unlimited economic growth to the advantage of everyone if a particular economic plan is followed. However, the neoliberal plan involves a number of key 'rules' specific to it, including greatly expanded, free (unregulated) trade between nations; and privatisation, deregulation, fiscal restraint and labour flexibility within nations. The key argument of neoliberal proponents is that everyone who participates in the global free market benefits. There is thus an overt emphasis on the spatial - neoliberalism is not something intended for individual nations, it is a global system of what Harvey (2003) calls 'spatio-temporal fixes' that have occurred in response to the crisis of the 1970s. Spatio-temporal fixes involve finding ways to absorb surpluses (of labour, commodities, or money capital) over space or time. This can be done in three ways:

1. By investing in long-term capital or social projects, thus deferring the re-entry of the surplus into the future. These might be, for example, large-scale physical infrastructure (eg. mega-dams, transport systems), or education and research. Harvey argues that it has been debt-financed mega-projects which have kept China's economy growing.

2. By opening new markets, or new production processes, or tapping into new resources, elsewhere. Spatial fixes involving the export of surplus commodities require uneven geographical development, and the ability of the buyer to pay for the commodities,

either with gold/currency reserves or through debt/aid. The export of surplus labour and capital has a far longer effect than the sale of surplus commodities, because it can take many years for capital accumulation thus set in place to mature, and even longer for such accumulation to develop to the point of over-accumulation. However, when/if this does occur, it creates its own problems, in the form of competition, in which case, there is either geopolitical confrontation or the weakest falls into crises of devaluation (for example, the property market collapses in eg. Japan (1990) and Asia (1997))[7].

3.   Some combination of these two, particularly large-scale infrastructural projects in eg. the 'developing' world, which can absorb massive amounts of surplus capital and labour (Harvey, 2003, p.64).

Much of this thus requires an increasingly global initiative.

4.2.4.1 Globalization

The late 20th century saw a series of transformations, now generally known as the process of globalisation. There is now a substantial literature on this phenomenon, and its effects and implications; but broad agreement about its key feature, viz. the growing interconnectedness of the world, made possible through new technologies, but driven by neoliberalism. Thus whilst globalisation is often presented as simply a technical inevitability, Touraine (2001) argues that the term 'globalisation' is used to hide the real name of the actual process which is happening - a capitalist offensive.

There are now a number of different, often incompatible, models and theories of globalisation, including, for example, world-system theory, global culture theory, globalisation of space-time theory, globo-local theory, global systems theory, and world-system approaches (McGrew, 1992). I will draw on Sklair's (1995) Global Systems Theory as the most appropriate to this particular study, for reasons that will become apparent.

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[7]   Since Harvey wrote, of course, we have seen numerous other examples of this, the most recent being that of Greece.

Global Systems Theory is based on the concept of transnational practices, which operate in three spheres - the economic, the political and the cultural-ideological (Sklair, 1995) (i.e. within both the economic base and the superstructure). Sklair insists that the practices within these spheres do not necessarily originate with state agencies or actors, but in fact are often dominated by civil society institutions. Thus, within the economic sphere, key role players are trans-national corporations (TNCs); within the political sphere, a still-evolving transnational class; and in the cultural-ideological sphere, the culture-ideology of consumerism. Sklair argues that one of the most significant shifts within globalised capitalism is the role of the masses, *but this is uneven across the spheres*. Thus within the economic sphere, there remains a (limited) role for the wage earning masses in most countries, whilst in the political sphere, the inclusion of subordinate classes is very partial. "To put it bluntly, the global capitalist system has very little need of the subordinate classes in this sphere" (Sklair, 1995, p.500) - within parliamentary democracies, political parties must be able to mobilise the masses to vote in order to secure legitimacy, but actual mass participation is usually discouraged.

However, in the culture-ideological sphere, the involvement of the masses is very different. Here, the aim is total inclusion of all classes, and, since the bourgeoisie is already included, it is especially the subordinate classes that are targeted. Sklair argues that the dominant culture-ideology is consumerism. In order to ensure continuing profit, people are persuaded to consume above their biological needs; the meaning of life becomes possessions. In this ideology, the nature of being human shifts from being an economic or political being to being a consumer, and the point of economic activity (i.e. work) is to provide the means to consume. The point of political activity, of course, is to ensure the ideal conditions for consumption (Ibid).

Sklair's analysis thus attempts to show the integration of economic shifts with institutional changes and hegemonic ideas. However, it does not take into the account the enormous time-space variations (Ballard, Habib, Valodia & Zuern, 2006a) which have occurred within each of three spheres. It also, like most other commentary on 'late' or 'advanced' capitalism, focuses on accumulation through production and/or exchange. Harvey (2003) argues that the spatio-temporal fixes used in an attempt to overcome the crisis of overproduction have not

worked; and therefore in fact we are now experiencing a rise in accumulation by dispossession, usually associated with the 'primitive' or 'original' stage of capitalism. Marx identified 'primitive' accumulation as the commodification and privatisation of land, and forceful expulsion of the peasantry; the conversion of various forms of property rights to exclusive private rights; the suppression of rights to the commons; the commodification of labour power and suppression of alternative or indigenous forms of production and consumption; the monetization of exchange and taxation, especially of land; neo-colonial or imperial processes of appropriation of assets; usury, national debts, and ultimately the credit system. Harvey argues that all of these are powerfully present now; but are accompanied by new methods, including the commodification of nature (such as the patenting and licensing of genetic material), cultural forms, intellectual creativity, histories.

Shivji (2006) agrees that the process of 'primitive accumulation' "through a gruesome process of plunder, expropriation, looting, wars, invasions, slavery, indentured labour, and colonialism and imperialism" (p.173) continues, and continues most intensely on the African continent; although now much of this is being done by South Africa, rather than a former Western coloniser. I will look at the specific case of South Africa in detail below.

4.3 Changes in the superstructure under neoliberalism

The structural changes in the process of capital accumulation over the last 100 years have had profound impacts on the superstructure (and here I am using Gramsci's conception of superstructure as including both political and civil society), as has already been discussed in the case of colonialism and decolonisation/developmentalism. However, with regards to neoliberalism there has been considerable and often heated debate about the nature of the changes which have occurred, particularly at institutional level. I will consider this in some detail, because it relates directly to my later arguments about what constitutes current hegemony.

In 2001, Hardt and Negri published *Empire*, which quickly became highly influential. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri argue that neoliberal globalization has led to a new form of sovereignty, what they call 'Empire'. They argue that the age of imperialism is over, and

dismiss claims that the United States of America is the centre of an imperialist project, whilst arguing that the 'Third World' (as a construct) has been destroyed. Rather, the Empire is decentred and deterritorializing, "sovereignty of nation-states, while still effective, has progressively declined" (p.xi). Effectively, capital now rules the world, having set itself free from the nation state, and power has transferred from the nation state to the global agents of empire (i.e. TNCs/MNCs, the IMF, World Bank, GATT, the agencies of the United Nations) (Wenman, 2009)

Hardt and Negri (2001) contend that the new capitalist Empire has three distinct features:
1.   A lack of boundaries;
2.   A claim (by 'Empire') that it is not an historical regime, but rather suspends history, and "fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity" (p.xiv);
3.   It operates at every level, everywhere, it "creates the very world it inhabits" (p.xv), "The object of its rule is social life in its entirety" (p.xv).

So Empire extends well beyond the economic to every sphere of life, the economic, cultural and political exchanges increasingly overlapping and investing one another (Wenman, 2009).

Clearly, Hardt and Negri's claims profoundly affect Marx's and Gramsci's claims about the importance of the nation state in consolidating ruling class power, as well as Marxist understandings of imperialism within capitalism. There has been much positive reaction to Hardt and Negri's work; but there has also been considerable criticism, particularly from writers from the South. Such work has tended to take a considerably more historicist and empirical approach than Hardt and Negri, and argues that the age of imperialism, and the role of nation state, are certainly not over.

Both African writer Amin (1997), and South American writer Boron (2005), argue that imperialism is most certainly not over. As discussed above, Amin (1997) argues that the post-World War II period saw the industrialisation of countries in the periphery, *and* the dismantling of the autocentric national production systems of the West/North nation states, particularly as globalisation deepened and these economies became integrated into the world production system. Since 1990, Amin contends, the equilibrium established has collapsed. He

argues that this is because no new forms of political and social organisation going beyond the nation state have been developed, and because the new relations that need to be developed across the globe have not been developed. This is particularly the case with Africa, whose relationship remains purely exclusionary.

Thus, Amin argues, there *is* a centre, which retains power through five monopolies:

1. Technological monopoly

2. Financial control of world-wide financial markets

3. Access to the planet's natural resources

4. Monopolies over media and communications (which has inter alia led to a uniformity of culture and new means of political manipulation)

5. A monopoly, by the United States of America, over weapons of mass destruction.

Boron (2005) specifically critiques *Empire*. He is insistent that we are not experiencing Empire. Rather, he calls this "the imperialist system in its current phase" (p.1), thus echoing Amin's argument. Imperialism was not ended with the advent of globalization, as Hardt and Negri argue - rather, globalization consolidated the centre and deepened the submission of the periphery. So imperialism "still exists, and it still oppresses peoples and nations and creates pain, destruction and death" (p.3). Boron argues that Hardt and Negri have got it so wrong because they are looking at the world from above, rather than from the point of view of writers from Latin America, India, Africa and the rest of the Third World. They have also largely ignored literature on imperialism (including Lenin's seminal work), and have drawn on North American social science and French philosophy.

Boron's contention that Hardt and Negri fail to see the unevenness of the process across the globe is supported by another South writer, Abu-Manneh (2004, cited in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005). Abu-Manneh uses Lenin's theory of imperialism to argue that "there can be no permanent joint exploitation of the world", as posited by Hardt and Negri (Abu-Manneh quoted in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p.2).

4.3.1 The role of the state

Clearly, one of the key issues raised by Hardt and Negri is that of the nation state; the extent to which it still exists, and if it does, the role it plays. To understand the current debate, and its import, it is necessary to look at (in particular, Marxist) arguments about the role of the state, and what has actually happened to the state over space and time.

The radical view of the state (including socialism, utopianism, anarchism, Marxism etc.) continues arguments that the (capitalist) state will (and should) wither away completely with the advent of a classless society. Esping-Andersen, Friedland and Wright (1976, cited in Sherman & Wood, 1989) subdivide the radical view into instrumentalist, structuralist and political class struggle. The views differ in terms of the relationship they see between the state and the ruling class.

In the instrumentalist argument, the state is the instrument of the ruling economic class, which uses the state directly for its own benefit. It is able to do this because members of this class hold key positions in government. In the structuralist view, the state's structure is determined by the constraints and contradictions of capitalism. Although the state is a class state, it cannot operate entirely as a tool of the ruling class, but must act to try to solve the contradictions and temporary crises of capitalism. Two of the leading proponents of the structuralist view are Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzis. Althusser (1972, cited in Jarvis, 1993) argues that the state controls the ideological apparatus, which he divides into eight, viz. religion, education, family, law, politics, trade unionism, media and culture. "Through each of these people can be socialised, albeit sometimes unknowingly, into consenting to the ways of the state's ruling elite" (Jarvis, 1993, p.19). Poulantzis looks on the state not just as an instrument of monopoly capitalism, but at its autonomy relative to the economy. He argues that the contemporary capitalist state is a class state, functioning to maintain the capitalist class, irrespective of what positions of political power the representatives of the class hold (McLellan, 1980, p. 304). In the political class struggle view, the state structure is the object of class struggle, operating with 'relative autonomy' from the direct domination of the capitalist class (Offe, 1972, cited in Sherman & Wood, 1989). In all three views, the state is still seen as a crucial agent, particularly of the ruling economic class; and the ending of state

is one of the goals of radical political activity.

As we have seen, Hardt and Negri argue that since neoliberal globalization, the sovereignty of the nation state all over the world has steadily declined; and this argument has been advanced by many other writers (eg. McGinn, 1996; Giroux, 2005). Clearly, this is not because of a proletarian revolution, and thus fundamentally questions any radical analysis; however, I would argue, the suggestion that the national state is in decline is in fact false. It is certainly true that much of the *discourse* of neoliberalism appears to be an attack on the nation state - as Shivji (2006) notes in his analysis of neoliberalism in Tanzania, "The intellectual elite embraced liberal ideology uncritically as it joined the IFIs [International Financial Institutions] in demonising the state and debunking nationalism and socialism" (p.9).

However, in most current Marxist analysis, the role of the state is the same as it ever was - to ensure the conditions for capitalist accumulation - and thus it remains critical:

> ...the state is always heavily and directly embroiled in the economic life of capitalism - appropriating and disbursing (surplus) value through taxation and expenditure, regulating accumulation, restructuring capital as it goes through its cyclical patterns, manipulating exchange rates through monetary and other macroeconomic policies, and influencing distributional relations through taxation and incomes policy. (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004, pp.172-173)

It is not surprising that neoliberal ideology suggests that the state is in decline, or unnecessary, whereas in fact it remains critically involved; in fact, this is exactly what Gramsci (1971) predicted:

The ideas of the Free Trade movement are based on a theoretical error whose practical origin is not hard to identify; they are based on a distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological. Thus it is asserted that economic activity belongs to civil society, and that the State must not intervene to regulate it. But since in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same, it must be made clear that laissez-faire too is a form of State "regulation", introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts. Consequently, laissez-faire liberalism is a political programme, designed to change - in so far as it is victorious - a State's leading personnel, and to change the economic programme of the State itself - in other words the distribution of the national income" (Gramsci, 1971, pp.159-160).

In advanced capitalism, the state is not only required, but strengthened (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2004). Thus, the state continues to be the main agent of globalization, not its victim, despite neoliberal discourse (Boron, 2005), advancing capitalist imperialism through the interlocking processes of neoliberalism and globalization (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Harvey, 2003). Capital has need of the state more now than ever before, and the state fulfills a long list of tasks for companies (Boron, 2005). Since the economic crisis of 1980, we have seen the apparently 'eroded' nation state revealed for what it is, in the massive bail-outs of capitalist organisations, giving lie to the myth of leaving it to the free market to sort things out.

However, as in the past, although the state has the same basic function, states themselves are not the same everywhere. Boron (2005) agrees that the current nation state is a crucial player in the world economy, and national economies still exist. What has happened to the state, however, is different across space. He shows how, despite claims to the contrary, there has in fact been a noticeable increase in the size of the Western state, measured as a proportion of public expenditure to GDP (although the rate of growth of public expenditure has decreased). Even as they champion the anti-state rhetoric launched in the early 1980s, all of the states of metropolitan capitalism have been strengthened in the last 20 years. In the periphery,

however, the state *has* been dramatically weakened, largely as a result of the deliberate intervention of the IMF, World Bank, WTO, G7 [now G8], and the United States, through the imposition of the (neoliberal) "Washington Consensus" (p.79). In these states, there has been a cut in spending, a dismantling of the public sector, privatisation, and, of course, the opening up of the economy (p.80), in line with neoliberal 'rules'. Clearly, this belies Hardt and Negri's claims of the end of imperialism.

Therborn (2008) agrees that there are different kinds of states in different parts of the world. He argues that the last 40 years saw the development of strongly differentiated state forms - the welfare state of Western Europe; the 'outward development' model, typified in East Asia; and the inward-looking, low-trade [post-colonial] states of Africa, Latin America and India. Therborn agrees that the European state has in fact grown (spending a greater percentage of GDP on public expenditure than its export income contribution to GDP), and so has the outward development state of East Asia. The outward development model is a neoliberal model, emphasising exports, based on heavy manufacturing, and is characterised by state planning and the control of banks and credit (and also some protection from incoming foreign investment). The inward-looking (post-colonial) low trade states, however, have faced a 'lethal crisis', coming to a dead end by the 1970s and 1980s. Foley (1994) suggests that neoliberal globalisation has led to transformation of (Western) welfare state into a 'competitive state': "Internally, the function of the state changes from the delivery of public services, perceived as the universal rights of citizens, to fostering of private sector production and the management of a continually contracting public sector" (Foley, 1994, p.130).

Boron (2005) suggests that although there are now different states in different parts of the world, in both the North and South governments have become steadily less accountable as the power of the parliament has progressively decreased. Instead, power has accumulated in the hands of executives. His analysis suggests a shift in the relationship between political and civil society - he argues that there is now a proliferation of secret areas of decision-making; a decline in government response to the claims and demands of civil society; growing similarities between the main political parties, and a drastic reduction of competition between them; growing oligopolies of the mass media/cultural industry; and, logically, an increasing political apathy among the general populace. McGinn (1996) shows that in the USA and

other industrialised countries political society (i.e. government) is in crisis, with plummeting levels of participation in the electoral process and a marked decline in trust in democratic institutions.

Thus there has been a growing crisis of legitimacy of the state globally. How has the state dealt with this? As Gramsci argued, through a combination of force and hegemony.

4.3.1.1 Force

Amin (1997) has argued that hegemony should not form the centre of debate, because it is in fact the exception to the rule; the rule is force/conflict. Giroux (2005) argues that neoliberalism is complicit in transforming the democratic state into a national security state, which is "largely used to regulate, control, contain, and punish those who are not privileged by the benefits of class, color, and gender" (p.8). In this kind of state, social services (as indeed all problems) are privatised into personal responsibility, while "human misery is largely defined as a function of personal choices" (Giroux, 2005, p.8), so the poor are ipso facto degenerate. Thus neoliberalism constructs a particular vision of a just society, which includes the need for the state to monitor us constantly to ensure that we do not become slothful and indolent (Apple, 2001). The political system is used to legitimise the process of control (Jarvis, 1993).

> As the state is increasingly stripped of its public functions, it is defined less through its efforts to invest in the public good than through the exercise of its police and surveillance functions in order to contain those groups deemed a threat to the social order. (Giroux, 2001, p.2)

Along with this disciplinary function comes, inevitably, increased militarisation:

> By militarization, I mean...an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals. Militarization is simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force,

the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them. Militarization is intimately connected not only to the obvious increase in the size of armies and resurgence of militant nationalisms and militant fundamentalisms but also to the less visible deformation of human potentials into the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and to the shaping of national histories in ways that glorify and legitimate military action (Lutz, 2002, p.723 quoted in Giroux, 2005, p.5).

This has happened in the West, as well as in other parts of the world. Neocosmos (2006) looks specifically at the authoritarian bureaucratic character of the post-colonial state in Africa, arguing that "the African state is at the core of the crisis which the continent's people have had to endure" (p.58). The modern African state acts primarily to control, laying down the limits for public debate, excluding or deligitimizing discourses or practices it sees as threatening. Boron (2005) suggests that the issue of force is not so about different states in different parts of the world, but about states acting differently towards different groups of people - "for the poor and the excluded, a fascist state; for the rich, a democratic state" (p.83). Arguably, given the point of the state, this is the same as it ever was.

4.3.1.2 Hegemony

However, as Gramsci argued, the state prefers not to use force if it can use hegemony instead. Thus, despite the increasingly disciplinary role of the state discussed above, many writers have emphasised the importance of hegemony in the continuing domination of the capitalist class under neoliberal capital. As we have seen, Gramsci argued that it is civil society, rather than political society, which plays the crucial role of creating and maintaining hegemony. Thus, we need to consider how civil society (in Gramsci's understanding, a part of the superstructure) has been affected by the shift to neoliberalism.

4.3.2. The role of civil society

We have seen how Gramsci believed 'civil society' to be the particular site within which hegemony is created and sustained, in order to bolster political society/the state (and thus the

ruling class). If we remember, Gramsci said that "the historical unity of the ruling classes is realised in the State....But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political....; the fundamental historical unity, concretely, results from the organic relations between State or political society and "civil society"' (Gramsci, 1971, p.52). Habermas, following Gramsci, agrees that civil society is shaped by the bourgeois class; but argues that it has a democratic significance if it is politicised, as occurred in the French Revolution (Mamdani, 1996). Geoff Ely has critiqued this understanding, showing how civil society inevitably involves the exclusion of certain 'publics' (such as women, the peasantry, the urban poor, subordinate nationalities), and is thus harnessed to the interests of one group (Ibid.). However, as we have seen, civil society is also the site of struggle for counter-hegemony.

Thus civil society is clearly a critical arena for social change; and hence it has remained an area of importance in social theory: "...the concept *civil society* is now the focal point of the theory and practice of a large and growing sector of the left worldwide" (Holst, 2002, p.57).

Under capitalist reorganisation to its current form, neoliberalism, the role of civil society's hegemonic function is as important as ever. Indeed, civil society today is deeply complicit in supporting capitalist neoliberalism. Neocosmos (2006, 2009a) constructs a careful argument showing how current dominant conceptions of civil society are fundamentally neoliberal, with a 'vibrant civil society' being one of the calls of neoliberal democracy. Buttigeig (2002) describes this as "the current fashion of exalting civil society" (p.131). Neocosmos gives as an example the definition of civil society suggested by Adam Habib[8], which Neocosmos claims is "fully in tune with current neo-liberal thinking" (2009a, p.268), because it does not allow anything that does not use the state as its reference point.

Under neoliberalism, Neocosmos contends, civil society is defined purely in relation to the state: "for neo-liberal theory there can be no civil society outside liberal democracy" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.269), 'civil society' is in fact the state 'in' society: "Civil society

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[8]   "The organized expression of various interests and values operating in the triangular space between the family, state and market" (Habib quoted in Neocosmos, 2009a, p.268).

regularly excludes democratic politics from its domain, and it has largely come to contribute to the constructing of a state consensus, rather than providing the required conditions for a genuinely democratic and emancipatory politics" (Neocosmos, 2006, p.59).

Civil society does this by, together with the state, making the state the sole domain of politics: "it can also be pointed out that the neo-liberal conception of civil society also implies recognition by civil society organisations of the legitimacy of the state and of the hegemony of its mode of politics" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.272).

Thus "the state is the sole legitimate domain of politics" (2009a, p.282). Politics outside of the state is unthinkable. Organisations who do not recognise the legitimacy of the state and the "hegemony of its politics" are thus not part of civil society - they are 'illegitimate', 'terrorist', 'ultra-leftist' etc. 'Civil society' in these terms clearly plays the role Gramsci identified for it - of propping up the state, consolidating its hegemony. "In this context the neo-liberal state has been ruling - ensuring its legitimacy - less through the operation of parties but increasingly by institutionalising the operation of civil society organisations, in particular NGOs" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.315).

So, in neoliberalism, civil society is a way of apparently increasing inclusiveness, broadening popular participation, and thus extending the hegemony of the state; as Gramsci argued, it does this through "a multitude of...so-called private initiatives and activities....initiatives and activities which form part of the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes" (Gramsci, 1971, p.258). Under neoliberalism, part of this process involves political parties (normally elements of civil society) becoming "frankly state institutions" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.273): "parties have become more and more bereft of politics, and rather simple vehicles for circulating elites around state institutions" (Ibid., p.273). This is also something Gramsci warned about in his assertion that "theoretical syndicalism" was about "a rotation in governmental office of the ruling-class parties" rather than a new type of civil society (Gramsci, 1971, p.160).

However, as is the case with the state (and because it is 'of' the state, as Neocosmos argues), civil society is different across space, and such differences are particularly apparent between

countries of the West and postcolonial countries. In the South, Boron (2005) asserts, thanks to a wide range of intellectuals and 'experts' connected to the World Bank, there is a growing trend to argue that civil society should take over those functions which had previously been improperly appropriated by the state:

> Such changes seek to provide a solution to the crisis triggered by the state's desertion of its responsibilities in the provision of public welfare - providing social assistance, education, healthcare and so on - transferring to civil society the task of dealing with these issues while incidentally preserving a balanced fiscal budget and, eventually, guaranteeing the existence of a surplus in the fiscal accounts in order to fund the foreign debt. (p.90)

This echoes Michel Foucault's arguments about the changing nature of how the state secures legitimacy. Foucault distinguished between sovereignty and governmentality. Sovereignty, he argued, was the legitimacy the state gained through a certain amount of participation by citizens in the affairs of the state. Governmentality, on the other hand, was the legitimacy of the state gained through the provision of resources to the population (Neocosmos, 2009a). Neocosmos, and Partha Chatterjee (2004), whom he cites, argue that governmentality is now the dominant form of state (as did Foucault himself (1991)); and the only issue now is its capacity to deliver. However, as Boron (2005) argues, under neoliberalism this function of legitimacy has been transferred to the state 'in' society, civil society, with political repercussions:

> In the advanced capitalist countries, civil society takes over the responsibility for providing services previously performed by the welfare state and abandoned by the neo-liberal state. In countries that never had a welfare system, civil society plugs the leaks and patches over the damage created by the most recent bout of restructuring. Not only does an autonomous practice of solidarity get converted into a social obligation but social organisation outside the state is also drained of its political content. (Greenberg, 2002, p.5 quoted in Hallowes & Butler, 2004, p.66)

Bown (2000) shows how under neoliberalism, NGOs in the majority world have come to play an increasingly important, and sometimes sinister, role, particularly in the South. She says that NGOs in the South are currently regarded as extremely important parts of civil society, and as necessary for democracy. "NGOs have in fact often become major intermediaries between local communities and the outside world, including the state" (Bown, 2000, p.10). Because of their need to successfully bargain for funding, NGOs have moved from supply side to demand side economics. "NGOs often use the rhetoric of participation and sustainability, but are non-participatory and dependent on others themselves" (p.11). Bown shows how the numbers of NGOs have dramatically increased in some countries in the South - she gives the example of Tunisia, where the number of NGOs increased from 1 886 in 1988 to 5 186 in 1991. Davis (2006), in his hugely influential book *Planet of the Slums*, echoes this argument. He says that since the mid-1990s, the World Bank and the UNDP is increasingly working directly with NGOs, rather than national governments. This "NGO revolution - there are now tens of thousands in Third World cities - has reshaped the landscape of urban development aid" (p.75). Typically, a donor works through a major (often international) NGO, who provides expertise to a local NGO, as part of "empowerment", "participatory governance", "partnership", "poverty reduction" etc. The true beneficiaries, asserts Davis, are the big NGOs, not local people: "the actual power relations in this new NGO universe resemble nothing so much as traditional clientelism...Third World NGOs have proven brilliant at coopting local leadership as well as hegemonizing the social space traditionally occupied by the Left" (p.76). An additional impact, according to McGinn (1996) is the overall "general retreat from the *practic*e of democracy" (p.344), because "governments of developing countries have been encouraged by international agencies to turn over certain functions to nongovernmental organizations" (p.345), most of which are founded and controlled by elites.

Thus civil society under neoliberalism continues to play the role of providing the "fortresses and earthworks" in Gramsci's terminology, to prop up the state and consolidate the power of the ruling class. One of the ways it does this is precisely by presenting itself as the driving force of liberal democracy, vis-a-vis the state, which, as I shall discuss further below, constitutes a major element of current hegemony. However, first I will consider the case of South Africa.

4.3.3 South Africa

A number of writers have argued that South Africa has been successfully integrated into neoliberal hegemony (Ballard, Habib, Valodia & Zuern, 2006a; Bond, 2000; Gibson, 2006; Hlatshwayo, 2008; Pithouse, 2006b; Neocosmos, 2009a). Bond, in his *Elite Transition* (2000), shows how the transition from apartheid to democracy included a

> transition from a popular-nationalist anti-apartheid project to official neoliberalism - by which is meant adherence to free market economic principles, bolstered by the narrowest practical definition of democracy (not the radical participatory project many ANC cadres had expected) - over an extremely short period of time. (p.1)

Now, "Freedom is the freedom to pay for food and for housing" (Gibson, 2006, p.6). Michael Neocosmos (2009a) similarly argues that "South Africa is, after all, probably the most consistently political neo-liberal of African countries, at least it is so in the eyes of Empire, as the latter regularly sets it up as a model for the continent" (p.267).

Thus, like many other neocolonial countries which adopted the (neoliberal) Washington Consensus, South Africa has seen the rich get richer, and the gap between rich and poor grow wider, with increasing unemployment, disconnections from hard-fought-for water and electricity, and evictions (Gibson, 2006). The class structure within the country has been normalised, and the vast economic inequalities have been made to appear natural (Ibid) through accompanying hegemonic discourses. By the mid-2000s, South Africa was experiencing "an unprecedented process of self-enrichment by the new elite" (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.214); "The year 2006 represented what is probably a unique phenomenon in modern times: a budget surplus in the midst of hunger, the collapse of public health service, a virtually non-existent public transport system, and the list extending to all areas of social life in South Africa" (Ibid, pp.214-215).

There is common agreement amongst commentators that the neoliberal turn is marked by the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy by the new South African government in 1996 (Bond, 2000; Gibson, 2006, 2008; Hlatshwayo, 2008). This is

generally seen as replacing the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), the manifesto on which the ANC was elected into power in 1994, and the result of an elite pact between the ANC, multinational capital, and local elites (Gibson, 2006)[9].

Thus, whilst much of the discourse about South Africa involves some kind of 'miracle', presenting the South African case as something exceptional, South Africa's experience has been roughly similar to any other peripheral 'developing' country (although, of course, peripherality is relative - so South Africa is relatively powerful on the continent vis-a-vis other African nations). Mamdani (1996), for example, argues strongly against the 'exceptionalism' of South Africa; rather, he believes, apartheid was a generic form of colonial rule. Gibson (2006) also rejects the idea that South Africa is unique, arguing that this country is like many postcolonial states that have experienced structural adjustment programmes, and a shift to the 'democracy' that is the most effective way to secure capitalist stability. In South Africa, this has resulted in a deracialized state, but no real changes in terms of economic power and access to resources (Taylor, 1997; Gibson, 2006). Thus South Africa experienced much what was described above - a transition in which the bourgeoisie retained power - possibly, a bourgeoisie of a different race (unlike in some other post-colonial states), but nevertheless the bourgeoisie. Oddly enough, this is exactly what Biko predicted as long ago as 1977:

> This is one country where it would be possible to create a capitalist black society, if whites were intelligent, if the nationalists were intelligent. And that capitalist black society, black middle class would be very effective....South Africa could succeed in putting across to the world a pretty convincing, integrated picture, with still seventy percent of the population being underdogs (Biko, 2008, pp.41-42).

What is perhaps exceptional about the South African case is the extent to which South Africa adopted neoliberalism voluntarily - Pithouse (2006b) says that in 1996 (when GEAR was adopted as official economic policy), South Africa became the first African government to ever voluntary impose a structural adjustment programme on its own people.

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[9]   In fact, I would argue otherwise - it seems very clear to me from a close reading of the RDP that it was already a fundamentally neoliberal document.

The democratic post-apartheid state has thus clearly played an important role in consolidating the power of the ruling class (albeit a changing ruling class in terms of race), and in this has been roughly similar to other states in other peripheral countries. In addition, the shifts in civil society discussed above have also been relatively clear within South Africa. Although, as Mamdani (1996) argues, unlike other colonial states South Africa developed a strong civil society of both black and white, the role of civil society in South Africa in creating/ maintaining hegemony has been the same as elsewhere, as Pithouse (2006b) argues:

> In contemporary South Africa the massive civil society projects of agencies like the World Bank and USAID exist alongside parallel civil society projects by the ANC. These projects take on a variety of tasks but generally function to co-opt the expression and inhibit the development of social antagonism by encouraging various forms of (always unequal) "partnership" that produce various anti-political corporatist arrangements for managing conflict (eg. lobbying, public participation, etc.). (p.256)

Gibson (2006) agrees that South Africa's civil society is intimately connected with the state, but also with markets and money. Of course, not all civil society organisations are the same; civil society, as any other structure, is a space of struggle, and so differences can and do emerge; but the general trend is there all the same:

> Many of the biggest and strongest civil society organisations orient upwards, justifying and elaborating the actions and ideologies of the dominant power. Others orient to the grassroots, and within this there are two different types: those that organise and mobilise to fit into programmes constructed by dominant power, and those that organise and mobilise to confront the dominant power (Greenberg & Ndlovu, 2004, pp.24-25, cited in Butler, 2007).

Certainly this is certainly the lived experience of many South African communities:

> The role of NGOs must be seriously discussed. We have had some good experiences with a small number of NGOs who do not impose on us but listen to, and support, the agenda that the movements of the poor themselves define. But many NGOs do not

work this way. Instead they impose other agendas on us, and they do not respect our own capacities (community member quoted in Butler and a 100 others, 2007, p.17).

There is a special kind of 'education'...- usually called 'capacity building' or 'political education' - that civil society organisations specialise in giving when the people who are meant to be suppressed start to struggle against their oppression. This kind of education is done in the name of the poor and oppressed and is aiming to teach the language and rules of how to change your struggle so that it can 'in order'. (Figlan et al, 2009, p.47).

4.4 Ideology and consciousness

As discussed in Chapter 3, Marx and Gramsci argued that one of the roles played by civil society within hierarchical social relations was the creation of ideology. Marx understood ideology as specifically the ideas propagated to serve a particular class interest ("The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class" (Marx & Engels, 1848/1977, p.236), and distinguished between ideology (partial or determinate) and true consciousness. Marx argued that ideology conceals contradictions; conceals how it serves the interests of the dominant class; and dehistoricizes. True consciousness is thus an awareness of what is really going on, including ideology. As we have seen, in an attempt to counter the 'vulgar materialism'/ economism of orthodox Marxism of his time, which rejected ideas as having a role to play in changing the capitalist system, Gramsci argued for a more nuanced understanding of ideology; he developed his understanding of hegemony as the ideology of the dominant group, but also argued for the possibility of 'counter-hegemony', which could be the work of anybody and everybody.

However, since Marx and Gramsci, Marxist theorists have further developed these ideas. Within Marxism, one of the most important developments since Gramsci wrote his prison notebooks was the creation of the so-called Frankfurt school, a group of Marxist theorists exiled from Germany during the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, and working primarily in the USA. Leading members included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Members of the Frankfurt school referred to their work as 'critical theory' (as opposed to

'materialism'), which Therborn (2008) characterises as purely intellectual (they certainly had no real significant relationship with actual political organisations of the working class). The Frankfurt school saw as its task (and that of critical theory) to contribute to social transformation, by emphasising social conflicts. They thus emphasised the contradictions and negativity of modernity, whilst retaining a focus on political economy (Therborn, 2008).

The leading 'second-generation' theorist of this school (although he rejects this claim) was Jurgen Habermas, who took critical theory out of political economy (Therborn, 2008), arguing that changes in capitalism itself required this. Habermas integrated hermeneutics and systems theory into historical materialism, declaring that "today the problem of language has replaced the traditional problem of consciousness" (Habermas quoted in McLellan, 1980, p.273).

In the mid-1960s, a hugely influential alternative to the Frankfurt school arose in the form of Structural Marxism, of whom some the leading theorists were Levi-Strauss, Lacan and Althusser. This school of thought emphasised the need to look beyond the conscious activities of people, to what underlies them - i.e. the unconscious structures which these activities presuppose (McLellan, 1980).

Althusser undertook a major structuralist re-reading of Marx, rejecting both Gramsci and Sartre because of their emphasis on people as subjects of history, and humanism and its corollary, empiricism (Ibid.). Foucault, meanwhile, explored the role of discourse in constructing and changing ideologies. Foucault was interested in how discourse allowed 'soft', 'secret' forms of domination by apparently progressive and humane modern institutions (Foley, 1999, p.15). For Foucault, discourse is not only about "what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority" (Ball, 1990, p.2 cited in Foley, 1999, p.15). So discourse is the way that key modern institutions like prisons, hospitals, schools and workplaces subtly control people, allowing violent control of people (i.e. force) to be replaced by 'gentler' means of control. 'Totalising discourses', asserted Foucault, are ways of thinking and acting which speak for and take over whole areas of human life, often operating 'behind the backs' of speakers. "This secret, unconscious aspect of discourses means that people can participate in their own subjugation by absorbing the

rules of a discourse or by taking something that is socially constructed as 'truth'" (Foley, 1999, p.16).

"In any society, there is a social process for deciding what kinds of and whose life experiences are of sufficient value and importance to be systematized and theorized into a body of knowledge" - and this has everything to do with power relations (Walters, 1998, p.436). Foucault's work has been an important influence in both neoMarxist and postmodernist work over the last several decades.

Recently, many operating from a Marxist perspective, including many within radical adult education, have argued for a return to Gramsci (eg. Allman, Foley, Mayo, McLaren). Foley (1994) thus argues that "Ideologies and discourses are central to the process of capitalist reproduction. In any historical period dominant explanations emerge which serve the interests of ruling groups" (p.128); whilst Allman and Mayo (1997) contend:

> We think ideology or any form of consciousness arises from social being or existence, but that it distorts our thinking because it pulls together, in explanations and ways of behaving and organising, only fragments or partial aspects of our experience, what Gramsci refers to as 'common sense'. (Allman & Mayo, 1997, p.7)

As Biko (2004) famously said (in 1971), "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (p.74). More recently, movement militants in South Africa have reasserted this:

> People who talk about the story of South Africa often talk about 'land dispossession'. We can surely also talk about 'mind dispossession' as well....We are also saying that dispossession is not just something that happened in history - it continues into the present. How else can we understand that the politicians think they can get away with presenting something like the Slums Act in the name of freedom? (Figlan et al, 2009, p.28).

So understanding the ideology behind neoliberal capitalism is crucial if we really want to understand what is going on in our world. Using Marx's frame for classifying an idea or a set of ideas as ideology, i.e. it must conceal contradictions; it must conceal how it serves the interests of the dominant class; and it must dehistoricize (Allman, 1988), and Habermas' and Foucault's ideas about language and discourse, I would argue that it is possible to identify three current dominant hegemonic ideologies - neoliberalism; liberal democracy; and (certain strands of) postmodernism. The three are interlinked and interlocking, each serving to support and confirm the others. All ultimately function to service the existing form of capitalism (neoliberalism), and hence maintain the control of the ruling class.

4.4.1 Neoliberalism as ideology

As we have seen, neoliberalism is a set of rules to further capitalist penetration and accumulation by the ruling class. Such rules are enforced, where necessary, through coercion (as we have seen above); but, as Gramsci points out, "the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion" (Gramsci, 1971, p.80), so consent remains critical. The hegemony of neoliberalism, says Boron (2005, p.115), is economic, ideological, and political; or as Giroux (2005) puts it, "...neoliberalism is an ideology, a politics, and at times a fanaticism" (p.12). Some of the ideas underlying neoliberalism as an economic philosophy include the necessity of economic growth; the fact that this can only be obtained via trade, particularly export-oriented trade, and thus trade needs to be facilitated in every possible way (including through deregulation, fiscal restraint, etc.); the understanding that high levels of unemployment (currently being experienced throughout the world) are largely the fault of individuals, who do not have the necessary skills to find jobs, particularly because the demands of the economy are becoming increasingly complex; and the notion, already discussed above, that the attainment of personal fulfilment and happiness can only really happen through consumption.

Like any hegemonic project, capitalist neoliberalism uses institutions, ideas, and discourse. As Wenman (2009) argues, "Under conditions of globalisation, capitalist processes of accumulation have also established their supremacy over the principal institutions of

'disciplinary society' - schools, factories, the family, hospitals, prisons and so on - that mediated social relations in the era of high modernity" (Empire section, para. 3). Boron (2005) says that during the 1980s, "neoliberalism won a strategic battle for the meanings of words used in everyday speech, particularly in the public sphere" (p.114). Thus, for example, 'reform' came to mean the things that were really 'counter-reform', such as the dismantling of social security, cuts in public spending, and so on; whilst 'deregulation' came to mean the privatisation of regulation into the hands of oligopolies.

Thus although neoliberal globalization is a response to the 'ongoing crisis' of overaccumulation, this is not how it presents itself. Instead, the 'new' imperialism operates under the guise of a 'democratising mission', which will bring about democracy, growth and ultimately equality for all (this is discussed further below and in the next chapter). It also presents itself, however, as Gramsci's analysis of hegemony would suggest, as 'normal', even in the context of such crisis. Dinerstein (2010), for example, shows that in Latin America, neoliberalism has managed to secure legitimation of instability and of dystopia - debt, uncertainty, risk, labour flexibility, informality of employment, unemployment, are simply the way things are. Similarly, Ledwith (2001) says that "the inevitability of market forces has been sold to us as a powerful form of false consciousness, justifying exploitation and inequality" (p.175).

Part of this 'normalising' neoliberal discourse is that of a particular kind of 'development' (in fact Tikly (2004) argues that development is *the* discursive element of neoliberal imperialism), much as modernization was in the previous phase of capitalist reorganization. As Amin (1997) says "the concept of development is an ideological concept defined by the design of the type of society the development process is supposed to bring about" (p.141); i.e. a capitalist (and under current conditions, neoliberal) society. The post-Second World War development discourse of modernisation has been further developed as a result of the development of advanced/neoliberal capitalism, so that 'development' now is inseparable from neoliberalism, and particularly its new imperialism. Tikly (2004) argues that the current discourse of neoliberal development is an aspect of an emerging global governmentality (a la Foucault), and is about making populations in the previous colonies useful for global capitalism, whilst managing the risks posed to emerging global markets by poverty through

social intervention and aid. "'Development' [meaning neoliberal development] is thus a central organizing principle of the entire western *episteme*, including the discourses of anti-colonial activists who have, given the hegemonic nature of the development discourse, largely been obliged to struggle within its discursive boundaries" (Tikly, 2004, p.181). Integrally linked with neoliberal 'development' as a capitalist project is 'education'(Youngman, 2000). "[T]aken together, discourses around education and development have the effect of rendering populations economically useful and politically docile in relation to dominant global interests" (Tikly, 2004, p.174)[10]. Of course, such notions are contested, as I discuss in the next chapter (South African militants have suggested that "development has actually become a war on the poor" (Figlan et.al., 2009, p.36)); nevertheless, they remain the dominant current development discourse.

Within South Africa, neoliberalism as ideology is clearly evident, and shapes, as elsewhere, institutions, ideas and discourse. Loftus and Lumsden (2006) have looked at the ways neoliberalism plays itself out in the local context, looking at water in Inanda, a township close to Durban. They show how this reflects attempts by government to legitimise the ANC's neoliberal turn. In Inanda, there have been repeated instances of vibrant autonomous movements arising, and repeated attempts to disband and quash these (as will be seen in some of the stories in Chapter 10). Civil society has been increasingly shaped by the state, and encouraged to form 'partnerships' with the state and the private sector as part of a process of consolidating neoliberal hegemony. In this process, residents have become shaped as passive consumers of services, through partnerships (often recruiting local community members) which 'educate' people into a 'culture of payment' (rather than one of non-payment), and against 'illegal' water connections. Loftus and Lumsden show how culture has been used to do this - for example, in the Masakhane campaign, by fostering the notion that "Zulu culture means payment for services" (p.119). This is coupled with a more general discourse that everyone should contribute their bit to the new South Africa . The intention is to create a moral obligation to pay what is actually unaffordable, thus garnering consent to neoliberalism.

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[10]   Neocosmos (2006, p.82), in contrast, argues that "Development is no longer part of the hegemonic discourse". There is little to support this argument, judging from current newspaper articles, television news broadcasts etc.

As we have seen, many have argued that neoliberalism has indeed become hegemonic. As Boron (2005) would have it, "...the commonsense of the last two decades of the previous century has been saturated by the contents of neoliberal ideology" (p.115). However, I would argue, the actual lived experience of people inevitably clashes with the ideas which people are encouraged to adopt within the hegemonic discourse; thus they are often able to see through it:

> The high levels [of unemployment] are not because people are 'lazy' and nor is it because people lack 'capacity' - there really are not enough jobs for the people. There are all sorts of reasons for this, including the trade policies of our government and the profiteering of companies, but we also see how technologies are killing us as machines and computers replace workers.

> The casualisation of labour is affecting people in the townships a lot, especially women. When you look at many employers, like at Checkers and Pick 'n Pay, they are only asking people to work for certain hours at a time and not giving full employment anymore. This undermines people in all sorts of ways, for example, their employment benefits are cut, their job security is gone, the wages are less, and organising into trade unions that could fight for workers rights and better conditions is made much harder.

> But the pro-capitalist policies that government has chosen are also the result of the big and powerful international forces - represented by things like the World Bank, the IMF, Bush etc. This is why it is not just South Africa that has chosen these kinds of capitalist policies but most African countries and elsewhere in the world too (community members, quoted in Butler & 100 others, 2007, p. 11-13).

4.4.2 Liberal democracy

The set of ideas underpinning the economic philosophy of neoliberalism, discussed above, are accompanied, not surprisingly, by a set of ideas related to government and how it should operate - as parliamentary liberal democracy. These ideas are, as Neocosmos argues above,

precisely about limiting politics to the state domain. This is certainly not unique to neoliberal capital: both Marx and Gramsci commented on (and critiqued) the suggestion that by changing the government, one could change society. Marx, in his analysis of why the Paris revolution failed, referred to the Paris Commune as an alternative conception to the state: "Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes" (Marx, 1871/1977, p.543). Gramsci considered how the state tried to influence subaltern groups, inter alia through "the birth of new parties of the dominant groups, intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them" (Gramsci, 1971, p.52). As we have seen, both Marx and Gramsci argued that it was impossible to have human emancipation without ending economic exploitation and inequality; and thus no state under a capitalist system could ever really lead to human freedom. Hegemony, of course, will always try to present the state as precisely that which can lead to freedom; and this has become very apparent in the neoliberal drive for liberal democracy.

Wamba-dia-Wamba (2007, cited in Neocosmos, 2009a, p.315) argues that "the current form of imperialism is one which is not only globalised, but has replaced its 'civilising mission' (and later 'developmental mission') by a liberalising and 'democratising mission'". Shivji (2006) argues that this 'democratizing mission', as did the 'civilising' one comes as a package; this time, of human rights, free market and good governance. And this time, instead of the missionary, merchant and magistrate/mercenary, the package is brought by human rights NGOs, educators, consultants, investors and IMF missions: "The colonial native had to be civilised and Christianised; the 'independent' citizen had to be modernised and Westernised; the 'poor and diseased' African has to be globalised and democratised" (p.172). Shivji argues that ironically such a mission would be unnecessary had the civilising mission worked.

Jarvis (1993) argues that the dominant (neoliberal) view of the state is a liberal one - the role of the state is to protect individual rights, but to interfere no further than this. Thus this view argues for minimal government. Parties and organisations, rather than just individuals, are emphasised, although, in the hegemonic view, the state should intervene in cases of social

protest by groups or 'interests' which it views as not in the interests of its people. As Holst (2002) argues:

> Western liberal democracy posits a separation of the state, society, and the economy and guarantees only civil rights. This liberal notion of democracy, with its emphasis on the separation of state and civil society, is the ideological foundation of neoliberal structural adjustment programs. (p.74)

As we have seen Gramsci argue above, this is about concealing the true involvement of the state and civil society in neoliberalism.

Many writers have commented on the connection between neoliberal capitalism and the current discourse of democracy, in which 'democracy' becomes synonymous with the free market and capitalism, and "freedom is defined increasingly through the logic of consumerism" (Giroux, 2001, p.2). This is particularly so in the penetration of capital through the imperialism of neoliberal globalization. Here, neoliberal capitalism is seen as a necessary condition for democracy; although, where (true) democracy might in fact block neoliberal capitalism, the dominant class argues for the suspension of the existing social order to allow for the transition to a new economic order; or that the neoliberal economic order will bring about equity and justice on its own (i.e. without the need for a democratic state) (McGinn, 1996).

Neocosmos (2009a) shows how liberal democracy underpins neoliberal capitalism in Africa and South Africa. He argues that critical approaches to neoliberalism have concentrated on the economic, bar some commentaries on the notion of civil society and the state. The real effect of liberal democracy has been to limit politics to the state: "On the continent, our manner of thinking about politics has been overwhelmingly dominated by a liberalism for which the state is the sole legitimate domain of politics" (Neocosmos, 2009a, pp.281-282). Holloway (2010a) asserts that the argument that the state is the sole legitimate domain of politics is the same everywhere, so even if people are unhappy, even if they want change, this can only be done through the state (and hence, as Marx and Gramsci have shown), no real change can ever actually happen. So politics is the state; and the only issue now is the

capacity of the state (Neocosmos, 2009a). Chatterjee (2004, cited in Neocosmos, 2009a) shows how the changing nature of the state (from sovereignty to governmentality, a la Foucault), has reconfigured citizens as passive recipients of services (although, as we have seen within South Africa, this is not a role that citizens have adopted). Politics is expelled by technique, particularly managerial technique, with relations between state and civil society becoming increasingly managerialist/ technicist/legalistic and apolitical (Ibid): "Liberal or representative democracy is a phenomenon of this century which expresses not the fulfilment of democratic aspirations but their deflection, containment, and limitation" (Good quoted in Neocosmos, 2006, p.78).

Using Marx's frame for what constitutes an ideology, Allman identifies liberal democracy as an ideology (1988), involving three displacements and one concealment:

- it displaces the emphasis/focus from the sphere of production to the sphere of exchange and consumption; in other words, it attempts to hide the real nature of what is going on, the underlying capitalist relations of production.
- It displaces the concrete/actual (lived experience) with the abstract/formal (rights will free us all).
- It displaces the total (the interlocking system of neoliberal capitalism, liberal democracy, the role of civil society, etc.) with the partial (liberal democracy).

However, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, many people are not persuaded by hegemonic ideas about liberal democracy: "Our experience of 'democracy' in South Africa is that actually 'democracy' is used for purposes of domination by a few and exclusion of the majority" (community member quoted in Butler & 100 others, 2007, p.14).

4.4.3 Postmodernism

It should be noted here that there are debates within the literature about whether the notion of 'postmodernism' is even useful given the diversity of views 'within' postmodernism. However, like Marxism, which continues to be a highly contested and varied concept, postmodernist views tend to rest on very fundamental ontological and epistemological

assumptions, and discussed in Chapter 2; and it is these which constitute the basis for the claim the postmodernism constitutes a hegemonic ideology.

Although postmodernism presents itself as a fundamental break with anything that went before, Marxist scholars tend to disagree with this. As discussed in Chapter 2, poststructuralism/ postmodernism arose out of critical theory (as discussed above), but then extended beyond it, many postmodernists/poststructuralists becoming in turn very critical of critical theory. Much of the movement emerged in response to criticisms that orthodox Marxism was unable to adequately explain, for example, racism and imperialism, particularly in the context of the Cold War; and with the disillusionment with actual 'Marxist' states such as Stalinist USSR and Eastern Europe. Post-Marxist, post-structuralist trends argued that Marxism needed to develop along decentralized, self-critical and pluralist lines (Harvey, 1990) and was strongly critical of critical theory's "totalizing" "metanarratives" and "metatheories", including Marxism itself. In Chapter 2 I looked at the fact that the postmodern perspective rests on very different ontological assumptions from the critical/emancipatory paradigm, seeing the individual as multiple and continually under construction; but also rejecting the notion that there is an objective reality that can be analysed and understood.

Whilst much of postmodernism is deeply concerned with issues of oppression[11], because of the fact that it rejects the notion that we can understand our reality (because reality does not exist, and in any case each one of us will 'know' it differently), and rejects the idea that we can use concepts such as class to explain what is happening in our world (because such concepts are 'metanarratives' which simply enforce one person's ideas rather than accepting all ideas as equally valid), it is clearly incompatible with Marxism.

A Marxist analysis thus considers postmodernism as not simply continuous with modernism (Jameson, 1984), but as a product of the current stage of capitalism (Jameson, 1984; Allman & Wallis, 1995; Zizek, 2000; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005):

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[11]   Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, cited in Hammersley, 1995) divide postmodernism into 'resistance' postmodernism and 'ludic' postmodernism. They say ludic postmodernism is "decidedly limited in its ability to transform oppressive social and political regimes of power" (1994, p.143, quoted in Hammersley, 1995, p.36).

This whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror. (Jameson, 1984, p.57)

However, postmodernism is not merely a reflection of the times we live in. In a Marxist understanding, as with neoliberal ideology, and the ideology of liberal democracy, the point of postmodern ideology is to further the interests of capital, and hence of the ruling class. Thus, as McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005) argue, within postmodernism is a tacit (and in some cases overt) acceptance of the market economy. The 'death of the subject', and celebration of a diversity and relativism in which there is no 'truth' and no 'universality', creates the illusion that our only task is to satisfy our individual wants and desires (because we are 'worth' it, and because we have a 'right' to it), by succumbing to the market place (Allman & Wallis, 1995).

The rejection of so-called meta-narratives is part of this. This rejection has a number of effects. Firstly, it precisely supports the notion of 'There is no alternative', by doing away with (or at least appearing to) the thing to which there is no alternative (i.e. neoliberal capital). Secondly, it disguises the fact that postmodernism is itself a meta-narrative, thus concealing its own true nature:

It may well be that what *is* ideological in our present circumstances is not at all the question of human universals but rather the idea of absolute difference according to which such discourses as those of democracy, feminism, and class struggles are so many occidental relativities masquerading as human commonalities. (Ato Sekyi-Otu cited in Pithouse, 2006b, p.284 fn.125)

Thirdly, it makes it impossible to carefully analyse the actual nature of our situation, because it both rejects existing tools of analysis, and offers no new ones truly capable of doing this. Boron (2005) argues that to really understand what's going on now we need to look at the work of organic intellectuals of the right, not the left, since (postmodernist) left intellectuals have abandoned the notions of imperialism, dependency, etc. It is no co-incidence that "class

is the repressed concept in all theories of post-ality" (Zavarzadeh, 1995, p.42, quoted in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p.31) because identity politics leaves class invisible and intact (Žižek, 2000), nor that "[j]ust at the moment that capital triumphs globally, the greatest theorist of capital [i.e. Marx] is relegated to the status of a wrongheaded 19th-century ideologue" (O'Connor, 1999, quoted in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p.18).

Whilst, as I have argued above, (one strand of) postmodernism is deeply concerned with issues of oppression, these are presented as multiple. Allman (1988) argues that this is an example of how the dominant class prevents the dominated from understanding how they are dominated: "One such practice is an ideological process by which one type of oppression is played off against another and people consequently are led to focus on their own specific form of oppression rather than understanding how one form links to another to constitute a structure of oppression" (p.93).

Kane (2001) argues a similar effect is obtained in the postmodern understanding of civil society:

> Civil society is not a homogenous entity but is sometimes highly fragmented, with many groups pulling in different directions and the analysis (some might call it 'postmodernist') which simply sees these groups as expressions of different, disconnected identities, with no structural or economic explanation of how and why such differences arose - or how they inter-relate in a single, common reality - is one which, to my mind, only strengthens the hand of neoliberalist advocates (Kane, 2001, p.147).

A number of writers (eg. Ledwith (2001)) suggest that postmodernism, postcolonialism, etc., whilst concerned about oppression, all focus on symptoms rather than causes of oppression, and thus cannot actually help in overcoming them. Postmodernism's rejection of historicity has similar effects and intentions, by preventing any understanding of how the ways things are came to be, and hence the role of capitalism, class struggle and ideology.

Ultimately, postmodernism makes it not only impossible to understand our true situation, but (at least in theory) impossible to change it (Amin, 1997; Hammersley, 1995; Touraine, 2001). It is difficult to successfully change that which we cannot understand, particularly when it is presented as an amorphous, shapeshifting set of relatives. It is almost impossible to change anything when our own agency is in dispute, and when we have nothing in common with anyone else, except (possibly) briefly, transiently. As Žižek (2000) argues the standard postmodern leftist narrative is that there is no 'natural' correlation between an agent's social position and its tasks in political struggle (unlike Marxism's unique historical subject, the proletariat); thus, there is an irreducible plurality of struggles which shows an acceptance of capitalism as 'the only game in town', and a renunciation of any real attempt to overcome this.

> In terms of acting in the world, the derision of metatheory and the lack of any effective theory of agency undercuts efforts toward reasoned action and community and/or collective purpose. (Lather, 1991, p.40)

Thus, Ato Sekyi-Otu points out, postmodernism's political intention is to undermine resistance by the oppressed (cited in Pithouse, 2006b).

4.4.4 Defeat

An important (almost hegemonic?) sub-text of all current hegemonic ideology (neoliberalism, liberal democracy and postmodernism) is that of defeat (what Miliband (1994, cited in Martin, 2000, p.13) calls the 'hegemony of resignation'); a sub-text which has had enormous impact on left thinking (with a significant number of left intellectuals leading the move into postmodernism, including Laclau and Mouffe). Jameson (1994, cited in Giroux, 2005), for example, argues that it is now easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism: "The assumption of the permanence of capitalism is built into the daily thought and practice of people in this society" (Holloway, 2010a, p.53). Because of the hegemonic ideological construction of neoliberalism as common sense/the laws of nature, there is no critical vocabulary left to talk about the possibility of an end to capitalism (Giroux, 2005). Holloway (2010a) says that "millions throughout the world have given up the dream of a radically different type of society" (p.19).

Boron (2005) says that we are living in a dark age, a time of defeat. This has impacted on left-wing intellectuals, with a move from political economy to philosophy (i.e. the opposite of the move made by Marx himself) (McLellan (1979) agrees with this). Hence, Boron argues, the turn to structuralism, post-structuralism, semiology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and postmodernism. In this view, the system is everywhere, so there is no inside and there is no outside. Everything inside is an accomplice, and everything outside is unable to defeat it. Boron argues that Hardt and Negri's *Empire* is an example of this - Empire is omnipresent, so we are all inside. The main message of *Empire*, he argues, is defeat and surrender. Its fame is because there is nothing in it that is incompatible with the dominant (neoliberal) ideology - the death of the state, the rule of global logic, and the multitude - no longer people, much less the proletariat.

Touraine (2001) argues that "We are inundated by a ubiquitous discourse that comes to us from left and right alike....[that] we really have no choice but to adapt as best we can to the new conditions of international economic life" (p.12). Touraine argues that the ultra-left are even more responsible than the right for their "ideological scare-mongering" (Ibid, pp.16-17). Ultimately, in this view, even hegemony ceases to exist in any real sense. Žižek (2000) says that in Laclau's understanding, hegemony is "the representation, by a particular social sector, of an impossible totality" (Laclau cited in Žižek, 2000, p.93) - Žižek says this is too much like we should try, but we will fail.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that, because of the dialectic relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, shifts in the economic base as a result of the restructuring of capitalism have resulted in shifts in hegemony, at both a global and national level. Since Gramsci's time, we have seen processes of decolonisation and developmentalism, and of globalisation, all in response to crises of capitalism; and we now live in an era of neoliberalism, or advanced capitalism. These economic shifts have profoundly impacted on understandings of the role of the state and of civil society, understandings underpinned by hegemonic ideology. I argue that current hegemony consists of three interlocking ideologies - neoliberalism, liberal democracy, and certain strands of postmodernism. I also argue that these

ideologies are bolstered by force (as is always the case), but also by a near-hegemonic ideology of defeat which has become a sub-text of all current hegemonic ideology.

Obviously, however, given the extraordinary level of resistence to capital that we are encountering in our world on a daily basis, the attempts by capitalist hegemony to secure consent have failed. In the next chapter, I consider resistance to current hegemony, and some of the arguments that have arisen within this.

Chapter 5: Resistance

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered some of the political and economic changes that have taken place since Gramsci developed his theory of hegemony, arguing that an analysis of this was necessary in order to understand shifts in hegemony. I then undertook a detailed analysis of what I argue to be the three current interlocking hegemonic ideologies - neoliberalism; liberal democracy; and (certain strands of) postmodernism.

However, as Gramsci suggested, these are not monolithic; and are thus contested and resisted, as they have always been, both practically and ideologically. The problem is that not all resistance is necessarily counter-hegemonic; indeed, some might rather serve to consolidate existing power relations. Thus, for example, resistance against neoliberal capital might focus on liberal democratic methods to do this; or insist on a postmodern politics of difference. There is thus considerable debate about what exactly constitutes truly counter-hegemonic resistance. Since resistance usually rests on people's ideas about what is wrong, and what should be done about and how, this clearly relates to the issue of counter-hegemonic thinking, and hence 'unlearning' hegemony.

In this chapter, I thus look at the nature of current resistance, and at contemporary debates about what constitutes truly counter-hegemonic resistance. I begin by looking at the framing debate, that of possibility versus defeat. I then consider the key debate of who should be targeted, using Helliker's (2010) with/within/without typology, before looking at current discussions about the nature of current 'politics'. Finally, I explore debates about who should be the primary agent of resistance.

5.2 Gramsci on resistance

As discussed in Chapter 3, Gramsci presupposes conscious human agency. Thus, although ruling-class hegemony would attempt to educate people to consent, such hegemony was never total. Rather, it is continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged (Williams, 1977, p.112),

and has thus constantly to be remade. Meanwhile, working class hegemony needed to be built in an ongoing 'war of position'. Gramsci accorded intellectuals a key role in the creation and maintenance of both ruling class hegemony and the working class hegemony, arguing that, because everyone has the capacity to think, everyone 'carries on some form of intellectual activity' (Gramsci, 1971, p.9). Thus thinking resistance is always a possibility.

5.3 Resistance since Gramsci

Obviously, there has been resistance to oppression throughout the period since Gramsci was writing, as there was in his time; and such resistance continues. Resistance has taken and does take multiple forms, and has been and is being carried out in multiple sites. Debate continues about the potential for success of such resistance; and about what is the most effective way to resist. As I will discuss, such debates reveal both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic tendencies.

5.3.1 Possibility versus defeat

Whilst Gramsci's work is premised on the possibility (and not just the necessity) of change, as I have argued in Chapter 4, part of current hegemony is precisely a discourse of defeatism, the'hegemony of resignation' (Miliband, 1994, cited in Martin, 2000, p.13). Thus many of those who still say they want a different world, a more just and more equal and more fair world, are not convinced that this is possible (Boron, 2005; Giroux, 2005; Holloway, 2010a; Touraine, 2001). Whilst the historic mission of the left is to formulate, in theory and practice, a humanistic response to the challenge (Amin, 1997, p.7), as Giroux (2001, p.8) comments, many on the left appear utterly cynical and paralysed.

A variety of explanations have been offered to account for this, including the collapse of the Soviet Union, and China's shift to a capitalist economic system, and the subsequent triumphalism of the political Right; but also, as I discussed in the previous chapter, precisely the intention of neoliberal hegemony to secure consent by persuading us that there is no alternative. One major critique has thus been the failure of left intellectuals to adequately address the role of capital. McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005) argue that radical and

progressive scholarship has failed to offer a lucid and incisive critique of contemporary capitalism, or to engage with class exploitation and oppression, and have thus played a role in maintaining the status quo (pp.7-8). Allman and Wallis (1995) agree - they argue that we need to go back to Marx, Gramsci and Freire, to develop a dialectical theory of consciousness and a critical concept of ideology. We need to accept difference and diversity as important, but strongly promote the common needs and goals of humanity and the natural world (p.31). Holloway (2007, interview by Marina Sitrin, response 9) says that the great problem with the left is that it has let capital set the agenda, and then followed behind protesting. He believes that many of those on the left who do believe that change is possible misread such change - they see the left governments in South and Latin America, for example, as victories, where this is not in fact so.

Since ideology and discourse are precisely a site of struggle (Knight, Smith & Sachs, 1990, p.136), many commentators have emphasised the need to overturn the discourse of defeat. Citing Keenan (1997, p.2), Giroux (2001) emphasises the need for a willingness to engage in a "politics of possibility" (p.19). He argues that it is essential to use a language of critique but also of possibility, engagement, hope. He insists that change is possible. Thus neoliberalism has not "dissolved our capacity for political action" (Touraine, 2001, p.2). Lazarus (cited in Neocosmos, 2009a) also argues that 'possibility' is key. If this is true, then historicist and scientific thought is overturned (because it is only an investigation of what is, not what might be):

> The possible here is totally subordinated to the extant. In people's thought [on the other hand], the real is identified through the possible. The investigation of what exists is also involved, but is subordinated to the investigation of what could be...We are confronted with two different modes of thought: the first is analytical and descriptive, it asks questions regarding what exists....The second is prescriptive and has as its principal point of entry the question of the possible. (Lazarus, 2001, p.8 quoted in Neocosmos, 2009a, p.293)

This argument is echoed by Bloch, who asserts that "*Hope* is a political category" (Bloch, 1959/1996, quoted in Dinerstein, 2010, p.14); hope is not about some impossible utopia, but about the 'not-yet-become' that lives within reality. Hope is thus about the really possible:

> [the] really possible is everything whose conditions in the sphere of the object itself are not yet fully assembled, whether because they are still maturing, or above all because new conditions - though mediated by existing ones - arise from the entry of the real. (Bloch, 1959/1996, pp.196-197, quoted in Dinerstein, 2010, p.14)

Thus what is needed is precisely the kind of consciousness-changing for which Gramsci argued - a change in the consciousness of left intellectuals. There are, of course, many intellectuals who remain hopeful; and I would argue that these are to be found particularly amongst those who are actually actively engaged with real struggles of real people (as was Gramsci). Holloway (2007, interview by Marina Sitrin), for example, says "These are not miserable times. Perhaps that is the most important point" (response 1). The times may be awful, and frightening, but they are full of struggle, and full of hope. The difference is, as was the case with Gramsci, that such intellectuals are themselves politically active, and themselves accord to ordinary people both agency and thought. Thus, in a sense, they collapse the very notion of intellectual into that of Gramsci, that 'all men are intellectuals'. As Pithouse (2006b) argues, '*rebellion is only real when it prioritizes the flourishing of the agency and intelligence of the dominated*' (his emphasis, p.265); or in Gramscian terms, the invisible become historical protagonists.

Fortunately, as it turns out, the agency and intelligence of the dominated does not require the left intellectual to 'discover' it, since it is ontological. Cabral (1979) says "struggle is a normal condition of all living creatures of the world. All are in struggle, all struggle" (p.31); and the Zapatistas say, "we are perfectly ordinary people, therefore rebels" (quoted in Holloway, 2007, interview by Marina Sitrin, response 11).

Thus, despite the defeatism, despite the hegemony of neoliberalism, liberal democracy and postmodernism, there is resistance, as there has always been and will always be. Harding, as quoted in Giroux (2005), argues that the last 30 years have seen "a new wave of political

activism [which] has coalesced around the simple idea that capitalism has gone too far"
(Harding, 2001, para.28, quoted in Giroux, 2005, p.2). This resistance is amorphous, including
students, workers, intellectuals, artists. The resistance has grown in impetus with the collapse
of 'neoliberal showcases' such as Argentina, and the scandals and bankruptcies of major
corporations such as Enron (Giroux, 2005, p.3). These events, argues Giroux, are revealing
cracks in neoliberal hegemony and domination (p.3). Holloway (2010a, 2010b) has argued
that it is from precisely these cracks and fissures in capitalist domination that we must start
resisting; and the world is full of them. Indeed, a number of writers have commented on
growing levels of resistence, and in particular the rise of social movements, which I will
consider in some detail in Chapter 6.

However, as Amin (1997) warns, "The people's spontaneous responses to the degradation
they experience, however, are not necessarily any more helpful" (p.7) (than believing that
there is no alternative). Clearly, some kind of organisation of social forces is needed, albeit so
small it does not recognise itself as resistence, as Holloway (2010a) argues. "Without building
new social forces that express political power, the existing balance of social forces that sustain
and reproduce the status quo will remain more or less intact" (Butler & Hallowes, 2004, p.65).
Fanon (1973, cited in Wallerstein, 2009) takes this even further:

> For the person who is in the thick of the fight it is an urgent matter to decide on the
> means and tactics to employ: that is to say, how to conduct and organise the
> movement. If this coherence is not present there is only blind voluntarism, with the
> terrible reactionary risk it entails. (Fanon, 1973, quoted in Wallerstein, 2009, p.122)

Giroux (2005) emphasises the need to form alliances between groups, and to not just struggle
against, but also for. If we believe that "Another World is Possible"[12], we need to think about
what the future might be, and how we will achieve this (p.15). We need to rethink the entire
project of politics, and we need to do this democratically (Buck-Morss, 2003, pp.4-5, cited in
Giroux, 2005, p.15). This thinking must be based on theory, to help us to imagine a new
future. Giroux (2005) argues that we cannot act otherwise unless we think otherwise, and this
is why we need a new politics (p.16).

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[12] The slogan of the World Social Forum, discussed below.

Thus the question arises about what form resistance should take, and what strategies and tactics it should use, in order to be most effective in bringing about real change (although, as Holloway (2007, interview by Marina Sitrin) comments, "The reality is running so far ahead of any theoretical reflections we make" (response 12)).

5.3.2 Resistance to whom?

One of the most polemical current issues in thinking about resistance is the relationship of struggle to the state. Is the point of struggle to pressure the existing state to behave better, or create a new state through existing forms of 'democracy', for example by voting into power a socialist party, or a green party? Is it to overthrow the state through revolution? Or is it to create something different altogether, outside of the state?

Helliker (2010) identifies different arguments about struggles for change, which he refers to as "with, within and without" the state. He categorises the different arguments as follows:

Table 3: A typology of struggle vis-a-vis the state

Relation to state	With	Within	Without
Form	Liberal	Radical state-centric, eg. Marxist (this is the historically dominant form)	Radical society-centred, eg. Anarchist; 'Radical Libertarian'/ 'Libertarian Communist'; (Marxist) Autonomist

5.3.2.1 'With' the state

This view is presented as resistance to what is, as a call for reform, but in fact is really supportive of the status quo, being primarily about liberal democracy. This view rose to dominance in the 1970s and 1980s, i.e. as neoliberalism became entrenched. Unlike the Hegelian and Marxist understandings of state and civil society (where civil society is seen as the domain of bourgeois capitalism) in the 'sanitized liberal' view now dominant, civil society is "'seen almost in its entirety as a progressive social force" (Helliker, 2010, p.120), as something separate from the state, which puts pressure on the state to behave itself. So civil society is the driving force behind processes of democracy (Ibid.).

Helliker argues that this view grew out of the anti-statist rhetoric of neoliberalism, and is linked to the new imperialism. Capitalism is seen as the very foundation of a strong and vibrant civil society; no attempt is made to analyse civil society in terms of its class relations, and because civil society, state and the economy are portrayed as separate entities, "[capitalism's] totalizing logic is undetected and left un-analyzed" (p.122). Since democracy is lodged in state bodies, civil society organisations have no legitimate existence independent of the state - so, as Neocosmos has argued, politics outside of engaging the state is illegitimate (Helliker, 2010; Neocosmos, 2006, p.59). Struggle within this view is "Ultimately inside a state-civil society consensus about social order that reproduces class domination and undercuts processes of emancipation" (Helliker, 2010, p.118).

A major component of the 'with' the state view is the discourse of human rights. As I discussed in Chapter 4, many have seen this as part of the 'democratizing mission' (Shivji, 2006) accompanying the current hegemonic notion of democracy, i.e. representative parliamentary liberal democracy; Wa Mutua (2002, p.19, cited in Neocosmos, 2009b, p.9) argues that human rights are "today a civilizing crusade aimed primarily at the Third World". Within this understanding of democracy, the role of the state is (ostensibly) to protect to protect individual rights, but to interfere no further (Jarvis, 1993). Allman (1988) argues that the ideology of liberal democracy displaces lived experience with the notion that rights will free us all.

Neocosmos (2006) takes this argument a step further in a somewhat more contentious way. In the human rights discourse, he argues, citizenship is about subjects bearing rights which are conferred by the state (Neocosmos, 2009a). Such rights are presented as formal and universal, and hence ahistorical and decontextualised (Neocosmos, 2006, p.66). The fact that such rights are 'delivered' and 'guaranteed' by the state has a number of effects. Firstly, it legitimises the state (since it is only the state that can 'grant' rights), and makes politics state-focused (Ibid., p.67). Secondly, it conflates 'freedom' with rights, and there is thus a "permanent system of political demobilization and disempowerment" (Ibid., p.68). Of course, it also undermines any real notion of the universality of rights.

Chatterjee (2009, cited in Neocosmos, 2006), although agreeing that the human rights discourse is one of the main pillars of imperialism, argues that rather than legitimising the state, its intent is to undermine national sovereignty by creating rights that are beyond the state. Such rights (together with democracy) must be imposed by force, if necessary. However, as Neocosmos points out, people can only actually access such rights as 'citizens' of a state, and it is the state who decides whether or not someone is a citizen (Neocosmos, 2006, p.68). Thus rights, whilst presented as universal, are not.

This is not to suggest that mobilization around rights, such as the right to free HIV treatment, women's right to safety, disabled people's right to access, shackdwellers right to housing and services, is illegitimate - simply that such struggles do not ultimately change the power structures (and might in fact reinforce them) - although of course they might make people's daily lived experience a lot easier.

Thus overall the 'with' view is primarily part of the hegemonic project, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, although often presented as an alternative to it. This has happened most notably by proponents of the so-called "Third Way" (what Bond (2004, p.21) refers to as the post-Washington consensus, or 'lite' social democracy). This view is held by a number of UN agencies, by many international NGOs such as Oxfam, by noted intellectuals such as Anthony Giddens and Amartya Sen, and by financial agencies such as the Ford Foundation, Charles Stuart Mott foundation etc.. However, this view is also promoted by proponents of Third World nationalism (Bond, 2004, pp. 23-25).

Not surprisingly then, the real debate about actual change is between intellectuals and activists promoting alternatively the radical state-centred (within) view and the radical society-centred (without) view; and since the 1990s, this debate has become increasingly intense (Helliker, 2010).

5.3.2.2 'Within' the state

This is the view of most Marxist-aligned thinkers and activists. As we have already seen, Marxists vary widely along a spectrum between seeing the state as purely an instrument of

capital, and taking a more nuanced view in which the state is fraught with contradictions, conflicts, tensions, ambiguities, which can be tactically exploited by emancipatory forces. Civil society is deeply connected to the state, but is generally seen as an arena for struggle (a la Gramsci) (Helliker, 2010). The point of struggle is to overthrow the bourgeois state (through the revolutionary 'war of manoeuvre', and/or 'war of position') and create a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which will ultimately result in the end of the state altogether.

The critical issue then becomes who leads the struggle, and in particular the role of the party (discussed further below). Much of the critique of this view focuses on the changing role of the state over time under imperialism/in an increasingly globalised world. Many theorists supporting this view thus emphasise the necessity to start with the nation state, but not end the struggle there. This has particularly been the focus of postcolonial writers (although, of course, many earlier Marxists argued for an international worker revolution). Fanon, for example, emphasised national struggle, but within a universal understanding, so moving towards the global. He said that the most important thing an intellectual could do was to build his nation: "If this building is true...then the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values" (Wallerstein, 2009, p.123). Che Guevara (2002) also insisted on the internationalisation of the struggle: "We must definitely keep in mind that imperialism is a world system, the final stage of capitalism, and that it must be beaten in a great worlwide confrontation" (p.58), and Cabral (1979) emphasised the necessity to think in terms of Africa's struggle as a whole, not just the national struggle (p.48).

However, as Mamdani (1996) shows, the postcolonial nation state that does not undergo this universalising process can revert to the kind of liberal state discussed above. Mamdani argues that within those decolonised states which have attempted to deracialise civil society, there is generally a counter-struggle by colons and immigrant minorities (in the African state, typically Indians) to defend their racial privileges. However, because this cannot be couched in the language of racism, it is instead framed within the language of civil rights, individual rights, and institutional autonomy. This may be countered by the language of nationalism and social justice, so that there are two competing discourses - one of rights, and one of justice (p.20).

Other Marxist-aligned writers, whilst continuing to emphasise the importance of the state within a broader global struggle, argue that this should not be the only tactic. Thus Bond (2004), for example, argues that the national state is "the most potentially substantial counterweight to global capital in the world today" (p.229), although global capital must be seen and fought against at a global level as well, and alternatives (such as autonomism) should also be recognised. In other words, build from below, and deconstruct from the top down (p.232).

With the (supposed) attack on the nation state, and its (supposed) eroding under neoliberal capitalism, as discussed in Chapter 4, a number of theorists have also expressed doubts that the nation-state should form the basis of the discussion about change. Allman and Mayo (1997), for example, question Gramsci's focus on the nation state, in the light of current leverage of international capital over the modern state (p.8). Some writers, however, question whether the state has *ever* been an appropriate target. So Foucault (1991) argues that the tendency to reduce the state to the development of productive forces and the reproduction of relations of productions ensures that the state is seen as an absolutely essential target for attack:

> But the state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance. (Foucault, 1991, p.103)

And numerous intellectuals and activists thus argue for struggle 'outside' or 'without' the state.

5.3.2.3 Outside/ 'without' the state

Helliker (2010) identifies radical society-centric forms as proponents of this view - i.e. anarchist, 'radical libertarian'/ 'Libertarian communist' and (Marxist) autonomist. This view sees the state as inherently oppressive, whatever form it takes: "What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto?" (Deleuze & Guattari, quoted in Pithouse, 2006a, p.7)

This tradition "speaks not of acquiring state power (either through the electoral system or on an insurrectionary basis) but of developing counter-power (or even anti-power) inside the bowels of civil society despite (or '*without*') the state" (Helliker, 2010, p.119). So civil society is seen not in terms of counter-hegemony (a la Gramsci), but counter-power - i.e. civil society is an end in itself, not a means (p.7).

Democracy in this context is seen as direct, as something outside of the state and ballot-box, as something which involved "the re-socialization of power as counter-power" (Helliker, 2010, p.125) - a new kind of politics. This is discussed is some depth below.

Autonomism

Autonomism is influenced in part by anarchism (although anarchists would see themselves as distinct from autonomists). Anarchism comes in various forms (some of which emphasise the individual, others the collective), but all rest on the simple assumption of fundamental human decency, and that human beings strive to be free; and that the state is inherently unnecessary and harmful (Chomsky, 2005).

Autonomist Marxism, a distinct current of Marxism, arose in Italy in the 1960s, becoming extremely popular during the 1970s. This school argued for autonomy from the both the state and 'the party', and for a broader notion of the working class beyond the point of production (Gibson, 2006, p.30). This created the possibility for political action and revolutionary subjects outside of the factory - i.e. social movements as agents of change. Theorists like Melucci (discussed further in Chapter 6) were heavily influenced by this understanding, as was Negri (co-author of *Empire*), who moved the debate away from Marxism per se.

There are now a number of writers, activists and movements operating from and within this position. Holloway (2007, interview by Marina Sitrin), a leading proponent of this view, argues that it is very clear that the world cannot be changed through the state, although it is difficult to say that changing the world will have no relation to the state at all. The question, he says, is how to deal with the implications of contact with the state, but not fall into the state as a form of organisation.

Holloway uses the example of left governments that have come to power in South and Latin America (for example in Brazil, Venezuela and Bolivia). He says such governments are a reflection and response to struggle; but are an attempt to statify the struggle - "which means of course to de-fuse the struggle and channel it into forms of organisation compatible with the reproduction of capital" (Holloway, 2007, interview by Marina Sitrin, response 1):

> In the best of cases, there is an expropriation of a revolution: the government carries out many of the aims of the movement, but it does it on behalf of the movement, telling the movement in effect to stay at home or convert itself into the loyal supporter of the government. (response 3)

In his celebrated book, *Change the World without Taking Power* (2010a), Holloway argues that changing the world through the state "is the paradigm that has dominated revolutionary thought for more than a century" (p.11). The problem is that it does not work; and it does not work because it cannot work; and hence both the reformist ('with') and the revolutionary ("within") strategy are doomed to fail. The reformist position because

> it attributes to the state an autonomy of action that it just does not have. In reality, what the state does is limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations. Crucially, this web of social relations centres on the way on which work is organised. The fact that work is organised on a capitalist basis means that what the state does and can do is limited and shaped by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organization of which it is part (Holloway, 2010a, p.13).

The revolutionary position, on the other hand, see the state as an instrument of the capitalist class: "like a hammer, the state is now wielded by the capitalist class in their own interest, while after the revolution it will be wielded by the working class in *their* interests" (Ibid.). They thus isolate the state from civil society and abstract it from the web of power relations within which it is embedded (p.14). In addition, social relations under capitalism do not coincide with national borders, because they are mediated by money, which de-territorialises such relations; so targeting the state simply does not make sense.

Holloway argues that far more inspirational than left governments are the social movements, and particularly those more autonomous movements, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico (discussed further below). It is essential that such movements maintain their own logic and forms of organisation, no matter what government is in power. With the state constantly attempting to determine the framework for conversation, however, "Can there be a relationship to the state that still allows autonomy?" (Holloway, 2007, interview by Marina Sitrin, response 8). Holloway thus argues for a strategy of 'against-and-beyond the state'. The emphasis of this, he says, is the beyond, is getting on with the movement's own project, and not being caught up with the state's project. This beyond must set, as far as possible, the direction and pace of the against (response 9).

The Zapatistas are a frequently cited example of the autonomist position. Founded in 1983 in the Lacandon jungle in Chiapas in South East Mexico, the Zapatistas became globally known on 1st January 1994, when they staged an uprising in protest of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), which came into operation on that day. By 2007, there were 38 self-organised and self-governing Autonomous Rebel Zapatista Councils, covering 1 100 communities (Dinerstein, 2010, p.10). The Zapatistas overtly question any obvious answers or pre-decided route, using as their slogan "asking we walk", or "we make the road by walking". They criticise vanguardism and hierarchical structures, and question the authentic subject of historical change: "no ontologically-pure transcendental subject (notably the working class) exists" (Helliker, 2010, p.125). Rather, there are diverse subjectivities in diverse struggles, which has led, mistakenly, to the Zapatistas being called postmodernist. In fact, the Zapatistas emphasise the universality of human suffering and struggle. In 1996, the Zapatistas held the International Convention against Neoliberalism and for Humanity. They emphasise dignity, identity, culture, territory and spirituality (Helliker, 2010, p.126), whilst quite explicitly rejecting neoliberalism: "Opposing neoliberalism, fighting against it, is not just one political or ideological option, it is a question of the survival of humanity" (Subcomandante Marcos, 2001, p.7). The Zapatistas believe that democracy is a way of life, not a system of representation (Dinerstein, 2010, p.11), and practice direct democracy through people's assemblies.

Another frequently cited example of autonomism is the piquetero movement in Argentina. The piquetero movement consists of a variety of local groups of the 'socially excluded', who organised themselves as a result of unemployment, poverty and repression arising from neoliberal structural reforms (Dinerstein, 2010, pp.1), and get their name from road blockades and pickets they set up to make the normal business of capitalism unworkable; although the factory occupation movement is also a major component of the piqueteros. Like the Zapatistas, the emphasis is on human dignity, with many piquetero organisations claiming that dignity, rather than employment, is the driving force behind them. They use the motto "Work, dignity and social change". They provide a fundamental critique of capitalist work and its social relations (Dinerstein, 2010, p.7). Khorasanee (2007) also argues that fundamental to the piquetero politics is "the reclaiming of direct democracy and the rejection of capitalist norms" (p.766). She says that the long-term goal of MTD Solano, the particular piquetero group with whom she works, "was and remains to be completely autonomous of the state" (Ibid.).

Dinerstein (2010) argues that autonomism requires not just a rethink of the importance of the state, but also a rethink of civil society. Whilst liberal theories see civil society and state as separate but contiguous, autonomism sees civil society as a sphere of self-empowerment, in which the power of the state is superfluous (p.13):

> Latin American social movements perceive collective action by civil society actors as replacing rather than complementing the state and, therefore, they put forward an explanation or implicit critique of 'civil society' and of the distinction between civil society and the state. (Dinerstein, 2010, p.15)

She also believes that these autonomous movements are essential in imploding the ideology of defeat: "By pushing 'possibility' further and demanding the 'impossible' autonomous movements widen the universe of what is politically thinkable and possible" (Dinerstein, 2010, p.13).

A critical concept in current autonomism is counter-power. This concept has been increasingly used by autonomists leaning towards a postmodernist (rather than Marxist) position. In these terms, counter-power is "the act of producing situational knowledge that affirms an alternative

to capitalism; negating any form of power that can 'dis-organise' the 'society of control'; and affirming an alternative consciousness based on horizontal and multiple affective social bonds" (Khorasanee, 2007, p.767). It is "the point at which the activist can start to think in a fundamentally different way" (Ibid.).

Helliker (2010), however, warns that whilst society-centred theories do allow for a different understanding of civil society, they often underplay domination in civil society, and romanticise the possibilities of autonomy. Gibson (2006, p.16) has also pointed out that the quest for autonomy is not necessarily progressive.

Radical democracy

'Radical democracy' is now espoused by a range of left and post-structuralist thinkers, including Laclau, Mouffe, Judith Butler, and William Connolly, and was drawn on by Hardt and Negri in their work. The concept was originally articulated by Laclau and Mouffe in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, published in 1985, in which these (formerly) Marxist thinkers show the influence of emerging postmodernism (as discussed in the previous chapter). Helliker fails to discuss radical democracy in his model, possibly because it is extremely difficult to categorise using his with/within/without model. This is because radical democracy, whilst being 'without', in the sense that it fails entirely to engage the state in any sense, is really also 'with' in the sense that it does not, like anarchy or autonomism, involve any real shift in power; and thus ultimately retains hegemony. Some of its proponents have also varied considerably in their thinking about the state over time.

At the heart of radical democracy is the argument that in every political context, there are a series of struggles (workers, feminists, gay, anti-racist, etc.), because there is plurality, and a variety of subject positions, all of which have been discursively constituted. These different struggles remain subordinate as long as they do not establish a 'chain of equivalence' with one another. This might happen if one or more of the subject positions articulates a relation to others. If they do, then relations of subordination are transformed into relations of oppression, and a radical democratic subjectivity begins to emerge (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp.153-154).

The radical democracy perspective has been extensively critiqued by, inter alia, Geras (1987), Holst (2002), Žižek (2000) and Wenman (2009). Much of the critique centres on the concept of multiple equal struggles, and the transfer of historical social agency from the working class to new social movements. Ultimately, as Geras (1987) asserts, radical democracy "could support *any* kind of politics" (p.77). Geras (1987) is also scathing of their reading of Marx and Marxist thinking, which he says is crass and disrespectful, and argues that they deliberately misrepresent Gramsci: "...once Laclau and Mouffe have finished with the concept of hegemony, it is, of course, quite incompatible with any kind of Marxism at all" (p.59).

Helliker (2010) warns that the state-centric versus society-centric options are often seen as competing, or mutually exclusive; in fact, although one may dominate in any initiative for change, there may be more than one, and these may be entwined (pp.118-119). Thus, for example, the Brazilian MST (landless rural workers' movement)[13] can be seen as both autonomous, and as dealing with the state, whilst some commentators (eg. De Souza, 2009, cited in Helliker, 2010) have criticised it for being vanguardist and hierarchical (Helliker, 2010, p.126).

This within the 'without' position there are ideas that could be considered to be absolutely counter-hegemonic, in their rejection of neoliberalism and liberal democracy, and their universal humanism. However, there are obviously also tendencies within the 'without' position that reinforce a politics of difference; and thus do not constitute a clearly counter-hegemonic form of resistance.

5.3.3 Resistance how?

Clearly, whether or not one is engaging the state, and how, impacts on the strategies and tactics one might use to bring about change. This is the realm of politics, but a very different politics depending on the goal. Helliker differentiates between 'the political' and 'politics'.

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[13]   MST was formed in 1984, with three main aims: land, land reform and just society (Kane, 2001, p.92). Operating in 22 out of Brazil's 26 states, MST identifies land that is failing to fulfill its 'social function' as required by the country's Constitution. If lobbying for use of this land fails, the land is invaded, and an encampment set up. By 1996, 146 000 families were living in 1 564 MST settlements (Ibid., pp.94-95).

'The political' in Helliker's understanding is the realm of the modern state, and has the function of "flooding and capturing civil society" (Helliker, 2010, p.126). 'Politics', on the other hand, is politics beyond/unbound by/at a distance from the state - i.e. the society-centred option; what Holloway refers to as the 'interstitial revolution', that does not obtain its meaning or relevance in reference to the state (Holloway, 2010a, pp.219-220): "Authentic emancipation involves exploring and activating latent potentialities in civil society as a means to social empowerment, without necessarily being directly and openly anti-hegemonic vis-á-vis the ruling bloc as understood in the Gramscian sense" (Helliker, 2010, p.130).

Held, cited in Martin (2000), argues that 'politics' is essential for real change to happen:

> The difficulties of the modern world will not be solved by surrendering politics, but only by the development and transfer of 'politics' in ways that will enable us more effectively to shape and organise human life. We do not have the option of 'no politics'. (Held quoted in Martin, 2000, p.12)

Helliker (2010) gives as one example of active 'politics' the Colectivo Situaciones. This is a collective that grew out of a student formation in Argentina, that has worked closely over more than a decade with Latin America social movements, including the piqueteros (Cardoso, n.d.). They argue that the process of true politics includes the experience of coming to understand one's self in the universal, transforming the "self" into the "common" (Helliker, 2010, p.131). Colectivo Situaciones argue that the politics of state-centred change does not address the question of building a new humanity (Cardoso, n.d.).

Neocosmos (2009a) has written extensively about this kind of politics, which he calls the 'politics of the possible', drawing on the work of Sylvain Lazarus, a French political theorist. Neocosmos is critical of writers whose critique of neoliberalism is confined to economics: "This relative lack of attention to neo-liberal politics has had the unfortunate effect of restricting the development of an alternative popular-democratic discourse" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.265). Thus, he says, left radical writers have adopted liberal conceptions of human rights, political parties, and civil society, an equating of politics with the state, and an unproblematic notion of the 'rule of law' (Ibid.). Democracy becomes the act of voting.

Neocosmos (2009b) is emphatic that "there is no subject of history" (p.3) - neither the working class nor the multitude will do. Thus, "to think an emancipatory politics without thinking a historical subject is precisely what social theory must help us achieve today" (Ibid.). This kind of politics is a practice, something that enables universals (freedom, equality, justice - i.e. precisely those things rejected as impossible by postmodernism) to be achieved (Ibid., p.12). In Neocosmos' conception, *anyone* can be the subject of politics; but the point of departure of the 'politics of the possible' is thought. Lazarus argues that there is no correspondence between subjective and objective, so "the possibility exists that people's subjectivities - thought - can assert something different from what is, an alternative to existing" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.285):

> To say that politics is of the order of thought is an attempt to conceive of politics after the end of classism and within another space than that of the state; but first and foremost, it is to say that politics is not given in the space of an object, be it that of the 'state' or that of 'revolution'. (Lazarus, 1996, p.13, quoted in Neocosmos, 2009b, p.265)

Whilst people investigate what exists, in Lazarus' thought this is subordinated to the investigation of what could be (Lazarus, 2001, p.8, cited in Neocosmos, 2009a, p. 285). Lazarus insists that people think; thus "anyone is able to think politically" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.286). However, true politics (i.e. 'Politics of the possible') is rare, and quite explicitly excludes politics related to the state, because such politics subordinates true political consciousness to that of the state. Thus within the parliamentary mode, the assumption is not that people think, but that they have opinions regarding the state, and thus voting is an essential political act (i.e. to express opinion). In Lazarus' opinion, then, true politics can only happen beyond both the state and civil society (not spatially or institutionally, but subjectively). Within this understanding, "Democracy ...no longer refers to a set of state institutions" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.291).

Lazarus', and Neocosmos', work is as much about agency as anything else, and this is something that radical writers increasingly insist on. Allman (1988) thus argues for "a concept of agency in which critical and systematic thought is interwoven with action in the creation

and continuous recreation of our social and material conditions" (p.85). Touraine (2001) is very critical of the notion that victims are powerless. He says that most underprivileged people are able to critique, and are able to take action (pp.2-3). This understanding of who can think, and how, is itself a terrain of political struggle:

> The leaders are saying that it is them who know everything and that the majority of the people can't think. We are saying that everyone can think. (Activist, Mandela Park anti-eviction campaign, 2003, cited in Desai & Pithouse, 2003, p.17)

This kind of politics allows a different conception of citizenship than that of human rights discourse: "Active citizenship arguably enables the second most important right after the right to life, namely the right to think" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.278). It is also "always founded on universals of justice, freedom and equality" (Neocosmos, 2009b, p.4); i.e. precisely what is rejected by the identity politics/radical pluralism of postmodernism and radical democracy, on the grounds that such universality is not possible, and hence any claims to such universality are necessarily exclusionary. Such claims about the impossibility of universality have extended not only to re-readings of Gramsci, as we have seen, but also of other writers who explicitly insisted on universality. Fanon, for example, was discovered in the late 1980s by various identity and post-colonial movements, who used him to support their identity politics (Wallerstein, 2009, p.118). This is ironic since, as Wallerstein's argues, Fanon was explicitly against identity politics, as he makes clear in his closing paragraph of the *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008):

> I, the man of colour, want only this:
> That the tool never possess the man. That the enslavement of man by man cease forever. That is, of one by another. That it be possible for me to discover and to love man, wherever he may be.
> The Negro is not. Any more than the white man. (Fanon, 1952/2008, p.180)

Thus clearly critical to the truly political 'politics of the possible' is an understanding of agency as the capacity for thought and for action; and an insistence on the universality of oppression and struggle. These are themes which Hallward (2009) has explored, using the

concept of 'the will of the people': "By 'will of the people' I mean a deliberate, emancipatory and inclusive process of collective self-determination" (p.17). Such a process is voluntary and autonomous, and privileges the will of the people over forms of knowledge and authority: "the alternative remains much the same: either an insistence on the primacy of popular self-determination, or a presumption that the people are too crude, barbaric or childlike to be capable of exercising a rational and deliberate will" (Hallward, 2009, p.18).

Hallward argues that it is the latter argument (that people are incapable) that tends to dominate, and that where people assert their will, strategies are used to criminalize, divide and then dissolve the will of the people (Ibid.). The people, in Hallward's understanding, "are simply those who, in any given situation, formulate, assert and sustain a fully common (and thus inclusive and egalitarian) interest, over and above any divisive or exclusive interest" (Ibid.). So examples of 'the will of the people' might be a national liberation struggle, or a movement for social justice. The 'will of the people' is fundamentally different from vanguardism: "It's not a matter of imposing an external will or awareness upon an inert people, but of people working to clarify, concentrate and organize their own will" (p.22). Nor is it about parliamentary politics, representation, legitimacy, because "an exercise in political will involves taking power, not receiving it" (p.23). It proceeds only in the face of resistance (p.25); and proceeds only insofar as it involves not just thinking, but doing (p.25). Finally, it must be about everyone: "Realization of the will of (the) people is oriented towards the universalization of its consequences....I can only will my own freedom by willing the freedom of all" (p.26).

Hallward calls this kind of politics 'dialectical voluntarism' (p.17), which he says was emphasised by Marx, and captured in the opening sentence of his rules of the First International, "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class themselves" (cited in Hallward, 2009, p.18), and built on by Gramsci's insistence on agency/will. However, "contemporary critical theorists tend to dismiss the notion of will as a matter of delusion or deviation" (p.20). Hallward thus argues for a return to Fanon, Guevara, Robespierre etc.

Hallward's argument is an important one, because it rejects much of current dominant political thinking; it also requires us to accept a sobering fact, as Hallward argues: If will is determinant in the first instance, "then the most far-reaching forms of oppression involve the collusion of the oppressed....in the end it is the people who empower their oppressors" (p.26).

5.3.4 Resistance by whom?

Clearly, who is seen as the most appropriate agency for undertaking struggle is closely linked to the 'politics' of this struggle - and thus, to its relation to the state, and its understanding of agency. In addition, for the most part some level of organisation is seen as necessary, and the form of this organisation is affected by debates about the state and about politics.

5.3.4.1 The working class

Marx believed that the driving force of social change was class struggle. As we have seen, he argued that the contradictions inherent within capitalism would lead to the creation of a proletariat which would rise up against the bourgeois class and seize control of the forces of production, creating a socialist (classless) society. However, a key issue was that of the working class becoming conscious of its own oppression. For Marx, this process was both necessary and inevitable:

> A distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict [i.e. that between the material productive forces of society and the existing relations of production] and fight it out. (Marx cited in Gramsci, 1971, p.138)

Marx thus distinguished between a 'class in itself', and a 'class of itself'. A 'class in itself' is simply those who have a particular relationship to the forces of production. A 'class of itself', however, is the recognition by them of this relationship as one of exploitation and oppression; i.e. with a class consciousness and class solidarity (Haralambos, 1985, p.43).

The real issue is how this process of becoming conscious happened. Marx believed it was an almost inevitable process, as the contradictions within capitalism became increasingly intense. For many early Marxists, however, someone else had to play a role - i.e. the working class could not on its own become conscious of its own oppression. Usually, this someone else was an intellectual, of the bourgeoisie. Kautsky saw intellectuals (refugees from the bourgeoisie) as providing theory and ideology and often leadership to the non-intellectual workers. The relationship was thus a fairly mechanistic one. Lenin, however, rejected this, arguing that within the revolutionary party, any distinctions between workers and intellectuals would be obliterated. As we have seen, Gramsci took this a step further by arguing that the workers themselves could have their own intellectuals, since everyone was an intellectual (Gramsci, 1971, p. 9).

Many anti-colonial struggles also emphasised the centrality of the working class; however, such arguments often emphasised the need both for alliances between the working class and other groups, and for the struggle to be internationalised. This was because colonised countries had generally not developed the kind of industrial proletariat of the Western industrialized nations. Guevara (1965/2002) thus argued that existing socialist countries should provide financial assistance to countries starting on the road to liberation, because proletarian internationalism was essential (pp.18-19). Cabral (1979, p.133) stressed that the working class could not carry out its mission without allying with other exploited sections of the population, in particular the peasantry, but also the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. Fanon (1961/2001) believed that nationalist struggles would have to move beyond the urbanised working class, skilled labour, and civil society, and build alliances with the peasantry, particularly the uprooted peasantry on the fringes of towns.

For all of these anti-colonial writers, consciousness about the reality of their own exploitation was essential for the working class to even begin to bring about change. Cabral (1979) thus argued that "to the extent to which [humankind] acquires consciousness of reality, to the extent in which reality influences his consciousness, or creates his consciousness, man can acquire the potential to transform reality, little by little" (Cabral, 1979, p.45).

However, Cabral argued, "events have shown that the only social stratum capable both of having consciousness in the first place of the reality of imperialist domination and of handling the State apparatus inherited from that domination is the native petty bourgeoisie" (p.134). Clearly, this presented a problem, since the ultimate aim was to overthrow the class system, and not merely to end imperialism; and the petty bourgeoisie in any case simply did not have the economic strength to force change. Thus the petty bourgeoisie would have either to become the bourgeoisie, or commit class suicide - and which they chose depended on the development of a revolutionary consciousness (p.134). Fanon stressed the need for a mediating 'force of intellect' to prevent struggles by the lumpenproletariat from becoming reactionary. He also insisted that decolonization needed to take place on both a political-economic and psychological level in order to prevent neocolonialism/domination by a comprador class (Gibson, 2008, pp.701-702).

The emphasis on the working class as the essential historical agent for revolutionary change continues amongst many Western Marxist thinkers. Mulhern (1984) claims that only the working class is the "indispensable agency of socialism", and Miliband (1985) agrees (both cited in Slater, 1985, pp.12-13). Holst (2002) argues that, whilst the working class is indispensable, it needs to form alliances with the petty bourgeoisie:

> This class is pivotal. It is precisely with this class, along with the peasantry (where appropriate), that alliances must be formed in order that a working-class party can be a vanguard (Lenin) and lead (Gramsci) the fight against capitalism ....[But] without working-class leadership we are condemned to petit-bourgeois, reform-oriented social movements and limiting civil society theory. (pp.75-76)

Much of the critique of the working class as an historic agent of change hinges on the changes to the working class itself as a result of late/neoliberal capitalism. Therborn (2008) shows that industrial employment peaked in the second half of 1960s, with the peak of the industrial working class movement occurring in 1970s (i.e. just as neoliberalism began to be introduced as economic policy in the industrialised states of the West). Since then, however, there has been a fairly dramatic process of deindustrialisation, including in Third World industrial centres (p.18). By the late 1990s, one billion workers representing one-third of the world's

labour force were either unemployed and underemployed - most of them in the South (Davis, 2006, p.199). Clearly, "the great epoch of the industrial working-class has come to an end" (Therborn, 2008, p.19).

Thus some writers have argued for a shift from the point of production to the point of consumption as the focus of struggle. Buroway (2003, cited in Ballard, Habib & Valodia, 2006b, p.410), for example, points out that currently labour does not have the universalism that the unrestrained market does, and "it is the market, therefore, that offers possible grounds for counterhegemony". Harvey (cited in Ballard et al, 2006b, p.411) also argues that most struggles are now outside the arena of production, and there is thus a need to forge links between struggles related to accumulation through dispossession and struggles at the point of production.

However, the critique has also focused on the fact that this view is largely Western. Thus Slater (1985), looking at Latin America, says that "what is...striking about the Mulhern and Miliband perspective [discussed above] is its eurocentric, universalist inclination to sustain conclusions about revolution and socialism without drawing on the experiences of societies on the capitalist periphery, where revolutions against the dominance of capital have actually taken place" (p.15).

Within South Africa, there is a strong tradition of seeing the working class as the agent of change. However, a number of commentators now question this, because neoliberalism has changed the nature of labour, and because trade union organisation is no longer radical. Barchiesi (2006), for example, says that, although there is a high level of unionization in the country, and trade unions played a key role in the anti-apartheid struggle, trade unions in South Africa have been deradicalised by NEDLAC [National Economic Development and Labour Council], BEE [Black Economic Empowerment], co-option into government/private sector etc. Unions have thus had very little influence on macroeconomic policy, as shown by the adoption of GEAR (pp.220-221). Neocosmos (2009b) questions whether there is any point in clinging to productivist theories of change in South Africa when 43% of the population is unemployed.

5.3.4.2 The multitude

Over the last few decades, the concept of the 'multitude' has been increasingly drawn on, particularly by those favouring an postmodernist autonomist or radical democratic position. As we have seen, Hardt and Negri (2001) argue that the multitude are the most capable of undertaking the task of creating counter-Empire, because of their ontology (being, loving, transforming, creating) and hence their innate power to act (p.355). Hardt and Negri never actually make it clear who 'the multitude' is (Boron, 2005), and this is the basis of much of the critique that has been levelled against their work; but it has also been adopted by advocates of radical democracy and postmodernist autonomism.

The concept of multitude rests on a particular understanding of the subject, heavily influenced by postmodernism. Mouffe (1979) argues that the subject is produced by ideology, not by class position (pp.187-88). There are thus more positions than class, including eg. sex, family, race etc. (p.171). Ideological struggle is the process of disarticulation and rearticulation of given ideological elements, not simply between two classes (p.193). Thus, as Barchiesi (2006, p.218) states, "the concept of multitude rejects an ontology of the "social subject" presupposed as a central, immanent actor of change, as in discourses of the working class as "general class", or of the "general will" of the people" (Barchiesi, 2006, p.218); and Khorasanee (2007) calls the multitude "a situational form of inhabiting the world and questioning oneself about the numerous possibilities for personal and collective development" (p.771); thus there is no higher or exclusive form of resistance.

So the 'multitude' is quite explicitly not the Marxist proletariat, and is indeed a reaction to the Marxist argument of the centrality of the working class, and to universalism. Rejecting the working class as the historical agent of change means that new agents of change are possible; and new sites of struggle. There are now a multiplicity of sites of contestation, of events and situations, rather than a cumulative path to transformation (Barchiesi, 2006, p.219). Politics can be seen in broader terms, and new approaches to the problem of power, a la Foucault, can be devised (Mouffe, 1979, p.201).

However, as Boron (2005) argues, Hardt and Negri define 'the multitudes' so vaguely that the multitude is simply "an amorphous mass of highly creative singularities" (Boron, 2005, p.88), and could thus include anyone, even the agents of exploitation and repression. The potential for the multitude to be reactionary rather than progressive is also raised by Pithouse (2006b, p.259), who says that Negri's contention that the multitude is the answer is wrong; the multitude are hardly ever for communism (p.260).

Even if the multitude could be a progressive agent of change, as with the working class, the issues of consciousness and organisation arise. Barchiesi (2006) concedes that this is one of the problems with the concept: "...the multitude seems unable to provide an explanation for its own politicization and for the conditions that make political action possible" (p.219). Nash (2005) says that although Touraine, Laclau and Mouffe, and Melucci, "opened the stage of history to many new actors" (p.10) by drawing attention to the varied oppressions suppressed by a class analysis, they emphasise the individual, and often minimise the collective base. Khorasanee (2007) emphasises the importance of moving from the individual to the collective, particularly because the state and the market start with the individual. The collective, in her conception, is affective community bonds on a daily basis. She says this is very difficult (p.771-772). Glaswegian housing activist Helen Martin says "I think it is deliberate that everything has been individualised", and argues for collective action (Martin & McCormack, 1999, p.261). Yet, as Boron (2005) asserts there is nothing in *Empire* about how the organisation of the multitude could happen (pp.96-97).

5.3.4.3 "The party"

The two forms of collective organisation most often referred to are the political party and the social movement, which I consider in depth in the following chapter. Currently, for those operating 'with' the state the party necessarily remains the most critical political actor (since this is how liberal democracy works); whilst for those operating 'without' the state, the party is simply irrelevant. Thus the revolutionary party is largely an issue for those working 'within', although even here it remains contested.

As we have seen, for Marxist theorists, in order for the working class to take on their revolutionary role, they needed to develop a revolutionary consciousness. Often, the task of developing this consciousness was given to intellectuals, often within the Party - i.e. to some kind of vanguard. Within Marxism, there has been an ongoing debate about the relationship between the party and the proletariat. Even those who believed in the automatic breakdown of capitalism during the time of the Second International still emphasised the role of the Party in developing a revolutionary consciousness among the working class (McLellan, 1979, pp.332-333). Lenin's arguments about the need for a vanguardist party became increasingly popular as the predicted clear polarisation of society failed to happen and the working class in the West took on an increasingly reformist agenda, and became dominant after the 1917 Russian revolution. (Ibid, p.333).

Meanwhile, within colonial and post-colonial struggles, the Party was considered essential. Guevara (2002) called for the "development of a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values. Society as a whole must be converted into a gigantic school" (p.35). However this did not mean that there was no need for a vanguard. "Clearing the way [for proletarian internationalism] is the vanguard group, the best among the good, the party" (Guevara, 2002, p.46). This is because "the vanguard group is ideologically more advanced than the mass; the latter understands the new values, but not sufficiently" (Ibid., p.36). Cabral (1979) also argued for a vanguard: "for a struggle really to go forward, it must be organised and it can only really be organized by a vanguard leadership" (p.84). This vanguard was essential, because the revolution could not rely on the working class or peasantry in the colonial struggle, since the working class was embryoinic, and the peasantry too bound within their economic, social and cultural situation. Thus only the vanguard could have the consciousness of the distinction between direct domination and indirect neocolonialism and ensure that the population understood this so that the struggle would not be subverted (p. 132). However, the vanguardist leadership needed to ensure that they were always acting on behalf of the those they led:

> A people's struggle is effectively theirs if the reason for that struggle is based on the aspirations, the dreams, the desire for justice and progress of the people themselves and not on the aspirations, dreams or ambitions of half a dozen persons. (p.75)

However, many postcolonial writers have commented on the tendency of the Party, with liberation, to became an agent of the capitalist class. Thus Fanon warned that 'the party' becomes 'The Party', which substitutes itself for the people (Helliker, 2010, p.128): "The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical" (Fanon, 1970, p.165, quoted in Wallerstein, 2009, p.122). For Fanon, it was essential to move immediately from national consciousness to political and social consciousness (Wallerstein, 2009, p.122).

Within the West, the need for a vanguard was used to implement a violent revolution from above in the Soviet Union, and in China under Mao, the party became increasingly divorced from the people, despite the Cultural Revolution. This led to a growing disillusionment in the West, so that a lack of faith in the revolutionary potential of the working class became evident in both the Frankfurt school and structuralist Marxism, as we have seen. More recently, the development of socialist states in Latin and South America have revived an interest in the revolutionary potential of the state (although this has been questioned by some, as we have seen). Olivera (2009), in commenting on the new left government of Bolivia, is very critical of the role political parties since the celebrated water war of 2000:

> The Constituent Assembly was dead from the onset, because it developed and run by political parties instead of ordinary and working class people. Moreover, it handed the work of creating new structures and institutions over to the political parties. This became a huge contradiction because we fought for a Constituent Assembly precisely because of the failure of political parties to be intermediaries between citizens and the government. (Olivera, 2009, The Constituent Assembly and the New Institutional Framework section, para.1)

5.3.4.4 The role of intellectuals

As we have seen, Gramsci argued that all people are intellectuals, although they might not function as such. He reserved an important place for intellectuals in his understanding of hegemony, in both creating and supporting bourgeois hegemony, and potentially working class hegemony. Thus even traditional intellectuals, those who committed class suicide and

threw in their lot with the working class, could ally with the party of the working class to bring about revolutionary change. The import of Gramsci's argument is that intellectuals are, as Said (1994, p.16) puts it, "*of* their time" - they are not, and cannot be, neutral. They cannot escape into pure art, or pure thought, or disinterested objectivity, or transcendental theory, despite any claims they might make to the contrary (Ibid.).

C. Wright Mills (cited in Said, 1994), writing in 1944, emphasised the critical role of intellectuals in politics:

> The independent artist and intellectual are among the few remaining personalities equipped to resist and to fight the stereotyping and consequent death of genuinely living things. Fresh perception now involves the capacity to continually unmask and smash the stereotypes of vision and intellect with which modern communications.... swamp us. These worlds of mass-art and mass-thought are increasingly geared to the demands of politics. That is why it is in politics that intellectual solidarity and effort must be centred. If the thinker does not relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle, he cannot responsibly cope with the whole of lived experience. (Mills quoted in Said, 1994, p.16)

Fanon, writing in a colonial/post-colonial context, also stressed the importance of lived experience, arguing that the "laziness of intellectuals" was the "greatest threat" to Africa's independence (cited in Gibson, 2006, p.35). This laziness meant a lack of reflection on people's lived experiences, and thus a lack of ideas and new concepts (Ibid.). However, the intellectual still had a role in struggle, but must neither legislate for people or be a 'yes-man' for the people. Fanon believed that radical intellectuals and middle-class militants brought very valuable stuff to the struggle (Pithouse, 2006b, p.271).

The importance of intellectuals as intellectuals (i.e. as a group separate from the rest of society) is still emphasised by many today. As we have seen, much intellectual activity over the last thirty years has served to create and support bourgeois/capitalist hegemony, either by promoting ideas which further or fail to critique neoliberal capitalism, or by promoting defeat in the face of it; but this does not negate the potential role of intellectuals in the 'politics of the

possible'. Touraine (2001) categorises intellectuals as those that:

1.   concentrate on critiquing the ruling system (eg. Althusser, Sarte, Fanon, Foucault). These intellectuals hold no belief in agency[14].
2.   identify with a particular struggle, becoming an organic intellectual or ideologue.
3.   analyse and understand by looking for the meaning behind actions (which they may support or oppose), and who believe in conscious and effective actors.
4.   Are utopians, who identify with new trends and make them more visible.

Touraine argues that the only group of intellectuals in decline today are those ideologues with organic links to a political organisation (Touraine, 2001, pp.107-111). Amin (1997), unlike Touraine, divides current social thinkers into only two categories - 'operatives' who serve the established ideological apparatus; and the 'intelligentsia proper' (p.142).

What is the appropriate role for the 'intelligentsia proper', those who position themselves within the 'politics of the possible'? Said (1994) is very clear on this subject: "The purpose of the intellectual's activity is to advance human freedom and knowledge" (p.13); "There is no question in my mind that the intellectual belongs on the same side with the weak and unrepresented" (p.17). Thus the intellectual must consciously take sides, critique, question, and, perhaps most importantly in current times, universalise: "For the intellectual the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others" (p.33). Said is thus adamant that now, in an almost complete absence of universals, "if you wish to uphold basic human justice you must do so for everyone" (p.69). Equally important is to disrupt claims that the way things are is 'normal'.

This argument, that the role of the intellectual is to question and disrupt the 'normalcy' of oppression, was expressed nearly thirty years earlier than Said, during the period of intense social upheaval in the West in 1968, by Benjamin:

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[14]   I strongly disagree with Touraine's position on Fanon, whom I would argue held a very clear understanding of agency.

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency. (Benjamin, 1965, quoted in Gibson, 2008, p.700)

Part of this task, surely, is overriding the defeatism discussed above. Derrida, for example, argues that intellectuals must be involved in a vibrant politics that makes the promise of democracy a matter of concrete urgency. In this, it is essential to talk of a "democracy to come" as opposed to that which presents itself - in other words, to present a utopian vision (Giroux, 2001, p.18).

A number of writers have commented on the role of intellectuals in social movements, and there is a growing body of work about 'movement intellectuals' (and about learning within social movements, which I look at briefly in Chapter 8). Movement intellectuals are "those individuals who through their activities articulate the knowledge interests and cognitive identity of social movements" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p.98). Eyerman and Jamison (1991), in their argument for a cognative approach to social movements, suggest that movement intellectuals are critical. They model these on Gramsci's organic intellectuals, arguing that, although they have shifted these from Gramsci's class base, they have the same function (Holford, 1994, p.103). Movement intellectuals could be established intellectuals (eg. academics), especially in the early stages - but as the movement develops, this "calls forth new kinds of intellectuals, often without any formal legitimacy in the established intellectual contexts" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p.98). Pithouse (2006b) argues that middle-class intellectuals also have a role to play in current counter-hegemonic struggles of social movements. However, there needs to be a dialogue between intellectuals, militants and the broader base of such movements, for example through political education, but vanguardism and elitism needed to be consciously fought against (pp.271-3). Pithouse asserts that ordinary members of social movements are often far more ideologically conservative that militants and movement intellectuals (p.274): "movement intellectuals often express views about movement goals and ideology that are in direct contradiction to those of 'ordinary participants'" (Pithouse, 2006b, p.257).

Others, however, have suggested that "in an ideal social movement that was both 'conscious and organised', as in a completely democratic and enlightened political system, the role of intellectuals would be minor or non-existent" (Touraine, 2001, p.106).

5.3.4.5 The 'new' social movements[15]

Many argue that the new social movements are the new historical agents of change, replacing the working class (Scott, 1990, pp.29-30). This is because of the structural changes that have taken place within capitalism, but also because Marxism failed to account for the rise of social movements, "the most visible form of struggle" today, according to Holst (2002, p.75). Even fairly consistent Marxists have looked to social movements as a potential agent of change. Allman and Mayo (1997), for example, question Gramsci's focus on the nation state, in the light of current leverage of international capital over the modern state (p.8). Rather, they believe that the 'historic bloc' needs to be larger than the state - some kind of alliance of international movements: "Can progressive social movements....serve as an important vehicle in this regard?" (p.8). Slater (1985), writing before the advent of leftist governments in Latin America, argued that social movements might play the role that Gramsci has proposed for the working class in the (counter-hegemonic) 'war of position', including the belief that change was possible:

> In countries like Brazil and Argentina with relatively densely-structured civil societies a war of position is indispensable and the radical democratic struggles of the new social movements provide a crucial contribution to just such a 'war'...in the palpable absence of more immediate prospects of radical transformation of state power, new social movements generate new sources of political hope. And optimism of the will can invariably attenuate pessimism of the intellect. (Slater, 1985, pp.18-19)

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[15]   'New' social movements as generally defined are those that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, including the women's movement, gay rights, peace movements, civil rights movement, environmental movements etc. It should be noted that within South Africa, 'new' often means post-Apartheid. Some movements have organise themselves on a global scale: the most noted example of this is the World Social Forum, which met for the first time in Porte Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, and has met each year since then.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered debates about resistance in the world today, and in particular the central debate about the relationship this should have with the state; the state which, as already discussed, is complicit with entrenching the power of ruling class and hence with capital. From my discussion, it is clear that there are currently deep divisions within those wanting change. I have considered the implications of this on the question of what should constitute a politics of resistance, and who should take this task forward.

The discussion makes it clear that 'without' positions are the most clearly potentially counter-hegemonic (because of the very nature of the state, but also because 'within' positions tend to the vanguardism of the party); however, not all 'without' tendencies are in fact counter-hegemonic. Thus, for example, the notion of the 'multitude' and of 'radical democracy' have both been critiqued for potentially supporting any kind of politics.

What is also clear is that many commentators, from a range of perspectives, have identified the new social movements as a potential key player. I have also argued, in Chapter 1, that I believe a particular contemporary South African social movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo, constitutes a truly counter-hegemonic social movement. Clearly, then, social movements warrant further discussion. I thus consider social movements in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Social Movements

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered current arguments about resistance to hegemony, including the critical issue of what relationship this should have to the state. Within current debates, it is clear that social movements have been identified as a key potential actor in such resistance.

In this chapter, I will consider current 'social movement theory', a growing body of work about what social movements are, how they have come into being and why, and their potential role within society. I also consider debates about social movements as potentially counter-hegemonic forms of resistance. I then consider in particular urban social movements, arguing that these have acquired growing focus because of the increasing importance of the city and the slum as a political, social and ideological space. Finally, I consider the specific case of South African social movements. This is of course highly pertinent to my study, since Abahlali baseMjondolo is an urban-based shackdweller social movement in South Africa. As I have argued, I consider Abahlali to constitute a counter-hegemonic movement, and it is on this basis that I have selected my research participants.

6.2 Debates about what social movements are

For the most part, there is some broad understanding of the political nature of social movements, and broad agreement that they operate outside of the state (in the sense of governments), as the following definitions by established social movement theorists suggest:

1. "The proper analogy to a social movement is neither a party nor a union but a political campaign. What we call a social movement actually consists in a series of demands or challenges to power-holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position" (Tilly, 1985, pp.735-736, cited in Ballard et al, 2006a, p.2).

2.   Social movements are "forms of collective action with a high degree of popular participation, which use non-institutional channels, and which formulate their demands while simultaneously finding forms of action to express them, thus establishing themselves as collective subjects, that is, as a group or social category" (Jelin, 1986, cited in Ballard et al, 2006a, p.3).

3.   A social movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity (Scott, 1990, p.6).

4.   "Collective, organized, sustained challenge to authorities, power-holders, or cultural beliefs and practices" (Goodwin & Jasper, 2005, p.3, cited in Gibson, 2006, p.15).

5.   "Social movements are....politically and/or socially directed collectives, often involving multiple organisations and networks, focused on changing one or more elements of the social, political and economic system within which they are located" (Ballard et al, 2006a, p.3).

There is, however, also considerable disagreement. Social movement theory originated in Europe in the 1980s, but a strong North America strand soon developed, partially in response. By 1988, McAdam et al (cited in Foweraker, 1995, p.19) were arguing that the field of social movement theory was 'incoherent', and Eyerman and Jamison (1991) have argued that

> like the understanding of most social phenomena, the understanding of social movements has come to be subjected to the whims of the academic marketplace. Sociology has provided a number of mutually irreconcilable modes of understanding social movements, what the philosophers call incommensurable explanations. (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p.1)

Writing in 1990, Scott (1990) argued that the rise of new social movements had a profound effect on sociology, especially post-1968 (p.1), but that the actual study of social movements had largely been neglected. Scott suggested that this was because of the functionalism that held sway during the 1950s and 1960s, which marginalised social movements, because the emphasis was on the stability of the state, rather than its instability; and because Marxism and neo-Marxism, with their emphasis on class, also marginalised social movements (p.2). The

recent interest in social movements, then, was because of the collapse of functionalism and crisis in Marxism (p.4). This collapse led to a shift from structure to actor; from static to historical; from conceptual clarification to theory-informed research (Scott, 1990, p.4). Writing some time later, Laurence Cox (1998) stated that "to the best of my knowledge no systematic attempt has been made to formulate a Marxist theory of social movements" (p.2), and even that which was vaguely Marxist asserted an essentially liberal view of social movements as the defence of civil society and the lifeworld.

Thus whilst much has been written about social movements, this tends to be from specific positions, most of them within what I have argued (in Chapter 4) is the current hegemonic frame. Below, I will consider some of the generally-understood 'schools' of social movement theory, before considering what has been said from a more Marxist perspective.

6.3 Social movement theory

Many commentators divide social movement theory roughly into two: a largely liberal 'American/USA' theory, which concentrates on the actions and motivation of the individuals involved in social movements, and the resources they need to influence political processes; and a 'European' theory, which developed out of Marxism and post-Marxist critiques, which saw social movements as a by-product of advanced capitalism, including the failure of organised labour to create change (Gibson, 2006, p.28). Munck (1995) argues that American theory focuses on strategy, whilst European theory focuses on identity (p.667).

Ballard et al (2006a), however, distinguish between three broad schools of social movement theory. I discuss each of these school in more detail below.

6.3.1 Opportunities/constraints within which social movements may/may not develop

This view developed in Europe in the 1980s, and concentrates on the relationship between new social movements and the broader structural changes in society as a whole (Davis, 2002, p.6). New social movements are seen as a product of late capitalism; but their potential impact is disputed.

Functionalists (looking at the function played by social institutions in society) saw social movements as 'non-institutional', because they challenged social institutions such as the family, government etc.. Thus, their actions were seen as spontaneous and irrational (Scott, 1990, p.38). A key proponent of this view is Neil Smelser. Smelser argued that the social system is always under 'strain' (i.e. neither in equilibrium nor disequilibrium) (Scott, 1990, p.40). Strain is a necessary but not sufficient condition for collective action: "people under strain mobilize to reconstruct social order in the name of a generalized principle belief" (Smelser, 1962, p.385 cited in Scott, 1990, p.41). So for Smelser, collective action is always reactive (Scott, 1990, 45).

Structuralists looked at broader structural openings/instabilities in which social movements may operate (Ballard et al, 2006a, p.4), whilst *political opportunity theorists* look at how institutions create and limit opportunities for mass struggles - i.e. the extent to which the political system is open or closed; the extent to which elite alignments are stable/unstable; the presence/absence of elite allies; the state's capacity and propensity for repression. Movements themselves can impact on political opportunity, for example increasing political opportunity as they expand into structurally created political opportunities; or declining because of disillusionment, frustration, boredom (Ballard et al, 2006a, pp.4-5).

Neo-Marxists such as Manuel Castells, on the other hand, saw social movements as "not quite class movements" (Scott, 1990, p.39). Castells remains one of the most influential neo-Marxist (post-Marxist?) social movement theorists. Stuart Lowe (1986) has shown how Castells' thinking changed over time, from a formal structuralist position, which accorded economics a determinant position, and saw the working class as critical to any processes of change, to a far more postmodernist position, in which the working class had largely been replaced by individuals and social groups (pp.17-52). Broadly, Castells argues that in liberal capitalism, the fight is about wages; in late capitalism, it is about the social wage, about housing, schooling, health (Scott, 1990, p.46). Thus the crux of conflict between classes is no longer in the sphere of production, but in the sphere of reproduction of labour power (p.46). Social movements are similar to trade unions in that they are essentially negotiating for a larger proportion of the total surplus produced without challenging the nature of production itself - they are fighting for participation *in*, rather than control *of* (Scott, 1990, pp.49-50).

Castells also insists that the site of struggle in late capitalism is the city, and thus much of his work has focused on urban social movements.

Another key theorist within this school is Jurgen Habermas. Habermas argues that social movements need to be understood in the context of a long historical process of rationalization within Western societies (Scott, 1990, p.15), to which they are a reaction (Foweraker, 1995, p.9). Habermas said that the 'lifeworld' created within civil society (the community, the family) has been progressively colonised by the expanding structures of state and market; new social movements are a defensive resistance to these processes of 'inner colonialization' (Scott, 1990, pp. 71-72); and are thus indicators of a potential legitimation crisis in late capitalism (p.70). Scott (1990) argues that, if Habermas is correct, then new social movements should be arguing for participatory rather than representative democracy; for growing state intervention in the cultural sphere to mitigate against the market; and for a more transparent distribution of resources. In fact, many new social movement demands are contra this - they are about the quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realisation, human rights (p.73). Scott says that Habermas did not in fact look at actual social actors or the actual political strategies they use, in his analysis (p.79): "The sociological consequence of this is an underestimation of the flexibility of late capitalist society to accommodate itself to possible legitimation and motivational crises" (Scott, 1990, p.80). Davis (2002) agrees that instead of finding out how activists themselves interpreted what they were doing, Habermas overlayed his own interpretation (p.9); whilst Cox (1998) also argues that Habermas' analysis of social movements is an essentially liberal one (p.2).

6.3.2 How social movement participants themselves define their movements

The scholarship of participant self-definition is also a largely European school, growing out of a disenchantment with the highly academic and structural version of Marxism which had become dominant, and in response to the increase of social movement activities in the 1960s (Foweraker, 1995, p.9). The upheavals of 1968 were not worker-led; whilst Marx's predictions about the growing disparity between the capitalist class and the working class, and the gradual disappearance of 'complicating' social classes between the main classes and of diversified sectors within the working class itself, had not materialised (Scott, 1990, p.56). A

revolutionary consciousness among organised labour did not seem to have developed, with trades unions focusing largely on wages and worker conditions, rather than on an overthrow of capitalism itself, and workerist parties having largely abandoned any commitment to the abolition of private property (p.58). Meanwhile, new social movements very apparent at the time - the women's movement, and black power - were not class based (p.56). Many left theorists thus sought to understand how social movements differ from working class or labour movements (Davis, 2002, p.6). Marcuse attempted to retain traditional Marxist reasoning, whilst substituting social movements for the working class (Scott, 1990, p.58), but in general there was a shift away from looking at structure (functionalism, structuralism, Marxism) to the social actor (Davis, 2002, p.11), and to the diversity of social movements.

Over time, discourse, symbols, and meaning became increasingly key features of this theory, as did culture, reflecting the shift from political economy to postmodernism in sociology in the wake of the failure of 1968 (Gibson, 2006, p.29). Many within this school thus attempt to theorise the new social movements outside of the 'grand narratives' of class, revolution etc., and to cast them rather as part of hybrid individual identities/multiple subject positions - social movements are thus collectively shared beliefs, ideologies, values, and meanings about the world. Whilst this school developed largely in Europe, it has an American ally in American Social Constructionism, which emphasises framing: "In the framing perspective, "collective action frames" emerge through an interactive and negotiated process as a group consciously fashions its grievances, strategies and reasons for action by drawing on and modifying existing cultural beliefs and symbols" (Davis, 2002, p.7).

Key European theorists connected to this school are the French theorist Touraine (1981) and Italian theorist Melucci (1989) (a pupil of Touraine's), both of whom also use framing, of identity, status, and values (Ballard et al, 2006a, p.6). Touraine abandoned class as a structural category, looking instead at the social subject as the active perpetuator and creator of social relations (Scott, 1990, p.61). For Touraine, social movements are pure forms of activity outside of the political system (p.11), and therefore "Social movements are not dramatic and exceptional events. They are, in a permanent form, at the very core of social life" (Touraine, 1978, quoted in Castells, 1983, p.290).

Touraine was critical of functionalist and Marxist theories that reduced action to structure or relations of domination. He saw social movements as both bearers and symptoms of the transition from industrial to post-industrial society (Scott, 1990, p.15); they reflect a qualitative shift in the nature of capitalist society (Foweraker, 1995, p.13). This shift involved a shift from industrial to post-industrial, from manufacture-based production to knowledge-based production, from the work-place to outside of the work-place. The struggle was no longer about the ownership and control of the means of production, but about the ownership and control of the means of knowledge production (Scott, 1990, p.66). The enemy was the technocratic state; but the solution was no longer to take over the state, but rather to defend and extend civil society against the state (Ibid.).

By 2001, Touraine was arguing that the new social movements, which had given birth to new actors and new ideas over the last 20 years, had now been greatly weakened (Touraine, 2001, p.9). Those that had had the most influence in France (his home) had been those that emphasised cultural rights, and particularly the *sans papiers* movement [a movement of illegal immigrants, literally 'without papers'/the undocumented] (a movement, coincidentally, that Badiou has been very involved with over a number of years), rather than those that directly opposed neoliberalism, such as those related to jobs and wages (Ibid., p.48). Touraine argued that social movements "cannot exist unless they both assert something and reject something" (p.48), and that their struggles "must be waged in the name of values that are deemed central by the whole of society"(p.49). He identified the following three contemporary characteristics of social movements:

1.   Their refusal to obey the rules (he calls this their 'primal revolt')
2.   Their recourse to the general principle of legitimacy
3.   Their powerful and educated vanguard.

What is 'new' about these movements is their defence of the cultural and social rights of individuals and minorities (Touraine, 2001, p.50). Scott (1990) argues that Touraine neglects movement organisation, his criteria for success or failure of movements is entirely ideological, and his conception of social action too limited (p.68). Like Habermas, Davis (2002) argues, Touraine imposes his own view on social movements and social movement activists, rather than asking activists themselves what they thing (p.9)

This kind of theory has also been applied elsewhere - Slater (1985), for example, has adopted this approach in looking at Latin America. Slater says that the rise of new social movements in Latin America is "rooted in the contemporary social development of capitalist societies" (p.2), i.,e. commodification, bureaucratisation, cultural massification, but are highly diverse and multi-faceted (p.1) He draws heavily on Mouffe (1984) in his arguments.

With the growing shift to postmodernism in social theory, social movement theorists took on a number of postmodernist concepts. These theorists denied the possibility of any general theory of society and history, a la Marxism, rejecting both the notion of the working class, and the notion that consciousness, culture and politics were shaped by class position (Scott, 1990, pp.101-102). Finger (1989), for example, sees the 'newness' of new social movements as being that "it is the person who defines his or her relation to modern society" (p.15). Unlike old social movements, which strived for a more equal distribution of modernisation and development and thus targeted the creation of new power relations, the members of new social movements fundamentally question modernity, both as a reality and as an ideal, and want new, personal relationships with the world. Their politics is thus new. Whereas old movements aimed to mobilise mass movements to put pressure on the state, the political system, institutions, and thus operated at the national level, new social movements, on the other hand, act at a local and transnational level, believing that transformation must start from the individual, with the personal being the political. Thus, the highly organised movements that were seen as having a greater chance of effecting change under the old social movement thinking have been replaced by loosely structured, grassroots and global movements (pp.16-17)

Laclau and Mouffe (1985), not surprisingly, argue from roughly the same position. They argue that the new social movements of the 1980s and 1990s signal a decline of class politics, and the rise of struggles based on 'extraeconomic' identities. There are thus a variety of struggles by social movements, none of which is more privileged or 'real' than any other. These struggles do not have a common opponent, and do not necessarily share common interests or aims (Scott, 1990, p.104). The outcomes of these struggles is not predetermined by structural factors, but is rather the result of developments within the social movement itself, and the reaction of the movement to its environment. The overall character of any movement

is determined by whatever tendency becomes hegemonic within it, so a movement might be left-wing, but might just as easily be reactionary (Ibid.). As we have seen, Laclau and Mouffe reject the notion of any historic subject, since all subjects are created by discourses. They espouse radical democracy precisely because this says absolutely nothing about the outcome of any historical struggle, since this can never be determined (p.105).

Eyerman and Jamison (1991) adopt a 'cognitive approach', looking at social movements as a way of thinking new knowledge. They argue that new social movements are "best conceived as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities and even ideals" (p.4). Their approach begins with the assumption that social movements are forms of activity by which individuals create new kinds of social identities. Whilst their contribution in terms of understanding social movements as spaces of knowledge creation has been considerable, I would argue, with Foweraker (1995, p.11) that their understanding of social movements clearly falls within the approach discussed above.

There have been a number of critiques of this position. Those working within it have been accused of dehistoricising and making opaque the relationship between social movements and the political world (Foweraker, 1995, p.13). Their claim that social movements reject modernity is unwarranted (Welton, 1993, pp.152-153), since in fact they selectively radicalize rather than reject modern values (for example emphasising social justice, especially for the marginalized (p.161)), or, at least in the peripheral countries, are the result of the shattering of the promise of real modernization (Amin, 1997, p.139). Rather than marking the end of politics, they are revitalizing political life, advocating direct or participatory democracy, and emphasing decentralisation. They directly challenge hierarchical and bureaucratic institutional forms (Welton, 1993, p.162). Welton (1993) sees new social movements as emerging in response to welfare state capitalism, with its emphasis on egoism and self-interest (pp.154-5). The position arises primarily from a Western perspective, and thus does not necessarily explain movements that have erupted in the South.

6.3.3 Networks, structures, and other resources[16] needed to mobilize supporters

The emphasis of this school of social movement theory is on *how* rather than *why* (Foweraker, 1995, p.2). Its theory is usually termed Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), and emerged primarily in North America. Resource mobilisation theory begins with the premise that social discontent is universal; but collective action is not. Different groups with different interests are a permanent condition of modern society, and conflict between them is inevitable. Social movements are a rational manifestation of this - when individuals with grievances are able to mobilise sufficient resources to take action (Holford, 1994, pp.98-99). Thus the issue is how to mobilise, and how to resource this (especially, organisation and leadership) (Foweraker, 1995, p.15). A crucial issue for RMT is what it is that makes individuals engage in collective action. Rational choice theory, which heavily influences RMT, posits that people will always weigh up the pros and cons of any action in a rational way. Generally, people will not engage in collective action if they can benefit from it without actually having to take part (this is called the 'free-rider' problem). Thus incentives need to be provided for people to engage in collective action (and once in, to act in a sustained manner towards a common goal) (Munck, 1995, p.669).

RMT has come under fairly heavy criticism for its emphasis on rationality. Foweraker (1995) criticises it for seeing social actors as employing narrowly instrumental cost/benefit rationality, rather than adopting a broader understanding, as did Weber, that people may act for habitual, affective, and expressive reasons, and not just instrumental.

RMT is also criticised for being too narrowly defined. Melucci (1989, p.3, cited in Ballard et al, 2006a, p.6), for example, says resource mobilisation theorists "tend to explain how, but not *why* social movements emerge and develop". Foweraker (1995) criticises RMT for ignoring the social context within which social movement occur (p.17), and argues that the theory lacks a properly political analysis of social movements, and a realistic assessment of their impact (1995, p.3).

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[16]   Resources here mean knowledge, money, media, labour, solidarity, legitimacy, internal/external support from power elite.

A number of theorists thus revised RMT by looking at mobilizing structures. They emphasise the need to look at formal/informal networks, and not only at material resources (Ballard et al, 2006a, p.5). So how social movements are formed, what networks they build on, what institutions they use, what access they have to political and material resources, and the kinds of political action taken (eg. Sit-ins, letter-writing, violence etc) are considered, as is the broader context (Ibid.).

6.3.4. 'Bridging' theory

Thus the three schools identified by Ballard et al (2006a) have arisen in different contexts, and make very different arguments about the nature of social movement. The general view of 'competing' theories, and the critiques of the different theories, has meant that several theorists have tried to bridge the main theoretical trends.

Tarrow (1988, cited in Foweraker, 1995, p.18) has tried to merge European new social movement theory and North American resource mobilization theory in his 'political process model', arguing that neither theory successfully manage to "[connect] collective action to politics". Tarrow believes that there is a need to bring the state back into the analysis (p.428, cited in Foweraker, 1995, p.18). Tarrow argues that the character and organisation of social movements varies depending on the political authority they challenge (p.19). His political process theory argues that there are three vital components for movement formation - insurgent consciousness (i.e. a collective sense of injustice felt by its members/potential members); organizational strength (i.e. resource mobilisation); and political opportunities. Tarrow thus de-emphasises the role of culture (Ibid.); but his remains a primarily state-centric model.

Cohen and Arato (1992, cited in Foweraker, 1995, p.21) have also tried to integrate European cultural theory and resource mobilisation theory, using a re-reading of Habermas. They claim that social movements have civil society "as both *target* and *terrain* of collective action" (Ibid.).

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, cited in Ballard et al, 2006a, p.8) have placed greater emphasis on the mechanisms and processes that bring about action, arguing for a more dynamic approach to social movement activity/collective action. Their framework uses:

- boundary activation (i.e. us vs. them);

- diffusion (transmission of ideas/approaches to new populations);

- brokerage (linking previously unconnected actors and sites);

- radicalisation (move to more extreme tactics/agendas);

- social appropriation (appropriation of previously non-politicised sites and activities);

- category formation (creation of new social categories);

- object shift (change in perceptions/relations among actors); and

- certification (validation of actors by external authorities).

Finally, Ballard et al (2006a) argue that there is a need to look at the material structure within which social movements are formed - it is thus important to look at opportunity structures *and* the establishment/presence of networks *and* the production of shared beliefs/collective identities (p.7).

6.3.5 The Marxist analysis of social movements

As discussed above, Cox (1998) suggests that there has not been a systematic attempt to formulate a Marxist analysis. This is deeply ironic, since Marxism itself is a theory derived from, and for, a social movement (the worker's movement): "Marxism is a theory of social movements; and, perhaps, nothing else" (p.2). He draws specifically on the humanist activist tradition of Marxism in formulating his own theory, thus rejecting the structuralist/fatalist point of view. Rather, he draws on Gramsci, Williams and the early work of Lukacs; as well as on Thompson's working class history. Cox argues that Western Marxism "*is* a theory of social movements, and one which elevates social movements to the central, perhaps the only, feature of the historical process and the social structure" (p.3).

In this analysis then, there is no space for the contention that economic and social structures are anything other than the result of human structures; and power, state, rationaility or discourse cannot be reified as either pre- or supra-social. "In other words, it is a thorough-

going historicism and humanism which treats all features of the social world as in the last analysis the product of collective and conflictual human practices, or in other words of social movements" (p.3). If one accepts the argument that collective human practices are social movements, then much current social movement theory simply does not make sense: social movements are thus not unusual phenomena needing an explanation; they are not only the actions/practices of the dominated and exploited, but also the actions/practices of those who dominate and exploit (in other words, systems from below, and systems from above - which tend to be more systematic); and social movements are historicised, and thus cannot be identified with particular kinds of social phenomena; they do not have a static form, but rather change in their interaction with their opponents (p.5). So social movements need to be looked at over their entire history, and not just at one moment (p.9): "We need to start from more general categories and work our way towards specific analyses of the shape movement activity takes in particular times and places" (p.6).

If one accepts his premise, argues Cox, then there are two names for these collective human practices (i.e. social movements) - social class, and hegemony. He suggests the following as a working definition:

> A social movement is the organisation of multiple forms of locally generated skills activity around a rationality expressed and organised by would-be hegemonic actors, and against the hegemonic projects articulated by other such actors (p.5).

Thus, for Cox, it is critical to look at the 'hegemonic' [or counter-hegemonic, as I have been using the term] core of social movements, since this is what gives the movement coherence and direction, and makes the breadth of manifestation of the movement possible. Thus we need to see movements, their opponents, and social totality as all open to intervention and transformation (p.10).

6.3.6 Critiques of social movement theory

Over and above the critiques of specific school of social movement theory (often made by the opposing school/s), there have been criticisms of social movement theory, and social

movements themselves, as well. It is clear that social movement theory provides very different (in some cases downright contradictory) interpretations of the phenomenon. For example, Welton (1993) argues that there is consensus among social movement theorists that the new social movements are not trying to seize centralized state power, or transform the productive system, but are rather fighting to create an autonomous and exuberant civil society, thus effectively moving the proletariat from centre stage (p.153); but even this is far from certain as neoliberal capitalism is increasingly targeted by social movements. More recently, Della Porta (2003, cited in Ballard et al, 2006a, p.4) identified what she calls 'new new social movements' - transglobal movements wanting an alternative to globalisation. And Bond (2004) claims that "the fight against global apartheid will continue to come most forcefully from....movements aggrieved by neoliberalism and its parallel oppressions" (p.225). Sklair (1995), however, argues that there are very few, if any, examples of successful movements against the global capitalist system. Whilst contemporary capitalism is organised globally, "it can only be resisted locally" (p.499).

Meanwhile, social movement theory in general has been critiqued by a number of commentators, particularly for its Western bias; its failure to really address lived experience; and its tendency to treat all social movements as if they had the same political intent. As we have seen, social movement theory tends to be shaped by its own social and historical context; thus in Europe, theory has tried to explain why new social movements arise in the first place, and emphasise identity, whilst in North America, the emphasis has been on how they work, not why they exist, and so resource mobilisation theory arose (Foweraker, 1995, p.2). Such theory was largely uncritically applied elsewhere, including in Latin America, a site of massive social mobilization, and very little social movement theorising had emerged from Latin America by the mid-1990s (Ibid., p.1). Foweraker (1995) argued that this was highly problematic, since both European and North American social movement theory tended to make assumptions about Latin America (and other postcolonial sites) which were not necessarily true (p.6). Since then, there has been a very significant body of work developed particularly within Latin America (eg. Cardoso, n.d., Dinerstein, 2010; Holloway, 2010; Khorasanee, 2007; Vanden, 2007). Such work has seen the emergence of profound new concepts concerning resistance, such as counter-power, as I discussed in Chapter 5. There has also been new work in Africa, though to a lesser degree.

The Latin American work in particular has looked at actually existing movements, something which many writers argue has been missing from much of the Northern work. Bryant (2006), for example, says that in reading much social movement theory he was "struck by how detached much of it felt from the lives and experiences of people struggling...most social movement theory seemed to emphasise social struggles as somehow apart from the struggle that people wage in their day-to-day lives" (p.77). Barker and Cox (2002) and Cox (1998) have tried to correct this problem in their own work (Cox, as will be discussed in more detail below, from a Marxist perspective).

One of the most vibrant debates concerns the question of whether social movements themselves are in fact counter-hegemonic. Holford (1994) identifies a "widespread if tacit assumption that Social Movements are invariably associated with the political left, or at least embody desirable or progressive values" (p.97). He and many others dispute this; some on the grounds of what social movements are demanding and the strategies they use to do this, and others on the grounds of internal movement practice.

A number of writers suggest that new social movements are essentially bourgeois in character (Holst, 2002, p.75; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2005, p.24; Sklair, 1995, p.497), and are generally reform-orientated. Thus, it is argued, they are organised around the interests of the middle-class, and do not and cannot overcome capitalism (Holst, 2002, p.70; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2005 p.24): "few if any....fundamentally challenge the root of the 'social consequences of capitalist development'" (Holst, 2002, p.70). As a result, the relationship between movements and the working class has become a focus of attention for many theorists operating from a more orthodox Marxist position. Both Sklair and Holst thus argue that there is a need to rethink the dichotomy between working class and social movements (Sklair, 1995, p.498), and return to the working class as the truly necessary agent of change (Holst, 2002, p.76). Sklair (1995) argues that new social movement theory is all based on one central idea: that the working class cannot defeat capitalism(p.496). Sklair argues that the same could be said for social movements. He shows that, although social movements have managed to disrupt capital at a local level, they have not managed to do this at an international level (p.495).

Even where movements are not bourgeois, "the existence of social movements is not in itself sufficient evidence of an emancipatory alternative" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.316). Rather, most have "simply been concerned to advocate their integration into either the state or the broader system" (Ibid.). Pithouse (2006b) agrees that not all social movements are equally engaged in a counter-hegemonic struggle. For example, he notes, the World Bank argues that social movements are an important liberalisation project (p.256).

Even those social movements who are progressive/counter-hegemonic do not necessarily stay that way. Oscar Olivera (2009), an activist and social movement leader in Bolivia, shows how by 2009, very little remained of the social movements built during the famous 'water wars' of 2000: "The movement that arose in the rural areas and was able to unite with the urban areas has been co-opted" (The Social Movement section, para.1), and movement leaders had become government officials or political operatives. As Sklair (1995) comments, "the reason why movements fail is to be found in the capacity of the authorities to divert their disruptive force into normal politics, usually with the collaboration of the movement organisers" (p.498).

Thus Neocosmos suggests that social movements need to be evaluated in terms of "whether or not [they] are able to show an alternative future in the present, a possible in the extant" (Ibid., pp.325-326).

As mentioned above, a number of writers have commented on social movements not from the point of view of the their politics, but their practice: "Just because an organisation or movement is opposed to the state, does not make it either democratic or 'progressive' (despite the possible justice of its demands)" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.271). In fact, many are "movements of reaction and intolerance" (Holford, 1994, p.97), are often unreflective and not dialogical (Pithouse, 2009b, p.260). Gibson (2006) points out that a key current critique of NGOs is that they are elite, funded by donors, and entrench paternalistic relations between organisations and people - but many social movements do the same. Being a social movement is no guarantee of democratic processes, and many social movements have become professionalised in the same way many NGOs have (pp.21-22).

However, of course, social movements are not monolithic; they are "contested terrains of strategies, goals and ideologies" (Gibson, 2006, p.34). Pithouse (2006b) suggests that *all* social movements are internally contested and understood differently from within (p.256).

A number of theorists have commented specifically about the urban nature of many social movements. Some have even argued that such movements have a particular historical role, because of the growing importance of the city not only as a social and political space, but as an ideological (and hence hegemonic) one as well. Linked to the city, however, is the slum; a growing (and necessary) creation of capital, and a potential space for resistance. I now turn to this discussion, which has particular relevance to this study, given that the social movement I am using as a 'marker' of counter-hegemonic thought is an urban shackdweller movement.

6.4 The city and the slum

There are now more people on this planet living in cities than in rural areas (Davis, 2006). Over the last few decades, both the pace and scale of urbanisation has dramatically increased, particularly in the South - Dhaka, Kinshasa and Lagos, for example, are all 40 times larger now than they were in 1950. We now have megacities of over 8 million inhabitants, and hypercities of over 20 million people (or the entire urban population of the world at the time of the French Revolution) (Ibid).

The city is generally viewed as simply a physical space; but, in a Marxist understanding, the materiality of the city was created by, and interacts with, the economic base (i.e. relations and forces of production); and the materiality in turn creates, and interacts with, the superstructure (i.e. social relations and ideology).

Henri Lefebvre predicted that urbanisation would be central to the survival of capitalism, and would thus inevitably become a crucial focus of political and class struggle (Harvey, 2008). Harvey shows how urbanisation is an inevitable and necessary function of capital, because cities allow for the absorption of surplus product. He argues that the housing sector has been an important stabiliser of the economy in periods of regional crises and crashes; but also that urbanisation has become an increasingly global phenomenon, because of the need to invest

surplus capital in a time of overproduction. Thus cities in the South have continued to grow rapidly even as economies collapse, "driven by the reproduction of poverty, not by the supply of jobs" as a result of neoliberal SAPs (Davis, 2006, pp.15-16).

However, as in all capitalist development, growth in the city has been (necessarily) uneven. This is true within the cities of the West and in the South, as well as between them (Davis, 2006). Fanon argued that the colonial era would be over when there were no longer two zones for two 'different species of men' in one city (cited in Pithouse, 2006a, p.19), and clearly we are a long way from that. Much of the growth of cities in the South has been informal, rather than simply the investment of surplus capital, and since 1970, slums in South cities have grown faster than urbanisation per se, whilst in Africa, slums are growing twice as fast as cities (Davis, 2006); but some of the fastest growing slums are in Russia and the former Soviet republics. There are now over 1 billion people living in slums, and according to UN-HABITAT, the slum population is growing at the rate of 25 million per annum[17]. The majority of residents of such slums are poor, but life in slums is seldom without a cost, usually an up-front payment to gain initial access, and with ongoing rental frequently being extracted by 'slumlords', frequently politicians or members of the upper middle class). Slums are frequently in hazardous or extremely marginal areas; on flood plains, steep hillsides, swamps, contaminated land, subject to landslides, floods, earthquakes, toxic industries, collapsing infrastructure and, most of all, fires (Ibid.).

Cities have become increasingly divided, with fortified, gated communities and privatised public spaces under constant surveillance, versus growing slums (Harvey, 2008). Increasingly, the rich are physically distanced from the poor, even right out of the city, with new high-speed roadways to allow for an easy commute into the core of the city (Davis, 2006):

> Urban segregation is not a frozen status quo, but rather a ceaseless social war in which the state intervenes regularly in the name of "progress", "beautification", and even "social justice for the poor" to redraw spatial boundaries to the advantage of landowners, foreign investors, elite homeowners, and middle-class commuters. (Davis, 2006, p.98)

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[17]   Davis (2006) predicts that by 2035, most people in the world will live in slums.

So the process has been a violent one: "A process of displacement and...'accumulation by dispossession' lie at the core of urbanization under capitalism" (Harvey, 2008, p.34). Davis (2006) estimates that within the Third World, every year hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of poor people are evicted, often as a result of high profile international events (the Olympics, the soccer World Cup), or to get rid of potential centres of resistance.

> Urbanization, we may conclude, has played a crucial role in the absorption of capital surpluses, at ever increasing geographic scales, but at the price of burgeoning processes of creative destruction that have dispossessed the masses of any right to the city whatsoever. (Harvey, 2008, p.37)

Coupled with this material reality is the city as a discursive space, as a place of hegemony. Henri Lefebvre has argued that urbanisation is a hegemonic force, since "dominant ideas are...consolidated through the built environment of the city" (Loftus & Lumsden, 2006, p.103). The built environment thus serves acculturating purposes (Lears, 1985):

> Elites try to manipulate hegemony, not simply by changing the physical environment of a settlement, but by reshaping the way in which people relate to that environment through their concrete, everyday, activities. (Kipfer, 2002, quoted in Loftus & Lumsden, 2006, p.103)

Part of this is concealment of what really is. Kevin Lynch, in *The Image of the City* (cited in Jameson, 1984), says that the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map, in their minds, either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves (Jameson, 1984, p.89), and Jameson (1984) shows how current urban architecture reflects postmodernist culture.

However, because the city is a discursive as well as material place, it is a site of struggle and of potential change, a terrain for challenging dominant ideas (Loftus & Lumsden, 2006, p.103); and a number of writers now suggest that the city is the most crucial site of struggle - Harvey (2008), for example, says the revolution has to be urban or nothing at all.

Manual Castells, in his influential *The City and The Grassroots* (1983), has argued that urban movements are critical agents of change, and his work has been seen by many as proposing a new historic agent. Castells says that it is in cities that people experience economic exploitation, cultural alienation and political oppression most acutely: "Spatial forms....will be produced by human action, as are all other objects, and will express and perform the interests of the dominant class according to a given mode of production and to a specific mode of development. They will express and implement the power relationships of the state in a historically defined society" (p.311) - but will also always be resisted - for example, by urban social movements. So urban movements can create new cultural settings and urban 'meaning', creating an 'alternative city', a network of self-managed, 'culturally meaningful' communities. This will be different in different cities, because different histories of struggle for meaning have resulted in different meanings - so a colonial city has a different meaning than a Western capitalist one. Such movements must be resolutely autonomous. However, Castells argues, an urban movement can really only change the meaning of cities, not much else:

> It cannot, however, be a social alternative, only the symptom of a social limit, because the city it projects is not, and cannot be, connected to an alternate model of production and development, nor to a democratic state adapted to the world-wide processes of power. Thus urban social movements are aimed at transforming the meaning of the city without being able to transform society. They are a reaction, not an alternative (p.327).

Stuart Lowe (1986) has shown how Castells thinking about the urban movement changed over time, from a formal structuralist position, which accorded economics a determinant position, and saw the working class as critical to any processes of change (i.e. urban social movements would need to articulate with the working class movement) to the more postmodernist position of *The City and The Grassroots*, in which the working class had largely been replaced by individuals and social groups. Lowe argues that Castells is in fact very contradictory in his thinking in *The City and The Grassroots*, in arguing that urban movements can innovate social change, but not actually bring about change themselves.

Not surprisingly, given the statistics cited above, a number of commentators have accorded the slum, the shack settlement, a particular place in this struggle, rather than some more general urban movement. Ironically, the World Bank realised the violent potential of the slums fairly early on, arguing in 1990 that urban poverty would become the "most significant, and politically explosive, problem in the next century" (cited in Davis, 2006, p.20). Davis also predicts the eventual revolt of the slums. However, he argues, such a revolt would not necessarily (and not probably) be progressive.

Many writers have disputed this analysis. Pithouse (2006a), for example, says that Davis is "just plain wrong" (p.8) to claim no left politics in the slum, because the slum is "a site where subaltern autonomy can achieve critical mass enabling the production of political and artistic innovation of world historical significance" (p.9). Davis got it wrong, Pithouse argues, because he fails to take into account "the humanity of shack dwellers" (p.7), and does not take "the thinking of the objects of his research seriously" (p.8).

Žižek (2005, cited in Patel, 2006) has also disputed Davis' claim:

> One should resist the easy temptation to elevate and idealise slum-dwellers into a new revolutionary class. It is nonetheless surprising how far they conform to the old Marxist definition of the proletarian revolutionary subject: they are 'free' in the double meaning of the word, even more than the classical proletariat ('free' from all substantial ties; dwelling in a free space, outside the regulation of the state); they are a large collective, forcibly thrown into a situation where they have to invent some mode of being-together, and simultaneously deprived of support for their traditional ways of life. (Žižek, 2005, cited in Patel, 2006, p.87)

Colonial and postcolonial writers have also identified the radical potential of the slum, particularly because of the particular character of colonial capitalism. Fanon (1961) was very critical of the nationalist struggles for concentrating on a tiny portion of the population, i.e. the urbanised working class, skilled labour, and civil society, and distrusting the peasantry. He argued that this prevented them from becoming truly revolutionary movements, which, he said, would have to be very different in colonised countries than the Western model of the

proletariat. Rather, colonised nations would need to rely on the uprooted peasantry on the fringes of towns:

> It is with this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the *lumpen-proletariat*, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the *lumpen-proletariat*, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people. (Fanon, 1961/2001, p.103)

Mamdani (1996) has also identified the need to link the urban and the rural in the postcolonial state, and wonders what social forces can do this (p.297). He identifies the disenfranchised, beyond the reach of customary law and yet with few entitlements to civil rights; as Marx said of the working class, "Though in civil society, they are not of civil society" (cited in Mamdani, 1996, p.297). Mamdani argues that these are migrant labourers and those in the informal sector. However, he cautions, there is a need to balance participation and alliance, rather than autonomy, because otherwise it is possible to justify and uphold the most undemocratic forms of central power. "One only needs to look at the experience of self-initiated squatter settlements in South Africa: many begin with an emphasis on participation and end up with a warlord" (pp.298-9).

6.5 Social Movements in South Africa

Mamdani's statement reminds us of the long history of social movements in South Africa, not only in the slum. During the anti-apartheid struggle, within South Africa a robust movement, the United Democratic Front, developed. This movement was made up of thousands of organisations, some of them large, and possibly social movements in their own right (such as COSATU), some of them relatively small (such as the community-based civics).

In 1997 (i.e. three years after the first democratic elections), Viviene Taylor (1997) in an article on the future of the mass democratic movement that had played so crucial a role in the anti-apartheid struggle, predicted that "the form that social and popular movements take in future will largely depend on how national liberation movements transform themselves into

political parties" (p.264), and who they took to be their allies; and this was indeed the case in South Africa. Gibson (2006, p.19) argues that the ANC's claims to represent 'everyone' trumped the particularist interests of the social movements that had existed during the anti-apartheid struggle. These social movements thus became subsumed by the party, as happened in many other national liberation struggles (pp.19-20). COSATU, on the other hand, became an alliance party in the new government. There was also, however, a fairly deliberate process by the new ruling party to dismantle 'struggle' civil society organisations, as Meer (2001) describes in her article "The Demobilisation of Civil Society".

Thus, although one might argue that the anti-apartheid movements were 'new' social movements (and many have argued that they were in fact something very different, since they were engaged in a struggle for national liberation), in South Africa, many of the current new social movements are very new, having been formed within the last 15 years. Two main 'waves' of social movement emergence can be distinguished - those which emerged in the late 1990s; and those that emerged in the mid-2000s.

There is some disagreement about the extent to which the new movements have any connection with the pre-1994 anti-apartheid movements. Ballard et al (2006a, pp.14-15), for example, argue that there was very little continuity between the anti-apartheid movements of the 1980s and the new movements. Gibson (2006, p.4), however, says that they trace their origins to the anti-apartheid era civics (a position which Bond also holds).

What seems clear is that the first wave of social movements[18] "arose in response to the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies that seemed to give the lie to...[government] promises" (Böhmke, 2010, p.7); in other words, after GEAR. Gibson says this was particularly because organised labour failed to successfully challenge the new neoliberal policies and their inevitable social results (Gibson, 2006, p.21). In 2006, Ballard et al published a study of these social movements. Their analysis was that the GEAR policy led to a re-invigoration of civil society, with a new generation of community-based organisations

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[18]   Most commentators agree that this includes the Landless People's Movement (LPM), the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) etc.

working closely with NGOs, gradually breaking dependency with NGOs, and then taking on government (Ballard et al, 2006a, p.17). The new movements defined themselves as anti-neoliberal, anti-capital, anti-GEAR, pro-poor, Trotskyite, socialist etc. Core to new movements was the material improvement in the lives of the poor, but they were not confined to this, also speaking of legal rights, social/environmental justice, HIV and Aids stigma etc. (i.e. what are often referred to as second generation rights) (p.17). Ballard et al (2006b) argued that these social movements were performing a critical political function, because they represented the interests of the poor and the marginalised, whereas the democratically-elected government did not. This was because the ANC faced no real threat at the polls, and the elite was thus not being really challenged by the citizenry. The new social movements were thus the only hope of facilitating accountability of state elites to the country's citizens (pp.412-415).

Fairly early on, the new social movements and other civil society organisations supporting them began to forge links. In 2001, the Anti-Privatisation Forum convened a National Exploratory Workshop after a very successful march by civil society organisations against the United Nations Anti-Racism Conference in Durban, to explore ways in which the new social movements and progressive NGOs could work together (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.216). In August 2002, after 20 000 people marched on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the Social Movements Indaba (SMI) was launched (Ibid.). The movements which formed it self-described themselves as anti-neoliberal capitalism (Ballard et al, 2006b, p.400). The SMI has met every year since, and many SMI-affiliated organisations (and other civil society organisations) have participated in the annual World Social Forum. Ballard et al comment (2006b) that "there is a sense within the Social Movements Indaba that its movements constitute the 'real' social movements of the country in contrast to more collaborationist and reformist organisations" (p.401).

However, by 2005 there was a "drastic reduction in social movement visibility" (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.219). Leading movement intellectuals ascribed this to the fact that they had not managed to make concrete links with the popular uprisings beginning to occur at community level all over the country. The problem was discussed at the SMI meeting in 2005, to which the 'new' (second wave) movements emerging from these uprisings were invited (p.222).

This 'second wave' of social movements emerged in the mid-2000s, at a time of spontaneous local demonstrations which displayed a 'self-consciousness of the poor' (Gibson, 2006, p.10). These revolts, according to Gibson and others, are revolts of 'the obedient' - those who have waited patiently for more than a decade for their lives to improve (p.11). Such movements were clearly seen as less developed in their thinking by SMI activists, even some years later: "The movements that emerged in the post WSSD period emerged as a result of concrete local struggles. Some of them may not have clear-cut positions on national and international politics" (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.222). Other writers, however, have suggested the these second-wave social movements were actually more about social justice and humanism than simply about service delivery (eg. Gibson, 2006, p.40), and thus constitute an entirely different kind of politics, that operates outside of the state's logic.

By 2008, most of the first wave social movements were in difficulties:

> [The] struggle by social movements partly reflects the weakness of the support organizations, the NGOs, and the inability of these to supply the information and analysis the new layer of activists need to build and sustain their organizations. On the other hand, it reflects the relative newness of these organizations, and the activist cadre that leads them. (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.216)

Some commentators have argued that it was precisely the close link of the first wave social movements to NGOs that was the cause of the problem. Gibson (2006) argues that, heavily supported by NGOs, these movements grew quickly:

> Yet, far from being simply beneficial, this relationship has turned out to be deeply problematic. Over the long run it has led to the demobilization and fracturing of many of the movements and forums, suggesting that intellectuals (i.e., those who have broken with bourgeois, as well as vanguardist conceptions of "the backwardness" of the poor) need to question their own practices. (p.15)

Some activists of the time have subsequently agreed with this position. Heinrich Böhmke (2010) has argued that left intellectuals saw the new social movements as the revolutionary

force that would complete the revolution begun by the anti-apartheid struggle, but ultimately betrayed to capital: "From the outset, all fledgling movements attracted a coterie of middle-class, left-leaning activists and academics, some newcomers and some remnants of earlier disaffections with the 'revolution betrayed', searching for a new radical social agent" (p.8).

Böhmke argues that such intellectuals have now mythologised the movements in terms of their size, nature, ideology, scope and reach. "In our propaganda, we retro-fitted a far-from-homogenous poor with the qualities we expected them to have from our readings of Fanon, Negri, Badiou, Biko, Engels or whichever other theorist we favoured" (Ibid., p.10).

By 2010, Bőhmke was arguing that now is a time of "marked decline [of social movements] as a radical political force in society" (p.3). As will be discussed below, I believe that this is not the case for at least some of the second wave of social movements.

What is clear is that South African social movements vary enormously. In their study of the first wave of social movements, Ballard et al (2006a) found that the movements varied greatly in size, scale, shape, and tactics, and thus wondered: "Is it fair to say that in all cases we are dealing with the same 'unit of analysis' and that all movements are necessarily of the same category?" (p.18). They argued that the only similarity between South African social movements at that time was that they were essentially post-apartheid; otherwise, they were very different (Ballard et al, 2006b). They "do not collectively share a common counter-hegemonic political project with a focus on state capture" (p.400), as had the anti-apartheid movement. Some were rights based, operating primarily within the current liberal order, whilst others were overtly anti-neoliberal capitalism. Even within these 'radical' movements, many members continued to support the ANC, and did not necessarily believe in socialism. Relatively few of the South African movements could be described as either out of the system or in the system - rather they were a mixture of both, or on a continuum between these two points. There was little consensus among the movements themselves about which position was best, and most of the social movements used a range of strategies - although some social movements refused to be involved in policy development initiatives, whilst others would do so.

In almost all of the social movements Ballard et al looked at, the leadership or vanguard cadre played a crucial role, although some activists were reluctant to admit this. Usually, this cadre was from the middle class, and often not black African. One (middle class) movement activist, Andile Mngxitama (2004, cited in Ballard et al 2006b, p.408) has been very critical of the dominance of white leftist individuals in the movements.

At about the same time (2006), although now considering some of the second wave social movements, Pithouse (2006b) argued, as had Ballard et al, that not all social movements are equal, and that social movements are contested internally, and understood differently by those within the movement. More recently, Helliker (2010) has argued that South African social movements have generally operated within state/civil society consensus, with many dependent on NGOs, and with some NGOs masquerading as social movements. "Any society-centred politics in South Africa though that falls regularly outside the state-civil society consensus has been subject to state scrutiny and if need be to repression" (Helliker, 2010, p.137). Gibson (2006) has referred to this as the criminalisation of emergent social movements who criticise the ANC.

Neocosmos (2009a) argues that whilst there is a well-developed literature on social movements in South Africa, much of this falls within a neoliberal framework, and is largely ignorant of literature in other parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia. Such literature tends to measure 'success' of social movements in their ability to influence or lobby government. Neocosmos compares two South African social movements to make his point, one of which is the movement I am most interested in, Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM). Abahlali is one of the second wave movements, and I discuss it in detail in the next chapter. Neocosmos' comparison leads him to a similar conclusion as that I have arrived at, which is that Abahlali is a genuinely counter-hegemonic project.

6.6 Conclusion

My study focuses on the narratives of people who have joined or aligned themselves with a particular social movement. Abahlali baseMjondolo ("people of the shacks") is a social movement of slum-dwellers, thus bringing together the themes I have discussed in this chapter

- the growing recognition of social movements as resistance, and the growing importance of the city and the slum as not only a social and political space, but also a hegemonic one. In the chapter, I have considered the fact that many current movements are not necessarily truly revolutionary, in that they operate within the logic of capital and the state, and emphasise difference rather than universality. However, as I stated in Chapter 1, I believe Abahlali to be a truly counter-hegemonic movement. In the next chapter, I argue this point.

Chapter 7: Abahlali baseMjondolo

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I spoke about how I came to know about Abahlali baseMjondolo, and how, on reading what they written, I was struck by the analysis that was being made by the movement itself, which seemed more insightful than much of the more 'academic' work I was reading. It became very clear to me that members of the movement were analysing the reality that is South Africa, and is Durban, in remarkable ways; and thinking a new way of struggling - what they call 'a living politics'. I was convinced that here was an example of a truly counter-hegemonic movement; and that exploring how this had come about might be an exciting and useful thing to do. In this chapter, I try to account for my assertion that Abahlali are indeed a counter-hegemonic movement.

In my discussion, I have used mainly documents emanating from the movement itself (press releases, speeches, newspaper articles), but also various more or less academic works that refer to the movement. I have also used interviews that have been done with Abahlali members. Mindful of Cox's (1998) assertion that we need to understand social movements within their historical context, and thus consider the whole of their history, and not just their appearance at a single point in time (p.9), I will first provide a brief history of the movement, before considering some of the more academic discussion that has taken place about the movement. Finally, I will consider the extent to which Abahlali can be considered a counter-hegemonic movement, in relation to earlier discussions about what constitutes current hegemony, and how this is being resisted.

7.2 History of Abahlali

Abhlali baseMjondolo ('the people of the shacks') is a social movement of shackdwellers. Abahlali grew organically out of struggle; it first emerged out of a road blockade by residents of the Kennedy Road shack settlement in the middle-class suburb of Clare Road in Durban. The Kennedy Road settlement has existed for over 30 years. The settlement was promised in-situ upgrading and additional land for housing by the ANC on numerous occasions in the

period leading up to, and after, the 1994 elections. However, as the neoliberal policies of the new government solidified, so government's policy towards shack settlements changed. In 2001, Durban began a 'slum clearance project' as a pilot of the UN-HABITAT "Cities without slums" programme (Pithouse, 2006a). This (neoliberal) project planned to convert public rental housing to private, and move most shackdwellers to the periphery (although a few - mostly those not in middle-class areas - would be upgraded in situ). From this point on, any attempts to start new shack settlements was regarded as land invasion, and any shacks that were 'formalised' (i.e. improved by using bricks or stones or other such building materials) were threatened with demolition or indeed demolished (Ibid.). Planned upgrading was suspended, and from 2001, there was no further electrification of any shack settlements, pit latrines were no longer cleaned, and some services which had been supplied were removed; for example, portable toilets were removed from Quarry Road settlement, and the only tap in Shannon Drive settlement was disconnected.

A formative event in the history of the movement occurred on Saturday morning, 21st March 2005. 700 people from Kennedy Road blockaded a major thoroughfare for 4 hours when they discovered that land in nearby Elf Road, which had been promised to them in February by the local councillor, had been leased to a brick manufacturing company. The protestors were dispersed by police with dogs and teargas, and 14 people charged with public violence (Bryant, 2006).

1 200 people from the settlement subsequently marched to the Sydenham police station, where the 14 were being held. The crowd insisted that "if they are criminal, we are all criminal", and should thus also be arrested (Bryant, 2006, p.54). The 14 were subsequently released after all charges were dropped; but momentum continued to build. Two weeks later, 3 000 people from Kennedy Road, plus people from five other shack settlements in the area, marched on the local councillor, and in September over 5 000 people, now constituted as Abahlali baseMjondolo, again marched on the councillor, telling him that he no longer represented them.

Meanwhile, the city's policy continued - in October, the Lusaka settlement was demolished at gunpoint, and the residents removed to the periphery. Nineteen of the households forcibly removed were 'not on the list', and thus left homeless (Pithouse, 2006a).

A major march on the local councillor was held on 14th November 2005 showed the continuing coalescence of the disparate settlements into a single movement. Organised by the Foreman Road shack settlement, it was supported by a number of other settlements. The march was met with a violent police response, with 45 people being arrested, and many injured (Pithouse, 2006a). By this stage, the movement had grown to 14 settlements; by the end of the following year, 34 settlements were affiliated to AbM.

In 2008, the movement took the provincial government's KwaZulu-Natal Slum Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Act to the High Court. The movement was concerned in particular about section 16 of the Act, which gave the MEC for housing powers to make it mandatory for landowners and municipalities to institute eviction proceedings against shack dwellers. The case was dismissed by the High Court, and Abahlali then took the case to the Constitutional Court. On 14 October 2009, the Constitutional Court ruled that section 16 of the Act was unconstitutional.

Less than a month before the judgement, on 29 September 2009, the Kennedy Road settlement was brutally attacked over a period of several hours by an armed mob, leaving many shacks destroyed, hundred of people displaced, and two of the attackers dead. The police refused to come to the help of the community. Two weeks before the attack, the ANC chair for Durban publicly stated that Abahlali was a threat to the ANC, and the day after the attack the ANC Provincial MEC for Safety and Security said that a decision had been taken to disband the movement, and described the attack as a 'liberation' of the settlement (AbM, 26/9/2010[19]). A few weeks later another AbM affiliated movement was attacked by the police. The movement has been adamant that the attacks were politically motivated, and have consistently called for an independent enquiry (Ibid.), something which has been supported by a number of organisations and individuals, including the Anglican Bishop of Natal (Ibid.).

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[19]   Where the movement itself has produced documents, for example press releases, I have referenced these to the movement, using the acronym AbM for ease of reference, and the date on which the statement was made. Where a particular individual within the movement is the author of a document, they are cited (eg. Zikode, 2010).

Bizarrely, in the wake of the attack on Kennedy Road, twelve Abahlali members were arrested and tried for charges ranging from public violence to murder. All twelve for acquitted of all charges on 18 July 2011, some two years after the attack. The magistrate found the state witnesses to be unreliable and dishonest. In September 2012, 52 residents of the settlement sued the police for failing to protect them. The case in ongoing.

There is little doubt that the Kennedy Road attack profoundly affected the movement; many of the leadership were traumatised, and forced into hiding, so "for some months we had to organise underground" (AbM, 26/9/2010); and the movement was unable to run large and open meetings as had been the norm prior to the attacks. However, as the movement says, "It damaged our movement in some ways but it has not destroyed our movement" (Ibid.).

By the end of 2010, there were 64 active branches and affiliated communities in South Africa, including in Cape Town, with 10 000 paid up members (Zikode, 2010)

7.3 Academic discussion on the movement

There is a growing body of literature about the movement, much of it generated by those 'traditional' (in Gramsci's sense) intellectuals who have gone over to the cause. This literature argues that Abahlali is a highly significant feature in current South Africa politics:

> They are portrayed as subjects who are resolutely militant and possessed of unusual clarity and courage. Their existence has broken all sorts of new ground: ethical, epistemological, legal and strategic. (Bőhmke, 2010, p.4)

However, there has also been a sustained critique of this position (in particular by Böhmke), and of Abahlali itself. As we have seen, Abahlali have come under attack from the state and the ruling party, but much of the academic critique has been from the left. Those academics who critique AbM suggest that "Abahlali actually appears quite conservative in its politics" (Sinwell, 2010, p.31), and in fact has become "a liberal NGO with a caste of permanent leaders and dubious allies" (Bőhmke, 2010, p.14). The argument is made that those academics who support AbM have given in to "the desire among the Left to depict the weak and the

vulnerable, the poor and shack dwellers, as those who have all the answers, as pure subjects"
(Sinwell, 2010, p.39). This is part of the process in post-Apartheid South Africa of left
intellectuals seeing the new social movements as the revolutionary force that would complete
the revolution (Bőhmke, 2010), as discussed above. However, argues Bőhmke and others who
have critiqued AbM, this was not just about (mis)representing Abahlali to the world, it was
also about (mis)representing Abahlali to each other and to itself (Ibid). By reading into
Abahlali what they wanted to see, these academics in effect created Abahlali, or at least its
thinking. Thus Bőhmke, commenting on one emphasis of Abahlali's politics, says "I question
whether the shift to seeking 'voice' and 'dignity' away from immediate political and
economic demands is as organic as suggested" (Ibid., p.15 fn.10).

Bőhmke claims that current presentations of Abahlali by those academics who have expressed
support is now "flat-out misrepresentation" (p.21). They have thus created a 'brand', which is
quite different from the reality:

> Abahlali of late is not unlike any other state-facing, constitution-thumping pressure
> group. They are, in their being and constitution, as prone to economism, reformism
> and chauvinism as any trade union and no amount of dressing up of their politics as a
> quest for "voice", "dignity" and "humanity" can hide that. (Bőhmke, 2010, p.30)

Bőhmke, Sinwell and others' claims do not accord with my own experience of Abahlali. I
have attended a number of functions at which members of AbM have been involved, and have
had a number of members (both in leadership positions, and not) as students, with whom I
have engaged over nearly six years. It is for this reason that I originally chose to use those
who align themselves with AbM as examples of counter-hegemonic thinking for this thesis.
However, in light of the increasingly acrimonious debate between academics who support and
those who critique Abahlali, I will now look in some detail at Abahlali and its politics, using
only what AbM[20] itself has said, in speeches, memoranda, press statements, etc. (i.e. what has

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[20]   As Pithouse (2006b) says, social movements are internally contested and understood
        differently from within. This is as true of Abahlali as any other movement; however,
        it is certainly possible to consider the politics of Abahlali as a movement (i.e. the way
        the movement operates internally); and to discern an overall position and ideology of
        the movement through its public statements, and its elected representatives. The

been generated by movement itself), and/or direct quotations from members of the movement carried in other texts.

7.4. Abahlali as a counter-hegemonic movement

In Chapter 4, I argued that current hegemony consists of three interlocking strands - neoliberalism, liberal democracy and postmodernism. Thus, to be considered counter-hegemonic, I would expect any movement to be clearly articulated some kind of position contra each of these strands. However, I am also mindful of what Linda Cooper (2005) has argued, that we need to look for counter-hegemony not just in ideas but in practices.

From what they have said, and what they do, it is clear to me that Abahlali is a truly counter-hegemonic movement, in that:

- it positions itself as anti-capitalist, and in particular anti-neoliberal;
- it critiques liberal democracy, and posits an alternative politics, which is in many respects very similar to the 'politics of possibility' discussed in Chapter 5;
- it makes a deliberate and absolute assertion of universality, of subject, and of agency, and is thus counter postmodernism
- in its own way of 'doing' politics, it demonstrates a politics of praxis.

7.4.1 Anti-capitalist (i.e. counter neoliberalism as ideology)

AbM's analysis of what is really going on is rooted in the actual lived experience of its members. Looking at reality, as Gramsci and Cabral and Fanon insisted, inevitably allows for a class analysis. Abahlali have looked at their lived reality, and drawn conclusions about it; and their understanding of why things are the way they are has to do with capitalism, and capitalist hegemony. Their analysis begins in the Memorandum of Demands handed over to the councillor for Ward 25 at a march on 14th September 2005, in which they say:

> We....note that this country is rich because of the theft of our land and because of our work on the farms, mines, kitchens and laundries of the rich. (Ward 25, 14/9/2005)

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movement itself refers to 'Abahlalism', discussed further below.

This analysis is picked up over and over again, in the ensuing years, with the implications of this being spelled out more and more clearly.

In an article entitled *The Third Force* (which was an angry response to growing claims by both the left and government that some 'third force' lay behind the movement) in December 2005, S'bu Zikode, President of the movement, wrote "We have learnt from the past - we have suffered alone. That pain and suffering has taught us a lot. We have begun to realise that we are not supposed to be living under these conditions" (Zikode, 2006a). And in his speech to a colloquium called by the Centre for Civil Society and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in March 2006, S'bu Zikode said:

> We who live in the jondolos of Durban, we democrats and loyal citizens of South Africa note that this country is rich because of the theft of our land and because of our work in the farms, mines, factories, kitchens, laundries of the rich. We cannot, and we will not, continue to suffer the way we do....If we are not given what a human being needs to survive while the city builds casinos and stadiums and theme parks we will have no choice but to take it. Those big projects, those casinos, that make some few rich people richer are built with resources stolen from our future....We need....to unite and think and fight together where the poor are, where the poor live, where the poor suffer. In your working environment, just like in mine, just like for all of us, there comes the capitalist system....It is already designed to direct you, to direct me, to direct us all, even to direct our struggles, so let us think well and fight bravely to overcome it. (Zikode, 2006b)

In mid-2006, Zikode made it very clear that

> This is a class struggle. This is a struggle between the Haves and Don't Haves. Our society can only be saved if the Don't Haves win this struggle. If we lose this struggle everyone will have to live afraid for ever. Everything will be broken everywhere. (Zikode, 2006c)

The movement's analysis of accumulation through dispossession, neoliberal capital and the hegemony which supports it was reiterated in 2008, in a speech given by their president to the Council of Churches. By this time, the movement was only two years' old, but already had considerable *real politik* experience to draw on:

> It has become clear to us that when ever we talk about history we are seen to be launching an offensive. It has become clear to us that this is because the rich want to believe that we are poor because we are less than them - less intelligent, less responsible, less clean, less honest. If we are poor because we are just less than the rich then we must be happy for every little thing that we are given, we must be happy with a hamper or some old clothes when our children are dying in the rats and the fire and the mud.

> But we are not poor because we are less than the rich. We are poor because we were made poor. The rich are rich because they were made rich. If your ancestors had the land you will go to university and get a nice job and look after your family well. If your ancestors lost the land you will be lucky to find a dangerous job that you hate so that your family can just survive...

> This system is a system where the people are separated into two - those that count and those that do not count. Those that count are those with money. Those that do not count are those without money. This system values business profit before human value. (Zikode, 2008a)

> We need to think about how we can create a new kind of communism, a new kind of togetherness. A living communism that recognizes the equal humanity of every person wherever they were born, wherever their ancestors came from, whether they are poor or rich, women or men. This new togetherness must also understand that the world, what God has given to us all, must be shared by us all. (Zikode, 2008a)

In a press statement on the xenophobic attacks then taking place in South Africa, Abahlali again raised the issue of a different lived experience for rich and for poor, and the connection

between wealth and power, in analysing the xenophobia and its causes in structural injustice: "It is time to ask serious questions about why it is that money and rich people can move freely around the world while everywhere the poor must confront razor wire, corrupt and violent police, queues and relocation or deportation" (AbM, 21/5/2008).

Thus, one the major counter-hegemonic moves of Abahlali has been their complete refusal to accept the 'normalising' of crisis that neoliberal capitalism fosters. Rather, they have exploded this - "for the poor, everyday is an emergency - every day" (Zikode, 2006b).

7.4.2 Within/without state, but not with (i.e. counter liberal democracy as ideology)

From very early on, the movement began questioning the way in which its members were 'represented' by those in authority. In an interview the day after the initial road blockade, in response to the arrest of the 14, S'bu Zikode, the man who became the first president of Abahlali, said "They say we have committed public violence but against which public? If we are not the public then who is the public and who are we?....We want to be listened to" (S'bu Zikode, quoted in Pithouse, 2006a, p.27). Another resident of Kennedy Road said "We are just trying to live but they say we are the criminals" (Nonhlanhla Mzobe, quoted in Pithouse, op.cit, p.27). This theme of being criminalised, simply for taking on the state in a way which was not 'with' the state became a common theme. Nearly 18 months later, another Abahlali member, Philani Zungu, said "Abahlali have discovered that when the strong poor speak for ourselves the people who are paid to speak for us, from local councillors, to Mike Sutcliffe[21] and some NGOs and academics, call us criminal....It seems that whenever we want the same rights as other citizens we will be called criminal " (Zungu, 2006, p.9).

Thus, not surprisingly, there was growing unease with the system of local government. At the time of the initial road blockade, the Kennedy Road settlement was staunchly ANC-supporting, with the target of their frustration being the local councillor. However, by the local government elections of a year later, the settlement, along with most AbM settlements, boycotted the elections, having threatened to do so in their march on the mayor of Durban in November 2005 (where they used the slogan, 'no land, no house, no vote'). As one *umhlali*

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[21]   Municipal manager of eThekwini (Durban).

(AbM member) put it, "They don't invite us [to discussions concerning our fate] but they always represent us" (Nonhlanhla Mzobe quoted in Gibson, 2006, p.14). By December 2005, in his *Third Force* article, Zikode was declaring that the movement was extra normal 'politics': "this is not a political game....This has nothing to do with politics or parties....This is a non-political movement. It will finish its job when land and housing, electricity and basic services have been won and poverty eliminated" (Zikode, 2006a). He argued that voting had brought no change, especially at the local level, and that the movement has thus adopted the slogan, "no land, no house, no vote" for the municipal elections. However, the struggle of the poor had started "a dawn of democracy for the poor" (Ibid.). Thus by the end of 2005, the movement had already started formulating an entirely different understanding of 'democracy' from that punted by the liberal democratic hegemony.

By March 2006, the President of the movement made it very clear how the movement understood South African democracy. In his speech to a colloquium called by the Centre for Civil Society and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, he said, "In this democracy the poor are only used for voting" (Zikode, 2006b); after that, they were lied to, undermined, ignored. This was not only the analysis of the movement's leaders - ordinary members of the movement, interviewed the following year, said "We think our government is ignoring us, or they have forgotten us. They only remember us when they need us to vote for elections. And they promise whatever. I think our democracy is just to vote for them. And then we go back and sit in the mud" (Lindela Figlan, quoted in Ngiam, 2007); and "They only come to us when they want our vote" (System Cele, 2007, interviewed by Kate Gunby); and "When it is time for the vote, they [the ANC] just come and say they're going to do this....They're just telling lies for the vote, after the vote they just kick you out" (Linda Motha, 2007, interviewed by Kate Gunby). In his speech to the Economic Justice Forum of the Council of Churches in 2008, Zikode commented "we are finished with being ladders for politicians to climb up over the people" (Zikode, 2008a). Each year, the movement organises around what it calls "Unfreedom Day" - the 27th of April, anniversary of the first free and democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Unfreedom Day is a symbolic day for mourning what the people of South Africa do not have, despite the (hegemonic) rhetoric to the contrary: "In a really free country there would be freedom of association for everyone. But in South Africa this is denied to the self-organised poor" (AbM, April 2010). This is, then, "really the freedom of the few" (Ibid.).

As part of the Unfreedom Day process, Abahlali has gone to each area to hear what people have to say, "to listen to their thinking about Freedom Day and the realities of shack fires, the Slum Act and so on" (Figlan et al, 2009, p.26).

Over the years, the movement has became increasingly critical of party politics, and spoken out against rampant corruption and intimidation by the ruling party; they have also, as will be discussed in more detail later, insisted on their own agency. They are very clear that this is precisely why the Kennedy Road settlement - the settlement where Abahlali was, in a sense, born, and which was at that time its headquarters - was attacked in September 2009:

> We were attacked because we were exposing corrupt councillors, organising the unorganised, and running our own projects such as créches, clinics, feeding schemes, community gardens. We were attacked because we were creating job opportunities for the unemployed. We were attacked because we were fighting nepotism, comradism, and the politicization of service delivery. We were attacked because we organized ourselves outside of the control of the party and its councillors. We were attacked because we thought that urban planning should be a bottom up and not a top down project. And, yes, we were attacked because we challenged the constitutionality of the then Slums Act which humiliated the Provincial Legislature. We were attacked because we took this democracy seriously. We were attacked because we believed that we had the same right as anyone other person to think and speak and act for ourselves in this democracy and because we acted on that belief day after day and year after year. (AbM, 9/3/2011)

In this statement, entitled "Ayikho impunga yehlathi" (There is no place to hide in the world), the movement argued that liberal democracy (as opposed to the real democracy they were talking about) was a combination of hegemony about how democracy was supposed to work, and force if you did not consent to this:

> The only way to be poor and to remain safe in this country is to limit your participation in this democracy to voting in election. The day you decide to organise yourself and to express yourself outside of party structures and elections is the day that you must give up your safety. (AbM, 9/3/2011)

From the start, police brutality during protests staged by the movement became a feature of Abahlali public actions. The movement made it clear from the start that such police action was merely a more public example of what was experienced by shack dwellers on a daily basis (Cele, 2006). As System Cele, an Abahlali activist in the early days of the movement, remarked, "We are nothing to them" (Ibid., p.9). By the end of 2006 (i.e. a year after the movement began, and 18 months after Kennedy Road residents blocked the road), over 100 members had been charged, but all charges had subsequently been dropped. Abahlali interpreted this as sheer intimidation, as "just one of their weapons" (Zungu, 2006, p.9). In a statement about the local municipality in March 2011, the movement questioned reports claiming that the municipality was one of the best-run in the country. Quite apart from the litany of instances of corruption cited by Abahali, it asked "How can eThekweni be a well run municipality when the poor must suffer illegal evictions, illegal bans of their protests and illegal beatings and arrests at the hands of the state?" (AbM, 9/3/2011).

The movement was also increasingly critical of the role of civil society, including NGOs and many other social movements, and from early on declared its independence:

> Membership [of Abahlali] costs R7 per annum. Even the very poor can afford this but because we are many all the R7 put together is enough for Abahlali to keep its freedom from those donors and NGOs who think that they can buy themselves a movement to say and do what they want it to do....Abahlali only belongs to its members. (Ndabankulu, 2006, p.7)

In his speech to a colloquium called by the Centre for Civil Society and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in March 2006, Zikode critiqued the solidarity being talked about at the colloquium, asking where other social movements and COSATU were when AbM was facing arrest/detention/police brutality/burning shacks. Whilst he appealed for unity, this, he said, must be a real unity, driven from below: "But unity must be real. It cannot be created from the top. It cannot be created by a few individuals sending emails to each other. It must be created in the middle of the struggle of the poor". (Zikode, 2006b)

In the speech to the Council of Churches referred to above, he said:

> It is very sad that some academics and NGOs continue to think that it is their natural right to dominate instead of to support the struggles of the poor. We have kept our silence for years but now we must say that it is clear that at the Centre for Civil Society the work of the intellectual is to determine our intelligence by trying to undermine our intelligence. They try to buy individuals, intimidate our comrades and tell the worst lies to try and show that we are too stupid to think our own struggles. (Zikode, 2008a)

As I have discussed in Chapter 5, there are raging debates about the most appropriate strategies to use in resisting current neoliberal globalisation. Part of this debate involves whether or not the state should be targeted, and if so, how. Those within a more reformist approach argue for working 'with' the state, by taking state power through the ballot-box. Those within a more revolutionary mode ('within') still see the state as the target, but possibly through more revolutionary means. However, there is a growing argument that the state can simply never bring about the kind of change that is required; and thus there needs to be a politics 'without' the state. The discussion above shows that Abahlali clearly critique liberal democracy; however, they do not propose a revolutionary overthrow of the state. Rather, they argue for working 'without' the state.

However, as I considered in Chapter 5, the 'without' the state model is not necessary counter-hegemonic; much of it emerges from the postmodernist notion of absolute difference. Thus, for example, arguments for 'radical democracy' in the way conceptualised by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Hardt and Negri (2001) simply offer no way out of the current situation, precisely because they are enmeshed in the very logic of capitalist hegemony. The alternative thinking of politics of amongst others Holloway (2010a, 2010b) and Lazarus (as cited in Neocosmos, 2006; 2009b), offers a truly counter-hegemonic way forward. I will now consider where Abahlali fots in this discussion.

7.4.3 An alternative politics (i.e. counter postmodern ideology)

One of the most fundamental tenets of Abahlalism (the name used by the movement to refer to its ideology and praxis) is, as Gramsci asserted, that everyone thinks, that everyone is an intellectual. This has been an absolutely consistent theme from the movement since its inception. In a documentary made about the Kennedy Road blockade shortly after it happened, an Abahlali member, Nonhlanhla Mzobe says, "We think. People must understand that we think" (quoted in Pithouse, 2006a, p.37). Connected to this is the (very obvious) fact that thinking results in understanding, in (new) knowledge. Very early on, one of the banners carried by Kennedy Road residents read "University of Kennedy Road"; and by the march of 14 November 2005, "University of Abahlali baseMjondolo".

Abahlali have been critical of the repeated assertion by government and civil society of the need to 'educate the poor', in order to help them understand better - they see this as quite clearly an attempt to divert them from the real issues, which they fully understand. For example, during the xenophobic attacks of mid-2008, the movement said:

> We hear that the political analysts are saying that the poor must be educated about xenophobia. Always the solution is to 'educate the poor'. When we get cholera we must be educated about washing our hands when in fact we need clean water. When we get burnt we must be educated about fire when in fact we need electricity. This is just a way of blaming the poor for our suffering. We want land and housing in the cities, we want to go to university, we want water and electricity - we don't want to be educated to be good at surviving poverty on our own. The solution is not to educate people about xenophobia. The solution is to give the poor what they need to survive. (AbM, 21/5/2008)

People who can think (i.e. everyone) have something to say; and are perfectly able to do this for themselves. Abahlali see their struggle as having given them voice: "Our struggle is the voice of silent victims...we hadn't been able to talk before" (System Cele, quoted in Bryant, 2006, p.50). Thus one of the movement's consistent demands has been that they be allowed to speak for themselves (from fairly early on, Abahlali began using the phrase "Talk to us, not

for us" (Zikode, 2006d, p.7)): "Words from everyone have to be heard. They [the ANC] mustn't listen to just the words of the rich, or the big people, they must listen to the words from everyone....We're trying to make something because we're talking. They must listen to us, we mustn't listen to them" (Linda Motha, 2007, interviewed by Kate Gunby). One of their consistent criticisms of government and of civil society has been that they attempt to speak for them; or that, when the poor do speak, they are not listened to: "because we have always been considered as people who do not count in our society our claims are always dismissed with contempt" (AbM, 9/3/2011).

In his *The Third Force* article in December 2005, Zikode (2006a) responded to claims that there was a "Third Force' behind the movement. Zikode conceded that there was one:

> The Third Force is all the pain and the suffering that the poor are subjected to every second in our lives....It is time for us to speak out and to say this is who we are, this is where we are and this is how we live. (2006a, p.1)

Later in the article, he said "This is the struggle of the poor. The time has come for the poor to show themselves that we can be poor in life but not in mind" (p.4). Indeed, the so-called leaders had been of no help. "It is the thinking of the masses of the people that matters" (p.4).

Thus, as I discussed above, the movement has been very critical of the role of many civil society organisations, and of intellectuals, for not accepting that shack dwellers are able to think their own struggle. Rather, they insist on their right to speak for themselves. Ordinary member of Abahlali are also insistent about their capacity and right to think, and their subsequent knowledge and understanding. Interviewed in 2007, one said:

> I'm not that educated, but I always say...that you may take Mlaba [the mayor], you may take him, and let him sit with me. And then you sit with us and listen, and you may find that I know more of politics than him. But he is in politics! He is practising it day and night. But you might find that I know more than him. (Mdu Hlongwa, quoted in Ngiam, 2007)

Abahlali have long recognised that it is precisely this assertion that they think, and that they have a right to speak and be listened to, that is most threatening to hegemony; as Zikode wryly remarked in mid-2006, "The state comes for us when we try to say what we think" (Zikode, 2006c), not when the state was needed because of, for example, the emergency of shack fires; "it is taken as a crime when people want to think and speak for themselves" (AbM, 9/3/2011). This is because "We are the people that are not meant to think" (Zikode, 2008a).

As can be seen from the above quotes, Abahlali consistently saw themselves as more than simply the residents of the shack settlements affiliated to the movement - Zikode refers to the 'masses', to the 'poor'. From its inception, the movement universalised its struggle, to include all people, everywhere, who were poor or oppressed. The memorandum of demands from the May 2005 march refers to the poor across South Africa, and in the *Third Force*, Zikode said "We know that our struggle is not by itself"; rather, it is for all shackdwellers, all the poor. "We will not rest in peace until there is justice for the poor" (Zikode, 2006a). And in his Harold Wolpe memorial lecture in July 2006, Zikode said:

> The Shack Dwellers (Abahlali baseMjondolo) have acknowledged that the majority of this country and this continent and this world are the poor....although we will fight for land and housing in the city we know that this is not only a fight for land and housing in the city. (Zikode, 2006c)

Perhaps the most powerful assertion of a universalising humanism is in the movement's press statement about the xenophobic attacks which began sweeping the country in May 2008:

> There is only one human race.
>
> Our struggle and every real struggle is to put the human being at the centre of society, starting with the worst off.
>
> An action can be illegal. A person cannot be illegal. A person is a person where ever they may find themselves.(AbM, 21/5/2008)

There were no xenophobic attacks in any of the settlements affiliated to Abahlali (Zikode, 2008b).

From early on, Abahlali began talking about a 'new politics', what came to be termed by the movement as 'a living politics'. This new politics was rooted in the actual lived experience of its members (and as we have seen the poor more broadly), and their struggle to change this. It was also rooted in a belief in the possibility of change: in July 2006, Zikode said that "I am optimistic that the "will" of the poor will be soon be done simply because the poor are the majority of this country and the majority is beginning to speak for itself" (Zikode, 2006c).

In his presidential address at the first AGM of the movement in November 2006, Zikode emphasised how lived experience built the possibility of change through unity:

> The no freedom of speech, the no jobs, the no electricity, the no water, the no right to know, the shack fire, the poisonous air we breath and the no land and housing has brought us together and made us strong. (Zikode, 2006d, p.7)

It was within this lived experience that a new politics could arise - "We must start by asking how we address the issues of day to day suffering" (Zikode, 2006b) - precisely because it could be thought. It was "in the middle of the struggle of the poor" (Zikode, 2006b) where "we must do our discussing and thinking and strategising" (Ibid.):

> The alternative, the direction of the struggle, will come out of the thinking that we do in our communities. We are doing this thinking all the time in our communities. (Zikode, 2006c)

The politics of thinking/thinking politics is based first and foremost on dignity and respect for everyone, and an assertion that everyone matters, everyone counts, and therefore, politics is fundamentally a collective business. "For us the most important struggle is to be recognised as human beings" (Zikode, 2006a), but in the meantime, they assume this: Our politics starts by recognizing the humanity of every human being" (Zikode, 2008a). Critically, Abahlali links this to theology: As Abahlali says, "God has always been on the side of the poor" (Zikode, 2006b) (and this is why they will triumph).

This politics is thus precisely *not* about liberal democracy:

The politics of the strong poor is an anti party politics. Our politics is not to put someone in an office. Our politics is to put our people above that office....Our politics is also not a politics of a few people who have learnt some fancy political words and who expect everyone to follow them because they know these words. Our politics is a traditional home politics which is understood very well by all the old mamas and gogos [grandmothers] because it affects their lives and gives them a home. In this home everybody is important, everybody can speak and we look after each other and think about situation and plan our fight together....the broader poor have no choice but to play a role in shaping and reshaping this country into an anti-capitalist system. (Zikode, 2006c)

Freedom is more than all of this. Freedom is a way of living, not a list of demands to be met. Delivering houses will do away with the lack of houses but it won't make us free on its own. Freedom is a way of living where everyone is important and where everyone's experience and intelligence counts. (AbM, 2008b in Gibson 2008, p.706)

However, this politics does not necessarily mean autonomy from the state; indeed, Abahlali has on occasion opposed the state directly through protest action; through the legal system; through its numerous statements to the press; but it has also met with and negotiated with the state. Whilst some have interpreted this as inconsistent, the movement has been clear that whilst it critiques the state, and does not see its role as replacing the state, it also does not see its role as acting entirely outside of the state. The issue is really about what is the appropriate strategies and tactics to employ at any given moment - you work it out, where you are, at that time.

Thus Zikode, in his presidential address to the first AGM of the movement in late 2006, said "We are busy rolling up our sleeves and mobilizing to partner our government to deliver to its promises" (Zikode, 2006d, p.7). In his speech after the 2008 AGM, Zikode itemised the successes the movement had achieved through protest, but also through negotiation, particularly "by negotiating directly with officials and leaving out the politicians" (Zikode, 2008b). In a speech on meaningful engagement in 2009, Zikode explained the movement's understanding of what it meant to engage with government. This shows a nuanced

understanding of the fact that the state is not monolithic; and that there are times and places when dealing with one or other part of the state can indeed be meaningful. So the state (and civil society) are terrains of struggle:

It is a fact that may not be disputed that not all engagements between the state and the people are meant to be meaningful. What is called 'engagement' or 'public participation' is often just a kind of instruction, sometimes even a threat. Many times it is done in such a way that all possibilities for real discussion and understanding are closed from the start. In these cases what is called engagement is really just a way for the state to pretend to be democratic when in reality all decisions are already taken and taken far away from poor people....

To be recognized requires struggle. It took Abahlali baseMjondolo in Durban three years of hard struggle - with many police attacks, many beatings and arrests - before we were even recognized as people who could negotiate with the state. Then there was another year of a different kind of struggle within the negotiations before we were properly recognized there....

The government says that it wants to 'bring government to the people'. It is much better to 'bring government to the people' than to send in the police, the private security and the land invasions unit to evict and disconnect and to then call that good governance. But bringing government to the people is not enough. Meaningful engagement will only happen when we can, through our struggles, bring the people into government.

That does not mean we want to replace one councillor with another or one party with another. It means that we want to bring the government, regardless of who is sitting on the comfy chairs there, under the control of the people....Therefore the government must come under the people. This requires the current political system to be turned upside down. If each community and each movement builds its power by respecting its members fully so that as each individual grows in power each community and movement grows in its power then we can slowly achieve this step by step. That is our

vision of meaningful engagement - a slow revolution from below fought day by day across the country. (Zikode, 2009)

7.4.4 A politics of praxis

Another key concept of AbM's politics is the insistence on praxis, a politics which insists on starting with where people are. In a speech to the Economic Justice Forum of the Council of Churches in Durban in 2008, Zikode said:

> We take our place as people who count the same as everyone else. Sometimes we take that place in the streets with teargas and the rubber bullets. Sometimes we take that place in the courts. Sometimes we take it on the radio. Tonight we take it here. Our politics starts from the places we have taken. We call it a living politics because it comes from the people and stays with the people. It is ours and it is part of our lives. We organize it in our own languages and in our own communities. It is the politics of our lives. It is made at home with what we have and it is made for us and by us. (Zikode, 2008a)

Thus the movement is clear that its politics is one of praxis, a lived politics; and that it takes many forms. It is in this area that Bőhmke (2010) is most critical. He argues that the movement's actual demands, which are for in-situ upgrading, are not at all radical, but in fact World Bank orthodoxy, and that they "resolutely cast their housing demands within both the commodity form and the liberal constitution" (p.19 footnote 17). The movement undertakes fewer and fewer marches and protests, and their statements are less and less militant. He is also critical of democratic practice within the movement itself, arguing that they effectively have a president for life.

Bőhmke's arguments appear somewhat ingenuous. As we have seen, the demands of the movement are in many respects entirely radical, departing as they do from hegemonic discourse, and insisting as they do on equality and humanity. Their 'no land, no house, no vote' position, adopted very early on in their history, was a remarkable position to take within a country where voting was being so consistently punted as the ultimate achievement of a

lifetime of struggle. Rather than becoming less radical, in many respects Abahlali's demands have become increasingly so. Yes, the movement argues for in-situ upgrading where this is possible, and this may well be the World Bank's position; but the alternative - of being moved to the periphery- is simply untenable when it will certainly result in the destruction of the meagre livelihoods people have managed to eke out where they are (the reason they are there in the first place). What Bőhmke fails to mention is that part of the demand for in-situ upgrading is that ownership of that land be transferred to the people living there; and that if people have to move, it must be to well located land, expropriated from, for example, Tongaat-Hulett (one of the largest landowners in Durban) (Zikode, 2008a), demands very much not in line with the liberal property ownership of the constitution.

Bőhmke is also disingenuous in using the decrease in the number of marches and protests to argue that the movement cannot (any longer) be considered radical. Certainly, during their 'year of action' (2005/6), the movement undertook an extraordinary number of marches. They declared 2007 the 'year of no evictions' - every single threatened eviction of any AbM settlement that year was stopped, as they were in 2008. Also in 2008, the movement won a concession from the municipality that services that had ceased in 14 settlements would be renewed; and that on-site housing would be provided in three others. The right of all shack dwellers to get services whilst they waited for housing, and the right of all shack dwellers to get housing where they are living, and the right of shack dwellers to participate in genuinely participatory and democratic urban planning has also been won (Zikode, 2008b). These are huge victories, won as a result of the initial protest action creating enough leverage to ensure that the movement was taken seriously, as we saw Zikode commenting on above. The state, however, does not always abide by their promises, and when they do not the movement takes action in whichever way it deems most likely to succeed - through the courts, through the media, through press action. Perhaps one of the movement's greatest successes was the overturning of the provincial KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Slums Act by the Constitutional Court in 2009. As Zikode commented in December 2008, "The task demands political creativity because we have to invent our struggle as we wage it" (Zikode, 2008b). It is also clear that the attack on Kennedy Road settlement in September 2009, discussed above, had a profound effect on the movement, which took some time to recover (AbM, 26/9/2010), and so might have affected the scale of organised protest.

The movement has also consistently acted against what it believes to be politics inconsistent with its own, whether from the state or from civil society, and not just spoken about it. Withdrawing its vote is an obvious example of this; but there have also been a number of occasions when the movement has criticised civil society action in speeches made to civil society itself; and on 3rd December 2005, members of Abahlali, together with members of the Cape Town-based Anti- Eviction Campaign, walked out of the Social Movements Indaba national meeting in Durban in protest against the fact that the SMI was NGO-dominated, and had become ineffective. Abahlali was strongly criticised by the SMI for this: "The fact of the matter is that the group that occupied the meeting had been provided with a platform to raise their concerns but chose a violent and intimidation (sic) method" (Hlatshwayo, 2008, p.224).

Within the movement, Abahlali practices the direct democracy of, for example, the Zapatistas, and there is thus direct and substantive participation in decision-shaping and -making, something which both Marx and Gramsci insisted was absolutely non-negotiable in any revolutionary organisation. The movement holds weekly meetings, open to any member of any settlement, and also holds monthly 'night camps', so called because such meetings run all night, from Saturday through to Sunday, to allow issues to be thoroughly debated and thrashed out. Again, these are open to any member of the movement.

The movement has a very careful structure to ensure democratic practice. In 2008, S'bu Zikode refused to allow his name to go forward for the presidential election, and no other name was forwarded. Zikode argued that all levels of leadership within the movement needed to be shared (he had also been brutally physically attacked by an unknown group of youths a short while before, as had other leaders of the movement). After a month of fairly intensive debate, Zikode agreed to concede to the requests of the movement, and to continue in the position. However, at the movement's AGM in 2011, a new president and vice-president of the movement were elected. Zikode remains in a leadership role, however, as chairperson.

Despite the ongoing, relentless, attacks on the movement from the state, political parties, and leftwing academics, the movement continues - as quoted above, this is precisely why it is attacked - "because we acted on that belief [that we have the same right as any other person to think and speak and act for ourselves] day after day and year after year" (AbM, 9/3/2011).

7.5 Conclusion

It thus seems very clear to me that Abahlali is indeed counter-hegemonic in its praxis. The movement is clearly anti-capitalist, as a result of their analysis of their lived experience; and for the same reason, reject liberal democracy. They do engage with the state, but they are very clear that this is for immediate strategic ends - in fact, their approach is rather one of 'without' the state. They also recognise the role that much of civil society plays in consolidating the power of the state. They propose an alternative politics, one which is rooted in the assumption that people think, and which argues for a universal humanism. Finally, theirs is a politics of praxis, which is ethically grounded and based on a belief in the possibility of change.

Looking at the development of Abahlali's thinking since its inception, it seem disingenuous to me to claim that academics who have written in support of the movement have done their thinking for them. Rather, this would appear to me to be yet another example of a (sadly) continuing left tradition that believes that intellectual work cannot be done by the poor; that, indeed, they cannot think. Abahlali appear to make such claims laughable, as indeed do other poor people's movements in this country and elsewhere. As the leader of the Anti-eviction Campaign (a social movement based in Cape Town) said, in a letter emailed to an NGO in 2007, "we are poor, not stupid".

Clearly, then, some people have 'unlearned' current hegemony; they are reflecting, questioning, critiquing - and acting - in ways they are not supposed to. They are, as they say, 'out of order'. How did this come about? What can we learn from their 'unlearning' experience? How does it relate to existing theory? In the next chapter, I thus consider adult learning theory that might help understand this kind of 'unlearning'.

Chapter 8: Unlearning hegemony

8.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, Gramsci broadened and deepened Marxist notions of ideology as bourgeois thought that led to partial consciousness; rather, he saw it as the terrain "on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle" (Gramsci in Mouffe, 1979, p.185) - "Critical self-understanding thus comes about via a struggle of political 'hegemonies', of opposing forms of direction, first in the field of ethics, then in that of politics, to arrive at a superior elaboration of their own conception of the real" (Gramsci, 1991, p.13, quoted in Cox, 1998, p.7). Gramsci's argument rests on an assumption that we all have the potential to be fully conscious - but we're often not, because of hegemony. The implication of this is that a lot of our learning is not about becoming fully conscious of the reality of our situation; rather, it is about hiding it. As Gramsci (1971) asserts, hegemony is precisely the process whereby "educative pressure [is] applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into 'freedom'" (Gramsci, 1971, p.242). So we *learn* hegemony, we are *taught* it - but the potential exists to *unlearn* it.

> Learning can be emancipatory, producing recognition, 'critical consciousness', a movement towards more equitable and just social relationships. Or the learning can be dominative, reproducing oppressive and exploitative relationships and ideologies. (Foley, 1999, p.74)

> There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and brings about conformity to it, or it becomes a 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Thompson, 1980, p.26, quoted in Mayo, 1999, p.5)

In this chapter, I will consider how we learn/are taught hegemony, and the extent to which this learning is through formal, non-formal, or informal processes. I will also consider arguments about how we might 'unlearn' hegemony. In this, I will focus on the role of informal learning as the most likely learning domain in which such 'unlearning' might take place; and will briefly consider the growing body of work about informal learning in social movements, which I have argued in Chapter 6 and 7 are a key potential instruments for resistance to hegemony, and hence sites of 'unlearning'. I will then consider three adult learning theories which seem to me to be the most pertinent for understanding any processes of 'unlearning' hegemony, viz. experiential learning, transformative learning, and Freirian emancipatory learning/conscientization.

8.2 Learning hegemony

In fact, most of how and what we learn is specifically hegemonic - it is there to ensure the maintenance of existing power relations. This is true for formal and for much non-formal learning/education, and potentially also for informal learning. As Carnoy (1974) suggests, this is not a 'conspiracy' - it is the logical outcome of those in power acting in their collective self-interest.

8.2.1 Formal education as hegemonic

Many, many writers and theorists have shown how formal education works to create and maintain capitalist hegemony. Carnoy (1974) argues that the 'myth' of education is that schooling has provided and can provide the means for individual and societal liberation. The myth is there to prevent people from changing the schooling system; and the schooling system is there to support the existing social structure - i.e. capitalist. In this system, schooling can sometimes help the individual - who might get an increased income, or an increased ability to function in modern, complex society; but often, schooling simply leads to higher education levels of the unemployed (as we have, in fact, seen):

But it is naive to assume that schools are merely places to develop vocational skills. That is not the only, or even the primary, function of schools. Schools transfer culture and values and they channel children into various social roles. They help maintain social order. (Carnoy, 1974, p.8)

Carnoy argues that "The school system is...a mechanism to maintain class structure in a capitalist society" (p.324). Whilst providing the skilled labour force necessary for the expansion of the private sector, schooling also maintains the income distribution and hierarchical structure. The educational system expands as unemployment increases (which it must do, as a necessary condition for, and consequence of, capitalism), because there is increasing demand for education as people compete for limited jobs by taking increasing amounts of schooling. However, the schooling system itself is structured "to allow children of an urban bourgeoisie to do well, and to filter out children of the poor" (pp.323-324). One of the ways it does this is by creating a dual education system, "a private system alongside a much poorer public system" (p.324), a vocational track and an academic track, 'prestige' universities and run-of-the-mill universities. Carnoy argues that thus schooling was greatly expanded in the postwar period, but whilst "everyone gets more schooling...the social structure is preserved" (Ibid.).

Perhaps one of the most poignant critiques of formal schooling, providing a graphic example of what Carnoy argued, is "Letter to a teacher", written in the mid-1960s by eight Italian schoolboys. The boys were all members of the Barbiano School, a remarkable 'school for the poor' started by Catholic priest Father Milano; and was written as a critique of the public schooling system in Italy at the time. The boys argued, exactly as Carnoy later did, that the system operated to separate out the classes, and specifically to advantage the rich:

During the five elementary years the State offered me a second-rate education. Five classes in one room. A fifth of the schooling that was due to me. It is the same system used in America to create the differences between black and whites. Right from the start a poorer school for the poor. (School of Barbiana, 1969, p.7)

The boys argued that the 'single problem' of school was the children that were lost to the system (i.e. that dropped out, or were forced out through failure or because they reached the maximum age). The children who got lost were the poor - "Not one of them is the son of well to do parents" (p.27). Short school hours (i.e. mornings only) allowed the teacher to teach the rich after school hours, for extra money - so the rich got the free morning schooling, plus extra, whilst the poor got only the mornings. School holidays benefited the rich, since this was a time of cultural expansion for them; but for the poor, it was simply a gap in learning. The boys commented that at least private, parochial schools were more honest - "Although they play their part in the class struggle, at least they don't try to hide it" (p.36) - they only served the rich. The public schooling system provided different schools in towns versus the country - country schools provided only three primary years, compared to town schools; children from rural areas thus had somehow to get to town to continue their basic schooling; and most children in rural areas were poor. In addition, the system (eg. teachers, principals, officials) encouraged children to think of school as a nuisance, rather than something to love, to prefer to play than to learn; and made no attempt to stop the 'sway of fashion' that prevented the young from becoming politically active. For those poor who did manage to complete their schooling, very few gained entry; none passed. Only the rich passed. As Illich (1973, p.9) suggested, "Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them".

This divided system of schooling within the 'developed' countries was largely exported to the 'less developed' as part of the colonialist project:

> Far from acting as a liberator, Western formal education came to most countries as part of imperialist domination. It was consistent with the goals of imperialism: the economic and political control of the people in one country by the dominant class in another. The imperial powers attempted, through schooling, to train the colonized for roles that suited the colonizer. (Carnoy, 1974, p.3)

This is something that Said (1993) has also explored in his study of culture and imperialism. Said looks at how imperialism was an educational movement, a co-operative venture, something done through persuasive means, hegemonic. Its stated intention was to 'modernize,

develop, instruct, and civilize....But at its centre it preserved the nineteenth- century divide between native and Westerner" (p.269), because it was permeated with ideas of unequal races and cultures, in its curriculum and its pedagogy. Colonial schools taught the native bourgeoisie how to grasp the fundamental of modern life, but they remained subordinate to an authority that was based elsewhere. A hierarchy between schooling in rich countries and schooling in poor countries was established. Alemayehu (1988) gives statistics showing how little was spent on education in Africa; as well as on how few school-goers there actually were during the colonial period. Meanwhile, within less developed countries, the hierarchy between schooling for the rich and schooling for the poor was also created, thus reinforcing power and control of both the colonial power, and the comprador elite:

> The schools are an extension of the metropole structure, just as are the economy, polity, and social structure. As long as the national bourgeoisie in its colonial rule dominates the domestic pyramid structure, we can expect that the school will prevent liberation on two levels: liberation from the definition of culture and development by the high-income imperial nations, and liberation from the domestic pyramid structure. (Carnoy, 1974, p.72)

Tikly (2004) argues that since independence, education has been used by emerging elites to transform colonial subjects into new postcolonial identities, either subject to dictatorship or the liberal state. He believes that an extended modernist, economic imperative of schooling through gradual expanding of formal education at all levels was a necessary precondition for the spread of global governmentality. So "modern forms of education with their roots in western cultures and civilizations have been deeply implicated in and provide a common thread between European imperialism and colonialism and the new imperialism" (p.188).

As I argued in Chapter 4, the last thirty years have seen a shift in the nature of capitalism, to neoliberalism (the new imperialism Tikly refers to). Under neoliberal hegemony, both the school and the university continue, very largely, to recreate hegemonic relations of power. Thus, education is a site for relegitimating the state (Knight et al, 1990; Tikly, 2004); education "is crucial in securing consent for the ruling way of life, one which is supportive of and supported by the prevailing mode of production" (Mayo, 1999, p.36).

Not surprisingly, then, under neoliberalism, education is seen increasingly as a mechanism for developing the human resources necessary for economic growth and competition. At the same time, this is accompanied by a reduction in public spending on education, an increase in user charges, and increasing private sector involvement (Youngman, 2000). Education is seen increasingly as a private consumption good rather than a public service (Payne, 1995). This was of doing education is increasingly seen as common-sense; markets are seen as natural and neutral, and opening schooling to the markets is thus seen as a good - it makes schools more competitive and more efficient. However, as Apple (2001) argues, opening schooling to markets entrenches the kind of inequality Carnoy and the schoolboys from Barbiana identified. Not surprisingly, as Archer (2007) argues, the IMF has more impact on education around the world than any other organisation, despite the fact that it has not been to a single major international meeting on education in years. The World Bank is now the single largest donor to education (Ibid.). Whilst the United Nations and the non-aligned movement argue that education is a basic human right, for the World Bank it is a way to raise 'human capital'. Primary education is now seen as the principal means to eradicate poverty, because it provides a relatively high rate of return to GDP and growth. However, as we have seen Carnoy argued above, whilst mass education may provide some benefit for a few individuals, it has largely simply led to a higher overall education level for the poor; and in developing countries with high unemployment (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) education also plays a social control function by keeping unemployed youth off the streets.

Neoliberal ideology is also shaping the school, including tightening control over curriculum and teaching and students; and a shift from student needs to student performance (Apple, 2001). Schools must be seen as politically disinterested, according to both Left and Right. "Public schools and colleges have become training grounds for corporate agendas" (Giroux, 2001, p.2). It is not only schooling that is affected, but post-schooling as well. So higher education is being corporatised/vocationalised, and public education is being privatised/ dismantled (Giroux, 2001). Access to higher education institutions is increasingly individualised, so the state is seen as providing opportunities to the disadvantaged, whilst, as the boys from Barbiana found in their analysis, the throughput rate for the poor remains appallingly low. Meanwhile, alternative ways of thinking about teaching and learning are under attack. For example, according to Giroux (2001), postmodernism is commodifying

critical pedagogy (by turning it into a totalizing theory, and then attacking it for being this), and turning it into an inert theory.

As a result, under neoliberalism, formal education is primarily hegemonic. Just as the boys at Barbiana were able to analyse this in the 1960s from their perspective as the sons of peasants and farmworkers, so activists from the shacks and the farms today are also able to see this truth. "It is clear now that education is always biased; it has an ideology and a bias" (Figlan et al, 2009, p.24):

> We see that education is mostly used to control people and keep power for the powerful - but we can disrupt this. This requires us to analyse what kind of education is going on - is it there to make us 'good boys and girls' or is it helping to make us question things and make that part of our struggle to change the world? (Figlan et al, 2009, p.20)

In their analysis, "In the school system as we have it still, we can see that teachers have something to teach and a way of teaching it - but both of these are there to serve the interests of the government" (Figlan et al, 2009, p.34):

> Everyone in government and in the media and so on is always emphasising education, education, saying that everyone must go to learn more, that we have a skills shortage etc. So this raises again the point that there are different kinds of learning out there - most of what is meant by education is about learning to be 'good boys and girls' and take our place in the system that benefits the powerful without questioning it. (Figlan et al, 2009, pp.22-23)

8.2.2. Counter-hegemonic formal education

This is not to say that *all* formal education is hegemonic; indeed, as Gramsci has emphasised, there is always contestation, there are always sites of struggle. Thus there have always been some examples of formal education that are counter-hegemonic, such as the School of Barbiana, discussed above. The school was founded by Father Milani after he was sent to the

small, remote Barbiana area in 1954 by the Catholic church. The school ran for eight hours a day, seven days a week. It targeted the children of peasants and factory workers, and considered it essential to study and understand problems significant to their own lives (Borg, Cardona & Caruana, 2009). Another historical example might the educative practice of Jacotot, the schoolmaster hero of Jaques Ranciére's (1991) work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Jacotot realised that all explication was essentially about teaching people that they could not think, that they always needed some to explain things to them: something like what Laurence Cohen (1997) much more recently described, in his account of the experience of students 'learning' that they could not think: "Some could say who told them they were dumb. Others just knew it for as long as they could remember" (p.62). Jacotot developed a radical pedagogy based on the axiom that everyone could think, so everyone could teach themselves anything.

There are also current examples of emancipatory formal education (for example, the schools and universities set up by the MST in Brazil, or by the Zapatistas in Chiapas in Mexico); and, of course, within otherwise largely hegemonic formal educational institutions, there can be cracks - an individual teacher who works in a more critical way, students who demand change in the curriculum, etc.; and there is a growing body of literature encouraging this work (eg. Simon, 1992; hooks, 1994). Really, however, examples of counter-hegemonic formal education are relatively few and far between.

8.2.3. Non-formal education as hegemonic

It is not simply schooling that remains primarily reproductive of existing social relations. Much non-formal adult education over the last half-century has also been concerned with this project, particularly since the advent of neoliberalism. Thus "over the past thirty years a reorganizing capitalism has restructured adult education" (Foley, 2001, p.80), so that now "It is the neo-liberal ideology which underlies much of the discourse concerning adult education in this day and age" (Mayo, 1999, p.2).

Mayo (1999) argues that the propagation of neoliberal hegemonic discourse in adult education started in late 1980s/early 1990s. "It reflects a concern with marketability at the expense of, for instance, social justice" (p.1), and is aimed at providing a 'flexible', 'adaptable'

workforce. Thus the emphasis of much current adult education is the building of human capital. Jarvis (1993) says neoliberalism has seen the recreation of adult education as 'continuing education', an apparently apolitical term that is actually conservative. Continuing education is increasingly responsive to the demands of commerce and industry. Adult education in this case is about either the adult learner as worker/producer, focusing on training for work (even if jobs do not actually exist); or the learner as consumer/customer, where adult education is commodity to be bought and sold (Martin, 2000). The dominant discourse of 'lifelong learning' is part of this, functioning primarily as a political ideology and instrument of social policy (Martin, 2003). "Adult education....is now firmly established as central to the smooth functioning of the economic systems and society. As such concepts as lifelong learning and the knowledge society gain prominence, education and training become key vehicles for preparing people to be adaptable to economic changes in society" (Nesbit, 2011, p.214).

Meanwhile, in the South, the role of adult education in nation-building that was so prominent after independence has died away (Bown, 2000). Mulenga (as cited in Youngman, 2000) argues that the impact of neoliberalism on adult education in the South has been significant, resulting in a decrease in adult education services, a trend to implement cost-recovery in those that remain, an emphasis on meeting the needs of the economy, the reduced role of the state in provision, and the increasingly important role of the private sector.

Because of the privatisation of education discussed above, adult education is done more and more by NGOs, with aid from the IMF, the World Bank, Oxfam and other big international NGOs, or governments, increasingly channelled through such NGOs (Bown, 2000; Payne, 1995). Now adult education in poor countries, and poor communities in rich countries, is about the kind of understanding of development I discussed in my consideratiaon of current hegemony in Chapter 4 (Bown, 2000). Much of this non-formal adult education has focused on building civil society, supposedly to curb the most harmful effects of neoliberalism. For example, the journals *Convergence* and *Adult Education and Development* include numerous case studies about building local, grass-roots initiatives, often with NGOs, to improve conditions for individuals and communities (Holst, 2004). This is part of the "current fashion of exalting civil society" (Buttigieg, 2002, p.131), a process deeply complicit in maintaining

the capitalist state, as I discussed in Chapter 4.

Activists from the Poor People's Alliance in South Africa have been quick to recognise the role of NGOs and other civil society organisations in non-formal education, and the way this acts to reinforce existing power relations:

> We discussed for a bit whether this analysis of people's experiences shows that there are not simply two but maybe three kinds of education? Certainly there is 'education' that is imposed to keep the people suppressed and silent so that the status quo is not threatened. On the other side there is a liberating education that starts with the people's struggles to be fully human. But is there a special kind of 'education' in the middle - usually called 'capacity building' or 'political education' - that civil society organisations specialise in giving when the people who are meant to be suppressed start to struggle against their oppression? This kind of education is done in the name of the poor and oppressed and is aiming to teach the language and rules of how to change your struggle so that it can be 'in order', following the protocols, thinking and expectations of the civil society people who want to claim to represent the people's struggles and interests. (Figlan et al, 2009, p.47)

> We talked about some of the ways that the powerful, including also some of the NGOs, are always denying and undermining the knowledge of the people. It has become necessary for them to do this and to insist that it is only they who have the real truth, the right analysis, the correct politics - in their minds, the poor must be given capacity building, education and training, political education which, of course, they will provide. All of this is to convince the people that they are not able to think and act for themselves. (Figlan et al, 2009, p.27)

So today, "Adult education, through its instrumentalist, professionalised and decontextualised practices and discourses, is implicated in processes of capitalist domination and capitalist reorganisation" (Foley, 1999, p.67):

Since the capitalist state has a class content reflected in its policy-making, adult education policies constitute an example of class-determined policies oriented to confront the political and social demands of the powerless and impoverished sectors of any capitalist society. (Torres, 1991, p.31, quoted in Mayo, 2005, The State and Adult Education section, para.2)

8.2.4. Counter-hegemonic non-formal education

However, there has always been a tradition of adult education that is different, as Martin (2000) argues, a 'venerable' tradition in which the learner is a political agent and social actor (not a worker/producer or consumer/customer). Education that aims to challenge injustice and oppression has been variously called community education, radical adult education, education for change, transformative education, education for empowerment, and liberatory education (Walters, 1998). Much of this was initially male biased, but in the early 1980s, feminist popular education emerged, and has greatly influenced many of these traditions (Ibid.).

Mayo (1999) argues that any radical adult education must look at social relations, sites of practice (not just formal), and content; whilst Payne (1995) suggests that adult education needs to look at 'politics-in-general' to really understand adult education in context. Adult educators need to keep asking, "Who benefits?", "In whose interests?", "rather than beginning with the assumption that all adult learning is equally valid, equally important, and that the only issues for adult educators are how programmes can be 'delivered' in the most efficient way" (Payne, 1995, p.272). Foley (1994), however, argues that much radical adult education neglects historical materialism and political economy; and that those authors who are informed by concepts such as class struggle and relations of production tend to emphasise ideology over political economy.

Since both formal and non-formal education, then, appear to be primarily about constructing and maintaining hegemony, then learning to think counter-hegemonically must fall primarily within the realm of the informal (although, of course, informal learning can and probably is mainly hegemonic as well).

8.2.5. Informal education and learning

Polanyi (1966) argues that there are some things we 'just know' - knowledge we use, but we do not know it as knowledge; it is implicit, and unarticulated; and this clearly relates directly to Gramsci's understanding of hegemony. Indeed, Foley (2001) argues that *most* of our learning is informal and incidental, unplanned and often tacit, because "...people learn, as they live, through their experiences, in their struggles" (Foley, 1999, p.1). Rossing (1991) agrees that unplanned, unorganised learning is the majority of all adult learning. A review of nearly 150 studies on informal learning undertaken by Mary Callahan (1999, cited in Marsick & Watson, 2001) showed that informal and incidental learning was relevant to practice in many different cultures and contexts. Schugurensky (2006) points out that much of the personally meaningful and significant learning we acquire through our lives, and particularly political and civil learning (and even more particularly the learning needed to act effectively in participatory democracy), happens through informal learning.

This suggests the importance of informal learning and education. However, within the field of education, informal education has been relatively little studied. Wolfe and Richardson (2001) call informal education "an area of study which at times seems to suffer from being so ordinary, so everyday, indeed so downright obvious, that we may forget its importance" (p.xii); Rossing (1991) suggests that "research on incidental learning from experience is very limited" (p.46); and Jeffs (2001) claims that "no adequate history of informal education exists" (p.34).

There has been some difficulty in defining exactly what informal education is. Frequently, informal education is defined by what it is not (Mahoney, 2001; Schugurensky, 2006). Where an attempt is made to say what it is, this often relates to where it happens. For example, a Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (1981) report on education provision in South Africa describes it as follows:

> Informal education is education that is given in situations in life that come about spontaneously, for example within the family circle, the neighbourhood and so on.
> (HSRC, 1981, quoted in Millar, Raynham & Schaffer, 1991, p.19)

The HSRC report argues that the family is the primary educational institution for informal education, but that informal education goes beyond the family; for example, the media has an important role to play in 'communities in the process of modernisation' to support the formal and the influence of parents. Thus much of the HSRC's report focuses on the child (and, interestingly, on the institutions of civil society Gramsci claimed were most important in creating and maintaining hegemony). David Knowles, one of the first adult educators to explicitly deal with informal education, on the other hand, in his *Informal Adult Education: A Guide for Administrators, Leaders and Teachers*, reduces informal education to a course: "When a group of people come together in a number of meetings for the purpose of learning something simply because they want to know about it, they are participating in what we would call an informal course" (Knowles, 1950, p.84).

Indeed, many writers on adult informal education (eg. Wolfe & Richardson, 2001; Mahoney, 2001; Jeffs, 2001) tend to see it mostly in terms of someone actually teaching something, some kind of educator, although they differ on whether in informal education this is planned, as Knowles claims, or not. Walters (1998), for example, argues that it is unintentional: "informal education refers to educational activity that is unplanned, incidental learning" (p.436).

Walters thus suggests a link between informal education (something that is taught) versus informal learning (something that is learned); and much of the literature focuses rather than on the notion of informal learning than on informal education, although clearly the two are linked, and Smith (2008) has argued that many writing in the field do not distinguish clearly enough between learning and education. Smith suggests that "learning is a process that is happening all the time; education involves intention and commitment" (2008, Conclusion section, para.1); but in the discussion below it is apparent that this distinction is not always clear.

Like informal education, informal learning has also been a very neglected area of study. Schugurensky (2006) says that informal learning is "at the margins of the margins of the educational conceptual and research radar" (p.163), is often undervalued and seldom recognised. Thus our understanding of the processes and outcomes of informal learning

remains 'a black box' (Ibid.); and Livingstone (2001) argues that our knowledge of the extent, processes, content, outcomes and trends of adult's informal learning and training remains very crude.

So what exactly is it? As with informal education, some commentators have tended to define informal learning in terms of where it happens ("or more accurately administrative setting and sponsorship" (Smith, 2008, Informal Learning: An Administrative Concept section, para.7)), but many have also pointed to the issue of who sets the curriculum. One of the foremost writers on the subject, Michael Eraut (2000b), says that "informal learning is often treated as a residual category to describe any kind of learning which does not take place within, or follow from, a formally organised learning programme or event" (p.114) - he thus suggests the term be rejected, and 'non-formal learning' used instead. Marsick and Watkins (1990, as cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001) argue that "informal learning....may occur in institutions, but is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p.12, quoted in Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p.25); and, unlike writers on informal education who emphasise the role of some kind of educator, as discussed above, Marsick and Watson (2001) assert that "informal and incidental learning generally take place without much external facilitation (p.30).

Livingstone (2001) gives as a 'generic nominal definition' of informal learning "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricula criteria" (p.5). Drawing on Livingstone, Schugurensky (2006) also uses the curriculum as the basis for defining informal learning, rather than place, calling it "the learning that occurs outside the curricula of education institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies" (p.165). He emphasises the location of informal education as being extracurricular, rather than extrainstitutional, since much informal learning can in fact happen within formal institutions (for example, children learn about power, discrimination, and so on, at school, although this may not be a part of their formal curriculum) (Ibid.). Schugurensky thus specifically argues for the use of the term 'informal learning' rather than 'informal education'. He also emphasises that informal learning is life long, and thus not only about adult education.

Whilst Foley (1999) identifies four different kinds of learning, viz. incidental (education which occurs as people live, work, and engage in social action); informal; non-formal; and formal, Livingstone (2001) constructs a model that provides a somewhat more complex categorisation of education, and accommodates the various arguments discussed above. Livingstone looks at the primary agent of the learning process (i.e. the learner or the teacher), and the knowledge structure of the learning process (the extent to which the learning is situational or pre-determined, i.e. there is a formal curriculum in place). Using these as axes, he creates the following model:

Table 4: Livingstone's categorisation of education

		Primary agency	
		Learner/s	Teacher/s
Knowledge structure	Pre-established (rational/ scientific, cognitive)	Non-formal education Further education	Formal schooling Elders' teachings
	Situational (practical, stresses direct experience)	Self-directed learning Collective learning	Informal education Informal training

Ref: Livingstone, 2001, p.4

Thus, for example, self-directed informal learning is learning undertaken on the learner/s' own terms without a pre-established curriculum or designated 'teacher'.

Livingstone (2001) argues that there has been considerable conceptual confusion in adult learning theory regarding types of learning. He agrees that the differences between the types of learning he identifies can be blurred; and that most adults are probably involved in multiple types of learning most of the time. He argues that most work in adult education has focused more on the pre-established types of learning:

> it is clear that both adults' informal education/training and their self-directed informal learning have been relatively little explored to date and warrant much fuller attention from those interested in comprehending the nature and extent of adult learning. (p.5)

Livingstone points to the work of Knowles and Freire as exceptions to this, Knowles having drawn attention to individual self-directed learning, and Freire to collective learning through dialogue.

Livingstone distinguishes between intentional and unintentional informal learning. He says that intentional informal learning/education is that learning/education which involves a retrospective recognition by the learner of both a new significant form of knowledge or skill having been acquired, and the process of acquisition. He distinguishes this from, for example, socialisation, which he conflates with tacit knowledge, arguing that most empirical research ignores or underestimates the depths and complexity of tacit knowledge, and that the boundary between intentional and tacit knowledge has only begun to be explored.

Schugurensky (2006) further refines Livingstone's understanding of informal learning, identifying three main forms of informal learning, viz. self-directed, incidental and socialisation. Schugurensky argues that what distinguishes different forms is the extent to which the learning is intentional, and the extent to which the individual is conscious of having learned something. Thus he adopts, but refines, Livingstone's notion of 'intentional informal learning/education'.

Self-directed learning is both intentional and conscious. The individual intends to learn something, and actively pursues this. He or she may draw on a resource person to help with this learning, although this person may not be an educator officially recognised by an educational institution. There is also a high level of consciousness about the learning - the person is aware that he or she has learned something.

Incidental learning on the other hand is unintended; however, after the learning experience, the learner becomes aware that he or she has learned something.

Socialisation, however, is both unintentional and unconscious. This is the internalisation of values, attitudes, behaviours, skills and so on, which occurs unconsciously during everyday life (the link here to hegemony is obvious). Polanyi (in *The Tacit Dimension*, 1966) calls this tacit knowledge, "that which we know but cannot tell" (quoted in Schugurensky, 2006, p.167).

However, Polanyi and others argue, it is possible (and useful) to make unintentional knowledge explicit, that "we can become aware of that learning later on through a process of retrospective recognition" (Schugurensky, 2006, p.167), and, particularly, through reflection (Foley, 2004). This might happen through an exposure to a different social environment, or by someone challenging or questioning our assumptions. In other words, although socialisation is unconscious learning, it might become conscious learning (i.e. incidental learning). Marsick and Watkins (2001) also consider the notion of tacit knowledge, which they identify as part of what they call incidental learning, which "almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p.12, quoted in Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p.25). Incidental learning is taken for granted, tacit, unconscious - but, as Polanyi and Schugurensky assert, can be intentionally explored. Eraut (2000a) argues that one of the great challenges for research on informal learning is finding the right questions and opportunities to elicit tacit knowledge, skills, and values from respondents, and to find out about where and when and how such knowledge was acquired. As Schugurensky (2006) points out, many people are not aware of the learning they have actually acquired through an experience.

There is a growing body of work on so-called tacit knowledge (Smith, 2008) (what Livingstone and Schugurensky refer to as socialisation, and Marsick and Watson as incidental learning). Smith argues that Eraut is the most helpful recent writer in this area. Eraut (2000b) considers Reber's definition of implicit learning, as "the acquisition of knowledge independently of conscious attempts to learn and in the absence of explicit knowledge about what was learned" (Reber, 1993, cited in Eraut, 2000b, p.115). Eraut contrasts this with deliberative learning, but then adds a third dimension, what he calls reactive learning. Reactive learning is near-spontaneous and unplanned, but the learner is aware of it - although articulating it explicitly might require more time and reflection. Thus, he argues, the dimension of time is important. Eraut (2000b) thus comes up with the following typology:

Table 5: Eraut's typology of informal learning

Time of stimulus	Implicit learning	Reactive learning	Deliberative learning
Past episode(s)	Implicit linkage of past memories with current experience	Brief near-spontaneous reflections on past episodes, communications, events, experiences	Review of past actions, communications, events, experiences. More systematic reflection
Current experience	A selection from experience enters the memory	Incidental noting of facts, opinions, impressions, ideas. Recognition of learning opportunities	Engagement in decision-making, problem-solving, planned informal learning
Future behaviour	Unconscious effects of previous experiences	Being prepared for emergent learning opportunities	Planned learning goals. Planned learning opportunities.

Ref: Eraut, 2000b, p.116

Eraut (2000b) argues that the effects of implicit learning on future behaviour "can only be explained as resulting from the accumulated experience of several episodes rather than that of a single event" (p.116). However, the individual has no conscious awareness of this process. Eraut draws on the work of Harvath et al (1996, as cited in Eraut) who themselves draw on Tulving's (1972) theory of memory. Tulving distinguishes between episodic memory (personal knowledge) and semantic memory (generalised knowledge). Harvathi et al argue that in implicit learning, (personal) event knowledge in episodic memory directly influences behaviour. In other words, there is never movement from personal knowledge/episodic memory to generalised knowledge/semantic memory. The existence of implicit knowledge can be inferred only from behaviour (Eraut, 2000b). We will often fall back on our tacit/implicit knowledge if we are in a situation that needs rapid action, or that is too complex to be fully analysed, even if we have explicit knowledge from elsewhere. In addition, explicit learning can become tacit knowledge, for example, through routinization. Thus Eraut (2000b) argues that "it is important from the outset to recognise that tacit knowledge is not a sideshow but central to important, everyday action" (p.118).

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Gramsci argued that we learn hegemony from, inter alia, the family, the church, the media. This suggests that much informal education is in fact necessarily hegemonic; and in particular the tacit/implicit socialisation we all experience all the time, as Eraut argues. Livingstone and Schugurensky's model allows us to see how hegemony can be constructed and reinforced through informal learning (through socialisation or hegemonic incidental learning); but also how this hegemony can be disrupted (through counter-hegemonic incidental learning or self-directed learning). Foley (1999) argues that it is precisely in this sphere that critical learning occurs, in his study of learning in emancipatory social movements:

> [The] process of critical learning involves people in theorizing their experience: they stand back from it and reorder it, using concepts like power, conflict, structure, values and choice. It is also clear that this critical learning is gained informally, through experience, by acting and reflecting in action, rather than in formal courses. (Foley, 1999, p.64)

Indeed, learning within social movements (much of it informal) has become a growing area of study. In 1991, Eyerman and Jamison published their cognitive theory of social movements. In this, they argued that social movements should be seen "as a fundamental determinant of human knowledge" (p.48) because "it is precisely in the creation, articulation, formulation of new thoughts and ideas - new knowledge - that a social movement defines itself in society" (p.55). Since then, there has been a rapidly growing body of work focusing on this, although adult education itself (even radical adult education), took some time to recognise the significance of social movements for the field. Although by the early 1990s a modest debate had emerged about the implications for adult education of the new social movements (largely centring on the nature of social movements themselves) (Finger, 1989; Welton, 1993), serious academic engagement with its implications really only emerged after the mid-1990s. Holford (1995), responding to Eyerman and Jamison's book, argued that social movement theory provided the basis for "a radically new understanding of the relationship between adult education and the generation of knowledge" (p.95), but that this had had very little impact on adult education theory, both because social movement theory had until recently fallen outside of the field of sociology of knowledge, and because the decline of adult education as a

movement had deflected attention away from social movements as an important field of study for adult education.

Since then there has been increasing interest in social movements by those within the radical tradition of adult education (Foley, 1999; Kilgore, 1999; Hake, 2000; Kane, 2001; Holst, 2002; Choudry 2009; Gouin, 2009; Choudry and Kapoor, 2010; Scandrett et al, 2010). Much of this work has centred on knowledge and knowledge production rather than on 'unlearning' - for example, Holford has drawn on Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) arguments about social movements as sites of knowledge production to argue that this is important for adult education "by enabling us to move from the appreciation that social movements are important phenomena in the learning process of the individuals (and even collectively of the groups and organizations) which compose them, to a view that they are central to the production of human knowledge itself" (Holford, 1995, p.101). Paterson (1999) highlights the importance of the women's movement in particular because, inter alia, it is based on experience as much as theory, and acknowledges emotions as a source of knowledge, not just reason. Gouin (2009) also argues for the critical need to look at women's struggles, because "the informal learning taking place within these struggles is just as significant as the learning that happens in larger Social Movements" (pp.158-159). Scandrett et al (2010), however, do consider 'unlearning' in their micro-meso-macro model of learning in social movements, in which the macro level is quite specifically "the corporate culture on which hegemony of powerful classes and groups operate" (Towards Conclusions section, para.6). Through engagement between learning at the different levels, and engagement with outside actors, social movements are able to learn 'really useful knowledge' which potentially contributes "to the shifting of these hegemonic alliances in favour of the material interests of oppressed groups" (Ibid.).

However, as two recent articles (Choudry, 2009; Gouin, 2009) argue, our understanding of the politics and processes of knowledge and theory production within and by social movements is still limited, and this knowledge and theory itself tends to be undervalued:

> ...even in many supposedly alternative milieus, voices, ideas - and, indeed, theories - produced by those actually engaged in social struggles are often ignored, rendered invisible, or overwritten with accounts by professionalized or academic experts. (Choudry, 2009, p.5)

Choudry argues that academics need to take note of work emerging from *within* social movements, and in particular what they have to say about informal learning and knowledge production. This is something which Barker and Cox (2002) have looked at in detail. Barker and Cox usefully remind us that much of the theory academics draw on was originally produced by movement intellectuals - including Marx and Lenin - who ground their theory in concrete situations and struggle. However, such activist theory is often "rapidly recolonized" (p.7). "Activist theorizing starts from specific structural relationships - of class and poverty, gender and violence, ethnicity and exclusion - and attempts to change these relationships through agency" (p.4). Their work thus suggests that a consideration of 'unlearning' within social movements might be a useful enterprise; but also that academics are not necessary the best people to undertake this work (something which is reminiscent of Gramsci's arguments about intellectuals, as considered in Chapter 3). Ultimately, they conclude, activist theory is "*dialogical* and *developmental*, as shifting groups of activists attempt to find answers to the question 'what is to be done?' in situations which they do not fully control" (p.25).

Jarvis (1993) suggests it is perhaps only in social movements that adult education is genuinely a process between equals, because here it is the interests of the movement, and not the state, which are decisive?: "where adult education is non-formalised, it is more likely to function in response to the people's own defined interests" (p.35).

As I have discussed in some depth in Chapter 6, however, not all social movements are equal; and indeed many operate pretty solidly within hegemony. Thus, like much informal learning, informal learning within social movements is possibly as much hegemonic as anything else. Because so much informal learning is hegemonic, it is only really in the small realm of emancipatory incidental learning (since some incidental learning is hegemonic) or emancipatory self-directed informal learning (since some self-directed learning is hegemonic), that any chance of counter-hegemonic 'unlearning', or of critical learning, can occur. As Gramsci argued, it does in fact occur; and as I have argued in the previous chapter, Abahlali baseMjondolo constitutes a clearly counter-hegemonic social movement. How does this happen? How is it that there is such resistance to the neoliberal hegemony we live in today despite the evidence of extraordinary educative attempts, as we have seen, to assure us that 'There is no alternative'?

8.3. Unlearning hegemony

The point of hegemony is to prevent change that might undermine the control of those in power. As we have seen (in Chapter 3), Gramsci argued that, for capitalist hegemony to be defeated, consciousness-transformation was essential. This consciousness-transformation must arise from actual working lives (Burke, 2005): "the starting point of critical elaboration is a consciousness of what one really is" (Gramsci, 1971, p.324).

In Chapter 5, I argued that for Fanon, Cabral and Guevara, as with other anti-colonial writers, this consciousness began with a consciousness about the reality of their own exploitation. However, hegemony ("ideology", in Marx's terms) tries to prevent this consciousness of reality. So consciousness-transformation is necessary for social change; it must begin with the actual lived experience of those who are oppressed, and with critical reflection on this; and this must then be followed by action to change actual lived experience. As Gibson (2006) argues, "lived experience as a challenge to theory then compels both new thought and new praxis" (p.36).

If the whole point of hegemony, though, is to prevent this, how does it happen? Marx, Gramsci, Fanon et al all suggest that there will always be a disjunct between lived experience/reality and hegemonic ideology. Whilst some writers suggest that this is not always obvious to the oppressed (because of hegemony), and they thus need someone else to help them to see this, others, including Fanon, suggest that all people think about their experience, and can thus come to see this disjunct by themselves:

> [After independence] the leader....asks [the people] to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then.
> Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives. (Fanon, 1961/2001, p.136)

This link, between experience and thought/critical reflection, and between these and action, has been a major area of theoretical development and debate within adult learning theory over the last 50 years. Much of this work has been formalised as experiential learning theory, critical/emancipatory learning theory, and transformative learning theory. It is important to recognise that these theories use learning as their point of departure, and thus are not confined to unlearning - but they do provide some ideas and arguments that help in understanding the process of unlearning. The discussion below looks at what each of these says about the nature of experience; how we learn from this experience; the nature of action for social transformation; and the link between these.

8.4 Experiential learning

Experiential learning theory was originally developed by David Kolb in the 1970s, but has since then been significantly developed by, inter alia, Boud and Jarvis. From early on, many writers were arguing that experiential learning is not a coherent field - Henry (1989) described it as 'fuzzy', whilst Wildemeersch (1992, p.20) called it a 'container construct', and cited Day and Basket (1982) as arguing that it is more of an ideology than a theory. In 1989, Henry undertook a survey of the field, showing very wide responses to the question of what exactly experiential learning is, and how to do it. However, she argued, there is a common underlying philosophy, and certain key agreements, including:

- a recognition that both affect and cognition are important;
- an emphasis on learner autonomy and control;
- the need for learning activities to be relevant;
- an assertion that experience is not learning - there must be reflection;
- an emphasis on action, not just knowledge.

By the end of the 1980s, Brah and Hoy (1989) were arguing that 'experiential learning' was fast becoming the new orthodoxy. They understood experiential learning as having emerged in response to neoliberalism (although they did not call it such), arguing that "the concept of 'experiential learning' represents an ideological shift" (p.75) away from adult education to adult learning, from education to training, in which 'learning techniques' are used to translate skills and attitudes learned from experience into accreditation, which reinforces the ideology of the individual and free market.

However, in the same year, Weil and McGill (1989) argued that people tended to use the term 'experiential learning' as if it contained no difference (as Brah & Hoy did). Rather, they suggested, those theorising experiential learning could be roughly divided into four 'villages', and tended to remain within only one of these: those

1. related to the recognition of prior learning and assessment/accreditation of learning derived from life or work experience [eg. Fraser, 1995];

2. looking at how to change post-school/adult education in terms of pedagogy, purpose etc in the light of experience and experiential learning [eg. Kolb];

3. related to group consciousness, community action and social change [eg. Jarvis];

4. related to personal growth and development, increased self-awareness and group effectiveness.

Rather than a single underlying ideology then, as argued by Brah and Hoy, Weil and McGill asserted that there are major ideological differences between the villages, including a different understanding of how experiential learning leads to development and change. In the discussion below, I will focus on the social change trend within experiential learning (i.e. village 3). In this understanding, experiential learning

> is the process whereby people become aware that the meaning system that they have imposed upon their life world is not the only system and that there are alternative systems of meaning. Having become aware that their original system is not necessarily the only one, or the best one for them, they might rethink their position and then try to act upon the world in order to transform it. (Jarvis, 1987, quoted in Weil & McGill, 1989, p.12)

This tradition focuses on dialogue and participation, and is influenced by Gramsci, Freire, Marx, Illich, Giroux and Nyerere (Weil & McGill, 1989). Clearly, then, it is the most appropriate 'village' for this study. However, because it is derived from Kolb's original theory, Kolb's theory will be covered first.

8.4.1 Kolb's theory

David Kolb is a professor of Organizational Behaviour at a University in the United States of America. Born in 1939, Kolb did his postgraduate work at Harvard University. His interest lies in the nature of individual and social change, experiential learning, and professional development (Smith, 2001).

Kolb first developed the theory of experiential learning in the 1970s, publishing "Toward an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning" with Fry in 1975. He argues that his theory is fundamentally different from rationalist and other cognitive theories of learning, and from behavioural theories of learning (Kolb, 1993). His theory draws on the work of Piaget, Dewey and Lewin. The theory proposes that adults learn by reflecting on their experience. This learning happens in four stages, which are cyclical - concrete experience; reflective observation; abstract conceptualisation (linking the experience to theory or concepts underlying it); and active experimentation (testing learning in a new situation). Learning can begin anywhere in the cycle, but all four stages are necessary (Kolb, 1993).

Figure 2: Kolb's model of experiential learning
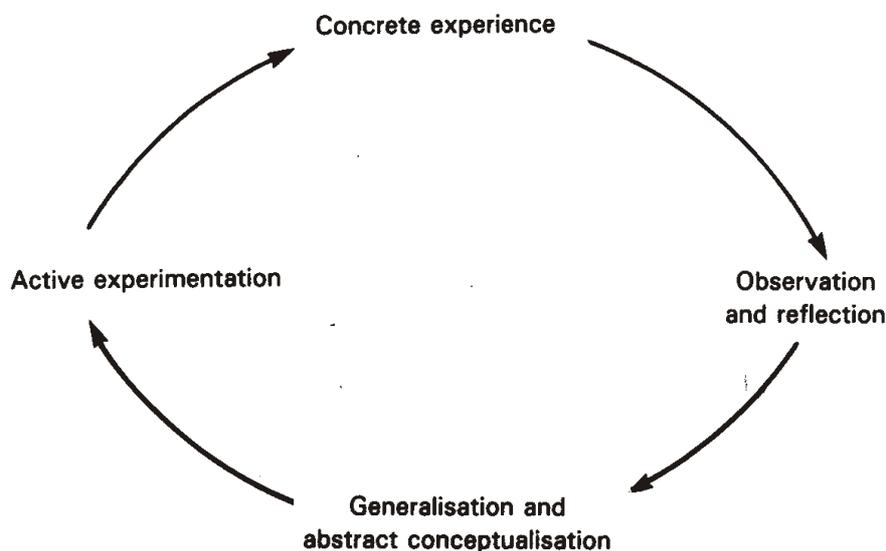
Ref: Jarvis, 1987, p.17

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Kolb's initial theory was criticised on a number of counts (see below), and he subsequently slightly revised the theory (Kolb, 1993) to posit six characteristics of experiential learning:

1. Learning is best conceived, not in terms of outcomes, but as a process.

2. Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience, and can be disrupted by experience. "It is in this interplay between expectation and experience that learning occurs" (Kolb, 1993, p.145). Thus all learning is relearning, because everyone is coming with something already. This means we need to dispose of or modify old ideas to gain new ones. We integrate new ideas into our existing schema (likely to be more stable), or substitute (which might result in dual theory, or the possibility of reversion).

3. The process of learning requires us to resolve dialectically opposed 'modes of adaptation' to the world (such as concrete and abstract, observation and action, impulse and reason). In other words, learning is a tension- and conflict-filled process; how conflicts are resolved impacts on the level of learning.

4. Learning is an holistic process of adaptation to the world. It is not simply a recognition of the world, but integrates thinking, feeling, perceiving, behaving.

5. Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment - i.e. it is situated - because experience is subjective and personal, and objective and environmental.

6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

Kolb thus sees knowledge as something which is created dialectically when someone reflects on an experience - i.e. when someone learns: "*Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*" (Kolb, 1993, p.155). This dialectical process is between the social realm and the individual one, so "knowledge is the result of the transaction between social knowledge and personal knowledge" (p.153).

It is clear that Kolb's theory holds some relevance for us in the assertion that all learning is relearning, in the sense that this implies some unlearning, too - i.e. disposing of or modifying existing ideas, as Kolb argues. However, it is also clear that Kolb's theory can in no way be seen to be primarily about unlearning hegemony; indeed, in his suggestion that learning is a process of adaptation to the world, it would appear that the opposite is true.

8.4.2 Critique of Kolb's theory

Kolb's initial theory was criticised on a number of grounds, including the fact that there was little empirical support for his theory, because he had based it on a small research base (Smith, 2001). Rossing (1991), for example, suggests that Kolb "prescribes an ideal model of learning rather than a description of actual learning under real circumstances" (p.47).

Critiques of Kolb's theory have centred largely on the issue of how we learn from experience, although Kolb was also criticised for not allowing for the fact that experiences occur within a specific context (Jarvis, 1987; Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985a; Wildemeersch, 1992). Thus a number of writers (eg. Jarvis, 1987; Rossing, 1991) have suggested that people might not go through the stages in sequence, and indeed might skip one, or undergo a number simultaneously. In addition, some of the stages, in particular reflection, could be a number of processes in its own right rather than being a single step, as Kolb argued; or, indeed, the stage of reflection might be skipped altogether, because some kinds of knowledge might not require reflection (eg. memorisation) (Jarvis, 1987).

A key critique of Kolb's initial theory was that the relationship between knowledge and learning had not been looked at enough; and that learning was not seen as situated, but only as something happening within the mind of the individual, so his theory did not sufficiently take into account different cultural contexts and conditions (eg. Andersen, 1988, cited in Smith, 2001). Jarvis (1987) has argued that Kolb's model did not allow for change in the learner as a result of the process - would the learner react differently the next time he or she encountered a similar situation?

As has been seen, Kolb revised his theory, in particular to make the relationship between learning and knowledge clearer, and to allow for the situatedness of the process. However much of the development of Experiential Learning theory has been done by others.

8.4.3 Further development of the theory

Experiential Learning theory has been further developed by in particular Boud, Jarvis, and Le Cornu, each attempting to correct what they see as underdeveloped or incorrect aspects of previous attempts.

Working from critiques of Kolb's theory, Boud (from the mid-1980s), together with his colleagues, developed the experience and reflection stages of the cycle, in particular building in the aspect of situatedness.

Figure 3: Boud, Keogh and Walker's model of experiential learning
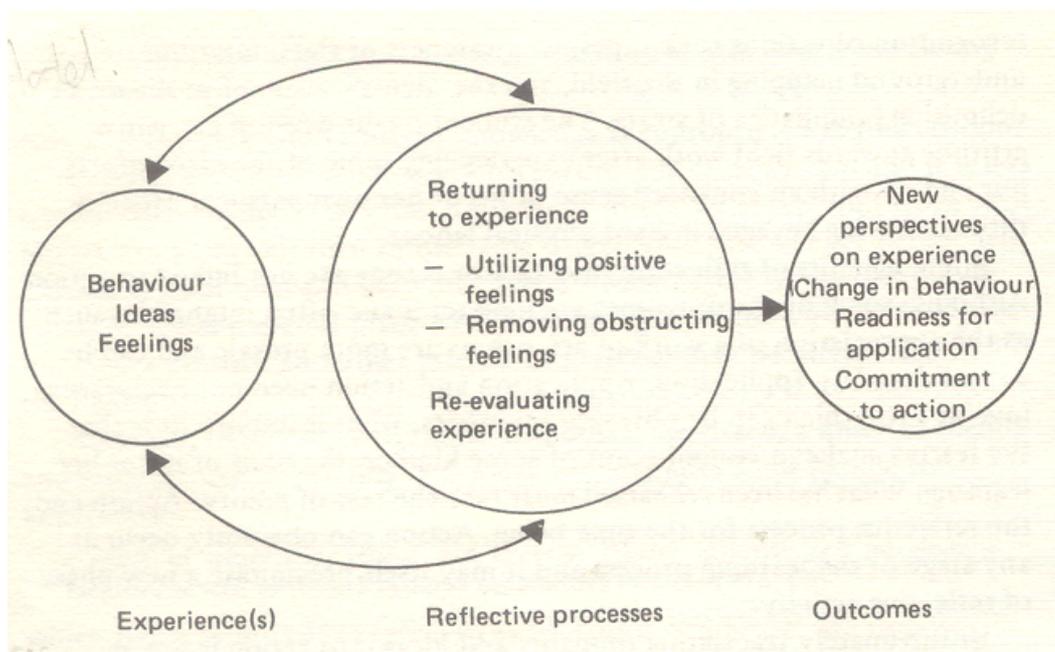
Ref: Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985b, p.36

Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985b) argue that there is general agreement that there are two kinds of experience - primary (transmitted through the senses) and secondary (initiated through some kind of communication). An experience can be planned or unplanned, internal or external. In most cases, the initial experience is quite complex, and is made up of a number of particular experiences. Not all experiences will necessarily lead to learning, however; for learning occur, an experience must be reflected on. "Probably, for adult learners, most events

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which precipitate reflection arise out of the normal occurrences of one's life" (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985b, p.19). This can be because of 'inner discomfit', what Dewey calls a state of doubt, hesitation, mental difficulty, or because of a more positive state (eg. achieving something one did not think was possible leading to a reappraisal) (Ibid.).

Boud et al emphasised that experiences do not happen outside of a particular context: "all experience is shaped by concrete social conditions" (Brah & Hoy, 1989, p.71). So experience is an 'ideological construct' (Ibid.). Stories of experience are mediated through a 'lens of ideology', so secondary experience also needs to be critiqued. "The value of any experience will depend not so much on the experience of the subject, important though this is, but on the struggles around the way that the experience is interpreted and defined and by whom" (Brah & Hoy, 1989, p.72).

This leads us to the issue of reflection, because as Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985a) state, "experience alone is not the key to learning" (p.7). Something has to happen to turn experience into learning - and that something, they argue, is reflection. In reflection, a person recaptures the experience, thinks about it, mulls it over, evaluates it (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985b). Dewey saw reflection as highly rational, controlled, conscious and voluntary (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985b). Boud et al (1985b), however, argue that affective aspects are also important, as are previous experiences, which affect the way someone sees the world. As a result, everyone reacts differently. Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985a) call reflection "an active process of exploration and discovery" (p.7). They argue that it is a multi-faceted concept, containing a number of important ideas and activities, including:

1. Only a person him/herself can learn, and only s/he can reflect on his/her own experience; but reflection can be done as a group activity.
2. Reflection is a "purposive activity directed towards a goal" (p.11).
3. The reflective process is a complex one, with both feelings and cognition involved, closely interrelated and interactive. Negative feelings can act as a barrier, or distort perceptions, leading to a false analysis of a situation, or undermining the will to continue the learning process. Positive feelings, on the other hand, can greatly enhance the learning process.

Boud et al (1985a) greatly developed the concept of reflection in their work, identifying three different stages of reflection - returning to the experience; attending to feelings; and re-evaluating the experience. They concluded that reflection is an important human activity, but the capacity to reflect is developed to different stages in different people. Because of this, some people may learn more effectively from experience than others. Reflection can and does happen at an unconscious level - but then it cannot help us make active and aware decisions (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985b).

Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985b) argue that "some benefits of reflection may be lost if they are not linked to action" (p.35); but the translation of thoughts and ideas into action is not straightforward. Unlike the experience and reflection aspects of Kolb's theory, however, they do not develop this aspect to any great extent. They are also not particularly concerned with the radical potential of reflection and action. Newman (2011) argues that in their work, Boud, Keogh and Walker are guilty of separating out reflection from action (unlike Freire, discussed below), and that their model relies too heavily on a chronological sequence (experience ⇨reflection⇨outcome) (p.317). Thus some years later, Boud and Walker (1992, cited in Newman, 2011) revisited their model. They accepted that they had not given enough consideration to the potential role of reflection leading up to an experience, and within the experience itself. However, they continued to insist for a distinct role between experience and reflection:

> There is a fundamental tension between becoming fully immersed in an event and standing back to witness our own actions. The former is required if we are to be a full player in the event. The latter is implicit in the concept of reflection (Boud & Walker, 1992, p.271, quoted in Newman, 2011, p.317).

Boud et al's suggestion that some kind of 'inner discomfort' gives rise to reflection would appear to relate my earlier discussion about how people might 'unlearn' hegemony simply by reflecting on lived experience as something different from what they have been taught to believe - in other words, by the disjunct between lived experience/reality and hegemonic ideology, as Marx, Gramsci, Fanon et al all suggest. However, their analysis of the relationship between experience and context, and how this might affect our understanding and

interpretation of experience, suggests the possibility that we might not be struck by such a disjunct because hegemonic ideology might affect how we interpret our lived reality.

Boud et al's claim that perceptions can be distorted, leading to a false analysis of the situation, clearly relates to the concept of a false consciousness, although they relate this specifically to feelings, rather than to ideology. Their suggestion that negative emotions might act as a barrier might be considered contentious, if we consider anger as a negative emotion, in the light of many arguments that have been made about the necessity of anger as a point of departure for social change (discussed further below). Their work on action, and the link between experience, reflection, and action, cannot really help in trying to unpack any link between 'unlearning' and social change; and it is perhaps here that turning to the work of Jarvis is useful.

Peter Jarvis has perhaps made the greatest contribution to developing experiential learning theory, and particularly the social change tradition within it (i.e. village 3). Jarvis (1993) has argued that "the whole experiential learning movement is in accord with the underlying epistemology of conservatism even though it appears progressive" (p.28), but has worked to emphasise its radical potential. In his work, he has developed in particular our understanding of both experience and how we respond to experience, including through reflection. Jarvis argues that *all* learning starts with experience.

Working from the late 1980s, and drawing on both transformative learning and Freirian learning (discussed below) he developed a new model as a result of using Kolb's theory empirically - he asked a number of different groups of adults to explore Kolb's cycle based on their own experience of learning. Jarvis was influenced by Habermas and others, such as Gagné, and emphasised the social context, which is related to social structures (Jarvis, 1987): "it is the way in which a person experiences the social situation that affects the learning process" (p.63). Thus, like Boud, Keogh and Walker, Jarvis argued that experience is socially constructed, and that people react differently to different experiences, and thus looked at these different responses in developing his model.

In his understanding of the situatedness of experience and reflection, Jarvis referred specifically to hegemony:

> It is important to recognise that reflection occurs within a social context in which the power elite of society has predetermined some of the dominant ideologies which have become a part of the taken-for-grantedness of society and internalised by its members. Indeed, it is also significant to note that these ideologies have become part of the educational institutional, so that people learn in formal institutions that have incorporated these dominant ideologies into their own subcultures. This is the process which Gramsci regards as hegemonic (Jarvis, 1987, p. 108).

Jarvis argued that, although people are shaped by their social situation, they may still respond differently to it, because learning is an individual process. He felt that the different situation/context within which an experience happened (including formal, non-formal and informal learning situations) influenced the response. Some experiences happen so often, they stop being meaningful, and we take them for granted; others call for a response, and are thus the start of a learning experience.

Jarvis argued that the learning resulting from experience might be three-fold, depending on what stages they went through and why. In his first model, he identified nine different routes someone might take after an experience - presumption, non-consideration, rejection, pre-conscious, practice, memorisation, contemplation, reflective practice, and experimental learning. The first three of these he classified as non-learning responses; the second three as non-reflective learning; and the final three as reflective learning:

Figure 4: Jarvis' model of experiential learning
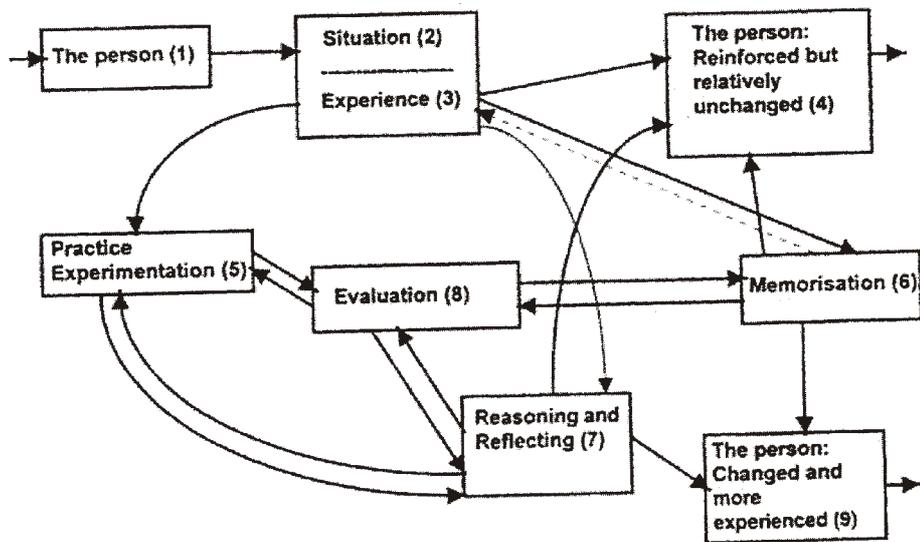
reproduced from Jarvis 1994

Ref: Jarvis, 1987, p.25

Jarvis argued that non-learning responses are closely connected to social structures and the cultural context:

> Presumption indicates that people have certain presuppositions about the social situation and provided that they are fulfilled they perform their role without question; non-consideration shows that in some situations people do not think about their experience; rejection demonstrates that there are certain situations in which individuals make a definite decision not to learn (Jarvis, 1987, p.133).

Non-reflective (pre-conscious, practice and memorisation) responses "are fundamentally reproductive in their mechanism, reproducing the knowledge, skill and attitude and also the social and cultural system" (p.165). Reflective learning, on the other hand, is "potentially a force for change; in other words, reflective learning is always potentially subversive" (p.189). Jarvis argues that there is a relationship between the social structure and the type of learning - reflective learning is more likely when structures of society are weak; and less likely to occur when structures are strong.

It [is] also recognised that non-learning does not disturb the stability of society at all. Indeed, this form of response is crucial to the stability of society and power does not have to be displayed overtly in order to ensure that the structures are not disturbed. By contrast to this, covert power may be manifest in forms of authority, or even more overtly in such situations as indoctrination and brainwashing, in order to encourage non-reflective learning so that the structures of society should not be disturbed. (p.188)

Thus Jarvis' model clearly reflects an understanding of the role of hegemony within society, and how this affects learning from experience. Ironically, he suggests that it is at the point where 'unlearning' is most needed (i.e. when structures of social control are at their strongest), that reflective learning, and hence the potential for change, is least likely to occur. However, this does not mean that it will *not* happen.

Jarvis argued that in every experience, there is an interplay between mind and self, and with the individual's situation. However, also as Boud, Keogh and Walker asserted, experiences do not have meaning in and of themselves - they are either given meaning, or are meaningless. Some experiences require an habitual response; some experiences create a 'disjuncture' that requires more - i.e. Dewey's state of discomfort, also identified by Boud, Keogh and Walker, but now further developed by Jarvis, drawing on Mezirow's work (see below). This 'disjuncture' is socially constructed, so it is different for different people, and is a potential learning experience. It is a disjuncture not just between the biography of the learner and present experience, but between biography and idealised experience. There is always the potential for disjuncture between biography and experience - this is essential for human growth and development (Jarvis, 1987); but this can arrest or distort the growth of the individual. Jarvis argues that consciousness is raised when someone experiences a disjuncture because of an unfamiliar experience - this is a momentary freezing of time. If the disjuncture is relatively insignificant, then a low level of consciousness in maintained, and there can be no learning. However, if the individual is aware of this disjuncture, but experiences this within oppressive relations, and can do nothing about it, this becomes oppressive and alienating, and leads to a slowing down of thought, and it becomes impossible to reflect (Jarvis, 1987).

Jarvis' model integrates reflection and reasoning (both are put into a single box), suggesting that Jarvis conceptualises these as linked. Newman (2011) argues that this, together with Jarvis' argument that reflection is socially constructed, suggests that reflection is something that can be learned, like a skill or a competency (p.319). Newman does, however, concede that in his discussion, Jarvis makes it clear that he does not intend this.

Jarvis revised his work in the 1990s and 2000s, in response to critiques that there is a problem of sequence, and that there was a limited experimental base to support it. His most recent model was published in 2004:

Figure 5: Jarvis' revised model of experiential learning

1. Person/ Biography/ Experience
2. Social situation
3. An episodic experience
4. Person unchanged
5. Practice
6. Experiment
7. Memorize
8. Thought/ Reflection
9. Evaluation
10. Person – more developed and experienced
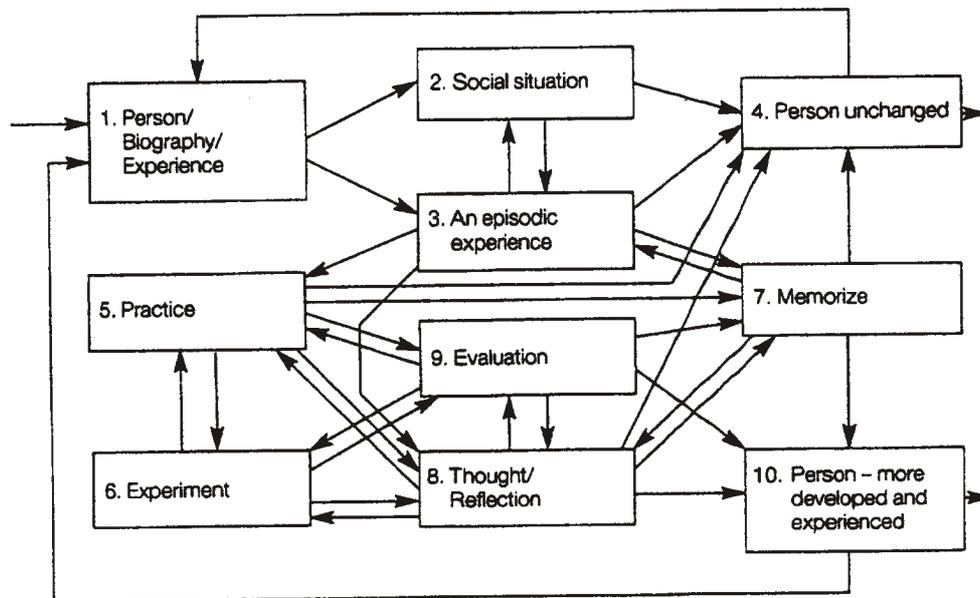
Ref: Le Cornu, 2005, p.169

He now argues that there are three types of non-learning (the same as before), and eight types of learning. He categorises learning into incidental learning (non-consideration and rejection; preconscious knowledge learning; and preconscious skills learning); non-reflective learning (basic skills learning; memorization); and reflective learning (cognitive learning; practice learning; contemplation). This new categorization reflects the holistic nature of learning, which Jarvis (2004) has increasingly emphasised, including the important role of emotion.

Jarvis now defines experiential learning as follows:

> Human learning is a combination of processes whereby whole persons construct experiences of situations and transform them into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, emotions and the senses, and integrate the outcomes into their own biographies. (p.111)

It is clear that Jarvis' work has direct application to the concept of learning and unlearning hegemony, because of his own acknowledgement of the impact hegemony has on learning, and in particular 'unlearning', if this is understood to be reflective learning. However, Jarvis does not make it clear how reflective learning can happen within structures of domination; much of how work considers rather the implications of his theory for educators of adults, rather than adults themselves.

Recently, Alison Le Cornu (2005), whilst acknowledging the value of Jarvis' model, has criticised it for being too time-centred and weak on the process of internalisation. She also questions whether there really is such a thing as non-learning, arguing that it is highly probable that learning of some form always occurs, even if it is accidental and unidentifiable. Much of Le Cornu's critique, and the new model she proposes, is based on the phenomenological work of Martin, Säljö and Booth (Le Cornu, 2005), using the concept of internalisation, and the argument that people 'constitute' not 'construct' the world: "learning is mostly a matter of reconstituting the already constituted world" (Martin & Booth, 1997, p.139, quoted in Le Cornu, 2005, p.173):

> So the process of reflection must be understood as the gradual transformation of knowledge into knowing, and part of that transformation involves a deepening internalisation to the point that people and their 'knowing' are totally integrated one with the other. (Le Cornu, 2005, p.175)

Le Cornu's model, while an interesting challenge to many of Jarvis' assumptions, offers little useful in the attempt to understand 'unlearning'.

Boud, Jarvis and Le Cornu have thus greatly developed Kolb's original model, in particular recognising the importance of the social context within which individuals are situated, and the impact that this has on both experience and reflection - i.e. both are socially constructed. Eraut (2000b) has further expanded on this, arguing that we need to recognise the different kinds of learning that might take place in a situation, and the influences on the situation of the different histories an individual might bring. Thus, to truly understand particular situations involving several people, it is necessary to look at both the situation itself (what happened before, the wider context within which it is happening, the ongoing interaction between the situation and its context) and its transactions with the participants; and at the contribution of the situation to the learning of the participants. In this way, the complexity of the learning process, and the importance of the relationship between the individual and others and his/her situation can be seen - something which Eraut argues is often lost within experiential learning theory because it tends to focus on the individual.

Jarvis, as we have seen, has tried to emphasise the radical possibility of experiential learning theory; and has looked at the context within which it takes place, recognising the importance of informal learning. A number of theorists who are particularly interested in informal learning have developed this aspect further, because, as Rossing (1991) claimed, there was as yet no theory directly about informal incidental learning from experience; Kolb's theory was based on a formal education setting, and much other work in the field has assumed a level of formality in the setting of experiential learning.

Rossing (1991) undertook research specifically on incidental learning, interviewing leaders and members of community betterment groups about the nature, content and processes of their learning. In his study, he found three 'modes' of learning. In direct experience, "learning...occurs through perceived consequences of one's own actions", whilst in vicarious experience, "learning...occurs through observing the structure and effects of behaviour exhibited by others" (p.51). Rossing argues that this happens in any group, but individuals are most likely to learn from those doing something that they expect to do themselves at some time. Finally, in guided experience, someone seeks to foster an individual's learning by presenting or structuring information or experience. Overall, Rossing found that people's learning from their experiences was more about action strategies than about awareness,

thinking or feeling. People were likely to learn awareness mostly from direct experience (and could readily identify this learning), and feeling from both direct and guided experience, whilst they learned thinking from all three kinds of experiences. However, people tended not to identify learning about feeling and thinking as learning. Rossing also found that people tended to identify positive outcomes, rather than negatives outcomes, as learning. "This implies that a 'learning' experience is one that provides some relatively unambiguous positive result" (p.57). Rossing's argument allows for the possibility that someone might learn informally, on her/his own, and this learning might include awareness and thinking. I would suggest that both of these could be related to the notion of 'unlearning' hegemony, although Rossing does not specifically consider this.

A few years after Rossing did his research, studies by Carter (1995) and Menard (1993) (both cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001) showed that informal and incidental learning was often the result of a significant unplanned or unexpected event (possibly something like Dewey's discomfort or Jarvis' disjuncture). Marsick and Volpe (1999, cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001) reviewed several studies of informal learning in the workplace, and also found that informal learning was often triggered by an internal or external 'jolt'. Informal learning was also often integrated with daily routines; not highly conscious; haphazard and influenced by chance; an inductive process of reflection and action; and linked to the learning of others. Marsick and Watkins thus came up with their own model for this:

Figure 6: Marsick and Watkins' model of informal or incidental learning
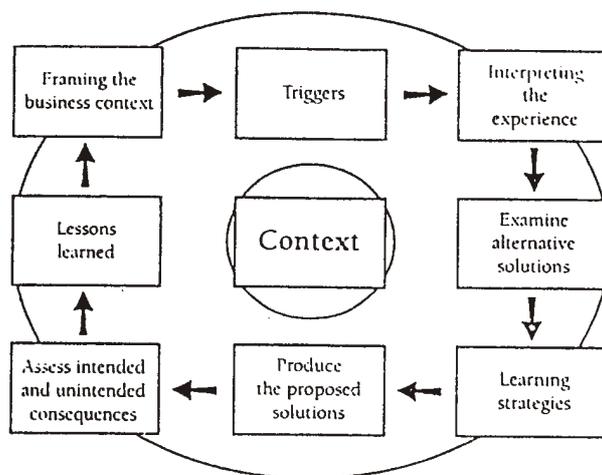
Ref: Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p.29

According to their model, learning grows out of everyday encounters within a particular context (the inner circle); whilst the experience from which the learning occurs happens within a broader personal, social, business, cultural context (the outer circle). This broader context influences the way people interpret their situation, their choices, actions and learnings. It is thus clear how Marsick and Watkins' model relates to the situatedness of experience and reflection asserted by Boud, Keogh and Walker, by Jarvis, and by Le Cornu.

Marsick and Watkins, like other theorists discussed above, emphasise that the meaning making of informal/incidental learning is not necessarily linear or sequential, so although learning always starts with a trigger, someone may go backwards or forwards from there. Whether we pay attention to the trigger, how we see the trigger, is influenced by our worldview; and our learning can in turn affect our worldview.

My discussion of experiential learning shows clearly that this theory of learning (at least within Village 3) allows for the possibility of hegemony. Thus the individual is shaped by broader society, and in particular by oppressive relations, and this impacts on their consciousnesses and the nature of their experiences, and their interpretation of these. The theory also allows for the possibility of 'unlearning' this. In this process, reflection is given a critical role, and many of the theorists within this school have thus looked at this concept in some detail. However, none of the theorists has adequately explained how this might happen, particularly within oppressive relations, beyond suggesting that the disjuncture between lived experience and hegemonic ideology might help it to happen. Jarvis, as we have seen, argues that there is a greater chance of reflective learning within a context where systems of society are relatively weak; and if a disjuncture is experienced within oppressive relations, and the person experiencing it can do nothing about it, this can become oppressive and alienating, and leads to a slowing down of thought, and it becomes impossible to reflect. This calls into question the possibility of 'unlearning' hegemony within our current system of brutal capitalism.

I will thus now turn my attention to another potentially useful learning theory, that of transformative learning.

8.5 Transformative Learning

Cranton (1994) describes Transformative Learning theory as a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience (p.23). The theory has been developed over the course of nearly four decades. It was first presented by Jack Mezirow, who remains the key author of the theory, but has been refined by a number of other theorists; and also extensively critiqued.

8.5.1 Mezirow's theory

Jack Mezirow is Emeritus professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Columbia University, New York. In his work, Mezirow was influenced by Jurgen Habermas and Paulo Freire. As well as his academic career, Mezirow has been a consultant on adult literacy to the UNDP, UNESCO, USAID, USIA [United States Information Agency] and the Asia Foundation for World Education. He is also an advisor on adult literacy to the government of Pakistan. Mezirow is the founder of transformative learning theory, and continues to present on this all over the world.

Transformative Learning theory falls within a constructivist understanding of education, and is located within personal experience, thus linking it to Experiential Learning theory. As we shall see, his theory draws heavily on many of the ideas already discussed above. Mezirow presented what he called a "critical theory of adult learning and education" in 1981. This drew on Habermas' three domains of learning (technical, practical and emancipatory). He sought to explain how personal transformation (i.e. emancipatory learning) occurred. In 1985, Mezirow published a slightly refined version, now called a "critical theory of self-directed learning", again drawing on the work of Habermas, and in particular his notions of instrumental learning, dialogic learning and self-reflective learning (Cranton, 1994). Finally, in 1991, Mezirow presented his "Transformative Learning Theory", in which he argued that the way we see the world is a product of our knowledge, our cultural background and language, and our human nature; but we can shift this worldview (Cranton, 1994).

Mezirow (1997b) argued that it is "a defining condition of being human" (p.5) that we seek to understand the meaning of our experience. "To make meaning means to make sense of an experience; we make an interpretation of it. When we subsequently use this interpretation to guide decision making or action, then making meaning becomes learning" (Mezirow, 1990a, p.1). This learning is not always emancipatory/transformational, though.

8.5.2.1 Meaning Perspectives and Meaning Perspectives

Mezirow (1990a) argued that we all have a 'frame of reference', a "set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences" (p.1). There are two dimensions to this frame of reference: these are our meaning perspectives (our higher level, broader assumptions), and our meaning schemes ('rules' that we have derived from our meaning perspectives that govern how we judge things around us, make decisions, etc.) (Mezirow, 1990a, p.2). Meaning perspectives are consolidated as we move through life, so we interpret experience differently at different stages of development. Over time, as we mature, meaning perspective becomes inclusive, discriminating, integrative of experience (Collard & Law, 1989).

We acquire meaning perspectives in different ways, for example stereotypes might be learned unintentionally whilst Marxism might be learned intentionally (Mezirow, 1990a), but one's meaning perspective is usually uncritically acquired through socialising (the link to hegemony is clear here). The more emotional the context of learning (for example, learning from parents), the more it is embedded; and experience then reinforces this (Ibid.). Transformative learning is a profound shift in our meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1990a). It changes how we know, and how we see ourselves and our world, whereas informational learning only changes what we know (Baumgartner, 2001).

How does this shift in our meaning perspective happen? Mezirow argued that when we have a new experience, which presents a dilemma or contradiction (a 'disorienting dilemma') for our meaning perspective, then we have two options:
1.   To reject the new information;
2.   To reflect on the experience and revise our meaning perspective. This is transformative learning. This might take place gradually, over time, or be swifter and more dramatic.

Mezirow (1997b) asserted that "we do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference" (p.7). So something has to happen to shift our meaning perspective. This occurs through a three part process:

1. Critical reflection on one's assumptions;
2. Discourse to validate the critically reflective insight;
3. Action (the type of action depends on the nature of dilemma) (Mezirow, 1997a).

The entire process of transformative learning is made up of ten elements:

1. Disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. Critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that others have shared similar transformation
5. Exploration of new roles/actions
6. Development of plan for action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing plan
8. Tryout of plan
9. Development of competence and self-confidence in new rules
10. Reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives (Imel, 1998).

The process can happen suddenly, over a short period of time, or gradually.

8.5.2.3 Reflection

As can be seen, as in experiential learning, critical self-reflection plays a vital role in the process of transformative learning, and involves "reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feelings and acting" (Mezirow, 1990a, p.13). In this, Mezirow draws on Dewey (1933, p.9), who says critical reflection is "assessing the grounds of one's beliefs" (quoted in Mezirow, 1990a, p.5) - i.e. rationally examining assumptions. This then changes the way we act, but "although

reflection and action are dialectic in their relationship, they should not be polarized as in Kolb (1984)" (Mezirow, 1990a, p.6).

Mezirow draws on Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1985b) three *stages* in reflection, as discussed above (i.e. returning to the experience to recapture as much detail as possible; looking at feelings attached to the experience and reviewing them; and re-evaluating experience) (Mezirow, 1990b). However, he argues that there are also three *forms* of reflection; content, process, and premise - this last, premise, is critical reflection (E. Taylor, 1997).

Mezirow also drew on Stephen Brookfield's (1987) work on critical thinking. Brookfield asserts that critical thinking is about calling into question our assumptions, our habitual ways of thinking of acting, and thus allows us to think or act differently. He identified five characteristics of critical thinking:

1. Critical thinking is a productive and positive activity; it involves an active engagement with life, and a belief that change is possible.
2. It is a process, not an outcome; because it is a continual questioning of assumptions, it is never complete.
3. The manifestations of critical thinking are affected by the contexts within which it takes place; they might be wholly internal, or might take the form of dramatic action.
4. It can be triggered by both positive and negative events.
5. It is emotive as well as rational.

Mezirow (1996) argued that we transform our fixed frames of reference by critically reflecting on our assumptions in two different ways:
1. 'Objective reframing' (the most common form of transformative learning), in which we critically reflect on a text/narrative/problem; and
2. 'Subjective reframing', in which we critically reflect on our own assumptions and reasons for them.

8.5.2.4. Action

Mezirow (1990b) argued that "Praxis is a requisite condition of transformative learning" (p.356). However, because "learning is a social process, but it takes place within the individual learner" (Mezirow, 1997a, p.60), "we must begin with individual perspective transformations before social transformations can succeed" (Mezirow, 1990b, p.363). However, Mezirow says that collective action will not necessarily come out of individual transformation (Kilgore, 1999), but the two are closely related:

> In the transformation of sociocultural distortions, it is an artificial dichotomy to present as competing polarities learning that occurs in relatively risk-free settings in which individual empowerment is a goal and learning that occurs within the struggle of collective action to change institutional structures or practices. (Mezirow, 1990b, p.356)

Clearly, in a number of respects, Mezirow's theory is relevant to thinking about 'unlearning'. Mezirow argues that we have 'meaning perspectives', which frame the way we understand the world and interpret our experiences. I have already noted above the synergy between this and Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Mezirow argues that the more emotional the context of learning this meaning perspective, the more deeply rooted it is likely to be. Gramsci argued that hegemony is 'taught' to us by a range of civil society structures, including the family, the Church and the school - all of which are thus involved in creating our meaning perspectives, and ensure that this is deeply rooted within us. However, Mezirow argues, we can undergo a radical shift, in which our meaning perspective alters - in other words, in which we potentially unlearn hegemony. This happens through some kind of disorienting dilemma where our meaning perspective (hegemony) and our experience (our lived experience) do not 'fit'; we can reject this dilemma, or we can critically reflect and potentially shift our meaning perspectives. Of course, in many respects this is very similar to the arguments made by experiential learning, and thus transformative learning brings us no closer to understanding 'unlearning'. However, one aspect of Mezirow's theory does strike me as potentially useful - that is Mezirow's assertion that making meaning of our experience is a "'defining condition of being human". What this suggests to me is not only why hegemony might thus always be

contested, as Gramsci argues, but also why people might attempt to 'unlearn' even under most oppressive circumstances - something which, as I argued above, I'm not convinced Jarvis' theory of experiential learning accounts for.

There are, however, problems with Mezirow's theory as I will now discuss.

8.5.2 Critique of Mezirow's theory

There have been a growing number of critiques of Mezirow's theory, although these began some time after Mezirow first proposed his theory. In one of the earliest critiques of his theory, Collard and Law (1989) argued that the fact that his ideas had not been subject to critique by that point was more of a comment on the field of adult education than on the ideas themselves. They argued that his claims to have a theory were premature.

Taylor's (1997) report on a survey he had done on empirical studies using Mezirow's theory tend to confirm Collard and Law's claim. He found that, in discussions of Mezirow's theory, there was very little reference to empirical evidence, and of those empirical studies that there were (he could find only 39 over a period of 17 years), most had not been published, and did not critique the theory but simply used it. None of the studies looked at what the participants' original perspective was, and relied on self-reported perspective transformation. They also did not look at the long-term impact of perspective transformation. He thus argued that the theory had been reified, with its basic premises concerning learning becoming accepted practice.

Taylor updated this survey ten years later (Taylor, 2007). At this point, he found that transformative learning continued to be the most researched and discussed theory in adult education, with an increasing number of empirical studies having been undertaken, and more of these having been published than was the case by 1997. In this review, which looked at 41 studies, Taylor used other conceptions of transformative learning, and not only Mezirow's. Taylor reported that Mezirow's theory continued to be reified, since most simply used the theory rather than critiquing it.

Very recently, Newman (2012) has called into question the very notion of transformative learning. Newman argues that the claims made for transformative learning are that it is 'dramatic, fundamental change" (eg. Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007), an apocolyptic, fundamental shift (eg. Brookfield, 2000). However, in literature reporting so-called transformative learning, Newman could find no evidence of this. It is true that many report a sometimes significant change, but, he argues, all learning is about change, and in any case "We cannot assume that people have undergone a radical change because they say they have" (p.40). In fact, Newman suggests, even in the original stories Mezirow uses to create his theory, there is really little evidence that learning had such a profound transformational impact. He thus suspects that transformative learning does not in fact exist.

Newman (2012) argues that the 'voluminous' literature on transformative learning contains several commonly occurring flaws. I will not discuss all of these in detail, since many of them are not pertinent to the issue of 'unlearning'. However, one criticism that Newman makes of transformative learning is that fails to distinguish between identity and consciousness. Newman claims that what transformative learning is really about is a change in identity, not consciousness. Identity is fairly superficial, "it is the face, the mask, the persona we present to the world" (p.42), we can alter it, and we often do.

> Consciousness is another phenomenon altogether. It is fluid, utterly insubstantial, and not so easily subject to rational control. It is the experience of existence. We develop our consciousness in the continual encounter between our self and the social and material world....It becomes the medium through which we apprehend the self and give meaning to the world the self inhabits....It is literally all we have, and without it neither the self nor the world exists. (Newman, 2012, p.42)

Like Collard and Law (1989), Newman (2012) contrasts Mezirow's 'perspective transformation' with Freire's 'conscientization' (discussed further below). He shows how Mezirow emphasises *role*, rather than *being*, and that 'perspective transformation' remains at the level of the individual. In contrast, conscientisation is a collective activity, in which learners examine their common condition. "In the process of coming to see our world authentically - naming it for what it is - we achieve a heightened form of consciousness in

which we *feel* and we *think* and we *do* with clarity and intensity" (Newman, 2012, p.43). Newman also argues that transformative learning theory mistakes mobilization for transformation. Action taken by people does not necessarily arise because of transformational learning.

Newman feels that the incredible amount written about transformative learning in the last decade has become repetitive, with such indiscriminate use of the term, that "transformation begins to refer to any kind of change or process at all" (Kegan, 2000, p. 47, quoted in Newman, 2012, p.49). Meanwhile, according to Newman, the theory itself has become increasingly unwieldy, with concepts inside concepts, and an ever-growing number of kinds of reflection. "This leads me to wonder whether transformative learning only exists in the realm of theory" (Newman, 2012, p.37).

Apart from Newman's claim that transformative learning does not really exit, those critiques that have been made of Mezirow's theory primarily centre on four issues.

8.5.2.1 The process of perspective transformation

Taylor's (1997) survey found that very little data confirming each of the 10 steps that Mezirow claimed were part of the process of perspective transformation. Some of the studies suggested that the process is more recursive, evolving, and spiralling, than linear, thus supporting Mezirow's concession in 1995 that the process does not always follow the same sequence (E. Taylor, 1997). Many of the studies emphasised the importance of feelings, rather than simply rational thought. The studies also suggested that there are other essential aspects in perspective transformation not included in Mezirow's model; and that critical reflection, considered by Mezirow to be an essential part of the process, is not in fact as necessary as his theory suggests - Hunter (1980, as cited in Taylor), for example, found that those who had experienced perspective transformation used blind faith, not critical reflection.

Most studies agreed that the catalyst and first phase is indeed a disorienting dilemma, some kind of "acute internal/external personal crisis" (E. Taylor, 1997, Disorienting Dilemma section, para. 1), as claimed by Mezirow. However, some of the studies have suggested that

perspective transformation may occur without a disorienting dilemma. Clark (1993, pp.117-8, as cited in Taylor, 1997), for example, argues that 'integrating circumstances' may trigger transformative learning. These are "indefinite periods in which the person consciously or unconsciously searches for something which is missing in their life; when they find this missing piece, the transformation is catalyzed" (Clark, 1993, pp.117-8, quoted in Taylor, 1997, Disorienting Dilemma section, para.1). This idea of the 'indefinite period' is supported by Bennetts' (2003) finding that the disorientating dilemma is often 'slow burn' rather than a critical incident; and in "order to be 'change ready', individuals need to have some hope for the future; some dream that they can aspire to in order to go through the difficult process of changing their circumstances" (Bennetts, 2003, p.460).

Many of the studies considered by Taylor in his first survey also criticised Mezirow for de-emphasising the importance of context in understanding why some disorienting dilemmas lead to perspective transformation, and others do not (E. Taylor, 1997). In response to his survey of the empirical studies, Taylor proposed that the theory needed to be expanded to include four factors - affective learning, nonconscious learning, relationships, and the collective unconscious - some of which are mentioned by Mezirow, but not given enough recognition. Taylor also affirmed the need to include an historical perspective, and to recognise social and political forces (Ibid.).

In his updated survey of empirical studies between 1998 and 2007, Taylor found that new studies helped to clarify exactly what perspective transformation is, and in particular its enduring nature and irreversibility. Lange (2004, as cited in Taylor, 2007), for example, found that transformation occurred not only at an epistemological level, but at an ontological level, in which "participants experience a change in their being in the world" (Lange, 2004, p.137 quoted in Taylor, 2007, p.181). Taylor also found that the studies tended to assume that all forms of reflection were equally significant, and that someone cannot critically reflect until they have reached a certain level of cognitive development (Taylor, 2007). The newer studies also supported the finding of many of the earlier studies that both personal (prior life experience) and sociocultural (historical events) contextual factors are significant in the process of perspective transformation. They also suggested that power was an important factor, particularly in sustained transformation. Epistemological change is not enough for

transformation to happen - things like institutional support, explicit guidance, etc. are also required (Taylor, 2007).

8.5.2.2 Critical reflection versus emotional response in perspective transformation

As discussed above, in his review of empirical studies using Mezirow's theory, Taylor (1997) found that many of them emphasised the importance of emotions in perspective transformation, some studies finding that emotion is integral to perspective transformation (Taylor, 2001). Morgan (1987, as cited in E. Taylor, 1997), for example, argued that anger is the most universal and profound stage, and that individuals could not move on if this was not resolved. Thus critical reflection can only start once feelings have been validated and worked through (E. Taylor, 1997). Indeed, critical reflection may not be involved at all; and some studies found that critical reflection might even be detrimental - it might be better to go for 'instinct' (Taylor, 2001). Some of the studies Taylor looked at emphasised the importance of other ways of knowing, such as intuition, affective learning, feelings, and connected this with relationships, which, whilst acknowledging, Mezirow tends to undervalue, particularly the more subjective elements such as trust, friendship, and support (E. Taylor, 1997).

The newer studies reviewed by Taylor supported the finding of many of the earlier studies about the importance of emotion and of relationships, in particular love relationships, in transformative learning (Taylor, 2007). Recently, Kathleen Taylor (2006) has argued that learning is always about memory, in the sense that it is about creating lasting neural connections in the brain; and long-term memory is especially affected by the emotions: "Memory is the embodiment of emotion tied to experience" (p.81). "For learning to be both lasting and meaningful it must be experienced" (p.73).

8.5.2.3 The relationship between transformative learning and social change

"Transformative learning has long been criticized for not paying enough attention to social change" (Cranton, 2011, p.325). A key elements of the critique is Mezirow's emphasis on the individual, and the inability of his theory to adequately explain the link between individual perspective transformation and collective social action (Collard and Law, 1989; Inglis, 1997,

Newman, 1994, 2012). Mezirow has consistently argued that learning is a social process, but takes place within the individual learner; thus individual transformation must precede social transformation (Cranton, 2011, p.325). Mezirow (1997a) has responded to much of this critique, emphasising that he has always maintained that transformative learning is a three-part process of which the last is action.

It is clear that much of the critique in this area centres rather around different political understandings of social change than any inherent weakness in the theory itself. Mezirow clearly understands agency to reside in the individual, and that the individual is the primary agent of change. Many of his critics, however, are more determinist and/or more vanguardist in their approach, or at any rate, cannot accept a notion of individual politics outside of collective action. Thus Inglis (1997), for example, argues that although Mezirow emphasises praxis, and calls for collective action, his emphasis is always the individual as the agency for social change (rather than social movements): "the world for Mezirow is primarily shaped through individual agency" (Adult Education and the Search for the Truth about the Self section, para. 4).

This links to another key area of critique of Mezirow's work, his failure to place his theory within a broader context, and in particular a context of ideology and power. For example, "Mezirow fails to acknowledge the difficulty of fostering conditions of ideal learning in a social environment in which structural inequalities are entrenched" (Collard & Law, 1989, p.105). Newman (1994, cited in Cranton, 2011) argues that Mezirow's theory does not show how transformative learning can happen in a context of systematic oppression, and suggest we need to look at oppression rather than the oppressed.

Collard and Law (1989) have argued that a fundamental problem with Mezirow's theory is the lack of coherent, comprehensive theory of social change. In any case, they argue, Mezirow's theory fails to adequately address questions of context and ideology, and they suggest that it is thus essentially liberal democratic in character (Collard & Law, 1989). Inglis (1998) (using Marx) argues that people's conciousness is determined by the political, economic and social structures within which they are situated, and their position within this - and not just their beliefs, values etc. Thus, people need to know and understand these

structures.

> I do not believe that the path to freedom begins with people critically reflecting about themselves, that is, becoming self-conscious, but rather developing a critical realist understanding of the structures within which they themselves and the society within which they live have been constituted (Inglis, 1998, para 3).

Thus "the task is not so much to change our understanding of the world, but rather to change the structures through which this understanding is created and maintained" (para 5). Mezirow's weakness, according to Inglis, is that he does not have a theory of power, how it operates, how it produces knowledge. Transformative learning theory "enables learners to name their reality differently, but still within capitalist social relations, a political philosophy of liberal individualism" (Inglis, 1998, para.13). Without an analysis of power, transformative learning theory can be seen as a subtle form of self-control, rather than emancipation (Inglis, 1997). Inglis raises questions about Mezirow's individualist/domesticating emphasis on 'empowerment' (which he argues is about developing capacities to act successfully within existing systems and structures of power), rather than on 'emancipation' (critically analyzing, resisting and challenging these):

> By contrast [to empowerment], education for liberation and emancipation is a collective activity which has as its goal social and political transformation. If personal development takes place, it does so within that context. But this process involves structures rather than individuals (Inglis, 1997, Distinguishing Empowerment from Emancipation in Adult Education and Training section, para.2).

In response, Mezirow (1998b) has asserted that he *does* support a structural position, he does not reject it. He agrees with Inglis that social movements are potentially powerful agencies for social change; but argues that they come and go, and are only one form of social action. He rejects Inglis' claim that he does not talk about power. In his more recent work (eg. 2000, cited in Baumgartner, 2001), Mezirow has acknowledged the importance of context, and social interaction, and power.

Another area of critique is Mezirow's use of radical theorists and theories to support his own theory, whilst losing the actual radical content of these. Thus Collard and Law (1989) argue that although Mezirow equates perspective transformation with consciousness-raising and conscientization, both of these are overtly political, whilst perspective transformation is not. Although Mezirow drew increasingly on the work of Freire in his later work, this was selective; and some writers have suggested that his use of Foucault and Habermas is doubtful (Collard & Law, 1989). Hart (1990) in particular has been very critical of Mezirow's use of Habermas.

8.5.2.4 The role of the educator

Much of Mezirow's work assumes a level of formality in the educative process, and thus gives a strong role to the educator; as Imel (1998) argues, "it is difficult for transformative learning to occur without the teacher playing a key role" (p.5). The nature of this role has also been subject to critique, in particular Mezirow's insistence that the educator be impartial (linking the critique to that above): "For Mezirow, imposing our beliefs about a need for social change beyond the learning experience would be indoctrination" (Kilgore, 1999, p.194). Hart (1990) is also critical of Mezirow's insistence that the teacher not 'indoctrinate' (i.e. effect a specific political action). Hart wonders whether it is possible for a teacher to *not* take a political stand if the point is a society free of oppression. In addition, no educator (or learner) is ever outside his/her socio-political context, which is power-bound and thus distorted. Thus, in Hart's view, emancipatory educators must commit to struggling against the distorting effects of power, and help create non-oppressive communities.

8.5.3 Further development of the theory

Baumgartner (2001) reports on new directions in transformative learning as a result of the work of other theorists:
1. The process is not as linear as originally conceptualised;
2. Working through feelings, and not just thoughts, is important;
3. The disorienting dilemma is not necessarily a single, dramatic happening - it might be long, cumulative process, or might be several events converging;

4. Relationships are important;

5. Context and culture is more important than originally thought; some people can be more ready for change because of personal contextual factors than others.

One of the results of such work has been a broadened definition of transformative learning, such as this one from the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE):

> a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions...a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and the natural world; our understandings of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities of social justice and peace and personal joy. (cited in Cranton, 2011, p.328)

Dirkx (1998, cited in Cranton, 2011) argues that transformative learning can be viewed through four lenses. Cranton (2011) agrees that Dirkx's suggestion is a useful one for understanding the different strands within current transformative learning:

1. One tradition is Freirean in outlook, focusing on liberation from oppression and social justice;

2. The second tradition focuses on Mezirow's concentration on rational thought and reflection as key responses to the disorienting dilemma;

3. The third tradition adopts a more developmental approach, seeing the process as intuitive, holistic and contextual.

4. The fourth tradition has taken the idea of emotion, affect and spirituality as key components of transformative learning forward (Cranton, 2011, pp.321-322).

Thus current transformative learning, much like experiential learning with its different 'villages', is itself a contested space.

A number of critiques of transformative learning question its potential usefulness in trying to understand learning and unlearning hegemony; but some also point to further ways it might help. The suggestion that not only rational critical reflection but also feelings, blind faith, intuition, might help with perspective transformation allow a greater possibility for 'unlearning' hegemony given the nature of the lived experience of oppression. It suggests, for example, that Holloway's scream might be a useful way in. The finding that perspective transformation might take place over a period of time, might be 'slow burn', also extends the possibility for unlearning.

However, it is certainly true that Mezirow's theory has little to say about hope and despair, something which, as I have discussed in earlier chapters, is an important hegemonic issue of our time. It is also true that Mezirow's theory does not adequately deal with issues of power and ideology and structure, particularly as these play themselves out on a daily basis in people lives; and whilst allowing for individual agency, Mezirow does not adequately account for how perspective transformation happens on its own (i.e. without a teacher), given the discussion above of how so much education (formal, non-formal and informal) is hegemonic. Neither does he adequately account for the relationship between individual transformation, praxis, and social change.

I take Newman's (2012) point about transformative learning needing to happen at the level of consciousness, not at the level of identity - and I think it is a crucial one, given the current hegemony of difference. However, whilst so much of what passes for transformative learning, according to Newman, really is not about a change in consciousness, that does not necessary mean that it cannot be. However, it is at this point that I turn to the theory that Newman suggests might be more helpful in this respect - Freire's theory of conscientization and emancipatory education.

8.6 Emancipatory education

Whereas many traditions of adult education emphasise the individual, critical pedagogy emphasises the social context and collective actionfor the liberation of the oppressed (Boud, 1989). The leading theorist in this tradition is Paulo Freire.

8.6.1 Freire's theory

Paulo Freire was born in Recife, Brazil, in 1921, and died in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1997. Freire worked as a secondary school teacher before becoming an adult educator. After the military coup in Brazil in 1964, he was jailed and then exiled for 15 years, living variously in Bolivia, Chile, Geneva, before returning to Brazil in 1979, becoming Secretary of Education of the City of Sao Paulo in 1989. During his time as educational advisor to the World Council of Churches in Geneva, he worked in various former Portuguese colonies in Africa, most notably Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. He was also involved in the Cuban literacy campaign.

In his work, Freire was influenced an unusually diverse range of live experiences and theorists, including his own Catholic humanist beliefs; the work of Fanon, Marcuse, Fromm, Adler, Jung and Freud, and a variety of others, on the psychological impact of oppression; contemporary revolutionary social thinkers and activists such as Fanon, Cabral and Guevara; Marxist thinkers such as Marx himself, Gramsci, Mao, as well as Marxist tools of social analysis, particularly in understanding of ideology and dialectical thinking; phenomenology (how people experience their world, rather than explain or understand it) (Kane, 2001, Schugurensky, 2011). Freire is also "profoundly existential" (Gadotti, 2001, p.55).

A number of writers have commented on the synergy between Freire's work, and that of Gramsci. Freire himself says that he was introduced to Gramsci's work in 1968, whilst in exile in Chile (Allman and Mayo (1997). In his later work, Freire (1992/2004) was very critical of ex-Marxists for having abandoned the concept of class struggle, and has emphasised the impact of Marxist thought on his thinking and work:

> The more I went to the slum areas, the more I talked with the people, the more I learned from the people. I got the conviction that the people were sending me to Marx. The people never did say, "Paulo, please why do you not go to read Marx?" No. The people never said that, but their reality said that to me. The misery of the reality. The tremendous domination, the exploitation. (Freire in Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 245-246)

Hurtado (2007) suggests that one can read Freire according to four main axes:

1. His stand on/call for/development of ethical thinking and commitment;

2. His dialectical epistemological framework;

3. His consequent pedagogy;

4. His unfailing socio-political commitment.

Schugurensky (2011), in contrast, identifies seven dimensions to Freire's work, adding philosophical, sociological, and psychological to Hurtado's list (pp.92-95). This suggests that Freire's theory rests on a complex relationship between different social, economic and political factors; and is profoundly affected by his understanding of ontology and epistemology. Thus in discussing Freire's theory of learning, I will also consider these pivotal aspects of his thinking.

8.6.1.1. Humanization and dehumanization

Freire's fundamental argument about oppression and dehumanization was presented in his first major work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, but subsequently developed in his considerable body of writing. Freire (1970/1996) argues that dehumanization was not only an ontological possibility, but an historical reality, and was the inevitable result of oppression. Racism, sexism and class exploitation are the most salient forms of this, but oppression can occur on a variety of grounds (although it is not possible to overcome racism and sexism in a bourgeois society (Shor & Freire, 1987)). Oppression dehumanizes not only the oppressed, but the oppressor as well; but dehumanization "although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.26); it is in fact the ontological vocation of humankind to be fully human. This means that "sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so" (Ibid.).

Thus, under conditions of oppression, we are incomplete; but we have, as part our human vocation, to seek to become complete:

> One of the best ways for us to work as human beings is not only to know that we are uncompleted beings but to *assume* the uncompletedness. There is a little difference

between knowing intellectually that we are unfinished and assuming the nature of being unfinished. We are not complete. We have to become inserted in a permanent process of searching. (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.11)

Although Freire insisted on subjectivity, and the possibility of changing the world (Kane, 2001), a person never becomes completely subject, does not achieve self-incarnation - never achieves "the human fullness of the subject" (Fiori, 1971, p.131). However the person is also never fully destroyed. S/he can be alienated by socio-economic structures who reduce him/her to mere objectivity of other subjects, so that his/her subjectivity is not recognised by others,

> Nevertheless, even the most oppressive domination is incapable of totally reducing man (sic) to a thing: there will always remain sufficient subjectivity for him to functionally integrate the system of domination. From there, this small ray of subjectivity will be able to pass through the crevices of the structural system, grow and become critical consciousness and liberating praxis. This is what makes de-alienation possible. (Fiori, 1971, p.131)

This is humanization, the realization of the value of human beings. "We can struggle to become free precisely because we can know we are not free!" (Freire in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.13). Liberation, though, can only be truly achieved by the oppressed themselves (i.e. the oppressor cannot do this for the oppressed, or even for themselves): "This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.26).

The problem is that those who are oppressed often, in this struggle, become in turn oppressors, or sub-oppressors, thus remaining themselves dehumanized (whilst dehumanizing others). This is because "the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.27). Under these conditions, they see that being human is to be an oppressor; "this is their model of humanity" (Ibid.). They may be aware that they are oppressed; but their understanding of liberation is to be like that which oppresses them.

True liberation - becoming fully human - thus requires first an understanding of the nature of oppression and its causes, and then transforming action (Freire, 1970/1996). However the ideology of oppression can precisely frustrate the oppressed in understanding the true nature of their reality:

> The reproducing task of the dominant ideology implies making reality opaque, to prevent the people from gaining critical awareness, from 'reading' critically their reality, from grasping the *raison d'etre* of the facts they discover. To make reality opaque means to lead people to say that A is B, and B is N, to say that reality is a fixed commodity only to be described instead of recognizing that each moment is made in history and can be changed in an historical process. (Freire in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.36)

Even if they do understand the true nature of reality, the ideology of oppression persuades them that change is impossible, by removing hope, by creating despair. Freire argues that hope "is an ontological need. Despair is hope which, having lost its direction, becomes a distorted version of that ontological need" (cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.61). "If we dispense with hopes and dreams, there is no basis for thinking in other terms" (Hurtado, 2007, p.61). So "Dreaming is not just a necessary political act, but is also inherent in our historical, social nature as women and men" (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.78). However, "There is no hope in hope alone, nor can what is hoped be achieved through hope alone, which becomes vain hope. Hope is necessary but not sufficient, it alone does not win the struggle, but without it struggle totters and flags" (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.78).

Freire argues that much of current ideology has exactly the purpose of creating despair:

> The fatalistic, discouraging ideology which drives the liberal discourse is stalking the world. In the name of postmodernism it seeks to persuade us that we can do nothing to change the social situation which, once seen as historical and cultural, is now becoming 'almost the natural state'. (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.52)

Not surprisingly, then, much of the struggle to become fully human is about consciousness; but also about action:

> In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. (Freire, 1970/1996, p.31)

Freire used the concepts of conscientization and praxis to explore this.

8.6.1.2. Conscientization

To a great extent, Freire's concept of conscientization rests on his understanding of epistemology. Freire argues that knowledge is not fixed, but always being created. Knowledge comes out of a dialectical relationship between being, environment and history - "Knowledge is...a process resulting from the continual interaction between human beings and their surroundings" (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.65). People first experience the world, through sense and feelings; then they interact with it, in what Freire calls an "act of knowing" (Kane, 2001); so, because they inhabit different social realities, people learn different knowledge (Kane, 2001). As part of this, they develop different levels of consciousness:
1. 'Magical' or 'naive' consciousness, in which people accept uncritically what is, particularly so if they have internalised the dominant ideology;
2. 'Critical consciousness', if they reflect on their experience - but, like subjectivity, this is never fully achieved, it is always 'becoming' (Kane, 2001):

> Knowledge is always becoming. That is, if the act of knowing has historicity, then today's knowledge about something is not necessarily the same tomorrow. Knowledge is changed to the extent that reality also moves and changes. Then theory also does the same. (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.101)

So knowing is always a process, not a goal; there's no static knowledge, there never can be (Hurtado, 2007); "knowledge is produced socially in that it is acquired by individuals through social interaction with other people" (Kane, 2001, p.37); and knowledge is produced dialectically: "Knowledge, always a process, results from the conscious impact of human beings on the objective truth which, in turn, conditions them. Hence a dynamic, contradictory unity is created between them and it" (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.66).

Freire argued that oppression and the process of dehumanization resulted in the 'magical' or 'naive' consciousness mentioned above:

> In their political activity, the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed, corresponding with the latter's "submerged" state of consciousness, and take advantage of that passivity to "fill" that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom. (Freire, 1970/1996, p.76)

At this level of consciousness, they accept uncritically what is, particularly so if they have internalised the dominant ideology. However, through conscientization, people can achieve 'critical consciousness', although this is never achieved, it is always 'becoming' (Kane, 2001). Conscientization is thus, primarily, an ontological process:

> Conscientization is the process by which the movement of the development of consciousness as existence is reflectively produced. In this movement man constitutes himself and achieves self-mastery, producing and reproducing himself. In this self-recreation lies his becoming and his doing. (Fiori, 1971, p.123)

So how does conscientization actually occur? Freire argued that conscientization involves confronting reality critically, "simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.34); "a mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality" (Ibid.).

Critical reflection is also existence - i.e. ontological. "Reflection...never ends, since its end and its beginning are dynamically joined in an existential dialectic" (Fiori, 1971, p.124). It is

thus not entirely cerebral: "Imagination, guessing, intuition, cannot be dichotomized from critical thinking" (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.185); but you cannot stop at the level of intuition, you need rigour. "Intuition is absolutely indispensable for me in this process of knowing, as long as we don't stop at that level, but go beyond" (Ibid., p.186).

Much of Freire's work focuses on the pedagogy of this process - i.e. how to bring about conscientization through critical reflection (and thus, many of his seminal works included 'pedagogy' in the title). Freire argued that education was never neutral - it was either aimed at continuing oppression, at maintaining existing power relations (i.e. was hegemonic); or it was aimed at liberation. He used the terms 'education for domestication' and 'education for liberation' to distinguish between these.

'Education for domestication' enacts and reinforces relations of domination and subordination - teachers dominate over learners; some learners dominate over others, as a result of competition; certain knowledge (academic, 'legitimate', already existing) dominates, excluding the possibility of creating new knowledge; theory/abstract thinking dominates over concrete thought and action (Allman, 1988).

In 'education for liberation', on the other hand, there is a shift both in the relationship between teacher and learner, and in the understanding of epistemology. Freire called for "a learning process that respected people as active and creative subjects rather than treating them as passive objects or receptacles" (Archer, 2007, p.10).

The starting point of any kind of emancipatory education is learners' own lives, and takes seriously the particular context within which they live:

> When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality. To truly know it, they would have to reverse their starting point: they would need to have a total vision of the context in order subsequently to separate and isolate its constituent elements and by means of this analysis achieve a clearer perception of the whole. (Freire, 1970/1996, p.85)

Here, the educator's role is to identify those fundamental issues (Freire called these 'generative themes') upon which learners are most likely to act, by listening to the learners talk about their own lives and experiences. Freire argued for the use of "codes" to prompt discussion in the classroom. These "codes" could be in the form of a poster, a play, an object, a song, a story, a newspaper article, a proverb, a case study, and so on. The code should deal with a theme about which the learners have strong feelings, and should relate very closely to common, everyday, experience. The point of the code is to stimulate interest, prompt engagement, and generate dialogue about how the generative theme links with others (i.e. a contextual analysis), to create a broader understanding of the context. It is imperative that this is not a process of explication, but of dialogue. Thus the code should never present an answer, but rather a problem. In the process, learners see that the issues are not an unchangeable part of life, but a problem which can and must be addressed (1970/1996).

A critical part of his pedagogical process is dialogue, and love is also central (1970/1996). Freire argued that there is a lack of understanding of what he calls 'the gnosiological cycle' - the distinct moments in the way we learn. He says:

> there are only two moments in the cycle, not more than two, two moments that are dialectically related. The first moment of the cycle, or one of the cycle's moments, is the one of *production*, the production of new knowledge, something new. The other moment is the one during which the produced knowledge is known or perceived. (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, pp.7-8)

Dialogue has a critical role to play in the knowing or perceiving this new knowledge, and like reflection is ontological, it is "an existential necessity" (1970/1996, p.69):

> Dialogue must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings. It is part of our historical progress in becoming human beings....Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it. (Freire in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.98)

In this process, "we are able *to know that we know*" (Ibid., p.99); so "knowing is a social event" (Ibid., p. 99). "Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimension" (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, pp.3-4). Real dialogue thus must be "infused with love" (1970/1996, p.70), "love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (Ibid.); but also humility and faith.

If new knowledge (about the true nature of reality, and how it can be changed) is perceived through dialogue, which requires love, humility and faith, then there is necessarily a different role for the teacher. Generally, in education for domestication, we dichotomize the two gnoseological moments discussed above - knowledge from elsewhere is transferred to a learner by a teacher. In education for liberation, something different must happen.

Freire argued for the role of what he called an 'animator'. This animator was different from a 'teacher', in that his/her role was fundamentally opposed to the role of the 'teacher' in the banking model of education. So "emancipatory education is not brought by an educator to a community or group, but rather emerges from within the oppressed themselves or through an invitation from the oppressed to the educator to join their struggle" (Inglis, 1997, Distinguishing Empowerment from Emancipation in Adult Education, para.5). 'Learning' becomes the emphasis, rather than educating: "From their very start, the struggles for liberation must restore to man (sic) his responsibility for remaking himself, i.e., for educating himself rather than 'being educated'" (Fiori, 1971, p.124). This means that the relationship between teacher and learner is fundamentally different. As Freire argued, "[Teachers] must become militants in the *political* meaning of this word....Something *more* than 'activist'. A militant is a *critical* activist" (Freire in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.50). Freire understood this criticality to mean subject to the dialogic thinking of the people as subjects.

The dialogic relationship between teacher and learner means that the teacher is also a learner, and the learner is also a teacher. This requires an act of faith on the part of the teacher: "It's necessary to believe in the people. It's necessary to laugh with the people because if we do not do that, we cannot learn from the people, and in not learning from the people we cannot teach them" (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.247).

However, Freire clearly did think that some kind of educator (presumably at a higher level of consciousness) was necessary to help people to move from 'naive' consciousness to a critically reflective consciousness; and also frequently suggested that the educator must know more than the people, at least theoretically (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990).

8.6.1.3. Praxis

As we have seen, Freire argued that conscientization is necessary, but not sufficient - what is needed is praxis. By praxis Freire meant that reflection and action cannot ultimately be separated from each other:

> The two activities fuse into one dynamic process in which learners act on themselves and on their world, bringing about a change in their own consciousness and in the way they engage with other people, organisations, institutions and objects around them (Newman, 2011, p.316).

Both reflection and action thus become an absolutely essential part of the education process, and the liberation process; but they need to be dialectical:

> At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Reflection and action become imperative when one does not erroneously attempt to dichotomize the content of humanity from its historical forms.

> The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection - true reflection - leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection. (Freire, 1970/1996, pp.47-48)

Thus clearly Freire remained absolutely convinced of people's ability to act in the world, and hence change it, and rejected determinist trends within both Marxism and the Church (Schugurensky, 2011, p.97). Freire saw an intimate connection between knowing and acting in the world, asserting that "*Without practice, there's no knowledge*" (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.98) :

> All knowledge starts from sensibility, but if it remains at the level of the senses it does not amount to knowledge because it is only transformed into knowledge when it goes beyond the level of sensibility and becomes a rationale for action. (Freire, cited in Hurtado, 2007, p.67)

Who should take action? Essentially, according to Freire, those who are oppressed - as we have seen, only the oppressed can liberate both themselves and their oppressors, "only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.26). This requires an act of faith by the leaders/animators. Throughout his life, Freire was very critical of left-wing activists, organisations and revolutionary leaders who imposed their views on people. The true revolution "must initiate a creative dialogue with the people...It cannot fear the people, their expression, their effective participation in power" (Freire, 1972, pp.97-99, cited in Kane, 2001, p.42), after all, "If the people cannot be trusted, there is no reason for liberation" (1972, pp.99-100, cited in Kane, 2001, p.39) (something which, Kane says, is "is arguably completely ignored or forgotten by much of the organised left throughout the world" (Kane, 2001, p.39)).

Freire recognised very well Gramsci's argument that the oppressors will attempt to co-opt struggle:

> Of course it is impossible for power to exist without trying to co-opt the other side, which is not yet powered...it takes part of the struggle. Trying to co-opt is a kind of struggle on behalf of those who have the power to do so. It's a tactic; it's a moment of the struggle. (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.206)

Freire emphasised that the radical transformation of society is a process, and one which might happen unevenly, both in terms of where it might take place - "it is easier to change things in some corners of society's historical streets" (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.217) - and in terms of the specific agents of change. In his early work, Freire argued that the campesinos (peasants) rather that the industrial proletariat, were the historical agents of change: "large sections of the oppressed form an urban proletariat, especially in the more industrialised centres of the country. Although these sectors are occasionally restive they lack revolutionary consciousness and consider themselves privileged" (Freire, quoted in Mayo, 1994).

However, in his later work, this emphasis shifted to allow for a variety of oppressed groups, and also a growing emphasis on social movements (Mayo, 1994). Freire argued for working inside and outside of the system (Mayo, 1994).

Freire differed significantly from Mezirow in his understanding of the relationship between the individual and the collective. He insisted that freedom is social, not individual, and that *feeling* free, whilst absolutely necessary, is not enough:

> Even when you individually feel yourself *most* free, if this feeling is not a *social* feeling, if you are not able to use your *recent* freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom. (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.109)

Freire himself was not comfortable with the term 'empowerment' (Ibid.). He felt that it made the situation seem too easy; it allows a confusion between feeling free and actual freedom; between the feeling of being changed (as in individual), and actual social transformation.

Freire's theory, like that of experiential learning and transformative learning, has clear synergy with Gramsci's notion of hegemony. In Freire's case, the link is even more direct, because Freire drew on Gramsci's work in his thinking and writing. So consciousness as a concept is even more overt in Freire's theory than in the others, and unlike the others his conceptual frame allows for a concept directly related to unlearning in conscientization.

The concept of dehumanization suggests that oppression impacts on people at an ontological level; this suggests that the possibility of 'unlearning' might be remote. However, Freire argues, it is our human vocation to become humanized. This goes a step beyond Mezirow's argument that it is part of being human to seek for meaning. It suggests that at even more visceral level, we will always attempt to overcome not just oppression but hegemony, since our consciousness is part of our being. Freire also insists on praxis, not as a process of reflection and then action, but as reflection⇔action, the two combined, each a process of both ontological and societal change. Thus acting in the world need not simply the result of 'unlearning', but may indeed be part of it. In addition, the possibility of collective consciousness change and praxis is a possibility in Freire's theory, through dialogue.

Freire also engages with the issue of hope and despair, and the necessity for people to believe in the possibility of change; interestingly, he links this directly with the hegemony of difference, arguing that this leads to a belief that we cannot change the world.

8.6.2 Critique of Freire's theory

There has been much criticism of Freire's work. Kane (2001) says that some criticism of Freire is hostile, some ambiguous, some ill-informed, and some constructive. Freire was also constantly critiquing himself. Kane (2001) argues that much criticism levelled at Freire does not acknowledge the evolution of his work. He says that "a political battle is being - needs to be - fought over the nature of Freire's ideas" (p.54), something which is echoed by Zacharakis-Jutz (1988), who argues that "Freire and his work have been thoroughly studied, institutionalized and grossly compromised by academe" (p.42).

In a recent book on Freire's work, Schugurensky (2011) has provided a useful overview of the critiques that have been made of Freire's work, and the responses to these from Freire and others. Schugurensky argues that there are essentially three groups of people who stand in some kind of relationship to Freire and his work: those who reify his work, and treat it as dogma; those who reject his work, usually for ideological or political reasons; and those who are sympathetic to his work, but either disagree with aspects of it, or have experienced difficulties in using it. Within this group, there are a huge range of critiques, which

Schugurensky categorises into seven:

1. Language

2. Lack of originality

3. Contradictions

4. Universal categories and dichotomies;

5. Antidialogue, manipulation and authoritarianism;

6. Conscientization as cultural imperialism;

7. Implementation and outcomes (2011, p.130).

Many of these categories of critiques, whilst useful, are not particularly relevant to this study, and thus in my discussion below I will focus only on those that have a bearing on the issue of 'unlearning'.

8.6.2.1. Universal categories and dichotomies

The heart of this critique is Freire's use of universal language and binary opposites - for example, oppressor-oppressed; humanized-dehumanized, and so on. Some critics have suggested that this has resulted in an oversimplification, and that Freire ignores contradictions and subtleties.

Freire's use of "oppression" has been particularly contested, with a number of commentators have argued that Freire is too vague in his use of concepts such as oppressor and oppressed, or that he decontextualised such concepts (Schurgurensky, 2011). Much of this critique has come for a more postmodernist trend who criticise the concept as a master narrative and accuse Freire of applying universal prescriptions (eg. Wildemeersch, 1992, and Ellsworth in Wildemeersch).

However, some of the critique has come from within the radical adult education tradition. Mayo (1994), for example, argues that, although Freire looks at the question of difference, there is no sustained analysis. Mayo believes that Freire fails "to take account of the complexity of the nature of oppression, and of the interchangeability of roles between oppressor and oppressed" (p.144). Schugurensky (1988, cited in Kane, 2001) also argues that

you can be both oppressor and oppressed at the same time. Allman (1988, cited in Kane, 2001), however, suggests that Freire did try to clear up misunderstandings in later works; and Taylor (1993, p.133, cited in Schugurensky, 2011, p.157) asserts that only the non-oppressed would have difficulty in answering the question, "Who are the oppressed?".

Some commentators have suggested that Freire did not look at specific forms of oppression enough. Youngman (1986, cited in Kane, 2001), for example, argues that Freire emphasised cultural factors at the expense of political and economic ones, although conceding that he did become more rooted in mode of production as he developed. As identified by Kane above, one of the criticisms of Freire's work is his failure to adequately consider women's oppression, and his use of sexist language. Freire has in fact admitted this, and changed his language in later work. Many feminists now acknowledge his contribution (eg. Weiler, 1996; hooks, 1994).

Hurtado (2007) reports that there are many claims that Freire's work is out of date, because the context has changed so significantly - and it is certainly true that the world is very different from when he wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Endresen (2010) argues that the continuing relevance of Freire's work has in fact been the main question concerning Freire's work. She cites John (2009) as arguing that some authors have questioned "the relevance of Freire's revolutionary theory in non-revolutionary contexts and have expressed difficulty with the terms oppressor and oppressed in contexts where the struggle is not overtly class-based", but rather about identity (John, 2009, p.52, cited in Endresen, 2010, p.64).

8.6.2.2 Antidialogue, manipulation and authoritarianism

Some writers have suggested that far from being emancipatory, Freire's pedagogy is simply another form of education for domestication; ultimately, the educator still controls the agenda, and could use the process of conscientization to indoctrinate (Schugurensky, 2011, pp.138-139). Freire himself quite correctly pointed out the *any* educational practice runs the risk of this (Schugurensky, 2011, p.161).

Yet others have critiqued Freire for not being clear enough about the role of the teacher, particularly in his early work, or for not allowing the teacher a crucial role in the learning process (eg. Lovett et al, 1983; Youngman, 1988, as cited in Mayo, 1994). In fact, as argued above, this is something that Freire *did* argue, and a number of writers has suggested that such critiques arise from a misreading of Freire (Schugurensky, 2011, p.161).

Another critique within this category is that Freire is contradictory in what he says about the ability of people to think for themselves versus the need for someone to help them to do this (Schugurensky, 2011, p.139). Schugurensky cites Walker (1980, p.143) as arguing that Freire was an elitist who based his pedagogy on the assumption that people are incapable of learning, are stupid. Freire has also been accused of being patronising in his assumption that oppressed people "need to conscientized by middle-class do-gooders to recognise that they live desperate lives marked by exploitation, hunger, and disease" (Zachariah, 1986, as cited in Schugurensky, 2011, p.139). Pithouse (2011) has argued that there is a 'slippage' in Freire's work, a tension between his insistence that we must on the one hand "trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason" (Freire, 1970/1996, p.48), and on the other his argument that oppression dehumanises, meaning that the oppressed themselves are not able to understand their own condition, and require some kind of humanizing pedagogy to conscientise them (this is obviously not unique to Freire – the entire concept of false consciousness rests on a similar argument). Pithouse argues that Freire makes a mistake in casting the oppressed as *actually* dehumanised, rather than as being *misrepresented* as dehumanised:

> While oppressed people have to make their lives amidst social relations that are objectifying people are not, even in the most repressive or wretched circumstances, inevitably reduced to those circumstances. On the contrary there are multiple ways in which people defend and tend their humanity. (Pithouse, 2011, pp.15-16)

Schugurensky suggests that if one looked across the whole of Freire's body of work, one could probably find examples to support arguments that Freire believed the oppressed to have a lower level of consciousness than he did; and Freire himself has admitted than in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he did suggest that the oppressed required assistance to move from a magical consciousness to a critical one; however, he has made it clear that this was not his

intention in subsequent work (Schugurensky, 2011, pp.162-164). Similarly, some commentators have suggested that Freire was too idealist in thinking that conscientization can change the world. Kane (2001) points out that Freire agreed with this analysis, admitting that he was, in *Pedagogy of Oppressed*, but later corrected this - for example, he did not use word 'conscientisation' after 1972, because he thought it was abused by idealists, but tried to emphasise praxis instead.

I would argue that the key issue for understanding 'unlearning' in the critique of Freire's work is that relating the role of the educator; someone whom, as I have argued above, probably needs to be discounted in any real unlearning.

8.6.3 Further development of the theory

As discussed above, Freire was influenced by contemporary revolutionary theorists like Cabral and Guevara; but he also influenced them. Thus many of his ideas are reflected in their work, and his theory is essentially a practical theory. Indeed, there is a growing body of work considering the links between Freire and some of these writers (see eg. Cortesão, 2011; McLaren, 2000).

For example, Guevara (2002) asserted that the individual is incomplete, unfinished:

> The vestiges of the past are brought into the present in one's consciousness, and a continual labor is necessary to eradicate them. The process is two-sided. On the one hand, society acts through direct and indirect education; on the other, the individual submits to a conscious process of self-education. (p.33)

Guevara, like Freire, emphasised the importance of love: "The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality" (p.44). Guevara differed from Freire in his emphasis on the role of the revolutionary vanguard, since they had a higher level of consciousness; and his assertion that hatred (of imperialism) was also important, because a long, bloody struggle was needed.

Cabral (1979) emphasised the importance of thinking before acting - but to act, not just to think:

> We must be able to bring these two basic elements together: thought and action, and action and thought. This independence in our thought and action is relative. It is relative because in our thought we are also influenced by the thought of others. (p.80)

These contributions to Freire's thought add little further to the potential usefulness of emancipatory learning theory, although they do act to reinforce it.

Within the realm of educational theory, Freire's work has been built on by many educational theorists over the last four decades, and now forms part of a body of theory termed "critical pedagogy", whose key authors include eg. Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Roger Simon, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor and Carlos Torres. Simon (1992), an Ontario University-based academic instrumental in the development of the concept of "critical pedagogy", argues for what he calls a "pedagogy of possibility", since he is concerned that without a sense of what might be, it is difficult for learners to construct an alternative to what is, however able they are to analyse and critique this. He thus suggests that the critical function of education is to create "images of that which is not yet" (p.9).

Given that he was himself an adult educationist, not surprisingly Freire's work has had a huge impact in the field of adult education, and in particular the work of Allman, Mayo, and Foley. Foley has applied Freire's work to informal education in particular.
Foley (1999) argues that:

> the unlearning of dominant, oppressive ideologies and discourses and the learning of insurgent, emancipatory ones are central to processes of emancipatory change. However, these processes of emancipatory learning and action are not straight forward; they are complex, ambiguous, contradictory. (p.16)

Foley (2001) draws in Turner's (1995) arguments that the formation of consciousness involves the interaction between three processes - explicit argument; implicit knowledge; and

action. So action and consciousness are interdependent and formative: "We learn as we act, and our learning is both tacit and explicit" (Foley, 2001, p.86). Foley (1999) argues that all learning in hegemonic struggles has certain commonalities - people gain self-confidence and useful skills and knowledge; develop a critical understanding of how power works in society; and learn that they can act and that action makes a difference. He also demands adult educators take a side - and the side of capitalism is evil. Martin (2003) has emphasised the role of emotions, and particularly what Pierre Bourdieu (1998, cited in Martin, 2003) calls 'legitimate rage'. He argues that agency "may be expressed as anger because, in a sense, it can be expressed in no other way" (Martin, 2003, p.575). Holloway (2010a), as I discussed in Chapter 1, calls this 'The Scream'.

There is also an increasing body of work on the relationship between Freire and Gramsci, eg. Allman (1988); Allman and Mayo (1997); Ledwith (2001); Mayo (1994); Mayo (1996); Mayo (1999).

8.7 What can we learn from these learning theories?

All of the three theories discussed above emphasise that we carry a body of knowledge, as well as assumptions, attitudes etc. into and from our adulthood, which somehow affect our consciousness - i.e. all in some way acknowledge hegemony. All suggest the need to 'unlearn' or shift this to something new, a truer consciousness; and all put reflection as a key part of this process, although there is a growing recognition of the affective dimension in this. All give some kind of educator/helper a key role in this process, although all of the theories also acknowledge the possibility of informal learning:

> Experiential learning challenges the misconception that learning mostly occurs in formal environments such as classrooms, and replaces it with the notion that all learning is the result of experience, no matter where it occurs. (Bouchard cited in Herod, 2003, p.15)

However, there are some key differences.

Whilst Kolb initially at least did not fully acknowledge the ways in which experience is shaped by the broader social, political, economic, historic context, experiential learning theory as a whole now does. Experience is seen as being socially constructed; and the interpretation of experience is likewise also influenced by the broader context. Much transformative learning theory, however, tends to focus on the way experience is shaped by the individual's meaning scheme and meaning perspective (although these, of course, are themselves shaped by the broader context); and this has been a key area of critique (i.e. that the theory does not take into account sufficiently ideology and power). For emancipatory learning theory, the focus is on only one kind of experience - that of oppression. This then affects consciousness. So the emphasis is on how lived experience impacts on consciousness, as well as on how consciousness impacts on the interpretation of the experience:

> World and consciousness are not statically opposed to each other, they relate to each other dialectically, within their original and radical unity. For this reason the truth of one is to be gained through the other; truth is not given, it conquers itself and makes itself. It is, at once, discovery and invention. (Fiori, 1971, pp.126-127)

All of the theories are concerned with how consciousness is changed. Both experiential learning theory and transformative learning theory argue that some kind of disjuncture is a necessary part of this process - within experiential learning theory, this is called variously an 'inner discomfort', a 'disjuncture'; in transformative learning theory it is a 'disorienting dilemma' with acts as a 'trigger'. Experiential learning theory (especially that of Jarvis) suggests that this is socially constructed, so it is different for different people; transformative learning theory, on the other hand, says very little about the impact of context on the 'disorienting dilemma' (and has been critiqued for this). In emancipatory learning theory, this part of the process is not included at all (although Freire did see a role for rupture in creativity: "there is no creativity without *ruptura*, without a break from the old, without conflict in which you have to make a decision. I would say there is no human existence without *ruptura*" (Freire, in Horton & Freire, 1990, p.38)). To some extent, the point of problem-posing was precisely to create this.

In both experiential learning and transformative learning, this disjuncture *might* begin a process of reflection; whilst reflection is also a critical part of emancipatory learning theory. This aspect - reflection - is indeed the key area of critique and debate in all three theories. It now seems clear that in fact critical reflection is not an essential part of the process - many studies have shown that intuition and emotion are just as key. Within emancipatory education, intuition and emotion have always been key - in fact, as we have seen, Freire has argued that they are different from reflection, but are in fact part of it. Another key difference between emancipatory learning theory and the other two (although Jarvis has worked to include this within experiential learning theory) is that critical reflection (and conscientization) is a social/collective process, not an individual one - it happens primarily through dialogue, through social interaction.

In emancipatory learning theory, there is also a far stronger relationship between reflection/conscientization and action - Freire's notion of praxis. Whilst Mezirow actually uses this term in his writing about transformative learning, in fact, as we have seen, the relationship between 'perspective transformation' and action is weak; and in experiential learning theory, it is barely developed.

Perhaps one of the clearest differences among the theories relates to this - that of the link between learning and social change. Whilst it is clear that all three theories are talking about shifting, at a fairly fundamental level, understandings and beliefs about the world, how this relates to social change is really not clear in either experiential learning theory or transformative learning theory - and as we have seen, this has been a major area of critique. Whilst Freire emphasised the need for a social critique of power - i.e. understanding the structural/ideological forces of oppression - and then linked this theoretical understanding to radical political practice, Mezirow fails to do this. This is primarily because for Freire, the whole process of changing consciousness is a social/collective one, *as well as* an individual one; for Mezirow it is an individual one, and he insists on this (and I think his insistence on individual agency has perhaps been too harshly judged). Freire is obviously also very different in his insistence that the process of social change is the task not of all but only of some - the oppressed (and indeed, in some of his work, particular agents). Neither experiential learning theory nor transformative learning theory suggest anything like this.

Cooper (2005) argues that Kolb, Boud, Mezirow and Freire's theories all have 'experience' as a continuous thread, and are thus an important resource for looking at learning in an informal context; but that there are still significant problems:

1. They tend to be individualised, focusing on the individual rather than the collective/social, overseparating the individual from his/her context; a context which is seen as a largely static space surrounding the individual, rather than an integral part of knowledge construction.
2. They do not recognise the power relations at the centre of pedagogy.
3. They create an unnatural split between thinking and action, mind and body, individual and context, by requiring the person who is reflecting to step back from the experience.
4. Experience itself is treated unproblematically; rather, experience is always located historically, socially and materially. It is always affected by our positioning.

I think that Cooper is perhaps being over-severe in her critique - as we have seen, both Jarvis and Le Cornu, for example, have attempted to address the issue of individual-in-context, whilst this is really the basis of Freire's theory; and there has definitely been an attempt to problematise the notion of experience. However, as we have seen, Gramsci argued that "...the starting point of critical elaboration is a consciousness of what one really is..." (Gramsci, 1971, p.323), and for Fanon, Cabral and Guevara, as with many other revolutionary writers, this consciousness began with a consciousness about the reality of people's own exploitation. Of course, there is a possibility that this process might happen at a relatively formal level - but it is unlikely. Whilst acknowledging the possibility of informal learning, many of the theories have tended to focus on the formal or non-formal context, or at least on the role of some kind of teacher (and as Zacharakis-Jutz (1988) points out, adult educators are beneficiaries of the hegemonic education process; how can they critique within this system?). Even more problematic for my study, whilst Kolb, Jarvis and Mezirow can help us some way towards understanding the actual process of unlearning at a theoretical level, their theory is constrained in the sense that it is unpolitical; divorced from actual political activity (although Mezirow claims otherwise, and Jarvis certainly tried to bring in a political aspect), and thus cannot entirely account for the political process of unlearning hegemony. Freire's theory,

whilst overtly political, rests on the assumption of the need for someone with a higher level of consciousness, and thus cannot account for any counter-hegemonic informal incidental or self-directed learning process.

8.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how we might learn/be taught hegemony, and have concluded that it is in a limited sphere of informal learning that this is most likely to happen, including within social movements, which as I argued in Chapter 6 and 7 are key potential instruments for resistance to hegemony, and hence sites of 'unlearning'. I then discussed the three adult learning theories which seem to me to be the most pertinent for understanding any processes of 'unlearning' hegemony, viz. experiential learning, transformative learning, and Freirian emancipatory learning/conscientization. I concluded that most of the theories have tended to focus on the formal or non-formal context, or at least on the role of some kind of teacher, and this limits their value in understanding self-directed informal learning. With the exception of Freire's emancipatory learning theory, they are also largely divorced from actual political activity, and thus cannot account for any counter-hegemonic informal incidental or self-directed learning process

I believe this is where reference to Badiou's political theory can help. The applicability of Badiou's work to adult learning theory has not, to my knowledge, been considered before; but I believe it offers some useful and provocative ideas for understanding hegemonic unlearning, particularly informal or incidental unlearning. So it is to Badiou that I now turn.

Chapter 9: Alain Badiou's theory of the event

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered adult learning theory that might help to account for the 'unlearning' of hegemony that apparently happens, as evidenced by the counter-hegemonic social movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo. In my discussion, it became clear that such unlearning must be primarily the result of informal learning, and hence learning from experience, and in particular daily lived experience. I considered three learning theories that might be relevant to this, viz. experiential, transformative and emancipatory learning theory. Whilst these are useful in helping unlearning, a concluded that they were not entirely able to account for the unlearning process.

In this chapter, I turn to the theory of the event of Badiou, as possibly providing another way into thinking about the problem.

9.2 Alain Badiou

Alain Badiou has been called "one of France's foremost living philosophers" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.1), whilst Den Heyer (2010) argues that "current attention suggests that Badiou will soon join Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas as another major French philosophical influence on Anglo-American scholarship" (p.152). There is a growing body of scholarly work on Badiou. Much of this is sympathetic, but it has also raised questions, which I discuss after considering Badiou's theory, below. Generally, though, much of Badiou's work is considered difficult and at times obscure.

Badiou was born in Morocco in 1937. He studied philosophy at the École Normale Supériare (ENS) from 1956 to 1961. In 1967 he joined a Spinoza study group organized by Louis Althusser, later joining Althusser's philosophy course (Barker, 2002), and was increasingly influenced by Jacques Lacan. In 1969 he joined the faculty of the University of Paris VIII, where he engaged in fierce intellectual debates with fellow professors Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Francois Lyotard, post-structuralists whose philosophical works he considered highly

problematic (and also, in the case of Deleuze, misinterpreted).

Hallward, currently one of the most important translators of and commentators on Badiou, has identified three key stages in the development of Badiou's philosophy (Hallward, 2008):

1. The 1970s, during which Badiou's work was largely political and historical, influenced by the 1968 Paris revolution and by Maost philosophy (evident in *Theory of the Subject*);

2. However, in the 1980s, as both Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis went into decline - with Lacan dead and Althusser in an asylum - and as Maoism collapsed, Badiou shifted from history to ontology, publishing more technical and abstract philosophical works, such as *Being and Event* (2005a); there was a 'mathematical turn' in his thought (Feltham, 2005, p.xix). Nonetheless, his work continued to respond to the philosophical and political debates of the time, and *Being and Event* has been described as a "defiant reposte to the postmodern condition" (Barker, 2000, p.4). Indeed, much of his work since the 1980s has been a challenge to postmodernism in philosophy (Barker, 2002).

3. Badiou has never renounced Althusser or Lacan, and his more recent work (*Logics of Worlds* (2006/2009b)) shows a partial returning to a more materialist approach and attempts to bring back history and society into his mathematical ontology (Steele, 2009 - although Hallward, 2008, questions this), as well as sympathetic references to Marxism and psychoanalysis.

His most recent translated writings continue this trend. In his *Second Manifesto for Philosophy* (2009/2011), he sees the main enemy no longer as deconstruction but as "the reconstitution...of something like a poor dogmatism by way of analytical philosophy, cognitive science and the ideology of democracy and human rights" (p.118). He insists on the "revolutionary pertinence" of philosophy and calls for a "philosophical suspicion" on the "pro-'democracy' propaganda that is as hegemonic today as it is belligerent" (p.124). His *Second Manifesto* does mark a shift from what truth is to what truth does, from "a separatist doctrine of being" to "an integrative doctrine of doing" in the complex formed by the body (p.128).

Overall, Badiou's work forms a coherent whole, and he has been described as one of the most consistent thinkers (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power).

Badiou taught at the University of Paris VIII from 1969 to 1999, when he rejoined the École Normale Supériere (ENS), now as a member of academic staff, as chair of Philosophy. He is currently a professor at the European Graduate School in Saas-fee, Switzerland. He is also associated with a number of other institutions, such as the College International de Philosophie. Badiou has also written fiction, writing his first novel, *Almagestes*, in 1964, as well as a series of plays.

Badiou has been politically active throughout his life; and thus joins theorists such as Marx, Gramsci, Lenin, Fanon, Cabral, etc. in grounding his theory in political activity. He was one of the founding members of the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), an offshoot of the SFIO socialist party. The PSU was particularly active in the struggle for the decolonization of Algeria. The student uprisings of May 1968 reinforced Badiou's commitment to the far Left, and he participated in increasingly radical communist and Maoist groups - he argued that Maoism became a kind of intellectual hegemony after 1968 (Badiou, 2008). In 1970, together with Sylvain Lazarus and others, he set up the UCFML (Group for the Foundation of the Union of Marxist-Leninist Communists of France), with three essential (Maoist) points:

1. Always link with the people: "politics for intellectuals was a journey into society and not a discussion in a closed room" (Badiou, 2008, p.131);
2. Do not take part in institutions of the bourgeois state (i.e. traditional trade unions and electoral mechanisms);
3. Be in no hurry to call yourself a party, to take up old forms of organization; remain very close to actual political processes (Badiou, 2008).

Badiou says that at this time (i.e. the founding of UCFML), "I made a permanent commitment" (Badiou, 2008, p.133), unlike others active in the 1968 revolution, for whom politics was a fashion (Badiou, 2008).

In 1984, Badiou, again with Sylvain Lazarus, founded "L'Organisation Politique", which he calls "politics without a party". OP rests on an assertion of subjective equality, and is without

a programme or a party (Hallward, 2004a). Every individual counts as one individual; no-one is valorized as marginal, excluded, etc. Badiou was an active member of OP, particularly working with the *sans papiers* movement in France (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power), until it disbanded in March 2007.

9.3 Philosophy

Not surprisingly, given his biography, it is impossible to separate Badiou's philosophy from his politics. Badiou's most fundamental principle is:

> simply the belief that radical change is indeed possible, that it is possible for people and the situations they inhabit to be dramatically transformed by what happens to them. He affirms this infinite capacity for transformation as the only appropriate point of departure for thought, and he affirms it in advance of any speculation about its enabling conditions or ultimate horizons. (Hallward, 2004b, p.2)

Hallward (2008) argues that Badiou is alone amongst French philosophers of the twentieth century, in synthesizing the subject and science projects of philosophy, whilst remaining resolutely radical. Hallward says that there have been two main projects in French philosophy in the twentieth century:

1. A focus on the subject, by those who used the notion of individual freedom to talk about how oppression and domination might be overcome;
2. A focus on science, influenced by maths and logic and linguistics and anthropology, which looks at how situations come to be "structured in dominance" (p.97).

Those philosophers who attempted to integrate, or at least accommodate, both, such as Deleuze, Foucault, Lacan and Derrida, all decentred the role of the active subject. Badiou does not.

Badiou's growing influence is partially a result of an increasing number of his main works being translated into English in the last decade. Short pieces by Badiou have also appeared in English periodicals, such as the *New Left Review* and *Cabinet Magazine*. There has been a considerable lapse between the original publication of much of his work, and its publication

in English, and many of his early works have only very recently been published in English, often after the English publication of later works. His seminal work *Being and Event* only appeared in English 17 years after it was first published, by which time Badiou was completing the second volume, *Logics of Worlds* (which was published in English only three years after its initial publication, showing the growing interest in his work internationally). His first major work, *Theory of the Subject*, (written in the late 1970s, and published 1982) which first introduced his ontology, was published in English only in 2009.

Table 6: Badiou's main works

Work	Date published in French	Date published in English
Theory of contradiction	1975	
Of Ideology (with Balmés)	1976	
Theory of the subject	1982	2009
Can politics be thought?	1985	2005
Being and Event	1988	2005
Manifesto for philosophy	1989	1999
Ethics	1993	2001
Deleuze	1997	2000
Saint Paul	1997	2003
Metapolitics	1998	2005
Logics of Worlds	2006	2009
Second Manifesto for Philosophy	2009	2011

9.3.1 Badiou's ontology

Badiou's ontology stems from his concern with subjectivity in the study of philosophy (including ontology). In *Of Ideology* (1976), he insists that ideology is a partisan activity, and that ideology and philosophy are synonymous (Barker, 2002). Thus, he bases his ontology on mathematics, because it is "most firmly abstracted from any natural or objective mediation, the most removed from our habitual ways of thinking, and by the same token the most

obviously indifferent to the identity of whoever comes to share in its articulation" (Hallward, 2004b, p.3). Thus Badiou believes that there is no ontology without mathematics - 'For Badiou, *mathematics is ontology*' (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.13).

Badiou (2005a) asserts that being is infinite multiplicity. However, we cannot ever know infinite multiplicity; we can only ever experience or know what is presented to us as consistent or unified - so the process of counting is the process of becoming, of ontology (Hallward, 2004b, p.5).

> We know only what we are able to unify or count. We know inconsistency itself (the 'stuff' counted) must *be*, but we can know nothing about it: since nothing can be observed or presented of inconsistency we cannot even know if it is multiple (let alone infinite) in any positive sense. No less than any other properly primordial quality of being, these qualities must be decided and affirmed, pure and simple. (Hallward, 2004b, p.6)

How does this happen? Badiou uses set theory to help him in his ontology. Set theory is the formal theory on non-unified multiplicity: it deals with issues of infinity, and the ordering of things. He draws on three 'orientations' of set theory in his ontology:

1. The work of Georg Cantor, who hypothesized that the infinity of integers is countable (this cannot actually be proved - it is a wager) - the question then is how to do this. Cantor came up with the notion of the 'infinite set', and used this to prove that relations between the subset and its set is infinite. Because you can count an infinite number of infinite sets, infinity must be an actually existing number. Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory then introduced a series of axioms, arguing that infinity can only be counted if the counting operation is consistent with the axioms;

2. Kurt Godel, who argues that the idea of an infinite set has to be intuitively constructed;

3. Paul Cohen, who argued that there must be an indiscernible or 'generic' infinite set (Barker, 2002, pp.9-10).

Below I discuss the basics of classical set theory, before looking at how Badiou has used this in developing his ontology.

9.3.1.1 Set theory

A set is a multiple of multiples called elements. However, since every element is itself a set, there is really no fundamental difference between elements and sets; and hence, there can also never be an ultimate set of all sets (since this set would itself be an element of another set). Thus there is an infinity of infinite types of infinite sets. A set, in set theory, is not a defined concept - rather, it is a relation of elements which 'belong'. There are a series of variables and logical operators and axioms which rule how sets are formed, i.e. what 'belongs'. The basis of orthodox set theory, which is what Badiou uses, is a series of 9 axioms (although there are variations on this). The axioms have been derived and tested through a century of work. Using these axioms, an infinite number of infinite sets can be created from the very first set, which is subtracted from the conditions of every other set - i.e. that they have elements. This first set is a null-set, a multiple of nothing, a void (signified Ø). From this, all other sets (the infinity of sets) are formed, using the operations regulated by the 9 axioms.

The void is the inconsistent multiplicity of a set, it is the nothing of the set, that which cannot be counted as one (Hallward, 2004b). The void is infinitely multiple whilst at the same time remaining essentially unchanged.

Sets can be broken up or put together in different ways, but for two sets to be different, at least one element of one of the sets must not belong to the other. A sub-set may be separated out from another, initial, set through a formula separating out only some of its elements. So a set {a, B, X} could have the sub-sets {a}, {B}, {X}, {aB}, {aX}, {BX}, depending on the formula used (eg. a set of green apples could be separated out of a set of apples, using the formula 'green apples'). If all of the sub-sets created from an initial set are grouped together, they create a power set. A power set is always larger than the initial set, because it holds the original elements/sets as well as the subsets, as well as the null-set. So, for example, the power-set of set {a, B, X} would be {{a, B, X},{a}, {B}, {X}, {aB}, {aX}, {BX}, {Ø}}. Thus any existing set can always generate a larger set (Feltham & Clemens, 2003).

9.3.1.2 The 'situation' (set)

In his ontology, Badiou replaces the terms used in set theory with an equivalent from philosophical discourse. He uses the terms 'multiplicity' or 'situation' or 'presentation' (and, more recently, 'worlds') in place of 'set', and 'multiples' in place of 'elements'. He uses the term 'state of the situation' to mean the power-set of the situation - in other words, all possible regroupings of the elements/multiples; all the various ways in which a situation organizes and arranges itself to make sure that its uncountable aspects (the void) are never presented (never counted), or represented (never included as a discernible part) (Hallward, 2004b, p.9). Badiou uses the term 'logic' for the rules which order the way things appear in a situation - i.e. what 'counts' (Hallward, 2004b, p.10).

Table 7: Badiou's terminology

Set theory	Badiou's ontology		
	Category	*Types*	*Examples*
Set	Multiplicity, presentation, situation, world	(see below)	a painting, a battle, a political demonstration; France; capitalism
Elements	Multiples, members, 'existence', subset	normal, excrescent, singular;	a whim, a supermarket, a work of art, a dream, a playground fight, a fleet of trucks, a mine, a stock prediction, a game of chess, a set of waves; baseball, fast food, free speech
Power set	State of the situation; how the set is defined, the 'logic' of the set	natural, historical, neutral	capitalism
Null-set	Inconsistent multiplicity, the void, the excluded, the things not counted in the situation, the things excluded by the 'logic' of the situation; but also what must be there for the set to exist in the first place	The edge of the void	The great majority of people today; the proletariat, shack dwellers; immigrant workers in France or Britain, Jews in anti-Semitic situations, gays in homophobic situations
Generic set	Place where an event can happen		historical

As we have seen, Badiou says that being is non-unified infinite inconsistent multiplicity. He defines the situation (set) as 'presented multiplicity' or the 'place of taking place'. The situation's 'structure' is what determines what belongs and does not belong to the situation/set. The structure does this by counting multiplicities as 'elements' of the situation - an element being the basic unit of a situation, a multiple of one that is 'counted-for-one' in the situation. So a situation can be defined both as unified presented multiplicity and the operation of counting-for-one. The situation accommodates anything

> regardless of whether it is necessary, contingent, possible, actual, potential or virtual - a whim, a supermarket, a work of art, a dream, a playground fight, a fleet of trucks, a mine, a stock prediction, a game of chess, or a set of waves. (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.10)

However, (from set theory), Badiou argues that in every situation (set), there must also be 'nothing', the void (the null-set), the inconsistent multiplicity, from which the situation is created; and since creating the set/situation is a 'counting-for-one', then those things that are not counted (that do not belong, the void) are uncounted. Every situation has its way (its 'logic') of authorizing/qualifying its members/elements/multiples as legitimate members of that situation. Those things that do not qualify, are unqualified/unauthorized, are the void (Hallward, 2004b, p.7):

> In situations which count only property, wealth or consumption, human capacities which cannot be counted in such terms will remain empty or indiscernible as far as the situation is concerned; so too, within the ordinary routine of situation of parliamentary democracies, will popular political capacities whose expression is indifferent to the business of electoral representation. (Hallward, 2004b, p.8)

However, as all sets are derived from the null-set, the void, it is precisely the unqualified/ unauthorized that make up the very being of the situation (Hallward, 2004b, p.8). The void is the 'subtractive suture to being' to a situation, because it is the point through which the situation comes to be. "So, for Badiou, every situation is ultimately founded in a void" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.16). "The void of a situation is simply what is not there, but

what is necessary for anything to be there" (Ibid.). For Marx, for example, the proletariat was the void, the uncounted/uncountable in the development of the capitalist state - but absolutely necessary for the capitalist state to exist. The void is not presented, it is not counted, because infinite inconsistent multiplicity cannot be; but the 'edge of the void' can be counted. In Marx's capitalist state, the working class occupies the edge of the proletarian void:

> The situation certainly counts this class as one of its elements, but has no significant ways of counting individual workers as thinking or creative people, as opposed to more or less diligent and deferential employees, or as consumers, or as patriots. (Hallward, 2004b, p.9)

In contemporary society, Badiou offers as examples immigrant workers in France or Britain, Jews in anti-Semitic situations, gays in homophobic situations - they are all 'in' the situation, but only as instances of the label that defines them, not as individuals in their own right (Hallward, 2004b). "People who inhabit the edge of a situation's void are people who have nothing which entitles them to belong in the situation, they do not themselves count for anything in it" (Ibid., p.9).

> Today the great majority of people do not have a name: the only name available is 'excluded', which is the name of those who do not have a name. Today the great majority of humanity counts for nothing. And philosophy has no other legitimate aim than to help find the new names that will bring into existence the unknown world that is only waiting for us because we are waiting for it. (Badiou, quoted in Neocosmos, 2009a, p.265)

Badiou argues that there are three types of situation (set) - natural, historical and neutral. They are made different, as different sets are made different, by the elements which make them up. Badiou says there are three types of element - normal, excrescent, and singular. A normal element is presented by the situation and represented by the state - in other words, it is 'counted for' twice. An excrescent element is only represented by the state, and so counts for one. A singular element is an element of a set, but not one of its sub-sets. It is only presented, and so counts for one. Natural situations contain elements which are all either normal or

excrescent. So in natural situations, nothing is presented which is not also represented. Neutral situations contain a mix of all three types of elements. Historical situations, however, contain at least one 'evental site', an element that is a sub-type of a singular element, the edge of the void, a place where that which is not counted can come to be counted because the logic of the situation is overturned.

Badiou says that 'every situation has a state' (Badiou, 2005b, p.143). As mentioned above, Badiou says that the 'state of a situation' is how a set organizes itself, the logic it uses to 'count' or present its elements; the 'state of the situation' is the power set. If we recall from above that a power set holds the original elements/sets as well as the subsets as well as the null-set, then it is clear that every element can appear more than once - as itself, and as a member of a subset/s. Badiou argues that:

> every situation is the presentation of itself, of what composes it, of what belongs to it. But it is also given as state of the situation, that is, as the internal configuration of its parts or subsets, and therefore as re-presentation. (Badiou, 2005b, pp.143-144)

So an element is presented in a situation if it belongs to it, if it is counted as one of its elements; but an element is also represented if it is included as a discernable part (subset) of a situation (for example, by residence, occupation, wealth, status) (Hallward, 2004b, p.9). "The state includes all the various ways in which a situation organizes and arranges itself to make sure that its uncountable or unqualified aspects are not only never presented in the situation but also never re-presented in it" (Hallward, 2004b, p.9); "The state is what arranges a situation in such a way as to ensure the power of its dominant group (or ruling class)" (Ibid.).

Because the state of the situation is the power-set, it is always larger than the initial set (since it contains the original elements, plus the subsets of those elements, plus the null set). So "the state of the situation always exceeds the situation itself", i.e. "The power of the State is always superior to that of the situation" (Ibid., p.144).

In his *Logics of Worlds* (2009b), Badiou focuses on how the process of ordering a situation - i,e. deciding what is presented and represented - happens. *Logics of Worlds* tries to theorize appearance (what he calls 'phenomenology'), "the ways in which the structure of reality becomes actualized or comes to life, so to speak, in different 'worlds'" (Steele, 2009). Here, 'worlds' is synonymous with 'situations' (sets); so worlds can be small and narrow (a painting, a battle, a political demonstration), or much bigger (Ibid.). Badiou here

> aims to provide an account of a 'world' understood not simply as a set or collection of elements but as variable domain of logical and even 'phenomenological' coherence, a domain whose elements normally seem to 'hold together' in a relatively stable way. (Hallward, 2008, pp.103-4)

Thus, in *Logics of Worlds* Badiou attempts to grapple with the relations among elements, rather than simply ontological structure and conditions for the event; so there is a new relational aspect to his developing work that had previously been excluded (Hallward, 2003, p.293). In the preface to the book, Badiou asserts that he is concerned to deal with what he calls the contemporary "natural belief", the confining dogma of postmodern relativism. This sees all cultures and claims as on a level. Badiou seeks to replace this "democratic materialism" with a "materialist dialectic"; the fundamental tenet here remains that there are ultimate truths, as discussed in detail below (Badiou, 2009b).

Badiou calls the rules which order the way things appear in a situation 'logic' (hence "Logics of Worlds"). However, what Badiou now argues is that elements do not appear (are counted) or not (are not counted) - rather, they can appear at different 'intensities'. So an element can appear in a situation very intensely, or only dimly. By using the notion of appearance, Badiou can now allow for relations of identity and existence, because "whereas it is plausible that ontology is static and non-relational, the realm of appearances is inherently relational, dynamic and variable" (Livingstone, 2009).

When being 'appears', as an element, it is not being-qua-being that appears, but a particular quality of being, 'existence'; and existence can be variable: "Something *is* if it belongs to a situation, but it *exists*...always more or less, depending on how intensely or distinctively it

appears in that world" (Hallward, 2008, p.109). For example, in the 'world' of the USA, some things - baseball, fast food, free speech - appear intensely, as 'at home' in that world, compared to, for example, communists or illegal immigrants, which appear less 'at home'. Presumably such appearances are all 'counted'; but are more or less 'intense'.

Badiou says that the various elements in a world are ordered in terms of their existential intensity by a 'transcendental', using the mathematical operators $\leq$ and $\geq$. So elements are ordered in relation to each other's intensity, from minimal to maximal degrees, and from 'exactly the same' to 'entirely different' (Badiou, 2008). This means that some elements are more likely to dominate: "A being is more likely to endure as an object of a world if it appears in ways that enable it either to dominate or at least remain compatible with the objects that surround it" (Hallward, 2008, p.112). Changing the relations between the objects/elements in a situation/world can never do anything but modify that world - it cannot utterly transform it (Hallward, 2008).

In *Logics of World*, Badiou does not really explain how transcendentals and logics actually come to structure worlds, so it is not clear how and why some elements come to be more intense; but in his earlier work, Badiou provides some clues as to how this might work. As we have seen, Badiou says there are three types of element - normal, excrescent, and singular. A normal element is presented by the situation and represented by the state of the situation - in other words, it is 'counted for' twice. An excrescent element is only represented by the state, and so counts for one. A singular element is an element of a set, but not one of its sub-sets. It is only presented, and so counts for one.

Natural situations contain elements which are all either normal or excrescent - nothing is presented which is not also represented. Neutral situations contain a mix of all three types of elements. Historical situations, however, contain at least one 'evental site', an element that is a sub-type of a singular element. The evental site is on the 'edge of the void', a place where that which is not counted can come to be counted because the logic of the situation is overturned. This is the place where something decisive can happen in a situation, in which an 'event' can take place (Hallward, 2004b).

Thus it is that in historical situations the potential for transformation is present. In order to be able to think about fundamental change, Badiou needed to be able to argue how a situation/set can be new. He thus uses the concept of 'the generic' or 'indiscernibility' from the work of set-theorist Paul Cohen. A generic set cannot be discerned by existing language, it cannot be described. Cohen, however, found a way of describing an element/multiple without betraying its indiscernibility. Badiou uses this to argue for a 'new' (generic) subset that cannot be discerned/described by existing language. So change, in other words the new subset of the historical situation, must be dreamed of through a 'hazardous series of bets' on the nature of the situation to come. Many of these bets could be wrong; "but those that hit the target will help construct the new situation" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.31).

The existence of an eventual site in every historical situation does not mean that change will actually happen. Change will only happen if there is in fact an event; and if there is then fidelity to the event.

9.3.2 The 'event'

An event is "a totally disruptive occurrence which has no place in the scheme of things as they currently are" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.27). Events are "emphatically exceptional occurrences" (Hallward, 2008, p.106). The event is "what brings to pass 'something other' than the situation, opinions, instituted knowledges; the event is a hazardous, unpredictable supplement, which vanishes as soon as it appears" (Badiou, 2001, p.67).

So what does an event (potentially) do? Badiou says that "the fundamental ontological characteristic of an event is to inscribe, to name, the situated void of that for which it is an event" (2001, p.69). The event thus "evokes the inconsistent being of the elements of a situation" (Hallward, 2008, p.101). So the event names/counts the void, the absence, the 'impossible', "that which is not conceivable from within the knowledges of the situation" (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.283). "The event is something which points to alternatives to what is, to the possibility of something different" (Ibid.). "An event triggers a process whereby what once appeared as nothing comes to appear as everything - the process whereby, paradigmatically, the wretched of the earth might come to inherit it" (Hallward, 2008, p.106).

The event is Christ's resurrection, it is the storming of the Bastille, it is the October Revolution, just as it is illegal immigrant workers taking to the streets in order to become agents in their own right, in order to break out of their status as clandestine victims; it is the unemployed stepping out from the ranks of statistics to become subjects of resistance, or the sick refusing to resign themselves to being mere patients and attempting to think and act their own illnesses. (Bensaïd, 2004, p.97)

Badiou insists that the event is pure chance. "The event has no cause" (Barker, 2002, p.80). "Events happen" (Badiou, 2003s, interviewed by Radical Politics). So anyone can experience an event: "A key condition of Badiou's definition of an Event is that it is open to anyone, rich or poor, black or white, man or woman" (Patel, 2006, p.89). In *Logics of Worlds* (2009b), Badiou extends his argument to suggest that certain 'worlds' (situations) may be more susceptible to an event - the configuration of a world, the logic that is used to structure it, may provide a greater or lesser number of 'points', places where the logical fabric of the world can be penetrated by a single yes or no, for or against, backwards of forwards (Hallward, 2008).

An event is always relative to a situation - it is an event for the situation, not above or outside it (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics). The event happens at the evental site of a situation, but it "cannot be predicted outside a singular situation, nor even deduced from that situation without some unpredictable chance operation" (Bensaïd, 2004, p.97). However, obviously, an event disrupts the state of the situation, it overturns the logic. Since "the illegal and the unpresentable are precisely what [the state] expels" (Badiou, 2005a, p.208), the state has a vested interest in denying the event; "the state is always committed to foreclosing or denying the errancy of the void, usually by naturalizing all elements in presentation such that what belongs is also shown to be included, while everything else is expelled" (Elmer, 2008, p.64). Events are "precious interruptions in the web of obedience that usually weaves society together and, if not faithfully theorised, are quickly woven closed" (Patel, 2006, p.95).

Badiou is clear that when he says an event is beyond calculation/prediction, he means in that situation. So the event is not unintelligible; it becomes intelligible through fidelity, i.e. retroactively. It is not 'religious'; it does not remain unintelligible) (Badiou, 2003a,

interviewed by Radical Politics). "One never wagers on the possibility of the event itself, since one cannot anticipate what cannot happen" (Barker, 2002, p.82). So someone must recognize and name it as an event "whose implications concern the nature of the entire situation" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.27) - someone must wager on the consequences (Barker, 2002, p.82). In other words, an event might happen, but nothing changes because no-one recognizes it. Badiou calls this naming 'intervention', the first moment in a process of fundamental change. The naming is to do with the impossible possible, the wager, the bet. "The act of nomination of the event is what constitutes it, not as real - we will always posit that this multiple has occurred - but as susceptible to a decision concerning its belonging to the situation" (Badiou, 2005a, p.203).

Naming the event, though, is only the first moment in the process of fundamental change that Badiou terms 'fidelity', or 'generic truth procedure'.

9.3.3 'Fidelity'

Fidelity "is the name of the process: it amounts to a sustained investigation of the situation, under the imperative of the event itself; it is an imminent and continuing break" (Badiou, 2001, p.67). The object of fidelity is to work out how to transform the situation in line with what is revealed by the event (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.28). "Fidelity to the event is an attempt to sustain the consequences of the event in thought"; to refuse to return to the status quo, to the idea that what happened was impossible (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.283)."This investigation is not a passive, scholarly affair; it entails not only the active transformation of the situation in which the event occurs but also the active transformation of the human being" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.7). In *Logics of Worlds* (2009b), Badiou shows how "through fidelity to the consequence of an event, that which used to appear as minimally intense or existent may come to impose a wholly new logic of appearing" (Hallward, 2008, p.105); Badiou cites as an example the Paris Commune's assertion "We are nothing; let us be everything" (Ibid.). However, "there is no hero of the event", because no-one is differentiated going into the event (eg. St Paul was not privileged by his experience over others whom he told) (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 6).

Badiou gives as an example of an event falling in love. The 'meeting' of those who have fallen in love, which might take place over any time period, "forms an event for them in relation to which they change their lives" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.7). This change is not necessarily for the better. "The point is that love changes their relation to the world irrevocably"; how long this lasts depends on their fidelity to the event of their love (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.7). The shape that fidelity can take is infinite; and a number of different fidelities to the same event can be developed (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.31); but "in *each* case of a fidelity it is a matter of the new coming into being"(p.31) - something independent of any known element in the situation.

Yet "fidelity is a practical matter; you have to organize something, to do something" (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 2). Sometimes, fidelity can become 'saturated' - you cannot find anything new in the field of your first fidelity; and there is no guarantee that fidelity will be sustained (Neocosmos, 2009a), so "any evental site can, in the end, undergo a state normalization" (Badiou, 1005a, p.176). An obscure event is "an event that occurs, that has a sequence, but whose sequence is, for whatever reason, stopped prematurely, saturated too early", or a victim of the problem of naming it (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 8).

Fidelity is clearly not the only response to an event. In *Logics of Worlds* (2009b), Badiou recognizes that there might be multiple different responses, including:

- a reassertion of a commitment to the dominant state of things, by insisting on the futility or criminality of trying to change it;

- an attempt "to obliterate the very possibility of a new event on the basis of a dogmatic allegiance to an originary super-Event" (he gives as examples Stalinism, or religious fundamentalism) (Hallward, 2008, p.107);

- the resurrection of an old event, whose implications have been forgotten or denied.

There can also be 'evil' in response to an event (Den Heyer, 2010). Badiou identifies three kinds of evil:

1. Simulcrum/terror - when a fantasy of an existing situation's promised fulfilment is embraced, rather than the void;

2. Betrayal - when a truth-process is given up on, or mistaken for the Truth;

3. Disaster - when the named content of a singular truth-process is mistaken for the Truth, and is used to justify the destruction of the material conditions needed by others to engage their potential for truth-processes (Ibid.).

Clearly, 'truth' here has a specific meaning; we thus need to turn to Badiou's epistemology.

9.4 Badiou's epistemology

9.4.1 Knowledge and Truth

Badiou insists that truth and knowledge are two entirely different things: Truth is "subtracted from knowledge" (Badiou, 2005a, p.342). However, he argues, they are dialectical (Barker, 2002). "Truth is not knowledge, but neither is it independent of us. It is we who make the truth, but precisely as something that exceeds our knowing" (Hallward, 2003, p.154). However, "Truth...is not the result of a laborious process of self-reflection, much less something that can be arrived at through the protocols of instruction or submission to a master" (Barbour, 2010, p.253). It is something else entirely.

In *Being and Event* (2005a), Badiou constructs an argument concerning the necessary criteria for truth:

• a truth must be infinite (a necessary but not sufficient criterion);

• it must be generic: "The term 'generic' positively designates that what does not allow itself to be discerned is in reality the general truth of a situation, the truth of its being" (2005a, p.327); and

• it must be something that is not classified as knowledge.

In other words, truth must be indiscernible and unclassifiable (2005a, p.338).

Knowledge is the capacity to discern (presented, unified) elements within a situation and classify them by naming them (Badiou, 2005a, p.327). Badiou calls this the encyclopaedia. Truth is something very different. Badiou argues that indiscernibility and truth are almost equivalent:

> ... 'indiscernible' conserves a negative connotation, which indicates uniquely, via non-discernibility, that what is at stake is subtracted from knowledge or from exact nomination. The term 'generic' positively designates that what does not allow itself to be discerned is in reality the general truth of a situation, the truth of its being, as considered as the foundation of all knowledge to come. 'Indiscernible' implies a negation, which nevertheless retains this essential point: a truth is always that which makes a hole in a knowledge. (Badiou, 2005a, p.327)

So, if knowledge is identifying presented, unified elements/multiplicity, truth is that which is not presented/classified , i.e. that which is 'indiscernible'; truth is the point at which the 'void' comes to count, it is "a process from which something new emerges" (Badiou, quoted in Bensaïd, 2004, p.95).

> ...[A] truth is nothing other than the process which exposes and represents the void of a situation - or, for it amounts to the same thing, that suspends the state of that situation (Hallward, 2004b, p.9).

> A truth overturns the very logic of a world by transforming the norms that regulate the manner in which things appear - the way different elements of a world appear as more or less discernible, significant, or 'intense'. (Hallward, 2008, p.104)

Truths make the old order illogical. So truth is what emerges through fidelity to the event. In the process of retaining fidelity, 'truth' is constructed, bit by bit, it is never 'discovered'. The truth is internal to the situation (i.e. singular), because it emerges from an event, which as we know occurs only within a specific situation; but also universal, because it is "the same for all" (Badiou, 2001, p.27), and so "each truth is at once singular and universal" (Badiou, quoted in Bensaïd, 2004, p.95). "However singular and particular a truth process, a truth-

process must always proceed in the name of all" (Den Heyer, 2010, p.155). "If truths exist, they are certainly indifferent to differences" (Badiou, 2005a, p.xii).

What does Badiou mean by 'universal singularity'? Essentially, that you can acknowledge universal truths precisely to the extent that you are seized by a singular event (Barbour, 2010, p.257). This is because every universal originates in an event (Badiou, 2004). However, every event is singular, to that specific situation. So the universal is singular, or is a singularity. And "a universal singularity is not of the order of being, but of the order of sudden emergence" (p.145). Universality is nothing other than the faithful construction of an infinite generic multiple; and every universal singularity remains incompletable or open (Ibid.).

The truth is a practical question, not a matter of theory (Bensaïd, 2004, p.95), and if truth is grounded in the event from which it emerges, then there is no transcendental truth, and truths cannot be deduced from premises; truths are axiomatic and foundational (Bensaïd, 2004, p.95), and they cannot be conflated with either common sense or scientific knowledge (p.96).

If knowledge is what is, presented, unified, and truth is the void, the indiscernible, then truth must change knowledge; "...a truth is, first of all, something new. What transmits, what repeats, we shall call *knowledge*. Distinguishing truth from knowledge is essential" (Badiou, 2003b, p.61). "A truth is always that which makes a hole in a knowledge" (Badiou, 2005a, p.327):

> A truth punches a 'hole' in knowledges, it is heterogeneous to them, but it is also the sole known source of new knowledges. We shall say that the truth forces knowledges. The verb to force indicates that since the power of a truth is that of a break it is by violating established and circulating knowledges that a truth returns to the immediacy of the situation, or reworks the sort of portable encyclopaedia from which opinions, communications and sociality draw their meanings. (Badiou, 2001, p.70)

So "we must conceive of a truth both as the construction of a fidelity to an event, and as the generic potency of a transformation of a domain of knowledge" (Badiou, 2003b, p.58). So knowledge has a shelf-life; truth does not (Barker, 2002). Truth is eternal; a truth 'explodes'

time - once a truth has been declared it will always have been true, and will always be true (Hallward, 2003).

This is what makes it so utterly different from knowledge: "Knowledge does not know of the event because the name of the event is supernumerary, and so it does not belong to the language of the situation" (Badiou, 2005a, p.329). Yet because a truth is constituted in the indiscernible, we cannot prove that it is so, we can only claim that it is. "A truth begins with an *axiom of truth*. It begins with a groundless decision - the decision to *say* that the event has taken place" (Badiou, 2003b, p.62). So truth is a wager. "Truths are affirmations to which in principle we can all hold true, in excess of our ability to prove that what we thereby affirm is correct or justified in any demonstrable sense" (Hallward, 2004b, p.1). "Nothing regulates [a truth's] course, since the axiom that supports it has arbitrated outside of any rule of established knowledge" (Badiou, 2003b, p.63). A truth is uncompletable, although one can anticipate/hypothesize a complete truth by 'forcing' it. "A forcing is the powerful fiction of a completed truth"(Ibid., p.65), which then allows new knowledge: "*If* we suppose the generic infinity of a truth to be completed, *then* such or such a bit of knowledge must imperatively be transformed" (Ibid., p.65). However, not all of the elements that a truth concerns can be forced into knowledge, some bits are unnameable - "Evil is the will to name *at any price*" (Ibid., p.66).

The fact that a truth has to be wagered is a fundamentally crucial point, because it means that *some one* has to wager the truth:

> Since truth must be conceived as always potentially surpassing the limits of any given state of knowledge, so likewise the subject - as seeker, discoverer, conveyor or faithful 'militant' of truth - must always be accorded a central role in the process by which knowledge encounters the limits of whatever it is presently able to discern, and hence the need to envisage the existence of truths that lie beyond its epistemic grasp. (Norris, 2009, pp. 259-260)

This brings us to Badiou's understanding of agency and the subject.

9.4.2 Agency and the subject

Badiou differs from contemporary French philosophers of the poststructuralist school in his understanding of the subject, using agency as his point of departure, rather than identity (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, pp.2-6). Agency, according to Badiou, is not about everyday actions and decisions; these are simply part of being and existence, they are an unavoidable part of being alive. Rather, agency is about something new:

> For Badiou, the question of agency is not so much a question of how a subject can *initiate* an action in an autonomous manner but rather how a subject *emerges* through an autonomous chain of actions within a changing situation. That is, it is not everyday actions or decisions that provide evidence of agency for Badiou. It is rather those extraordinary decisions and actions which *isolate* an actor from their context, those actions which show that a human can actually be a free agent that supports *new* chains of actions and reactions. For this reason, not every human being is always a subject, yet some human beings *become* subjects; those who act in *fidelity* to a chance encounter with an *event* which disrupts the *situation* they find themselves in. (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.6)

Badiou says that the subject is constituted by the wager that something has happened, a new truth has emerged: "'This event has taken place, it is something which I can neither evaluate, nor demonstrate, but to which I shall be faithful'" (Badiou, 2003b, p.62). So Badiou rejects the notion of the universal human subject (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.15), and claims that "the subject is rare" (Bensaïd, 2004, p.98). The subject also has no particular interests, because truth has no particular interests.

The subject to a truth must itself 'live' in the world in which the event took place, where the truth appeared; so a subject must have appeared in that world, must be a 'body' in that world. Badiou insists that by 'body' he does not necessarily mean an organic body. A body might be an army, a political organisation, a group of artistic works, a set of scientific results (Badiou, 2008). So a 'body' is rather a set of possibilities to support a procedure of truth; once it abandons this, it is undone. Thus, if a body begins a new experience, it will be under a new

form/new body, although always profoundly marked by the baptism of its first event (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics).

The subject created by fidelity to an event is, in Badiou's term, a 'militant' - who disrupts 'opinion', which is that analytical dead-zone of thought which poses as 'ethics' or 'politics' but which in fact prevent these (Patel, 2006). "A fidelity is not a matter of knowledge. It is not the work of an expert: it is the work of a militant" (Badiou, 2005a, p.329).

In his more recent work, Badiou has expanded on his understanding of the subject:

> It's a very important philosophical construction that there is a difference between individual and subject, and subject is generally something not reducible to the individual. In fact, even when the truth procedure is very near to the individual, like in love, finally the subject of love is not reducible to the individual. (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power, response 7)

There is, however, no subject without individuals (Ibid.).

Badiou also now argues that it is not simply a case of some individuals retaining fidelity to an event, and some not; rather, an individual can be divided in his/her response to an event, with one part of himself/herself near a process of truth, and another part not. Any individual could also be involved in more than one truth-procedure at any one time - for example, someone might be in love, and also part of a political truth-procedure (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power).

In his recent work, Badiou also suggests that events are far more common than might be supposed:

> Incessantly, in some accessible world, something happens. Several times, in its brief existence, every human animal is granted the chance to incorporate itself into the subjective present of a truth. (Badiou, 2009b, p.514)

9.5 Badiou's politics

Neocosmos (2009a, p.14) calls Badiou one of the most important writers today on theorising emancipatory politics. In some ways, this might seem odd, since Badiou's politics is fundamentally enmeshed in his philosophy; if Badiou argues that events occur randomly, and can never be predicted, then it is axiomatic that no-one can actually create change, no-one can transform a situation. Politics, then, for Badiou, is about fidelity to the event, and hence about truth and about ethics; in other words, about becoming a subject. So Badiou argues that real politics is hazardous and unpredictable, because political militants have as their sole aim, the truth, and, as we have seen, truth has no particular interests (Barker, 2002). As will be discussed further below, Badiou is very critical of much 'political' activity, arguing that it has nothing to do with truth (Badiou, 2003b).

If truth is the aim of 'real' politics, then clearly this politics is about thought: "any politics of emancipation, or any politics which imposes an egalitarian maxim, is a thought in act. Thought is the specific mode by which a human animal is traversed and overcome by a truth" (Badiou, 2003b, p.73). Thought is thus serious trouble for the State.

9.5.1 The current state of the situation/The role of the State

As we have seen, Badiou argues that any situation (set) organizes itself to 'count' or present certain elements, and not others. The way it does this is called the 'state of the situation': "The state is what arranges a situation in such a way as to ensure the power of its dominant group (or ruling class)" (Hallward, 2004b, p.9). So what is the current state of the situation?

Badiou is quite clear that this is capitalism, in its current particular form of neoliberal imperialism, propped up by liberal democracy. Badiou (2005b) describes the period from 1976 to 1995 (and often beyond) as a lengthy counter-revolutionary period, a period of bitter betrayal, "which went by way of undifferentiated praise for 'human rights', the devastating critique of 'totalitarianism', the rallying to bourgeois parliamentarianism, the support for apparently humanitarian (but in reality imperialist) interventions, and finally capitulation the world over to American arrogance" (p.xxxiv). Badiou claims that we are currently in a period

of particularly brutal capitalism: "Today, there's something violent and cynical in capitalism...Today, the capitalists have no fear of anything. They are in a stage of primitive accumulation, and there is a real brutality to the situation" (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 5). However, global capitalism has not delivered on its promises - there is not peace, and there is huge inequality: "We have no unity in the world, but a rich western world and another world which is not at the same level at all. We also have inside the rich world itself very strong inequalities, and more and more" (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power, response 1). "We are not in simply a victorious capitalist world. We are practically 20 years after this apparent victory [i.e. the collapse of communism] and the world is not a very good one" (Ibid.). So there is resistance. We are thus, claims Badiou, "at the beginning of a new subjective sequence of the understanding of what is politics, what is new politics" (Ibid., response 2).

Clearly, though, any real change relies on the end of the state of the situation. Badiou (2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics) says that "fundamentally, I remain convinced, ideally and strategically, that the existence of the State is a limitation of human existence" (response 10). By State, he says, he means the State in the political sense. He argues that in this respect, he remains a Marxist - the State is not positive (Ibid.). The contemporary definition of the State must include the economic apparatus. So Badiou rejects the suggestion of the State being somehow separated from neoliberal globalisation; it is entirely implicated in this, as Marx argued:

> In reality, we need to take the modern definition of the State as being in itself marked by the global development of capitalism, that is, by the existence of the global market. A great prediction by Marx! Marx's observation is much more relevant today than it was in his own lifetime. This is a typical example of a scientific prediction that is absolutely remarkable. So I do not think that the problem is at the State and/or globalisation level, but rather in terms of a new form of State that is situated in an economic set that is part of the State (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 12).

However, he argues (and I discuss this further below), we have to use different tactics to change the state of the situation; we cannot use Marx's tactics. This is because Marx's set of elements (state, revolution, class etc.) is saturated. Thus, for Badiou, real politics must work "at a distance from the State", and make politics independent of it. "We cannot work within the logic of the State anymore" (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 10). However, capitalism is an historical situation which is more and more considered natural (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics): "This is a very important point, one that Marx had already noticed: although it is a situation, capitalism has a tendency to present itself as natural" (Ibid., response 9). Thus "the problem is that we cannot think the end of the State" (Ibid.). This brings us to issues of thought and consciousness and ideology, and thus to hegemony.

9.5.2 Current hegemony

Badiou argues that the different kinds of States in the world today (dominant states, like the US; intermediary states like the European states, and emerging states, like China, India and Brazil) have different strategies in terms of this. However "every State uses propaganda to convince us that all the decisions they take are necessary" (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 12); in other words, hegemony is in operation.

9.5.2.1 Neoliberal capitalism

As we have seen, Badiou argues that the current state of the situation is capitalism, in a particularly brutal form. The State undertakes certain tasks on behalf of capitalism, including hegemony:

> The modern state aims solely at fulfilling certain functions, or at crafting a consensus of opinion. Its sole subjective dimension is that of transforming economic necessity - that is, the objective logic of capital - into resignation or resentment. (Badiou, 2003b, p.73)

So the state is not disinterested, and "it has nothing to do with justice" (Ibid.).

For example, in the French context, the state destroys public hospitals, public schools, etc.; but it does not admit that it does this on behalf of capital:

> What is the State explaining? It is explaining that specific policies must be implemented. It cannot claim that all this is acceptable, that it is right. So, instead, they claim that such policies are mandatory....This is the government's way of situating this State policy in an economical context that is [actually] part of State decisions. (Badiou, 2003a, interview by Radical Politics, response 12)

The State's explanation rests on the logic of Darwinism, to argue that the way things are is natural, is normal. For example, it is 'natural' to be competitive, to accumulate, for the weak to disappear in a battle for the survival of the fittest: "When [capitalists] say that it is natural, they say that, finally, human beings naturally seek profit, competitiveness, rivalry, etc." (Badiou, 2003, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 9).

However, "the subjective propaganda of capitalism is not... capitalism! ...there is no propaganda which is directly about capitalism [because no-one thinks it is good]. It is rather always about democracy" (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 15).

9.5.2.2 Liberal democracy

Badiou calls the current hegemonic ideology 'democratic materialism' (Steele, 2009). Liberal democracy, "the 'democratic' hegemony of the parliamentary state" (Badiou, 2005b, pp.121-122), is part of the logic of organising the current situation of capitalism, and is used as the propaganda for this. For this reason, "it is imperative that we criticise the democratic fetish today, rather than capitalism. Let's be honest: nobody really loves capitalism" (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 15):

> Today, our "democratic" totalitarianism is all the more firmly entrenched. It is now more necessary than ever that those with free minds rise up against the servile way of thinking, against this miserable moralism in the name of which we are obliged to accept the prevailing way of the world and its absolute injustice (Badiou, 2001, quoted

in Gibson, 2006, p.37).

Badiou argues that the human rights discourse, in the way it is currently constituted, is often part of the propaganda of liberal democracy:

> Badiou rejects outright the doctrine of universal or natural human rights - which he regards as having resulted largely from the failure of the revolutionary project of Marxism - and its replacement by the ideology of liberal humanitarianism and the law of the global market. (Barker, 2002, p.135)

> The latent violence, the presumptuous arrogance inherent in the currently prevalent conception of human rights derives from the fact that these are actually the rights of finitude and ultimately - as the insistent theme of democratic euthanasia indicates - the rights of death (Badiou, 2004, p.151).

"At every level of public life the rules binding individuals into various pseudo-social contracts of mutual rights and responsibilities (consumer rights, workplace rights, parental rights, animal rights) threaten to trivialise our collective humanity" (Barker, 2002, p.136). Badiou argues that human rights discourse acts to divide the civilized from the uncivilized, and is thus part of seeing Third World misery as part of its own incompetence, its own subhumanity (2001, p.13).

9.5.2.3 Postmodernism

Badiou is particularly scathing of the philosophy and politics of difference/ postmodernism, and as we have seen this has been one of the impetuses behind his work. Postmodernism is, he contends, about maintaining the situation, not about changing it. Difference is what there is, as his ontology (the multiplicity of being) makes clear:

> That there are intertwined histories, different cultures and, more generally, differences already abundant in one and the "same" individual, that the world is multicolored, that one must let people live, eat, dress, imagine, love in whichever way they please, is not

the issue, whatever certain disingenuous simpletons may want us to think. Such liberal truisms are cheap, and one would only like to see those who proclaim them not react so violently whenever confronted with the slightest serious attempt to dissent from their own puny liberal difference. (Badiou, 2003c, p.11)

As we have seen, for Badiou this is precisely the point of the event, of truth: "since differences are what there are, and since every truth is a coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences then are precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant" (Badiou, 2001, p.27). This is why Badiou is so insistent on the universality of truth.

Given his ontology of how multiplicities come to be presented and/or represented in a situation, by the logic/state of the situation, Badiou is concerned about how difference and identity are used to obscure universal truth, or deny the event/truth, rather than reveal it:

> When I hear people say 'we are oppressed as blacks, as women", I have only one problem: What exactly is meant by 'black' or 'women'?...Can this identity, in itself, function in a progressive fashion, that is, other than as a property invented by the oppressors themselves?...there must be a progressive meaning to these particularities, a meaning that is intelligible to all...Otherwise, we have...a demand for integration. (Badiou, 1989, pp.118-9, quoted in Hallward, 2004a)[22]

Badiou argues that the embrace of difference leads to a culture of victimization (Elmer, 2008). Truth, on the other hand, "is indifferent to difference", it is "the same for all" (Barker, 2002, p.137). Whereas postmodernism rejects both truth and subject, Badiou reclaims them (Barker, 2002, p.83).

Badiou is very clear that three things, capitalism, liberal democracy and postmodernism, together comprise current hegemony:

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[22]   Badiou has recently argued that our current world is 'pointless' - i.e. there are few if any places where the logical fabric can be penetrated; presumably, this is because the relativism of postmodernism means that the possibility of polarization to yes/no, for/against is that much less.

The situation [at the time *Being and Event* was published] was actually quite paradoxical. On one hand, dominating public opinion, one had 'democracy' - in its entirely corrupt representative and electoral form - and 'freedom' reduced to the freedom to trade and consume. These constituted the abstract universality of our epoch. That is, the alliance between the market and parliamentarianism - what I call 'capitalo-parliamentarianism' - functioned as if the only possible doctrine, and on a worldwide scale. On the other hand, one had the widespread presence of relativism. Declarations were made to the effect that all cultures were of the same value, that all communities generated values, that every production of the imaginary was art, that all sexual practices were forms of love, etc. In short, the context combined the violent dogmatism of mercantile 'democracy' with a thoroughgoing scepticism (Badiou, 2005a, p.xii).

9.5.3 Praxis/ So, what is to be done?

Badiou is equally scathing about much of what is considered politics today. He argues that much current political philosophy is pro-parliamentary, pro-capitalist, pro-occidental, and is thus complicit in maintaining the state of the situation (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics). As discussed above, Badiou is very suspicious of any politics organised around principles of inclusion/representation; he argues that this is about negotiation of interests within a framework of agreed on norms; and thus not really politics at all:

> The logic of inclusion cannot account for the arrival of differences that rupture the state of the situation, just as the logic of representation, or the negotiation of interests, cannot comprehend the disinterested character of the subject who declares a truth (Barbour, 2010, p.253).

In fact, such a politics is dangerous, because it can prevent the emergence of an event that gives rise to a real political sequence, for example by denying the event, by normalizing the situation.

Whilst he agrees with Marx's analysis, he rejects the solution Marx proposed. He argues that Marx's sequence of destruction of the state - dictatorship of the proletariat - disappearance of the state, is saturated, because none of its elements is really clear today. Whilst class exists in a social sense, it no longer exists in a political sense (Ibid., response 10). Thus, as discussed above, Badiou rejects the notion that we have to struggle within the state itself: "we must work at a distance from the state. We must make politics independent from it" (Ibid.).

Of course, this does not mean that Badiou thinks that the state is inconsequential - clearly not: "I am all for its disappearance, but we have no political avenues leading us to this outcome because this set is not clear anymore" (Ibid.). Badiou considers the anti-globalisation movement as reformist, not radical; it is asking for a revision of capitalism, not its overthrow. "This doesn't create any politics! It creates movements"; and is essentially bourgeois, not popular (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics). However perhaps the most fundamental problems of the anti-globalisation movement is that it is state-oriented:

> One of the aspects of the anti-globalisation movement that I denounce is its dependency towards the State....This movement depends on the State because it gathers where States gather. This is useless. And to ask for what? What is it going to ask the G8?....What do we demand from them? To change global economic policies? To change capitalism? (Badiou, 2003a, interview by Radical Politics, response 12).

Badiou thus disagrees with Negri, who, as I discussed in Chapter 4, argues that there is hope of emancipation within the system of Empire. Badiou argues that the 'multitudes' are leading the inhabitants of 'Empire' to an impasse (Badiou, 2005b, p.xxxv). He feels we need new concept of democracy, which he argues Negri does not have - he simply uses new names, Empire instead of State, multitude instead of movement ((Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 5). However, revolutionary politics (as fidelity to the event - of the French Revolution, of 1917, of 1968, etc.) - is currently saturated, and has been since the mid-1980s. One response to this is to say nothing is possible; but another is to retain fidelity to fidelity - not a continuation of what is, but not a rupture; we need to find something new (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli); and this needs to be outside of the state. The state is the very opposite and negation of the event. The state is the

petrified form of anti-politics.

Badiou says that "the real question today is not the relationship between the movement and the state. The real question is, what is the new form of organization after the party? More generally, what is a new political discipline?" (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 5). Badiou argues that emancipatory politics must have one foot in 'being' (what is), and one foot in a possible alternative situation, what could be (Neocosmos, 2006, p.89). Thus politics is of the event, not of the state, and not of history (Bensaïd, 2004, pp.99-100); and the fundamental role of emancipatory politics is to retain fidelity to the truth revealed by an event.

Badiou accords politics a special place in the possibility of fidelity. In his *Metapolitics* (2005b), Badiou devotes a chapter to "Politics as Truth Procedure", which he argues is the most important chapter in the book. In this, he tries to answer the question, "When, and under what conditions, can an event be said to be political?" (p. 141). He argues that an event is political only if it is universalising, i.e. only if it is generic in its result. Politics, he says, is unique as a truth-procedure, because it "is the sole truth procedure that is not only generic in its result, but also in the local composition of its subject. Only politics is intrinsically required to declare that the thought that it is is the thought of all" (Badiou, 2005b, p.142). In addition, politics takes as its point of departure that the situation is open, never closed.

As we know, "the power of the State is always superior to that of the situation" (Badiou, 2005b, p.144). Only a political truth-procedure can summon the power of the state, can measure this power, can show where the power of the state is really greater than the situation, because "whenever there is a genuinely political event, the State reveals itself" (Ibid., p.145). So the role of a political truth-procedure - i.e. fidelity to a political event - is "to count as one that which is not even counted" (p.150), i.e. everyone, humanity. Badiou's politics "is one which from the context of the specific conditions of the particular situation stresses alternatives on the basis of universality (justice, equality, etc.). This is unavoidably so because such universals are central to what makes humans human." (Neocosmos, 2006, p.90). Badiou's own political praxis clearly reflects this.

So the political task is to go beyond identities, to a generic identity, "the identity of no-identity, the identity which is beyond all identities" (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 9); i.e. humanity as such. For Marx, this generic identity was the proletariat, so the liberation of the working class was the liberation of humanity. However, as discussed above, Badiou argues that this cannot any longer be the case:

> If the idea of the working class as a generic group is saturated, you have the choice of saying that there are only identities, and that the best hope is the revolt of some particular identity, or you can say that we have to find something much more universal, much more generic (Ibid).

Badiou suggests that the only possible politics is subaltern politics - the politics defined by fidelity to the event whereby the victims of oppression declare themselves (Bensaïd, 2004, pp.99-100). Badiou argues that popular components that are themselves heterogeneous - "ordinary people", "ordinary workers" - are thus more important that civil bourgeoisies/movements; and indeed, the proletariat remains important (although not the historical agent of change) (Badiou, 2003a, interviewed by Radical Politics, response 13). For Badiou, it is not a question of numbers, something which he says he learned from Algerian colonial war: "It's my conviction today that political action has to be a process of principles, convictions, and not of a majority. So there is a practical dimension. And secondly, there is the necessity of direct relations between intellectuals and workers" (Badiou, 2006, interviewed by Diana George and Nic Veroli, response 1).

Badiou draws from Jacques Ranciére (1991; 2009, interviewed by Lawrence Liang) the concept of already existing equality. Ranciére argues that the current assumption is that people are not equal, but we could get there if we try. He insists we should start rather from the "axiom of equality" (Ibid.). Badiou's thinking clearly echoes this: "Political equality is not what we want or plan, it is what we declare under fire of the event, here and now, as what is, and not as what should be" (Badiou, 2003b, p.72). Equality is "*postulated* not *willed*" (Badiou, 2005b, p.112). Genuine political activity involves "not the desire for equality, but the consequences of its axiom" (Ibid.). Thus "equality exists to the extent that some subject acts and speaks on the assumption that equality exists" (Barbour, 2010, p.255); it cannot be

planned for, it can only be practiced, and therefore verified.

Equality, however, is not about status, or income, or function - it is about intelligence; about an equal ability to think. Quoting Lazarus, Badiou says "People think" (Badiou, 2005b, p.31).

Badiou believes that "people think, people are capable of truth" (Badiou, 2003b, p.71). "To say "people think" is to say that they are capable...of prescribing a possible that is irreducible to the repetition or continuation of what exists" (Badiou, 2005b, p.32). If people are equally capable of thinking, then there is "a universal power to be struck by a truth" (Barbour, 2010, p.254); or, in Badiou's terms, a "universal capacity for political truth" (Badiou, 2005, quoted in Barbour, 2010, p.254). As we have seen, Badiou asserts that anyone can retain fidelity to the event; everyone has equal capacity to be seized by an event, and hence become a subject to the truth. So Badiou affirms the "political capacity of all people"; "everyone can occupy the space of politics, if they decide to do so" (Badiou, 1998, quoted in Hallward, 2004a, p.2).

9.6 Critique

A number of critiques of Badiou's philosophy have been made; some of these relate to his use of mathematics and set theory (eg. Nirenberg & Nirenberg, 2011), and I will not discuss these here. Rather I will consider some the key critiques concerning issues pertinent to my argument.

Clearly, one of the greatest 'problems' with Badiou's theory of the event relates to the role of, and the possibility of, praxis. If events are pure chance, what does this mean for political and social change, for agency, for political will? Thus a number of writers have suggested that this is an aspect of Badiou's theory that perhaps needs rethinking.

Hallward (2004b) is critical of the fact Badiou refuses to allow that events can be anticipated or prepared for, that they are always random, and in no way linked to the historical context. Can events not be the result of preliminary acts of resistance? Is it not more true to say they are 'relatively' unpredictable? (pp.26-17). Bensaïd (2004) also suggests that there is some historical and social determination of events (p.98).

There is another problem, related to this issue, once one moves to the issues of fidelity and truth. Düttman (2004) has argued that Badiou's conception of fidelity and event in *Being and event* means that Badiou is incorrect in saying that fidelity relies on an event. Rather, he argues, fidelity makes the event happen in the first place, it 'triggers' the event. "To maintain that fidelity turns into yet another event can be interpreted as meaning that fidelity is constitutive of the event and that, without fidelity, the event wouldn't happen"(p.203, fn.). So possibly an event only comes about retroactively, through the naming of its existence, and the fidelity to the truth which comes to light in it (Bensaïd, 2004, p.97). Hallward (2004b) asks how, if we can never anticipate an event, do we distinguish a false event from a real one?

In relation to the truth, Hallward (2004b) is also critical of the fact that it comes only to those who have experienced the event and retained fidelity to it - and to no-one else. Hallward believes Badiou thereby rejects motivation or resolve in subjective decisions, in that no-one can be convinced of anything, which makes political organisation an impossibility. This seems to devalue political will, which Feltham and Clemens also argue (2003, p.8).

Badiou's insistence that there can be no subject within the event, only after it, through truth 'inducing' the subject, means that truth is isolated from the situation. Hallward questions this - can truth really be isolated from other aspects of the situation (Hallward, 2004b, pp. 17-18)? Hallward argues that Badiou does not explain the process by which some people become a militant subject, and others not.

Hallward (2004b, p.12) suggests that the problem of the relationship between being and acting stems from Badiou's use of mathematics as ontology: "Once ontology is identified with mathematics then being is forever isolated from the entire domain of the material, the sensual or the existential" (Hallward, 2004b, p.5). It also creates the problem of relation - Hallward (2003) argues that a key weakness in Badiou's work is his refusal to grant relation any properly constituent force (p.322). Hallward (2004b) thus wonders whether mathematics provides a description, rather than an explanation.

As we have seen, in *Logics of Worlds* Badiou has tried to deal at least with the issue of relation; and Hallward (2008) has argued that "Badiou may be more willing today than

previously to recognise that the critical analysis of ideology and hegemony may have something to contribute to the pursuit of justice and equality" (p.107). However, Hallward argued, we need to privilege history, not logic; and political will, not just truth (p.121), and feels that Badiou still does not allow for the role of power, struggle and hegemony.

Thus many critics believe there is still an underlying problem with Badiou's theory. Livingstone (2009) summarises this key problem in Badiou's work, by suggesting there is a critical question that needs to be asked:

> This is the question of the extent to which the elaborate formal apparatus that Badiou develops in both books (*Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*) in fact supports the militant political doctrines of evental change and generic Truth that underlie his more polemic claims, both with respect to existing philosophical projects and the larger socio-political situation. For it is one thing to give a formal theory, even a rigorous and sophisticated one, of how me might think of what evental or punctual change actually is (even assuming that we can follow Badiou in all of the other aspects of his often very imaginative projections of formal structures into political categories); it is quite another actually to work toward changes of this sort in real, already-structured domains, or even to know in much detail how to go about doing so. Indeed, insofar as Badiou's theory of evental change in both books demands that the event, if it is to be truly transformative, amounts to the sudden, unpredictable advent to appearance of a kind of phenomenon that could not possibly be discerned within the previously existing situation, it seems to deprive us of the possibility of anticipating, even in vague outline, these possibilities of radical change or locating their sites of appearance until after the event. Thus, it is not clear that Badiou's elaborate theory can actually play a significant role - despite its strong rhetoric - in supporting the kinds of change it ostensibly envisions. (Livingstone, 2009, final para)

In my reading of Badiou, however, I think some of the claims made by some of Badiou's critics, in particular about agency and political will, are perhaps a little harsh. It is true that events happen, randomly, to anyone, anywhere, any time; but whilst this might suggest that there is no possibility for action, it is not the event itself that has anything to do with the

action; rather, it is fidelity to that event. It is holding on to the implications of the event, in thought. It is proclaiming a universal truth, and sticking to that. I see plenty of scope for political action in this. However, as I discuss later, I am concerned that Badiou makes no allowance for the possibility that concerted and planned action might bring about an event.

9.7 Badiou's relevance to this study

9.7.1 Badiou and hegemony

Clearly, Badiou in many respects is moving from a very different place than Marx and Gramsci, with whom I began this study. Although Badiou still frequently refers to Marx and Marxism, and clearly aligns himself with this tradition (although he is very clear it is not a single concept), a number of his claims really do appear to be irreconcilable.

It does seem clear from the above discussion of his politics at least that Badiou broadly agrees with Marx's general diagnosis of the capitalist economy, and argues that it has continuing relevance and accuracy: "There is no need for a revision of Marxism itself" (Badiou quoted in Hallward (2004a, p.12). However, as we have seen, he argues that we cannot use class as the basis for analysis and action any more; and we cannot target the State. In his claim that events happen anywhere, at any time, to anyone, Badiou clearly rejects the notion of historicity, the idea of the single subject of history, and that class struggle as the driving force of history.

His notion of praxis is also very different from that of Marx. In his concept of fidelity, Badiou remodels the Marxist concept of praxis to a hazardous series of bets, on the nature of the situation to come (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.31).

Thus a number of commentators have questioned his relationship to Marx. Bensaid (2004, p.104) says that Badiou cannot clarify his relationship to Marx, because he fails to clarify his relation to Stalinism and Maoism. Hallward (2004a) is not convinced he can still be called a Marxist at all (p.13); and rejects his claim that he is either a materialist or dialectic in his *Logics of Worlds* (2008).

Steele (2011), however, suggests that Badiou has never actually claimed to be developing Marxism in his work; rather, his emphasis has always been on communism. Marxism, as we know, is built on a theory of history, of which the end point is communism. For Badiou, though, communism is imminent; it is an axiom, not an objective; a process, not a programme.

Despite Hallward's claims to the contrary, I do see, as I have discussed above, an acknowledgment of the crucial role of ideology and hegemony, a la Gramsci, discussed in Chapter 3. Badiou argues that the state of a situation uses an organising principle - logic - to organise the elements within it, so that some count, and some do not (and some count twice, and some only once). This is a useful way to analyse our current context. As is clear from his discussion of politics, part of this logic is hegemony; ideas that organise the situation in this way. The state of the situation, including hegemony, also to try to prevent the emergence of event, or at any rate, to deny the event or prevent fidelity to the event, so that no new truth emerges. For example, capitalism makes us think competition is inevitable, some will be weaker and suffer, so if and event occurred that suggested otherwise (that the weak/poor count), it will try to shut that down. Generally, according to Badiou, it does this by trying to normalise the situation; for example, by suggesting ways in which the poor/weak might come to be represented in the state of the situation. So the situation itself is not overturned.

Badiou also clearly has an understanding of the dialectic nature of hegemony and counter-hegemony, as Gramsci did: "There is a dominant ideology only because there exists a permanent resistance to this domination" (Badiou, 1976 cited in Barker, 2002, p.28).

It seems very clear to me that Badiou broadly agrees with the three aspects of thought I identified as hegemonic in Chapter 4; neoliberal capitalism makes us believe that competition is normal and natural, is 'common sense'; liberal democracy makes us think that the current form of democracy is the only possible one, and that the state is the only legitimate terrain of politics, so that anything organised outside of that is 'criminal' or 'terrorist'; postmodernism makes us think everyone is equally different, there's no universality, there's no subject, and there's no truth; there is only what there is.

Badiou obviously also makes a very significant contribution to thinking about politics today, and how it might work, as considered in detail in Chapter 5; and his politics is quite clearly counter-hegemonic: "Badiou's politics of the event signals an explicit stand against the complementary phenomena of imperial globalization and identitarian panic" (Bensaïd, 2004, p.101-2). He is overtly against the capitulation of universal reason before differences, and the 'linguistic turn' (Bensaïd, 2004, p.102). His being is not bound by time; is formed before language, not created by it; and is intransitive - i.e. very different from postmodernists (Barker 2002). As we have seen, he is also outspoken about liberal democracy, and his politics at a distance from the State is an attempt to move beyond this.

Thus in terms of the current context and hegemony, Badiou is clearly relevant. However, can he help in thinking through or understanding 'unlearning' current hegemony?

9.7.2 Badiou and adult learning theory

Badiou's relevance to the field of education as a whole has only very recently been acknowledged; a special edition of *Educational Philosophy and Theory* in 2010 was the first to examine Badiou in relation to education (Den Heyer, 2010, p.152); and to my knowledge, nothing has been written in English about his relevance to adult education. Den Heyer argues that Badiou's theory

> offers a potentially powerful guide to re-vivify our purposes for teaching and learning in the present historical situation. For example, while it is as possible to plan an event as it is to schedule when one falls in love, can teachers translate a vision of Badiou's ethics into curricula arrangements? In what ways might educators take up Badiou's notion of truth-process to work for educational standards that reflect our highest affirmative potentials? (p.155).

It seems to me, however, that the overlap between Badiou and adult learning theory is possibly greater. One of the reasons why I was first drawn to undertaking this study was because there seemed to me to be synergies between some of the adult learning theory that I had read and some of Badiou's ideas, and I though these might be worth exploring. Is there

not something similar about 'the event' and the 'disorienting dilemma'? What is the relationship between conscientization and fidelity?

In contrasting Badiou's theory of the event with the three learning theories I explored in Chapter 8, it seems to me that some things converge; but some are clearly very dissimilar, and even conflicting.

9.7.2.1 The nature of consciousness and the role of hegemony

As discussed above, in his ontology, Badiou shows how the 'state of the situation' uses and organising 'logic' to count certain things, and discount or exclude others; and in this process, always to consolidate the power of the dominant group. Part of this organising logic is hegemony. In his political philosophy, Badiou argues that certain ideas (especially those I considered in Chapter 4), are currently hegemonic; these are used to disguise the real situation or to explain what is currently happening in a deceitful manner (particularly, but not only, as related to the State). They are also used to discourage any belief in the possibility of meaningful (i.e. complete) change.

All three of the adult learning theories suggest the existence of hegemony. In the Village 3 version of experiential learning, according to Jarvis, experiential learning "is the process whereby people become aware that the meaning system that they have imposed upon their life world is not the only system and that there are alternative systems of meaning" (Jarvis, 1987, quoted in Weil & McGill, 1989, p.12). As discussed in the previous chapter, Mezirow argues that we have a 'frame of reference', "a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences" (Mezirow, 199a, p.1): these are our meaning perspectives (our higher level, broader assumptions), and our meaning schemes ('rules' that we have derived from our meaning perspectives that govern how we judge things around us, make decisions, etc.). Generally, we acquire our meaning perspective from socialisation; and generally, it is a distortion of reality, a false consciousness. Mezirow refers to different kinds of distortions, some of which clearly relate directly to hegemony: epistemic distortions are about the nature and use of knowledge (including seeing phenomena as beyond human control), whilst sociocultural distortions are about taking beliefs for granted, especially those currently

prevailing and legitimized, or taking the interests of the sub-group as the general interest of the whole. Freire's theory of conscientization, as we have seen, rests on the belief that reality is hidden from us, and we internalise the dominant ideology. In Freire's case, this affects us *ontologically*; we are not complete as human beings unless we undergo a process of conscientization. In some cases, Freire's language about current hegemony is uncannily similar to that of Badiou - for example, he says that postmodernism is now "almost the natural state"; extremely similar to Badiou's description of the current state of the situation.

9.7.2.2 'Unlearning' hegemony

All of the theorists under discussion - Badiou, Jarvis, Mezirow and Freire - believe in the possibility (and the necessity) of social and political change; and all believe that 'unlearning' is an important part of this. Thus none of them argues that our consciousness have been so subsumed that there is no possibility of thinking our way out. However, how this happens is fundamentally different in the case of Badiou.

All three of the adult learning theories argue that experience is the basis of learning (both hegemony and reality); and all argue that it is through a process of critical reflection that we can 'unlearn' hegemony, and come to grapple with reality. Badiou, however, posits something very different. For Badiou, 'unlearning' is not really a 'learning' process; rather, as we have seen, it happens through the event. In other words, it happens outside of, an entirely separate from, the human individual. Of course, the human individual can then retain fidelity to that event, or not; and arrive at the truth, or not.

Interestingly, apart from Freire's conscientization theory, within the other two learning theories there is the suggestion of an 'event', although it is never called that, and is in reality something somewhat different from Badiou's event. Within experiential learning theory, this is called variously an 'inner discomfort', or a 'disjuncture'; in transformative learning theory it is called a 'disorienting dilemma'. However, Jarvis argues that the 'disjuncture' is socially constructed, and so is different for different people; and Mezirow's 'disorienting dilemma' is also based within the individual. Badiou's event, on the other hand, is in the very structure of being. It changes things for everyone, not just the person.

Badiou also gives very little space to critical reflection. For him, always, it is not so much about reflection as about the wager. "Truth...is not the result of a laborious process of self-reflection, much less something that can be arrived at through the protocols of instruction or submission to a master" (Barbour, 2010, p.253). It is something else entirely. Thus, after the event, fidelity to the event is an assertion that the event has happened, that it changed everything irrevocably, and that it has changed everything for everyone - in other words, a new truth has been created.

This brings us the fundamental difference between knowledge and truth as asserted by Badiou. As we have seen, Badiou insists that knowledge is of the state of the situation. So learning anything new is within the paradigm of the state of the situation. Truth, on the other hand, is precisely that which was indiscernable within the state of the situation, and is unclassifiable according to the 'encyclopedia' of knowledge. Within both experiential learning theory and transformative learning theory, however, there is no such suggestion. Whilst Le Cornu, within experiential learning, talks about existential change because of the learning process, and Mezirow also suggests this, for both of them, it is through knowledge. However, Badiou is clearly suggesting a very important place for thought, and for thinking through/about/with truth.

As I argued in the previous chapter, it seems to me that whilst the three theories are all useful in helping us to engage with the notion of 'unlearning', they do not provide us with all the answers. It also seems to me that in some of the critiques of the learning theories, particularly those based on actual empirical evidence, there is a suggestion of how Badiou's theory might help with this.

As discussed in Chapter 8, Kolb's original experiential learning theory was critiqued, inter alia, for not understanding the situatedness of experience. Brah & Hoy (1989), for example, say that "all experience is shaped by concrete social conditions" (p.71); so experience is "an ideological construct" (Ibid.). "The value of any experience will depend not so much on the experience of the subject, important though this is, but on the struggles around the way that the experience is interpreted and defined and by whom" (p.72). It seems to me this is pointing towards Badiou's theory of the event. Clearly, situatedness is a predominant theme in his

work - that events happen in a particular situation, which has been structured (including by ideology); so they are singular (although their results, as we know, are universal, if the truth-procedure the follows them is continued). I would also suggest that the problem of sequence referred to by Boud and Jarvis might also be related to the possibility, as Badiou's theory suggests, that reflection is not a critical part of the process at all; something which comes up in critiques of transformative theory. Hunter (cited in E. Taylor, 1997), for example, in examining those who had experienced perspective transformation, used 'blind faith' rather than critical reflection. Is this not the nature of Badiou's truth-procedure? A wager? A claiming that something has happened that has irrevocably changed the world, and holding on to that in thought?

Clark (cited in E.Taylor, 1997) found in her study that the search for something missing, "indefinite periods in which the persons consciously or unconsciously searches for something which is missing in their life" was as important as a disorienting dilemma in triggering perspective transformation. "When they find the missing piece, the transformation is catalyzed" (Clark, quoted in E.Taylor, 1997, Disorienting Dilemma section, para.1). Could this not be the event, where that which is not counted comes to be counted, comes to 'belong'? Lange (cited in Taylor, 2007) argues that for those who had experienced perspective transformation, this had happened at an ontological, not an epistemological level - "participants experience a change in their being in the world". Lange concludes that epistemological change itself is not enough for transformation to happen. Again, is this not reminiscent of the event, which changes the very nature of the situation? And of truth as something distinct from existing knowledges? As we have seen, Baumgartner (2001) distinguishes between informational learning (what we know) and transformational learning (how we know, how we see ourselves and the world); is this not trying to grapple with precisely what Badiou asserts, that there is a fundamental difference between knowledge and truth? And perhaps this is why Newman (2012) contends that there is no such things as transformative learning, but rather only good learning? Since, as Badiou (2005a) asserts, "knowledge calms the passion of being: measure taken of excess, it tames the state, and unfolds the infinity of the situation within the horizon of a constructive procedure shored up on the already-known" (p.294).

I have discussed in Chapter 8 critiques of Freire's work, including the suggestion that he does not sufficiently allow for the thinking of the oppressed, but in fact is "based on the assumption that 'the people' are incapable of learning [on their own], that 'they are stupid'" (Schugurensky, 2011, p.139). Whilst I believe this critique to be somewhat harsh, it does clearly point to the need for the 'axiom of equality' of Badiou's work - that everyone is equal, because everyone thinks. The possibility of the event, and hence the truth, is open to anybody, anywhere. This leads us to the issue of the individual versus the whole.

One of the strongest critiques of transformative learning is the issue of social change; critics have argued that Mezirow cannot account for social change, Mezirow himself has insisted that we must change the individual before we can change the world. For Badiou, the ultimate social change (event-fidelity-truth) is really not about learning something new; it is about 'unlearning', coming to see that things are entirely different from what they were. In other words, it is precisely *not* at the level of the individual. Unlike Jarvis' and Mezirow's individual transformation, the 'aha' moment *must be universal* if it is to be the truth. So once that has happened, it is for everyone. Of course, it is individuals as subjects who have to enact this fidelity; and it is 'for' a subject (whether individual or collective). They become 'subjects' through the process of emerging from the event and retaining fidelity to it. The 'truth' of the event might be universal, but particular persons/subjects have to 'think' it and engage (through a 'truth procedure') in some kind of faithful praxis in response to it.

9.8 Conclusion

Thus it seems to me that Badiou's theory of the event offers a potentially useful alternative through which to examine the 'unlearning' of hegemony. How useful is this in practice? I now turn to the seven activists involved in this study, and their life histories - i.e. their lived experience within what I have argued is current hegemony. In the final chapter, I attempt to identify inter alia whether an 'event' has occurred, to which they have retained 'fidelity' which has led them to 'punch holes' in knowledge (in other words, to 'unlearn' hegemony), and through this construct a new 'truth'.

Chapter 10: Life stories

10.1 Introduction

As I have argued, Abahlali constitutes a counter-hegemonic movement, and I have thus used it as a 'marker' to identify people who have possibly 'unlearned' hegemony. In this chapter, I present the life stories of the seven militants (in Badiou's terms) who are either members of, or have aligned themself with, Abahlali baseMjondolo.

As already discussed, I interviewed seven people, all of whom in some way consciously associated themselves with Abahlali baseMjondolo. Four of those interviewed are members of Abahlali, three of them currently holding some kind of leadership position in the movement. Two of the remaining three are members of an NGO which has worked closely with the movement over a period of some years. The remaining person is an academic based at a South African university, but who has had a close relationship with the movement from its inception.

The interviewees were selected on a number of grounds. Firstly, I tried to ensure that I was interviewing both members of the movement, and non-members of the movement. This was because, as explained above, I was simply using Abahlali as a 'marker' of counter-hegemonic thinking, so anyone aligning themselves to the movement might be said to be possibly counter-hegemonic in their thinking - in other words, actual membership was not required. Indeed, choosing only members might potentially mean that they would all follow 'a line'; choosing non-members would correct for this.

Secondly, I tried to ensure some range in terms of class, race, sex and age (in fact, I had originally intended to interview one additional white middle-class woman, who was not South African, but this proved logistically impossible):

Table 8: Research participants

Class	Working class	4
	Middle class	3
Race	'Black' African	5
	'White'	2
Sex	Male	6
	Female	1
Age	20-29	2
	30-39	2
	40-49	2
	50+	1

Finally, I chose people whom I already knew to some extent. I did this partly because it was simply easier to arrange what might end up being very long (or multiple) interviews with people with whom I already had a relationship; but also because I hoped our existing relationship might allow a greater degree of trust between us, and thus allow them to be more honest with me, and me to ask more probing questions than might otherwise have been the case. I did, however, avoid interviewing people who might have fitted the various other categories, but with whom I had too close a relationship (such as my husband).

The interviews were conducted wherever most suited the interviewee. All seven of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. One interview was conducted over two sessions, because the interview went on longer than the initial time allocated (see Appendix 1 for details of where and when interviews were held).

My interview schedule consisted of only five key questions (see Appendix 2); but, of course, in the actual interviews, I asked numerous follow-up questions, etc. The first three interview questions were structured largely to follow a person's life trajectory (birth, family, early childhood, growing up, schooling, work life, marriage and children etc.). The fourth question then asked the person to reflect on possible learning that had occurred during this life. This allowed for formal, non-formal and informal learning, and for both hegemonic and counter-

hegemonic learning/unlearning to emerge. The final question related specifically to Abahlali. My structuring and choice of the questions was determined by the nature of the methodology (life history), and by my research questions.

Really, the interviews were largely in the form of a conversation, particularly because I knew all of the interviewees fairly well prior to the interviews. However, I have presented the stories below as life narratives. I have used the words of the interviewee, but have restructured where necessary to ensure chronological flow, or to make the sense of what was being said clearer.

One interview ended up being much longer than the others (about twice as long as the average), and two were much shorter (about half as long as the average). The very long interview was the one that was conducted over two sessions, and was conducted with the oldest of the participants (who thus had more life to cover). The two shorter interviews were both with Abahlali members who have been fairly frequently interviewed, and are, I think, fairly used to giving a succinct account of their lives. They were also the first interviews I did, and it is possible that I was not probing quite as much as I did in later interviews, being new to the process. It is also possible that the fact that they were speaking in their second language affected the interview; but on the whole I do not think this had a major effect, since the other interviews with isiZulu speakers (three of them) were far longer. In terms of the analysis, I do not believe that the length of the interviews substantially affected this - in my analysis, as discussed in the next chapter, all of the interviewees are fairly evenly represented.

As discussed in Chapter 2, once I had typed up the interview as above, it was given to the interviewee to check (although in one case, because the participant was in a remote rural area, this had to be done over the phone). In the event, very few changes were made, most of them relating to typographical errors on my part.

All of the interviewees were given the option of adopting a pseudonym, in line with ethical practice. Only one chose this option, and this person's name has accordingly been changed. The others specifically requested that they *not* be given a pseudonym - in the words of S'bu Zikode, "I don't want to be hidden".

10.2 Andrew Collins

[Andrew is involved in a civil society organisation with close links to Abahlali]

I was born in Nigeria. My parents were missionaries, working in a medical hospital in Nigeria. My parents grew up in Cape Town, my father studied at Cape Town University to be a medical doctor. They were part of the Baptist Church, and were sent to Nigeria as missionaries for two sessions. They were there for about seven or eight years. Of my siblings, two of us were born in Nigeria, one in Zimbabwe, two in South Africa.

Then, when I was still a toddler, we left Nigeria and came back to South Africa, to Durban. Then when I was 6 or 7, we moved up to Harare, Zimbabwe (then still Salisbury, Rhodesia). When we came back from Nigeria, my father specialised in obstetrics and gynaecology at King Edward Hospital. When we moved up to Harare, it was take up the post of head of department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. My father, in his choices about his career, chose actively never to go into private practice, and his academic career was always in what was then known as a black university. The Zimbabwe position was to set up the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at the university, linked to the teaching hospital.

My mom was a secretary, she had worked for the Cape Times, but then as they started having children, and moving around, she focused a lot on family. Her passion was looking after the family, keeping us as children together, and the family together. This helped incredibly, because of moving around.

I started pre-primary in Durban, then started Grade 1 in Salisbury. Whilst we were in Harare, my father did his post-graduate research, on managing labour.

I went to Blakiston Primary up until standard 2. It was an all white school, but for boys and girls. I then moved to a new primary school for standards 3,4 and 5, which I absolutely loved. I was head boy in standard 5, top of the class, captain of the cricket team. But then we moved to Cape Town for a year, for my father's sabbatical. I went to Bishops for standard 6. This was a totally different experience. My parents had decided on Bishops, because it had small

classes, and they thought it would be easier for me to cope. But it was such a totally different experience, absolute elite, only boys. I found it very hard.

Then we went back to Rhodesia for my standard 7 year; but then moved to Durban the following year in 1975. So I started Std.8 at Durban Boys High. This meant that I went to four different schools, in two different countries, over four grades. It was incredibly hard, and affected my marks and my participation in sport hugely. Durban Boys High was very different from the school in Rhodesia, it was very big, very different. I arrived on the Durban surfing scene wearing safari suits; it was a huge culture shock. I stopped playing sport, which was my absolute passion. I also found school difficult - I never learned study skills, I never learned how to study. By matric, I didn't know how to do it. So although I had generally done very well, I didn't do well enough in my matric to study medicine, which had always been my plan.

After matric, I went to the University of Natal to do a B.Sc., majoring in Chemistry. The idea was that I would do a B.Sc as a way into medicine.

 I finished school not really knowing what was going on in the world, or to me.

I failed two of my four first year subjects. Partly this was because I had become a paddle-skier, and spent too much time doing that, but a lot of it was just coming out of a white schooling system in which I had never really had to study. This was the first time I'd ever failed anything. I began to doubt whether I could do it. I repeated the subjects I failed in my second year, and passed them; so in my third year, those I had started with were nearly finished their degrees, whilst I still had a year to go; and then all the years of medicine. I started wondering if I really wanted to do this.

At that time, I was becoming very active in the youth group at church. I had always been involved in the church, but now I became involved in leadership, and was also baptised .

That was making an actual choice. It was the first time in my life I was actually making a choice about my life. It was very much about becoming an adult making choices about my

faith. I also came to the realisation I was not a chemist, and made a decision I was going to stop, and dropped out of university. This meant I had to go to the army. My call up was for July, so I had six months before I had to go. I decided to work for the church for that six months, and that made me realise I wanted to become a minister. I saw medical stuff and church stuff as very closely related. It's about people. Chemistry wasn't. I wanted to get more involved in the life of the church. I became a youth pastor in the youth group.

I started studying theology through UNISA during those six months; the plan was I would carry on studying during the army. I had never really thought about the army before. During university, obviously there was a lot more discussion about it, and some of the early objectors were Baptists, so I had become more conscious of it. I had time during that six months by myself, to think. I finally made the decision that I couldn't go to the army, that I wanted to object. That was a time of really connecting with my father. My father had fought in the Second World War, members of his family had died in that war; objecting was a big thing for him. But he had been quite involved with Black student politics when he was at university. He knew student leaders, people who had been in the SRC. He was very supportive, although he was worried about what it meant for me, the implications. When I decided to object, the first thing he said was that I needed to talk to people. Because of the good discussions and relationship with my father, I didn't link up straight away with the ECC and the objector group; I linked up with people who were linking up with ANC. But for me it wasn't a political decision, it was about what is right and wrong, about justice. This was about taking conscious choices that had real implications, for me, and for my family. My mother was also very supportive, as a mother. My sisters had different responses, but were also supportive. But this was a time when everything in white South Africa was geared to the army - my sisters' boyfriends had been in the army, my friends were in the army, were going off to camps. The youth group I was involved in used to pray for the boys on the border. At this time, there was no difference between religious objection and political objection - it was just objection, with a penalty of one year in prison.

There were all sorts of negotiations with the army. The Baptist chaplain arranged that I would be moved to the air force, at Valhalla in Pretoria, to be a chaplain, once I had completed my basic training. The ethical principle was that I would do what I could, as far as I could, until I

reached a point where I couldn't. So I reported for my basic service. The first week, I was given a weapon, and refused to take it. I was all alone on the parade ground as they tried to force me to take it, and I refused. So I was put into detention. I was then discharged, and the legal process began. My actual army career was 10 days, of which 4 were in detention.

I went home, and didn't know what to do whilst the legal process unfolded. My local church would not let me have anything to do with them. I was already going out with Liz, I had met her at church. She was in Cape Town, and I wanted to see her. So I went down to Cape Town. I had nothing to do there, so I started to work for a Catholic church group, working with Anglicans in Crossroads, at the time of great crisis, with people being trucked back to Transkei. This opened up a whole new world for me. What I was seeing, but also the possibility to connect with real action that could make a difference in the midst of this misery. Actually connect with people who are suffering this, but making ways around it. This was 1981, at the time of the witdoeke. It gave me a sense of life, or being, of purpose, of faith. It's true there was the trauma. But part of my job was to arrange food and clothing and accommodation for women and children. I sat in the church and phoned people to find out who could help. Very practical. So there was the suffering, but also actually being able to practically help. I thought, I'm sitting here waiting for a military trial. Now I know why. It helped consolidate everything, it helped me find the words to talk about what I felt uncomfortable about - the border stuff; here in Crossroads, was the same army. This was a major change in my life as a white male.

I was devastated that I couldn't stay, but because of the court case, which was just hanging over my head, in November, I went back home. I had to decide what to do the next year. I decided I wanted to stay with theology. No academic place would accept me if I still have the court case pending, because there was the possibility of a year in prison. But the Bible Institute of Cape Town, a conservative Bible college in Kalk Bay, said they would take me. They offered a Diploma in Theology, whilst I was doing the UNISA degree. I was there for 3 years. Meanwhile, because I'd done the negotiation upfront, the army actually didn't have a water tight case against me. So in the end, after about two years, they dropped charges, and started calling me up again.

I struggled at the college, because it was so conservative, but managed to keep contact with the squatters at Fish Hoek; also had the opportunity to attend the launch of the UDF.

When Liz and I finished our degrees, we got married. I was employed by the Baptist church in Cape Town as a youth pastor. Throughout this time, I had not had to go to the army because I was studying. I now registered for Honours part-time at UCT. This was great for me, because I came across amazing people, and stuff about the ecumenical movement, which I'd never come across before. One of the Masters students allowed me to use his coral in the library whilst he was away - and left all these incredible books in the coral. I read and read and read. So it wasn't so much the course, as his books. There is also a Baptist Theological College in Cape Town - this was the 'coloured' college, I went to this one to study Baptist doctrine. Some of the people there were really radical, and I was connecting with them. I also started linking up with the Baptist Convention. So for a whole two years I was getting all of this stuff, even though I was working for a middle class white Baptist church. In my second year, it became apparent that there was a problem; that it would be unlikely for me to be called as a pastor because I had objected. I was stuck as a youth pastor, with my army call-up still hanging over my head.

By now I'd shifted from religious objection to political objection, and Liz and I had made a decision to leave the country to prevent me from having to do six years in prison for conscientious objection. We were planning to go to Zimbabwe, or to Transkei. But then I received a phone call from the army, wanting to check my address etc. as someone who had completed my service. It turned out they had never checked me out in their administrative system after checking me in for my basic training; so according to them I'd done my two years and all my camps. They wanted to know if I would do occasional chaplain duty. I told them they had got it wrong, but the person who phoned said I should just leave things as they were. I never heard anything more. We now realised we possibly didn't have to worry about further call ups (and if I was called up, we could leave then), so we decided to stay. But we felt that if we had planned to leave because of our beliefs, then we would have to put into effect what we believed if we stayed.

At this time, three Baptist churches in Durban were looking for someone to work as a missionary in the informal settlement in Inanda, Amaoti. We said we had to live there; and that we would not start a Baptist church there, but rather build relationships and witness to Jesus Christ through serving people; and they agreed. This was 1987.

This was a conscious choice for us, to stop our careers, stepping away from being an occupational therapist, for Liz, and from being a pastor, for me. It was a time of sadness, almost of grieving.

So we went to live in a shack in Amaoti. Connecting with Abahlali reminded me so much of experiences in Amaoti. We started in the community high school - Liz taught English, I taught Maths. The high school was a community high school, not a government school. This was a time of increasing violence between Inkatha and the UDF. The school was a UDF stronghold - a lot of young comrades from the townships came there, and the teachers were UDF comrades. We didn't know this when we arrived. We were sussed out by the teachers; after two or three weeks, we met with the comrades' leadership. It took a very long time for us to be accepted, as white, and as coming from the Church. For example, many of the church people were there on Sunday; during the week, they were there in Casspirs, beating up the comrades. But because of the connections we had with some of the people in the area, we were gradually accepted.

The school had been trying for years to get registered with the department, without success; but we got all kinds of things set up - the maths and science tuition project etc. In the end, we got registered, which meant desks and books; but also meant many of the teachers who had been teaching there couldn't anymore because they weren't qualified.

Then there was a bad flood in the area. There was all kind of relief coming in; and it was horrendous seeing how politicised this help was. So we started a relief project at the school, but we wanted to do it differently. The teachers came from different areas. They would check out their areas, and any family that looked like they were in trouble, they told them to come to the school on Saturday morning. We could then put together packages specifically targeted at that family, for them to collect - the right sizes of clothing, the right amount of food, etc. This

started us thinking about targeting, for example, shelter for people, because many homes had been destroyed. So the teachers that would no longer be employed the following year, decided to take this project further. We called the project Ilimo, after the Zulu tradition of sharing. In each area, there were key people. They would identify families that needed help with shelter. We got building material from all kinds of places, World Vision etc. So we started building houses, standard houses, all over. Very quickly, the area, the 15 sub-areas, were all organised. Now it wasn't just houses anymore, it was gardens. By now we'd all left the high school, we were running this project. The young people from the school, who had known us as teachers, introduced us to the whole community.

The powerful thing was that it had gone beyond us. It was all local people organising. In each area, the Ilimo committee would be the local leaders of any project there; toilets washed away, so now we needed toilets. How? Valley Trust trains people in building toilets, so let's get them. We could get money from several places because we built toilets and houses. Eventually, Ilimo became a primary health care organisation - for us, health was about houses, toilets, water, vegetables. Out of that, grew the civics - the Ilimo structures helped in the formation of the civics.

As staff we supported the committees, organised training etc. At this time, there was the overwhelming poverty, plus the state of repression, plus the Inkhatha-UDF violence, which was becoming increasingly like a war. We were also targeted. There was never an actual physical attack on us; we got harassed by the army. The shack we had built for our offices was regularly raided. It got worse and worse; eventually the comrades defeated Inkatha, and Amaoti became a UDF area, with a very well organised civic. But then after the ANC were unbanned, there was increasing tension between the civic and the ANC.

The comrades knew I was paid by the church, and was a pastor. Right near the beginning, they asked me why I wasn't doing pastoral stuff; they asked me to do bible studies. So we started having bible studies in the evenings, in people's homes. Just 8-10 young comrades, meeting in the shacks. I didn't know what to do, I wasn't trained for this. I just asked if they had questions, and we could look at those. It was incredible. They had practical questions. That's how we did it, just working through the questions. It took about four or five months.

After that, I said, well, okay, we're finished. But then after a month, they wanted to keep meeting. It turned out to be a space for engaging with what was actually going on. This was whilst we were still teaching at the high school. Once Ilimo started, it became part of Ilimo. Every Friday morning, we'd have a staff meeting, 2 to 3 hours, using see-judge-act, using liberation theology, the Brazil methodology. I used some stuff from Diakonia, some stuff from theology people at University of Natal; I had started doing a Masters. This was in the middle of the intense violence. We'd talk about what had happened in the last week. Is this connected in any way with what's in the bible? People know the bible. So people were taking what was happening, making direct links to the bible, and then back into the struggle, as a way to sustain themselves.

Then, with the ANC, they began criticising what Ilimo was doing; and the Baptist church withdrew its support. They started asking about Jesus, where was Jesus in the housing, toilets, gardens etc. They withdrew the funding. You then got SANCO, a very different thing from the Amaoti civic. SANCO had a different agenda. In Amaoti, there was a committee for every single thing. Every Tuesday night, every single committee would come to the high school to meet in the different classrooms; between 300 and 350 people came. You would follow up week by week, what was happening. Everyone was mobilized. But SANCO came, then the ANC set up a separate office in the area. By 1993, the tensions within the area became intense. There were death threats against one of the key Ilimo people, and then I got death threats. I went to a meeting with ANC heavyweights at the university, asking for the ANC to intervene in the situation. I was increasingly disillusioned with the ANC, who we had trusted.

We left Amaoti in 1994. I remember the elections of 1994. Part of it was an anti-climax; the elections were great, of course, everyone was getting involved in election monitoring, and we needed the money, but somehow we just couldn't do it. Even the actual voting day, it was exciting, but there was a feeling of, what's changed; being excited about it, but a sense of what's going to change for us, for Amaoti, because of the connections we had with the ANC party machine. In the 1995 local government elections, that's where at the local level it became so intense; to see how the civics, the ANC, all the individuals coming back from exile, from MK, now position themselves, and it became quite ruthless, politicking power games. We felt quite ostracized from it. In fact, one person elected in 1995 as the councillor

was killed a couple of years later, in the vying for position. It was very aggressive kind of stuff. It just felt so strange - all those years, mobilising against this powerful state, and then it becomes inside. It had taken its toll on us, personally, eight years in Amaoti, living through all this.

We felt that we needed a change, and things were changing anyway, 1994, in Amaoti. So we looked for jobs. For me, the jobs were connected to ecumenical agencies that had been involved in some justice issues - in other words, Diakonia or PACSA. So by now I'd shifted - it wasn't about going back to being a pastor, it was about how you do you continue this kind of journey in different ways now, in struggles for justice, and the poor. We had read a book from a real Christian perspective, *Companion to the Poor*. It was all about how do you live in solidarity with the poor. That is where God is. So how do you be there. It was part of your own redemption. So, if opportunities are closing now in Amaoti, how do we take that kind of mission forward.

Diakonia was advertising for someone to work in informal settlements around Durban; the Theology department of the university in Pietermaritzburg were looking for someone to co-ordinate their contextualisation programme; and PACSA was advertising a job around trying to work out for PACSA what does development meant post-1994. I was offered the jobs at Diakonia and PACSA - although I had really wanted the Theology one, because I had wanted to continue in Amaoti, but take it in a theological direction, but not as intensely being there, in the sense of being stuck in one project. But to continue that and take it into other places. I took the PACSA one because I was still involved with the Leadership and Development programme at the Theology department in Pietermaritzburg. I could continue that, and be at PACSA.

So we moved to Maritzburg. The whole idea was to look at development post-1994, and this was what became the new language. I didn't know what development was; it became quite difficult to work what you do, stuck in an office in the city, in Maritzburg, and all my connections to informal settlements and townships in Durban is gone, I had to reposition myself without these connection. So my year was spent trying to work what does PACSA actually do. PACSA didn't have a clear idea of what it could do around development. All the

thinking had been really around projects, development projects. During my time there, three issues came up that I though the church needed to engage with, seemed to be around land, HIV/AIDS and the economy; those were the issues the Church would have to grapple with, and it made sense for PACSA to grapple with those and choose one and work with it. This came out our experiences in Amaoti - what are people experiencing, what are they grappling with, and how do we respond. As it turned out, at that time PACSA wasn't interested in HIV and AIDS; didn't have much experience about the economy; but the director had had connections in the past with the removals stuff, and land at the time was a key political issues. And then we had nice connections with AFRA. We we created something to look at people on church land.

The whole idea was around the assumption that the church could be a benevolent land owner, and so how do we take forward the land reform agenda of the government with a benevolent landowner. Couldn't we experiment and do different things, and see what kinds of mechanisms worked. So that's we tried to do. So the Church Land Project grew out of that, as a pilot project for a year, a joint project between AFRA and PACSA. After a year, it was going well enough that neither AFRA nor PACSA wanted to give it up and hand it over to the other, but it was becoming cumbersome to have two organisations to report to, and so the decision to go independent and set up our own entity of the Church Land Programme. So CLP became independent to focus on church-owned land and how we can make land reform work better. That was the intention behind it. An because we were based in KwaZulu-Natal, lots of mission-owned land, we can do research, we can work with communities, we can facilitate for the government and get contracts to take that forward. And become the "centre for expertise" on church land for the country.

So we took that journey forward, which along the way, raised lots of questions for us on what was actually happening. When you get to the point where it takes eight years to make a donation of land that could happen in three months, legally, there's something going on here. And so it forced us to rethink what was actually happening around the land question. With Mark, we did our occasional paper, *Land: Gift for all or commodity for few*, and this sharpened up our thinking around the land theologically, doing an analysis of it in our own context and the history of it, and in that process beginning to realise that in fact 1994 was not

a discontinuity with the past. In grappling with the land question, around land reform, what became apparent was the continuities. It was a re-reading of what took place in 1994. Yes, it was fundamental, and a foundational moment for our democratic South Africa. But in fact the elite transition that happened meant that we were doing in taking forward the land reform programme of the government was not actually dealing with the interests of the poor. So, in words for myself, "My worst nightmare is if we're successful". What land reform does, is actually just perpetuates the system of poverty in which poor people find themselves. So that became really unsettling. Going on this treadmill, and thinking, no, we can't do this, we've got to find another way.

We realised this from simple things - like when land gets transferred, it's always the men, educated, retired principals, retired nurses, who can speak English, who run a shop, who actually get control of the land. We would facilitate nice participatory processes on land use options and how it will work; and then after the meeting, as you're walking to the care, women who are the meeting coming to say please, please, please don't transfer land. And all the meeting had been about how to use the land when it is transferred; and they feel the need to come on the side, and say please don't. When it gets transferred the men control it and put their cattle on it, and if that happens we won't be able to feed our families. So what are we helping to happen here? When women feel the need to come quietly to us to say please don't make this happen. So it was those experiences that made us, so what do you do then? How do you support women who are providing for their families? Without taking forward land reform processes? So a whole lot of questions arose there.

So for us as an organisation, grappling with those questions, and talking, and saying, okay something's got to be done differently, in processes around strategic planning, we made the decision that we have to do things differently. This was in around 2000 or 2001. How do you support the poorer households in these processes? So there came a point where we actually decided, No, we are not going to receive any more contracts from the department of land affairs to facilitate land reform, which we were receiving; and we weren't going to take contracts from churches to do research and to facilitate their stuff. We were beginning to ask these questions, but weren't sure where to go to. In Amaoti, we had used Training for Transformation, and Mark was familiar with that, so we went back to that. David had read

some Paulo Freire. So we began to talk about what animation means. And then the conscious shift to okay, how do we change our practice.

And then carefully looking through that, and trying to rework and rethink our practice. It wasn't easy, and amongst us there were different ideas. It was around that time, at one of our strategic plannings, making the conscious choice, okay, animation is what we do. At that stage we didn't talk about it as our core process, we just talked about animation, almost as one among many, but becoming more central. And then after the strategic planning, saying okay, we've made this choice to do animation; we don't know what it is. And if we're going to change our practice, we can't just say the words, we have to think through what it means. And so the intense process of bring in Mark to accompany us in each area of our work, to ask the questions. What is the effect our practice is having in terms of animation. Is it animating?

We tried to have picture in our mind where animation was stoking fires - if there's a spark, what can we do to feed that, so it becomes flames, so the smoke chokes those above. It was the simple pictures that held it together for me, where animation was a bit of an unknown, so I could work out in practice what do you do. The whole notion of if there's a spark, that means there's some agency there already; and yet how much that agency is silenced. So again the question of , the words used, of voice; and consciously choosing not to talk about the voice of the voiceless; how that silences. But there is voice; how do we amplify that voice. There were conscious discussions around advocacy. Some board members said we were creating an advocacy platform. There was an actual debate about that, and we said no it wasn't that, it was just amplifying the voice of those who are speaking. So grappling with all of that. What Mark really helped us to do was to think and read - so that's when we began discovering Subcommandante Marcos and the Zapatistas, Lazarus, Badiou, Neocosmos, about agency; and recovering some of that Paulo Freire language of agency and animation. For some of us, Freire had been part of our theology; it wasn't a separate thing, it's just somehow in that period post-1994, we assumed this wasn't what we were about anymore, with such a focus on becoming good facilitators and implementing programmes.

So it was putting all that aside, and changing language, and what we do. And in that process, the whole picture of where there's a spark, you support it into flames, we started asking, So

where's the spark? So much of what we had done was actually kill sparks. So we had this whole process, a joint project, with other NGOs and the land movement of that time, and the question was, are people angry enough to rise up against land restitution? We worked with other organisations, with people coming in to help us think things through. And discovering that in fact even when you accompany each other, even the social movement, its actually deadly. There's very little spark. So where is the anger. And the anger just seems to be silence contained and channelled into 'the programme' of land reform programme. And it was so hard to get a sense of are people angry enough. What a stupid question! Why can't we share it, why can't we see it, why can't we engage with it, without workshopping it, without packaging it. We were going to have a Congress of the Betrayed. We'd worked out the language already. We'd worked out how angry people should behave. They should come together in a Congress of the Betrayed, and we would help them do it. It never happened. Amongst us, the NGOs and the social movement, the congress of the betrayed was going to become another slick conference.

Even from the beginning, it was clear we were alone. We were just pushing the simply question, that we didn't understand, we didn't know about, but - we wanted to go around the province, just listening to people, what's their experience, how's their anger, but what it became was about running a series of workshops, in hotels. It wasn't about listening to people. We realised that others we were working with didn't understand things in the same way. For them it was about having to write a report for funders. It was really uneasy stuff. And for us, we didn't know how to do it, we didn't have experience around it, but we just knew it wasn't answering the questions we were asking, and it wasn't giving space for that. For us it was an attempt to say, hey, this is fantastic we've got a new lease of life, animation is what it's all about, let's go try it and do it, and didn't happen. We couldn't make it work. It was this moment of exile. We had to step away. Because in that moment of practice, it get's killed, and you come away feeling very compromised.

Attempts to ask questions, self-critique questions of both NGOs and social movements couldn't happen. There was no self-critique. It just closed space. And the movement knowing what was best, and you couldn't question it. So the need for us to actually think differently about how we're going to do this. So reading more, more strategic planning, more talking

about it, more practising. Still involved in a lot of processes on church-owned land. In the midst of that, one of us left, and took with him a number of communities, who had formed a group together. We felt that we'd lost our major community connection, but then realised the community group really wasn't what we had thought; it wasn't the beginnings of a social movement, that was a fantasy. This in fact gave us space to do something different.

We moved away from land reform. Thulani joined us. We wanted to 'unearth' the issues that people were struggling with around land in rural areas, and see how we can get church bodies to support people as they struggle around those issues. So shifting from running workshops for churches on behalf of land affairs, on what the policy was, we said no, we don't want to do that, it's a government job, they do it better. We want nothing to do with it. Surely, our interest as church is to hear what it is that people are struggling with, for them to name it, and for us to support them as they take that struggle forward. That was a major shift for us, in turning down a church body saying her, do work for us, saying no, we reject that. We found some support from within the KZNCC for a time, but then that closed down.

Tensions with other NGOs then became a lot more intense, around issues of practice, of what happens on the ground. We would see what they were doing, it would be so compromised. So there were attempts there - the conference of the betrayed, unearthing issues, working with a smaller number of church communities getting their land back. At Oakford, when we finally get the donation of land taking place, at the handover ceremony of the title deeds, when everybody's there, at the end of the ceremony some people from Oakford stand up with their posters. For us as an organisation we knew it was coming, but because David and myself had both worked at Oakford, we were caught in this difficult situation. I was actually up on the podium with all the official and dignitaries, because we'd helped facilitate; David was in the audience; we knew their strategy was let it all take place, and then they would stand up. And it was very consciously thought out. For us it just became a very critical moment. They took with them these posters that were written, but were blank paper as well. And their protest was from the back of the marquee, once the ceremony had all been done, stood up, silent, with their posters with their messages. Saying "Why is our land being taken away from us again". And the MC up front, trying to work this out, saying 'what do you want to say", and they would take their posters down, write on the back, and hold it up. So they never said anything.

Which for me was incredibly powerful. They just wrote on their posters, and put up.

The conscious choice for them was not to speak. Because as soon as you speak, you have to debate, engage; and there's powerful bodies there, who can come with all the technical stuff. And so the conscious idea was to take one out, and put it up, take it down, write another one. So there were new ones being written there, and put up. I just thought that was incredibly powerful stuff taking place. Oakford was the place that took eight years for a donation, we'd facilitated, we'd made all sorts of things happen, and you sat there thinking, in all this process, how could it have gone so wrong. Everyone was there - land affairs, the cardinal, in some ways a very successful project; but with the signs up saying why is our land being taken away again. A few days later, we got a phone call from the lawyers of the church saying they realised what the protestors were saying was actually true; there has been a mistake. So in all these places, trying to think, how do we do our practice differently. Oakford was a conscious shift away from facilitating, but now we're also connecting with groups that are protesting. So you feel really compromised. Physically, as an organisation, you're separated. You know very clearly where you want to be.

For me it was having to rethink stuff. Not just what should we do, in terms of how do we do it better, but in terms of what is going on here? What is happening? When no-one else was questioning too strongly the land reform stuff in our kind of circles. I had sabbatical in 2006, and the board asked me what questions I wanted to look at. The questions I wanted to look at looked at was how do I believe change happens? Can I give words to it? In our practice and in our reading of Badiou and others it had become clearer for me, and I wanted space to consolidate it a bit. What is my theory of change? How do I believe change happens? If that is how I believe it happens, what does that mean about the state, our relationship with the state, and then specifically where is the church in that? If I could make sense of that in my head, then hopefully that could help position ourselves. These were indicative of the questions in the organisation. We were still grappling. I was away for about four months. David used the opportunity to connect with Abahlali as much as possible.

He'd already made some connections to them earlier through Raj. And Raj saying I think you should come and meet with these people; here's a place where people are actually taking

forward struggles. We became conscious of Abahlali through Raj, talking about attending some of their meetings, and just being blown away by the thinking that was taking place; and then reading the Third Force. That was something, wow, what is this all about. David said, here Andrew, you better read this, its incredible. David started attending some of their camps, and their meetings; and they just seemed to allow him to be there. Very little formal organisational connection. Just the whole process of trying to take seriously this notion of where's the spark, and by this stage talking about practice, the first moment of practice is listening with political intent. So he said, I've got to listen carefully, I've got to listen, listen, listen. So he would just be there, and keep us updated. I remember being asked to speak at an ecumenical conference up in Johannesburg around what the church should be doing, because in 2005 there had been all sorts of protests and uprising - I said, I think you should shut up and listen, and virtually read We are the Third Force to them. I said if you don't shut up, you won't listen, and then you won't hear what God is saying.

For me, what was happening in Abahlali, was actually articulating a sense of people saying, We are here. Whereas so much of what went before was how can we take stuff there. Are you angry enough? Well you don't have to ask Abahlali if they're angry enough. It erupted, it took place. And then they put words into it. We are the third force. Wow. So that was a conscious place where I know in my own practice, and for the organisation, how do you be present in those places, is, Can you just hear what is being said? Don't come with a clever argument and power-point. Just the simple thing, shut up and listen. A very conscious thing.

The way David talked to us about it, when we asked what the plan was, what he was doing with Abahlali, he used to say "I just want to be rolled over by the politics of the poor. And if I'm going to be rolled over enough I've just got to be in there spaces, I've got to be where they are". David just wouldn't be around, because he'd be there, and then come back and feed this amazing stuff coming out of that. And we'd have to work out how do we make sense of this. So that was the early stuff of us connecting with Abahlali, was David just being exposed to what they were doing. It wasn't on our plans anywhere. Urban stuff wasn't what we do; we do rural. It wasn't a conscious choice, okay now let's do urban, where can we go. It was more a sense of , this is what is erupting from formations of the poor, it seems that this is where politics is happening, how do we do that, how does the organisation respond to it.

A lot of what attracted us to Abahlali in particular was the sense of a break with keeping the 1994 project going. There had been a lot of other angry stuff around. But the kind of stuff we were encountering was more about wanting it to be something, but it's not. So yes, there was a lot of other stuff around, a lot of anger around. But we wanted the landless themselves taking forward a radical agenda and making it happen. Some of us were connecting with MST [in Brazil] and groups around that. But when we engaged with groups in SA it was all about positions of power and money, which seems to be a pretty good NGO agenda. So where's the radical stuff around land? We'd done this occasional paper, but none of it was happening in the circles of the landless movements. It wasn't engaging with the substance of the landless struggle. It was all about, can we force land affairs to do this stuff, and how bad land affairs had been, and making them do land reform better. The break wasn't happening. So there's uprisings and dissent; but there still hadn't been for us the break with the 1994 project. And not just in land, there was no break away from the state project. The intention was not to disrupt everything, just about pressure to make it work. Let alone talking how do we want to produce, what models are there. That wasn't happening. There was no-one saying, well, there's the land, it's our land, we will take it. The difference with Abahlali - we are here, we take our place, we take it gently, but we take it firmly. Even with the so-called service delivery protests - it was more around give us water, etc. Abahlali's was a different kind of language, we are here, we take our place. And being labelled as, for example, the Third Force. Awful language, from apartheid, about being all the wrong things. And Abahlali saying, yes we are the third force. It's a claiming of your own presence, naming our own sense of who we are. It's that kind of shift. Our sense was that that wasn't happening in other struggles we were connecting with - it was very much more about connecting with the right people, to influence either policy or processes or decisions or make our claim happen, get the budget t happen, etc.

My question for myself was how do I believe change happens. It's not going to come from that way of doing things. Can I explicitly name it. A sense of, can we be disloyal? That's where Abahlali was a breath of fresh air. Abahlali was saying, we are consistently disloyal; and it's the right thing to be. There had been so much pressure to make democracy happen, and when it's not happening, your protest against it is still terms of it. For me, our talk about animation and the shift for us, was stepping away from that project but still not finding ways

to step outside of it. So we're no longer going to facilitate it, but we're going to strengthen voice for those who demand something from it. That was a significant shift. But Abahlali opened a slightly different way. We are here. The idea of out of place. For me personally, it connected to my experience in Amaoti. We are here. You can't wish it away, and pretend we aren't, and working towards housing. The reality is we are here. Now talk about that. It took me back to Amaoti.

In our Ilimo project, in a meeting with Kellogg, we had to explain what our approach was. We sat in the shack with them, we had prepared posters that we put up on the wall to explain this. We came up with this thing of INSVV: *Identify*: identify with people, you identify yourself with the poor. You identify yourself to the extent that their problems are you problems, what they feel you feel, the leadership that they respect is the leadership that you respect, the discussions they engage in are the discussions you engage in. The theological thing for me was incarnation. You identify with people in their struggles; and so you feel it. *Needs*: as you identify with them, the needs that they name, that they identify, that they take action about, that they struggle around, become your needs. The needs that people acting on become your needs. Then you respond to those needs. Then there was a very conscious choice - what you would normally have is about a service. We talked about *Structure*: what we do is build a structure, support a structure, that is responding, articulating, acting on those needs. You cannot provide a service, because when you leave, the service collapses. Rather, you have to build a structure. So don't deliver primary health, build a health committee, and they will connect with the people who do provide a service, and they will be accountable to us. We will determine what that service is. But if you don't have a structure you can't determine what that service is. *Vision*: structure is useless, unless it has a vision. Part of our function is working with the structure to hear what the vision is, to build the vision, to articulate that vision of who they are themselves, what are we working for, why are we doing this. *Values*: Our experience had been that structures can be incredibly cruel and authoritarian. So the need to build structures that had values that they could be held accountable to. So this was the philosophy that came out of Ilimo, in our work there. We used to talk about being in a war, a war against poverty. INSVV was about how we did this.

This connects with Abahlali. So much of what we'd seen after 1994 was about providing a service. Service delivery was exactly that kind of stuff. So when Abahlali speak about taking our place, about the Third Force, it's not about service delivery, its about structure. This is what I had lost. In the midst of this need to become a good NGO, I'd lost a sense of what we're on about, building structure. So in 2006, when I was trying to answer the question about how does change happens, it's not that I didn't have answers; I'd lost them. And I'd lost the language of it. Abahlali was provoking to say, let's recover some of that. In the midst of this, reading Neocosmos saying the 1980s and UDF was the moment, it made sense to me. The other bit was my own theology. My masters had been about who does theology - I argued it was black, poor, predominantly women struggling to survive and make a life. How does their faith support them in that struggle for life, how do they articulate that. I was so excited when it got published, and then I was critiqued for it; what was a white academic doing writing this stuff. It took me years before I could read it again. This is partly why Abahlali was so important. At the Abahlali moment, they speak, but lots of others speak around them, and connect to other things internationally. That wasn't happening at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. It had happened in the 1970s and early 1980s - we had a priest from the rural areas in Brazil come and lead one of our sessions in Amaoti, on how they would do it in his base community in Brazil. It was just fantastic. Abahlali reinvigorated some of those connections. And Raj and Richard, and reading Neocosmos and Fanon. It provided frameworks that were there but I don't think South Africa had connected with. So the "we" of abahlali became much greater than just Abahlali - connecting with the we of the Zapatista, and the way that they wrote - "we are the women". So a chance to discover so how do we connect that we to us? So the we became broader.

The protests were about anger, but I don't know how much reasoning there'd been, how much thinking through, articulating. In Abahlali there was so much thinking; there was a discussion, there was engagement, there were arguments; there was a politics; around real struggles for life. We are they. The idea that we are shaped by them.

The key learning points of my life: 1981, when I objected to the military and worked in Crossroads. Objecting wasn't necessarily the result of thinking - a lot of it was learning on the ground. The learning was realising I'm having to make choices, about me, in this country, and

the theology of it. My thinking, my framework, my understanding of it. That linked me to the theology of resistance of the Anabaptist movement. It was shifting me away from where I was. I was becoming something different. 1981 was a conscious moment of doing that. Now I was having to act for myself, and think for myself. Objecting started me off on a path that opened up the possibility of connecting with others in Crossroads. It connected me to people who could be real role models, 'out of order'. Then the experience in Amaoti was life-changing; it got rid of some of our romantic notions. Amaoti was a real expression of what we wanted to do after reading *Companion to the Poor*. It was an incredible opportunity and privilege to work that out. Then some moments in CLP. Not the early years; they were quite boring. The later years challenged who I am. Reading stuff like Neocosmos, Badiou, Ranciére, and grappling with what was happening in Abahlali. One of the phrases we used was about Jesus being outside the gate; we go to find him, and join with him in his suffering so that his glory can be revealed. It's the conscious choice; where do you position yourself. Somewhere in the 2000s, it became about making a conscious choice about where you position yourself; because God is present, because life is present. The attacks on Abahlali in 2009. It brought back so much of the experience of Amaoti for me; the futility of it. I just remembered so much about what had happened. [Just] Because people speak. These people don't do anything wrong. They just articulate, they just claim, "We are here. And we speak, and we will act. And all we are acting about is our place". And how threatening that is to institutions. The attack confirmed everything. As much as it was painful, it was okay, in some ways it helped - it was round about then I went back and read my book. That sense, of yup, here we go again. Abahlali wasn't destroyed, but something got fractured. Up until then it had all been great; now there was a sense of okay, this is real, this is the messy stuff. The fact that there is contestation is it. That is a politics of life. When it's not there, then we've lost it. That's what's still so important about Abahlali. At the moment, there are still places where it is contested. There is still life. Now I'm not in it so directly in it as I was in Amaoti; but I can still connect with it, from my own space. And that's a privilege.

Now, when I get invited to speak, I have a sense of settledness, that I think Abahlali has given. This is the nature of emancipatory struggle. You make your choice where you position yourself. I've got to the stage where I'm not the radical, I'm normal. This is my faith. It's a deep political position. This is how it is. This is what we do. And there's a wealth of

international resources and traditions giving effect to it. So this doesn't fit the South African NGO scene? Yes, it doesn't. We don't have to defend anything. The settledness of a living politics. It's what we live, it's what we do. We don't have to justify it. This is us living out a living struggle. For Abahlali, part of what it's been is that dogged, determined, persistence, the patience, of we're here, we take our place.

10.3 Lindela Figlan

[Lindela is currently Vice President of Abahlali baseMjondolo.]

I'm from the Eastern Cape, J.B. location, near Flagstaff. It's a rural area, very disadvantaged, where there is no close school. I was born in 1970. I grew up in a very poor family. My father used to work in Johannesburg as a mine worker, but he was retrenched because he was involved in politics. He was retrenched before I was born; so when I grew up he was at home, not working.

He was involved in Ingquza where many people were killed by the white people, because the minority government decided that they must leave the land, but the people refused to move because the land was rich, stock was on the land, our children were fed from this land. The soldiers came, about 45 people were killed - people were using their sticks, the cops were shooting from helicopters. The soldiers dug a mass grave for the corpses. My father was secretary of that group that was involved, something like Abahlali, but it was under the ANC.

So now, the soldiers used to come even when I was growing up, to detain him, for a few months each time. He would be sent to Betani. When he came back his fingers would be chapped from ploughing potatoes, they were taken by the soldiers to dig with their fingers, they weren't allowed to use spades because that would damage the potatoes. When someone died, they would dig a hole, put the person in, and plough potatoes over that person. He used to tell us a lot of stories.

He was still politically active whilst I was growing up. He was not aware that I listened to the stories. When my uncle used to come to visit, they would sit and drink Commando brandy. I

would sit between the legs of my uncle, and pretend to be sleepy, and listen. My father would wonder when Mandela was going to be released. I was so interested in this about Mandela and about Betani and the Ingquza story. He didn't tell me the stories, I would pretend to be fast asleep, he would say, now this boy is asleep we can talk....

After that, because I was listening to all of these things, when I went into the veld to bring the stock back, I would tell other kids about Mandela, although I didn't know a lot, I would say there's this man, Mandela, a black man, he's going to come back and rule the country. And they would say, no, no, a black man? And even myself I was not too sure about that. But I never thought my father would say something false, my father was always true.

I was in school at that time, but playing soccer after school. My father didn't want me to play soccer, because he was so proud of his stock, he wanted me to look after his stock. I used to play soccer when I was supposed to be looking after the stock, but even if I scored a goal, I wouldn't say, because my father would be cross.

One day there was an older boy, my cousin, I asked him whether he knew about Mandela, he said be careful, you will be arrested. He said let's talk somewhere else. He said come to a meeting. I didn't want to go, how could I go [without my parents knowing]? We pretended to go to church, the church was always happening at the same time, but I went to the meeting instead. I realised these people knew about Mandela and the ANC. This was the early 1980s, I was still very young, like Mnikelo [another Abahlali member, also from the Eastern Cape]; when you are small, you cannot talk whilst they talk. Then Sthembile [cousin] said no, you are still young, you can't always attend the meeting. This was very frustrating because I wanted to know more about Mandela.

Then they allowed me to attend the meeting, because they realised I didn't tell anyone what was talked about in the meeting. All this time my parents thought I was going to a church meeting. One day, my father realised I was going to the meetings, not to church, and he called me one day and asked me what I was doing. I told him that I heard him talking to my uncle about the ANC, and I was so interested, and wanted to know more, I said, "You talked about the land, and about taking the land. How are you going to take the land?" I was a little

worried that they would literally take the land, and leave a big hole full of water behind. He told me I was not allowed to know because it was dangerous.

Then I grew up, and joined the ANC youth league. At school I was the chairperson of COSAS, also of the SRC. I was the vice president of COSAS for Pondoland. I was very involved in the ANC activities in my area, I was elected the chairperson of the ANC in Flagstaff. I said when we go to the stadiums, whilst we are still in the veld we must sing freedom songs, then people will become interested. In the beginning, people sang the songs but didn't know what they meant, but later they knew everything. When I was eleven years old, I was organising the young ones, but later I was organising everyone. People were afraid because of the history of Ingquza, because a lot of people had died there.

When I was about 13, my father was not well. There were a lot of 'tribal' wars in the area at that time. White soldiers came to the area. They came to J.B. location. Even though my father was coughing badly, the soldiers treated my father with contempt. They beat him with sjamboks. This was only the first or second time I had ever seen a white person. I bit the soldier who was hitting my father, I bit him and he kicked me, I bit him again, and he beat me with the sjambok. I took my father to the house. This incident caused strong feelings in me of hatred of white people and a desire for revenge. Later I saw white people with the ANC, and was confused by this.

At the age of I think 20, there was a teacher teaching history at my school. He was a Marxist. He taught me a lot about Karl Marx. That's why I talk about Karl Marx a lot. He noticed that I was interested in politics, so he suggested I go and join MK. When the transport came [to take us to MK], I was writing matric. I knew I was going to fail Geography, so I went to Mbizane, in the bush. Whilst we were there, they were checking what was happening on the border, but things were not good on the border, so we couldn't get across. They told me to go to Port St Johns, to join the people that were training there, there was a military camp there, but I decided I wouldn't go, I wanted to go across the border. I went back home. I failed that year. I failed matric 3 times, I passed it on my fourth attempt. By then the teacher wanted me to join APLA, he was a PAC member.

Once I passed standard 10, I sold insurance for African Life, in Flagstaff. I realised that the person I was working for was exploiting me. Then I worked for another place in Flagstaff. I earned R5 a day, my transport was R4.50. By now, my father had passed away, I needed money for my family, my mother was only getting a pension. I asked the teacher if I could stay with him in Flagstaff. By now the teacher had forgotten politics. I stayed with the teacher so I could save money. Then I told my mother I wanted to train as a security guard; my mother gave me the money to study. I studied at Success College in Flagstaff. Then I got my first security job. I got R800 a month. Then after that, I decided to go to Durban, in 1998. I got married in 1999; now I have three children, one who is 11, one who is five, and an 18-year old from when I was still at school.

I came to Durban, working for another security company, a small company, they were exploiting us a lot. Then another company came to where I was working, Musgrave Road, to speak to the management of that building about taking over security at the building. The management told them to talk to me, and I agreed to work for them. They paid me R2 500. I used to stay in the shacks in Foreman Road. I stayed at Foreman Road from when I came to Durban. At Foreman Road, we were planning to form our own thing, that would define ourselves - we used to call it the real ANC, or the non–discriminatory ANC, because we believed we were discriminated against by the ANC. Most people at Foreman Road - nearly everyone - was from the Eastern Cape. We were discriminated against by the ANC committee, so we started our own organisation.

Then in 2002, I moved to a school, where I was security guard - we often got moved around by the security company - the school principal gave me a place to stay with electricity, water and everything. There was a good relationship between me and the principal. The security company didn't like this, so they took me away. So I went to stay in Kennedy Road. Then someone gave me a job at Benwood flats, collecting rent, and I got a flat at the block where I had to collect the rents.

I was still staying at Benwood when I became involved in Abahlali. One day, whilst I was staying at Benwood, Mnikelo called and told me to watch TV - it was showing an Abahlali march. So I went to Kennedy Road and joined Abahlali. That was in 2005. The second time I

went to an Abahlali meeting, I saw Richard Pithouse and Richard Ballard and Faizel Khan. I was confused about why white people were there, being called comrades. I thought that this place wasn't for me. But then I saw that these people were not the ones who did that to my father. They didn't talk like white people, they talked like human beings, like me, like everyone.

After I met Richard Pithouse, I asked him why I am called Figlan. I thought maybe I wasn't 100% black, perhaps in the travels of some of my family, something had happened. I wasn't sure where I belonged. Richard found out that my forefather, a chief, resisted the confiscation of his land. His descendants changed their name to protect themselves. Later I went and found the other Figlan people that Richard told me about.

S'bu [Zikode] told me one day that they were going to Chesterville, and I went with. Whilst I was there, my wife called to say our house was being attacked because I had joined the red shirts. I went back home, S'bu came with. He told me I was not safe at Benwood, I must move elsewhere. So I went back to Foreman Road and rented a house there. ANC people at Benwood hated me, because I used to be ANC. So from the start, ANC people saw Abahlali as anti-ANC. I was banned from the ANC.

Even though I have lost a lot because of Abahlali, Abahlali is where I feel free, especially at meetings. I forget about my worries; everyone is my brothers and sisters. People don't mind me speaking Xhosa, compared to the ANC. I still love the ANC, but I feel it has lost its way. It needs to go back to the old ways, not the way of today. Abahlali feels like I am joining the other part, the real ANC. Later on, after I joined, I noticed that Abahlali doesn't do what political parties do. It accommodates everyone from everywhere - no matter what political party, what religion. People can speak freely, without interruption. It doesn't just go according to 'policies', you can talk anytime about anything, the 'real politics' of 'real people'. It is not bluffing people, it is saying it straight. Abahlali helped me realise that being a landlord at Benwood was exploitative.

10.4 Zodwa Nsibande

[Zodwa is currently the Secretary of the Abahlali Youth League]

I was born in Enhlalakahle, Greytown, near Pietermaritzburg, in 1984. That's where my mother and grandmother lived, and also my father's family. I am the first born in my family. I've got two sisters and one brother. I am much older than the others - the next born (my sister) was born in 1994, she's ten years younger.

I did my primary school at Tholinhlanla Primary School. After I finished my primary education, I went to start my Grade 8 at a boarding school which is next to Maphumulo. I only studied there for one year, I didn't adapt to them, then I went back to Enhlalakahle to Buhlebuyeza Secondary to do rest of high school. I finished school in 2001.

When I was growing up, there was political violence in the area. In Enhlalakahle there were two groups, ANC and IFP. I was in the ANC part, I grew up knowing Inkatha was bad, it was killing people. It was scary. At one point my cousin and I had to move from our school to a different school where my aunt was teaching, in Hermannsburg, for about six months, from June to December, because our school was often attacked, and we had to flee the area. All these tensions also affected my family. My two uncles didn't see eye to eye - one was ANC, the other was IFP. It went as far as the IFP one wanting to kill the other. He was one his way to kill him, where he was living in an ANC area, but he was killed on the way. This was whilst I was still in primary school. After that, things had calmed down, so we could go back to our old school. Sometimes I laugh about the violence now, as I've grown older, because I understand it now. At the time I didn't understand it. We didn't understand it, we were just told the IFP is the wrong party, it's killing people; the ANC is the good party, it protects people. It wasn't about their ideas, we were told the people in the hostels and from outside Enhlalakahle were IFP; those who are from the area , who come from the area, were ANC. It was just about the one is good, the other is bad. Now I see in fact they were all the same. I remember at some point, they were called to a forum, I was about to finish high school. They were asked why are you fighting? They would all say we are fighting for independence.

Democracy came whilst I was at school, but I'm not sure if it mattered or not, because I wasn't interested in politics at all, I wasn't thinking of that. We had to listen to the news for school, we had to write essays for the teachers especially if there was a state of the nation speech or a budget speech; but other than that, it didn't matter to me. One thing I learned from school, in terms of life, we used to communicate with teachers socially, they would give us life guidance about how to live in society. I also remember in my last year, the inspector from education came to our farewell as the speaker, I will always remember that he said in this world there are two kinds of people - those who have learned but are not learned; those who are learned but have not learned. Those words always kept me going in how to interact with people. Sometimes, you would see people who went to school, but didn't have an understanding, sometimes you would meet people who didn't go to school, but who knew a lot.

After high school, I moved to Durban. I arrived in Durban in 2002. I went to Durban for two reasons. I was staying with my aunt in Enhlelekahle. My aunt is a teacher, and she wanted me to do nursing. By the time I finished my matric, to be a nurse was one of the priorities to easily get a job. I didn't want to be a nurse, I didn't think I was suited - I didn't have that passion to care for sick people, and I believed to do that kind of job, you needed a passion for it. I wanted to do something different. So we had a misunderstanding. Also, my mother was working in Durban by then as well. My mom went there in 1991.

At the time I went to Durban, she was living in Kennedy Road. She had been living near there the whole time, but in a formal house, in Clare Estate. I used to go there during school holidays. My granny used to tell me that people who live in informal settlements are not good people. So I always used to turn a blind eye to the people who lived in Kennedy Road, because they are not good people. But by 2002, my mom had been retrenched, and had had to move across the road into Kennedy Road settlement and build a shack. So when I arrived in Durban, that's where she was, with my brother and my youngest sister. When I came there, people in the settlement came to welcome me. That was different. In Enhlelekahle, no one does that, no-one cares about anyone, you only know your family. Here, in Kennedy Road, it was different, everyone was greeting me, I found there is life.

Part of me was happy to be there, because of how people welcomed and accommodated me; part of me wondered if I would get used to it. It was a big shift, coming from where you have your own bedroom, to a place where there is only a kitchen and one bedroom with everyone sleeping together. Whilst I was growing up, we moved from the location to a suburb. In the past, I could just go across the passage to the toilet, now I had to go out. The worst part was when it was raining. I didn't think I could adapt. It took me almost a year to adapt to living in this place, getting used to the shared bathroom, going to the tap.

At the beginning, when I told my aunt how I felt, after two months, my aunt told me to find a flat, she would pay, but I didn't want to. It was something new to me to find a sense of belonging. In the morning, people would come and ask, "Are you okay?" That meant a lot to me. I also felt that living there would allow me to live with my Mom. If I left, I wouldn't be with her, it would be like it was in Greytown, when I only saw her in holidays, in December.

When I came my mother said you can't just sit here, so I went to Durban Commercial College to study Information Technology. I only studied there for one year. Then after a year I discovered it was not accredited. So then I went to Durban Community College, for IT again for three years. I did not finish my third year. In my third year I got burned. I stayed at home for one year, without studying, treating myself. So for three years I was living in Kennedy Road, going in the morning to college, coming back in the afternoon, Monday to Friday. By then, my Mom was spending a lot of time in Kennedy Road, she was volunteering at the drop in centre. She was also a member of the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC). Sometimes if I had time, I would go to the community hall for community meetings. That's how the political side of me was born and grew. Every time there was a community meeting, everyone was there. Everyone wanted to know about the development of the area. In my second year in Kennedy Road, I was asked to be part of the election committee, to help count the hands of people voting for their leaders.

I knew S'bu, because he stayed across from my Mom's shack, and they used to talk. But I didn't know anything else about the history of Kennedy Road or the KRDC. When he was elected the first time, I wasn't there; I only arrived after that.

The one thing I have learned from my experiences is that a human being is a human being no matter where he or she stays. If he or she has decided he wants to be a human being, he is a human being. I have met good people in the so-called squatter camp; and bad people in the so-called suburbs or location. Staying in a good place, or a fancy place, doesn't make you a human. It's about how you choose to live, to be a human being, how you interact with other humans, this makes you human. I have learned that through my direct experiences. The other thing I have learned through my experiences is that sometimes, politics is propaganda. Some people have a different view from this, some people believe in politics but from my experience of how some politicians are behaving, and how this propaganda that was inflicted on us that this party is good, and this party is not good. The things that one party used to do to us when I was growing up, the ANC does to us as a social movement.

Before my Granny died in 1999, she told me, because we were very close, you are entering a different stage of life. In life, you need to choose how you want to live your life. Whatever you do, you need to realise you are the mirror of your family. How I behave in life generally, everything I do reflects my family; even if someone does not know my family, through me they know my family.

What motivated me to stay in Abahlali, is that, within me, I have this motive that this life is not good. If I move to a different place that is better, leaving other people suffering, that is not good. If people have stayed for almost 10 years, or almost their whole lives, I can do that. I want to see a change in this place I am staying. People in Kennedy Road and the Kennedy Road Development Committee were accommodating to me. It's a mixture of how they have treated me, how welcoming they have been, and the strong feelings I have about what is right. If I had had strong feelings, but people hadn't welcomed me, I couldn't have done it.

Abahlali *is* a political movement, but what makes them unique, is that they are talking about issues that matter to people, that affect people directly, that are affecting them each and every day, that people have directly experienced, not just heard about, so they can explain it. At Abahlali we don't talk about issues that people have once heard about; people share their own stories of how lack of service delivery, development, not being respected by officials, have affected their daily lives. That's what makes Abahlali unique. They are talking about the lives

of the people directly. It's not somebody else who is talking, it is the people themselves who talk, themselves. The solutions are being sought amongst the people who are part of that gathering, being explored by the very people who are sharing the problems they are facing. There are no experts. We only involve experts if people failed to do what we suggested at that gathering; then we ask the expert for advice on how to do it, not for them to do it. Not everyone can go to court, so we need a lawyer; that's where experts come in.

10.5 David Ntseng

[David is a member of a civil society organisation with close links to Abahlali]

I was born at King Edward Hospital in Durban. In the early 1970s, we stayed in Matatiele, which is where my father's family comes from. We left there when I was 2 or 3, in about 1974/5. Matatiele was very cold, and I had asthmatic problems, so it was agreed we should move to Durban where my father was working. My father stayed in Umkhumbane when he first went there, working at a petrol station or doing other piece jobs, until he decided to employ himself by being a barber, which is what he was when we moved. He worked in Durban itself, and then moved to Umlazi until the time the political violence was at its peak, in around 1993. He found a spot and got a permit at Berea station, where he worked until he passed on in 1999.

We lived in Umlazi, and stayed there until 1984. I started school there. Then we moved to Amaoti. We had been renting in Umlazi, in different parts. My older brothers were living in Inanda, and suggested we move there because there was still land available, and we could build a house. At that time, it was very difficult to get a house unless you had a stable job, so for my father the only chance of getting a house was to build one. So in 1984, we were given land in Amaoti, and my father built a house, a wattle-and-daub structure with a corrugated iron roof, but he used cement in the walls, and plastered it; it's still there today, although it has cracks.

There were five of us, all boys. There's a big gap between us; two are a lot older than me, then the youngest was born after me, in 1976. Two of my older brothers have now passed

away. Both of them were already living in Inanda then. When we moved to Amaoti, we were all within walking distance of each other, seeing each other almost every day, staying with each other at weekends.

I went to high school in Amaoti. In 1988, the Department of Education and Training agreed to take over the community high school in the area. They brought in their own teachers, and released the community teachers. I went into that school in standard 7 (Grade 9). At that time it was really an under-resourced school. Most of us were from the same part of Amaoti, friends together - so we decided to enrol in the same school, and it was close. I had done Standard 6 in KwaMashu, which was administered by the KwaZulu (homeland) government, closely monitored by the IFP. In 1986, the schools unrest began. Students were demanding free books, and no fees. The IFP/KwaZulu government mounted a war against the students. It spread across the townships; there was a lot of killing of young people. I didn't want to have anything to do with KwaMashu, so transferred to the Amaoti school. It was within walking distance, it was new, it wasn't run by the IFP/KwaZulu government, it was safer.

Already there was intense fighting between UDF and Inkatha in the area. But we knew clearly which areas were IFP strongholds, and what routes we could take to get safely to school. We knew the language, the politics of the school was very close to where we came from, the UDF. Our area was very organised. We knew exactly where to go if the IFP had closed the main road, who to go to who would escort us safely home.

My father didn't want to talk about politics openly, especially with us. We'd tell him what was happening at school in KwaMashu, about the Inkatha people, and the ZP (KwaZulu police) and KwaZulu military coming to school, and he'd swear about the IFP, so we knew he hated Inkatha. We'd also overhear him talking to other adults, about MK and the ANC, and how life would change when they came back. So we knew his feelings, but I can't say we got a political education from him. Rather, we got this from school - people would come and talk at the school about the campaign for free education, free school books, same uniform across townships, etc. I was about 14 or 15, I could make sense of this. I knew that all the schools in Phoenix, next door to Amaoti, had the same uniform, with maybe a slight difference in jerseys; but our schools all had a different uniform, very expensive. These schools were all

encouraged to join the boy scouts, and had a subject which was basically Inkatha propaganda.

Violence would be mounted by ZP, IFP-aligned people, to prevent change, to prevent what we saw as justice, schools run according to what is good for pupils. Parents couldn't afford the money asked for. The way the IFP had the boy scouts, where people were forced to join, forced to do that syllabus. There were annual general conferences, and the young men would have to go, and get the expensive uniform. We could see this was wrong. My parents couldn't afford all of that - the uniform, the knife, etc. So when we were made to reason around having to differ from the IFP, that's when the IFP attacked. So from 1986 to 1987, the struggle was really around schooling. But at the same time, from 1986, the UDF was exploding in and around Durban. I remember June 16, 1986, there was a stayaway in Amaoti, to commemorate June 16 1976, just like in any other township. People were supposed to stayaway; shops were burned if they tried to open, government structures were attacked, if kids went to schools they were attacked, by the UDF. In Amaoti, a lot of shops were run by Indian families; if they opened, they were burnt down, looted etc. for not following the order for the stayaway. It was chaos. Homes were also burnt down. Nasty, nasty. Those who were known as IFP were confronted, attacked. Pressure mounted against the IFP. The IFP started to regroup, to make links with strongmen elsewhere, there was a resurgence. New faces in Amaoti, new songs hailing Buthelezi. Violence increased. A fierce war broke out.

Every meeting that took place at night was important, so that we would know what was being organised, who was organising it, was it safe to go to school. I was in the Catholic church youth group at that time. We would say we were going to prayer cells if we were confronted by IFP, we were known as church-goers. Outside the meetings, you had to be very careful of your language, not use the word 'comrade'. But pretty soon everyone knew who was IFP or UDF. In my area, most of the youngsters of my age group or a little older did not want to join the IFP. Our experience of the IFP in KwaMashu gave us firsthand experience of what the IFP was all about. Running, running from attacks on the school, hiding in one woman's house for hours until we could get to the buses to go home. Although there was UDF violence, it was different - they came and talked to us, explained things, why the government was wrong, why we needed to fight against it, why the stayaway was necessary; it wasn't the coercive experience of KwaMashu, when IFP people came with spears, with threats. You knew well in

advance there would be a stayaway and why, and why people would be confronted if they did not support the stayaway. It was a way of reinforcing the struggle. And the struggle was much bigger than Amaoti.

The SADF would come in in support of the IFP, with the casspirs and hippos. It was clear to everyone that the IFP and the South African regime were working hand in glove - people would write 'Bothalezi' on the walls.

It quietened down in about 1989. Different reasons are given about why it cooled down. 1988 had been the peak. At this time, the IFP would come in in buses at night and attack. Our home was also attacked. They arrived at midnight; just after we saw our neighbour's house in flames, they were all over the yard. They said they heard we were hiding amaqabane. They made us all come out of the house, and guarded us there with spears and knobkerries whilst they searched the house. They didn't find anything. At that time, they wouldn't just leave you; if they didn't burn you, then they took you with to show them where comrades lived. But my mother switched to her language, Sotho, asking what they were doing; and we replied to her in Sotho. So one of the leaders, who was perhaps Basotho, said they can't be *amaqabane*, they can't be involved. They asked where we were from, and we said Matatiele, and we'd just arrived, and we were members of the Catholic Church. The churches, especially the Catholic Church in KwaZulu-Natal, were not seen as political, they were seen as supportive of the state - because many of the people in church councils were employed by the state or had senior positions. It was only at the youth level that there was any politics in the church. So in my area, being involved in the church was seen as being outside politics, unless you as an individual had clearly aligned yourself. So they left us alone. We were very shaken. The next day, we went to see what had happened elsewhere, and we were verbally attacked by one old man, who said we were the reason why the attack had happened, because we had brought the UDF to the area, it was our fault. We told our father, and he went to confront this man. Soon after, the man was attacked and killed in broad daylight.

There were many strategies used by UDF in the area. We started Self Defence Units, with guards at night, blowing whistles when the IFP arrived; ambush tactics, cornering them before they left their areas, gunning for the leaders. Many of the IFP were not young men;

they were older men, business men, with guns, big cars. So they were led by grown men, who meant business. So various strategies were used. It was clear that guns were needed; stones and petrol bombs was not enough. Towards the end of 1988, some comrades managed to convince a cultural group, of traditional dancers, older men, to join the struggle. This group held control of one whole area of Amaoti, they were living in one particular area, they had their own protocol in that area. When they joined, things changed - they had networks in other parts of Durban, around Umlazi. And Inkatha was driven out. I was in Grade 11. Up to this point, my whole high school career had been disrupted, by IFP, by casspirs. But by matric, things were quiet.

There was a lot of rebuilding. The unbanning of the ANC in February 1990 was also a huge relief, in terms of moving around freely, organising freely, having meetings freely. The IFP was gone. So there just rebuilding to be done. Every area had a structure.

I did matric twice. In 1991, I was in the science stream. We had no laboratories. We did have a teacher and a textbook, but from Grade 9, no practical. The papers that we wrote assumed that we had a certain level of understanding of the periodic table and the chemical reactions - that you'd done it, you'd seen it. But we hadn't. I passed matric, but with a senior certificate. So I and some of my friends decided we should redo it, because we wanted to go to University.

We enrolled at the Durban Finishing School, a private school. It cost R350. We didn't have the money. But the Amaoti community based organisation paid for our fees. This school was very different. I don't know how much government was involved. There were only two black teachers, both teaching isiZulu. Everyone else was white. It was well resourced; it was what we should have had long ago. The teachers would tell us that they had spoken to the examiner, they knew what the examiner was focusing on. I was still staying at home, going into Durban for school. So I got exemption this time.

During this time, I met Mzwandile who was involved in Young Christian Workers, he wanted to organise YCW in the area. He came to the area, and we went to his office at the Workers' College on weekends and in school holidays. So by the end of 1992, we were pretty

influenced by this. He was running a fund, sourcing money from France, that had been set up to support students who were being terrorised by the IFP or the state. He had two houses in Woodstock to house them; some still finishing school, some doing university. He wasn't afraid to claim himself as a communist, the language he used was far more radical that what we heard from the comrades. We didn't understand all his ideas, especially about not trying to take over government. Mzwandile persuaded us, me and two others, to go to Cape Town to the school he was running there. It was a kind of a political school, for a gap year between matric and university. We were there for the whole of 1993, with people from Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal. There were about 20-25 of us, boys and girls. We were taught French, Socialist politics, African politics - DRC, Rwanda. At the same time, we were encouraged to work out what we wanted to do, and then apply to whichever universities you wanted to go to. They helped you do this, paid the fees, accommodation etc.

I don't know how it happened, but I decided to study theology. So I came to Pietermaritzburg in 1994, the best training place for this at that time - the others were seen as puppets of the churches. I was glad, because it was closer to home.

My parents were very supportive of my going to Cape Town. They had accepted that I didn't plan to go and join the police, which was what many youngsters were doing when they left school. But I was very sceptical about this, and they accepted that. I was very clear I didn't want to be a priest from the word go. I lived in a house rented by the same fund, in Epworth. We were thrown out just before the 1994 elections, because we were black. We moved to a house in Scottsville, that was bought by the fund. That was magic. There were four of us, and then Mzwandile, who stayed in the servants' quarters. We were doing different things, one was doing law, one politics, etc. We were fully covered - fees, accommodation, food.

I loved theology. From early on, I was involved in a course called practical theology. It looked at African religion, African tradition, African history, how humanity came out of Africa. It was very interesting, and linked with the African stuff I had done in Cape Town. I also carried on with French. In my first year, we looked at a lot of great African writers, in French. The second year of my degree, we did a course where there was a lot of organisational and community development stuff, working in a community; they used lots of

real case studies, like KTC. I found this very interesting. So I asked if I could switch to the extended programme. The School of Theology was trying out a new programme, the extended Bachelor of Theology. It was trying to link what was happening in class and what was happening outside. So for six months in our second year, we were based in a community, to be part of community life, community projects, whatever you were interested in. I was placed in Amaoti, linking up with what the Amaoti organisation was doing. I had been linking with them for a long time, whilst I was still in school - on Fridays, after school, we used to go to their staff reflection/bible study meetings. Andrew had already left Amaoti, he was living in Scottsville. He was very interested that I was studying theology, he gave me books to read. In my third year, we were in Amaoti again. We spent six months each time; the lecturers would come to where we were to give us lectures. There were four of us, one of us white, a Presbyterian. A fifth person withdrew.

The experience was great. It was tough because it was at a distance - not easy to get to the library, we had to be very organised. It was also tough, because comrades in the community were suspicious - they would ask, are we talking to you as a member of the community, or as researcher? They felt they were over-researched, and hadn't seen any fruits of this, so they had developed a phobia of researchers. They would say, you can come to the meeting, but you can't take any notes. It would probably have been easier somewhere else, to be a researcher without a conscience. In Amaoti, I had to be extra careful. Going through protocol from your own comrades. You couldn't just have frank conversations.

This was now after the 1994 elections. There was a lot of rebuilding going on in Amaoti. For the 1995 municipal elections, I was one of the enumerators, to earn a bit of money. By now, Amaoti was solidly ANC - there were a few IFP votes, which shocked us. In the municipal elections, we were surprised there was opposition. The tension between the civics and the ANC branch had been there since 1992, 1993, before I went to Cape Town. SANCO had started setting itself up; there were already structures in the 14 areas. After it was unbanned, the ANC also wanted to organise in the area. The one option was to piggyback on the civics, the other to have different structures, Branch Executive Committees with different people. There was fierce competition. Who represented the community; who connected the community to other structures. It was nasty. Backstabbing, outmanoeuvering, propaganda

against people. It was bad. This was still going on when I went back. If you got approval from one, that didn't mean you had it from the others. So it was two sets of protocols. People were generally over-suspicious.

I finished my degree in 1996, then did Honours in theology. I still didn't know what I wanted to do after university. During honours, in 1997, there was another placement - but this time, in an organisation, not a community. Two of us were placed in PACSA as interns for six months. We attended some things on campus. I was staying at ETHOS house. Andrew was working for PACSA then, on a project focusing on land. He suggested I be part of it. At that time, this was a big issue in South Africa, and no-one was focusing on church land, which is what the project was looking at. He had lectured us before, on CAP (Church Agricultural Project), on land. At the same time, in another course, we were looking at Jesus as an historical figure working against empire, building a movement. This fitted. So when I finished my honours, I went to register for a Masters with the School of Environment and Development. There was nothing left to do in Theology that interested me. They had stopped the Extended Bachelor, and anything else like it. Everything was connected to church ministry. Even leadership and development didn't attract me. I wanted to do something practical, in communities. My honours research had been about a community on Catholic Church land, Orford. So I wanted to stuff like that. Things weren't great, though. I had no funding. I was doing piece jobs at PACSA. By then Andrew's project was an independent NGO. I did some work for them to make some money. I was staying with someone where I only had to pay rent when I could. I passed the coursework, but then battled with the thesis. So I left with a Postgraduate Diploma. I managed to convince Andrew to give me a job. They had a six month project paid by the Catholics, so I was employed to do that.

When it finished, they got a bigger contract, for a year, so they employed me to do that. Then in 2001, I was employed full time.

I didn't know about Abahlali until 2006. I should have known about the Concerned Citizen Forum, in Durban, which appeared in the early 2000s, but I didn't. I began to hear about the Durban Social Forum, and the Maritzburg Social Forum, in 2004. They were saying something different about how the city can be organised, should be organised - way beyond

the conventional language about community development, which was about connecting with government departments. The experience in Orford had created enough doubts in my head about development through government processes - from 1996 to 2005, without much change. There was no convincing reason why it needed to take that long. The Department of Land Affairs was in disarray, the Land Commission was doing it's own thing. So the language of the social forums made sense; movements, demanding. Already, in the early 2000s, in our strategic planning we had started questioning partnering with governments. We wanted to work more with communities or the marginalised. Our first occasional paper was expressing the dilemma we were feeling. The social forums sat well with the questions we had.

At our 2004 strategic planning, we had started talking about animation, about stoking fires at grassroots level. At round about this time, I met Richard Pithouse - I met him at a Maritzburg Social Forum meeting at Tembaletu. He would be invited to meetings, and would let us know and recommend I go. We realised that people had been talking about these issues for years, from their lived experience. I remember a meeting in Cape Town, which was really an eye opener, and helped to gel what we were thinking, about leaving the partnership stuff, and going back to the grassroots. We weren't working with movements, but with individual communities, village activists, struggling for change; we were able to help them share their experiences with each other, what a community could do when it was organised outside of the government paradigm, below the radar.

We were receiving emails as part of the CCS list. We got the news that Kennedy Road had blockaded the road; and later in the year, the big Foreman Road march. We had seen the photographs of this march. Richard and Raj Patel had posted stuff in Indymedia, which got sent through the CCS list. Then we read S'bu Zikode's piece on the Third Force. We were blown away. We thought I should find out what was going on there, the new kind of politics that seemed to be happening. In early 2006, Abahlali planned a big march. We were asked by Raj if we could pay for two buses. I took money down, but didn't really meet with Abahlali comrades then, because it started very late, because the police had banned it. Then there was a fire in Lacey Road. They had asked for help from anyone. I had spoke to S'bu on the phone, I had to explain who was, where I was from. I asked if I could come; so I went down and met

Mashumi and others; I explained who I was, where I came from, why the organisation was interested and wanted to support Abahlali. We had a long, long, long discussion, over beers. Then I took them to Kennedy Road. We left as friends. I had still not met S'bu. I heard there would be a meeting, I was asked to come. I went - my first meeting in Kennedy Road. It was so different from the community meetings I had experienced before. First, there was chanting and singing, but about different things from the ANC stuff. I was introduced, I talked about where I came from, I was welcomed. That's how the road began.

I think one of the key learning points in my life was the 1986 experience. It took me out of my comfort zone, the zone that all that matters is you, and school, and made me see what was happening around me. There were very few TV sets in my community - we didn't have one, and those that there were were black and white. Radio Zulu was what we mostly listened to, and it only reported some things, not others, and reported in a particular way - not what I was actually seeing with my eyes. Then the attack on our home. This was a realisation of how deadly the IFP was. Also an IFP attack I saw at kwaMnyandu station with my father, that I fled, because the violence was terrifying. So the awakening to the level of violence a political party can represent if you disagree with it's ideology. And the experience with land after 1994; where everything you believed, you suddenly realised was not going to happen. That we were part of the vicious cycle that was hammering people into more poverty. That it wasn't about how slow it was, about the 'snail-pace' of change; it was about the direction, about what it was trying to do. And that the actual experience of communities showed this. And then of course, coming across Abahlali. Already I was worried about the direction that ANC was taking - there was evidence to show there were problems - and the lack of countering of this. But I still did not expect anything like Abahlali. That so many people could say, we are back in apartheid; supported by the logic that you see everyday, that the ANC is pushing the agenda of the rich. People still evicted. People promised housing, delivery projects, but nothing ever delivered, after years and years. People saying, no, this is not it. This is not what we wanted. This changed my thinking, my experience, in my understanding of what is really happening.

10.6 Mazwi Nzimande

[Mazwi is the youngest of the interviewees, joining Abahlali when he was still at school. He is was elected Public Relations Officer of the movement at the last AGM].

I was born on the South Coast, at Umzinto. I grew up living with my granny. It was a very big family, but most of us who were there, we didn't have our parents with us, we grew up without knowing our parents very well, because they were all in the city, working there. So we grew up as a group of children, but we only had one granny who was looking after all of us. There were about 10 girls and 15 boys there, cousins from somewhere else, but all staying with the granny because they had no-one there to look after them.

My granny had 10 children, about 5 daughters and 5 sons, so all of those kids of the daughters were staying with her. So we grew up having fun, staying together. As time went on, some of the children grew up and decided to go to the city, to their fathers, and start looking for a job.

I had an older sister at that time. When she finished matric she also decided she wanted to go and find a job in the city, to live with my mother. So she had to take me, because my granny was old, she said there's no way the granny can look after you. My sister asked if I minded coming with her, I said I didn't mind. I was very young at the time, there was no situation that was forcing me to leave the rural areas.

So I came with her. I was 5 years old when we came to the city. For some time she couldn't find a job, instead of finding a job, she had a baby. This was 1996. I started my schooling at that time. For me, it was hard at that time. You know, when you move from the rural areas to the city, you expect a different life. But when I came to the city, I said I think it's better in the rural areas than in the shacks. Because in my whole life I had never seen a shack, it was completely strange. To be inside a house, but you can actually see people walking outside during the day, during the night.

When me and my sister moved from the rural areas to the city, there was no-one, only my granny. I had to start schooling in the city. It was a life that was unexpected for me. When

people talk about Durban, you create this picture for yourself, then when you come to the city and you say oh it was better where I'm coming from. I was very upset with my sister for taking me from the rural areas to the city, because it wasn't a good place for me. But as time went on, I began to understand, this is a home for me, I have to accept it.

She came to Joe Slovo settlement, near Lamontville. When we first moved into Joe Slovo, it didn't have a name, it was called Lamontville, but as time went on committees were elected, names were suggested, and it ended up being Joe Slovo.

I was living with my sister and her baby and my father and mother - he was already living with my mother in the same shack. He was travelling a lot, only my mother was living in the house. They had been there since 1994; although in the city longer, renting different places. I moved there in 1996.

I went to Excelsior Primary School. It was an Indian school. I don't know why they chose to send me there - oh, yes, they told me they wanted to send me to an English school so I would learn English faster. I struggled. You know for a boy to come from the rural area to an Indian school was very hard. Everything was new. I knew no English at all, only maybe one or two words, yes, no, hi. Those three basic words, that's the only thing I knew.

I started Grade 1 in 1998 at that school. I was very close to where we lived - I could walk, maybe 7 or 8 minutes.

It was very hard in the beginning; I couldn't at first even understand the children that were in the school, because most of them were born in the city, in different places. And also, I was ashamed. I think in that school was the only one who was coming from the shacks. They were all talking about their houses, TVs, all these cartoons that they watched, and for me it was a different story. I grew up listening to news, because all the time the radio was on, so I was listening to the news, and then here they are talking about cartoons that they saw, movies they had watched. I was just a little child, sitting there alone, having nothing to share with anyone. Because all the children would sit and then discuss what they saw on TV last night, but for me, there was no electricity, there was no TV, so it was very hard. Even when the teacher

asked a question about something that happened on TV, I don't know. And I was also ashamed to say, no, I don't have a TV, because at that time everyone in my class had a TV, I was the only one who didn't have a TV, and I had never seen a TV before, although I knew what a TV was, because our neighbours had one, but the programmes on TV, I never saw.

I hid the fact that I came from the shacks from Grade 1 to Grade 3, I didn't tell anyone, I pretended that I don't like to talk. The teachers ended up thinking maybe I had a problem, social workers would come to the school. But still I didn't talk about it, I would just say, I'm okay, I'm fine, I don't have any problem. Until one of the children was walking past, it was a very hot day, a Saturday, maybe they were going to the pool to swim. And here I was, sitting outside, not even playing with the children on the street outside, just sitting. On the Monday, when I went back to school, everyone was saying ah, we know you live in the shack. They had a funny name that they were using. Then everyone started knowing, then I was a laughing stock again. And that was a problem too.

Until I was in Grade 7 when I started to understand, and accept, and look in a different direction. But still I wasn't very confident to talk about where I was coming from. I'd say, no, I was visiting my aunt, my aunt stays there. So the whole of primary school was a lie. Sometimes they believed me when I said I didn't live there, sometimes they didn't. I was clean, I was wearing clean clothes all the time, sometimes they did believe me, maybe he was visiting his aunt, sometimes they just said, no you are lying, you live there.

When we first moved in, the conditions were still very bad, the shacks were very new, 1994/1995 to 1996, every two to three weeks, the Red Ants [people hired by the municipality to demolish shacks] would come and demolish shacks, so people didn't build very nice shacks, they always used broken materials to build because they didn't want to buy things that would get destroyed. For me, because I was coming from the rural areas, I knew a house was made of mud. For me it was very embarrassing. I started to think this was not something to tell people about. And then what I was thinking they also said the same thing, you know, How can you live in a house like that? The people who live there, they don't bath, they don't have a toilet. I didn't want them to think that, that maybe I don't bath, I'm dirty. Sometimes they would say thinks like, hey, something is smelling funny. And someone would say, no, you

forget there's a brother in this class who lives in a shack. I would respond, no I don't live in a shack, I was visiting my aunt. Then they would start laughing. And then someone would come and say, I believe you, you don't look like you come from the shack. I would say, no I'm not coming from there, when you saw me there, I was just visiting.

The demolitions happened quite often, as I was growing up. Many times I've seen that. My home was never destroyed, but some of the houses were destroyed. But I have experienced a shack falling down while we were inside sleeping, because of the rain that was falling down. I was still very young at that time, and the shack collapsed, not the whole shack, the side of the shack. I was sleeping. When I woke up in the morning, I could see outside. I asked, what happened? My father said, no, when you were sleeping, this is what happened, some of the houses were destroyed. So it was very bad, ja.

In Grade 7, I was still ashamed, but there were a few individuals who became my friends because I have been with them since Grade 1. They laughed at me, but you can't laugh at someone for 7 years. But when there were new people who just came in like two, three years before, those I wouldn't tell that I lived in a shack, because then I would go through the same experience, laughing at me. But in Grade 7 I discovered a new thing, that within the same school, there were also people who were also living in shacks, but not in the same area that I was living in. So I began to say, no, it's not only me, who is hiding this, everyone is hiding. From Grade 7 I started moving around also, because I had friends, so they would take me other places, so I started seeing people from my school, in shacks, I said, hah, that brother was laughing at me, but you are also living in a shack, that girl is also living in a shack, so it wasn't that bad. But still it was something that I wouldn't talk about, but if you asked me about it, I wouldn't deny it. I wouldn't say, no, no, no, I don't live there.

So the other kids were also hiding. But in my head I thought it was only me, because my parents are poor, I didn't think everyone was in the same situation, or most of the people in the school were in the same situation. I thought it was just me because when children were talking about TVs, everyone was talking, they were born there, but for me, I was coming from the rural areas. I think the part that I was living in the rural areas did affect me. Even if I wasn't living in a shack, being from the rural areas, moving from the rural areas to the city

was also a challenge. Even if I wasn't living in a shack, I wouldn't tell that I came from the rural areas, because I was thinking that the rural areas are bad, but here I think it's worse.

There were Indian kids and African kids at the school, it was quite mixed. When I came to do Grade 1, it was already mixed, it was half Indian, and half African kids. It had been like that for a while. It still is.

Then I went to high school, Protea Secondary School in Chatsworth. I took a taxi or a bus in the morning, there was a bus that went to Chatsworth because there were a lot of schools in Chatsworth. I took a taxi or a bus. Taxis were expensive, a bus would only cost R2.00, a taxi would be R3.00. There was no Indian high school nearby, there were only black schools. Having been in an Indian school for seven years and going to start high school in a black school, it wouldn't have been easy. So I thought it would be better if I went to an Indian school because that's where I started. Even though they were mixed, they were still called Indian schools, and all of the teachers were Indian, so we called them Indian schools.

For the first few days, High School was scary - you are starting a new school, being in a different environment. In primary school, when we were in Grade 6 and Grade 7, we were like the top. No-one told us anything, we were owning the school. Now, at high school, it was like going back to Grade 1. You have to listen, someone else will tell you something to do. But when I came to that school, for my first week it was like that, I had to observe and see. But I didn't have a problem, no-one was worrying anyone in that school, everything was organised well.

Coming from a shack wasn't a problem because from primary school I discovered that some of the children were also hiding. It's something that we didn't talk about at all - where do you stay, if you were asked the name of the place where you are staying, you would tell us you stay in Umlazi, I stay in Lamontville, you don't ask do you live in a shack. Everyone was worried about their own things. I think it was hard for the children who were living in Chatsworth because in Chatsworth there were also shacks. So they were worried. But for us it was better for us because we were using a taxi to come to school. So no-one knows where we were coming from. But the thing that made it hard in Primary school was that we were

walking, they can see you are coming from that direction, and they know there are shacks that side, or there are fancy houses that side, so you live in one of the fancy houses or you live in a shack. But when you come from a taxi or a bus, they don't know where you come from.

When I was in Grade 6, I think, my father bought a small TV for us, so I started watching cartoons also, although it didn't play all the channels. But it always became a problem, because when I started talking about the cartoons from SABC 1 or SABC 2, they spoke about cartoons from DSTV now, from this channel, from that channel, something that I don't know now. So then I decided, no, maybe it's better if I talk about something else because some of the people will always be a step ahead of me. So if I talk about SABC 1, they will talk about SABC 3, if I talk about SABC, they talk about DSTV. So now I won't be worrying my father because I told my father, you know, children are talking about TV and all that, I'm only talking about things that are on the radio, and he said, don't worry I will buy a small TV. So I was scared now to go and say, ay, it's all about DSTV now. So I thought it's better if I don't talk about it. At least we had a TV.

It's very interesting how I got involved in the movement. You know, it's a movement that fights about land, housing, that demands service delivery. How I got involved was in 2005, when I went to high school my mother was working as a domestic worker. The school fees in primary school were about R300. So they could pay that, maybe in January they would pay R100, and then in June they could pay maybe another R100, then in November you pay another R100. So by December you have finished paying.

But now, in high school, it was R500. So it was hard now. My mother was working her last year as a domestic worker, and her boss said, don't worry, I will pay for this year, for your son in high school. So he paid R500 cash for me, in January. I was the only one in that school who paid cash in January. And then they started asking for reams of paper, I think it was about four reams of paper, and stationery, and uniform. That man bought everything for me. That was in 2005. At the end of that year I went to the rural areas to visit my granny, to see how she was doing. Then when I came back, my mother told me that she was not working anymore, only my father was working, so it will be really hard to pay fees for you, so now I just want you to know. So I said, but now, what are we going to do, because the record I have

built in that school, I want to keep that, I want to have everything, because they respect me for paying the school fees, for giving the reams of paper. Some of the children couldn't do that, but have done it. While I was new in the school, some of the children never paid all the fees since they came, but now they are in Grade 11, but for me I want to keep that record.

My mother was already involved in Abahlali. She said I will talk to these people I have joined, maybe they can give some help. So I said, okay, talk to these people please, because I don't want to be embarrassed in school. So I think she phoned S'bu or someone. Then S'bu shared the story with Faizel Khan, that this is the story, this woman, she is not working, her son is in school. And then Faizel talked about some exemption forms, that you fill in and then you don't pay fees if you cannot afford. And I said okay. And then Faizel said he wanted to see that boy, how old is he. And then I went to an Abahlali meeting, Faizel Khan was there, everyone was there, it was a workshop held on Westville campus. That's where I went. There were a lot of things that were being shared. They spoke about a lot of them. And then Ashraf Cassiem from the Western Cape was also there. So he thought I was a member of Abahlali, and then he came to me, he greeted me, he said, are you a member of Abahlali, and because my mother was already a member of Abahlali, I said yes, I'm a member. And he said, ah, that's good, you are very young to be involved in a social movement. He said things that I didn't understand, and I pretended I understood. He said, you are doing a very good thing, by being involved in a social movement at a very early age, it will keep you away from bad things.

I did that year at high school (Grade 9) without paying school fees. Then I was promoted to Grade 10. I said, ah, maybe I should go back to these meetings. Then I started attending meetings, because I was in a school for whole year without paying a cent. I said, no, maybe I should go to a meeting and attend. When I went to the meeting, it wasn't at the University of KwaZulu-Natal anymore, it was in a very terrible place, there it was really smelling, where the meeting was, from the taxi, when the windows were open, I closed the window, I said where are we going, it was really terrible. That was in Kennedy Road.

But we had a meeting The meeting went on and on and on, people were talking about lack of service delivery, and that was another thing that frustrated me, because I said for how long,

for seven years I was embarrassed to live in a shack, but now people were saying, no, no, don't worry, we will get RDP houses. That was the time when the project had already begun in Joe Slovo. Some of the people had been moved away, some were already living in the houses. I said but for me it's frustrating now, because I have been embarrassed since I came into this place, and I'm still embarrassed now. So the project is not helping at all. And these people have helped me to study for a whole year without paying a cent, and now they are talking about people getting houses. Maybe if I get involved, we could get a house, because my mother wasn't attending regularly. So I went to my mother and said, you know what, Ma, these people have helped me, I've been in the school for a whole year, without paying anything, and I was promoted to the next grade, now, when I went to that meeting, this wasn't a workshop, this was just an ordinary Abahlali meeting, they were saying they want houses, they want service delivery, the same thing that we want. She said, that's the same reason we joined the movement, it wasn't for the school fees, it was for the houses. These people are fighting for land and housing. So that's how I got involved in the movement.

I was very young, I was participating in meetings, people were listening to me. They didn't say, "Hey, you are a young boy, you don't have a house, you don't talk". When I had my hand up, they would point at me, and I would make a point, and then they will respect that point. And I was happy about that. Getting involved in this movement, that has old people, but when I make a point they actually listen to me. This had never happened before. For my whole entire life in the city, I have been living with lies, with being embarrassed, but this is the movement where I can get open, and say whatever I want to say, and be free, and tell people where I come from. The reason I joined Abahlali is because they gave me freedom. It's the only movement where I was free to talk about my family, my house and everything, but in school, where I was studying, I would hide some things, I wouldn't tell people certain things. In Abahlali I would tell people about everything that happens in school, that happens in my community, that happens in my house. I would share. I started being a free person, who could talk. That's why I joined the movement. Because they gave me freedom. It wasn't about land and housing, it was about me. Although it was about land and housing, for me it was also about myself, about self confidence, I could talk, I could look people in the eye, I wasn't ashamed, sitting in my own corner, I was with the people, starting to get involved. I started saying, wow. Let me just see these people every day. Sometimes I would just ask my

mother for some money, just to go and visit Abahlali, even if there was no meeting, I just felt like going to Kennedy Road because there I could talk with anyone, tell the truth, without any lie.

It changed things at school a lot. In a meeting we spoke about being open, that made me realise, I am hiding where I am coming from. How will hiding help me? Why am I hiding this, for whom? How are they going to help me, I'm just like them. I am coming from the shacks, but if I don't tell them, they don't notice that I'm coming from a shack. They believe me. So that means I look like them. You know, I'm clean, I'm not smelling. That means if they say someone is smelling because he's coming from a shack, that's a lie, it's not the truth. I can tell them that people from the shacks are clean people, decent people, they are not mentally disturbed, they are just human beings, like everyone. I started bringing that to their attention. In school, including my principal, everyone knew that I was coming from the shacks. I'm a member of the shacks. Because since 2008 I was also elected president of the Abahlali Youth League. So I was open now. Everyone in the school knew that I came from a place called Joe Slovo, that I was a member of Abahlali. Because I didn't tell everyone that I'm living in a shack, certain people knew, but when I was walking they couldn't see oh he's coming from a shack, I looked like everyone, that's what I told them. If I don't tell you, you don't notice, that means there's no difference between you coming from duplex housing in Phoenix or Umlazi or wherever you come from, I'm just like you. So it did change my life a lot.

In high school, there were also people who came from the same area as me. They were open, because they had to be, because I was there. They would say, no, he's right, he's our neighbour. He's right, people from shacks are just human beings, just like us. Some people who came from different shack settlements, they wouldn't tell, some would tell, some would not tell, some wouldn't tell everyone, they would be embarrassed, but they would tell me that they are living in a shack, but they didn't want everyone to know, but as you say, it's okay to live in a shack. It was about the person, how they felt, whether they wanted people to know or not.

My mother joined Abahlali in December 2005, right at the beginning. She introduced me to the movement in January 2006, when I cam back from visiting my granny. She joined because of the corruption that was happening in Joe Slovo. A house was built right in front of our house. We thought maybe, because this house is built in front of our house, our shack will get demolished and then we would move into that house. But when we were sitting there, waiting for them to move us, someone who was not even from Joe Slovo, someone who came from somewhere else, came in. We were very upset, because that didn't only happen in our case, that happened in half of the houses that were in the area of Joe Slovo. People from Umlazi, people from Chesterville, from Lamontville, will come and occupy houses. And original residents who were there from 1994 were left homeless. Everyone was very upset about that situation. They were very angry at the councillor, they thought he had done this. In 2005 there was a big protest, Abahlali marching against Yakoob Baig, councillor of Ward 25, demanding houses, demanding the resignation of Yacoob Baig. We saw that in the newspaper. But Ward 25 was a huge, huge settlement, Joe Slovo was small, about 300 people. So even if they wanted to have a protest it wouldn't be successful. Some of the people were moved from Joe Slovo to other areas, so people had been split up, only 100 or 80 people were left in the shacks. Most of the people who were occupying houses were coming from somewhere else. Even if they held a protest, it wouldn't be successful. But the people in Ward 25 were speaking the same language of forcing the councillor to resign.

But the true story is that the people of Joe Slovo didn't find Abahlali, Abahlali found the people of Joe Slovo. There was a woman, Busiswe, who was told by the councillor that she would never get a house in Joe Slovo because she went to confront the councillor, saying you sell our houses, you are a very corrupt councillor. And then the councillor told her straight, you will never, never get a house as long as I'm still councillor, even if I'm not councillor any more, as long as I'm alive you will never get a house. She went to the media, she told Isolezwe, there was an article about it in Isolezwe. Then Mnikelo, the Abahlali spokesperson at that time, he phoned the Isolezwe offices asking for the details of the woman. And then he phoned and she was invited to a meeting. She was scared, she didn't know if it was the councillor who was inviting her to come. She told some of the people that she had received a strange call from these people who say they are Abahlali, and then someone said these are the same people who were marching in Kennedy Road, let's all of us go there, not just you. So

the whole community went there, and they met in Kennedy Road. So that's how we joined Abahali, and we became a family.

For me, just coming to the city, I learned a new life. When you are living in rural areas, even the old people think the city is better. We are told that the city is a nice place. It's like people always being told South Africa is such an amazing place. I've learned that as a person you need to pass through the some hard moments to get somewhere. You get scratches, you get wounds that will heal. Now I'm not embarrassed about who I am. By telling the truth, you ended up being helped, you ended up being respected. Sometimes I think if I had hidden where I came from, where I would be? I would have dropped out of school. I didn't want to upset my parents, and say, we live in a terribly house. I didn't want to break their hearts. I pretended all the time, it's alright, I'm okay, I pretended. Even though I was feeling this pain. I would sit there, and they would say, what are you thinking, you are so young, what's wrong with you? It killed me inside. At school, the same thing. Now I've learned, talking helps, sharing helps, meeting new people, also helps. Sitting in one corner and waiting for miracles never helps. I have learned that you have to work for everything, and everything you get you get it the hard way, there's never an easy way. Even at my age I know this. I didn't choose this life, this life was created for me by someone. I didn't choose to live in a shack, and I don't like living in a shack. But because someone wants me to live in a shack, I live there. What can I do, what can I say, I don't have money. At least I have a shelter. I see people living on the street, at least I have a shelter.

10.7 Richard Pithouse

[Richard is a member of academic staff at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa]

I was born in Durban, but I grew up in Kloof where we moved when I was about two. My sister was born when I was two and a half. I lived there until I left home. I went to school in Kloof. It was a very stable childhood, apart from the fact that my father died of cancer when I was 13. He was ill for a very long time. In those days, they were very reluctant to give you pain killers in case you got addicted, you were only given pain killers right at the end. They put a lot of effort into keeping you alive, chemotherapy even when it was really too late, very

little consideration for how you died.

On the whole, I enjoyed school. The kids were nice, most of the teachers were nice, it was generally okay. I wasn't really aware of apartheid at primary school. Not at all when I started, in junior primary school. I don't ever remember any of us children at school having an awareness. But I do distinctly remember when it became clear to me that this was a system that was unjust. I was in Standard 3. There's no big story to tell, there wasn't any particular incident. I've often been asked, but I've never really had an answer to the question of how it came about. In English-speaking white South Africa, there was this pervasive assumption that racism was something Afrikaners do, and it's not our problem. But I never encountered anyone, family, teacher, friends, parents, anyone, who was actually opposed to apartheid. They made it safe for themselves by saying it was what the Afrikaners do. But the entire system, structurally, discursively, in every respect, was saturated with it, without anyone taking responsibility for it. Kids just absorb that. It was implicit in how we played. The songs we used to sing in our games were intrinsically racist; it's not even that people were necessarily invested in it, it was just so saturated, it's just part of the discourse, even before you're aware of it. But I just remember on the playground, participating in that kind of way of speaking, and just suddenly getting almost like a shock in my body, suddenly thinking, this can't be right. And that was that. I can't point to anything, it was just a sudden awareness of what the words mean, a sense of it just being unjust.

At that point, I'd never met an African person or a black person outside of domestic workers or cleaners at school. I never had that close relationship with an African person that many other white children had. And I didn't witness overt oppression. That's the whole point about the suburb, that you don't have to witness those things, it happens somewhere else. Of course, African people were present, as domestic workers and gardeners, but the discourse at that point in that space would always have been on the surface about compassion - but mediated by the idea that these people were backward, not yet ready; we're helping them, giving them work, giving them money so their kids can go to school. It wasn't a discourse of overt hostility. Not that that was entirely absent, but when it was present, it was seen as uncouth by most people. So it was an extremely paternalistic and maternalistic rather than overt racist hostility.

After I became aware, I tried to find things to read - and I read a lot as a kid. I read anything, Albert Luthuli, whatever I could get in the school library, whatever I could find, from wherever you could find things. There was an ideologically loaded system, but it wasn't impermeable, and you could find things. And even though I didn't meet any adults who would really talk about politics, and certainly not to me, some of my parent's friends were a little more interested in ideas, a bit more arty. And you might find something in their house, and go away somewhere and read it. My parents didn't really talk about politics. At a time of intensity, like elections, they might talk. My mother would say she'd vote for the PFP; my father was from England and didn't have the right to vote, even though he'd lived in Durban since he was 12, would say that he'd vote for the National Party, My mother would say you're just saying that to be contrary. But most of the adults I met who were overtly racist were immigrants, from England or Holland; but not particularly interested in politics.

At high school, there were some teachers - two teachers (not my teachers) - who were interested in progressive ideas. Both were from England. Both taught history, which was a subject I really wanted to take. I did very well in History in Standard 7, but I was banned from doing history, not for political reasons, but because my father had died, and I would have to be responsible for my family, so I had to do science so I could get a proper job. That's what the school told my mother. So I didn't have any actual engagement with those teachers, but I know that in their classes they were talking about things. One of them was actually deported. He was apparently involved in the UDF, and apparently the cops came to school one day and took him away. I wasn't able to talk about politics with any of my friends when I was in primary school. But these things were important to me, so I found ways to engage people around these things. And there were ways, like through popular music, for instance. Bob Marley died in 1980. It was still quite current, a lot of people had older brothers who were into reggae music, not just Marley, but Linton Kwezi Johnston, and that was a way to talk to people and find some common ground. By the time I was about 16, there was a small group of us - some through these history teachers, others through older brothers or sisters who were at university, one close friend had a brother who was very involved in the UDF. Up until that point, I was basically completely on my own.

I do remember doing my first confession - I was Catholic - trying to speak to the priest. Because I did see, although they never really talked about politics in the sermons, they used to sell these papers, Umafrika, Southern Cross, and there was a calendar produced by Diakonia that they had - I just got the sense that in the church there were some people who were involved; but my discussion with the priest didn't really go anywhere. I did see there was potential for a space in the church, that there were white people in some kind of organised way thinking about this stuff. But I was under no illusions about my suburban church.

During this whole time, the 1980s, the whole of society was becoming more militarised. A lot of older men that I encountered, teachers, other kids' fathers, in the boy scouts, would always make the argument that the army would a make a man of us. It was very tied up with ideas of masculinity. I was always told that that's where my head would be put right. We had to do cadets at school, we were only the second year to do it. The school had no particular investment in it. That did change towards the end of my high school career when some of the teachers tried to get serious about it, and they started coming to school on a Friday in their army uniform. In the beginning it was just seen as a joke, by probably most of the teachers, and certainly by the kids. It was just marching. And the propaganda we got, we got a magazine called *Die Kadet*, it was just so crass we just laughed at it. Some of the kids who became officers went on camps. And we did have one teacher who, not so much invested in the state project, but just in his own racism, used to give us the most extreme propaganda - like, during cadets we'd have lessons on guns, and he'd say you can't use a 9mm to shoot a kaffir, because their heads are too thick, you have to use a .45; when you finish school you'll have to get a gun because all they'll want to rape your girlfriend. But the kids just thought he was an idiot, just laughed at him, it was so extreme. He was woodwork teacher, and we all just thought the woodworker teachers were thick, and treated them with contempt anyway. I don't think it loomed too large as a fear at all, the army.

I do remember if standard 7 that someone came to give us a talk about going into the army. Mostly it was about masculinity, how the army would make a man of you. Politically it wasn't framed in terms of South Africa, and racism, it was framed largely in terms of the Cold War. That's what many people don't remember, it's missing in the academic discourse. It was all Cold War, it was seen as a global thing. We were shown films like Red October etc.

It wasn't presented as a uniquely South African thing, it was about communism. Where the racism came in wasn't so much about justifying it as in saying the ANC was incompetent, we were told stories about how they couldn't use rocket launchers the right way round, and blew themselves up. We only heard a different view when we actually met people at university who had been to 'the border', who told completely different stories, about being in the bush in southern Angola, running away in total panic, being completely outclassed by the soldiers they were fighting. There was also an incident when I was on a rugby tour in matric, where one of the male teachers had too much to drink, and broke down and told us all stories, one about attacking this 'terrorist' base which turned out to be a high school, and he started crying. He also told us about being chased from Angola into Namibia, over three or four days, just running, all discipline broke down, all on their own, and every time they thought that they'd got away, and lit a fire, they'd be attacked again, it was obviously terrifying.

By the time I was in matric, there was a realisation that actually this thing was serious. Neither my mother or my father had been able to go to university. My father started work at 16. After he died I found a lot of letters he had written trying to get scholarships - he obviously really wanted to study further but never did. My mother went to nursing college. But my parents did just assume we would go to university. I didn't do very well at school. I just basically didn't have any interest in most of it. I really didn't. I just didn't do most of it. I had decided in Standard 8 that I wasn't going to go to the army, when I first heard about the End Conscription Campaign. I persuaded my mother to take me to a couple of meetings at the Ecumenical Centre. I refused to do cadets for the last three years of school. I was the only one, apart from the Jehovah's Witnesses, so it singled me out. All the other boys came to school on Fridays in their cadet uniforms. I presented it as political. The default position was to try to depoliticise it, to say, well, he's probably homosexual. I was lucky that in other respects I conformed very well to what was expected of a boy - I was bigger and stronger than most of the other boys, I was good at playing rugby, and played it with commitment and didn't shy away from a tackle - so I didn't have to deal with that from the other boys, I was respected in that way. But the male teachers had a very ambivalent relationship to me. They wanted to win the rugby games, they wanted me in the first team, but they didn't want to put me in the first team. So officially I was in the second team, I played every single game for the second team, but then I would put on another jersey and play for the first team. I played two

games, one after the other. I was also told that there was a big fight over whether I should be a prefect or not. Some of the female teachers wanted me to be a prefect and held their ground on that. I actually didn't want to be a prefect, but when they told me what a battle there had been over it, I said yes.

When I first refused to do cadets, I was caned. The military police came and took some of my friends out, not me, in a very aggressive way, and showed them pictures of dead bodies etc. I think they wanted to warn them against following me. One of the teachers came to me in a very sneering way and told me I would have to give a talk to all the boys in my year about why I had refused to do cadets. I think they thought I'd back down. But I got some help from a friend of mine whose brother was a student and in the UDF, and gave a good talk. And a lot of the kids were won over; not to the point of themselves refusing to do cadets, but to be supportive. I actually didn't feel alienated from the other kids.

My father, who came from a working class family, had been a cub growing up in England. It had been a wonderful things for him, because he got to see the countryside, and they went on camps and hikes. So it was something he really wanted me to do. I also went on hikes, in the Drakensberg, which was nice. There two scout troops in Kloof. One seemed to be very easy going, just about having fun. But mine was actually quite sadistic. There were a lot of older boys some of whom were real bullies. My experience of being a boy child was always easy, because I was always bigger and stronger. Scouts became much more linked in with militarism than cadets. They had this competitive hike co-organised by the army. They had soldiers there, and military equipment, they used stun grenades to simulate attacks on us, we had ratpacks. It was like basic training. I stopped being a scout at the end of Std.9. I had enjoyed the experience of nature, but I found the rest of it really pointless. It became a space that wasn't nice. The troop meetings on Friday night just didn't appeal to me anymore.

I assumed after school that I would go to prison, but that it would be too harsh on my mother and my sister to go straight from school, so I'd go to university first, for 3 or 4 years, and then I'd go to jail. I thought it would easier for them then, I'd be older. I had no real interest in a career or anything. It never entered my head that things would change, the state seemed impregnable. So I didn't have any career plans, or anything like that - six years was just such

a long time, I didn't think about after jail. From when I was 16 until I finished university, the future was going to prison. I didn't think beyond that.

I definitely didn't have any friends at school in a similar position. At university, I met some people who were concerned about conscription. They tended to be older than me, and they very nice and very sincere, but they felt a lot older. I'd gone to university with this idea that I got from my parents and their friends that students were basically hippy, left-wing. I expected them to be more like me. That's not at all what I found. I was put into William O'Brien residence in PMB, 440 boys, four fifths of them white. I wanted to go to PMB to be away from home, but not too far, as part of the process of preparing my family for losing me to prison. We had become very close. In William O'Brien I was basically completely ostracised by the right wing racists. They were very violent and aggressive. I didn't understand their culture at all until I started to see some movies about Vietnam - it was very militarized. At my first meal, I sat down with some of the black kids, and that was basically it for me. It was terribly sexist and racist, with huge amounts of alcohol being consumed in a very organised and ritualistic way. I was constantly threatened with violence by the white students. So there was a very limited space I could occupy, completely in the black space. The first people who really looked after me were the black workers, in the kitchens. Some guys tried to attack me, one of the cooks helped me. They were very nice to me, and through them, I got a little bit involved in what was happening in Pietermaritzburg at the time, through their communities.

I socialised only with the black students - so conscription wasn't a big issue. Outside of the residence there were the white left-wing students. I'd expected to find a home with them, but to my surprise I didn't. For a couple of reasons. For one thing, they were like a sub-culture; they would all smoke all the time, and dressed in a particular way, defining themselves against other people. And I also just didn't like the ANC, I didn't like the way students just slavishly followed the ANC, and I didn't like some of the black activists I met, especially around Harry Gwala. To me it was incredibly authoritarian. The politics I liked was much more at the community level, the attempts of the workers on campus to unionise. The ANC stuff was militaristic, dogmatic, authoritarian, demagogic. I just didn't like it. I wouldn't say I found a political home. But in a concrete sense I didn't know what I was for, because I didn't see it or encounter it. My best experiences were with the workers. That was warm, open, I

would spend the evening with them, drinking beers, playing music. But it wasn't a project. The closest I came to really being involved in something, was when I was asked whether I might be prepared to shoot an Inkatha warlord (on the grounds that he had such strong muthi that if any black person tried to shoot him, the bullet would either turn to water or turn around and shoot them). I thought about it at some length, and eventually agreed. It didn't actually come close to that. There some meetings, and I was introduced to some people. I had seen what he'd done, because I used to go into some of the communities in that area. There was this idea that if white people were there, there wouldn't be an attack. I got involved in a university project to support people in the violence, but also through the workers I knew. I was acutely aware of the violence. But nothing happened with the assassination plan because Harry Gwala vetoed it. It went as far as thinking through the logistics - when, where. I agreed to do it because the state was supporting him; he was killing people. What alternative was there? I did wrestle with it, I thought about it a lot.

I studied English at university because it was the one subject I liked at school; I studied Philosophy I thought it would give me something to think about in jail. Most of what I studied was crap. It was really removed from my reality. Outside of English, I went through university without reading a single book by a black person, or anyone from the Third World. I was very conscious of this, because I was reading my own stuff. When I went to university I didn't have a sense of myself as a person who would be good at it. I hadn't been very good at school. I didn't think of myself as an intelligent person. I thought university was a space where these elevated very intelligent people went. I just hoped I wouldn't fail. Maybe it was because my parents put it on a pedestal, as something they couldn't have, they thought university was important. I did do very well in Philosophy, I got 98% or something, which was kind of a shock to me. But on the whole I wasn't encountering ideas that were useful to think about, social, political ideas, not in Philosophy not in Politics, maybe a little bit in English. There some amazing courses. But my problem was that those very good academics tended to generally be Marxists, and my encounter with Marxism tended to be as disappointing as my encounter with the ANC. Marxism struck me as overwhelmingly authoritarian. Also, I thought racism was fundamental in South Africa; and all the Marxists that I met were generally white, and used Marxism to rule out any discussion about race. And to me that was just wrong. So again I just felt really on my own, essentially, as I had been

since eleven. It was only much much later, in my late 30s that I started revising my opinion of Marx, and actually reading Marx. I didn't even want to read Marx, I had such a visceral antipathy to it. Marx was represented as structuralist, which of course it's not when you read it, but that's how it was presented, with no space for agency, a complete denial of race, and this authoritarianism. It took me twenty years to get over that, and actually read Marx.

I finished University in 1992. I was on the register of conscientious objectors, and I wrote the army a letter and said I'm not coming, and had a difficult conversation explaining that to my family, which I had been dreading since I was a teenager. We hadn't had that conversation before. So I waited, and I was called up, and I didn't go, and they didn't come to fetch me. After a while, I realised they weren't going to come. That was the year that they still kept the call up, but they stopped prosecuting people that didn't come. So I had to think about the future, which I had not done at all.

I tried to get a job as a journalist, because I was interested in writing, but I didn't have success with that. So I then had this idea that I wanted to hike through Africa; but I didn't have any money. So I tried to make some money. I was waitering, a cashier, eventually I decided to go to England, and make some money there, and do it that way round. I had an English passport, because of my father. I worked in a factory in Ealing, and had other jobs like that - I worked as a labourer, I was shop assistant, but I never had any money there, either, really. When I got there I went along to see the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but they were very sceptical, I think they had enough people coming along there as spies, so they told me to go and see the ANC. I thought about it a lot; I even went to Finsbury Park, thinking of going to their office, but I just didn't like what I saw in Maritzburg. Authoritarian, militaristic, demagogic; I just didn't like it. I participated in the UDF stuff, the big marches, some stuff about collecting food for people who had been displaced by the violence, also through Churches - though I hadn't been a Christian since I was about 16. I felt comfortable with the UDF stuff. But I didn't feel comfortable with the ANC. The UDF was more democratic, people could participate more, it was more reflective, it was more inclusive, the older people that I met, I could think, I'd like to be like these people when I'm grown up. It was like a mirror image of the ANC. And in the ANC there was also all this completely uncritical stuff, despite the fact that it was 1989, about the Soviet Union, which I just didn't buy.

In England I read a lot, what I could. The left-wing people I encountered there were the SWP, who just gave me the creeps; they were a cult, basically. I have since met people in the SWP who were actually very nice. I didn't encounter anything that worked for me. There were courses for unemployed people on writing, journalism, which wasn't very useful, but through that I met someone who was the former president of the British Union of Journalists, and went to her house - one of the few occasions where I actually met English people outside of the work relationship - and she told me how disappointed she had been on a trip to Kenya to find everyone drinking coke and wearing t-shirts. So there was really nothing for me to engage with. I did go around Europe, but not Africa, because things changed at home. I was reading all five of the broadsheets every day, just being obsessively interested in what was happening at home. I wanted to come home and be part of it, so I came home.

I still had this vague idea that I wanted to be a journalist, but I didn't really have any strong sense of what I would do. I got back at Christmas, 1994, after the elections - I voted in England. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't see myself as the kind of person who would have a career. I wasn't really confident about that.

I just got offered a job. UDW wasn't in a particularly good state at that point, and they were looking for someone to teach philosophy, and one of the guys there was doing a PhD with the department in Maritzburg, and asked them if there was someone, and they called me up and asked if I would come and teach. So that's what happened.

It was wonderful for me. For the first time in my life I was around adult men that I liked and respected. They were intelligent, without being pretentious. They were socially committed without being dogmatic or authoritarian. They enjoyed things like music. When they were white they weren't racist, or sexist, or like the men that on the whole I had encountered. Up until then, there'd always be a point at which I'd recoil, particularly from the racism. I really liked being around them. Both of the men in the department, Mabogo More and Ben Parker, were very kind to me, and treated me as a person who should be taken seriously. I was 24; at staff meetings, which were run democratically, my opinion would be taken as seriously as anyone else's.

I still didn't think I could be an academic. In the beginning, I could hardly speak in the academic context. But I guess that would be the beginning of the process of thinking differently about myself. The students were fantastic. I'm still in contact with three of the students in the first class I taught. They were nearly the same age as I was, and quite sceptical about this young white guy teaching them. I'd never thought about teaching, but it just turned out I was a naturally good teacher. What they liked was that I took them seriously. I challenged them.

Under apartheid UDW was a basically Indian university; then they decided it should be two-thirds working class African students. They weren't prepared. The most common response from the staff was to drop standards; I refused to do that. I assumed that the working class African students could do they work as well as anyone. I just didn't think anything different. I don't know why, I didn't have proof, I just didn't believe they couldn't do it.

There were two kinds of politics; student exclusions, and then the whole thing that came to a head in 1996, with Ashwin, eventually taking over the campus. They intersected at times. It was incredibly complex, there were so many things going on at UDW at that time. There was an old guard, very resistant to change, that was racist, often corrupt; on the other hand, the change that was happening, even back then, was in the form of neoliberalism, managerialism. At the time I didn't have the vocabulary to put a name to this. At the same time there were internecine battles. The philosophy department was a kind of oasis at the time, committed to teaching the students. We just focused on that. We were mostly optimistic about the prospect of transformation. I was teaching Fanon, possibly the first in South Africa to do that.

I was quite attracted to some of Ashwin's rhetoric, but it was extremely demagogic. There was some outright thuggery. I didn't know what to make of it. They were using a leftwing discourse, but the people they were mobilising were basically fighting for Indian privilege, a racist mobilisation; that's how they expressed it – "this is our space, and it's being taken away by these black people". I guess the idea was that the progressive ideas would trickle down, but it didn't happen. So internally there was this visceral racism and externally there was the left discourse.

I was there for seven years. The teaching was always cool, but it did become more and more difficult. That is where I did start becoming involved in politics. I did some work for the TAC when it started in 2000. We started a project on campus, Fazel, myself and the students; we organised a march about the price of treatment. I didn't know Ashwin, I knew who he was. I did some teaching at the Workers' College, and I met him there. By then he'd been kicked out of UDW. People were often in awe of him. They were starting to do this work in Chatworth. I was quite moved by some of the things Ashwin said. I learned a lot from that. I learned how to do a lot of things.

Adam had been in the politics department at UDW. When he got the job at CCS, he wanted me to go. I felt it would be selling out, going to a privileged university. He encouraged me, and Vishnu Padayachee, head of the school, had a discussion with me. There was this idea at UDW that there would be this foundation course for all students; Jonathan Jansen announced at a public meeting that I would be running this course. I arrived at work one day, and was told I had to run this course, with 3 days' notice. I had to get a curriculum together. I taught 5 classes a day, 200 students in each class. Slowly, slowly I was able to get some support.

I had complete carte blanche to do what I wanted. We had five sessions, one on AIDS, one on gender, one on race, one on reading the media critically. No one cared, because things were too chaotic. But we managed to do some cool things. One of my former students was at the Mail & Guardian, and we managed to get them to give us a bulk discount, we got all of the students a subscription. And then we'd use that to engage with. It was really experimental, but completely exhausting. I had agreed to do it, if I could go back to philosophy. But they wouldn't let me. The course was compulsory, and they charged it at a higher rate than other courses, and they were spending almost nothing, so they were making a lot of money out of it. So I did for it two years. I don't think I ever recovered, I still feel exhausted. I was becoming more the co-ordinator, but it was a lot of work. The people who were teaching were mostly my students, they needed a lot of support. 5 classes a day, of 200 students each. Can you imagine the marking? So I left.

At CCS, I was the second person there. It was really about setting up, getting the website up. Adam spent about 3 days a week travelling, I got it set up. There was a lot of money coming

in for research. I managed all that stuff. Initially, it was just the two of us, then for particular projects, people were brought in. But the best time was between Adam and Patrick, when Vishnu ran it, we brought in people like Raj. It was an amazing space then. About a year and a half. It was a hell of a lot of work, but cool. I wrote a lot of reports for funders, edited the books. But it was nice. We could publish our work, I was in charge of the website; we had a good archive, which people still use. We could pay people to produce stuff about contemporary issues. We'd commission people like car guards to write stuff. I set up the Wolpe lecture series. We invited some very cool people.

In 2005, there were these protests happening all over the country. In March there was a protest in Kennedy Road. I read about it in the Sunday Tribune. I went to look for the place. I didn't have any intention of trying to work with people politically or anything. I was just struck by these protests happening all over the place, and all these academics pontificating about why, without actually talking to anyone. I just wanted to know what was going on. So I went there. When I arrived, there was a line of policemen, all armed, with police vehicles; and a line of young men. And a stand off. I didn't know, but 14 people had been arrested the morning before, and there just been a march on the police station to demand their release, and the march had been broken up. So I went and stood with the line of young men. It was a very tense moment, not the ideal moment to start chatting to people. One of the young men there grabbed me and started slapping me around a bit. He had a stick. But I never get frightened in situations like that, I get very calm. I just stayed, and there was a meeting, and I asked if I could come. There were hundreds of people there. The hall was packed. S'bu was speaking. I later discovered he had been hidden, dressed in women's clothes and escaped, got in through the back of the hall. My Zulu was not perfect, but I understood enough to know what was going on. I didn't take notes or anything, but they were talking about what happened at the police station, what happened to the land, about how to get those who were arrested out. And they were talking about being alone, about not trusting anyone, so they would have to represent themselves. There was no screaming and shouting, there was no demagoguery, there was just rational discussion. That was something I felt comfortable with, it was attractive to me. It was different from what I'd seen in Maritzburg, and in Chatsworth. It wasn't about S'bu performing, or trying to be the big man. It was, "Look, what are we going to do?". And people participating from the floor. But then I was asked to leave, which I did.

I went along to the court. I went because I wanted to try to understand. It was clear to me that the way they were living was unjust, that their cause was just. I didn't have a sense of who they were, what their politics was, what they were trying to do. I didn't have a sense of that. But the fragment of the meeting I had been to was, my impression was, there was a fundamental sincerity. I thought I would just sit at the back, and see how the state responded. But they didn't have a lawyer, they were not allowed to represent themselves, and they were just sent straight back down to the cells. It took at most two seconds, they hadn't even all finished filing into the dock, and they were just sent down. I thought I could probably help with a lawyer, and that I should tell them that. I spoke to someone, and said I couldn't promise anything, but if you need a lawyer, I might be able to help. S'bu was there and I was introduced to him, and I explained who I was and said I might be able to help with a lawyer. And eventually they asked me to. It wasn't immediate, some people said we shouldn't trust this guy.

They thought I was a journalist the first time, and journalists were seen as against them, because the reporting had been mostly hostile. At that point, they hadn't seen the article in the Sunday Tribune, which was actually quite fair. But they just didn't know, and they were worried, and they had an incredibly strong feeling of being alone, isolated from the ANC, alone.

I had some contacts through the stuff I had done on AIDS and in Chatsworth, and I did manage to get a lawyer. I told them that if they wanted me to, I could try to write an article about Kennedy Road from their side. And then they asked me to come, and I met S'bu and others, and they took me around, and I met people. We were being watched the whole time by the police, they had a searchlight on us. I took notes, and I wrote it up like they told it to me, and it was published the next week. I took them some copies, they'd seen it, they were really excited about the article, they felt that for the first time they'd been fairly represented. So then they asked me to come to KRDC meetings, and I started to do so, every week after that.

It must have been 2005, I was 35 then, that was the first time I could be part of a political project with people that I really respected, and trusted and liked, in a project in which I didn't have to constantly wrestle with ambivalence. Except for the AIDS stuff, and the student stuff

at UDW everything up to then had been led by someone who was demagogic. Here were people who were achieving things, stopping evictions, had vastly more political experience than me, it was rational, it was kind, the way they treated each other. There was a real sense of people together, working it out together, their project, a sense of possibility, of collective excitement, like a kind of congregation.

The excitement in Kennedy Road was contagious. The excitement was because people finally felt they doing something on their own, as the poor, not as participants in someone else's project, it was tremendously liberating. People of a particular place in society, a particular exclusion.

In Maritzburg, an SRC person raped someone, but it was a comrade so all the comrades were expected to be silent. In Chatsworth there was a thuggery, an ugliness. Before going to a new community there was lots of strategizing: 'you say this, you say that'. It was all about performance and manipulation. Here it wasn't like that. There was a simple morality, similar to what I was taught as a child by mother. Be nice to people – respect other people, look after each other. Abahlali would just go. There was no plan, it was just a discussion. 'What should we do?' I'd always been told by the 'political experts' that to be effective politically one can't be ethical. Abahlali proved to me that this isn't true. They're so much more effective than all the political experts that think that any politics that isn't grounded in thuggery, manipulation and misrepresentation is naïve or romantic. In Abahlali, the ethical and the political came together – that was central to Ubuhlali. S'bu said "we are the people who don't count" long before anyone went to Ranciere. There was a thinking there, an ethical thinking, rooted in in the real lives and struggles of real people. I felt fully politically at home for the first time in my life.

10.8 S'bu Zikode

[S'bu was a founding member of Abahlali. Having served as President of the movement, he is now Chairperson]

I was born in Loskop, near the little town of Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal, in 1975. I went to four different schools, three in the Estcourt area, but the 4th school was in Bergville. This was because my life was not stable. My mother was a domestic worker for a white couple in Estcourt - they were good people compared to many at that time, they bought me a bike for a gift. You didn't really see much of that at that time. We were four children. I am last born, with a twin sister. In African culture at that time, your parent, the person who brought you up, wasn't necessarily your biological parent. I lived with different families, because my mother was at work, not necessarily relatives, also neighbours. She only came about once a month. We siblings were divided up, living with different families - even I and my twin sister were divided up. This really shaped me as I am today. I have struggled a lot with that, being brought up by different families.

The first school was a community school, built by the community. There weren't enough classrooms, so some of us studied under trees. I knew nothing about the government at that time, because it was deep rural area, but people felt that school was important. There was no support by the state, I think even the teachers were paid by the community. One of the most important things for me about school was the scouts. I remember clearly one of my teachers asked me to join the boy scouts. I must have been about 14 years old, because I remember that when you were smaller, you had to join the cubs, but I was old enough to join the scouts. It gave us an opportunity to be seen as unique - we were picked out from amongst many boys. I'm not sure what the criteria were. We were taught very good skills. The teaching was about citizenship, manhood, responsibility. We were taught that citizenship was about loyalty, something very good. We had a unique uniform, which made you stand out, not just a normal boy, a boy who had to stand out in the future. As leaders. Within these teaching what became clear was that you were not just a normal boy, you were trained to be a man, but not just a normal man, a responsible man - a man who would take responsibility, who would provide leadership, a man who is loyal, a man who can provide assistance.

There was a boy scout promise; you promised to do your duty to God and the country, to help others at all times, and to obey the scout law. There were ten scout laws - that a scout's honour is to be trusted, a scout must be loyal, be useful and help others. I remember them very well. We had to memorise them. We were very young, but this teacher made them exciting. We learned the motto "Be prepared". Then there were the outdoor activities, about nature, exploring, adventure. We had camps. This was very exciting, to sleep under the stars. It was something very big. To be able to cope with difficulties in nature, mountains, rivers. But also to survive within constrained resources - cook without utensils, etc.

Then there was the Scout jamboree, that brought us all together. A rally, a big gathering, for something exciting. This was all in the 80s - the political violence was rife at that time. Good teaching, good training, which helped me a lot to understand life - but it was limited in politics. There was no party politics, it was about neutrality, about being loyal, to the country. The spirit of loving one's nation, a responsible citizen, to take the lead. This training gave me in particular training meant for adult leaders. I remember attending training for troop scouters, meant for scout trainers. In one course, I was the only scholar - everyone else was a teacher. The principal of the school I transferred to realised immediately that I was different, because of the way I walked, dressed, behaved. He told my teacher I was unique, I was different. In that school, there were very few teachers who were involved in the scouts. I was given the chance to train other boys, because no teacher in that school was prepared to take this forward. I was sent for more training, that didn't necessarily match my age. This was all happening in school.

Outside the school, this was in the middle of the political violence. Outside of the school, the ANC people were accusing the boy scouts of being in alliance with Inkatha, being a 'lamp' of Inkatha. This was partly because of the kakhi uniform we wore, which was like the KwaZulu Police. We were called sons of Buthelezi. On the other side, the IFP was very confused about who we were, but there wasn't much focus on us, because we were young boys, and it was happening in school, so people didn't really know what we were doing. So people didn't trust us. At the community level, the area I was living in was IFP dominated. In order not to be burned, you had to attend Inkatha meetings. These weren't about politics, about ideas, they were about attack or defence. The word 'scouting' was often used in these meetings. For me,

this gave a different meeting to the word scout. In order to save my life and my family, I had to be part of this, this gang, this horrible history.

Where I grew up, if you were seen to be liking school, dressed smart, progressive somehow, not associating with 'gangs', that was a crime to the 'gangs' that were part of the IFP. Any uniqueness made you an enemy. A lot of people were killed for that. I lost a lot of friends who were critical, who were in opposition to what was going on. Mobilisation was violent, people were forced into groups, not by ideas but by force. It wasn't about politics. In the meetings, they would talk about defensive tactics, or launching warfare. Every afternoon, there were loudhailers calling for meetings.

There were just lines - on this side of the road, ANC, on this side, Inkatha - no matter what people living there actually thought. One day, these was a shooting. People with guns would be behind you, you, without any weapon would be forced to be at the front. If you ran back, you'd run into the guns. I remember one person was shot in front of me, which gave me an excuse to run away, because I could carry this shot person away. That's how I escaped. We had no weapons, we were just kids. Then realising that on the other side were the SADF, soldiers, not ANC.

My worry with all this politics was that a lot of people were killed for nothing. I cannot find any peace with this. Even now when we people say they were proud to have sacrificed, etc., it's all lies. Maybe there were some people who actually knew what was going on, but most people didn't. Some just enjoyed carrying big guns. In the meetings you were forced to volunteer to wage attacks. If you didn't volunteer, you were identified as a problem. Your home would be burned in broad daylight. You couldn't report this to anyone, no-one would help you. You would know that this would happen.

Only two or three years after that did I realise it was lies, it wasn't about politics, it was for nothing. There were a lot of funerals. If you didn't go to a funeral, you were suspect. If you went to a funeral, people were killed at funerals, because you were all there, and identified. I lost some friends, who weren't killed for ideas, philosophy; they didn't know about these, they were like me, our minds were dark to ideas, philosophy. Even elderly people, who didn't

know what was happening, were killed. The meetings weren't about explaining anything, just about physical power. Those who died didn't know what they died for; those that killed didn't know what they were killing for. It was about numbers, numbers of people killed. One day, these people killed; so next day, you must kill back. Those people killed six, so today you must pay back, you must kill double that number.

After a long time, I realised that all that helped prepare me - it taught me that things would not be easy. Scouts especially. I remember going to Lexden, in Pietermaritzburg, for Patrol Leaders Training Unit (PLTU). I still have the certificate. We arrived in this camp. I thought it was an army camp. We had a lot of fun, but a lot of difficult physical training. At times, we were starved; treated very badly. The instructors would be very violent. But I remember on the last day we had a beautiful gathering, with the instructors smiling for the first time, how we were suddenly given nice food, a beautiful dinner, powerful talks, so that we would think positively. This made you reflect on the fact that the ill treatment wasn't because you were hated, but being shown that life is not easy - if you could survive this, you could survive anything. Some hadn't, they had left. In the camp, there were areas that were 'no man's land' - you would have to run like mad across this land. We didn't even get to sleep, we were given things we had to do, projects we had to accomplish, working through the night. When I went back to report to my principal, he laughed - I realised he knew what was going to happen there. It was about me making a decision about whether I would go on or not with Scouts. When I was arrested in 2006, I spent the whole night in the cell deciding whether I would go on with this or not, making a decision. We were assaulted. I had a terrible headache. The whole night I was thinking whether or not to continue with what I was doing. I hadn't decided by the time I had to appear in court. The policeman came down and said to the other prisoners, Is Jacob Zuma here? When no-one responded, the policeman said, if you know that you have red t-shirt supporters, come out. When I came out, I realised the corridor, the court, outside, was full of red-shirted supporters. And the singing outside. That's when I made a decision to proceed, because of the support. We hadn't known what was happening outside. After we were released, we found out that there had been a lot of mobilising, that people had even been shot, in support of us. In fact, people from different settlements had gone to Kennedy Road, had marched to demand our release, and in doing so, had been shot. This was like my experience at Lexden. In that camp, I decided I would go on - when we were told why

we were treated the way we were, I understood the reasons, they made sense to me.

Scouting was the most exciting thing for me about school - time was set aside for scouting within school. I did very well in school. Part of the reason was because of the scouting and the opportunities it gave me. I failed Grade 1, and I remember I cried the whole day. At that time, my twin sister passed, and she was very excited. I was naturally quiet, she wasn't. There was a feeling of competition. I was very angry and very hurt and shamed. I hid away. I felt that everyone could see on my face that I had failed. It was a painful experience. But from then on, I was the first in my class, I would get the highest mark in nearly every subject. I think this was because of the lesson I learned from failing Grade 1. I didn't do as well in matric as I was expected to. But I didn't feel I learned much from school outside of scouting. In high school, I really liked history. I remember my history teacher used to say to me, you go and prepare this chapter, and then you give us the lesson. I don't know if it was deliberate. That was hard. To be given a chapter that you hadn't reached yet as a class. The first chapter I was given was about the Voortrekkers. I remember I had to go and research what the word meant; and then explain it to the class - 'voor' means 'before' - they were the Boers that were travelling first. So I was challenged, but I wanted to prove a point, that I could do this, and I did very well.

I always wanted to be a lawyer, although I didn't know why. The principal and teachers and other kids said I should be a teacher. I had no reason to argue against this, I just knew I wanted to be a lawyer. I think the profession of lawyer was highly regarded, it had a lot of status compared to the usual professions of teacher, nurse, policeman. People in rural areas didn't really think about law, it was very abstract. I wanted to stand out, when I was picked out I realised this was what I wanted, who I was, what I wanted to be. My scout training was about being the first person to stand up and talk. I was naturally a very quiet, shy person - but the boy scout movement helped me with that. My sister was also more outspoken, more confident. I remember learning that the founder of boy scouts discovered that boys were very shy until they were taken away from girls. So put them on their own.

As I said, I didn't do as well as expected in matric - as well as I had expected, and as well as others had expected. At the time I was in matric, there were a lot of family problems, which

disturbed my focus. I was also doing a lot of thinking, about my family background, how I grew up, and about my future. What was I going to do. There was no career guidance at school, no-one to advise or trust or rely on, about the future. It was just accepted that when you finished matric, you would go and study, or go and work - in the city. This assumed you had friends or family in the city you could stay with. I didn't have friends or family in a city, that I could go to. I also didn't have friends. I wasn't very friendly, although I became less shy because of being moved from family to family, sometimes being ill-treated; and because of scouts.

What I enjoyed learning most in Grade 11 and 12 was the chapter on Cold War; the war of ideas, capitalism and communism, which I had to teach.

I got a university exemption, that qualified me to go to university, even though I wasn't satisfied with how I did. I had applied to university (UDW), but I didn't know what I would do if I was accepted. I had a brother-in-law whom I used to visit to do piece work during holidays, before I left school. There was no-one else I could go to, so I went to him; he was open about me staying with him, but I was not his responsibility, so he did not commit himself to supporting me, in terms of university fees. But then he was relocated to Johannesburg. I then had to find new accommodation. I realised that the school hadn't given us any guidance about dealing with this. It became a crisis. I realised I couldn't carry on at University. I nearly committed suicide. I had never thought of anything but being a lawyer, I had no other plan. I didn't know about any way of getting support. Standard Bank offered loans, but only to families who earned R5 000 a month. This was a big amount of money. The only person I knew who earned that was my brother-in-law, but I didn't even approach him, I didn't want to burden him. I realised I had no future. I accepted that. When I stayed with him, travelling to the university, I saw, for the first time, the informal settlement of Kennedy Road. He lived in Clare Estate. I never thought I could live in a place like that. But when I dropped out of university, I had to go there - I couldn't afford to live anywhere else, and I was not prepared to go back to the rural area, because that would show me a failure - not able to go to university, not able to get a job. The city hides you. You would rather suffer here, and prove yourself capable.

I chose Kennedy because it was close to where I had lived with my brother in law. This was before I met my wife. My brother-in-law, as a technician, had helped fix pumps at petrol stations. He spoke to one of the petrol stations about me; they liked people from rural areas, because they were not troublesome, they were still innocent. So I got a job at the petrol station close to Kennedy Road. I found a shack to rent for R80 a month. I stayed for a year there. Then someone, I knew him from the service station - an old, very humble man who used to come to the petrol station for petrol, or park his vehicle there and then walk to the settlement. I used to help him, and we became friends. I didn't know where he was staying. Then I found out he was living in Kennedy Road. He had a big shack, with a big yard and also a VIP toilet (which was proof of ownership). He was considering selling this, because he had bought a plot on the other side. I was still new to the settlement, I didn't know many people. So he sold the shack to me. He made an affidavit to this effect.

I was very shy when I moved to the settlement. My consciousness at that point gave me hard questions about the place. I thought people weren't doing enough to get out of the place; were accepting it too much. I decided I must do what I can to make things better. I made a new commitment - a human being cannot live like this; this is not fair. In the settlement was one man who was the chair of the settlement; there was no committee, just this one man. He had a shop, which he expanded, and a car - people feared him. There was no democracy. He would attend meetings outside, about the settlement. He made decisions on his own, negotiated on his own or with one or two people he favoured. Then he would hold meetings to tell people this. In the meetings, there was only this one man talking, without even a piece of paper. The man used a traditional style of leadership - a single man dominating, women not speaking. I realised people weren't happy with him, but feared him - although women did not fear him as much. I realised that people were capable, but were afraid. People saw he was really only interested in making money for himself, that he was happy for the shacks not to be developed.

There were a lot of young people, and we got organised - not about him, but about what young people could do in the settlements. So the young people decided to mobilise other young people, through sport, talent shows etc. Then shifting to development issues, as a conscious strategy. One of the things identified as a challenge was that this man wouldn't share responsibility. In 2000, we had our first democratic election in Kennedy. I was elected

chairperson of the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC) in 2000, and again in 2001. The only experience I had of leadership at this time was being involved in the boy scouts. In the same year, I joined the ANC branch. The ANC was seen as pro-development. In the KRDC, it was seen as ineffective to pursue development in the area on its own. I was elected vice chair of the BEC in 2001. There are about seven informal settlements in the one ward. But in the meetings in the ANC branch, we couldn't come up with our own agenda - the agenda was always there. So although the issue of housing was a priority for many, there was no space to talk about it. Someone from the ANC region would always ask us to talk about a specific subject - eg. street names. And when we tried to raise our issues, we would get stopped. It was easy to see how you could go back to the people and lie - you haven't had a chance to raise issues you were mandated to take, but you can't tell the people that. So you have to lie to look good, to look smart, that you've done what you're supposed to do, when you have betrayed the people. This went on and on. My response was to say you can't sustain the lies. You can get away with it today, but not tomorrow and the next day. So you have to be truthful. So we reported to the Kennedy Road community that the BEC didn't give us a chance to talk. It was only about party politics. It was only about who do we elect, delegates to meetings etc. We told the people it was not a vehicle for development. We saw how the BEC dismantled the actual efforts of people. It distracted us, sending us to conferences. You had a mandate from the community to talk about people's real needs, but instead you had to talk about the regional executive council, the parliament - lists. For the whole year. And then you had to choose people you did not even know.

The philosophy of the ANC was fine, it was worth joining, but the practice was something completely different; it did not help with people's needs. So we dropped out of that. From there, KRDC started engaging with the city, outside of the ANC or BEC. The idea was to mobilise first within the community, that the community could lead the struggle. Our first meeting with the municipality, it was raining. We got to the offices of the municipality. One of the men in the KRDC had mud on his shoes, and was sent outside. This really hurt me. This man had a mandate to speak for his community, but he was treated like this by the officials. In the meeting, we said this man must come in, he is part of us. I hated the environment in which we lived, that degrades you, that makes you not count.

We had several meetings with the municipality. Every time we met, we'd report back at a mass meeting. In 2004, there was a time where the municipality said that different departments would come together at a meeting to finally decide about the future of Kennedy Road. The Department of Health would be part of it, because of dump, the Department of Water, the Department of Housing. We were told once they had met, they would be able to give us their position. We had high hopes of this meeting. But no-one came back to us to give us feedback. Then we demanded to know what had happened at the meeting. We heard rumours. We heard that the head of the Department of Environment was apparently not happy with formalisation of the settlement because of issues like soil stability etc. So we just heard it was unlikely the municipality would agree to development in the area. There was also a lot of negative press about the settlements - about fires, about smell, about landslides, about how steep it was, and how much it would cost to develop. We couldn't understand this, when the Indian middle class community was all around us, in the same place, with the same issues. When we raised this, it was clear these were political questions. In our final KRDC meeting in 2004, we came up with a plan for 2005 - with a Plan B (I had learned this from my life). We declared 2005 as a year of action, because the city had fooled us. We would mobilise and expand to voice our anger, to be counted, to be taken seriously.

In March 2005, the city finally agreed to meet with us. We were expecting a formal response to the meeting of the departments in the previous year. Instead of giving us that report, they just promised that they would develop Kennedy Road; and a piece of land near Kennedy Road - what became known as "the promised land" - was to be set aside for low cost housing. People were very excited. Two weeks later, a bulldozer was clearing the land. As people got off the buses they could see what was happening. People were very excited - the low cost housing project was coming. But we were worried, because we hadn't been told anything. We asked the bulldozer driver, who said that the land had been purchased to build a brickyard. It was hard to tell the people. People were very angry. At the mass meeting, people agreed to stop the bulldozing until we were listened to. But the driver wouldn't stop, and people became violent. We called a meeting of the ward councillor and officials on the promised land. But none of them came - instead, they sent the police vehicles. People became angry, and blocked the road. It was spontaneous, it was not planned. No-one knew about the Gatherings Act, that we needed permission. People were just angry after waiting in the sun

waiting for the officials. So they went and blocked Umgeni Road for three hours. Again, instead of officials, the police came. I was leading that, with other KRDC members. 14 people were arrested, they became known as the Kennedy 14. This included school kids, who couldn't write their March exams. When they were arrested, they were bitten by dogs, and beaten by the police. I was given a hard time by the parents of these kids. It was a difficult experience. Women came, in tears. It became a question of personal responsibility. People would ask, why weren't you arrested? I don't know. I don't remember escaping. We realised later that police were serious about arresting people - we thought they were just wanting to disperse us. We also didn't realise at the time that it was a political act. It was only on the next day, with the media coverage, we made headlines, that we realised.

The following day, we mobilised, and marched to the police station. We heard that they had been charged with public violence. We argued, we're the public. So which public are they referring to? If it's us, we are the same public as is now saying release them. If not, we were all part of that, arrest us all. Half way to the police station, we were dispersed with stun grenades, rubber bullets. I was identified as a culprit by the station commander. I knew he had been instructed to. It was clear I was now personally targeted. I was given a woman's pinafore as a disguise, to hide in the crowd. The police blocked the road; there were high walls on each side. They were making sure to catch me. I was given a doek to put on, and managed to escape. A delegation was elected on the road, and sent to the station to negotiate. It was decided I should not be part of that, because I would be arrested; that I should rather hide. The delegation negotiated very well, but the 14 were not released. The 14 were sent to Westville, they were in jail for a month. At the court, when they appeared, we first met Richard Pithouse. He had come to the march, but we didn't trust him. When he came to court, we were still suspicious, and angry. I remember very well he was very humble and careful. But we did not want any stranger amongst us, also because he was white. The following day, when the news broke, and we made headlines, we realised this was because of him. Slowly, slowly we started trusting him. He offered to find a lawyer.

We had a welcome back party for the Kennedy 14 when they were released from prison. That's when I delivered the second Nelson Mandela speech - that the 14 were the second Nelson Mandela; and about the personal responsibility and pressure I felt. I argued that they

were important; their suffering was the basis for our struggle. Their sacrifice was important.

In the meantime, we had organised a third march. This time, we did it through the Gatherings Act. Richard had introduced Raj Patel to us, who gave us a booklet about it. So we followed the steps. We had high morale and energy. At that march, we had close to 10 000 people. We shook the whole city. Without us realising it, that march was joined by a number of informal settlements around. They said they were not there to support us, but because they felt like us, they were the same, the issues they were resisting were the same. They said all your complaints are our complaints. We were also joined by the socialist student movement and some academics from the university. We realised the amazing support we had. It was huge.

In that march, Kennedy Road decided to make t-shirts saying "Kennedy Road says 2005 is the year of action". Everyone wore that t-shirt. It made us proud to design that t-shirt. Faizel Khan helped us facilitate that. This influenced the fifth march. This was hosted by Quarry Road, a neighbouring settlement. As the hosts, they decided what would be written on the t-shirts, "Quarry Road says no to eviction". No-one was arrested. This created a sense of brotherhood, of comradeship. The 6th march, in November, was to be hosted by Foreman Road settlement. They had designed their own t-shirt, with the name of the settlement. But in the meeting before, of 14 settlements, on 14th October, the question about what was to be our demand, what was to be the message on the t-shirt. There was a long debate. We realised that we were being divided - one settlement named, proud, not others. Then someone at the meeting said let's just say Abahlali baseMjondolo, we are all living in the shacks, so why are we not saying that. And in the same question of who are we, that was discussed at the meeting, the same idea came up. So Abahlali baseMjondolo emerged as a name; an organic, collective thing, accommodating everyone. Not the idea of one person or one settlement.

We didn't realise this was the beginning of a long journey. I didn't know it was going to be like this. I don't know what the future is.

10.9 Conclusion

What do these stories have to say about 'unlearning' hegemony? And how does this relate to the adult learning theories discussed in Chapter 8, and to Badiou's theory of the event? I thus now turn to these questions

Chapter 11: Analysis and discussion

11.1 Introduction

S'bu Zikode, in his interview with me, said that he thought this thesis is about "What has driven you into this". In part, this is exactly what it is about - what people have experienced that has brought them to the point of aligning themselves with a movement like Abahlali baseMjondolo. The stories are extremely revealing about what attracted the participants to Abahlali; and it should be noted that the body language of everyone I interviewed changed at point at which we 'arrived' at Abahlali - they leaned forward, became much more fluent and passionate and emotional. However, the stories are obviously about a lot more than that.

In this chapter, I discuss how I analysed the stories, and what I think they say about learning and unlearning hegemony. I consider the usefulness of the three learning theories I discussed in Chapter 8 in helping account for this. Finally, I consider Badiou's theory of the event in the light of the stories, and in relation to the learning theories, in order to be able to gauge the extent to which it is applicable to an understanding of 'unlearning' hegemony.

11.2 Approach to data analysis

As stated in Chapter 1, my research questions are:

1.   Why have the activists considered in this study joined/aligned themselves with Abahlali baseMjondolo?

2.   Have these activists 'unlearned' the hegemony of our current context, and if so, how?

3.   To what extent was their 'unlearning' of hegemony informal, and how did this happen?

4.   What does Alain Badiou's theory of event-fidelity-truth contribute to understanding this process?

I used these questions as the basis for a first level of analysis of the stories. Once I had analysed the transcripts very broadly by research question, I then undertook a thematic analysis, using themes generated from the discussion in earlier chapters of this thesis. For example, in coding instances of hegemony, I used Gramsci's assertion that people 'learn' hegemony from family, church, media and school, and coded for these. This allowed me to see both whether this had in fact occurred as Gramsci claimed; but also where it might not have happened, or have been resisted, to link to both issues of resistance/counter-hegemony, and to issues about the 'terrain' of learning (formal/non-formal/informal). I also specifically coded based on the debates I have considered in this study about counter-hegemony and resistance. I thus specifically looked, for example, for ideas associated with within/without the state. Obviously, I was concerned with any instances of learning, and noted where things people had said related to any of the learning theories discussed in Chapter 8 (for example, instances where people spoke about emotions, am issue considered in my discussion of the critique of Mezirow's theory). Similarly, I used key ideas from Badiou's work to code the transcripts for instances of how they might relate to Badiou's theory (state of the situation/counting in/out; event; fidelity; truth). My coding was thus iterative and dialogic (See Appendix 3).

However, as discussed in Chapter 2, I also used event analysis, because of its clear usefulness in relation to Badiou's theory of the event. I identified significant events in each respondent's life, including family events (births, deaths and marriages; moving place, either of themselves or of family members where this affected them); formal education (where this happened, what it involved, how well they did, etc., for both school and post-school formal education), and where this was specifically mentioned, non-formal educational experiences; and work experiences. I then identified particularly traumatic or important events (See Appendix 3). My final stage in this preliminary analysis was to compare my events analysis of each participant's life to those of the other participants; and to log them against significant national and local events (eg. the states of emergency in the 1980s, the political violence; 1994). This allowed me to see, firstly, the extent to which the respondents had experienced stability or instability of home circumstances, education, working life (and how these coalesced); but secondly to compare life histories with other respondents by identifying common elements. I could thus see similarities and differences.

Finally, I used the 'critical events' approach of Webster and Mertova (2007) as discussed in Chapter 2. They say that "A critical event as told in a story reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller....It is almost always a change experience, and it can only ever be identified afterwards" (p.73). A critical event is not necessarily the specific incident itself; rather, "critical events lie between the flash-point incidents and the long-term consequences". Woods (1993a, p.357, cited in Webster and Mertova, 2007, p.84) says they are those events which "illuminate in an electrifying instant some key problematic aspect...and which contain, in the same instant, the solution". Though they occur within a structure, "critical events will always contain something that is at the same time outside and beyond the structure" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.83). There is thus considerable synergy between this 'critical event' and Badiou's 'Event', and it is for this reason that I chose to use this approach.

Webster and Mertova (2007, p.83) propose looking for the following in identifying critical events:

- they exist in a particular context;
- their impact on the people involved;
- they have life-changing consequences;
- they are unplanned;
- they may reveal patterns of well-defined stages;
- they are only identified after the event;
- they are intensely personal with strong emotional involvement.

Webster and Mertova also suggest looking for 'like' and 'other' events. A 'like' event is similar to a critical event in that it repeats the context, method and resources of a critical event, thus reinforcing or confirming the critical event itself, or broadening the issues it raises. An 'other' event is a "further event that takes place at the same time as critical and like events" (p.79), in other words, at the same time, or in the same place, or in the same context. Looking for 'like' and 'critical' events helped me to confirm my thinking about what constituted critical events for the participants. Whilst I did identify other specific critical events within some of the individual stories, it became clear that a critical event common to them all was the creation and/or discovery of Abahlali.

In my discussion below on what the stories have to say about learning and unlearning hegemony, and how it happens, I use my research questions as the organising principle.

11.3 Why have the activists considered in this study joined/aligned themselves with Abahlali baseMjondolo?

Whilst the paths to Abahlali were almost all very different, within the stories there is a startling similarity about reactions to Abahlali itself at the point of joining/aligning, and the sense of belonging they report. This is even more telling in that there is little difference between those who are shack dwellers themselves and actual members of Abahlali on the one hand, and those who are not shack dwellers and have supported or aligned themselves with the movement on the other.

Members of Abahlali talk about the movement in relation to other things. For Lindela, this is the ANC. He says that "at Foreman Road, we were planning to form our own thing, that would define ourselves - we used to call it the real ANC, or the non-discriminatory ANC, because we believed we were being discriminated against by the ANC. Most people in Foreman Road - nearly everyone - were from the Eastern Cape. We were discriminated against by the ANC committee, so we started our own organisation". He saw an Abahlali march on TV, "so I went to Kennedy Road and joined Abahlali":

> Abahlali is where I feel free, especially at meetings. I forget about my worries, everyone is my brothers and sisters. People don't mind me speaking Xhosa, compared to the ANC....Abahlali feels like I am joining the other part, the real ANC.

For Zodwa, Abahlali is something closely related to the ethos of living in the shacks; an experience that was very different from her expectations:

> When I came there, people in the settlement came to welcome me. That was different. In Enhlelekahle, no one does that, no-one cares about anyone, you only know your family. Here, in Kennedy Road, it was different, everyone was greeting me. I found there is life....It was something new to me to find a sense of belonging. In the

morning, people would come and ask, "Are you okay"? That meant a lot to me.

She said that she has stayed with Abahlali (despite considerable hardship) because of this ethos: "It's a mixture of how they have treated me, how welcoming they have been, and the strong feelings I have about what is right. If I had had strong feelings, but people hadn't welcomed me, I couldn't have done it". She also said "They are talking about the lives of the people directly".

Thus for Lindela and Zodwa, a prior sense of what was right or wrong ("strong feelings" as Zodwa puts it) fitted with their feeling of being welcomed, of belonging.

S'bu's case is clearly a little different, since he did not so much join the movement as take part in creating it (although he is very clear that Abahlali baseMjondolo emerged as "an organic, collective thing, accommodating everyone. Not the idea of one person or one settlement"). Nevertheless, remaining with the movement has been a matter of conscious choice: "When I was arrested in 2006, I spent the whole night in the cell deciding whether I would go on with this or not, making a decision." As he reports, he had not decided by morning. However, "when I came out, I realised the corridor, the court, outside, was full of red-shirted supporters. And the singing outside. That's when I made a decision to proceed, because of the support".

Mazwi, of all the Abahlali members, appears to have joined for very different reasons. His mother had joined early on, and through support via Abahlali, his high school fees had been paid. He started attending meeting "because I was in a school for a whole year without paying a cent". At the meetings, he heard them talking about housing, and thought "Maybe if I get involved, we could get a house, because my mother wasn't attending regularly". When he reported this to his mother, she confirmed that in fact she had joined the movement, not for school fees, but for a house. However, once he had started attending meetings, the experience affected him greatly:

> people were listening to me. They didn't say, "Hey, you are a young boy, you don't have a house, you don't talk". When I had my hand up, they would point at me, and I

would make a point, and then they will respect that point....when I make a point they actually listen to me. This had never happened before...The reason I joined Abahlali is because they gave me freedom. It's the only movement where I was free to talk....In Abahlali I would tell people about everything....I started being a free person, who could talk. That's why I joined the movement. Because they gave me freedom. It wasn't about land and housing, it was about me.

For those who were not living in the shacks and subsequently joined Abahlali as part of their own struggles, a similar sense of 'belonging' is apparent. Richard said that he had read about the Kennedy Road protest in the *Sunday Tribune* newspaper. "I went to look for the place. I didn't have the intention of trying to work with people politically or anything. I was just struck by these protests happening all over the place, and all these academics pontificating about why, without actually talking to anyone. I just wanted to know what was going on". However when he then went to a meeting at Kennedy Road, he immediately felt an affinity, which was cemented as he spent more time with what became the movement:

> They were talking about being alone, about not trusting anyone, so they would have to represent themselves....there was just rational discussion. That was something I felt comfortable with....There was no screaming and shouting, there was no demagoguery ....I was 35 then, that was the first time I could be part of a political project with people I really respected, and trusted and liked, in a project in which I didn't have to constantly wrestle with ambivalence. Everything up to then had been led by someone, or was demagogic. Here were people who were achieving things, stopping evictions, had vastly more political experience than me, it was rational, it was kind, the way they treated each other. There was a real sense of people together, working it out together, their project, a sense of possibility, of collective excitement, like a kind of congregation....It was tremendously liberating.

Andrew had in one sense had a very different experience from Richard, in that he had once before felt 'at home', comfortable, belonging, in his initial experiences in Amaoti in the 1980s. In his story, when he started talking about Amaoti, he said that connecting with Abahlali had reminded him strongly of this initially extremely positive experience; and in

talking about Abahlali, he referred back to Amaoti:

> Abahali opened a slightly different way [for us]. We are here. The idea of out of place.
> For me personally, it connected to my experience in Amaoti. We are here. You can't
> wish it away...The reality is we are here. Now talk about that. It took me back to
> Amaoti.

Andrew's experience in Amaoti had in a sense been betrayed, by the ANC (just as Lindela
felt betrayed by what he felt was 'not the real' ANC). In his story he recounts the long,
difficult, painful process of trying to do things differently that his organisation had
undergone; a process which had demanded a fundamental rethink about what was actually
happening in South Africa. In a sense, what had happened was also a betrayal, of the idea of
the new South Africa, the 1994 moment. Abahlali allowed him to acknowledge this:

> My question for myself was how do I believe change happens. It's not going to come
> from this way [the existing way, the extant] of doing things. Can I explicitly name it?
> A sense of, can we be disloyal? That's where Abahlali was a breath of fresh air.
> Abahlali was saying, we are consistently disloyal; and it's the right thing to be.

However, what Abahlali also allowed was a sense of belonging *beyond* Abahlali - to other
thinking, other movements, other politics; but also to the past (including Amaoti). Andrew
says that "this is partly why Abahlali was so important". So 'belonging' to the 'we' of
Abahlali became a belonging to something bigger, the 'we' of the Zapatistas, and of others
claiming the same thing: "We are they. The idea that we are shaped by them". This linked
strongly with thinking in the Ilimo project in Amaoti, of identifying with others, so that their
thinking became your thinking.

After a long period of reflection and struggle, particularly about the nature of praxis, and how
to do this differently, Abahali showed how this could happen; but in a way that Andrew and
his organisation had not anticipated - by simply taking one's place. "The difference with
Abahlali - we are here, we take our place, we take it gently, but we take it firmly". This was a
complete departure from anything else happening within the country at the time. It was a

repture, it was not planned for:

> It wasn't in our plans anywhere. Urban stuff wasn't what we do; we do rural. It wasn't a conscious choice, "Okay, now let's do urban, where can we go?" It was more a sense of, this is what is erupting from formations of the poor, it seems that this is where politics is happening, how do we do that? How does the organisation respond to it?

The reason why the organisation has remained connected with Abahlai, Andrew asserts, is because it is still real, it is still living. "That's what's still so important about Abahlali. At the moment, there are still places [within it] where it is contested. There is still life".

Not surprisingly, since they are from the same organisation, David's path to Abahlali was similar to that of Andrew (although they remember the process of connecting slightly differently). He also spoke about the rethinking process that had already started within the organisation.

> We wanted to work more with communities or the marginalised....At our 2004 strategic planning, we had started talking about animation, about stoking fires at grassroots level.... We weren't working with movements, but with individual communities, village activists, struggling for change, we were able to help them share their experiences with each other, what a community could do when it was organised outside of the government paradigm, below the radar.

As with Andrew, before even meeting members of Abahlali he had felt a sense of something different, that was close to what they were trying to do. As he said, "Then we read S'bu Zikode's piece on the Third Force. We were blown away". When he attended his first meeting in Kennedy Road, "It was so different from the community meetings I had experienced before".

It is clear, then, that with the exception of Mazwi (and S'bu, who didn't "join"), everyone joined/aligned themselves to Abahlali because they felt a sense of belonging, of finding a place that they had not found before, or had found but then lost/been betrayed by. As seen above, Mazwi subsequently also experienced this. It seems clear to me that their recounting of joining/aligning with Abahlali reveals this to be a critical event, as described above.

As argued in Chapter 7, I consider Abahlali a clear marker for counter-hegemonic thinking. Thus for most, the act of joining *itself* is a suggestion of counter-hegemonic thinking/being, of being 'out of place' and finding a (new) place in a counter-hegemonic movement. This suggests that my original hypothesis, as discussed in Chapter 1, that some 'unlearning' has to happen before the social movement seems to be the case for most of them. This must now be accounted for.

11.4 Have these activists 'unlearned' the hegemony of our current context, and if so, how?

I am suggesting that joining/aligning with Abahlali itself suggests a level of 'unlearning', given that this joining/aligning (in most cases) was because of a sense of belonging, rather than for purely materialistic reasons (which was initially the impetus for Mazwi to join). However, beyond that, the stories show vivid examples of how the participants were 'taught' hegemony, and how they resisted or 'unlearned' this, before joining/aligning with the movement. Much of their learning of hegemony was clearly through the structures of civil society Gramsci identified in his theory of hegemony. As discussed in Chapter 3, Gramsci said that we learn hegemony from our family and friends, the church, school and the media. All of the interviews show vivid examples of the ways in which this happened; but, again as Gramsci predicted, the stories also show how none of these structures is monolithic, and thus resistance can and does occur within them.

11.4.1 Learning hegemony

11.4.1.1 Family and friends

Most of the participants spoke about their families as relatively traditional in terms of gender relations, and as frequently passing on 'common sense' notions of class and race. Zodwa, for example, says that "My granny used to tell me that people who lived in informal settlements are not good people", and Richard spoke about how racism was an intrinsic part of his upbringing, whilst never being made overt: "I never encountered anyone, family, teacher, friends, parents, anyone, who was actually opposed to apartheid". Andrew's father, however, was clearly outspoken in his condemnation of apartheid, and Lindela's father was also consciously political in his support of the ANC. Whilst David's father was clearly opposed to the IFP, David says "I can't say we got a political education from him".

In terms of friends/peer group, most of the participants did not specifically refer to them. Those that do, often talk about feeling alone, not really having friends they could talk to about what they were thinking and feeling. This is clearly the case for Richard, Andrew and Mazwi, although David talks about making certain key decisions as a group, or doing things as a group, with friends - moving to the Amaoti High School, going the 'political' school in Cape Town, moving to Pietermaritzburg to study at the University there. Andrew was also clearly accompanied in much of his journey by his wife; many of their decisions to do things differently were made together. For David and Andrew, their journey as an organisation was made together.

11.4.1.2 Church

For those who talk about the Church, this is represented as primarily conservative or hegemonic, though never monolithic. Both Lindela and David talk about the church as something that could be used to hide what one was really doing (the implication being that Church was apolitical or 'safe'). Lindela tells of pretending to go to church meetings when he was actually going to political meetings, whilst David speaks of telling IFP members attacking their home that:

we were members of the Catholic Church. The churches, especially the Catholic Church in KwaZulu-Natal, were not seen as political, they were seen as supportive of the state - because many of the people in church councils were employed by the state or had senior positions. It was only at the youth level that there was any politics in the church. So in my area, being involved in the church was seen as being outside politics.

In Andrew's story, where religion and church played a major role, the 'white' churches are portrayed as generally conservative. The youth group he was in used to pray for boys on the border, and after being discharged from the army, "my local church would not let me have anything to do with them". In Cape Town, the Bible Institute (the only academic institution to accept him whilst he was awaiting his army court case) was "conservative". When he moved to Amaoti, "It took a very long time for us to be accepted, as white, and as coming from the Church. Their experience of the white churches working in the area was seeing people there for the church on Sunday; during the week, they were there in Casspirs, patrolling the area, beating up the comrades". Later on in his life, now working in an organisation specifically targeting the church (as a potentially "benevolent landowner"), Andrew began to question the Church's complicity in reinforcing poverty and oppression, based on what he was seeing actually happening (an analysis which, in some cases, the Church acknowledged).

However, at the same time, the Church (and faith) was also a place where quite radical things could happen; and where he could himself do radical things. Thus some of the early conscientious objectors were Baptists, and his first working experience, which was a great inspiration to him, was with a church group working in Crossroads. He reports that there were some 'really radical' people at Baptist Theological College he linked up with. He also came across radical texts and methodologies in some of his theological training. Reading the radical Christian text *Companion to the Poor* had a profound impact on his life, helping him to make choices about his own theology, and how he would live out his faith; including moving to Amaoti, and what to do once he left there. He himself was able to implement radical praxis in the bible studies in Amaoti (although the official Church response to this was to withdraw funding); and to write and publish a work specifically critiquing accepted notions of who 'does' theology: "I argued it was black, poor, predominantly women struggling to survive and make a life. How does their faith support them in that struggle for life? How do they articulate

that?". He was subsequently critiqued by black theologians who questioned his right to speak about this as a white, male academic.

In his account of his organisation's struggle to do things differently, he acknowledges that at points the Church was supportive; but then generally retreated. Abhalali also played a critical role in his growing understanding (or reclaiming) of the radical tradition of the Church. Andrew recounts a particular moment that took place shortly after reading S'bu Zikode's *The Third Force*, of attending an ecumenical conference in Johannesburg to discuss what the Church's response should be to the growing wave of protests in the country. After listening to "clever argument and power-point....I said, "I think you should shut up and listen", and virtually read *The Third Force* to them. I said, "If you don't shut up, you won't listen, and then you won't hear what God is saying". It was ultimately Abahlali that brought him back to the radical Anabaptist tradition of his own faith (and incidentally made him able to read his book again): "I've got to the stage where I'm not the radical, I'm normal. This is my faith. It's a deep political position. This is how it is. This is what we do".

David also found an alternative experience in the Church through the work of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement, and Mzwandile Nunes, who "wasn't afraid to claim himself as a communist, the language he used was far more radical than what we heard from the comrades". It was through YCW that he attended 'political' school in Cape Town. His own experience of studying theology, like that of Andrew, was mixed - the extended Bachelor of Theology he undertook had some fairly radical components (but was soon shut down). Richard also reports sensing that the Church was potentially an alternative space:

> Although they never really talked about politics in the sermons, they used to sell these papers, *Umafrika*, *Southern Cross*, and there was a calender produced by Diakonia that they had - I just got the sense that in the church there were some people who were involved...I did see that there was potential for a space in the church, that there were white people in some kind of organised way thinking about this stuff. But I was under no illusions about my suburban church.

What is telling is that many of the participants simply did not mention the church at all - suggesting either that it was not a feature of their growing up (unlikely), or was not in any way notable as something alternative (more likely).

11.4.1.3 Media and culture

The media is not mentioned a lot in the stories. Mazwi used it simply as a marker for class (the 'haves' had TV and watched cartoons, the 'have-nots' - those in the shacks - had radios and listened to the news; later on, the 'haves' had DSTV, whilst the 'have-nots' had SABC). However, others referred to the media as presenting a particular bias. David, for example, spoke about his direct experience of political violence versus the media reportage: "There were very few TV sets in my community - we didn't have one, and those that there were were black and white. Radio Zulu was what we mostly listened to, and it only reported some things, and not others, and reported in a particular way - not what I was actually seeing with my eyes". Richard said that Abahlali were initially suspicious of him because "they thought I was a journalist the first time, and journalists were seen as against them, because the reporting had been mostly hostile".

However, in the stories the media is also portrayed as a potentially alternative/counter-hegemonic space: David talks about reading about Abahlali in indymedia [an independent web-based news agency] including *The Third Force* article by S'bu that had such an effect on him; as mentioned above, Richard mentions *Umafrika*, *Southern Cross*, and a calendar by Diakonia in his local church which made him think there might be an alternative space somewhere in the Church. He also wrote an article about what had happened in Kennedy Road which was published in a mainstream newspaper - "[Kennedy Road people] were really excited about the article, they felt that for the first time they'd been fairly represented".

In the stories the media clearly also played a role by simply reporting on what was happening. Lindela went and joined Abahlali after he saw an Abahlali march on TV; Richard went to Kennedy Road after he saw a report on the Kennedy Road road blockade in the *Sunday Tribune* (which was "mostly fair"); Mnikelo contacted the Joe Slovo informal settlement because of an article in *Isolezwe* about housing corruption.

The media forms part of culture more broadly, and the stories show clearly how certain norms and values and ideas were inculcated through this. Richard talks about how the playground songs he used to sing in primary school inculcated racism, how racism simply permeated the cultural milieu he grew up in. The culture of militarization comes through very strongly in many of the stories - cadets and the army in the stories of the white men, scouts and political gangs in the stories of the black men.

Richard and Andrew, however, also talk about the importance of accessing alternative books. Richard says "After I became aware [that the way things were was wrong], I tried to find things to read - and I read a lot as a kid. Albert Luthuli, whatever I could get in the school library, whatever I could find, from wherever you could find things". He makes the point that although the system was 'ideologically loaded', it was not impermeable, so alternatives could be found, for example, through popular music, in particular the reggae of Bob Marley and Lynton Kwezi Johnston. Andrew talks about the powerful influence of the radical Christian text, *Companion to the Poor*, and refers to Freire; and also the influence of things he read as a student, where the books rather than the course were the real learning. David talks about the pivotal role played by a traditional cultural group in Amaoti in ending political violence in the area by siding with the UDF and thus making Amaoti a no-go area for Inkatha.

11.4.1.4 Schooling

The experience of schooling described by the participants is strongly reminiscent of that described by the boys of the School of Barbiana in Chapter 8 - a parallel system for different classes (compounded, in South Africa's case, by race).

Within the apartheid South African system, participants had very different experiences of schools - whose who were schooled in 'white' schools experienced better-resourced schools, but also the militarization of cadets; those schooled in black schools experienced worse-resourced schools, often severely affected by political violence. In those black schools under the control of the KwaZulu (homeland) government and/or the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the scout movement was a particularly strong, built-in element.

So Andrew and Richard attended all-white schools (in Andrew's case, two of these in what was then apartheid Rhodesia). Mostly, these were government schools, although Andrew did attend one private school, in the year in which his family lived in Cape Town. He reports having been most unhappy in this school - "it was such a different experience, absolutely elite, only boys. I found it very hard". By the time Richard was in High School, cadets had been introduced into all white government schools as compulsory for all boys. Richard recalls that "the school had no particular investment in it", but some teachers did, and it got taken more seriously towards the end of his high school career. In the beginning, "it was just seen as a joke, by probably most of the teachers, and certainly by the kids". The crass propaganda that accompanied the cadets (like the publication *Die Kadet*) was also not taken seriously, as was the woodwork teacher's extreme racist propaganda (possibly, he comments, on class lines).When he refused to do cadets, he was caned; and was marked out by not wearing the cadet uniform on Fridays when all the other boys did.

For those that attended 'black' schools, their experience was generally of poorly resourced schools. In S'bu's first school, a community school (which may or may not have been supported by the state), "There weren't enough classrooms, so some of us studied under trees". David made the choice to move to a community high school, just at the point that it was taken over by the state. The school was very underresourced. Even so, it was better that the school he had been attending, which was severely disrupted by violence. That school had fallen under the KwaZulu government and was closely monitored by the IFP. When students began demanding free books and no fees and changes to the uniform, "the IFP/KwaZulu government mounted a war against the students. It spread across the townships, there was a lot of killing of young people". By the time he reached Grade 11, "my whole high school career had been disrupted, by IFP, by casspirs". Zodwa's school "was often attacked" during the political violence in her area.

In S'bu's case the political violence did not affect the school itself, although it was a huge factor in his life outside of school. However, if you were seen as liking school, you were seen as an enemy by the Inkatha thugs in the area. For S'bu, the biggest part of school was scouts, into which he was inducted at 14. He was sent to many camps to be trained as a leader. Scouts was a far more important part of his schooling than the actual school ever was.

Mazwi's experience was different again, because his entire schooling was post-1994; thus class became much more of a factor for Mazwi than it had been for the other black participants. By this time, 'black' schools and 'white' schools no longer legally existed; he went to what he still called an 'Indian' school (i.e. one which under apartheid had been reserved for Indian children), which was still predominated by Indian children. He went there because his parents wanted him to learn English faster, something which he would not learn in an ex-'black' school. Clearly, he found this difficult: "You know for a boy to come from the rural area to an Indian school was very hard". Indeed, his whole school career was coloured by this choice, because he spent it hiding the fact that he was from the shacks. He felt deeply ashamed of this fact. He thought he was the only child from a shack, because he was apparently the only one who could not talk about what was on TV (since he did not have one). "I didn't tell anyone, I pretended that I don't like to talk. The teachers ended up thinking maybe I had a problem, social workers would come to the school". Mazwi was then 'outed' when someone saw him in the nearby shack settlement, where he lived. "On the Monday, when I went back to school, everyone was saying, "Ah, we know you live in the shack"". He denied it, claiming he was only visiting a relative. "So the whole of primary school was a lie". At high school, he had to catch public transport to get to school, so it became easier to hide where he was actually from.

For many of the participants, school was a place where you learned to think in the ways you were 'supposed' to think, by the dominant regime. For those at white schools under apartheid, you learned to be racist and to accept militarization. For those at schools under the KwaZulu government, you learned traditional values and loyalty. For those attending after democracy in 1994, you learned to orientate yourself to government, by being given assignments to listen to key state speeches and read key state documents, as Zodwa had to do.

Richard's description of what it was like in his school is perhaps the most graphic example of this. Richard says that he "wasn't really aware of apartheid at primary school. Not at all when I started, in junior primary school. I don't ever remember any of us children at school having an awareness". This was because school was simply "intrinsically racist"; the songs he sang in playground games had no real meaning as racist songs, they were simply what you sang. At high school, cadets was the way you were inducted into a militaristic society, prepared for the

army. Whilst this was part of learning racism, it was also about learning that capitalism was right, and communism was wrong (much of the rhetoric of the time was "die Rooi gevaar" (the Red danger); and it was about learning to be a man. Richard's experiences after refusing to be a cadet were an example of what happened when you refused to accept this - but were also mitigated by the fact that he was so obviously a 'boy' in all other respects (a boy who was big and strong and played rugby aggressively).

As we have seen, S'bu's experiences in his KwaZulu government-controlled school was, from his early teens, largely about scouts. "The teaching [in the scouts] was about citizenship, manhood, responsibility. We were taught that citizenship was about loyalty, something very good....There was no party politics, it was about neutrality, about being loyal, to the country". Being in the scouts was also about being a man, a responsible man.

Zodwa was still at school when the first democratic elections were held in South Africa. She does not remember being particularly interested in this, although it was brought into the school curriculum. "We had to listen to the news for school, we had to write essays for the teachers especially if there was a state of the nation speech or a budget speech". For her, in school, democracy was primarily about the state. What Zodwa recalls as important things she learned at school were not in fact anything to do with the curriculum. She says she got guidance from her teachers about life, when talking to them socially; and she vividly remembers a school inspector speaking at her matric farewell: "I will always remember that he said in this world there are two kinds of people - those who have learned but are not learned; those who are learned but have not learned".

Mazwi does not really talk about anything that happened inside school apart from the relentless need to hide his identity as a shack dweller. Clearly, in his case, the importance of consumption - of owning a TV, then having DSTV - was what he was learning in his post-apartheid school.

A few - very few - of the participants mentioned any kind of alternative politics within their schools. Lindela spoke about a Marxist teacher at school, who taught him about Marx - "That's why I talk about Karl Marx a lot". The teacher suggested that Lindela join Umkhonto

weSizwe, and connected him up with this (although he did not actually make it across the border). The same teacher later joined the PAC, and wanted Lindela to join APLA; but later, when Lindela was living with him, the teacher "had forgotten politics". David said that he got his political education from the Amaoti high school he attended - "people would come and talk to the school about the campaign for free education, free school books, same uniform across townships, etc.". Richard mentioned that at high school there were some teachers who were interested in progressive ideas - one of whom was deported. So schools, like the Church, were never monolithic.

However, clearly, as the Barbiana students reported, school was not to be enjoyed, not about a love of learning; nor was it about thinking. Indeed, it was as much about persuading people not to think, or that they could not think, as anything else. Only Richard said that he actually enjoyed school; most of the others reported something very different. S'bu said "I didn't feel I learned much from school outside scouting".

Many of the participants talked about reaching the end of their schooling without any sense of who they were or what they wanted to be; and for most of them, schooling had taught them not to think highly of their own abilities. Andrew, having done extremely well in his early school career, did not do well enough in matric to study medicine, as planned. "I finished school not really knowing what was going on in the world, or with me". Lindela failed matric three times. David also did not do as well as he had hoped, or had been expected to do. This was largely because his very underresourced high school had not adequately prepared him for the science subjects he wrote. He repeated matric at a finishing school in Durban: "This school was very different...It was well resourced; it was what we should have had long ago". This time, he got a matric exemption. Richard also said that "I didn't do very well at school". "I just basically didn't have any interest in most of it...I just didn't do most of it". "I didn't have a sense of myself as a person when I went to university as someone who would be good at it. I hadn't been very good at school. I didn't think of myself as an intelligent person". S'bu failed Grade 1. "I remember I cried the whole day". However from then on, "I did very well in school....from then on, I was the first in my class, I would get the highest mark in nearly every subject". In high school, he was called on to prepare and teach history sections to the rest of his class. Nevertheless, "I didn't do as well in matric as I was expected to".

For many, school, if it talked about career paths at all, seems to have proposed a very limited set of options for the lower class (black) children - nurse, teacher, policeman. S'bu, David and Zodwa all rejected these options. S'bu knew what he wanted to be - a lawyer - although in part, he believes this was simply because this was higher status than the other careers usually on offer, and he wanted to stand out. Neither Zodwa nor David knew what they wanted to be - they just knew it was not what was on offer.

The participants had mixed experiences in their post-school formal education. Andrew failed two of his four first-year modules. "I began to doubt whether I could do it". Having chosen to study chemistry as a way into medicine, he decided he could not be a chemist, and dropped out of university. He started studying theology through UNISA, but apart from this, "no academic place would accept me" because he was still awaiting trial by the army. The only place that would accept him was the "conservative" Bible Institute of S.A. However, he made links with other higher education institutions, in many of which he found some radical thinking and resources.

David's experience of university was also on the whole positive, although much of this was due to good timing - he arrived at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg in time for the extended Bachelor of Theology, later closed down. He loved the course, though he found it tough. He particularly liked how it linked to practical work, in communities. He also experienced financial difficulties in his studies.

For some of the participants, the experience of post-school education was largely a negative, and even a traumatic, one. S'bu tried very hard to study to be lawyer, moving to Durban, staying with his brother-in-law. However he could not afford it, and when his brother-in-law moved to Johannesburg, he no longer had accommodation. "I realised I couldn't carry on at University. I nearly committed suicide...I had no other plan". Zodwa's post-school educational experience was also somewhat traumatic. After studying for a year at a college in Durban, she discovered it was not accredited. She moved to another college, but never completed her studies there because she was badly burned in a shack fire.

Richard's experience was very complex. Initially, university turned out to be a betrayal of what he had hoped for. "I'd gone to university with this idea that I got from my parents and their friends that students were basically hippy, left-wing. I expected them to be more like me. That's not at all what I found". The all-male residence he was living in was dominated by white racists, who alternately ostracised or threatened him. "Outside of the residence there were the left-wing students. I'd expected to find a home with them, but to my surprise I didn't". He found the sub-culture of the left-wing students uncomfortably authoritarian. When a member of the SRC raped a fellow student, you were expected to be silent, because he was a comrade. His experiences were not all bad, however. He was befriended (and protected) by the black workers in the residence. "My best experiences were with the workers. That was warm, open, I would spent the evening with them, drinking beer, playing music." Given his understanding of himself as not particularly intelligent, he was surprised when he did extremely well in some of his studies. However, like school, he did not feel that he learned much: "Most of what I studied was crap....I wasn't encountering ideas that were useful to think about, social, political ideas, on the whole, not in Philosophy, not in Politics, maybe a little bit in English".

11.4.2 'Unlearning' hegemony

Gramsci's assertion that people 'learn' hegemony through these organs of civil society, but that hegemony is never total, always resisted and having to be remade, is borne out by the stories. Formal schooling appears to have played a major role in teaching hegemony, as could be expected from the discussion of formal education and hegemony in Chapter 8. Nevertheless, in the case of most of the participants, this appears to have been unsuccessful. Some kind of counter-hegemonic thinking is evident from the political involvement of some of the participants in anti-apartheid struggles and organisations (by Andrew, Richard, David, Lindela); but also from life choices, for example the conscious choice made by both Richard and Andrew to refuse to serve in the apartheid army, despite the extreme consequences of this. The stories, though, also show 'unlearning' about 'common sense' discourses of power - not surprisingly, given the context, often about race, but also, increasingly about class. 'Unlearning' was also, significantly, about party politics, and the developmental state. Thus the three interlocking hegemonic ideas I consider in Chapter 4 - neoliberal capitalism, liberal

democracy, and postmodernist emphases on difference - all appear to have been learned and unlearned in the participants stories.

11.4.2.1 'Unlearning' party politics/liberal democracy and developmentalism

Almost all of the participants mentioned some kind of experience relating to party politics and how they felt about this. As already discussed, a number of participants had been active in politics during the apartheid era. Lindela grew up with ANC. His father had been, and was still at the time he was growing up, an active member, who was frequently harassed by the security forces. Lindela himself became active in the ANC at very early age, was vice president of COSAS, and chairperson of the ANC in Flagstaff. At one point, he tried to cross the border to join Umkhonto weSizwe. Andrew attended the launch of the United Democratic Front in Cape Town, and participated in UDF-aligned activities in Amaoti, as did David. Richard also participated in UDF-aligned activities.

However almost all the participants talk about becoming disillusioned with party politics, some of them fairly early on. For some of those growing up in areas affected by the political violence of the late 1980s/early 1990s, the violence itself created a sense of disillusionment. For both Zodwa and S'bu, the violence was about power, not about ideas. Zodwa's experience of the violence included having uncles on different sides, one of whom was killed on his way to attacking the other:

> Sometimes I laugh about the violence now, as I've grown older, because I understand it now. At the time I didn't understand it. We didn't understand it, we were just told the IFP is the wrong party, it's killing people; the ANC is the good party, it protects people. It wasn't about their ideas....It was just about the one is good, the other is bad.

Unlike any of the others who experienced the political violence, S'bu lived in an Inkatha-dominated area:

> In order not to be burned, you had to attend Inkatha meetings. These weren't about politics, about ideas, they were about attack or defence...In order to save my life and

my family, I had to be part of this, this gang, this horrible history....I lost a lot of friends who were critical, who were in opposition to what was going on. Mobilisation was violent, people were forced into groups, not by ideas but by force. It wasn't about politics....There were just lines - on this side of the road, ANC, on this side, Inkatha - no matter what people living there actually thought....a lot of people were killed for nothing. I cannot find any peace with this. Even now when people say they were proud to have sacrificed, etc., it's all lies. Maybe there were some people who knew what was going on, but most people didn't....Only two or three years after that did I realise it was all lies, it wasn't about politics, it was for nothing....Those who died didn't know what they died for; those that killed didn't know what they were killing for. It was about numbers, numbers of people killed. One day, these people killed; so next day, you must kill back. Those people killed six, so today you must pay back, you must kill double that number.

David also experienced the political violence at a personal level, but in his case, he did believe (and still does) that it was about ideas. He also saw the violence as connected to a bigger context, the broader anti-apartheid struggle. "The struggle was much bigger than Amaoti". So it was not just about two arbitrary sides vying for control of specific areas. "Although there was UDF violence, it was different - they came and talked to us, explained things, why the government was wrong, why we needed to fight against it, why the stayaway was necessary". The IFP, on the other hand, was coercive, and part of the apartheid state: "It was clear to everyone that the IFP and the South African regime were working hand in glove - people would write 'Bothalezi' on the walls"

The political transition from 1990 on appears to have left almost all of the participants feeling betrayed, particularly by the ANC, but also by the kind of liberal, parliamentary democracy South Africa was experiencing.

Andrew recounted how his Amaoti experience - such a powerful, positive one - started unravelling after the ANC was unbanned, with increasing tension between civics and ANC. "By 1993, the tensions within the area became intense". There were death threats made, including against him, by ANC comrades. Andrew went to meet with ANC heavyweights

about this, but nothing was done. "I was increasingly disillusioned with the ANC, who we had trusted." David's account of what happened in Amaoti over this period was the same; growing tension between ANC and civics in the area. "There was fierce competition. Who represented the community, who connected the community to other structures. It was nasty. Backstabbing, outmanoeuvering, propaganda against people."

For Andrew, the Amaoti experience influenced his thinking about the 1994 moment before it happened:

> I remember the elections of 1994. Part of it was an anti-climax; the elections were great, of course, everyone was getting involved in election monitoring, and we needed the money, but somehow we just couldn't do it. Even the actual voting day, it was exciting, but there was a feeling of, what's changed? Being excited about it, but a sense of what's going to change for us, for Amaoti, because of the connections we had with the ANC party machine.

The local government elections in Amaoti in 1995 simply confirmed this sense: "It became quite ruthless, politicking power games....It was very aggressive kind of stuff. It just felt so strange - all those years mobilising against this powerful state, and then it becomes inside".

Lindela, who had had such a close relationship and emotional bond with the ANC throughout his childhood and young adulthood, also felt betrayed after he moved to Durban, where he had an entirely different experience of the ANC:

> At Foreman Road we were planning to form our own thing, that would define ourselves - we used to call it the real ANC, or the non-discriminatory ANC, because we believed we were discriminated against by the ANC. Most people at Foreman Road - nearly everyone - were from the Eastern Cape. We were discriminated against by the ANC committee, so we started our own organisation.

His home in Benwood was attacked. "ANC people at Benwood hated me, because I used to be ANC. So from the start, ANC people saw Abahlali as anti-ANC. I was banned from the ANC."

> I still love the ANC, but I feel it has lost its way. It needs to go back to the old ways, not the way of today. Abahlali feels like I am joining the other part, the real ANC. Later on, after I joined, I noticed that Abahlali doesn't do what political parties do. It accommodates everyone from everywhere - no matter what political party, what religion....It doesn't just go according to 'policies', you can talk anytime about anything, the 'real politics' of 'real people'.

S'bu recounts joining the ANC, and being elected onto the Branch Executive Committee; but the experience within the branch was deeply disillusioning. He comments "The philosophy of the ANC was fine, it was worth joining, but the practice was something completely different." Zodwa had a similar experience of disillusionment:

> The other thing I have learned through my experiences is that sometimes, politics is propaganda....from my experience of how some politicians are behaving, and how this propaganda that was inflicted on us that this party is good, and this party is not good. The things that one party used to do to us when I was growing up, the ANC does to us as a social movement.

Like Lindela, she contrasts Abahlali with the ANC. She argues that Abahlali is a political movement, but is unique, because it talks about the lives of people directly, and it is the people themselves who do the talking. David also contrasts the ANC and Abahlali, and how Abahlali's reading of the ANC affected his thinking:

> Already I was worried about the direction the ANC was taking - there was evidence to show that there were problems - and the lack of countering of this. But I still did not expect anything like Abahlali. That so many people could say, we are back in apartheid; supported by the logic that you see everyday, that the ANC is pushing the agenda of the rich. People still evicted. People promised housing, delivery projects,

but nothing ever delivered, after years and years. People saying, "No, this is not it. This is not what we wanted". This changed my thinking, my experience, my understanding of what is really happening.

Unlike many of the others, Richard's view of the ANC was fairly jaundiced from early on, whilst he was still at university. He found the ANC dogmatic and authoritarian, in contrast with UDF, with which he felt much more comfortable. Whilst he was in England, he tried to link up with Anti-Apartheid Movement, but they simply sent him back to the ANC:

> But I just didn't like what I saw in Maritzburg. Authoritarian, militaristic, dogmatic. I just didn't like it....I felt comfortable with the UDF stuff. But I didn't feel comfortable with the ANC. The UDF was more democratic, people could participate more, it was more reflective, it was more inclusive, the older people that I met, I could think, I'd like to be like these people when I'm grown up. It was like a mirror image of the ANC.

His experience of 'alternative' politics in England was also disillusioning. Abahlali, however, was different: "I was told all the time, to be effective politically, you can't be ethical. [Abahlali] proved that wasn't so....the ethical and political come together".

For Andrew, the attack on Abahlali showed up the brutality of the system, but also confirmed everything he now believed. He identified that attack as a pivotal learning moment:

> The attacks on Abahlali in 2009. It brought back so much of the experience of Amaoti for me; the futility of it. I just remembered so much about what had happened. [Just] because people speak. These people don't do anything wrong. They just articulate, they just claim, "We are here. And we speak, and we will act. And all we are acting about is our place". And how threatening that is to institutions. The attack confirmed everything.

As is suggested above, much of the growing disillusionment with the ANC (as government) in the post-1994 period related to 'development', and how it happens. As discussed in Chapter 4, neoliberal capitalism tends to be accompanied by very particular ideas about what development is, and how it should happen; and South Africa adopted many of these notions. Again, in the stories, this understanding of development is often contrasted with Abahlali's approach.

David's experience was not as intensely personal as is the case with some of the other participants. His work in the Oakford community from the time he was doing Honours raised questions for him: "The experience in Oakford had created enough doubts in my head about development through government processes....There was no convincing reason why it needed to take that long". Within the organisation he worked for, they had started questioning partnering with government as a strategy. After connecting with movements, "We realised that people had been talking about these issues for years, from their lived experience":

> The experience with land after 1994; where everything you believed, you suddenly realised was not going to happen. That we were part of the vicious cycle that was hammering people into more poverty. That it wasn't about how slow it was, about the 'snail-pace' of change, it was about the direction, about what it was trying to do. And that the actual experience of communities showed this.

Andrew's experience was very similar. His growing awareness of the role of the model of development of the South African state in perpetuating poverty was rooted in the same experience David recounted - of being part of that project. "Along the way [our journey] raised lots of questions for us on what was actually happening. When you get to the point where it takes eight years to make a donation of land that could happen in three months, legally, there's something going on here. And so it forced us to rethink what was actually happening around the land question".

In doing this, it became clear that the model of land reform being used by the state was more of a continuation with the past, rather than something new; a growing sense that nothing much had changed, at least for the poor:

In grappling with the land question, around land reform, what became apparent was the continuities. It was a re-reading of what took place in 1994. Yes, it was fundamental, a foundational moment for our democratic South Africa. But in fact the elite transition that happened meant that what we were doing in taking forward the land reform programme of the government was actually not dealing with the interests of the poor....What land reform does, is actually just perpetuate the system of poverty in which poor people find themselves.

Thus, "when land gets transferred, it's always the men, the educated, retired principals, retired nurses, who can speak English, who run a shop, who actually get control of the land". When those who were excluded in this process - for example, the women - began to express this sense of exclusion, he was forced to rethink what their role actually was. Andrew also recounted the particular experience at Oakford, where at the handover ceremony of the title deeds, with all the officials and dignitaries present, some people from Oakford staged a protest at the back of the marquee:

Once the ceremony had all been done, they stood up, silent, with their posters with their messages. Saying "Why is our land being taken away from us again?" And the MC up front, trying to work this out, saying "what do you want to say?", and they would take their posters down, write on the back, and hold it up. So they never said anything. Which for me was incredibly powerful. They just wrote on their posters, and put them up. The conscious choice for them was not to speak. Because as soon as you speak, you have to debate, engage; and there's powerful bodies there, who can come with all the technical stuff. And so the conscious idea was to take one out, and put it up, take it down, write another one.

Andrew recounts a long and painful process of trying to do things differently, all the time coming up against the hegemony of how development was supposed to happen, and how his organisation (as an NGO) (and, incidentally, the first wave of social movements as discussed in Chapter 6) was supposed to be involved in this:

We were going to have a Congress of the Betrayed. We'd worked out the language already. We'd worked out how angry people should behave. They should come together in a Congress of the Betrayed, and we would help them do it...Amongst us, the NGOs and the social movements, the Congress of the Betrayed was going to become another slick conference.

The disjunct between the NGO practice they had been part of, and were still encountering in others on a daily basis, and their own self-reflexion about the possibility of a different praxis, resulted in serious tensions: "Attempts to ask questions, self-critique questions of both NGOs and social movements couldn't happen. There was no self-critique. It just closed space. And the movement knowing what was best, and you couldn't question it". Ultimately, he says about working with others, "We couldn't make it work. It was a moment of exile. We had to step away".

Although the 2005 period was one of growing social protest, Andrew did not see this as a significant break from the state project - rather, it was always state-oriented. "The intention was not to disrupt everything, just about pressure to make it work. Let alone talking about how do we want to produce, what models are there. That wasn't happening....Even with the so-called service delivery protests - it was more around give us water, etc.". In his understanding, although the protests were about anger, he was not convinced that there had been thinking and reasoning involved.

 Tellingly, the end point of their journey is very close to the beginning - and Andrew realises that for him it was more a reclaiming of what had been, rather than the creation of something entirely new: "somehow in that period post-1994, we assumed this [agency and animation] wasn't what we were about anymore, with such a focus on becoming good facilitators and implementing programmes". He thus talks about the INSVV process that Ilimo developed in Amaoti in some detail; about how it marked an absolutely different way of 'doing development'.

This is what I had lost. In the midst of this need to become a good NGO, I'd lost a sense of what we're on about, building structure. So in 2006, when I was trying to answer the question about how does change happen, it's not that I didn't have the answers; I'd lost them. And I'd lost the language of it. Abahlali was provoking to say, "Let's recover some of that".

Many of the other participants' experiences were much more personal, in the sense that rather being the ones who were implementing this kind of development, they were the ones targeted by it, and experiencing it directly. S'bu recounts his experience of creating the KRDC, but feeling that it could not develop Kennedy Road on its own. Thus, they joined the ANC branch: "The ANC was seen as pro-development". However, they could never actually talk about development there, because the agenda had already been set elsewhere:

So although the issue of housing was a priority for many, there was no space to talk about it....When we tried to raise our issues, we would get stopped....The BEC didn't give us a chance to talk. It was only about party politics. It was only about who do we elect, delegates to meetings, etc. We told the people it was not a vehicle for development. We saw how the BEC dismantled the actual efforts of people.

Having decided to ignore politicians after getting nowhere with the BEC or the local councillor, and rather work with officials, their first experience was similarly disturbing. At the first meeting they attended at the municipality, one of their delegates was refused entry into the meeting because he had mud on his shoes. Ultimately, of course, there was the betrayal of the 'promised land', and spontaneous blockading of the road. "We..didn't realise at the time that it was a political act".

Zodwa argues that Abahlali is different, because it starts with the actual lived experience of people; "It's not somebody else who is talking, it is the people themselves who talk, themselves. The solutions are being sought amongst the people who are part of that gathering, being explored by the very people who are sharing the problems they are facing. There are no experts".

Mazwi grew up in the post-apartheid period, but much of his childhood was an experience of evictions happening around them (and the collapse of his own home after severe rains). Then, "a house was built right in front of our house. We thought maybe....our shack will get demolished and then we would move into that house". However, someone else, not even from his settlement, moved in. "That happened in half of the houses that were in the area". People were very upset at the councillor, and blamed him. This experience of corruption in housing led to his settlement joining Abahlali as a settlement. This experience, and his involvement in Abahlali, helped Mazwi see connections between his own experience and structures of power: "I didn't choose this life, this life was created for me by someone. I didn't choose to live in a shack, and I don't like living in a shack. But because someone wants me to live in a shack, I live there. What can I do, what can I say, I don't have money".

11.4.2.2 'Unlearning' difference, especially race and class

Growing up in South Africa, it is not surprising that most of the participants encountered a continual discourse about race. However, as a result of the transition to liberal democracy, whilst this discourse continued, class began to emerge, as the neoliberal policies of the government (as discussed in Chapter 4) kicked in, and the discourse of race became increasingly fraught with problems.

A number of participants spoke about how they had come to a realisation that what they had been 'taught' about other races was wrong. Lindela spoke poignantly about how he had learned to hate white people because of an early experience related to his father:

> When I was about 15, my father was not well. There were a lot of 'tribal' wars in the area at that time. White soldiers came to the area. They came to JB location. Even though my father was coughing badly, the soldiers treated my father with contempt. They beat him with sjamboks. This was only the first or second time I had ever seen a white person....The incident caused strong feelings in me of hatred of white people and a desire for revenge.

Given his incredible emotional investment in the ANC, he says that "Later I saw white people with the ANC, and was confused by this". It was his experience with Abahlali, though, that caused a shift in his thinking:

> The second time I went to an Abahlali meeting, I saw Richard Pithouse and Richard Ballard and Faizel Khan. I was confused about why white people were there, being called comrades. I thought that this wasn't the place for me. But then I saw that these people were not the ones who did that to my father. They didn't talk like white people, they talked like human beings, like me, like everyone.

Lindela had also experienced some concern about his own race:

> After I met Richard Pithouse, I asked him why I am called Figlan. I thought maybe I wasn't 100% black, perhaps in the travels of some of my family, something had happened. I wasn't sure where I belonged. Richard found out that my forefather, a chief, resisted the confiscation of his land. His descendants changed their name to protect themselves. Later I went and found the other Figlan people that Richard told me about.

S'bu also recounts not trusting Richard initially, largely because he was white. "I remember very well he was very humble and careful. But we did not want any stranger amongst us, also because he was white". S'bu and others slowly began trusting him. Richard himself, having been brought up in a milieu that was 'saturated' with racism, realised very early on (when he was in Standard 3 - about 10 years old) that racism was unjust:

> I do distinctly remember when it became clear to me that this system was unjust....I just remember on the playground, participating in that kind of way of speaking, and just suddenly getting almost like a shock to my body, suddenly thinking, this can't be right. And that was that. I can't point to anything, it was just a sudden awareness of what the words mean, a sense of it just being unjust.

No particular incident created this awareness: "I didn't witness overt oppression. That's the whole point about the suburb, that you don't have to witness those things, it happens somewhere else". His sudden awareness just happened.

As far as class is concerned, many of those who are members of Abahlali talk about being told, or simply understanding, that people who lived in shacks were somehow 'less than' others, that shack settlements were not good places to be. S'bu recounts seeing Kennedy Road when he was living with his brother-in-law and travelling to UDW. "I never thought I could live in a place like that". He thought that people who lived in the shacks just were not trying hard enough. Once he moved in, however, he changed his ideas about the people living there, believing them capable of creating a new life for themselves under the right conditions.

Zodwa says "My granny used to tell me that people who live in informal settlements are not good people. So I always used to turn a blind eye to the people who lived in Kennedy Road", when she was living with her mother in Clare Estate. Then her mother went to live in Kennedy Road after she was retrenched. Used to living in a middle-class suburb, with her own room and inside plumbing, she found it very hard. However, the experience was actually a very positive one. "When I came there, people in the settlement came to welcome me. That was different [from her previous experience]....Here, in Kennedy Road, it was different, everyone was greeting me, I found there is life".

Mazwi was appalled by the place he found himself living in after moving from a rural area to Joe Slovo settlement as a small child. His feelings about this were compounded by the attitudes to shack dwellers he experienced in his 'Indian' (higher class) school, that shack dwellers were dirty and smelly, so much so that he lied about where he lived all through his primary school career:

> Sometimes they believed me when I said I didn't live there, sometimes they didn't. I was clean, I was wearing clean clothes all the time.... They said "How can you live in a house like that? The people who live there don't bath, they don't have a toilet." I didn't want them to think that maybe I don't bath, I'm dirty. Sometimes they would say things like, "Hey, something is smelling funny". And someone would say, "'No,

you forget there's a brother in the class who lives in a shack".

Much of Mazwi's and S'bu's feelings about the shacks related to their understanding of the city as opposed to the rural sphere, and their expectations and attitudes coming from a rural area. Mazwi says that

> when you move from the rural areas to the city, you expect a different life. But when I came to the city, I said I think it's better in the rural areas than in the shacks. Because in my whole life I had never seen a shack, it was completely strange....Even if I wasn't living in a shack, I wouldn't tell that I came from the rural areas, because I was thinking that the rural areas are bad.

> When you are living in the rural areas, even the old people think the city is better. We are told that the city is a nice place. It's like people always being told South Africa is such an amazing place.

S'bu says that, growing up in a rural area, it was simply expected that, when you finished school, you would go to the city, to study or to work. The assumption behind this is that you have relatives there that you could stay with. When he had to drop out of university, he simply could not go back: "I was not prepared to go back to the rural area, because that would show me a failure....The city hides you. You would rather suffer here, and prove yourself capable". Even though he had never thought he could live in the shacks, this was still preferable to returning to his rural home.

What many of the participants described was thus an 'unlearning' of the understandings they had about race and class, and the realisation of something different - that we all essentially the same. Zodwa, in finding "a sense of belonging" in the shack settlement she had expected to hate, and shifted her attitude to people living in shack settlements completely:

> The one thing I have learned from my experiences is that a human being is a human being no matter where he or she stays. If he or she has decided he wants to be a human being, he is a human being. I have met good people in the so-called squatter camp;

and bad people in the so-called suburbs or location. Staying in a good place, or a fancy place, doesn't make you a human. It's about how you choose to live, to be a human being, how you interact with other humans, this makes you human. I have learned that through my direct experience.

Mazwi, after he started attending Abahlali meetings, shifted his attitude to shackdwellers, and himself as a shack dweller, entirely:

I'm coming from the shacks, but if I don't tell them, they don't notice that I'm coming from a shack. They believe me. So that means I look like them. You know, I'm clean, I'm not smelling. That means that if they say someone is smelling because he's coming from a shack, that's a lie, it's not the truth. I can tell them that people from the shacks are clean people, decent people, they are not mentally disturbed, they are just human beings, like everyone....If I don't tell you, you don't notice, that means there's no difference between you coming from duplex housing in Phoenix or Umlazi or wherever you come from. I'm just like you.

Lindela, as we have seen, learned that white people "talked like human beings, like me, like everyone". Lindela also recounted how Abahlali had made him see that being a landlord at Benwood (which was his employment at the time) was exploitative - and thus to reject was what was really an aspirational job.

Thus all the participants reveal a process of 'unlearning' the dominant ideologies of apartheid and/or liberal democracy, and difference, fostered in institutions such as schools, universities and political parties, in favour of a radically inclusive grassroots politics of emancipatory democracy and universalism. How did it come about, then, that the participants 'unlearned' hegemony, and learned this instead?

11.5   To what extent was their 'unlearning' of hegemony informal, and how did this happen?

It is clear from the discussion above that most of the participants' formal learning was hegemonic, or, in Freire's terms, 'education for domestication', although they clearly 'learned' hegemony informally as well. However, very little of what they 'unlearned'/critical learning was through formal schooling (i.e. from teachers, curriculum etc). So, mostly, 'unlearning'/critical learning was indeed informal. This concurs with Schugurensky's (2006) claim that much of our personally meaningful and significant learning, especially political or civil, is through informal learning.

As we have seen in Chapter 8, Schugurensky identifies three main kinds of informal learning
•   self-directed (intentional and conscious);
•   incidental (unintended, but afterwards conscious); and
•   socialisation (unintended and unconscious).

As has already been discussed (in Chapter 8), socialisation is about internalising values, attitudes, behaviours, etc. - much of socialisation is thus related to hegemony - to being 'taught' that the way things are is they way they should be and/or even if you do not like it, there's nothing you can do about it. Clearly, in the case of most of the participants, such socialisation was largely unsuccessful, in that they 'unlearned it'. There is relatively little evidence of self-directed informal learning in the stories - although Richard's account of wanting to find out what was happening and why when he went to visit Kennedy Road, and later the court, is one example. Thus most of the 'unlearning' appears to have been incidental - in other words, people did not intend to learn/unlearn something, but later became aware that they had (in some cases, their socialisation became incidental through reflecting on it). For example, S'bu and Zodwa both become aware, only sometime later, that the political violence had been "a lie", "for nothing"; Mazwi realised that nobody knew he came from a shack if he did not tell them, because he was just like everyone else; Lindela realised that white people were not necessarily like those who had assaulted his father, but could in fact be just like him. This tends to support my argument in Chapter 8 that it is only really in the small realm of emancipatory incidental learning or emancipatory self-directed learning that

'unlearning'/critical learning is possible.

The stories make it clear that much of the 'unlearning'/critical learning was the result of lived experience - as Gibson (2006) puts it, "lived experience as a challenge to theory [which] compels both new thought and new praxis" (p.36). As Marx and Gramsci suggested, there is always a disjunct between lived experience/reality and hegemonic ideology, and out of this a new consciousness can arise. This appears to have been particularly the case in relation to the political violence of the late 1980s/early 1990s; and the experience of post-apartheid 'development' and liberal democracy. Many of the experiences relate to being betrayed by things you trusted/believed/hoped for (by 'radical' people, for Richard; by the ANC, for Lindela, David, Andrew and S'bu); although this seems to have been far more the case with the older participants. Quite often, people compared or contrasted things, also suggesting some kind of disjunct:

- Abahlali/ANC (Lindela)
- Kennedy Road/Enhlelekahle (Zodwa)
- rural areas/urban areas (Mazwi, S'bu)
- Abahlali/school (Mazwi)
- Abahlali/other involvements (Richard)
- Amaoti-Abahlali/ANC (Andrew)
- Abahlali/other community meetings before (Lindela, Mazwi, Richard, David)
- Abahlali/other social movements (Andrew).

It thus appears likely that the adult learning theories discussed in Chapter 8, because they relate to informal learning from experience, are relevant to understanding the stories. I now discuss each of the theories in turn, considering how well they 'fit' the experience of unlearning described in the stories, and what they have to offer by way of explanation.

11.5.1 Experiential learning

Clearly, experiential learning is highly relevant, given how the participants learned from lived experience. As discussed in Chapter 8, experiential learning theory argues that experience is the basis of learning (Jarvis claims that *all* learning starts with experience), but something

needs to happen to turn that experience into learning. Kolb, the originator of the theory, argues that learning is the interplay between expectation and experience; and when we reflect on our experience as a result of an 'inner discomfort', then we learn. Those who developed the theory further (Boud and Jarvis) suggest that our emotions are possibly just as important, and can act as a barrier to reflection, or enhance it. Both also argue that experiences are socially (and hence ideologically) constructed - our experiences are situated, so experiential learning operates in the realm between the social and the individual. Thus the 'inner discomfort' (or 'disjuncture', as Jarvis calls it) is also socially constructed, and hence different for different people. Marsick and Watkins agree that informal learning is often triggered by an internal or external 'jolt'.

In the stories, there is indeed lots of evidence of people learning from their experiences, by reflecting on them. There is also some sign of 'inner discomfort', although this does not always happen at the time of an experience, and can occur over a period of time (for example, it was only in retrospect that Zodwa and S'bu felt that they really understood what the political violence was actually about; but S'bu did feel immediate discomfort when one of the men he was with was refused entry into the meeting because he had mud on his shoes; Andrew and David go through a relatively long period of 'inner discomfort' about their role in the post-apartheid development project). Some of the 'inner discomfort' seems to relate to betrayal - expecting something, and not finding it, or finding something different (Richard and the university as an 'alternative space'; many of the participants and the post-apartheid ANC government); and the stories reveal a number of strong emotions, often negative, but, in the case of Abahlali, a positive sense of belonging. However, the 'jolt' that Marsick and Watkins mention seems only to have taken place in Richard, in his experience on the playground in primary school.

11.5.2 Transformative learning

Mezirow argues that we have an ontological need to seek meaning of our experience. As discussed in Chapter 8, he distinguished between our 'meaning perspective' (the broad theories or beliefs we carry in our heads, that might be unintentionally learned, for example, through hegemony, or intentionally learned, for example, Marxism), and 'meaning schemes'

(the rules for interpreting our experiences that we draw from these). The more emotional the context of learning our meaning perspectives, the more embedded they are (for example, learning from our parents, or as part of our faith). Sometimes, we experience a 'disorienting dilemma', where our experience does not 'fit' with what we believe; we are not able to use our normal rules of interpretation to make sense of what has happened. When this happens, we can reject this, or we can revise our meaning perspective. Critical reflection is an essential part of this process of revision.

Those who have critiqued Mezirow's theory suggest that emotions might play as important a role as rational thought (E. Taylor, 1997, 2007) (with anger as the most universal and profound stage), and indeed blind faith might be the cause of perspective transformation rather than critical reflection (Hunter, 1980, as cited in E. Taylor, 1997). Although most studies using Mezirow's theory do suggest some kind of 'disorienting dilemma', the nature of this has in some cases been expanded. For example, Clark (1993, cited in E.Taylor, 1997, p. Disorienting Dilemma section, para.1) defines a disorienting dilemma as "indefinite periods in which a person consciously or unconsciously searched for something which is missing in their life; when they find this missing piece, the transformation is catalyzed". Most studies suggest that perspective transformation is enduring and irreversible at an ontological, not just epistemological, level - "participants experience a change in their being in the world" (Lange, 2004, quoted in Taylor, 2007, p.181). As discussed in detail in Chapter 8, many critics have pointed the weakness of the theory in linking individual change and social change. Newman (2012) has also claimed that transformative learning is really about identity, not consciousness; and identity is actually quite superficial.

The stories reflect some of what transformative theory argues; but certainly not all of it. There does seem to be evidence of searching for meaning, as Mezirow claims is an ontological need. Clearly, the idea of 'meaning perspectives' is reflected - people do indeed have a set of ideas, many of them hegemonic. As discussed above, the participants do show a clear shift or change in their perspective - they have 'unlearned' some hegemonic thinking. Many also seem to have experienced this as ontological, as "a change in their being in the world".

The stories contain many clear episodes of trauma, and there is some sign of a disorienting dilemma for some of the participants (Zodwa's encounter with the shackdwellers in Kennedy Road, and Mazwi's encounter with Abahlali, moments which seemed to challenge and change their previous meaning perspectives regarding shack-dwellers; and, most obviously, Richard at school). However, for many of them the 'disorienting dilemma' is not there: the 'discomfort' they feel is rather between their lived experience and what they are told, than between what they think (their 'meaning perspective') and their experience. Thus the shift in meaning perspective is not really explained by the original theory. As mentioned above, betrayal is a strong theme in many of the stories, as are many other strong emotions - being hurt, lonely, afraid, ashamed, which do seem to be related to new thinking/alternative thinking. However, Clark's suggestion of that "indefinite periods in which a person consciously or unconsciously searched for something which is missing in their life; when they find this missing piece, the transformation is catalyzed" does seem to be relevant here - almost all of the participants talk about a strong sense of Abahlali as a place they belonged, where they could be free.

11.5.3 Emancipatory learning

Freire argued that people are dehumanized by oppression, but have it as their ontological need to be humanized - to be humanized is the realisation of the value of human beings. To become humanized, we must first understand oppression. However, the ideology of oppression (hegemony) is precisely there to prevent people from doing so. Thus some kind of conscientization is required - i.e. becoming critically aware of what is really going on. Freire argued that we should start with our own lives; if we critically reflect on our reality/ experience, we can develop a critical consciousness. For Freire, praxis, reflection⇔action, was essential for this process, as was dialogue. On the whole, Freire suggested that someone else (a teacher of some kind) might be necessary to assist with this process.

Emancipatory learning theory thus fits the stories quite closely - the stories do suggest people seeking to find a place they belong, and in the process (of conscientization, of truly understanding what's actually going on), realising the value of every human being. So many of the stories end with some kind of realisation about the universality of human being.

Lindela, in commenting on how different Abahlali is, says that it "accommodates everyone from everywhere - no matter what political party, what religion". Although initially distrustful of white people who came to Abahlali meetings, Lindela realised "They didn't talk like white people, they talked like human beings, like me, like everyone". Zodwa argues that what she learned from her experience was that " a human being is a human being no matter where he or she stays. If she or he has decided he wants to be a human being, he is a human being....It's about how you choose to live, to be a human being, how you interact with other humans, this makes you human". Mazwi realised that everyone is the same; it does not matter where you come from, "I'm just like you". S'bu realised the experiences of Kennedy Road were not unique when "without us realising it, [the] march was joined by a number of informal settlements around. They said they were not there to support us, but because they felt like us, they were the same".

However, unlike Freire's suggestion that someone else needs to help them to do this, here people seem to have done it on their own initially, and then in dialogue with others. In a way the movement itself is the 'teacher' in enabling the collective reflection, action and interaction of its members; but clearly this is not the case for all; and often happens only after some kind of initial conscientization process. Generally, people reflected on their lived experience and realised there was a disjuncture between the experience and what they had been 'taught' to believe, ideology. There's also strong evidence of praxis, of not just recognising the disjuncture, but reflecting on it, and then acting on it. What is clear is the crucial role of dialogue within Abahlali, and the space created for this within the movement, in contrast to other spaces.

So Lindela says "Abahlali is where I feel free, especially at meetings. I forget about my worries, everyone is my brothers and sisters....People can speak freely, without interruption....you can talk anytime about anything, the 'real politics' or 'real people'". Zodwa says that it was in the Kennedy Road community meetings that "the political side of me was born and grew". This was in contrast to other meetings, where others spoke for the people. "At Abahlali we don't talk about issues that people have once heard about; people share their own stories of how lack of service delivery, development, not being respected by officials, have affected their daily lives".

Mazwi also says Abahlali meetings are places people talked about what they were experiencing. These meetings were also the first place where he could talk and be listened to. "I was very young. I was participating in meetings, people were listening to me. They didn't say, 'hey, you are a young boy, you don't have a house, you don't talk'. When my hand went up, they would point at me, and I would make a point, and then they will respect that point...This had never happened before". In one meeting, people spoke about being open about who they were and where they lived - so he went to school and stopped lying.

S'bu contrasted Abahlali meetings with other meetings he had attended. In his experience of meetings during the political violence, "the meetings weren't about explaining anything, just about physical power". His experience of early meetings in Kennedy Road, when it was still under the control of a single man, were similar:

> He would attend meetings outside, about the settlement. He made decisions on his own, negotiated on his own or with one or two people he favoured. Then he would hold meetings to tell people this. In the meetings, there was just this one man talking, without even a piece of paper....a single man dominating, women not speaking.

At the ANC BEC meetings, the agenda was set, and people were not allowed to raise their own issues. His first meeting with council officials, as already mentioned, was very disturbing. "One of the men in the KRDC had mud on his shoes, and was sent out. This really hurt me. This man had a mandate to speak for his community, but he was treated like this by the officials". By contrast, he talks about the meeting between various shack settlements preparing for the Foreman Road march:

> There was a long debate. We realised that we were being divided - one settlement named, proud, not others. Then someone at the meeting said let's just say Abahlali baseMjondolo ....And in the same question of who we are, that was discussed at the meeting, the same idea came up.

David, who had attended many different community meetings, including the UDF in Amaoti in order to "know what was being organised, who was organising it, was it safe to go to school", found his first experience of a Kennedy Road meeting "was so different from the community meetings I had experienced before". These were places to think things out, rather than somewhere we got told things. Richard also talks about Kennedy Road meetings as an entirely different space. At the first meeting he went to (where he was asked to leave), "they were talking about what happened at the police station, what happened to the land, about how to get those who were arrested out. And they were talking about being alone, about not trusting anyone....There was no screaming and shouting, there was no demagoguery, there was just rational discussion....It was different from what I'd seen in Maritzburg, and in Chatsworth. It wasn't about S'bu performing, or about S'bu trying to be the big man. It was, look, what are we going to do. And people participating from the floor". After that, on invitation, he started going every week. "It was rational, it was kind, the way they treated each other. There was a real sense of people together, working it out together, their project, a sense of possibility, of collective excitement, like a kind of congregation".

So meetings in Abahlali played a very different role form meetings used as a mechanism of control that participants had experienced elsewhere. Within Abahlali, the meeting is clearly a dialogic space, and hence a key site of learning and unlearning. The movement meeting also seems to have a powerful affective dimension of creating a sense of solidarity and shared humanity. Although this space is a 'formalised', organised way of engaging with reality together for the sake of understanding and transforming it, I would argue that it remains an instance of informal learning, in that involves "the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricula criteria" (Livingstone, 2001, p.5).

It is very clear, then, that all of the participants to some extent 'unlearned' hegemony by reflecting on their own experiences in relation to what they had been told; but it is also clear that was not just an individualist project, because it centred so strongly about becoming part of something bigger, of belonging, of a collective, of dialogue. Thus, their 'unlearning' was a essentially a social project, as Freire has suggested conscientization to be.

Thus elements of each of the three learning theories considered in this study 'fit' with elements in the stories. However none of them entirely explains what has happened across all of the stories.

11.6   What does Badiou's theory of event-fidelity-truth contribute to understanding this process?

As discussed in Chapter 9, Badiou argues that (political, social, economic) situations are created by 'counting' elements of that situation in certain ways, and not counting others, according to a certain 'logic'. Currently, the state of the situation is capitalism, but the logic which governs this situation is liberal democracy (i.e. what Badiou calls 'capitalo-parliamentarianism') and the politics of difference. This is as I have argued in Chapter 4 - that we are currently in a situation of advanced capitalism, supported by the 'logic' of the ideology of neoliberalism, liberal democracy and postmodernism.

Badiou says that every situation is founded on a void - that which is not counted, but must exist in order for the situation to exist. It is the state which arranges this, counting things in such a way as ensure the power of the dominant group:

> In situations which count only property, wealth or consumption, human capacities which cannot be counted in such terms will remain empty or indiscernible as far as the situation is concerned; so too, within the ordinary routine of the situation of parliamentary democracies, will popular political capacities whose expression is indifferent to the business of electoral representation (Hallward, 2004b, p.8).

This is, as discussed in Chapter 5, what the state does - it thinks in terms of collective divisions (race, class, ethnicity, nationality, age group, etc.), so people are not seen as people, but as members of groups; and are then represented as members of those groups, rather than presented as themselves (Neocosmos, 2012). Badiou argues that within a situation, some elements are counted twice, because they are both presented and represented (eg. members of parliament); whilst other elements are counted only once (they are only represented, eg. as voters); they may also have greater or lesser intensities. In this way, some things count more

than others. However, always, some elements are uncounted, they are the void. The 'edge of the void' can be counted, but only as a group (for example, as 'consumers' or 'employees'), not as the individuals within it. In the current situation, most people are not counted:

> Today the great majority of people do not have a name: the only name available is 'excluded', which is the name of those who do not have a name. Today the great majority of humanity counts for nothing. (Badiou, quoted in Neocosmos, 2009a, p.265)

Changing the situation thus requires more than simply rearranging the existing elements.

It seems clear to me that applied to South Africa, some of what has happened in the stories is easily explained, drawing on my arguments relating to this in Chapter 4. Within the capitalist apartheid situation, the state ordered elements in such a way as to include 'non-whites' (its term) as 'non-whites', as 'workers', whilst not counting black people as individually counting. Elements were ordered through the logic of apartheid and capitalism to ensure the continuing dominance of white capital. The transition to democracy, as discussed in Chapter 4, was essentially a transition from one elite, bourgeois group, to another elite, bourgeois group. The elements got reordered, but those that were not counted before still did not count, except perhaps on the edge of the void as 'voters', 'recipients of government grants/services', 'consumers'.

I think this is clear in the stories. As has been seen, a consistent thread through the stories is of not counting, of not belonging, of feeling out of place. Often this was because they were simply not counted in that situation (not counted because they were black, not counted because they were shackdwellers, not counted because they were poor, not counted because they were Xhosa). However, often this was because people refused to be 'counted' (to be represented or presented) in the way the situation demanded (as white racists, as members of the army, as silent in the face of injustice):

Table 9: The situation

Counted out (excluded)	Counted in (belonging)
Of Apartheid South Africa (because you were black) - Mazwi, Zodwa, Lindela, S'bu Of post-Apartheid South Africa (because you were a shack dweller) - Mazwi, Zodwa, Lindela, S'bu Of the ANC (because you were Xhosa) - Lindela Of the 'white' Church - Andrew Of 'black' theology - Andrew [Mazwi thought he was counted out of participation in Abahlali meetings because of his youth; but then realised he was counted in]	By black workers - Richard By the shack settlement - Zodwa, S'bu By the community - (Andrew, in Amaoti) By YCW - David By the scouting movement - S'bu By Abahlali - Zodwa, Lindela, Mazwi, Richard, David, S'bu
Counting yourself out	**Counting yourself in**
Of the Apartheid army - Andrew, Richard Of cadets - Richard Of white racist residence culture - Richard Of leftist student politics - Richard Of the political violence - S'bu, Zodwa Of being an exploitative landlord - Lindela Of NGO/developmentalist practices - Andrew, David Of being a shack dweller - Mazwi Of liberal democracy - S'bu, Zodwa, Lindela, Andrew, Richard, David	As a shackdweller - Mazwi As a member of the human race - Mazwi, Zodwa, Lindela, Andrew, Richard, David, S'bu

The stories thus suggest a fairly high level of individual agency - people are not just counted in/counted out in a fairly mechanistic way by the 'logic' of the system, as Badiou suggested; whilst it is true that people are counted out/in, they can also make choices to count themselves out, and as we have seen, in.

Badiou argued that what is needed to change the situation, to make those who do not count, count, is something far more significant than rearranging elements - what he called the event. The event happens at the edge of the void. In an event, the logic of the situation is overturned, what was inconceivable before becomes conceivable, the possibility of something different emerges:

> The event is Christ's resurrection, it is the storming of the Bastille, it is the October
> Revolution, just as it is illegal immigrant workers taking to the streets in order to

become agents in their own right....it is the unemployed stepping out from the ranks of statistics to become subjects of resistance, or the sick refusing to resign themselves to being mere patients and attempting to think and act their own illnesses (Bensaid, 2004, p.97).

Something similar is described in Oliviera's (2009) description of the water wars in Bolvia:

> We rose up from our communities and neighbourhoods, from our factories and schools, and occupied the roads and streets, plazas and markets to say ENOUGH. Until that moment we didn't exist in the eyes of politicians, capital, the transnational corporations, the owning class and the wealthy.(The Reason section, para.4)

Hallward (2008) says that the event is the process whereby the wretched of the earth come to inherit it.

I think the stories show those who do not count in the current situation refusing this; the stories show shackdwellers stepping out of the ranks of statistics of people to be moved, or refusing to resign themselves to being mere consumers and attempting to think and act their own 'development' in a radically different way from what the term would usually imply. They say, as Andrew says, "We are here". In the process, they count themselves in, and not only that, they count everyone in. Thus, I would argue, in this respect Abahlali is an event.

Although he originally insisted that events are pure chance, Badiou now concedes that some situations might be more susceptible to events, and that events are probably more common than we might think. The problem is that for an event to lead to radical change, it must be recognised, it must be named; and then fidelity to that event must be retained in thought. This is made more difficult by the state trying to shut this down, or deny the existence of the event. In Chapter 7, the physical attack on Kennedy Road, the heart of Abahlali, was described (trying to shut the event down); as were intellectual attacks on the movement (denying the existence of the event). This is clearly consistent with the idea of Abahlali as an event.

To retain fidelity to an event is to keep the consequences of the event in thought, to refuse to return to what was. It is a practical matter, it is active, not passive; it is a matter of *praxis* (as Marx and Gramsci and Freire would assert). The process of fidelity changes someone's relation to the world irrevocably. Retaining fidelity creates truth. Truth happens when the void is exposed, when the state of the situation is suspended, by the event. Truth then blows a hole in knowledge, in our understanding and classification of what is. We make truths out of our fidelity to the event and what it reveals. Truths make the old order illogical. Although they arise out of a particular event in a particular situation, truths are universal: "However singular and particular a truth-process [i.e. fidelity to the event], a truth-process must always proceed in the name of all" (Den Heyer, 2010, p.155).

I would argue that the stories show this process clearly - the emergence of the truth that everyone is the same, that everyone counts, that there is hope, because people (and not just the shackdwellers) retained fidelity to the event. Whilst this emerged from the very specific experience of Abahlali, it emerges as universal. Badiou also asserts that truth is eternal - once declared it will always have been true and will always be true. However, a truth can never be proved; it can only be claimed. I think this is so for the truth that Abahlali asserts; which is why the sense of (finally) belonging emerges so clearly in the stories. Abahlali are not claiming they are the chosen few, that they have any particular special rights or abilities - in fact, they are claiming the opposite. I think that the truth that everyone counts, that everyone matters, that everyone is the same, makes the current situation illogical, untenable - and this is precisely why the movement has come under such attack.

Badiou says that those who wager that an event has happened (because you cannot prove it), and who retain fidelity to this, become subjects, become 'militants'. Militants disrupt 'opinion', as truth disrupts knowledge.

As discussed in Chapter 9, Badiou's theory is primarily a political theory - it was never intended to be a learning theory. When applied to the stories as a political theory, Badiou's theory clearly holds weight. Badiou argues that not all events are political. "Whenever there is a genuinely political event, the state reveals itself" (Badiou, 2005b, p.145). This appears to have been the case in the thinking of the militants in their stories - and, as Badiou suggests,

thought as an essential part of politics is 'serious trouble for the state' (and hence, incidentally, the attacks on Abahlali, both as a revealing of itself and as a reaction to the thinking of the people). The event must of course be recognized, and fidelity to it must be retained - in other words, there must be a truth-procedure. As we have seen, this seems to have happened in this case. For an event to be political, Badiou asserts, it must be universalizing; thus the political truth-procedure must be to count as one that which is not counted, i.e. everyone, humanity. To do this, Badiou argues, one must work locally, in the gap between politics and the state. Interestingly, in talking about the Sans Papiers, Badiou uses exactly the language that Andrew uses when he talks about the INSVV philosophy of Ilimo: "their struggle....[is] also my struggle. There is complete equality" (Badiou, 2009a, interviewed by Nina Power, response 6).

The connections between Badiou's political theory and the stories is clear; as is the broader connection between Badiou's political theory and Abahlali. I am not the first to suggest a link between Abahlali and Badiou's work. Both Richard Pithouse (2006) and Raj Patel (2006) have drawn on Badiou's work in discussions of Abahlali. Patel (2006) says that according to S'bu Zikode, the struggle started "from a particular *event*, one constituted in part by individuals and ideologies, but which far more strongly acted to constitute people, mobilizing them, rendering them militant" (p.87). Patel uses Badiou's theory to unpack this. Neocosmos (2009a) argues that Abahlali has retained fidelity to the 'event' of the mid-1980s struggle period. He argues this on the basis of AbM's deeply democratic practice; the fact that it does not rely on outside funding; and the fact that it is operating outside of statist politics. He quotes Abahlali leader, S'bu Zikode, in support of this:

> The politics of the poor is an anti party politics. Our politics is not to put someone in office. Our politics is to put our people above that office...Our politics is also not a politics of a few people who have learnt some fancy words and who expect everyone to follow them because they know these words. Our politics is a traditional home politics which is understood very well by all the old mamas and gogos because it affects their lives and gives them a home. In this home everyone is important, everybody can speak and we look after each other and think about situation and plan our fight together...the...poor have no choice but to play a role in shaping this country

into an anti-capitalist system (Zikode, 2006c).

Thus, Neocosmos argues, Abahlali has been successful, not in getting houses, but:

> at something arguably much more important, in asserting that the poor count and
> cannot be ignored and are capable of theorising on their own the basis of
> emancipatory politics independent of the state and its bureaucratic managerialism.
> They have rediscovered a truth that any politics worthy of the name is for all and not
> only for some....It seems to me that by asserting that they count, by screaming 'we
> exist' the AbM have come the closest today to an understanding of this truth
> (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.326).

Much of the language used by Abahlali (see Chapter 7) clearly 'fits' Badiou's political
theory. Abahlali statements, and speeches by its leaders, thus often refer to Abahlali as the
people who do not count. From as early as 2006, Zikode (2006b) was claiming "We are the
poorest of the poor. Our lives are the ignored truth of this society". In 2008, he said, "This
system is a system where the people are separated into two - those that count and those that
do not count. Those that count are those with money. Those that do not count are those
without money. This system values business profit before human value" (Zikode, 2008a). In
the same speech, (which as we have seen Andrew quotes) he said:

> We take our place as people who count the same as everyone else. Sometimes we take
> that place in the streets with teargas and the rubber bullets. Sometimes we take that
> place in the courts. Sometimes we take it on the radio. Tonight we take it here.
> (Zikode, 2008a)

Abahlali have also consistently asserted that they are not struggling for themselves, they are
struggling for everyone. In his *The Third Force* speech at the end of 2005, Zikode said "We
know that our struggle is not by itself"; rather, it is for all shackdwellers, all the poor. "We
will not rest in peace until there is justice for the poor" (Zikode, 2006a). As part of this, they
insist on a universal humanity; and they then act accordingly:

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There is only one human race.

Our struggle and every real struggle is to put the human being at the centre of society, starting with the worst off.

An action can be illegal. A person cannot be illegal. A person is a person where ever they may find themselves...(AbM, 21/5/2008).

In *The Third Force*, Zikode said: "For us the most important struggle is to be recognised as human beings" (Zikode, 2006a), and in a speech to the Council of Churches in 2008, he said:

Our politics starts by recognising the humanity of every human being. We decided that we will no longer be good boys and girls that quietly wait for our humanity to be finally recognized one day (Zikode, 2008a).

Badiou says that thinking some kind of new politics means trouble for the state. Abahlali are clear that it is precisely the assertion that they think, and that they have a right to speak and be listened to, that is most threatening to hegemony; as Zikode remarked in mid-2006, "The state comes for us when we try to say what we think" (Zikode, 2006c). This is because "We are the people that are not meant to think" (Zikode, 2008a). Abahlali are clear that this is why they were so brutally attacked in 2009: "We were attacked because we believed that we had the same right as any other person to think and speak and act for ourselves" (AbM, 9/3/2011).

However, does Badiou's theory offer anything as a potential *learning/unlearning theory*? In the discussion below, I focus on how Badiou's theory converges with or contradicts the three adult learning theories I have discussed in this study; and the extent to which his theory is supported by the evidence of the stories.

11.6.1 Hegemony, consciousness, and the state of the situation

As discussed in Chapter 9, all of the learning theories, and Badiou, believe that it is necessary and possible to change the world. All agree that our understanding of the world - our consciousness of it - is affected by hegemony. All three of the learning theories agree that some kind of 'unlearning' is necessary to change our consciousness before social change can happen. Jarvis refers specifically to hegemony in his work, and talks about our original 'meaning system' being changed through experiential learning (Jarvis, 1987, cited in Weil & McGill, 1989, p.12). Mezirow, as we have seen, uses the term 'meaning perspectives' as that which we construct to help us make meaning, and which shifts in transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990a, p.2); Freire talks about 'magical consciousness' and the need for conscientization (Schugurensky, 2011, pp.162-164).

All three of the theories accept the possibility of learning without a change in consciousness. So the three adult learning theories considered in this study all argue that a shift in consciousness is what is required - whilst they call this some kind of learning (experiential; transformative; emancipatory), these all rest on a shift; in other words, on an 'unlearning'. All of them suggest that this is a profound, and potentially ontological, process. This is very much in keeping with both Marx's and Gramsci's understanding of consciousness, of a process of 'becoming' conscious of what was really happening. As Gramsci (1991, cited in Cox, 1998) argued:

> The consciousness of being part of a given hegemonic force (that is, political consciousness) is the first phase in a further and progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice are finally unified. The unity of theory and practice, then, is also not a given mechanical datum, but a historical becoming, which has its elementary and primitive phase in the sense of 'difference', of 'distance', of barely instinctive independence, and develops up to the real and complete possession of a coherent and unitary conception of the world (Gramsci, 1991, pp.13-14, quoted in Cox, 1998, p.9).

Badiou, when he talks about his politics, also accepts the notion of hegemony (as I discussed in Chapter 9, he identifies roughly the same set of hegemonic ideas as I do in Chapter 4); and it is of course implicit in his argument about the 'logic' which is used to structure the state of the situation. In his more recent work, it is even more apparent in his understanding of how elements come to be more or less 'intense' (eg. baseball and free speech in the situation of the USA, etc.).

In the stories, there is plenty of evidence of hegemony - understandings of who counts and who doesn't in the situation of apartheid, and in the situation of post-apartheid (neo)liberal democracy; understandings of race and of class; understandings of how things are 'supposed' to change, and how people are 'supposed' to behave. This supports the learning theories' contention that our consciousnesses are affected by hegemony; but also that this can change, because there is also plenty of evidence that people have 'unlearned' this. The stories show that, as Gramsci suggested, structures of society are all sites of struggle, all the time - the school, the church, etc. The stories also show individual agency; people making their own choices about counting in/out. This suggests that the state of the situation is perhaps not as monolithic as Badiou suggests; his recent work begins to deal with this problem, and it will be interesting to see how that develops. As critiques of his work suggest, how elements relate to each other and the situation is important; and so is temporality.

11.6.2 Shifting consciousness versus fidelity to the event

The three learning theories all suggest that the starting point for changing consciousness is some kind of disjunct between lived experience and consciousness-as-affected by hegemony ('magical' consciousness, 'false' consciousness) - i.e. that lived experience is the basis of such learning. As we have seen, Marx, Gramsci, and others who followed in their footsteps (Cabral, Fanon, Guevara) have all suggested that such a disjuncture is likely, and that lived experience is potentially a good place to start. However, this alone will not necessarily lead to shift - something else is needed. All three of the theories thus argue for critical reflection on this disjunct (all agree that this is something more than just reflection). For Freire, this involves praxis and dialogue as part of the critical reflection process, whereas critical reflection is sufficient in the original forms of both experiential and transformative learning

(as we have seen, critiques of these have suggested something more might be necessary - blind faith, or emotion). All three theories agree that a shift in consciousness is affected by context within which it happens, which may be more or less conducive, and thus make it more or less likely to happen.

For Badiou, however, the primary shift happens outside the individual, in the situation, through an event which overturns the logic of the situation, and make that which did not count come to count: "the fundamental ontological characteristic of an event is to inscribe, to name, the situated void of that for which it is an event" (Badiou, 2001, p.69). An event is "a totally disruptive occurrence which has no place in the scheme of things as they currently are" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.27), so it cannot be planned, it cannot be predicted, it cannot be caused. The event is "what brings to pass 'something other' than the situation, opinions, instituted knowledges; the event is a hazardous, unpredictable supplement, which vanishes as soon as it appears" (Badiou, 2001, p.67). So the event will actually change nothing unless it is recognised and named and the implications of the event held in thought - what Badiou called 'fidelity', or 'truth-procedure'.

Fidelity "is a sustained investigation of the situation, under the imperative of the event itself; it is an imminent and continuing break" (Badiou, 2001, p.67). "Fidelity to the event is an attempt to sustain the consequences of the event in thought"; to refuse to return to the status quo, to the idea that what happened was impossible (Neocosmos, 2009a, p.283)."This investigation is not a passive, scholarly affair; it entails not only the active transformation of the situation in which the event occurs but also the active transformation of the human being" (Feltham & Clemens, 2003, p.7).

Clearly, then, although the event happens outside of the consciousness of the individual, the event has something to do with reflection and with thought if fidelity to the event is retained; and potentially with the understanding/consciousness of the person who retains that fidelity. As we have seen, Badiou argues that if fidelity is retained, then truth emerges (which is why fidelity is a 'truth-procedure'). Truths make the old order illogical. In the process of retaining fidelity, 'truth' is constructed, bit by bit, it is never 'discovered'. The truth is internal to the situation (i.e. singular), because it emerges from an event, which as we know occurs only

within a specific situation; but also universal, because it is "the same for all" (Badiou, 2001, p.27), and so "each truth is at once singular and universal" (Badiou, quoted in Bensaïd, 2004, p.95). Badiou understands truth to be fundamentally different from knowledge - knowledge is what is, truth on the other hand is the void, the indiscernible; thus truth must change knowledge: "A truth is always that which makes a hole in a knowledge" (Badiou, 2005a, p.327). So "we must conceive of a truth both as the construction of a fidelity to an event, and as the generic potency of a transformation of a domain of knowledge" (Badiou, 2003b, p.58).

In his understanding of fidelity and truth, Badiou's theory of the event clearly has application here; they suggest not just something fundamental happening within the state of the situation, but something fundamental happening at an ontological and cognitive level. Thus Patel (2006) says that fidelity to the event is a disruption of the 'self' and "of the knowledges that have come to constitute the self" (p.90), and Pithouse (2006a) says that "Truths are events that no longer allow us, in good faith, to see as we previously saw and to be as we previously were" (p.45). So events do in fact ontologically restructure us, if we retain fidelity; but the impetus for this is from outside. The disjuncture is not between what we think and what we experience, but within the experience itself - which we then have to hold onto in thought.

As already discussed above in my consideration of the applicability of the three learning theories, there is some synergy between the stories and the theories. I have already suggested that Abahlali constitutes an event, in the sense that Badiou meant; and thus restructured the situation and created a new truth. However, the stories do not really entirely support Badiou's thesis, because they show unlearning happening *before* the event, in some cases long before. The stories show sometimes fairly sustained critical reflection over a long period of time - as Boud & Walker (1992, cited in Newman, 2011, p.317) said in their revision of their work, critical reflection is often evident leading up to experience, and during it, and not only after it. Eraut (200b) argues that the effects of implicit learning on future behaviour "can only be explained as resulting from the accumulated experience of several episodes rather than that of a single event" (p.116), and in many (though not all) cases the stories suggest this to be true.

I do not want to suggest I am entirely negating Badiou's theory of the event, or the usefulness of it. As I have argued above, Abahlali seems to me to constitute and event, and the

participants of this study appear to have retained fidelity to it, and, as a result, to have emerged with an important truth - a truth which overturns the current hegemonic logic, and which is ultimately universal. I am struck by Andrew's story of a long, slow, painful process of trying to learn to do things differently, and then encountering the simple truth of Abahlali, "We are here". This is startlingly similar to the description of critical events that appears earlier in this chapter: they "illuminate in an electrifying instant some key problematic aspect .... and which contain, in the same instant, the solution" (Woods, 1993a, p.357, quoted in Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.84). Thus it does seem to me that some of the 'unlearning' people have gone through has precisely been the event of Abahlali; but Badiou's theory cannot entirely account for the learning/unlearning of the stories; and I think this has something to do with human agency, which I now turn to.

11.6.3 Unlearning and change

It seems to me that there is a fundamental tension between the very notion of hegemony and individual agency. If hegemony changes our very consciousnesses to believe that the way things are is 'normal', and/or that we cannot do anything about it, then how do we act in the world to effect any change? The only possible answer, which is thus the one put forward by Marx and Gramsci and others who accept the notion of hegemony, is that hegemony is never total; to assert otherwise is to adopt an entirely determinist position and place any possibility of change outside of the hands of individual human agency. However the tension is very clear within the three learning theories. Thus Jarvis, whilst arguing that hegemony exists, and insisting that oppressive structures make it difficult to think critically, still has to be able to assert that it is possible to overcome this (it's not very clear how); and Mezirow found himself in the same position. For both of them (as, arguably, with Gramsci and Marx), there thus needs to be someone who somehow has managed to escape hegemony to help others to do this - so the role of teacher becomes essential (this is not to say this needs to happen formally, of course). Freire looked to ontology - whilst we are dehumanized by oppression, including at the level of our consciousnesses, he argued, it is our human vocation to become humanized, so we will do that despite hegemony (but even so, we probably need help).

Badiou simply takes the whole issue away. If the fundamental shift that is the event happens outside of the individual, then he does not have to account for human agency. For Badiou, human agency was never really taken away at a cognitive level - hegemony is about the logic of the situation, not about consciousness. However, of course, there's a deeper problem about human agency in Badiou's theory, because in his assertion that events just happen, he denies the active involvement of human will in creating change, as Hallward and others have noted. For Badiou, the cognitive shift happens after the event, in holding the truth of the event in thought, and then acting on this.

Figure 7:   A comparison between the adult learning theories and Badiou's theory of the event

The three learning theories

Context

Individual

Changed individual sees self and context in new way

Context may or may not change

Individual changed

= change in consciousness

Badiou's theory of the event

State of the situation

Individual

Individual become subjects in fidelity to the event

Event changes situation

Entirely new situation

Individual changed

= 'event'
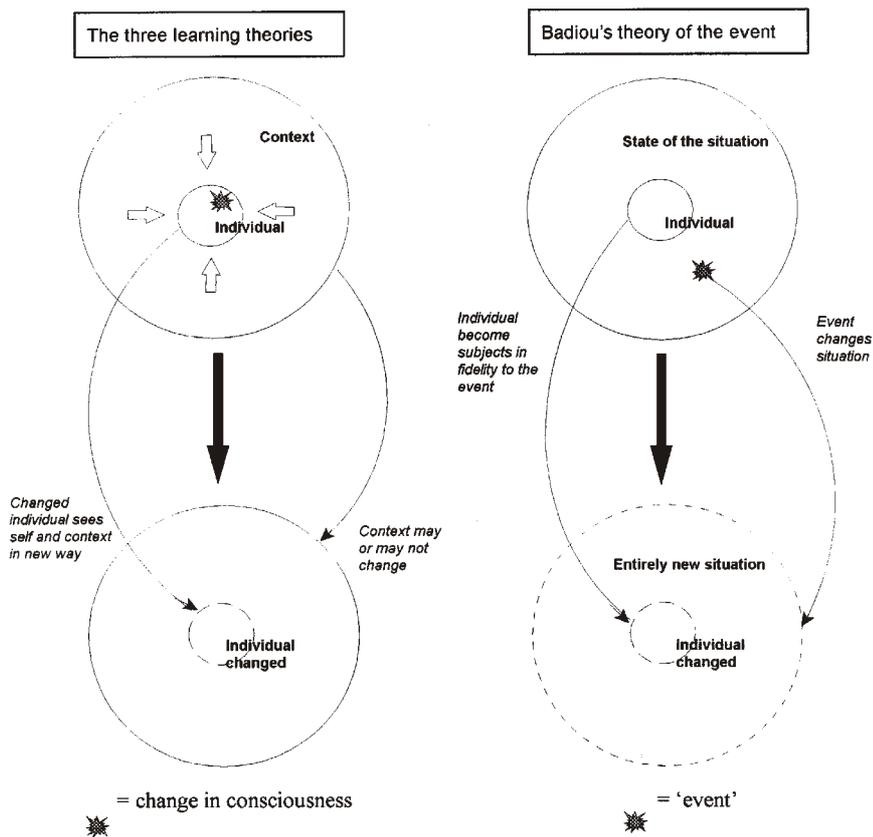
I'm not sure the stories support either of the approaches discussed above. Clearly, people have thought their way out of hegemony; they have done this by themselves, often throughout their lives, despite appallingly repressive regimes at both an ideological and a material level. They have acted, even when to act was to know that you would be faced with extreme consequences. This does suggest something at an ontological level - but neither Freire's nor Badiou's ontological theories fully account for it.

I wonder whether thinking our way out of this tension might not rest with Ranciére's axiom of equality, which, as discussed in Chapter 9, Badiou draws from. Ranciére (1991) argues, quite simply, that we are all already equal because we all already think; and we think equally well, because we are equally intelligent. For Ranciére, then, hegemony is not about persuading us that the way things are is normal and natural, or that we cannot do anything about it, it is about persuading us that others do not think. If we simply accept that they/we do as the ultimate truth, then it is axiomatic that we can act in the world to put precisely the fact of our equality into practice.

11.7 Conclusion

In considering the usefulness of Badiou's theory of the event, as well as that of the three learning theories I have chosen to focus on in this study, it would appear that all help to some extent in understanding the stories of unlearning of the participants. Clearly, there are some fundamental differences between the learning theories on the one hand and Badiou's theory on the other; and I have tried to construct a model showing that the basis of this rests on the locus of the trigger for transformation. I would argue that Badiou's theory provides a very useful addition to adult learning theory; but that it cannot be considered to have replaced existing theories in understanding how people learn informally to think and act in counter-hegemonic ways.

Chapter 12: Conclusion

12.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I undertake a brief overview of what I have attempted to do in this study, at both an academic and personal level, and what I think has emerged from it. I also provide some reflection on my learning regarding the narrative methodology that I adopted and I offer some ideas about areas for further investigation prompted by this study.

12.2 Overview of argument

I began this thesis by arguing that it is both necessary and possible to change the world, thus positioning myself within a particular political position, and a particular tradition within adult education. I argued that changing the world requires engaging with, to try to understand it from the basis of lived reality, thinking something new, and then acting. Our ability to do this is, however, affected by current hegemony, which attempts to convince us that the way things are is either normal and natural and the only possible way they could be, or that it is impossible to change them. Nevertheless, even under current hegemony, there is resistance, including in the form of militant social movements; and I suggested that looking at how they had 'unlearned' hegemony might be a useful thing to do. This position influenced the way I undertook this study - I framed it within a critical paradigm, as the most appropriate for my political intent, but also because my own ontological and epistemological assumptions made many other paradigms inappropriate. I used the life history method within a narrative approach, gathering stories from seven people who are members of, or aligned to, Abahlali baseMjondolo, a shack dweller movement that erupted in Durban, South Africa, in 2005, and which, I argued, might be considered counter-hegemonic. I wanted to find out whether these people had indeed 'unlearned' hegemony, and if so, how.

In this study, I have used Gramsci's theory of hegemony as the basis for understanding current hegemony. I considered how he developed his concept of hegemony from the thinking of Marx, but also in response to his own context. I then considered how Gramsci's theory applies today, in very different times from those of Gramsci. I reflected on how the nature of

capitalism has shifted, drawing on current writing on advanced, or neoliberal, capitalism. I discussed how this shift in the economic base has impacted on hegemony, identifying three current interlocking hegemonic ideologies, viz. neoliberalism, liberal democracy and (certain trends of) postmodernism.

Gramsci argued that there is always resistance to capitalist hegemony, and I thus considered current resistance including the role of social movements, currently one of the key agents of resistance, and one which is often posed as the new historic actor in social change, having replaced the working class. Much resistance, and many social movements, I argued, cannot properly be called counter-hegemonic in that, although it/they may critique the dominant economic system, it/they remain trapped within hegemonic logic. However, it is clear that there is existing truly counter-hegemonic resistance, including some social movements, and I have argued that Abahlali baseMjondolo is indeed such a counter-hegemonic movement. Thus it is possible that those who join/align themselves with this movement might be considered to have 'unlearned' hegemony.

I then discussed relevant and appropriate theory for examining this phenomenon, arguing that we need to look to learning theory that applies to informal learning, since it is only in certain kinds of informal learning that we might find 'unlearning'; and to learning theory that is broadly related to social and political change. I thus considered experiential learning, transformative learning and Freirean emancipatory learning in detail. I argued that whilst these theories of learning are helpful, they cannot entirely account for unlearning. I then turned to the theory of the event of Badiou as a possible complementary or alternative way into thinking about unlearning. I concluded that his theory was useful, in that it considered the issue of hegemony, and of individual and social change, in a way that the other theories did not. I then presented the stories of the seven 'militants' (in Badiou's terms). I concluded that all of them showed strong evidence of unlearning. Finally, I considered the learning theories and Badiou's theory of the event in the light of the stories, and the extent to which they can account for what the stories demonstrated.

It was clear from the stories that, as I had anticipated, most of the militants formal learning was hegemonic, although they had clearly learned hegemony informally as well. Their unlearning, though, whilst taking a variety of forms in a range of settings in the stories, was most often informal, and incidental (i.e. it was unintended, but became conscious). This concurs with Foley's (1999) argument that *most* of our learning is informal and incidental, unplanned and often tacit, because "...people learn, as they live, through their experiences, in their struggles" (Foley, 1999, p.1). It is also clear that much of the 'unlearning' was the result of lived experience, and in particular that of being counted out/counted in. This was clear in the ways the militants talked about binaries - Abahlali/ANC, the shack settlement/the township, etc. Since their unlearning related to informal learning from experience, the relevance of the three adult learning theories is obvious.

In my application of the theories (both the adult learning theories on one hand, and Badiou's on the other) to the unlearning of the militants, I concluded that all of the theories help to some extent in understanding the stories. There are of course certain fundamental differences between the learning theories on the one hand and Badiou's theory on the other; and it should be remembered that Badiou's concerns are essentially philosophical. He is interested in ontology/epistemology in its broad application to science, art, politics and love, and not particularly in learning as such. Although he speaks of 'truth procedures', he does not detail what these involve from an educational perspective. I constructed a model showing that the basis of the difference between the adult learning theories and Badiou's theory of the event rests on the locus of the trigger for transformation. From this it is clear to me that Badiou's theory provides a very useful additional perspective to adult learning theory; but that it cannot be considered to have replaced existing theories in understanding how people learn informally to think and act in counter-hegemonic ways.

12.3 Reflection on my findings

It is clear to me that Badiou's theory unsettles much of what current adult learning theory provides; it offers a radically different approach. As I have shown, Badiou's theory has never been intended as a learning theory - his is first and foremost a political theory (although, as I will discuss below, it applies far more widely than that) - and I am not aware that anyone has attempted to use it in this way before. It does seem to me that there are some extraordinary

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similarities in some of the language that Badiou uses and that of theorists such as Jarvis, Mezirow and Freire, particularly in their attempts to account for the growing disjuncture many people feel between their lived reality and current hegemonic ideas; this is what first drew me to Badiou as a potentially useful theorist, and I think this resonance is worth exploring further. Beyond that, Badiou's understanding of the fundamental difference between knowledge and truth also seems to be a very fruitful area for future application within adult education. Badiou's assertion of the universality of truth, as truth for all, warrants further exploration - is there a kind of 'learning for all' that happens? Could emancipatory movements like Abahlali be considered a kind a 'learning event' for society as a whole?

Whilst I have used Badiou's theory to try to account for how people unlearn political hegemony, Badiou has consistently argued that there are four areas within which he believes an event might occur (and thus areas in which he would presumably see some applicability of his theory) - science, politics, art and love. In a sense then, his theory is life-wide. This indicates that it might usefully be considered in relation to many areas of adult's learning experience. Perhaps the idea of 'evental learning' as a particular dimension of lifelong learning offers the possibility of relating people's learning experiences to the wider epochal events that occur both at a personal and a much wider social level. The difference from the dominant discourse of lifelong learning is precisely that it begins with the event: its locus of analysis is beyond, and not reducible to, the individual learner. It might offer ways of exploring learning in relation to 'events' such as the Arab Spring or much more local but pivotal community events, such as the Kennedy Road blockade recounted in this thesis.

Badiou has suggested that events are probably more common than we think - I think this also true of the thinking of resistance. Jarvis (2006) argues that "we can potentially learn from every experience in life, which means that our learning is not controlled by what we are taught" (p.207). This is really a very fundamental point, and relates to my concluding discussion in Chapter 11. We all *think*. This is to say, we apply our minds. We try to make sense of things, as Mezirow claims. We seriously consider and reflect on issues. Marx said this, Gramsci said this, Badiou says it, Ranciére says it; and, much more importantly, all of those who are supposed not to think are saying it. I think it's time we starting taking this seriously, and exploring it more, in our research on adult learning.

12.4 Reflection on life history methodology

As discussed in Chapter 2, I chose to use a life history method because was trying to answer, inter alia, the question of what leads certain people to critique the existing, hegemonic system. I was looking at the lived experience of people who had 'unlearned' the neoliberal hegemony and created alternative or 'subversive' stories. Thus I was looking at processes of change, of learning (and 'unlearning'), of the link between individuals and society. I am attempting to account for how and why any unlearning has happened, including trying to unpack their own understanding of it (the meaning they give to what has happened) - in other words, dealing with issues of consciousness. I was also trying to test Badiou's theory of the event. In all of these areas of inquiry, the life history method has particular strengths. I also believed that a life history approach might have synergy with my own political position, and my own concerns about how academic research is often conducted.

I found the approach to be an extremely useful one. It allowed me to 'unearth' (the term Andrew used in his story) not only the lived experience of the militants, but also how they had understood these and reflected on them, leading them to unlearn hegemony. Thus, as a research method, the life history approach was useful in generating rich, thick data (and as the length of Chapter 10 attests to, a great deal of it!), which also allowed sufficient scope for theory testing.

Much of what the literature reports, in terms of the how the method potentially shifts power, but also about the considerable ethical issues involved, manifested themselves in my experience. I felt enormously privileged to be the person with whom these incredibly powerful stories were shared; and, as I have mentioned above, the 'interviews' really became conversations. Possibly, this happened more than usually so in my case because I already knew the militants fairly well. However I think it is probably true that part of being human is wanting to share, and that we often do not get the chance. Thus Elliott's (2005) claim that "most people like telling stories and with a little encouragement will provide narrative accounts of their experiences in research interviews" (p.29) appears to me to be the case. However, I think more than usual care is required when using the method. As reported in the literature, life history interviews can take on the nature of therapy sessions, and people van reveal more than they intended, and this needs to be treated with care and sensitivity;

particularly because when we tell our stories, we are telling the stories of others as well. I also found it troubling to have to shift from the position of someone having a very interesting and personal conversation to someone looking at the stories from a distance, in the task of analysing them.

Nevertheless, I would recommend using this approach with social movement activists and other militants, to explore activism, and to explore learning. Whilst, as I discussed in Chapter 8, there is a growing interest in learning in social movements, it does not seem to me that the method has been widely used.

12.5 Possible areas for further investigation

I think it might be useful to explore some of the ideas I have suggested above, and possibly others, further:

- the nature of the 'truth procedures' that social movements undergo in response to 'events'. Obviously, not all movement activists experience an event; but it is clear from Badiou's work that those that do are profoundly affected by it (I am thinking here of Badiou himself, and the event of 1968). This has perhaps not been closely enough considered from an adult learning perspective. This approach allows for an engagement with issues of power and ideology, as those working within the radical tradition of adult education argue is necessary. What do social movement activists learning from 'events'? Why do they/do they not retain fidelity to them? What kinds of truths have emerged in these struggles for a more just, less brutal world?
- the relation between 'evental learning' and lifelong learning, as mentioned above. Does it help us to relate people's learning experiences to wider epochal events that occur both at a personal and a much wider social level? Does it help us understand the learning/unlearning of the Occupy Movement? Of the *Indignados*?
- Could this idea of 'evental learning' be applied to the areas beyond the political, as well; perhaps to those other areas Badiou identifies as spaces where events can happen (art, science, love)? Might it be possible and useful to consider this in relation to Freire's insistence on love as an essential component of emancipatory learning? Might this help us engage with the growing body of work that suggests that the affective is important in learning?

- the application of Badiou's notions of truth and knowledge to existing learning theory. Is it possible that as I have suggested above, Newman's (2012) claim that transformative learning doesn't exist, has something to do with this issue? Might the difference between transformative learning and 'good' learning be about knowledge versus truth?

- Can Badiou's idea of the situation/set help us in understanding 'barriers' to learning?

12.6 "The importance of staying angry"[23]

I started this thesis with a scream, which John Holloway suggests is the only appropriate way to begin in a society mutilated by capital (Holloway, 2010a, p.1). For me, this thesis has been a part of that scream. Holloway argues that, of course, we cannot end with the scream - something must be done. He suggests that we do not know what that is - we have to just work it out as we go, in the cracks and fissures of capitalist domination. What we cannot do, though, is turn the scream into something to be studied, something to be fetishised.

In this study I have tried to remain true to that. Clearly, as will have been obvious, this is a political study, a study for political purposes. In a recent article, Scandrett et al (2010) suggest that "Really useful knowledge is that which is selected by collective movements of the oppressed on the basis of its value for their emancipatory progressive of revolutionary projects", and so it is my hope that some of what is in here will be really useful; and as I have already said, it will in the first instance be presented and discussed with Abahlali. Laurence Cox (1998), himself an activist who has attempted to make his academic work relevant to struggle, argues that "there is no better way to improve your thinking than to have it criticised by people who know the situation you are talking about" (p. 12). So I am hopeful then that this study will contribute to the 'working it out' that both Abahlali and I do in that process. However, as Holloway (2010a) says; "It is from rage that thought is born". So I end with the scream, too, knowing that it is really only the beginning.

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[23] Martin (2003, p.574) used this as a heading in an article entitled "Adult Education, lifelong learning and citizenship: Some ifs and buts".

Appendix 1: List of interviews

Person	Place	Date
Andrew Collins	Pietermaritzburg	6th March 2012/ 6th December 2012
Lindela Figlan	Pietermaritzburg	7th February 2012
Zodwa Nsibande	Pietermaritzburg	7th February 2012
David Ntseng	Pietermaritzburg	26th September 2012
Mazwi Nzimande	Pietermaritzburg	7th February 2012
Richard Pithouse	Durban	11th April 2012
S'bu Zikode	Pietermaritzburg	7th February 2012

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

1.   Please tell me a bit about yourself - where you were born, where you grew up, about your family, about growing up.

2.   Tell me about school - Where did you go to school? Did you complete school? How did you feel about school? Did you feel you learned a lot? What did you learn? Was this learning important for you after school?

3.   Tell me about your life after school - What did you do? Where did you live? Do you have any children?

4.   What do you think you have learned from what has happened to you in your life? Why did you learn these things? Which of these things has been most important to you? Have you made any choices about your life because of what you learned?

5.   Tell me about your experiences about Abahlali - When did you first hear about Abahlali? What did you hear? Why did you decide to join/support the movement? How do you feel about Abahlali now?

Appendix 3: Examples of analysis

3.1 Example of life history/critical event analysis and coding:

3.2 Examples of coding transcripts by research questions and themes

[I used different colours to code for different research questions - red for Question 1 (Abahlali); green for Questions 2 and 3 (learning/'unlearning', including informal learning); blue for Question 4 (Badiou)].

share it, why can't we see it, why can't we engage with it, without workshopping it, without packaging it. We were going to have a Congress of the Betrayed. We'd worked out the language already. We'd worked out how angry people should behave. They should come together in a Congress of the Betrayed, and we would help them do it. It never happened. Amongst us, the NGOs and the social movement, the congress of the betrayed was going to become another slick conference.

Even from the beginning, it was clear we were alone. We were just pushing the simple question, that we didn't understand, we didn't know about, but - we wanted to go around the province, just listening to people, what's their experience, how's their anger, but what it became was about running a series of workshops, in hotels. It wasn't about listening to people. We realised that others we were working with didn't understand things in the same way. For them it was about having to write a report for funders. It was really uneasy stuff. And for us, we didn't know how to do it, we didn't have experience around it, but we just knew it wasn't answering the questions we were asking, and it wasn't giving space for that. For us it was an attempt to say, hey, this is fantastic we've got a new lease of life, animation is what it's all about, let's go try it and do it, and didn't happen. We couldn't make it work. It was this moment of exile. We had to step away. Because in that moment of practice, it get's killed, and you come away feeling very compromised.

Attempts to ask questions, self-critique questions of both NGOs and social movements couldn't happen. There was no self-critique. It just closed space. And the movement knowing what was best, and you couldn't question it. So the need for us to actually think differently about how we're going to do this. So reading more, more strategic planning, more talking

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I was still staying at Benwood when I became involved in Abahlali. One
day, whilst I was staying at Benwood, Mnikelo called and told me to
watch TV - it was showing an Abahlali march. So I went to Kennedy Road
and joined Abahlali. That was in 2005. The second time I went to an
Abahlali meeting, I saw Richard Pithouse and Richard Ballard and Faizel
Khan. I was confused about why white people were there, being called
comrades. I thought that this place wasn't for me. But then I saw that these
people were not the ones who did that to my father. They didn't talk like
white people, they talked like human beings, like me, like everyone.

After I met Richard Pithouse, I asked him why I am called Figlan. I
thought maybe I wasn't 100% black, perhaps in the travels of some of my
family, something had happened. I wasn't sure where I belonged. Richard
found out that my forefather, a chief, resisted the confiscation of his land.
His descendants changed their name to protect themselves. Later I went
and found the other Figlan people that Richard told me about.

S'bu [Zikode] told me one day that they were going to Chesterville, and I
went with. Whilst I was there, my wife called to say our house was being
attacked because I had joined the red shirts. I went back home, S'bu came
with. He told me I was not safe at Benwood, I must move elsewhere. So I
went back to Foreman Road and rented a house there. ANC people at
Benwood hated me, because I used to be ANC. So from the start, ANC
people saw Abahlali as anti-ANC. I was banned from the ANC.

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Even though I have lost a lot because of Abahlali, Abahlali is where I feel free, especially at meetings. I forget about my worries; everyone is my brothers and sisters. People don't mind me speaking Xhosa, compared to the ANC. I still love the ANC, but I feel it has lost its way. It needs to go back to the old ways, not the way of today. Abahlali feels like I am joining the other part, the real ANC. Later on, after I joined, I noticed that Abahlali doesn't do what political parties do. It accommodates everyone from everywhere - no matter what political party, what religion. People can speak freely, without interruption. It doesn't just go according to 'policies', you can talk anytime about anything, the 'real politics' of 'real people'. It is not bluffing people, it is saying it straight. Abahlali helped me realise that being a landlord at Benwood was exploitative.

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