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Development, Competition and Hillbrow: the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* 2005-2015, a community arts project

Zanele Suzen Madiba
Student number: 388145
Supervisor: Nontobeko Ntombela

This thesis is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Arts and Culture Management by Dissertation.

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Plagiarism declaration

I, Zanele Suzen Madiba (Student number: 388145), am a student registered for the degree of Master of Arts in Arts and Culture Management by dissertation.

I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above degree is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

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Abstract

This study looks into the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to promote an appreciation for arts and culture programmes in inner-city high schools and beyond, and, by extension, reflects on how the festival impacts on participants' perceptions of Hillbrow as home.

Through an analysis of South African art historian Lize van Robbroeck's conceptual framework of community arts centres, this case study unpacks how site specificities of the centre being in Hillbrow, starts to debunk what has become a widely understood framework of arts centres as inherently pro-marginal, thereby associated with 'blackness', both during apartheid and post-apartheid. Qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews with the Hillbrow Theatre Project staff, facilitators and school teachers, focus group discussions with school-goers, letters and organisational documents have therefore been used in order to get a deeper understanding of the workings of the Outreach Foundation as a centre and its artistic programme under the Hillbrow Theatre Project called the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival.*

The study reveals that the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* are effective in promoting an appreciation for an arts and culture programme, and it further shows that the festival can indeed effect some measure of change in participants' attitudes about Hillbrow as home.

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For my late father, Malesela Simon and brother, Themba Alfred Madiba.

Introduction

> Sometimes our communities need something more than just food to stay alive. So when stories from our street corners come to us, we need to care for them, breathe life into them and echo them where they are needed most. This is what the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* has over the years managed to do… giving young people a chance to speak about who they are and where they come from using all elements of theatre. These are genuine and honest voices of our youth that are not diluted by fame and fortune or fears and flaws (Napo Masheane,[1] 2014:33).

The *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a public arts educational platform hosted by the Hillbrow Theatre Project under the umbrella of the Outreach Foundation[2] located in Hillbrow[3], Johannesburg, South Africa. In its initial conceptualisation, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* was targeted at inner-city schools but has since grown to include schools outside of the inner-city areas. To examine the growth of this educational programme over the course of ten years, this study poses the following question:

> What artistic strategies does the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* employ to effectively address an appreciation for arts and culture programmes in inner-city schools as well as challenging negative perceptions about Hillbrow as home?

To answer this question, this study will interpret the work of the festival in relation to the promotion of the arts as well as whether and how the festival manages to 'destabilise' the stereotypes about Hillbrow as home. To situate the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* as a community arts model, the study will examine the

[1] Masheane is a playwright, poet, performer and director.
[2] The Outreach Foundation is a community centre located in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, South Africa. The history of the centre will be outlined in detail in Chapter One of this study.
[3] Hillbrow, situated on the outer margins of the Johannesburg city centre, is a residential and commercial place.

festival's successes and failures in four ways. Firstly, the study will look at the festival's emphasis on development and educational aspects. Secondly, it will assess the effects of the festival's competition element. Thirdly, it will examine the impact of funding on 'assessments' of the success of the festival. Lastly, the study will explore the engagement of the festival with its immediate vicinity and its ability to change perceptions of Hillbrow.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'inner-city' is broadly understood through the lens of the City of Johannesburg framework which argues that the inner-city is an area which is central in the city and has a higher population density. The inner-city "is not just the historical centre of Johannesburg but is also its symbolic, economic and cultural centre".[4]

This study looks at the definition of community arts centres as outlined by South African art historian Lize van Robbroeck's (1991) Master's thesis titled The Ideology and Practice of Community Arts in South Africa, with Particular Reference to Katlehong and Alexandra Arts Centres. van Robbroeck's dissertation is a starting point for this study because available literature on South African community arts is limited, and very little of it pertains directly to community arts centres in the way that she engages with its history, ideologies and practices. Although limited, van Robbroeck's thesis provides a conceptual backdrop for which the study was able to interpret the case of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* and provided guidance on the analysis of this study's empirical data.

[4] According to the City of Johannesburg, "the inner-city covers Yeoville and Braamfontein in the north to Marshalltown and Benrose in the south, and Vrededorp and Fordsburg in the west to Jeppestown, Bertrams and Troyeville in the east" (http://www.joburg.org.za).

To supplement van Robbroeck's writings, the study touches on the limitations of a majority of academic writings on South African community arts,[5] in which, for the most part, theorise community arts centres as a rural/township phenomenon targeted at black people. A number of local South African community arts scholars who have written to this effect include van Robbroeck, Dr Gerard Hagg (a chief research specialist in the Democracy and Governance research programme) and Eben Lochner (current Rhodes University PhD candidate).

The claim of community arts centres as an initiative targeted at people of colour is particularly evidenced through van Robbroeck (1991:3) who claims that at their inception, community arts centres sought to provide solutions to the "socio-economic conditions of the townships". As a result of this framing, I became interested in understanding centres that operated within city-suburb spaces which disrupt 'neat' definitions of community arts. This study is therefore an attempt to complicate narratives present in past literature and highlight the complexities and multidimensionality of local community arts centres.

While I looked at other arts centres located within city-suburb spaces such as Lefika La Phodiso[6] in Parktown, I opted to focus on the Outreach Foundation located in Hillbrow, Johannesburg for numerous reasons. Firstly, I had been observing the Hillbrow Theatre Project's educational art programmes since 2011. Secondly, geographically the centre is close to the University of the Witwatersrand, which meant that I could use the school bus and avoid additional transport costs in conducting the

[5] Although this study uses community arts and community arts centres interchangeably, the former is used in reference to a movement, as the umbrella body while the latter is used as the product born out of that movement. Community arts will be unpacked in detail in Chapter One.

[6] Lefika La Phodiso refers to 'The Rock of Holding' in Sesotho "is Africa's first psychoanalytically informed Community Art Counselling training centre" (http://www.arttherapycentre.co.za). The centre uses art-making as a form of therapy and healing.

research. Thirdly, Gerard Bester, the creative director of the Hillbrow Theatre Project, was my lecturer during my undergraduate studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, and therefore a relationship had already been formed. This allowed for easier research access.

The Outreach Foundation is home to six outreach programmes namely the Hillbrow Theatre Project, Boitumelo Project, Day Vision Youth Centre, Hillbrow Music Centre, Hillbrow Counselling and Hillbrow Computer Centre. These various outreach programmes are arguably in place to serve the different needs of the community of Hillbrow. van Robbroeck (1991:81) essentially argues that "one of the strengths of community arts centres lies in the fact that they are designed to be flexible and to accommodate the particular needs of community".

My undergraduate studies focused on Performance Studies and Performing Art Management (PAM) because I have a particular interest in theatre for education and transformation. It is for this reason, that this study focuses on the Hillbrow Theatre Project. The Hillbrow Theatre Project was established in 1999 to offer after-school arts and culture programmes[7] to the children and youth of Hillbrow and Johannesburg inner-cities.

While observing the work done by the Hillbrow Theatre Project, I watched a theatre production titled *The Donkey Child* directed by Lindiwe Matshikiza in March 2014. This theatrical collaboration between professional artists and the children at the Hillbrow Theatre Project was the final motivation to undertake this study. *The Donkey Child* went beyond the superficial narrative of violence that one would 'expect' in Hillbrow. It

[7] Arts and culture programmes is used broadly to refer to "all forms and traditions of dance, drama, music, music theatre, visual arts, crafts, design, written and oral literature" (Revised White Paper, 2013:16) as a way of expressing individual and collective artistic originality.

explored themes of who we are as individuals and as a community within the spaces that we occupy. While it was possible to centre an entire research on a single production, I thought a once-off production such as *The Donkey Child* would limit the scope of what this study wanted to investigate, such that I had to find an ongoing programme within the Hillbrow Theatre Project educational programming. The *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* as one of their long-term running programme became an obvious choice.

Although the initial interest in this study stems from the problematic conceptualisation of community arts centres, secondary interest stems from the contrariety between the narrative of Hillbrow as a 'dangerous' space which one had assumed over the years in mass media. The festival highlights the discrepancies between what one has heard over the years about Hillbrow and this has motivated me to question my own misconceptions about this space; firstly, as an unsafe place and secondly as home.

As someone who has spent most of my life in the township (Tembisa, Johannesburg), there are a number of community arts centres that I could have focused on such as Uncle Tom's Community Centre in Soweto (Johannesburg), Moses Molelekwa Arts Centre in Tembisa (Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg), and Sibikwa Arts Centre in Benoni (East Rand, near Johannesburg). However, those centres would have been inappropriate as this study is an attempt to move-away from the kinds of rigid 'township' community arts framework. The study is a shift towards understanding how community arts centres transcend such frameworks by looking at the Outreach Foundation and how it functions within the inner-city context and plays a different developmental role from one that is carried out in the townships (if at all).

Social issues such as crime, migrants, overpopulation, sex workers, drugs, landlord exploitation, violence, and unemployment are some of the issues that have been documented as being factors associated with life in Hillbrow. Scholars that have written at length on this effect include Tracey Jill Morton,[8] Alan Morris;[9] Phaswane Mpe[10] and Lauren Beukes.[11] Their writings will be outlined in Chapter Two of this study. While one could argue that the standard of living in Hillbrow can impact on children's socialisation, it is the environment in which many of the school-goers who participate in the festival find themselves.

This study is further prompted by the realisation that numerous studies on community arts studies are located outside of city spaces, in townships (places that were/are inherently black populated areas). Despite the many community arts centres located within marginalised black communities, this is an area of study dominated by white scholars. As a black female scholar, I noticed the scarcity of critical literature generated by black voices in this area and can therefore see how such a view could offer an important insight in the literature of community arts centres.

While this study seeks to give a different perspective, I recognise that it relies heavily on literature generated by white scholars which is challenging. However, this reinforces the need for black voices in this area of study. It makes visible the scarcity

[8] Morton is a senior lecturer at UNISA and also lectures at the University of Johannesburg. Her Master's dissertation on Hillbrow titled '*A Profile of Urban Poverty in Post-Apartheid Hillbrow: Comparing South African and American Inner Cities*' (1998) is a comparative study that assesses how Hillbrow displays signs similar to that of American inner-city slums and the ghettoes.

[9] Morris is an urban and housing studies scholar and a lead Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council Discovery (https://www.uts.edu.au/staff/alan.morris). His book *Bleakness & Light* (1999) examines the racial transitions in Hillbrow in relation to its physical decline.

[10] The late Mpe was a South African novelist, poet and an African Literature lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. His novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) articulates post-apartheid struggles through the lens of Hillbrow.

[11] Beukes is a South African novelist and journalist. Her science fiction book, *Zoo City* (2010) reflects on some of the chaos of life in Hillbrow and explores notions of being "animalled" (Beukes, 2011).

of scholarly writings generated by black scholars on inner-city based community arts. In this, lies the significance of this study. It attempts to address the gap in material and knowledge available about the inner-city community arts programmes.

This study is two-pronged. While one part seeks a deeper understanding of the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, the second part seeks to challenge the negative perceptions about Hillbrow as home. This is based on an underlying assumption that it would be almost impossible to talk meaningfully about the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* without looking at the social context in which the programme and subsequently the Outreach Foundation is operating from. The focus on Hillbrow is therefore significant because the location influences the ideological framing of the festival. A general historical overview of Hillbrow is only given as a way of contextualising and orientating the festival.

While the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is but one case study, it has highlighted issues that speak to the nature of community arts 'movement' in South Africa. It is for this reason that this study hopes to contribute to literature that proposes a shift in thinking about the conceptual framework of community arts and Hillbrow as home. Literature such as that generated by scholars like Mpe and Morris which argue for an analytical engagement beyond the simplified narratives of physical decline and looming dangers in Hillbrow.

Methodology

Using a single case study of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, qualitative research methods seemed fitting to articulate participants' experiences of the festival. Michael Quinn Patton (2001:21), an "independent evaluation and organisational development consultant" describes the principles of a qualitative analysis as a way of

capturing participants “in their own terms.” In the context of the festival, qualitative methods are a means of uncovering participants’ perceived ‘realities’ in relation to their participation within the festival.

While I have opted for a case study research method, I am aware of its limitation as outlined by Jacques Hamel and Stephane Dufour (1993:21) in their book *Case Study Methods: Qualitative Research Methods* that a case study method cannot “validate the general applicability”. This is based on claims that a case study findings tend to apply to one case, and therefore findings cannot be generalised. However, in its limitation, an American social scientist, Robert Yin (1994:10) argues that a case study allows a researcher to sufficiently offer an in-depth analysis into a single case that can start to speak to trends and patterns that can be linked to other projects, and in turn, offer a broader practice.

It is further acknowledged that because this study is case specific, biases will arise as it deals with people’s perceived ‘realities’ and in such cases one is bound to be subjective. In her book *Case Study: Research in Practice*, Professor Helen Simons (2001:162) argues that subjectivity is necessary to generate knowledge. It is on the basis of Simons’ claim on subjectivity that I have found the case study method useful for this study.

In collecting empirical data, semi-structured interviews were conducted between 17 April and 5 June 2015 with three teachers instead of four because St Enda’s Secondary School did not have a teacher representative. Their drama group is facilitated by Linda Michael Mkhwanazi, one of the initiators and facilitator of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. Participating teachers included Lothisa Msengana (Reasoma Secondary School), Frank Sithole (Phoenix College) and Lucas Nyathi

(Supreme Educational College). Interviews were also conducted with the Hillbrow Theatre Project Creative Director Gerard Bester, Project Coordinator Thabang Phakathi, two festival facilitators namely, Gcebile Dlamini and Linda Michael Mkhwanazi and three sponsors/partners, namely Janet Watts (Rand Merchant Bank), Clara Vaughan (Market Theatre Laboratory) and Mpho Mabule (Department of Arts and Culture).

This study uses semi-structured interviews as outlined by Zina O'Leary (2004) in her book *The Essential Guide to Doing Research* which argues that the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to get detailed descriptions about participants' experiences and perceptions. This study found that given the level of literacy of the participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires would have also been suitable and less time consuming. However, it was felt that to get detailed descriptions, personal interaction with the participants was necessary. While the interview schedule had structured questions, it included a number of open-ended questions which allowed for follow-up questions in instances which required clarity. An interview schedule was emailed to each participant two weeks prior to the scheduled interview in order to allow the participants to prepare and email any questions before the interview.

Four focus group discussions were conducted between 27 and 29 April 2015 with 39 school-goers from St Enda's Secondary School in Hillbrow, Reasoma Secondary School in Soweto, Supreme Educational College in Braamfontein and Phoenix College in the Johannesburg CBD. These schools were selected based on their geographical diversity and because they represent a mixture of government, township and independent/private schools. Permission to conduct focus group discussions on school premises was granted by school principals after the Department of Education

had approved this study. Given that most of the learners are minors, assent and consent forms were also signed.

In practice, focus group discussions did not work out as well as expected. Generated data was very limited as some of the school-goers did not feel confident to voice their opinions in a group setting. It was felt that the data collected was not reflective of the entire group dynamic and would also not be sufficient as a stand-alone. So in addition to the focus group discussions, school-goers were requested to write letters which personified Hillbrow. The reasoning behind the writing of letters was to access school-goers' perceptions of Hillbrow as a place and consequently as home. Through this format, all the school-goers had an opportunity to voice their opinion uninterrupted by their peers.

The letter format was adopted from Rangoato Hlasane, a lecturer in the Division of Fine Arts (Wits School of Arts) who mentioned that he had used the format for teenagers and children who participated in the Keleketla! After School Programme situated in Joubert Park near Hillbrow. Like myself, Hlasane designed the letter format as a response to Mpe's lament at the lack of written output on Hillbrow. When I enquired about this method, Hlasane's reasoning went as such:

> I thought letters in which people personify Hillbrow could be a homage to both place and the author. By allowing people from all walks of life, the outcome would make visible both public perceptions as well as invisible stories people hold of Hillbrow (Hlasane, 2015).

Letters to Hillbrow yielded fruitful results as the method was designed for the purpose of reimagining Hillbrow which lies at the heart of this study. The content of the letters provided great insights into school-goers' perceptions on Hillbrow which would not have been possible to extract from available literature on Hillbrow and from the focus

group discussions. While not all of the school-goers who participated in the study are residents of Hillbrow and one might argue that they cannot be expected to offer any concrete experiences on the notion of Hillbrow as home, I engaged with this line of enquiry to gain insider-outsider perceptions of Hillbrow.

Out of the 39 school-goers who were part of the focus group discussions, only 34 submitted their letters. In the analysis stages, the letters were grouped into four key themes. The first key theme was misconceptions about Hillbrow. The second one was notions of crime and danger. The third one was physical decay and filth. The last one was around the idea of Hillbrow as home. In the end, one letter got selected out of each category. While one cannot claim that four letters are representative of 34 learners, the letters that were eventually selected had fewer grammatical errors and clearly articulated the school-goers' views. Although one's subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated, these letters illustrate school-goers' multiple points of views and embody a diversity of opinions. To protect their identities, school-goers were requested to use pseudonyms.

The study also relied on the content analysis of organisational documents including press releases relating to the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* programme which were made available by Gerard Bester. These documents provided an in-depth understanding of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*.

The study also uses fictional texts such as Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) and Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010) to provide a nuanced picture of Hillbrow. To provide a balanced reading, these texts have been supplemented by critical literature generated by scholars such as Alan Morris, Robert Mshengu Kavanagh, Allister Sparks and Todd Henderson.

To make sense of the empirical data, this study reviews a number of local and international community arts literature and one on Hillbrow. As opposed to engaging with the empirical data separately in a chapter, it has been integrated throughout the study to allow for its reading in light of the theoretical discussion.

The abovementioned research methods allowed for multiple perspectives on how the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* encouraged an appreciation for arts and culture programmes, how its relation to the ideas of development, community and advocacy links it to the work fulfilled by community art projects, and how the manifestation of these artistic strategies impacted on participants' perceptions on Hillbrow as home.

These methods and the reviewed literature made it possible to make comparisons and build an argument on how the Outreach Foundation, although located in the inner-city is not different from community arts centres operating outside of city spaces.

Outline of the study

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter One engages notions of 'community arts centres' as outlined by van Robbroeck's Master's thesis as a way of locating my own case study within broader debates of community arts projects. It also interrogates what constitute 'community' itself. This chapter also gives background of the case study and a brief overview of the Outreach Foundation as a centre.

Chapter Two looks at Hillbrow and some of the participants' perceptions of Hillbrow within the broader socio-political context. The historical transition of Hillbrow is explored from a South African 'whites only' residential area to an urban space that is now densely-populated by people of colour who can freely occupy the space, and consequently call it home. The notion of Hillbrow as home is analysed through the

critical literature generated by Alan Morris, Allister Sparks, Mshengu Kavanagh, and Shirley Walters. In locating Hillbrow within broader debates, this chapter reviews how the festival influences and challenges negative perceptions of Hillbrow as home. Finally, the chapter unpacks the 'danger' element that has dominated most writings on Hillbrow and relates it to international narratives on danger and its association with black bodies and inherently black populated areas.

Chapter Three unpacks the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to effectively promote arts and culture programmes in inner-city Johannesburg schools and beyond. The chapter employs South African and international festival literature to locate the festival within the broader literature of "festival culture" as outlined by Georgia Seffrin (2007:67). It examines a number of arts festivals and the pros and cons of engaging in an arts festival format with a competitive element as an education medium (the building of professional and learners' connections and mentorship). The chapter looks at competition as an incentive for participation and the tensions that arise as a result of competitive pressures. The implications suggest that care needs to be taken when incorporating competition within a programme that is specifically geared towards educational development in order to avoid conflict.

Chapter Four looks at the educational value of the festival and how this translates into long-term partnerships with bodies such as the Department of Arts and Culture, the Department of Education, City of Johannesburg and Rand Merchant Bank. The chapter argues that the focus on the educational value of the festival persuades private, government and corporate sponsors to align themselves with the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. The chapter explores how these strategic partnerships contribute to the bridging of the education gap and enhances the current curriculum

structure. The chapter also questions funding assessment criteria and the measure of high number of participants and audiences as to what constitute ‘success’. Last, the chapter integrates how funding community arts initiatives speak to the ideology of transformation and development.

Chapter One: Conceptualising local community arts centres

1.1. A brief historical overview of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*

The *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a public arts educational platform that was initiated by Hillbrow Theatre facilitators Linda Michael Mkhwanazi, Thabang Phakathi, Denny Dube, Qhubani Malinga, Evans Majozi and Maluleki Mthembu while they were still operating under the collective of Hlalanathi.[12] The festival was first staged in 2005, a year after the Outreach Foundation was formally established as an independent community arts centre separate from the German Lutheran Church of Peace.[13]

In 2007, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* ceased to be the brainchild of the Hillbrow Theatre facilitators and was absorbed by the Outreach Foundation due to the "necessity for funding and resources" (Festival booklet, 2014:17). When it comes to the ownership of the festival, different people present contradictory versions concerning its inception and consequently its history. Speaking back to these 'ownership tensions', Gerard Bester, who joined the Outreach Foundation in 2007, insists that his employers assured him that the festival from its initiation was a product of the Outreach Foundation. Contrary to Bester's version, Linda Mkhwanazi, who is documented as one of the initiators of the festival, disputes this claim. Mkhwanazi (2015) maintains that the festival was his 'sole' idea which he subsequently pitched to the rest of the team and that was how the festival was born.

[12] Hlalanathi is one of the earlier theatre groups that was also launched with the help of the Outreach Project of Lutheran Church of Peace (Hillbrow) in 1999.

[13] The German Lutheran Church of Peace originally founded the Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation in 1998 (Festival booklet, 2014:2). The aim of the Outreach Project was to create a sanctuary for the residents of Hillbrow where they could engage peacefully in the arts.

As argued in the Festival booklet (2014:17), "these transitions brought a range of troubles such as leadership, ownership and independence". Regardless of which version is the truth, disputes over ownership of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* are indicative of some of the contentions that connect to broader issues around the workings of community arts centres. Despite ownership tensions, the initial objective of the festival has remained the same. It remains a platform that seeks to showcase new original works created by high school learners. The launch of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* was a result of the facilitators' observation that there was a lack of arts and culture activities offered within the school programme and inner-city extra-curricular initiatives.

Today the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* programme is one of the largest annual events on the Outreach Foundation's calendar and arguably the biggest festival for young audiences in Johannesburg. The festival takes place in the first week of September[14] every year and 2016 is its twelfth year. The Hillbrow Theatre Project focuses a great deal of its energy and resources on workshop training programmes. These workshops are conducted every year by various facilitators from the Hillbrow Theatre Project and the Market Theatre Laboratory (The Lab).[15] The Lab allocates their second-year students to do their practical component at the Outreach Foundation specifically working on the *Inner City-High Schools Drama Festival* programme as a part of their internship programme.

[14] According to Bester, this date was about timing. It is mid-way in the third term which gives time after June holidays and enough time after for all learners to focus on their third term exams. However, later it became strategic as it runs at the same time as the Arts Alive International Festival (Bester, 2015).
[15] The Market Theatre Laboratory is a theatre and performance drama school that offers arts training to young from disadvantaged backgrounds that would otherwise not have access to arts training (http://markettheatre.co.za).

The workshops focus on teaching drama skills, helping school-goers research the festival's annual theme, develop their original plays, and integrate design elements into their stories. Beyond empowering school-goers, these workshops also equip young facilitators from The Lab and school teachers with skills in facilitation, directing, design and scriptwriting.

The *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* encourages high school-goers to use drama as an artistic tool to interrogate issues that are pertinent to the world they live in. To date, the Festival booklet (2014:6) outlines that "issues such as xenophobia, landlord exploitation, drug abuse and violence have been the focal point of some of the plays presented in the past years". The notion of unpacking themes as a way to educating and creating awareness will be explored in detail in Chapter Three under the subheading of 'arts education and awareness'.

In addition to the educational aspects, the festival has a crucial competition component where prizes are awarded to schools and school-goers who excel in various categories. The competition aspect as an artistic strategy will be explored in detail in Chapter Four of this study. However, it is important to mention here that the Hillbrow Theatre Project argues that despite the festival being seen as a competition, "the main aim of the festival is to provide a dynamic and exciting learning experience for the learners and advocate for quality arts education in inner-city schools" (Festival booklet, 2014:6). It is therefore geared towards facilitating teaching and learning rather than encouraging the spirit of competitiveness.

In 2014 the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* celebrated its tenth anniversary. In this year, the Hillbrow Theatre Project started the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* outreach programme. This outreach programme provides mentorship and

facilitation support to all the schools that participate in the festival. According to the Festival booklet (2014:19), this outreach programme initiative was realised through "an increase in funding from Rand Merchant Bank and new funding from the Department of Arts and Culture".

Through the festival, the Hillbrow Theatre Project emphasises arts education and learners' personal development. The educational value of a community art festival is highlighted by Georgia Seffrin (2005) in her journal article *The OUT OF THE BOX Festival of Early Childhood: Fashioning the Boutique Festival for Children*. Seffrin (2005:254) argues that the educational elements of a community arts festival function as an empowerment tool for the children and young adults involved rather than a concern with aesthetic values. While aesthetic values such as the quality of the performance, the staging of the play, and costume and design are important, community arts festivals highlight artistic process. In the case of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, the foregrounding of the educational elements manifests in the form of annual festival themes. Each year (Festival booklet 2014:7) "the Hillbrow Theatre Project team decides on a broad theme for the festival to give focus, direction and inspiration to the process of creating an original play". It is here where high school-goers get the opportunity to engage with the complexities that arise from their cultural lived experiences. This is based on Seffrin's (2005:254) finding that arts education creates active school goers who are able to make a valuable contribution to the well-being of their communities.

1.2. Local South African community arts centres

Community arts centres are largely associated with areas that are densely populated by black people such as the rural areas and townships. Evidence to this claim will be

outlined in this chapter using writings generated by local South African community arts scholars. The problem with such understanding is that it overlooks the contribution of urban spaces as other possible locations to host arts centres. Furthermore, only pinning community arts centres to township areas reduces the complexities of these spaces. Missionary arts centres, township arts centres, rural area arts centres, and to a certain extent city-suburb arts centres all have varying historical backgrounds, yet have a common objective of offering skills development within their respective communities. A comprehensive historical background of community arts centres is not without contradictions and as such would require a study of its own. However, for the purpose of this study, an overview of community arts is given as a means to challenge the available theoretical conception of 'community arts centres' as inherently township-based or peri-urban.

Given the limited literature on South African local community arts centres, it was a challenge to access critical writings generated outside of the prominent community arts scholars such as van Robbroeck, Shirley Walters, Dr Gerard Hagg, and Eben Lochner. Hagg's journal articles namely *The New Wave: Government Arts and Culture Centres Reinforcements or Liabilities* (2004) and *The State and Community Arts Centres in a Society in Transformation: The South African Case* (2010) are concerned with mapping the history and progression of South African state-owned community arts centres with a particular focus on their poor performance post-apartheid and their complex relationship with the state.

Hagg's (2010:163) concerns emerged out of extensive research that he conducted on state-owned community arts centres between 2002 and 2006 through the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), where he worked as the manager for the HSRC project called Identity and Cultural Diversity in Conflict Resolution in Africa. The arts

centres[16] that he researched are also referred to as Reconstruction and Development Project (RDP) arts centres as they formed part of the reconstruction project by the democratic government to counter the apartheid government's oppressive policies.

While there are some writings on South African community arts generated by scholars such as Shirley Walters (1989), van Robbroeck's study/model is useful because it has been cited and utilised by numerous local writings (published and unpublished). While van Robbroeck was not the first to write about local community arts, the multiple cross-referencing of her study by prominent scholars such as Hagg and Lochner, arguably qualifies her as one of the 'pioneers' to have conceptualised local community arts centres and their workings. van Robbroeck's Master's thesis maps out the history, ideologies and practices of local community arts centres using the case study of Katlehong and Alexandra Arts Centres in Johannesburg as her primary reference. van Robbroeck (1991:29) relates these centres' ideologies to the community arts "movement" abroad.

1.3. Notions of community

It is very difficult to offer a definition of community arts without going into the complexities of what constitutes 'community'. van Robbroeck (1991:8) postulates that the difficulty with a single definition lies in the fact that "the term on which it is based, 'community', is a catchword which refers to an abstract concept rather than a circumscribed physical structure''. Therefore 'community' being the root of 'community arts' makes it difficult to pin down a definition that is fully encompassing. The nature of the concept of 'community' opens itself up to multiple interpretations given varying circumstances. For the purpose of this study, 'community' is understood in a lateral

[16] Some of these arts centres include Mmabana Arts Centre in North West, Mamelodi in Pretoria and Gugas' Thebe Centre in Langa, Cape Town (Hagg, 2010:179).

way (as a physical entity that congregates around a space, idea, activity) and that communities are changing, evolving and in flux.

The spectrum of references that the concept of community opens up is illustrated by Jim Ife and Frank Tesoriero (2006:100) in their book *Community development: Community-based Alternatives in an Age of Globalisation* which argues that "community is always in a state of 'becoming'. It is felt and experienced, rather than measured". Inherent in Ife and Tesoriero's claim of 'community' always being in a state of becoming is that it cannot be fixed nor confined. It is forever fluctuating given different circumstances. This is evident in the context of Hillbrow, which is always in constant influx of people. Hillbrow, as a locale that has undergone rapid transformation since the establishment of Johannesburg is therefore an appropriate 'community' to look into. Although this paper argues that Hillbrow is in constant transition and argues its fluidity, I am cognisant that Hillbrow also takes up actual physical space and that there are actual laws and regulations that govern the space. And as such, I acknowledge that as an inner-city residential area, Hillbrow is affected and effected by a number of the City of Johannesburg by-laws. While the ideology of the concept of 'community' is acknowledged, so is its instrumentalisation of Hillbrow into a concrete community.

For the purpose of this study, 'community' in the context of the festival refers to all the participants who contribute towards the success of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. These include the general residents of Hillbrow, audiences, participating schools, the Hillbrow Theatre Project staff, facilitators, adjudicators and partners/sponsors. The decision to opt for a loose definition of what constitutes a 'community' lies in the refusal to be summarised into a single definition as outlined earlier by Ife and Tesoriero (2006:100). In its refusal to be tied down, it opens up

insightful ways of reading the participants' perception of Hillbrow as a community and consequently as home.

Hillbrow has been in a continuous state of transition as a community since the late 1970s. According to Morris (1999:3), this was a time when white people were moving out of Hillbrow due to the emergence of black and Indian people into the inner-city. Morris (1999:12) argues that the emergence of people of colour and 'foreign nationals' into Hillbrow had a lot to do with the collapse of the Group Areas Act of 1950 which had previously separated people on the basis of race. While the history of the city centre has a direct impact on the historicisation of Hillbrow, this study only offers elements of that history as a means of contextualising the case study. This history will be briefly outlined in Chapter Two.

Writing from the context of the United States of America in his book *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives*, Eugene van Erven (2001:17) defines community arts as "a means of creating art in which professional artists work more or less intensively with people who do not normally come into contact with art and culture". It links community members with professionals operating in the art industry and operates as a skills development project. Similarly, to van Robbroeck, van Erven (2001:17) also locates community arts within American marginalised communities. While locally marginalised communities refer to those who are less likely to have access to arts education internationally, since the 1960s community arts initiatives sought more collaborative platforms that engaged the 'masses' and went against the individual white male genius artist trope. For international artists, the possibilities of 'art' being more democratic and accessible were important as well as a collective expression.

Locally, community arts are also associated with the idea of 'development'. Development is usually understood to be one of the main drivers of a community arts programme upon which creative productions are conceptualised, funded and supported. In this instance, development refers to any "process of change which is purposive and positive" as outlined by Padam Lal Devkota (1999:26) in an online journal titled *People-centered Development in Nepal: An Innovative Approach*. Devkota (1999:26) argues that there is no universal measure of development; it is all dependent on people's economic, cultural and social standing within their communities. Given this understanding, development varies from person to person. The implication of development is that it is understood to be a component of community arts centres that should be beneficial and subsequently lead to some form of growth for the community. In the case of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, the process of development manifests itself through various workshops conducted by the Hillbrow Theatre Project. Here, facilitators equip learners and teachers with basic drama skills such as voice, acting, and movement training. Since 2014, an additional mentorship programme for artists and facilitators has been added to the workshops. This has enhanced the quality of the learners' creative output (Festival booklet, 2014:9).

1.4. Ideological tensions

Community arts centres are considered to have played a critical educational role in marginalised black communities during apartheid. This is evidenced through van Robbroeck (1991:29) who states that "from its inception, community arts movement in South Africa was geared towards providing solutions to pressing socio-economic and educational problems within the black community". van Robbroeck places the emergence of the earliest local community arts centres in the 1950s and 1960s. Her

timeline of local community arts centres being a movement of the early 1960s is mentioned in earlier studies conducted by scholars such as by Shirley Walters (1986) in her PhD dissertation titled Education for Democratic Participation: An Analysis of Self-Education Strategies within Certain Community Organisations in Cape Town in the 1980's'. Walters (1986:24) attributes the rapid rise of community arts centres in the 1970s to "the rising influence of the Black Consciousness Movement after the 1976 upheavals". Black people wanted to engage in an alternative system of education, one that puts them at the fore.

While the efforts of community arts during apartheid are evident in past literature, van Robbroeck's paper presents two ideological tensions and contradictions. On the one hand, community arts centres are outlined as being a 'redress' effort by the apartheid government. In *Inheriting the Flame: New Writing on Community Arts in South Africa*, a collection of essays looking at local and international community arts, van Robbroeck (2004:45) argues that past community arts centres "to a greater or lesser degree [were] concerned with redressing educational and cultural imbalances wrought by decades of systematic neglect and marginalisation under the system of apartheid". On the other hand, she posits that community arts centres realised by efforts made by black artists who sought to challenge the oppressive system of apartheid, established it in opposition to the apartheid government (van Robbroeck, 1991:83). Given these contradictions, one has to wonder, to what extent did these centres challenge the status quo if their existence was also dependent on the very apartheid government to permit and sometimes fund their existence?

Based on van Robbroeck's study, there is a clear sense of control that the apartheid government enforced that limited the full realisation of such a motivation (black artists' attempts to collapse the apartheid government). Her section on funding speaks directly

to these tensions. van Robbroeck argues that an arts centre like Katlehong Arts Centre (KAC) which took on an "apolitical" (1991:96) stance in their art-making was considered to be non-threatening to the apartheid government. Their 'apolitical' ideologies did not challenge the status quo, hence the centre is documented as being subsidised by the state since its inception (van Robbroeck, 1991:96).

The absence of a clear political stance in KAC's work, one could argue, was influenced by a predominately white management structure which influenced the nature of the work. According to van Robbroeck (1991:69), those entrusted to oversee the management of KAC "consisted entirely of whites from various departments" and meetings regarding funding "did not involve consultation with the broader Katlehong community or the founder KAC members". Given this top-down management, it comes as no surprise that KAC management lacked stability with Zandberg Jansen managing the centre in 1978, Rosemary Shakinovsky in 1980, Davydd Myburgh in 1982, Clyde Carstens in 1983 and Steven Risi in 1984 (van Robbroeck, 1991:70-72).

Although KAC could easily access state funding, the same could not be said for Alexandra Arts Centre which took on a highly politicised ideological stance which sought to challenge the apartheid government (van Robbroeck, 1991:83). Their artwork had political overtones which critiqued the oppressive policies of the apartheid system. In addition to their politicised work, Alexandra Arts Centre refused to be funded by the apartheid government as they considered such an affiliation a liability to the mission of overthrowing that very oppressive system. As a result of their resistance, the centre was often harassed by the apartheid government (van Robbroeck, 1991:96). Unlike KAC, Alexandra Arts Centre has a different management history. The Arts Centre was established by Joe Manana and Jingle Makgothi in 1985 and "the first meetings of the Alexandra Arts Centre were influenced or even

determined by the needs of the Alexandra community" (van Robbroeck, 1991:76). It is this refusal to be apolitical that led to the state's hostility towards Alexandra Arts (van Robbroeck, 1999:77).

This implies that in fact, the state's 'investment' into township community arts centres was part of a political agenda. This hostility towards Alexandra Arts Centre speaks to how the source of funding can impact on the ideological stances of a community arts centre. Therefore, whoever funds a cause influences its direction, which is how the apartheid government had power over the running of Katlehong Arts Centre. This, according to van Robbroeck (1991:97), is because all sources of funding have expectations. The tensions around different sources of funding and their ability to inhibit a community arts centre's freedom will be addressed in detail in Chapter Four of this study.

While van Robbroeck (1991:42) presents community arts as a "movement" born out of the "lack of arts tuition for black artists" as a means of redressing the oppressive apartheid arts education, one is mindful that community arts were and still remain a political strategy. This is evident in how the apartheid government treated Alexandra Arts Centre in comparison to 'apolitical' centres such as Katlehong Arts Centre. Peter Franks and Allison Vink (cited in van Robbroeck, 1991:58) argue that Katlehong Arts Centre was funded by the state because its initial aim was to "solve at least some of the problems of juvenile delinquency" in Katlehong. Such understandings frame the apartheid government as the 'white messiah' who came into the township of Katlehong to 'save' the community from itself and its delinquency, but is an escape from the fact that it was the apartheid government, in the way that it treated black people that created the "delinquency" problem to begin with.

What this literature demonstrates is that although during apartheid, community arts centres served marginalised black communities, they did so with little attempt to challenge the status quo but rather implemented a function which they termed as a process of "civilizing" or "recreational" (van Robbroeck, 1991:59). From the onset, the political motivations behind the formation of early community arts centres are documented as seeking to provide recreational facilities and uplift black communities (van Robbroeck, 1991:29). I argue that the thinking of white people as 'saviours' within such community initiatives is problematic. This saviour mentality is further reinforced by Peder Gowenius, a Swedish printmaking art teacher who taught at Rorke's Drift[17], a community arts centre established in 1962 in the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal by the Evangelical Lutheran Church and closed in 1982 due to financial problems among other factors (Hobbs & Rankin 2003:3). Gowenius cited in *Rorke's Drift: Empowering Prints*, a book written by Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin (2003:xiv) as having said that Rorke's Drift was established because they "wanted to reveal the huge potential and capacity of black people". Gowenius' reasoning behind the opening of this centre presented the same problem faced by many local South African community arts initiatives where white artists come into community spaces as 'saviours' to help black people explore their 'hidden' talent through engaging them in processes of the arts. Gowenius (in Hobbs & Rankin, 2003:xv) states that in their teaching of printmaking they discouraged any influence of politics. Gowenius (in Hobbs & Rankin, 2003:xv) argues that they gave black artists the 'freedom' to express themselves and were "only interfering when themes like 'the suffering Africa' came up". This is because depicting elements of suffering reflected the injustices of apartheid and attracted the

[17] Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu-Natal was established in 1962 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church and was closed in 1982 due to financial problems among other factors (Hobbs & Rankin 2003:3).

state's interference. This was clearly a regulation and control of art-making. Although Rorke's Drift is one of the pioneer community arts centres in South Africa which has produced phenomenal South African black artists, Gowenius' statement reinforces that the early ideology of community arts centres did very little to challenge the apartheid government, particularly if one has to operate on the assumption that they felt that they had a social responsibility towards black people.

Rorke's Drift, as one of the early centres located in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, reinforces the framing of community arts centres as targeting the marginalised communities. While Hagg also recognises the critical role played by early community arts, his writing problematises the role of the apartheid government through putting an argument forward that they "provided urban black communities with inadequate facilities, such as bare community halls, that were supposed to suit the Africans' temporary cultural requirements" (2010:165). This is based on an understanding that to remain in power the apartheid government had to ensure that black people's education remained inferior compared to that of the ruling class which privileged white people's education. It is also important to recognise that the advantage of Rorke's Drift being located so far from the clutches of government power in the city centres meant that they could not easily be spied upon.

According to Robert Mshengu Kavanagh (1985) in his book *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa*, the inferior education provided to black people sought to legitimatise the rule of apartheid. Although the formation of community arts centres may sound radical on paper, they were in a way a continuation of the inferior education which left black people at the mercy of white people. Bhekizizwe Peterson (1994:38) in *Politics and Performance: Theatre, Poetry and Song in Southern Africa* argues that the apartheid government's attempts were to "dislocate cultural practices from social

struggles and to instead make them universal and trans-historical 'civilising forces'". The apartheid government sought to regulate content and essentially control the ideological stances of many community arts such as KAC and Rorke's Drift.

There is an argument to be made by saying that the missionaries were extremely political or were used by black artists to come together without being politicised or seen as a political threat – given that they were working within the context of 'church' and so their work was disguised under Christian work. Although artists working in these spaces often did not deliberately produce overtly political work in order to avoid raids or banning, political statements can still be deduced in their work (even though it is seen as heavily Christian reference). Upon closer reading, political statements were imbedded in these Christian images as metaphors (Hobbs & Rankin, 2003:xv).

While this study has raised an argument that challenges the motivation behind community arts centres established during apartheid, I am also mindful that most of our renowned black artists have come not only from these spaces but from the Polly Street Recreational Centre established in Johannesburg in 1949, Johannesburg Arts Foundation established in 1972, Nyanga Arts Centre in Cape Town established in 1979, Funda Arts Centre in Soweto established in 1983, and Afrika Cultural Centre. One cannot therefore dismiss the work done by some of these institutions and individuals who worked in such spaces. Artists such as David Koloane, Kagiso Patrick Mautloa, Sam Nhlengethwa and Kay Hassan speak openly about their experiences at these centres and how they subverted the missionary activities. The above mentioned arts centres allowed black artists to learn a skill that was otherwise denied to them because apartheid government did not allow black artists to access artistic training within formal academies – which were reserved for whites – this in itself is a political move and one that asserts motions of redress.

While I question the framing of these spaces, I am aware of the agencies of those who worked within such spaces and how these spaces were also instrumental to a means of political resistance as outlined above and by literature generated by van Robbroeck, Hagg, Hobbs and Rankin. As such, the study is interested in the broader ideology of how their framework reductively praises the saviours and relegates defeatist racial issues, but to instead look at a much more complex set-up in which black artists survived.

As a researcher, I am cognisant that this study relies heavily on literature generated from community visual arts centres and relates it to theatrical community activities. This choice is mainly informed by the shortage of writing within performance/theatre spaces. While there are tensions in treating all the arts the same, I am aware that performance and visual arts centres have different histories. However, it is the similarities of local community arts centres that informs the cross referencing of these disciplinary paradigms. This is also based on the fact that local South African community arts centres are isolated from each other and as such, it is difficult to track literature that speaks to directly performing arts centres only. This point is clearly articulated by van Robbroeck (1991:2) who outlines that South African community arts centres "lack the clear, articulated theoretical foundation of the community arts movement abroad". Local community arts performance/visual have therefore failed to set clear goals and objectives on which to operate (van Robbroeck, 1991:121). It is for this reason that this study borrows some literature from visual arts centres, an intentional choice which reinforces the lack of specific scholarship on local community arts centres.

1.5. Reinforcements or transformation: current community arts centres

Many community arts centres both past and current have shut down, while others have been reduced or changed due to the new set of challenges presented by post-apartheid and funding crises. However, many continue to be concerned with the ideological framework of catering to the needs of marginalised communities. Hagg (2010:166) claims that "as education providers, the centres were stepping stones to cultural empowerment and professional careers". Stepping stones in this context, is understood to mean offering opportunities that allow artists access to arts education outside of formal arts training such as universities. While apartheid's exclusionary laws denied black people quality arts education, arts centres operated as stepping stones to black artists (van Robbroeck, 1991; Hagg, 2010 & Durden, 2015). They attempted to build a bridge and neutralise the gap.

Hagg (2010:166) argues, among other things, that the arrival of democracy negatively affected the 'positive' running of local community arts centres. Central to his argument is that current state-funded community arts centres (also referred to as RDP arts centres), have not lived up to the expectation of redressing the conditions of marginalised black communities. He attributes these failures to various factors such as "historical disjunctions, ideological shifts, fragmented policies, institutional weaknesses and inadequate capacity in both government and the arts sector" (Hagg, 2010:163). These factors are noted as having weakened what was inherently an 'effective' community arts movement during apartheid. While there are merits to Hagg's argument about the 'poor' functioning of current community arts centres, to argue that democracy collapsed their 'effectiveness' is in my opinion disingenuous and an attempt to romanticise apartheid.

While Hagg (2010:164) claims that what was planned as a “democratization exercise” has collapsed largely due to poor policy implementation, it is important to highlight that apartheid centres were not without mismanagement issues as demonstrated earlier with the case of KAC and their unstable management. Nonetheless, the current democratic government’s attempt at cultural redressing and their political strategy at defying the apartheid government’s oppressive policies is yet to materialise. While community arts centres are not mandated by government, the current government (African National Congress) since taking over in 1994 has promised a better life to its citizens including community development initiatives. However, in many instances it has failed, as it continues to offer inferior education and facilities to people of colour outside of the city centre. By not fulfilling their transformation obligation, one could argue that it is creating a contradiction and an unreflective practice in the way that they are reproducing the same systems they are claiming to overcome from the apartheid government. These contradictions call for reassessments of its policies in relation to the role of the arts.

The government’s inability to financially sustain community arts centres has pushed performing arts centres such as Moses Molelekwa Arts Foundation in Tembisa, Khutsong Arts and Culture Centre in Carletonville and Outreach Foundation in Hillbrow to adopt various strategies to keep their doors open. In an attempt to be progressive, these centres have found alternative ways of sourcing funding. The above-mentioned arts centres have aligned themselves with private sponsorships and engage in rigorous fundraising efforts. To stay functional, they rent out parts of their facilities to structures such as churches, event functions and to the general public. Unfortunately, this means that these arts centres have to do away with some of the artistic programming or sacrifice their rehearsal spaces/time in order to generate income. In

this way, the financial crisis has affected the ability of community arts centres to function and even stay open.

In 2004, van Robbroeck (2004:50) reflected on the economic climate and argued that community arts centres that resist profitability are subjecting their initiatives to failure. She proposes that arts centres ought to find innovative ways to generate income through their performances and exhibiting/selling artworks. This proposal is reiterated by Hagg (2004:64), who adds that "centres need to develop innovative services, which attract users and deliver impact in the job market". While community arts centres are essentially geared towards development, they are urged to find ways to shift towards profitability. These studies reinforce that aspirations of being solely developmental and educational are no longer feasible in the current economic climate.

1.6. Locating the Outreach Foundation

It is worth unpacking the Outreach Foundation's structure in order to illustrate how some of its operations fit in with the framework of community arts centres as outlined by van Robbroeck. While some parts of the centre do not fit neatly into the framework of community arts centres, the obvious one remains - its location.

In 1998, four years after the emergence of democracy, the German Lutheran Church in Hillbrow launched the Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation project. Morris (1999:89) argues that 1998 was a time when Hillbrow had an influx of street children. It therefore makes sense that the church would set-up an initiative of this nature to create a peaceful, safe haven within the inner-city of Johannesburg. This establishment sought to enhance personal development, empower the youth and consequently reduce poverty among the local members of the inner-city through performance and art-making skills transfer (Festival booklet, 2014:2).

Like most local and international community centres, the Outreach Foundation was also born out of missionary work. It was set up as a means to respond to the needs of the community of Hillbrow. It was therefore an attempt by the church to show their support to fellow community members out of a charity obligation. Walters (1989:40) substantiated this claim by stating that "the churches supported the participation of the people in community programmes on moral-ethical grounds". This speaks to the critical role of churches during apartheid and post-apartheid.

In October 2004, what started off as a German Lutheran Church initiative became formally inaugurated as an independent, legal entity (non-profit organisation) which was separate from the church. As of 2004, the Outreach Foundation operates:

> […] with a Board of Trustees. The Executive Manager is appointed by the Board. The Executive Manager and the management committee report to the board on a quarterly basis. Independent auditors are required to do an annual financial audit and a half-yearly preview (Outreach Foundation, 2014).

Although the centre is now a separate entity, it continues to operate out of the church's premises in Hillbrow. The separation from the church has meant greater independence for the Outreach Foundation. The structural changes have meant that they can reach out to the broader community of Hillbrow regardless of their belief systems or lack thereof.

While there is a clear shift in the orientation of the centre, given its separation from the church, this is only useful for descriptive purposes of the centre. In reality, the separation barely exists. There are obvious links that tie the two entities which go beyond just operating within the same premises. For example, the Hillbrow Theatre Project and consequently the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is sponsored by

Brot für die Welt - Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst.[18] This sponsor stems from their association with the church.

As outlined in the introduction of the study, the Outreach Foundation is home to six outreach programmes namely the Hillbrow Theatre Project, Boitumelo Project, Day Vision Youth Centre, Hillbrow Music Centre, Hillbrow Counselling and Hillbrow Computer Centre. These outreach programmes cater to various needs of the community of Hillbrow and neighbouring inner-cities. For example, Boitumelo Project is an initiative that creates hand-made artwork and products which contribute to the alleviation of unemployment. Participants are mentored to develop the own personal hand-crafting skills. Day Vision Youth Centre seeks to empower and involve the youth in community-building initiatives. Hillbrow Music Centre is targeted at people of all ages and teaches different value systems through the power of music. Hillbrow Counselling provides trauma counselling in a safe space facilitated by professional counsellors. Lastly, Hillbrow Computer Centre offers computer literacy classes to the youth and adults to improve their chances of being employed.

The Hillbrow Theatre Project's objective is to develop and present creative programmes that have a definite measurable social impact on its beneficiaries. Participants are taught playmaking skills through play, acting and movement. They create a safe environment for those who engage with this space. The incentive of joining the Hillbrow Theatre Project outreach programme is that it allows its participants the opportunity to reflect and develop tangible skills on the arts, crafts and

[18]Brot für die Welt which translates as "Bread for the World" is "the globally active development and relief agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany" (http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/en/bread-for-the-world.html).

cultural heritage, which will in turn help them with their personal, emotional and economic growth and development (Outreach Foundation booklet, 2014).

While the location of the Outreach Foundation immediately challenges van Robbroeck's understanding of community art structures, its operation parallels early community arts centres in how the Outreach Foundation also caters to various needs of people within its immediate Hillbrow community. Firstly, the Outreach Foundation was an initiative born out of missionary work by the German Lutheran Church in 1998. Secondly, like many community arts centres, the Outreach Foundation's mission speaks to a need to redress the lives of the marginalised through various skills development platforms implemented through its six outreach programmes as outlined earlier. Thirdly, the Outreach Foundation's strategy speaks to the notion of development, which is synonymous with the works of most local community arts centres regardless of its location.

What emerges from local readings is that while community arts centres are largely targeted at poor black people outside of the city, the same structures exist in city-suburb spaces and continue to function in similar ways. This suggests a few things (open to contention). Firstly, community arts centres have reinvented themselves from early apartheid centres; they are more progressive and therefore cater to a variety of audiences including those in urban spaces. Secondly, the socio-economic standing of marginalised groups who moved into the urban spaces has not changed hence a need for such spaces.

While this study acknowledges that the majority of community arts centres were born out of rural and township settings, to cement an entire 'movement' as an initiative which sought to 'save' and educate struggling artists, intrinsically reinforces the legacy

of apartheid which was/is separatist in its form. While there is validity to the association of community arts centres to black communities given the oppressive policies of apartheid, the continuation of framing community arts centres as inherently black or peri-urban speaks to the slow transformation of these spaces post-apartheid.

The current orientation of community arts centres in available local South African literature makes it difficult to apply such readings to cases such as the Outreach Foundation, which although fits the criteria of a community arts centre, exist outside of the prescribed settings. It is for this reason that while the study explores a centre that explores performance art, it borrows literature generated from visual art centres. Care has been taken not to treat these entities as if they have the same history.

Chapter Two: Perceptions of Hillbrow, past and present

Hillbrow, situated on the outer margins of the Johannesburg city centre, is a residential and commercial place that has undergone rapid transformation since the establishment of Johannesburg. The ongoing state of transition in Hillbrow manifest through an influx of new people, locals and 'foreign nationals'. There are always people coming into Hillbrow, while others are moving out. While geographically, it is confined to a physical structure, the concept of community in Hillbrow is free-floating in its nature.

This chapter will touch on some historical background on Hillbrow, which only serves to give context to the location in which the centre and the case study is located. Issues relating to decentralisation processes and the moving of the financial district in the 1980s to suburbia that resulted in the racial dynamics of Johannesburg and the city being relegated to a 'no-go' zone are only mentioned in passing. While the issues are an important part of the history of Hillbrow and to a certain extent to this study, the aim of this study is not to historicise the space but to give elements of history as a way of contextualising it. As a result, this chapter outlines the political transition of Hillbrow from a space where people of colour's movements were restricted to one that they can freely access and subsequently call home. The purpose of mapping out Hillbrow in this manner, is to answer the following question: How and to what extent do the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* challenge and/or influence the negative perceptions about Hillbrow as home?

In responding to this question, extracts from the empirical data have been extracted in order to examine the 'dominant' narrative of Hillbrow as a 'danger zone' and consequently an unsafe place. In unpacking these perceptions, as a researcher I am

aware of the absent opinions of white/private schools' opinions about Hillbrow or their participation in the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. Private schools' participation in the festival has not been very strong, attempts to research one such school yielded no results as the school did not wish to subject itself and its learners to research processes. I was therefore left with the opinions of mostly black teachers and public school-goers with the exception of Bester (the Hillbrow Theatre Project Creative Director) and the festival sponsors.

2.1 Hillbrow and the 'danger' factor

> Hillbrow is a nice place, I love Hillbrow. I'll never leave Hillbrow. I have stayed in Hillbrow for like four years and I've never been mugged. I'm in the right places at the right time. I have never been mugged. I have seen a lot of things happening around me and for me, it feels like it's your spirit, how do you walk on the street and say… you know what, these are my people. If we could ever change Hillbrow and make it look like Braamfontein or make it look like CBD, make it have beauty then the beauty and the authenticity of Hillbrow is gone cause Hillbrow is about crime. It's not a good thing, it's so not good but it's like going home (Dlamini, 2015).

This statement came from Gcebile Dlamini, a Hillbrow resident and one of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*'s facilitators in an interview that took place on 15 March 2015. Dlamini was responding to a question about what she thinks about Hillbrow as a place and consequently as home. Dlamini was among the four people who were interviewed because they engaged with Hillbrow on a daily basis. Her views on Hillbrow are insightful in that she is talking from an insider's perspective. Although, Dlamini admits that there is crime and muggings, she argues that Hillbrow gives her a 'sense of belonging'. One similar to her country of birth, Swaziland. Dlamini's analogy of one's "spirit" being the reason one is seldom subjected to mugging neglects the imminent dangers of navigating Hillbrow which she has personally outlined. Dlamini's safety 'measure' suggests that to be safe in Hillbrow, one must have a certain level of

awareness (spirit) when walking in the streets of Hillbrow. While this is an interesting analogy, this 'knowledge' does not give one any concrete information on how to navigate in Hillbrow. It raises questions about; what is this spirit? How does one attain it? Is it inherent or is it something one can learn? While there is no way of assessing the validity of this 'spirit', Dlamini maintains that she has never been mugged or been subject to any kind of violation of her safety because of it. Dlamini goes further to declare that danger is a characteristic of Hillbrow, one which forms part of its 'identity'.

Dlamini argues that outsiders are the only people who have a problem with Hillbrow as home. She claims that life in Hillbrow is like life in the rural areas. Dlamini states that in rural areas, people who fetch water from the rivers do not complain until someone from the city comes and imposes their ideas of 'civilisation' on them. In the same way, the people of Hillbrow do not see anything wrong with Hillbrow until outsiders come and impose their views of what Hillbrow should be in order to be fit for human occupation. While Dlamini insists that any attempt to change Hillbrow will tamper with its unique identity, she goes on to confirm that strict measures need to be put in place to fight crime in Hillbrow.

> If they can sort out the crime, the negative things about Hillbrow but keep the people, keep the Zimbabweans, keep the Nigerians. Keep the different cultures because that's what makes Hillbrow become Hillbrow. Yes, we need to reduce the crime, but I don't know, I just love Hillbrow, because I walk on the streets, there's my brother there. I have brothers and sisters. I feel like [Hillbrow] is home for me (Dlamini, 2015).

Dlamini insists that the strength of Hillbrow lies in the diversity of the people who live in it. She outlines its density and flux as some of the things that contribute to its unique make-up. For her, the dangers, migrants and overcrowding all form part of Hillbrow. According to Dlamini, Hillbrow cannot exist outside of these elements. Dlamini speaks very strongly of never wanting to leave Hillbrow, this is despite the dangers that she

has highlighted. Like Mpe, Dlamini argues that outsiders hold an exaggerated view of Hillbrow. She maintains that Hillbrow might have complex issues that need to be addressed, but it is filled with vibrant people who make it home. While I acknowledge Dlamini's point of view, it is worth mentioning that while there are stereotypes of danger, crime, violence and other factors, the reason stereotypes work so well and live so long is because they are always founded on some half-truth.

Outside of the festival there are other strategies in place to turn Hillbrow into a safe space that people can call home. Attempts to turn places like Hillbrow into 'liveable' spaces are demonstrated by a few Johannesburg renewal projects, namely the City of Johannesburg[19] and Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement[20]. The projects are important to highlight because they aid new narratives of Hillbrow, and contribute to new ways of seeing Hillbrow as home. These projects outline that their main objectives are to implement plans of remodelling Hillbrow back to its former state as a "cosmopolitan hub" (Byrne, 2014:3). These are efforts to regenerate Hillbrow and transform it from the notorious image by which it is known. The city's strategies to upgrade Hillbrow into 'liveable' spaces fit into this paper's argument of evolving perceptions around Hillbrow as home. While the renewal of Hillbrow is positive on one hand, it also raises questions of gentrification, not just in terms of ideology but in practical implementation. The quest to turn Hillbrow into what people can proudly call home using industrial standards can arguably leave a lot of Hillbrow residents displaced. While renewal projects in Hillbrow are important to reinforce the notion of

[19] City of Johannesburg renewal project is an initiative by the city to raise and sustain private investment and raise property value through renovating and maintaining infrastructure. The long-term goal is to create an environment that will be attractive to both the residents and businesses (http://www.joburg.org.za).
[20] Ekhaya Neighbourhood Improvement is a "social upliftment" project and operates with the slogan "Making Hillbrow your home" (http://www.joburg.org.za). This city improvement initiative seeks to clean up Hillbrow and make it safer for the residents.

Hillbrow as home, it is essentially a double-edged sword. Unfortunately given the scope of this study, I was unable to go into processes of gentrification and possible negative effects of the people of Hillbrow.

To appreciate the argument of Hillbrow as home, one needs to acknowledge that the danger factor is not unique to Hillbrow and therefore cannot be used as the only factor to dismiss the idea of Hillbrow as a viable home. The perception of Hillbrow as a 'no-go' zone is not a new phenomenon; it has been featured in a number of writings by various local scholars.[21] Mpe and Morris' books are some of the writings that demonstrate the themes of danger and violence in Hillbrow. While the stereotype of Hillbrow as a danger zone is not warranted, there is evidence that suggests that the narrative of danger and moral decay in Hillbrow has been greatly exaggerated (Morris, 1999:333 & Mpe, 2001:17). The exaggeration of danger in Hillbrow is outlined by the Hillbrow Theatre Project Coordinator, Thabang Phakathi who maintains that:

> Most learners outside of Hillbrow have their own perspective of a violent Hillbrow as a place of drugs and gangsters. I don't blame them because it is what they hear from the people around their neighbourhood but after they have witnessed and took part in our festival, we always get some good feedback. Most of them say that at first they were afraid of coming to Hillbrow, but after they have witnessed being in it physically, they are now confident that they can come here anytime without any fear (Phakathi, 2015).

This statement from Phakathi illustrates how the festival acts as an influential platform towards changing perceptions about Hillbrow, particularly from school-goers. Phakathi's reflections highlight the critical role that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* plays in the re-imagination of Hillbrow as a place. In this way, the festival being situated in Hillbrow works as a strategy for educating and challenging the perceptions

[21] This includes writings by Jill Morton, Alan Morris, Phaswane Mpe and Lauren Beukes.

of school-goers and fulfils an additional role of advocating for the role of the arts and its power to effect change in attitudes.

Looking at the notions of danger beyond South Africa, Judith Humphreys Weitz, an international arts scholar who focuses on collaborative mural arts, neighbourhood improvement initiatives and arts education, studies children's safety in relation to the impact community arts programmes play in the lives of those at risk. Weitz's (1996) journal article *Coming up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk* looks at the impact of performance and visual arts on children and argues that arts programmes influence children's perspectives on social issues and how they engage with their surroundings (Weitz, 1996:59). Although the dangers in Hillbrow are not only related to children's lives but to its general population, Weitz's argument is important in drawing attention to the level of violence which is commonly associated with black populated areas. While Weitz's research is located in American inner-cities, the study is cautious not to transpose the links as if these various communities are homogenous.

Weitz (1996:12) reports that "in the United states, a child dies from gunshot wounds every two hours, and three million children each year are reported abused or neglected." These numbers illustrate that danger is not unique to Hillbrow, but rather speaks to the tendency of white supremacist writing to connect 'danger' with communities that are densely occupied by black people – which in turn speaks to this danger phenomenon as bound with blackness. This is evident in Khalil Gibran Muhammed's book, *The Condemnation of Blackness* (2010). Gibran argues that the association of danger and crime with black bodies has long been diagnosed as a "negro problem" (2010:52). Without necessarily de-contextualising American theories of danger, the framing of Hillbrow as a danger zone is no different from that which

dominates the writing of black populated American inner-cities. Bringing up Weitz and Gibran's studies is not an attempt to dismiss the high levels of crime and violence in Hillbrow as there are studies undertaken in this regard. One is cognisant that in the United States of America black people are a minority, and in South Africa, and in Hillbrow, it is the density of the black bodies that creates a fear. However, there is a tendency to associate danger with spaces that are inherently black which influences all of these locales and how they are framed in literature. This is similar to the 'delinquency' argument of the establishment of KAC.

The issue of gunshots outlined by Weitz is also a prominent topic in most writings of Hillbrow. Mpe (2001:5) claims that "at least eight people died and thirteen were seriously injured when the New Year's Eve celebrations took the form of torrents of bottles gushing out of the brooding clouds that were flat balconies". South African science fiction writer and journalist, Lauren Beukes (2010) touches on the issue of danger in her novel *Zoo City*. *Zoo City,* the setting of the book, operates as a backdrop to emulate the level of crime and chaos in Hillbrow which Beukes likens to a zoo. The characters' moral traits and the crimes that they have committed are represented by animals. For example, Zinzi December (a character and protagonist in the book) harbours a sloth which goes with her everywhere and reflects her laziness characteristic and tendency to commit petty crimes (Beukes, 2010:5).

People in *Zoo City* do not get to choose their animals; this is evident in Zinzi's statement that "Maybe it would have been easier to have a tiger. As if any of us gets a choice" (Beukes, 2010:4). As in the case of Mpe's book, Beukes' characters also battle with drug addiction, violence, questions of witchcraft, overpopulation and crime. Like Mpe, Beukes also claims that gunshots were part of the Hillbrow environment. Beukes (2010:49) claims that "gunfire has always been part of the nocturnal

soundscape of Zoo City, like cicadas in the countryside." While referencing Beukes (2010) in line with Mpe (2001), I am in no way trying to make parallels in their representation of Hillbrow. Their works are placed within different genres and their writings are not translatable. The study found Beukes' book limited in weighing in on plausible perceptions of Hillbrow. The animal motif appeared very problematic in the manner in which black bodies are likened to animals, particularly given South Africa's history with apartheid and the imagery of black people and animals. While I remain uneasy with the style of Beukes' book, it is helpful in demonstrating the growing tendency by scholars and writers to fictionalise Hillbrow in order to reveal complex and uncomfortable narratives. Beukes' novel, for all its problems, also shows Hillbrow as an extremely accepting, forgiving place that accepts differences, as a home. It therefore reinforces the idea of Hillbrow as a space for love, kindness and as a viable home.

The tendency by writers and the media to impose the narrative of danger on spaces such as Hillbrow, Joubert Park and Berea is highlighted by Linda Mkhwanazi in an interview that took place on 22 May 2015. Mkhwanazi asserts that:

> Most kids don't know anything about Hillbrow, they're learning in Hillbrow. They have never experienced anything in Hillbrow, they only hear stories about Hillbrow, about its past because when we talk about the issues of crime, crime is all over the world. Robberies are happening every day around the country. Drugs are everywhere. The kids just grow up here; they don't see anything wrong about Hillbrow. Only the media write bad stories about Hillbrow, even when something happens in Berea they will write that it happened here. We need to preach a new chapter; I was never robbed in Hillbrow but I was robbed in Maboneng (Mkhwanazi, 2015).

Mkhwanazi touches on the exaggerated representation of Hillbrow by the media. He argues that they fabricate stories that reinforce the narrative of Hillbrow as a danger zone. This is evidenced in Mkhwanazi's (2015) statement that "even when something

happens in Berea they will write that it happened here". He claims that the media always finds a way to link violence and danger to Hillbrow. His statement suggests that the media do not pay attention to the visible boundary markers between Hillbrow and Berea or Hillbrow and Johannesburg central. Mkhwanazi insists that he has never been robbed in Hillbrow but was robbed in a considerably 'safe' place such as Maboneng.[22] By raising these contradictions, Mkhwanazi highlights the tendency of the media to reinforce Hillbrow as a danger zone. While the reports are not always unwarranted, Mkhwanazi proposes that in cases where such reports are false, they ought to be challenged. He argues that the current image of Hillbrow has to be re-imagined outside of the embellishments imposed by white framings of blackness being synonymous with danger. To challenge negative perceptions of Hillbrow held by different people, Mkhwanazi reiterates Mpe's proposal for rigorous writings on Hillbrow as a means of destabilising the myths.

Burton Pike (1981:26), in his book *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*, argues that most writings on the city are filled with contradictions and that "perhaps the central fascination with the city, both real and fictional, is that it embodies man's contradictory feelings - pride, love, anxiety, and hatred." However, it is these contradictions in the representation of Hillbrow in Mpe, Beukes and other writings, which make Hillbrow such an appealing area of study.

2.2 Perceptions on Hillbrow as home

To assess perceptions about Hillbrow as home, school-goers from participating schools namely St Enda's Secondary School in Hillbrow, Phoenix College in

[22] Maboneng is an urban neighbourhood in Johannesburg CBD known for its beautiful apartments, art galleries, retail stores and upmarket restaurants. It is "the brainchild of property development group, Propertuity [a company which focuses on re-energising the city through innovation]" (http://www.mabonengprecinct.com).

Johannesburg CBD, Supreme Educational College in Braamfontein and Reasoma Secondary School in Soweto, were requested to write a letter personifying Hillbrow and sharing their impressions of it. The letters allowed me to diversify views that would not have been possible, for instance in a focus group discussion. This format further allowed each learner to write their views freely without any interruptions or influencing views from peers.

Through the analysis of these letters, the study aimed to consider the extent to which the participants' perceptions of Hillbrow corroborated or challenged Mpe and Morris' representations of Hillbrow. In this regard, using Mpe's lens seemed more accommodating in analysing the school-goers' perceptions. This is partly because the letters mirrored what this study terms the 'Tiragalong-Hillbrow divide' which existed in Mpe's book. This divide is about varying perspectives about Hillbrow from different people. For the purpose of this study, the 'divide' broadly refers to the insider-outsider (residents and non-residents of Hillbrow) viewpoints which offer different observations on Hillbrow. These letters engage with a number of assumptions on Hillbrow which are diversely challenged and reinforced.

Morris' literature was useful in sections where learners expressed ideas of fear, crime, violence, physical decay, migrants and over-crowding as issues they struggled with. Similar to Mpe (2001) and Morris (2001), the majority of the letters called for a rigorous engagement with Hillbrow before passing any judgement on Hillbrow and the idea of it as a viable home.

In presenting these letters, I have not tampered with their structure. The school-goers' emphasis, such as the use of capital letters and, in some instances, the underlining of words has been retained. These letters were obtained between 28 April 2015 and 6

May 2015 during four focus group discussions conducted with the abovementioned schools. The letters were all addressed to Hillbrow:

1. Dear Hillbrow

I have heard that you are the main source of evil. You are the most feared in South Africa all around. They say that you have given birth to raucous gangsters, drug dealers, criminals. At school if you are from Hillbrow, you are degraded. Never taken seriously because you are trash, filth and all the bad stuff. But from my point of view, if you have been in SA and never been to Hillbrow then you haven't been in SA. You are one of the most important things in South Africa. You define it as you define Rainbow Nation, Diversity, and most of all UBUNTU. You are a best friend, a shoulder to cry on, and a shelter when I have nowhere to run to. You are secure. We need to fight the preconceived ideas people have about you. I feel you define being an AFRICAN PROUDLY. I think your helping hands go a long way!

Yours S*A*N*G!

2. Dear Hillbrow

I've heard people say quite nasty stuff about you, I even came to the point where I feared you and I didn't want anything to do with you because of the high levels of crime, rape, murder and everything else. Coming here to you, for a moment I felt like I was deceived, yes you had a bad side, but you also had a good side, e.g. Hillbrow Theatre. Every day with you is an adventure because not only do I get to witness things but I also learn a lot from you. Last year, I was mugged, here, right at your streets, and I hated you!!! I later realized that this is part of life, people think it's unfair, but it is fair, actually we make it fair. I am grateful that I know you, coz of you I know more than I used to, and you've opened my eyes to greater things in life.

#Kool_Kidd
Thank You Hillbrow

3. Dear Hillbrow

Many things happen in this place that gives the place a bad name. But actually to many people this is home. I don't like to be judged because I stay in Hillbrow, but I actually want to be proud. But in the moment I am not. I am afraid of walking in the streets alone because of the crime that is going on in this place. Dirty streets and many beggars. I am not seriously proud. I don't think the way I feel will ever change. This is home, but sometimes I am scared to mention it.

Yours Polony

4. Dear Hillbrow

> It's such a sad story that people have the wrong perception about you, I mean these people don't even know you that well but they say all these horrible things about you based on hearsay. If only they knew you as well as I did, what happened to the saying "don't judge a book by its cover". No like really, they see the filth and all the unruly elements or rather criminals that take advantage of these "uninformed" people that come into your territory and they put a blame on you.
>
> Love
> SA Citizen

Letter 1 speaks to misconceptions about Hillbrow which incite fear amongst outsiders. The idea of the evil present in Hillbrow is encapsulated in a claim that Mpe (2001:3) makes that "Hillbrow was a menacing monster". The perception of Hillbrow as a monster which provokes fear is not a new one, it is reiterated by Morris (1999:ix) who claims that Hillbrow "always had the reputation of being a neighbourhood on the cutting edge, a neighbourhood populated by the more deviant segments of the society and locality where many devious activities occur". It is a neighbourhood popularly known for being notorious. This has contributed to the dominant narrative of Hillbrow as a 'danger zone'.

The letters call for a re-imagination of Hillbrow, with the school-goers urging people to challenge their preconceived ideas about Hillbrow. Letter 1 argues that Hillbrow represents the diversity of South Africa and the mixture of culture present in Hillbrow demonstrates the idea of *Ubuntu*. This diversity is evident in all the different 'foreign nationals' who live in Hillbrow. In support of letter 1's sentiments, letter 2 posits that the only way to challenge preconceived ideas of Hillbrow is through personal engagement with the space.

Letter 2 provides an insightful before and after perception of Hillbrow. It captures the negative side of Hillbrow from the school-goer being mugged to a positive side where

the learner affirms that despite the muggings in Hillbrow, the place has opened her eyes to “greater things in life” (SA Citizen). The notion of opening her eyes to greater things in life speaks to the educational component of the festival. After further engagement with Hillbrow, the learner has also come to the similar realisation as Mpe (2001:17) who points out that “the moral decay of Hillbrow, so often talked about, was in fact no worse than that of Tiragalong.” Without romanticising Hillbrow, letter 2 assumes that there is more to Hillbrow than the mugging that the learner was subjected to.

Although letter 1 make reference to Hillbrow as “a shelter when I have nowhere to run to” (S*A*N*G), letter 3 is the first one to capture the notion of Hillbrow as home. Polony (2015) states that “to many you are home”, however, the letter is quick to mention that the learner does not identify with Hillbrow as ‘her’ home. Although Polony is a resident of Hillbrow, her letter blatantly points out that she is not proud of Hillbrow being her home but she is helpless to this fact. Polony (2015) concludes her letter on a resentful note by making a declaration that “I am seriously not proud. I don’t think the way I feel will ever change”. While the festival influences perceptions about a variety of issues including Hillbrow, Polony’s views about Hillbrow as home have not changed. The shame associated with identifying Hillbrow as home is evident in how Polony (2015) asserts that “sometimes I am scared to mention it”. The feelings of shame associated with having Hillbrow as home could be attributed to a variety of factors. One that comes to mind is Morris’ (1999:ix) claim that “black residents in Hillbrow were stereotypically “labelled ‘criminals’, ‘dirty’, ‘uncivilised’, ‘uneducated’, ‘uncultured’ and ‘poor’”; hence Polony’s choice to disassociate herself from Hillbrow. Hillbrow represents elements she is not proud of, namely the notions of crime, physical decay and over-crowding. The letter alludes to the tensions and complexities of Hillbrow as a space. To Polony,

Hillbrow is a place where she resides but not one she considers home in the traditional sense of the word.

Letter 4 presents a similar view to that of letters 1 and 2, and cautions against the misconceptions that people hold of Hillbrow. The letter warns that people should not base their perceptions of Hillbrow on hearsay but instead urges outsiders to use the analogy of "don't judge a book by its cover". This letter appeals to outsiders to avoid stereotyping Hillbrow and its people. Like Mpe and Morris' conclusions, the letter suggests that there is more to Hillbrow than just a hub of decay and danger. These letters demonstrate that the arts can affect some measure of change in people's attitude if they are exposed to cultural productions which give them access to a space and make them rethink the place the people who transit through it and call it home. This notion is further demonstrated in the festival play below.

2.2.1 Are we Free or "dom" Democratically?

Are we Free or "dom" Democratically is a workshopped theatre play by Mahlasedi High School under the facilitation of Denny Dube and Musawenkosi Hlophe. Mahlasedi High School is located in Bree Street, Johannesburg. While the school itself is not located in Hillbrow, some of the learners from the school are residents of Hillbrow. The play was performed in the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* in 2014 as part of South Africa's 20 years' celebration of democracy. The school-goers were tasked with assessing the validity of democracy. *Are we Free or "dom" Democratically?* articulates the grievances and aspirations of the Jacksons, a family that has lived in Hillbrowsdale for the past fifteen years.

Twenty years into democracy, the Jackson family still live in a small flat crammed with their children in a poverty-stricken neighbourhood of Hillbrowsdale. Mr Jackson, who

is unemployed, blames their current circumstances on the failure of democracy. He claims that democracy is a myth. His unhappiness stems from his inability to find a job and provide for his family. Mr Jackson, claims that the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), has failed to deliver what they termed “a better life for all”, a life which they promised him when he voted them into power in the 1994 democratic elections.

In contrast, Mrs Jackson is positive about the prospect of a better life in their small flat. Her narrative is presented as someone who is hopeful about the future of South Africa. She trusts that their turn will come. She argues that the process of transformation takes time as the apartheid legacy still lives years after democracy. Mrs Jackson is grateful that at least they are still together as a family under one roof which she considers to be better than life during apartheid when families were separated for various reasons. Mrs Jackson believes that their turn to reap the fruits of democracy is coming.

The narrative is told through the use of dance, music and poetry. The characters are presented with contradictions of freedom, the expectations of democracy versus what has been delivered to the people in the past twenty years. Through the use of various images, the play asks the question of “are we free or dom?”, the term ‘dom’ implying the state of being unwise. As opposed to posing the question to the characters on stage, the question extends to the audience members. This is done in an attempt to problematise the validity of democracy outside the world of play.

The ending of the play is ironic in that Mr Jackson, who was adamant that Hillbrowsdale was a dump, now starts seeing the beauty in the uncertainty of democracy. Rather than questioning the rationality of freedom, the play ends on a positive note of celebrating the achievements of democracy thus far. While not realistic

given the current economic climate in South Africa, the resolution reinforces the old saying that "there's no place like home" as the actors celebrate life in Hillbrowsdale. While the play asked pertinent questions about the state of our democracy, in my opinion, it is here where the tension of the play collapses.

The ending of the play felt rushed and naïve given the complexities of the narrative of democracy. Nonetheless, this play demonstrates how the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* provides a platform for the school-goers to engage in relevant issues facing South Africa. The festival allows a space for learners to question their daily life experiences in a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. The play itself does not attempt to provide answers to the question "are we free or dom?" Rather, it presents various political images that force audience members to personally think about what freedom means to them, given where they live.

The play uses a lot of political metaphors relating to South African's political sphere. The recurring one is the use of the South African president, Jacob Zuma with the showerhead[23]. This metaphor relates to his rape case from 2005. The underlying assumption is that the audience are aware of South Africa's politics, and do not need this message to be vocalised as the reference is assumed to be obvious to a South African audience.

While the play itself was not explicitly focussed on the notion of Hillbrow as home, it raised questions of what is a home. Where should it be located? What should it look like? Can inner-city spaces be considered to be home? These were all questions that the play evoked. To assume that Hillbrowsdale in the play is Hillbrow would be to

[23] The image of Zuma with the showerhead has been given visual currency in Zapiro's cartoons and public service protests. Zapiro (real name Jonathan Shapiro) is a South African cartoonist.

impose a reading onto a creative output; however, images of crime, filth in the streets, migrants and a noisy neighbourhood acted as signifiers which informed this reading.

While the main theme of the festival was to question the validity of democracy, the school-goers under the assistance of their director personalised the level of freedom in relation to their immediate environment, Hillbrowsdale. While the play displayed obvious links to the notion of home, I was unable to unpack the participants' viewpoints as Mahlasedi High School was one of the private schools that declined the request to be part of the research. The principal outlined that the board of directors of the school did not want the school or its learners to be subjected to research processes. As a private school, the approval I received from the Department of Education did not apply to them. Nonetheless, the play was used as a case study because it was found to be most fitting in unpacking the complexities of how notions of home are intertwined with the festival, as well as how topical socio-political issues are inserted as a strategy of teaching and challenging perceptions of Hillbrow.

2.3 The transition of Hillbrow

> Hillbrow is a space where as a general rule you never feel entirely safe and it's really hard for kids to grow up with a sense of purpose and freedom and power within a community where they often feel marginalized. They are always navigating the unknown. It's not a community where they are given traditions or practices. There's such a mix of cultures, such a mix of ways of doing things and it changes constantly. So it's hard as a child to really flourish in a community like Hillbrow. It's very adult orientated, it doesn't cater for children. The schools are in high rise buildings and often they don't even have playgrounds. The child is always pushed into a corner. It's a place of flux, there's people coming in and going out all the time (Watts, 2015).

From this statement a number of narratives central to Hillbrow can be identified. Firstly, Hillbrow as an unsafe space presenting various danger elements which hinder the freedom of navigation. Secondly, a characterisation of Hillbrow as a space that is not

conducive to bringing up children and consequently an unsuitable home. Thirdly, Hillbrow as a place with no stability, one which is constantly changing. Watts' perception of Hillbrow is one that is held by many and is subject to much literature on it. The notion of a mix of cultures, high-rise buildings and a constant influx of people is actualised by Alan Morris (1999) in his book *Bleakness & Light* (1999). Morris' scholarly book paints images of the racial transition of Hillbrow and assesses the validity of linking the physical decline of Hillbrow to the emergence of locals and 'foreign nationals' into the inner-city. Morris' (1999:333) conclusions argue that "the extent of physical decline was generally exaggerated and the deterioration that had taken place was because of a range of interlinked processes." His study's conclusions suggest that the deterioration and physical decline of Hillbrow had a lot to do with the landlords' negligence in maintaining the flats as much as it did with tenants' overcrowding of the flats (Morris, 1999:334). In response to the racial transition, Morris (1999:3) argues that:

> Hillbrow is one of the very few neighbourhoods in South Africa that despite the Group Areas Act moved from being an all-white neighbourhood to be predominately black.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 outlined that "Hillbrow was legally reserved for white residents [only]" (Morris, 1991:3). This apartheid segregation law designated where all people should live based on race. It therefore dictated where 'home' should be placed for people of colour. The Group Areas Act regulated that a home for black people was a small house with a designated yard and a stand number located in a small township which was mostly considered as a dangerous ghetto (Morris, 1991:182; Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008:19). The Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs (2001:10) outlines

that townships under apartheid were positioned as “large dormitory areas far from places of economic, cultural, recreational and educational opportunity”.

The repressive practices of restricting black people’s movements are evident in Mshengu Kavanagh’s book *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (1985). Kavanagh (1985:3) outlines that “blacks were swept up from their homestead in areas designated ‘white’ and dumped in those designated ‘black’”. Hillbrow, like Berea, Joubert Park and Yeoville, was deemed a “whites only” residential area, and black people were only allowed to access it for work purposes. Kavanagh (1985:3) further asserts that apartheid segregation laws dictated that “at the end of the day the whites returned to their suburbs, and blacks to their ‘townships’”. In creating these divides, these laws sought to enforce exclusivity and portray white people as the dominant race. The segregation was an obvious attempt to police black bodies and to ensure that no mixing took place between whites and blacks beyond the parameters of work.

Against the apartheid backdrop, Morris (1999:10) argues that the economic decline (the inability of the National Party government to continue to fund apartheid) and the political turmoil made it difficult for the government “to control the allocation of urban space on the basis of the racial classifications”. From the 1970s it started becoming harder to control black people’s movements. Morris (1999:11) and Shirley Walters (1989:126) outline the Soweto Uprising as one of the main political events that led to the collapse of the movement of people of colour. The Soweto uprising in 1976 created a ripple effect all around Johannesburg and drew an influx of local people of colour and African immigrants such as Nigerians, Zimbabweans and Mozambicans into Hillbrow.

Another scholar, Allister Sparks in his book *Tomorrow Is Another Country* (1994) reiterates that the collapse of movement control into cities was as a result of the political change. Sparks pins the inability to maintain movement restrictions on various factors, namely that "international pressures were on the increase, the country was under economic and diplomatic siege, the black townships were on the boil" (Sparks, 1994:5). From the 1970s there was complete unrest in various South African townships and a growing black resistance to the apartheid government was on the rise. The white minority were facing a serious economic decline, which in addition to border wars and the apartheid government's loss to Cuba dragged them to the negotiation table (Sparks, 1994:12).

Once the moving to Hillbrow and other Johannesburg areas started in the late 1970s, it could not be stopped and it became impossible to regulate movement. This started well before the official ending of apartheid. Morris (1999:10) refers to this influx as "the beginning of desegregation" in Hillbrow. Morris marks the period between 1978 and 1982 as the time of racial transition in Hillbrow. It was the political and economic volatility during this period (1978-1982) that led to the erosion of the Group Areas Act in Hillbrow and other parts of Johannesburg (Morris, 1999:12). The influx of people classified as blacks and Indians into spaces that were previously designated white areas made it impossible for the National Party to continue enforcing segregation laws.

This overflow of people into Hillbrow and other parts of Johannesburg meant that the segregation laws of apartheid could no longer be maintained (Morris, 1999:12). One could also argue that it was during this racial transition that the idea of Hillbrow as home became a viable option for people of colour, locals and 'foreign nationals'. This claim is supported by Morris' findings based on a survey he conducted on Hillbrow flat-dwellers. Morris' (1999:183) survey outlines that "eight out of ten owner-occupiers

responded that they enjoyed living in Hillbrow versus six out of ten tenants". In this context, the term "owner-occupiers" refers to people of colour (blacks, coloureds and Indians) who had purchased their apartments.

While Hillbrow continues to transition with people moving in and out of the city, there is still tension around the racial transition of Hillbrow. One such example is the case of Gerard Bester who moved out of Hillbrow in the late 1960s. In an interview conducted on 5 May 2015 with Bester, he stated that:

> I have a nostalgic connection and I know we have got to be careful as 'whites' with our nostalgia for the past but it is part of my personal history of Hillbrow and I feel connected to it on a personal level still. It has now given me work opportunity which has been great. I suppose I live with the tension of [pause] am I an outsider? Do I reflect the community I work in and is that important? (Bester, 2015).

Bester's tensions articulate the tensions of Hillbrow as a space and home to those who have dwelled in it. He highlights issues of belonging and notions of community and how one can contribute to its narrative. His statement evokes an anxious relationship with Hillbrow's transition, and by extension, the long-lasting legacy of apartheid. One which leaves questions about whether there are insiders/outsiders in Hillbrow. In this context, aspects of the racial transition of Hillbrow continue to manifest in how people relate and engage with the space post-apartheid. Bester's statement illustrates an awareness of the tensions of Hillbrow as a space, and a community that is constantly transitioning physically and ideologically, and more particularly, his inclination to reflect Hillbrow as a community within the new South Africa.

2.4 Hillbrow through the lens of novels

This section uses novels as an entry into an alternative perspective of reading Hillbrow. While novels are not subjected to 'fact' checking that is normally required within

scholarly writings, they do provide creative and intensely subjective understandings and viewpoints worthy of consideration. One such text which allows me to do that is Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). Mpe's text displays certain levels of investigated knowledge which is illustrated in the manner in which he spatially maps Hillbrow from the point of view of an insider. Mpe presents a coherent representation of Hillbrow, Johannesburg through the precise naming of the streets, national events and popular buildings in Hillbrow and by extension, Johannesburg. Mpe reveals complex narratives of Hillbrow and provides useful ways of reading people's perceptions outside of the parameters of scholarly critical writings such as that of Morris.

To set the scene of Hillbrow and South Africa, Mpe (2001:1) begins his narrative in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* by referencing a historical event, "you would be glad that Bafana Bafana lost to France in the 1998 Soccer World Cup fiasco". This motif of linking a factual event to the narration of the story makes one buy into it as a moment of 'reality'. The World Cup is an actual soccer sporting event that took place in 1998. To reinforce the 'reality' of Hillbrow, Mpe (200:1) points out distances in actual kilometres which he claims are estimations "according to official records".

Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010) are used in this study to examine various perceptions of Hillbrow and what they reveal about Hillbrow. The decision to use fictional literature in an academic paper was motivated by the manner in which these writers evoked the image of the city (Hillbrow). Scholar and theorist, Burton Pike (1981:12) in his book *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* argues that fictional texts on the city are "the process by which the writer evokes the city [which] appears to parallel the process by which the citizen seeks to encompass

his experience." Therefore, writers such as Mpe and Beukes attempt to present a coherent image of the city (Hillbrow), one which the readers can realistically relate to.

Pike (1981:12) argues that the level of accuracy is achieved through labelling and mapping the physical features of the city as the readers would imagine it. Such is the case with Mpe (2001:11), who maps the streets of Hillbrow and Johannesburg inner-cities such as Joubert Park, Braamfontein and Berea and popular buildings that readers can recognise like the Hillbrow Police Station. By accurately labelling Hillbrow and its surroundings, Pike (1981:13) suggests that what Mpe has achieved in his imagery of Hillbrow "harnesses this image rather than… creates it". Rather than asserting it as a 'reality', Mpe's image becomes a reflection of Hillbrow through his lens. Pike (1981:13) suggests that the representation of the city in fictional writing gains credibility from its readers because "writers seem to pay careful attention to this difference between reality and image".

What is useful about the argument that Pike (1981:13) makes, is that as opposed to reading fictional texts as 'reality' which encompasses some historical truth, they are "parallel or analogous rather than identical". From the image, the reader can recognise the real place, and in the context of this study, one can identify Mpe's narrative with the actual setting of Hillbrow. In this way, Mpe's text functions as a way of evoking what is firmly possible within one's imagination in relation to the image one holds of Hillbrow as a real place.

While I recognise the limitation of citing novels in critical writing, Todd Henderson (2008:176), a law scholar in his journal article *Citing Fiction* argues that fiction can offer a perspective which is unachievable in scholarly writing. What is interesting about Henderson's perspective is that he is writing from the law discipline which is perceived

to be rooted in facts in order for one to build a credible case. Novels shed light on people and their experiences. As such, one can gather much about human experiences.

Numerous writings report that Mpe lived in Hillbrow in 1989 while pursuing his studies at the University of the Witwatersrand (McGregor, 2004). Writing from a perspective of someone who was once an insider of Hillbrow points to his nuanced observations of the space. Pike (1981:15) declares that writing from this position is like "casting back an image of truth." Mpe's book is also useful in drawing on what this study refers to as the dominant narrative of Hillbrow, one which speaks to concerns over issues of overpopulation, physical decay, xenophobia, violence, drug abuse, prostitution and immigrants.

To challenge perceptions about Hillbrow relating to ideas of crime, violence, illegal immigrants, drug abuse, xenophobia and suicide, Mpe contrasts the rural village of Tiragalong in the Northern Province (now Limpopo) with the notorious neighbourhood of Hillbrow. He does this to expose the prejudice and xenophobic tendencies of the people of Tiragalong. Mpe (2001:4) asserts that "Hillbrow was the sanctuary in which *makwerekwere* basked". The presence of migrants is explored throughout his book with the residents of Tiragalong attributing the social ills of Hillbrow to the presence of migrants. The bigotry of the people of Tiragalong is most evident in how they believe that migrants are responsible for the spread of the HIV/Aids virus; "AIDS, according to popular understanding, was caused by foreign germs that travelled from the central and western parts of Africa" (Mpe, 2001:3-4). Other aspects include the 'Africanisation' of Hillbrow, which has resulted in even black South Africans having stereotypes of Hillbrow.

Mpe uses the ignorance and perceptions of the people of Tiragalong about Hillbrow as an opportunity to educate his readers. He condemns their lack of knowledge about fellow Africans through highlighting the issue of xenophobia. In the same way that Mpe challenges perceptions, this study argues that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* operates in similar ways. It serves as an educational platform to influence positive perceptions about Hillbrow as a place and as home. Through a contrast of life in Tiragalong and Hillbrow, Mpe reveals the people of Tiragalong's ignorance towards foreigners by exposing how xenophobia is a concept of black-on-black hate which mirrors a new form of oppression in the new democracy, one very similar to the oppressive system of apartheid.

Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* suggests that Hillbrow belongs to everyone who occupies it. There are no dichotomies of outsiders and insiders; Hillbrow is personified and presented as a 'person' who is welcoming to everyone. It operates similar to the claim made by the South African Freedom Charter that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it". If one had to operate on the assumption that Hillbrow belongs to one group of people, then everyone in Hillbrow would be regarded as a foreigner, given past segregation laws of apartheid in the 1950s. This thinking is reinforced by the narrator through multiple referencing of "Welcome to Our Hillbrow" throughout the book. Hillbrow is always referred to as 'our', therefore belonging to everyone. It is here where Mpe explores the idea of Hillbrow as 'home' and as a 'community' and ideas of belonging.

The people of Tiragalong hold the same understanding of home as the one which was dictated by the apartheid government. Their outlook of home refers to a place that is located outside of the city; a homestead. Mpe (2001:3) claims that to the people of Tiragalong "the City of Gold was full of career opportunities for them", so it represents

a place of work opportunities rather than a place where one could start a family and build a home.

Mpe's book is used in this study to demonstrate the power of perception in stereotyping people and places. Both Mpe (2001) and Morris (1999) make reference to issues such as overpopulation, crime, drug abuse, migrants and prostitution in Hillbrow. However, unlike Mpe, Morris' writing is removed from people's perceptions, despite using interviews and surveys as his method of data collection. However, this is to be expected as Morris undertook a study while Mpe took the novel route, and therefore the writings serve different purposes. While Morris' book was useful in 'factually' locating Hillbrow historically within a theoretical framework, Mpe's writing challenges negative perceptions of Hillbrow as an unsafe space dominated by drugs, violence prostitution and HIV/Aids which can often go undocumented in scholarly writings.

2.4.1 Hillbrow: the festival setting

> For me going to Hillbrow Theatre was actually the moment I went [pause], oh! Hillbrow is not that bad, it is not a "no-go zone" but like anywhere in Joburg, you must be vigilant. People are actually people living there (Vaughan, 2015).

Clara Vaughan, an education officer at the Market Theatre Laboratory (The Lab), first came to Hillbrow through an invitation from Bester to adjudicate for the festival in 2010. Vaughan's statement reiterates the dominant perception of danger that many people hold about Hillbrow until they have engaged with the space. Like myself, Vaughan had a long-held perception of what Hillbrow was, and was confronted by a different picture.

Recognising the dominant perception of Hillbrow as outlined in the reviewed literature and the empirical data, school teachers were asked if they thought Hillbrow was an appropriate location to host the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival,* given the long-held perceptions of its notoriety. Teachers were not opposed to bringing their

learners to Hillbrow; on the contrary they were very enthusiastic about exposing their learners to the Hillbrow experience, one that would allow them to see another side of Hillbrow. Identifying the changing narrative of Hillbrow, Frank Sithole, a teacher from Phoenix College stated that:

> I think it's appropriate for the festival to take place there, I'm telling you! Because Hillbrow is a hub of activity. There is so much going on there. Fine, there are positive aspects of Hillbrow but there are also negatives. But one thing that stands out when you talk Hillbrow most of the time is the crime, the drugs and the congestion that is there, the living conditions. How people share flats. That's what you see when you pass through Hillbrow, the filth. So at the end of the day, you've got this idea that nothing positive comes out of Hillbrow but then with the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, you've got something positive coming out of Hillbrow especially for the youth (Sithole, 2015).

Sithole's statement reiterates the negative perceptions of what comes to one's mind at the mention of Hillbrow. Despite all the negative representations of Hillbrow that is in public circulation, Sithole declares that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is one of the positive things to come out of Hillbrow. For him, the festival gives the school-goers an opportunity to experience a side of Hillbrow that is not often spoken about, one that presents a positive image of Hillbrow and arguably troubles the dominant narrative of danger, and is rarely represented in mass media.

The letters and interviews illustrate that Hillbrow, like any other place, has its own positives and negatives. Strict measures must be put in place in order to reduce the levels of crime and violence. Participants of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* argue that the festival articulates a positive narrative about Hillbrow, one that ought to be embraced widely. It is for this reason, that this case study is such an important case to destabilise the myths about Hillbrow through those who engage with the space on a daily basis.

To the participants, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* represents a space that unlocks learners' creativity. The festival is a prolific way of offering a renewed perspective into the creative activities that happen in Hillbrow. It has become a lens through which the participants reflect about Hillbrow as a community and as home.

In the context of the Hillbrow Theatre Project, Bester perceives their role to be a positive one as their educational programming is geared towards nurturing young minds. Through drama workshops and play-making skills, children are encouraged to come up with creative solutions to various issues that are pertinent to their age groups. The outreach programme continues to function within the community of Hillbrow long after the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* has finished. For Bester, spaces such as the Outreach Foundation are paramount for the functioning of any community. Community arts centres contribute to the changing face of locations such as Hillbrow.

Chapter Three: Artistic Strategies

A project like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a remarkable example of how one project can destabilise misconceptions and stereotypes about a community through promoting arts and culture programmes and consequently presenting the notion of Hillbrow as home. To demonstrate how this manifests, this chapter will examine a number of festivals and the pros and cons of engaging in an arts format with a competitive element as an education medium: the building of professional and student connections and mentoring; competition as a barometer for judging 'artistic quality'. It will explore the notion that competitive spiritedness could be both a good incentive (and a confidence booster), but that it could also discourage others when they lose.

3.1 Festivals

There is a growing number of studies focusing on arts festivals as cultural events. However, the majority of these studies seek to understand the economic benefits of festivals as tourist attractions within tourism literature (Getz, 1997; Gursoy et al., 2004; Hughes, 2000; Hauptfleisch, 2006, 2007; Seffrin 2005, 2007). One of the thought-provoking definitions for arts festival which is useful for this study is provided by Kavanagh (2012) in his essay "Festival as a Strategy for the Development of Theatre in Zimbabwe 1980-2010" which defines a theatre festival as a "celebration and showcasing of an artistic harvest" (Kavanagh, 2012:3). This idea of an "artistic harvest" is important to outline as it suggests that one must undergo a process of sowing in order to reap the artistic fruits of the harvest. In the context of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, the process of sowing refers to the artistic development that takes place through various workshop trainings, rehearsals, researching of themes,

screening of films and other additional support that start at the beginning of each year, prior to the showcase of the festival in September.

In this way, the actual run of the festival is the "artistic harvest" (Kavanagh, 2012:3), while the process of rehearsing and workshopping school productions are a build-up to the harvest. A harvest implies a completion of the process, and a pay-off for all the hard work of those who contributed towards the success of the festival. A book that is useful for interpreting and locating the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* within a broader festival culture is *Festivalising!: Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture* edited by Temple Hauptfleisch, Shulamith Lev-Aladgem, Jacqueline Martin, Willmar Sauter and Henri Schoenmakers (2007). This book is a collection of essays by various local and international scholars who have dedicated their time to researching numerous festival case studies in an attempt to argue for the importance of festivals as cultural events and as a development strategy.

The book also highlights the importance of utilising the festival strategy within communities to engage the general public on issues that are pertinent to the world they live in. The contributors look at various local and international case studies in order to draw attention to the growing prevalence of festivals. Willmar Sauter (2007:18) declares that arts festivals should "include the complexities in which it takes place". Beyond being just celebratory events, they must speak to issues of their respective communities. This can either be celebratory or highlight social injustices. This is where the significance of festival like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* lies, as cultural events that go beyond any economic benefits. Hence the festival organisers conduct workshops in schools as a way to guiding school-goers to relate their school productions to their cultural life experiences.

Vicki Ann Cremora defines festivals as events that connect and bring people together (2007:11). For Cremora, festivals are a means of drawing people from different backgrounds and uniting them over a cultural event. In the context of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* the connection with others manifests through the coming together of different schools under the roof of the Hillbrow Theatre. Temple Hauptfleisch, reasons that arts festivals are considered as events because they hold some cultural significance to the communities in which they exist (2007:181).

Using the festival strategy within a community arts model is by no means a new phenomenon. One of the community arts centres that has been using the festival strategy to call attention to their arts centre is Sibikwa Arts Centre[24], located in Benoni in the East Rand near Johannesburg. Sibikwa Arts Centre is one of the early community arts centres, and was founded in 1988 during the apartheid era. Despite financial challenges faced by current community arts centres, Sibikwa Arts Centre continues to be fully functional in the new democracy, largely because it is an independent community arts centre. The centre does not rely on government funding. Rather, it targets private funding sources and engages in rigorous fundraising initiatives.

In his book *Arts, Entertainment and Tourism,* Howard Hughes (2000:131) reports that "festivals have strong drawing power and can attract large numbers of locals and non-locals in the festival audiences". Sibikwa Arts Centre hosts a number of festivals such as "Sibikwa Motsamai Festival", an educational dance project that is targeted at primary and high school learners. The festival has similar programming as the *Inner-*

[24] Sibikwa Arts Centre focuses on "in vocational training in the performing arts, arts education, community development through the arts and the creation of innovative South African performance pieces" (http://www.sibikwa.co.za). The Arts Centre promotes arts education through their various platforms such as festivals, music, theatre and dance.

City High Schools Drama Festival. In this festival, primary and high schools compete against each other to win various prizes. They host "The Sibikwa Arts Storytelling Festival", which is a four-day festival aimed at celebrating the beauty of storytelling through the exploration of different cultures which highlights this skill. They also host "The TOTAL[25] Sibikwa Community Theatre Play Competition", a platform that seeks to provide employment opportunities by linking participants with professional artists and performance practitioners. Through this initiative, Sibikwa Arts Centre works with local South African prisons. Lastly, Sibikwa hosts a festival called "Seriti sa Basadi" [Dignity of Women]. This is a two-day women's festival that takes place in August (Women's Month). This event celebrates the role of women in society and seeks to bridge the generational gap between young and old women through engaging them in music, poetry, song and dance. The motivation behind these various festivals is to reward artistic excellence.

Given how festivals must have significance for the communities they serve, Cremora qualifies the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) as one of the festivals which fits the criteria of serving its immediate community. KKNK originates from a specific cultural context within the Afrikaans community. Its programming is a celebration of the Afrikaans language and consequently its culture. KKNK as an event raises awareness about arts and culture activities happening within the Afrikaans community thus fulfilling a unifying role. Hauptfleisch (2007:79) stresses that this is because arts festivals are more than just entertainment; they are "events that foreground relevant issues". In this instance they reveal a political nature - remnants of apartheid on how they are still addressing spatial segregation and by default become racialised.

[25] Capital letters have been maintained in TOTAL because this is how the Sibikwa Arts Centre has branded the festival and I have opted not to collapse it.

While the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a high school festival and cannot be compared to a professional festival such as KKNK, this example is useful for the study because it has been used numerous times as a case study in theatre festival studies as a cultural event and for its economic impact. Since its inception in 1994, KKNK has grown to attract people across the country and tourists alike. During the week-long festival, the main roads in Oudtshoorn are closed off to traffic. According to Herman Kitshoff (2004:237) in his journal article *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) - Oudtshoorn, 3-11 April 2004*, the scope of the festival has enormous economic impact for the locals as people spend a lot of money on various stalls, renting apartments, and parking and ticket sales. Although KKNK has grown significantly in terms of the level of seriousness and professional expectations it continues to remain true to its objective of serving the Afrikaans community.

While festivals are said to be unifying events, one is critical of KKNK and its focus as a 'purely' Afrikaans festival in South Africa post-apartheid. This speaks to the slow rate of racial transformation within South Africa post-apartheid. Nonetheless, the case of KKNK is helpful in reading how festivals can fulfil various purposes and operate as an educational tool with a particular community.

The financial support it receives also sets it apart from a small-scale development festival like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. The festival runs for eight days in March/April and continues to serve the community of Oudtshoorn through job creation. While it is clear that KKNK reflects the slow transformation in South Africa twenty-two years into democracy, it does present a model to work from. The festival serves the community on the level of generating jobs and 'preserving' the Afrikaans culture and it also contributes to the economy.

KKNK is an important festival to highlight because in assessing the purpose it serves within the community of Oudtshoorn, it becomes a significant programme to illuminate the role of festivals in fulfilling an educational role. In this way, it begins to speak to similar initiatives such the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. While this study does not propose that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* holds a cultural significance in the same way that KKNK does, it does however bridge the gap within inner-city schools by providing arts and culture education. The *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* like KKNK has grown in its own right. It has seen an increase in the number of school participation, sponsors and audience development.

3.1.1 Festivals as moments of building connections

Beyond bringing people together, arts festivals are inherently about building artistic connections. The Hillbrow Theatre Project prides itself in facilitating connections between participating schools and professional theatre practitioners through their outreach programme. This is made possible through the increase in funding from Rand Merchant Bank (RMB) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). Additional funding has ensured that they provide trained facilitators at each participating school (Festival booklet, 2014:9). As a result, the quality of school productions has also improved.

Artistic connections between professional artists and the community have always been one of the primary motivations behind the formation of early community arts centres (van Robbroeck, 1991:108). While in the past 'professional artists' had the connotation of white professional artists, the emergence of democracy and the process of *democratisation* of the arts has re-conceptualised the concept, and it has since become deracialised. Professional artists are now inclusive of all trained artists irrespective of race. Emma Durden (2015:95) points out that community arts centres

bring in theatre-makers into community arts spaces to provide mentorship, give artistic guidance and facilitation that seeks to empower participants.

The Hillbrow Theatre Project makes use of a festival ambassador, Dumisani Dlamini[26] to facilitate artistic connections between schools and the professional world. Dlamini fulfils a mentorship role for the festival through visiting schools and sharing his industry experience. In the past, the festival organisers have managed to connect participating schools with big arts industry names such as Don Mlangeni[27], Mncedisi Baldwin Shabangu[28], Clara Vaughan[29], Mpho Molepo[30], Napo Masheane[31], and Sello Motloung[32] (Festival booklet 2014) as part of the adjudication process. The presence of these professional artists in the programming of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* has arguably added some weight to the festival's credibility as a semi-professional high school festival particularly to outsiders and potential partnerships.

It is no secret that using well-known people such as Dlamini has added benefits of encouraging school participation solely based on his celebrity (well-known) status in the arts industry. A strategy that has not been used effectively is the role patrons play in promoting the festival to people in their circles. Patrons of the festival play an indirect advocating role for the festival and consequently promote arts and culture through word of mouth. They operate on the level of articulating the role of the festival to the general public.

[26] Dlamini is an acclaimed actor, producer and film producer popularly known for his role as "Chester" in the controversial drama *Yizo* that used to air on SABC 1 back in 2001.
[27] Mlangeni is a South African actor best known for his role as Zebedee Matabane in the popular SABC soapie Isidingo.
[28] Shabangu is a South African actor, theatre-maker and director.
[29] Vaughan is the education officer at the Market Theatre Laboratory.
[30] Molepo is a South African actor, theatre director, theatre maker and cultural activist.
[31] Masheane is a playwright, poet, performer and director.
[32] Motloung is a South African actor.

Arts ambassadors within the context of the festival create connections between schools and the industry they represent, making the arts seem accessible to those who would otherwise see it as something distant from them. They promote the work of the organisation; they make the work accessible and understandable to potential participants, which in turn starts to speak to shared-ownership of the festival. Furthermore, ambassadors promote the festival – making it fun, enjoyable and importantly a project worth respecting given the calibre of people who are seen to be supporting it. This is based on the premise that "advocacy can be very effective when undertaken as a collective effort between individuals and organisations with a shared purpose or goals" (Arts Advocacy & Toolkit Tool, 2011:6). The Arts Advocacy & Toolkit Tool document is one of the *Arterial Network* publications, a creative network that was established in 2007 to give individuals and arts organisations in African countries tools to lobby and advocate for the arts in their respective communities. The network builds connections between cultural workers, artists and arts organisations across Africa as a means of contributing towards creating sustainable change through the arts. Sustainable change in this context implies that organisations are able to create and survive outside and beyond the assistance of the *Arterial Network*. Such networks highlight the significant role that the arts play in contributing towards nation building. While the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is not operating on a professional scale like *Arterial Network*, it contributes towards building connections by creating a network of schools, which in turn forms a creative community. This is a community made up of different schools with the objective of unleashing talent, creative thinking and imagination with the expectation of strengthening arts education.

The use of arts festivals as a strategy is endorsed by arts scholars such as Kavanagh who argue that "the very fact that artists have a festival to focus on, where their work

will be showcased, appreciated and possibly receive an award, stimulates production" (2012:3). In this way, preparation for a festival stimulates creativity and artistic innovation. It is assumed that the pressure that comes with being part of a festival can give school-goers the motivation to focus on winning. Evidence supporting this claim will be outlined in the following chapter through interviews from school teachers who affirm that the competition element within the festival motivates their learners to give their best performances.

By opting for a festival strategy as opposed to any other form of programming, the Hillbrow Theatre Project is able to reach out to more high schools than it would have been possible in any other format. The festival as an artistic strategy allows for school-goers to negotiate their own cultural experiences as peers and translate them into school productions. This is evident in the testimonies expressed in the letters that were discussed in Chapter Two. While performance aesthetics and production values are important for competitions, community arts projects tend to focus on the educational process of the form. This is not to imply that they are not crucial, however they become secondary to arts education (Sauter, 2007:24). This is because at a primary level, a community arts festival has a social responsibility to the community it serves. This role is realised through an explicit emphasis on the artistic process such as workshop training and research of subject matter over aesthetics and the beauty of the performances.

The Hillbrow Theatre Project highlights the importance of artistic process by the use of established theatre practitioners and industry players who actively guide the school-goers' acting process as outlined earlier in this section. Linking schools with trained facilitators is the centre's attempt to fill the gap between schools with adequate arts and culture programmes with those who do not have basic arts facilities (Festival

booklet, 2014:9). This is because private and public schools do not have the same facilities. Therefore, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*'s efforts to bridge the gap becomes a crucial part of contributing to improving the quality of arts education. Thereafter, schools with lower socio-economic circumstances no longer offer arts-related subjects due to certain limitations, such as lack of adequate resources or qualified arts teachers. Additionally, arts teachers are teaching subjects other than art because their schools may not offer art as part of their curriculum after Grade 9. Arts teachers are arguably concentrated in urban as opposed to rural areas. It is for this reason that government ministry such as the Department of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture have aligned themselves with the festival. These partnerships reiterate the importance of strong arts education in schools and how it should be incorporated with the same seriousness as subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Literacy.

3.1.2 The festival as process

Process in the context of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* refers to the exchange of acting and directing skills (the educational element) between professional artists (facilitators) and the community of participating schools (school-goers and teachers). The significance of process is reinforced through the kinds of partnerships the Hillbrow Theatre Project forms with institutions such as the Constitutional Hill Education Project, the Market Theatre Laboratory, the Department of Arts and Culture and the Department of Education. These partnerships cement the festival as a learning experience. All these partners come together with the primary objective of contributing towards improving the quality of our South African education system. The educational value of the festival is arguably one of the reasons why sponsors support the *Inner-*

City High Schools Drama Festival as an initiative. This notion will be argued in detail in Chapter Four.

Highlighting the educational process of the festival is one of the ways that the Hillbrow Theatre Project downplays the competition element. The element of competition in the festival is an area of contention for the festival organisers. For Bester, competition is a secondary dimension of the festival. He states that the primary aim is to highlight the educational and developmental aspects of the festival. This viewpoint is supported by Seffrin who confirms "the focus resides clearly on [the] process and not on the final product" (2005:254). It is the educational development strategies such as workshop trainings that involve teaching directing, writing scripts, acting, playmaking, movement, voice and designing skills that firmly locates the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* within the community arts festival model. This was illustrated in an interview with Bester who asserted that:

> What we try to encourage with the plays is investigation, research, trying to understand about self and how we interact with each other and how we interact with our environment. So I hope that by engaging the imagination and by engaging in creative processes, we can re-imagine our environment and we can re-imagine how we operate in our environment (Bester, 2015).

The Hillbrow Theatre Project directs its resources towards the educational programming of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to highlight the importance of research and training. They ensure that learners have access to research material that will inform the interpretation of their plays. This includes reading hand-outs and films to watch. While this assistance is helpful to some of the participating schools, the gap between how government and private schools interpret the festival themes was one of the cultural exchange issues that came up in this

research, but the study was unable to engage with it due to the fact that some schools, primarily the private schools, were not willing to participate in the research.

For example, in 2015 the festival theme was “mapping homes”. Parktown Girls High School performed a play titled *Thunzi* which refers to a ‘shadow’ in isiZulu. *Thunzi* (Festival Programme, 2015) is a “narrative inspired by a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe”. The play depicts a journey of a young girl searching for a place called home. The search is explored through the convention of fairy-tale and magic. It is removed from any form of realism and is told through physical theatre and oral tradition. The play overtly maps the idea of home through a magical journey; home is not realistically represented as a structure but rather as a dream and a fantasy. While the play itself was not grounded in any reality, the narrative had a clear storyline, demonstrated a high level of research (based on Johann Wolfgang’s poem) and illustrated aesthetic quality (production value). The play further demonstrated the kind of aspirations the learners associate the idea of home with. Parktown Girls High School’s play was crowned as 2015 Best Production.

Aha-Thuto Secondary School, also responding to the same theme of “mapping homes”, performed a play titled *My Normal Home*. Similar to Parktown Girls High School, the narrative was about a young girl who runs away from the home where she lives with her four disabled family members. On a journey in search of a ‘normal home’, she discovers that all homes have challenges. She is sent from one orphanage to another and with each home, the treatment is worse than the previous one. Struggling to find herself a stable home, she is forced to go back to her ‘dysfunctional’ home. The play took on a more realistic representation compared to Parktown Girls High School. Interpretations grounded in realism and fantasy all form part of modes of storytelling within theatre.

The interpretations of themes by different schools are telling of the difference in race, socialisation and culture of the learners and their schools. The interpretations indicate the different orientations of each school – which speaks largely about the contexts from which they come. Government schools tend to deal with more realistic pressing matters of their daily struggles. Private schools on the other hand, explore issues relating to the world of fantasy, which removes them from their immediate environment. While this is not the case with all schools, there is a clear sense that their interpretation is influenced by their socialisation. It is for this reason that the festival explicitly places emphasis on processes, which seek to bridge the educational gap by providing trained facilitators to assist schools to counterbalance the issue of lack of access to arts facilities.

The ideological framing of the festival speaks to what the centre considers to be important given their location. As such, great efforts have been put in place to highlight the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* as a strategy to bridge arts education inequalities, and enhance learning and different cultural experiences within schools. The use of ambassadors as an artistic strategy to build connections becomes the lens through which one can interpret how the festival fulfils its advocacy role. It is in this that we begin to see how the promotion of arts and culture programmes in high schools becomes a site for the articulation of social issues affecting inner-city high school-goers.

While it would have been ideal to assess how the festival builds connections between private and government schools, my attempts to engage private schools through physical visits and emails was to no avail. As a result, there is an absence of opinions of predominately white/private schools in assessing opinions about Hillbrow and their participation in the festival.

3.2 Competition

Through the use of competition, this section reflects on how the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is able to acknowledge schools' artistic excellence through awarding prizes. Drawing on the literature from Kavanagh and Bruce Seaman which explore the use of competition within community organisations, this section asks: does the incorporation of competition within a community arts programme disrupt its developmental objective, if at all, and what implications does this have?

To address this question, firstly one has to look at how the aspect of competition manifests itself within the festival as an incentive to appeal to a larger participation. Secondly, one would have to reflect on how competition operates as a means to maximise participation, reward artistic excellence and encourage creative innovation among schools. Thirdly, it would be necessary to outline the shortfalls of competition when participating schools fail to show palpable signs of development. Against this backdrop, this section hopes to illustrate tensions and contradictions, which underline the competition dimension within the festival.

The Hillbrow Theatre Project does not engage the festival strategy in isolation; competition plays a crucial aspect of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. Although this is not overtly spelled out in the festival aims, with competition being mentioned only once in the festival booklet, *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival: Celebrating 10 Years.* This booklet is one of their first official publications with packaged information on the festival, which essentially maps the festival's journey over the past 10 years. Within the festival, prizes are not framed as winning the competition but rather as recognising and rewarding artistic excellence. Despite the 'modest'

framing, the festival format relies on the competition aspect equally as it does on the educational development aspect.

The notion of rewarding artistic excellence through competition is projected as a popular strategy used among many theatre festivals. Kavanagh (2012) asserts that having a competition aspect within a festival strategy is a practice that has been part of the black communities for many years. Kavanagh (2012:2) argues that the competition element is an opportunity for arts organisations to reward "those who have contributed outstandingly to the success or social achievement being singled out for honours or prizes".

While Kavanagh writes from the context of Zimbabwe, his argument is particularly relevant for this study as it outlines that one of the ways to ensure that competition does not override the educational component is to provide strong training opportunities to the beneficiaries. Without necessarily transplanting a Zimbabwean study into a South African context, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a good example of this intersection between arts education and competition. The Hillbrow Theatre Project links the showcasing of school-goers' talent with the acquisition of skills such drama, playmaking skills and dance. Equally noteworthy here is how the festival employs the competition aspect to optimise participation.

In his journal article titled *Competition and the Non-Profit Arts: The Lost Industrial Organization Agenda* (2004), economist Bruce Seaman (2004:181) argues that while there is an assumption that competition motivates artists to create better art, there are conflicting effects of competition, which weakens creative engagements. Even though Seaman interrogates competition within arts organisations and not necessarily in relation to arts festivals, his study is useful to highlight the tensions of using

competition in fragile initiatives such as community arts centres. While competition can serve as an educational development, it can also be detrimental to others. This is based on Emma Durden's statement that festivals are "often hotly contested competitions with substantial cash prizes and kudos going to the winners" (2015:94).

While cash prizes are not substantial in the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* given budget constraints, the festival organisers still give kudos to the winners through awarding winning schools trophies and book vouchers. Recognising creative excellence in settings such as this highlights the contradiction of the festival's orientation as a development programme. In recognising one school over the other, the hierarchies of development are highlighted. While winning and losing all come with the nature of any competition, a weak implementation strategy of balancing competition and arts education can lead to contradictions which can potentially undermine the fundamental objectives of the festival.

3.2.1 Competition as an incentive

Seaman argues that given the right environment, "competition encourages artistic innovation" (2004:173). In this way, competitive pressures have the potential to motivate learners to be innovative in the creation of their original productions. The power of the competition dimension as a means of motivating participation was evident in an interview conducted on 24 April 2015 with Lothisa Msengana, a teacher from Reasoma High School (Soweto). When asked why her school participated in a festival that was outside of her region, Msengana asserted that:

> This is the challenge; this is the most important thing to us. We were not participating in bigger competitions whereby we are using big theatres. Most of the time we've been competing in school halls and all those types of things. So it was a big competition this one [*Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*]. We felt yes, it's a challenge, and it's something we felt it can develop our learners (Msengana, 2015).

Msengana's statement highlights competition as one of the festival's striking features, which persuaded her school to take part. The scale of the competition was another factor, which motivated their participation. The scale of the festival gives them a sense that they are engaging in professional practice, one that is located outside of school halls. Msengana associates big theatre spaces with learner-development. It is an opportunity for her learners to perform in a theatre space, which they are deprived of in their school. Being deprived of a theatre space speaks to the lack of facilities faced by the many schools that participate in the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. The festival therefore provides an experience to disadvantaged learners. For Msengana, the festival represents a move away from small-scale competitions in school halls. In this way, it represents growth for the learners and her school.

For Msengana, competition is a necessary component to 'challenge' her learners' potential. It is an opportunity for them to challenge themselves and gain artistic experience in the process. Msengana argues that the competition dimension of the festival enables learners' personal development as it provides them with an opportunity to witness the kinds of work their peers are creating. She claims that the festival is the crucial space for her learners to compare the quality of their education to those of the learners located in the city. Msengana maintains that:

> Participating in the festival motivates them [learners] because they compete with the well-known Model C schools, taking part with them, being involved with them and socializing with them. They can compare their education with Model C schools, even when they are performing they are able to rate themselves to those learners from Model C schools (Msengana, 2015).

Msengana's aspiration to measure up to Model C[33] schools is important to note because it speaks to the disparities of the curricular in our local education system. This is inherently a historical problem as township schools' education has always been considered to be inadequate compared to that of private school education. Msengana considers the connection between her school and other Model C schools an essential one to the educational growth of her learners.

Msengana's insistence on the competition dimension speaks to the lack of recognition that arts and culture subjects are given within the school's curriculum and the community at large. Creative subjects are generally viewed as secondary to 'important' subjects such as Mathematics and Science. A programme like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* becomes an opportunity for Msengana to challenge this perception as it enables schools that otherwise would not have the capacity or time to teach these skills given the current curriculum structure. The notion of lack of capacity in disadvantaged schools to teach arts education is explored by Eben Lochner in his academic paper *The Community Arts Project (CAP): The Role of the Arts in Building Community and Artistic Development* where he argues that "education in South African township schools is seriously lacking in any form of art education" (Lochner, 2011:136). It is for this reason that, arts initiatives such as the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* are crucial.

For Msengana the competition element of the festival is more than just a challenge for the learners; it is also an opportunity for her to make an important contribution to the curriculum and image of her school. One often hears art teachers complaining about

[33] Model C schools, now referred to as "former Model C schools" are schools that were previously deemed 'whites only', but are now administered by the government, yet remain largely funded by parents and other funding bodies. They are typically known for having good facilities (Hofmeyr, 2000).

how hard it is to convince their school principals to understand the importance of such programmes because they are not valued the same as the other subjects. For the teacher to speak of additional work (to train) and funds (to transport) is a tall order if there is no incentive at the end of it. Therefore, to win this competition would be an opportunity for Msengana to get acknowledged, which in turn will assert some form of authority and respect amongst her peers. This could also be the reason why her school which is clearly outside of the inner-city (Soweto) continuously returns to the festival.

For Msengana and her school, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is seen as an opportunity to fulfil an educational and socio-political gap that would otherwise not be fulfilled given the inadequacies of the current education system. The study argues that the role of the festival in bridging the education gap and enhancing the current curriculum is also the reason why institutions such as the Department of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture are collaborating and funding the arts programme. They realise the shortage of artistic skills within the current curriculum and recognise the role that the Hillbrow Theatre Project plays. The argument of the educational value of the festival will be explored in detail in Chapter Four.

While there are disadvantages to employing competition, Msengana insists that the competitive aspect of the festival motivates school-goers rather than discourages them. Her reasons are in line with the finding that "arts education helps to create a positive school environment in which learning and human development can occur" (Arts Advocacy & Networking Tool, 2011:7). By engaging in creative processes such as the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival,* the school-goers get the opportunity to obtain education beyond the school parameters. It is within this context that Elliot Eisner in his book *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* argues that arts education

engages the imagination and stimulates a "never-ending growth within the individual" (2002:241).

3.2.2 Engaging competition tensions

Although Msengana is in support of the competition aspect of the festival, her attitude towards the necessity of this component reveals how fragile the concept of community arts is when merged with competition. There is an underlying risk that without striking a balance between competition and arts education, it can quickly alienate those who do not win. If schools do not win this 'challenge' (as Msengana refers to it, competition can create winners and losers), these binaries can lead to an unhealthy environment for the growth of school-goers.

Operating purely on competitive lines can put unnecessary pressure on school-goers who are perceived to be underperforming. The pressure can further remove school-goers from the crucial educational component, which is the primary aim of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. This is because participants within community development programmes are "pre-disposed to cooperate rather than compete'' (Seaman, 2004:181). In this way, competition can discourage those who come across as weak participants. By not winning, participants could become demoralised which is detrimental to the overall objectives of the festival.

Looking at the impact of competition, Seaman (2004:179) argues that the pressure to win can "reduce the quantity and quality of art output," The implication here is that, using the competition strategy can compromise the quantity (school participation) and quality (standard of the productions) that learners produce. As a result, competition pressures can work against the fundamental aims of the festival, which are premised on arts education, artistic innovation and development of appreciation for arts and

culture programmes. In this way, the element of competition can reduce meaningful participation. Although this is not yet the case with the *Inner-City High School Drama Festival*, it must be noted that the emergence of competition and arts education if not implemented strategically can cause a mismatch which can compromise the integrity of what the centre seeks to achieve with the festival.

A question was posed to Bester about what he thought was the impact of competition on the school-goers. His response is captured in the following conversation that I had with him:

> GB (Gerard Bester): I know there can be huge frustrations around the competitiveness of it [the festival] and huge a disappointment but for me that's a learning process and it's important that learners know that we can't always win.
> ZM (Zanele Madiba): So do you think that competition is negative or can it be both negative and positive?
> GB: I think it can be both negative and positive, personally I would love it not to be a competition but people have always argued with me that competition is the motivation.

From Bester's statement one can deduce the tensions and contradictions in the ideological framing of the festival. On a personal level Bester wishes that the festival did not have the competition component. However, he acknowledges that it plays a crucial role in persuading participation. While Bester's aspirations sound ambitious, one has to wonder if schools would participate in a festival if the only incentive was arts education. An answer to this question would clearly require a study of its own. However, Bester's objections are noteworthy because they highlight the tensions around the merging of competition with arts education and framing of community arts programmes.

In any scenario, the competition dimension creates a number of complications. In the first instance, competition creates the notion of winners and losers. While in theory,

the process of not winning a competition has the potential to discourage participation, the study has in fact proved the opposite to be true. Schools that did not win still chose to continue to participate for the many other benefits of performing arts.

Schools such as Africa House, His Majesty, Q-House, Vector College and Sir Isaac Newtown High School are among schools that have shown little consistency in their participation. While there could be a host of reasons for their inconsistent participation, Thabang Phakathi (Hillbrow Theatre Project Coordinator) in an interview on 18 May 2015 outlined that the inconsistencies of schools' participation can be improved if the following happens:

a. If we can be guaranteed of a stable funding that will make us plan for the years ahead without having to think that we might not get funding.
b. If all the principals can have the same mindset in giving these learners a platform to do this initiative without any restrictions.
c. If all schools can have proper facilities of access to a rehearsal space that is flexible to accommodate all drama students (Phakathi, 2015).

Phakathi does not believe that the competitive nature of the festival is the reason for the inconsistent participation of schools; rather in most cases it tends to be miscommunication between the school teachers in charge of the drama students and the schools' principals (Festival report, 2015). He argues that school principals do not always co-operate or fully commit to the festival. This in turn makes it difficult to coordinate and ensure consistency.

While Bester has ardently emphasised the importance of its inclusion, resistance to diversity by other participating schools could be another contributing factor to inconsistency of participation. When asked whether he feels that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* was creating a 'community' among participating schools, Bester alluded to the tensions around attempts to diversify the festival.

> We had St Stithians. You know, on one level, diversity is important but interaction was quite limited and in the end quite negative actually, we actually had a school complain so we had to deal with that. We once had a refugee school take part and that also created tensions… I think how we engage with others in this country that space needs to be held (Bester, 2015).

From hosting eight schools in 2005 when the festival started to catering to over 35 schools in 2014, it is clear that while the festival grows in number, new challenges such as intolerance among schools arise. From Bester's interview, it is clear that bringing a diversity of schools from different background has not always worked well in the past. The tensions between government and private schools could be read through van Robbroeck's (1991:24) statement that such gatherings "indicate the degree to which the majority of the population has been alienated and excluded from the dominant cultural arena." This applies to the value of the festival which is considered different by different schools. Bester's statement on the negative interaction between the two schools illustrate that while building an educational network in an attempt to foster a 'creative' community, it is also important for the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to partner with school teachers to engage school-goers in the process of dismantling prejudices and hierarchies among themselves. This is if they wish to view the festival as a decolonial project, one that challenges the apartheid past and committed to rendering 'visible' stories and narrative of all who participate.

An apparent implication of competition is demonstrated through the tensions visible in the track record of two schools namely St Enda's Secondary School (Hillbrow) and Phoenix College (Johannesburg CBD). These two schools have a similar profile in that they have both participated in the festival since its inception in 2005. On one hand, a school like St Enda's has always been selected in the finals throughout the festival's

existence. They won first best production in 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2011, came second in 2009, 2013, third in 2007, 2010, 2015 and received a special mention as the fourth best production in 2012.

On the other hand, a school like Phoenix College, despite having received what could be argued to be the same workshop series as St Enda's, has never been in any of the finals. In the past eleven years, the school has not received a single recognition or award. The school, however, remains committed to the festival despite their performance record.

These disparities raise questions around the idea of development and how it manifests among participating schools. How can two schools, exposed to presumably the same form of playmaking training, have such contradictory outcomes? These discrepancies were posed to Frank Sithole, a teacher from Phoenix College, in an interview on 22 April 2015. Sithole has only been teaching at the school for the past three years and was unaware of the school's track record in the festival. He, however, asserted that despite not winning any prizes, there are lessons for his learners to gain from their participation. His sentiments were as follows:

> The learners or the students who get involved get to learn a lot, they get to experience a lot and it's quite motivating for them (Sithole, 2015).

Sithole did not seem to be bothered by their lack of natural progression in the competition. He shares similar views to that of Msengana who argues that his learners' participation in the festival exposes them to a professional practice which equips them with acting skills from facilitators that they would not otherwise be exposed to. Sithole considers the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to be a platform which allows his learners to gain professional artistic experience which the school curriculum has

no capacity to provide. Although they have not won anything in the past eleven years, he considers the experience they gain from participating in the festival to be valuable and responsible for his learners' artistic growth, improved confidence and communication skills.

Sithole's take on the discrepancy on the lack of palpable development (winning) implies that the tension that arises from incorporating competition with arts education does not take away from the objective of the festival, one that is centred on the promotion of arts education development. In fact, Sithole outlines competition as one of the crucial aspects of the festival. His position on competition further implies that the competitive nature of the festival does not work against the objectives of the festival but rather motivates the school goers to work harder.

Collectively, these teachers insist that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* creatively engages school-goers to come up with solutions to improve the face of their communities. Both Sithole and Msengana's schools have never been in the finals. However, they emphasise that despite not winning the competition, the learners' participation in the festival continues to be an enriching experience for them.

Despite the teachers' overwhelming positivity, if a school has not managed to be recognised for their efforts in a festival of this nature in the past eleven years of their participation, it can also be argued that there is no tangible growth for such schools. If one has to operate on the assumption that winning is a measure of growth, then Phoenix College has not met the required standard that would qualify them to be acknowledged in any meaningful way apart from receiving participation certificates which acknowledge all the schools' participation in the festival.

It has to be acknowledged that participation certificates are a good gesture from the festival organisers. They imply that everyone's presence is recognised and appreciated. In a meeting with Bester on 15 January 2016, I posed the question about the "under-performing" track record of Phoenix College. Bester stated that the festival organisers were aware of Phoenix College's record in the festival. He further pointed out that there was a need to "level the ground" (Bester, 2016) and ensure that all the learners have a fair chance at winning. To do this, he also outlined that the Hillbrow Theatre Project facilitators are putting necessary measures such as better monitoring and facilitation in place for the upcoming 2016 festival showcase. This monitoring and evaluation of the process would see all the facilitators subjected to various assessment of their directing and workshopping skills being tested to ensure that they are equipping the learners with the right acting skills to fully participate in the festival.

Despite agreeing that measures need to be put into place to ensure that learners receive quality facilitation, Bester believes that Phoenix College's track record in the festival was not a 'discrepancy' as I suggested, but rather part of the process of a 'competition' of this nature. Bester declares that "winning and losing are all part of the process" (2015). Even though Phoenix College has mostly lost throughout the competition since 2005, Bester insists that the festival organisers cannot award Phoenix College a certificate of artistic excellence if the adjudicators do not find their performances to be meeting the required performance standards. He insists that the presence of credible adjudicators neutralises any form of bias.

> How we choose adjudicators is very important, because really, for me what makes a successful festival, yes it is the quality of the productions but really it is the quality of the adjudication. It is how they get feedback, how they select, why they select and justify it (Bester, 2015).

Bester maintains that the festival adjudicators are objective and guard against any discrepancies. However, if the adjudicators are said to be objective, then this raises further questions about the level of facilitation provided to underperforming schools such as Phoenix College. One could argue that the different outcomes between St Enda's and Phoenix College highlight one of the failures of the competition's strategy to reflect tangible development of school-goers. In this context, a strategy that is designed to reward excellence can also act as a means of alienating those who are unable to reach a certain standard of performance. The criteria of adjudication is as follows: interpretation/choice of play, direction (use of stage, pace, transitions and ensemble work), acting, design, and technical aspects (lights, sound and other effects). The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the learners understand the basics of acting, movement, and voice. The facilitator is also in charge of helping the learners interpret the themes within their script and making sure that the set design is in line with the story being told.

Based on the adjudication form, it is unlikely that Phoenix College would ever meet the requirements given that they claim that they are receiving inadequate facilitation. This observation is based on the festival's adjudication criteria as outlined above. Everything that the adjudicators are looking for is beyond school-goers' control, as it is dependent on good facilitation and physical theatre usage. Only a trained facilitator can execute what the adjudicators are looking for in these school productions. For school-goers to meet these 'standards', they would require good artistic guidance during rehearsals. A good facilitator is a mentor that ensures that learners understand why they are doing what they are doing. Learners have to know the motivation behind telling the story that they are telling, its relevance, and the purpose it serves. While feedback from the adjudicators is helpful for the learners' growth, the process of putting

the play together is the responsibility of a good facilitator. Unfortunately, Phoenix College met with the same fate in 2015 when they did not make it to the finals again and received no mention in any of the numerous categories.

In a focus group discussion that took place on 28 April 2015, Phoenix College's learners were asked how they felt about their school's track record in the festival. While school-goers had suggestions about how to improve the quality of their future performances, they had this to say about their track record in the festival:

> Student C: We should also rehearse at the Hillbrow Theatre; we can go there.
> Student A: I think we should get better facilitators.
> Student B: Last year was horrible… today it was her, tomorrow it was her, next it's her (Focus group discussion, 2015).

It was interesting that the learners picked up on these inconsistencies while their teacher made no mention of it. The learners' blame their lack of progression in the competition on the inability to access the Hillbrow Theatre space for rehearsals. Unlike St Enda's learners who rehearse full-time in the Hillbrow Theatre, Phoenix College learners only have access to the space two to three days' prior to the actual run of the festival. It is therefore not surprising that the issue of access to the space would be raised as a concern which plays a significant role in their poor performance. Nonetheless, there are many other schools who have won the competition despite not having access to the theatre rehearsal space. However, lack of access to the theatre facilities cannot be dismissed as it impacts on the learners' performances and their confidence.

Furthermore, the school-goers also claimed that St Enda's learners had an unfair advantage in that they are facilitated by one of the festival initiators and two student facilitators, while they are only facilitated by various students whom they claim are

never fully committed to their rehearsal schedule, as evidenced in the focus group discussion above. If Phoenix College learners are facilitated well and are working with a shared understanding of what is required of them and had consistent facilitation, they could be meeting the standards as well.

Given some of the consequences of competition as outlined by Seaman, it is clear that the Hillbrow Theatre Project must guard against the challenges that come with the incorporation of competition within their festival. To avoid risky competitive spirits, Bester (2015) claims that there is a need for the Hillbrow Theatre Project to monitor the competition aspect of the festival and keep track of each school's performances. In the same vein, Bester (2015) maintains that the festival organisers cannot dismiss competition as a complete threat. This reinforces Msengana's views illustrated earlier that competition acts as a persuasion tool for the involvement of schools outside Johannesburg.

It must be highlighted that the Hillbrow Theatre Project is not blind to the tensions that the merging of competition with arts education presents. As a result, they have come up with ways to neutralise these tensions by creating several categories that give numerous opportunities to reward participating schools. In addition to recognising obvious categories such as best, second best and third best productions, they now have added categories such as special mention (fourth best production), best original script, best ensemble production, best runner-up actress in a lead role, best actress in a lead role, best runner-up male in a lead role, best male role, best actress in a supporting role, best male in a supporting role, best cameo role, best overall presentation, best technical, audience award and best poster design (Festival booklet, 2014:27-29). All these categories are an obvious attempt to broaden the notion of rewarding participating schools.

All schools receive participation certificates in recognition of their efforts. Added categories form part of the innovative ways that the festival tries to neutralise the impression of winners and losers. They are an effort to allow more schools to strive under competitive pressures. Andrew Buckland (a prominent South African performer, theatre writer and Associate Professor at Rhodes University's Drama Department) in James Gibbs' book *African Theatre Festival* (2012), maintains that competition is a necessary element for any arts festival. His argument is that the competitive nature of any festival provides "a way of reflecting qualities to peers" (Gibbs, 2012:94). In this way, seeing each other's productions provides school-goers with an opportunity to learn from their peers and therefore another moment of development. However, in the context of South Africa, witnessing each other's creative works reflects how inherited socio-economic disparities continue to influence/affect the arts (and replicate certain racial-class hierarchies).

While the literature and empirical data has revealed that competition plays a critical role in optimising participation, this case study has revealed that competition brings a host of tensions that should be addressed if the Hillbrow Theatre Project intends to safeguard and cement the fundamental objectives of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* as an educational programme.

Chapter Four: Education, awareness and the gifting economy (funding)

While there are numerous studies undertaken by international scholars such as Judith Humphreys Weitz (1996), François Matarasso (1997), Edward Fiske (1999); Paula Merli (2002), Eleonora Belfiore (2002 & 2006), and Rachel Marie-Crane Williams (2008) which attempt to assess the impact and benefits of participating in community arts programmes, measuring the impact of this nature remains an ambiguous process. There remains a shortage of critical literature in South African which documents the impact of participating in the arts, particularly community arts programmes.

In interrogating the impact of participating in various arts activities, François Matarasso's study titled *Use or Ornament?* (1997) has been referenced various times by scholars such as Paula Merli, Joshua Guetzkow and Eleonora Belfiore. Matarasso outlines the social benefits of participation on an individual level and subsequently on the community. His study claims overwhelming positive benefits of participating in community arts project such as improved self-confidence and self-identity (Matarasso, 1997:16). He posits that young people who take part in arts programmes have a better chance of succeeding in life compared to those who do not. Success is conceptualised as the state of being employable (Matarasso, 1997:14), these individuals feel less alienated, and foster the development of a self-image. For Matarasso (1997:22), community arts spaces go beyond just providing a safe space for children to interrogate complex issues. These spaces provide young people with skills that accord them an opportunity to succeed in life.

This chapter looks at how government, and private and corporate funders see their different funding roles in terms of educational development and supplementation. The empirical data suggests that it is one of the main reasons why they collaborate with

arts educational initiatives such as the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* and consequently speak to ideologies of transformation. The chapter further questions assessment criteria of what constitutes success of a community arts programme.

4.1 Arts education and awareness

Festival themes

To question the selectivity of their curricular, school-goers use singing, acting, designing posters, poetry reciting, and dancing as an artistic medium to address what is not taught in school, and to bridge this gap the Hillbrow Theatre Project has explored various themes (discussed below in detail). These themes form part of fulfilling their educational mandate within inner-city schools. This is based on the argument made by Kevin McCarthy, Elizabeth Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras and Arthur Brooks in their book, *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts* that participation in the arts "connects people more deeply to the world and opens them to new ways of seeing and experiencing the world" (2004:3). It is for this reason that the festival themes are an intentional strategy to engage school-goers in issues pertaining to their immediate environment and beyond.

In 2008, school-goers interrogated the theme of 'Respect Yourself, Respect your World' (Festival booklet, 2014:18). This theme was an artistic strategy to encourage participating schools to cross-examine the concept of respect for self and others. Through this theme, the festival tried to influence school-goers on how to treat themselves and those around them. It was during this time in 2008 when xenophobic attacks had just broken out in South African townships such as Alexandra and had started spreading all around Gauteng. The theme sought to challenge learners' perceptions of 'foreign nationals'. By teaching respect on a personal and societal level,

the idea of tolerance also comes to the fore. Through engaging learners in themes of respect and tolerance, the festival highlights the role that arts education plays in creating active conscientious citizens.

In 2009, the festival explored the theme of 'Ubuntu' in an effort to unpack the idea of humanity as proposed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. School-goers were tasked with unpacking Tutu's quote in relation to the ideas of humanity, unity and the abstract concept of the "rainbow nation". Given the abstract nature of a concept of a *rainbow nation*, schools-goers were challenged to question Tutu's thinking. Howard Gardner (1973, 283) in *The Arts and Human Development* argues that encouraging young people to reflect on the world they live in, stimulates their problem solving skills. Given this sentiment, the festival provides learners with an opportunity to engage in processes that improves their skills to solve problems creatively as well as their communication skills.

In keeping with the events of the country, in 2010 the festival tasked learners with the theme of "fairplay". This theme was inspired by the FIFA World Cup which South Africa was hosting at the time. According to the Festival booklet, this theme sought to challenge "participants to re-evaluate 'fairness' in their daily lives" (Festival booklet, 2014:22). Through this, the Hillbrow Theatre Project highlighted the important role that the youth of South Africa play in how the current democracy functions.

As years went by, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* themes have become less about moral concerns and have instead moved towards "a re-investment of the city" (Festival booklet, 2014:26). As a result of these shifts, the theme for 2012 was "Jo'burg stories" which was "inspired by the 2040 Growth and Development Strategy" (Festival booklet, 2014:26). By encouraging school-goers to source city-inspired

stories, learners explored ideas of homelessness, drug abuse, crime, violence and to some extent, the idea of home.

While in 2012 the festival claimed to move away from moral concerns, in 2014, as South Africa celebrated its 20 years of democracy, learners were given a theme of interrogating "the validity of democracy" (Festival booklet, 2014:30). Some school-goers' plays asked questions about "where to go from here?" These plays displayed a spirit of despondency at the state of South Africa. School-goers highlighted the myth of democracy and its failures in delivering what the ANC election slogan has deemed "a better life for all". Nonetheless, other plays were enthusiastic about the future of the country. The school productions encouraged an active participation in South Africa's democracy. School-goers urged the audience to be part of finding solutions to problems facing the youth such as unemployment, drug abuse and crime.

In the in-between years, some of the festival's themes have been implemented through the use of quotes from prominent figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "I am human because I belong" in 2009. In 2011 school-goers interrogated Barbara Masekela[34]'s quote in relation to their role in upholding the constitution and contributing to the transformation of our democratic values:

> We are problem solvers. We are pragmatists. We work by consensus. And we prefer long-term solutions to quick, expedient fixes. But we are still revolutionaries: we want to hand succeeding generations a truly better world.

In 2013 the school-goers unpacked Britain philosopher, Anthony Clifford Grayling's quote:

[34] Barbara Masekela is an activist, cultural worker and diplomat. She has played a huge role in the eradication of apartheid under the leadership of the ANC (www.thepresidency.gov.za).

> To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries.

And finally in 2014 they explored Mahatma Gandhi, who played a critical role in South Africa's history through his activism and fight against racial segregation. The quote read as follows:

> What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?

The use of themes has been one of the effective ways that the festival organisers have attempted to highlight the educational value of the festival and inspire school-goers to research and engage in issues relating to the world they live in. In this way, the festival encourages critical thinking, communication and research skills. The festival develops and enhances a learning experience beyond the parameters of schools. Through this they hope to highlight the educational aspects beyond the competitive elements of the festival. The execution of these themes is rooted in training and workshops focusing on arts education. This allows the learners to what Howard Gardner (American developmental psychologist) refers to as a moment to "recreate, comment on, or react against aspects of the world or facets of subjective experience" (Gardner, 1973:31).

The examination of specific themes, as outlined in their Festival booklet, is a strategy of the Hillbrow Theatre Project to give learners the direction to engage with issues in meaningful ways that strengthen democracy. Framing the festival around themes highlights Gardner's (1973:283) argument that engaging learners in any artistic process allows them "to manipulate, comprehend and relate to symbolic media in specific ways." Unpacking themes is also an important way to test school-goers' creative problem-solving abilities. It allows school-goers to react and reflect on various

aspects of the world through creative means. Using themes as an artistic strategy also allows the Hillbrow Theatre Project to gain insight into school-goers' viewpoint of the world they live in and how they are navigating it. The themes that have come through the learners' plays start to indicate the site specificities of the centre.

To site a moment which reflects how the festival fills an education gap, I refer to an interview on 15 May 2015 with Gcebile Dlamini, one of the festival facilitators who recalled a conversation she had with one of the learners in one of her rehearsal sessions. Her recollection of this discussion goes as such:

> One of the kids was like "You know sis Gcebz at school we are always learning about Hitler, who is Hitler? I mean when we come here, when I ask my teachers that: why are we not learning about our African history? Why are we not learning about the genocide? What happens to us as Africans? We learn about South African history, okay- we are in South Africa but there are other things that happen out there and we don't understand when we see people flocking in our country and we start being xenophobic yet we don't understand what is happening out there" (Dlamini, 2015).

This statement reflects the lack of awareness of other social issues that is happening around the world. The student quoted above indicates that most of the issues that impact on South African society, including the social, economic and political realities in neighbouring countries, is not reflected in their history books. Researching and exploring ideas related to proposed annual themes have become the hallmark of the festival. The educational manifestation of the festival is evident in Sunnyboy Mavuso's (festival adjudicator in 2007) observation:

> I found the festival relevant in terms of the new curriculum and the current social, political and economic situation with regards to Johannesburg and the entire South African situation (Festival booklet, 2014:16).

Mavuso's statement illustrates the critical role that the festival plays in highlighting the fundamental educational aspect of connecting school-goers with relevant issues that

surround the world in which they live. By providing this educational arts platform, the Hillbrow Theatre Project is challenging school-goers to see themselves as individuals but also within a larger community and consequently the world.

4.2 Impact of participating in the performing arts

To investigate the benefits of participating in arts programmes, this chapter explores ideas relating to development and advocacy. Impact is used here to imply any social or cultural effect on the individual and the community which influences perceptions of how they view themselves and their community. This can either be a tangible impact, which can be measured through actual creation of employment or an intangible impact, which has to do with feelings of improved self-esteem and confidence (Guetzkow, 2002:2).

Although this chapter highlights the educational benefits of community arts programmes as one of the reasons why government, private and corporate sponsors support programmes like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, one is cognisant of studies that oppose these benefits. One such a study is generated by scholar, Eleonora Belfiore[35] (2006) in her journal article titled '*The social impacts of the arts – myth or reality?*' Belfiore (2006:24) contends that "any type of participatory activity has an empowering effect; it does not necessarily have to be art-based." While this is not necessarily true as not all people enjoy playing team sports or dancing in public, her argument is that participation in any extra mural activities has transformative powers. She is opposed to studies that only claim positive outcomes. Participation can have both positive and negative effects depending on the individual and their personality

[35] Eleonora Belfiore is a Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Loughborough University. Her writing focuses on "cultural policy, culture and society, evidence-based policy making, cultural theory and social impact of the arts" (www.scholar.google.com).

traits (Belfiore, 2006:24). It is for this reason that she cautions against setting high expectations on the beneficial outcomes of participating in any community arts programmes. For Belfiore, the only way for community arts programmes to have a tangible impact on their beneficiaries, is if they do not operate autonomously in the regeneration of communities. Therefore, to make an impact, arts organisations such as community arts centres have to collaborate with a wider programme of community development (Belfiore, 2006:24). They cannot isolate themselves; community arts centres must form partnerships that speak to similar goals.

Former education editor of the *New York Times*, Edward Fiske (1999) in his journal article titled *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* claims that in communities where the arts play a central role, participation gives people a sense of control over their lives. Fiske (1999:47) asserts that an active involvement in arts-related programmes contributes to the regeneration of neighbourhoods. This idea is reiterated by Alan Kay (2000:422) in his journal article *Art and community development: the role the arts have in regenerating communities* argues that participation in community arts programmes can change how people engage with their environment. Writing from the context of arts, literature and science in New York, Kay claims that participation can enhance how they identify with their communities and contribute toward their development (Kay, 2000:422).

Community arts centres "create safe places for children and youth where they can develop constructive relationships with their peers" (Weitz, 1996:10). These spaces create safe platforms where young people can meet and form constructive friendships (Weitz, 1996:17). Through educational programmes such as the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, the Outreach Foundation functions as a platform which

facilitates constructive engagements where school-goers can creatively develop skills to engage with their respective communities through the use of the performing arts.

Weitz (1996:20) also claims that children and young people who participate in organised youth activities are less likely to engage in anti-social and risky behaviour. This is because these spaces allow children to envision a world that is outside of their circumstances. In this way, arts education such as drama, poetry and dance can be used as tools to bring change within underprivileged communities. This assumed causality suggests that by impacting on the individual as a consequence, the community also benefits.

In accounting for arts impact on school-going children, the *Arts Council England report* (2014:36) maintains that there is evidence that suggests that "participation in arts activities facilitates discussion in children around topics such as identity and citizenship." Participation promotes dialogue; it allows young children and the youth to reflect on complex issues. This report insists that establishing "creative communities" such as festivals, exhibitions and public performances helps young people develop a sense of community (Arts Council England report, 2014:36). Participating in community arts programmes and learning through the arts plays a key role in educating and empowering young people.

4.3 Relating funding to ideological transformation

Studies on the benefits of community arts programmes play a critical role in encouraging financial support from external sponsors. The lack of financial support leaves many community-based initiatives in a vulnerable state. The arts in particular are consistently faced with budget cuts and struggle to execute their mandate within their communities. While arts centres need financial support to function efficiently, van

Robbroeck cautions that they should be wary of where they source their funding from. This is because “the source of funding may act as a co-ersive influence on the ideological stance of the centre, or inhibit and curtail the centre’s freedom in various ways” (van Robbroeck, 1991:93). There are criteria that arts centres must meet in order to qualify for funding, some more restrictive than others.

Government and private funding all expect returns on their funding support. In the context of community arts projects this does not necessarily have to be monetary value as these institutions seldom have large economic impact such as generating revenue. Rather it can be in the form of community development or “publicity value” (van Robbroeck, 1991:100). In some instances, private companies fund community arts projects as part of their “social responsibility” requirement. Peter Franks and Allison Vink in their study *Between Ideals and Reality: A research investigation of the Katlehong Centre* (cited in van Robbroeck, 1990:148) argue that “any source of funding can have manipulative possibilities” (1991:97). This is seldom the case within small community arts organisations with limited impact, as funding can restrict artistic freedom and dictate the direction of a centre.

While state-funding bodies like the Department of Arts and Culture can commit to long-term funding on community arts programmes, private sponsorships in most cases “have to be approached on a yearly basis” (van Robbroeck 1991:99). Requirements for funding vary from one institution to the next. The implication is that festivals like the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* are only guaranteed life on an annual basis which means that the issue of accessing funding for the programme is an ongoing concern.

Every year the Hillbrow Theatre Project engages in rigorous fundraising processes in order to put the festival together. Over the years, they have formed relationships with various sponsors in an attempt to avoid funding problems. Among those who have partnered with the festival to strengthen the quality of arts education includes Rand Merchant Bank (RMB), Business and Arts South Africa (BASA), the City of Johannesburg, Johannesburg Arts Alive International Festival, Department of Arts and Culture, Department of Education, Arts and Culture Trust, The Market Theatre Laboratory, Brot für die Welt, Constitution Hill Education Project, Assitej South Africa and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

These sponsors support the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* for the role it plays in bridging the arts education gap and developing curricular. In most disadvantaged schools' creative arts subjects are not compulsory after Grade 9. The festival enables these schools to continue with an arts education despite their lack of capacity or the necessary skills to carry on. In this way, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* appeals to sponsors because their programmes speaks to sponsors' needs to reflect an ideology of transformation and development in their funding models. This kind of support enables the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* to reach out to more schools and enhance meaningful learning experiences through arts education.

It is against the backdrop of transformation and development that sponsors support this public arts educational platform. This notion of funding relating to the ideology of transformation is encapsulated in a statement from Janet Watt, a sponsor from Rand Merchant Bank:

> RMB doesn't fund events, so it's really not about the event that we are funding, it's about the process that happens and the build-up to the event. We want to

> see better teaching and learning happening in schools and we really believe projects like this contribute towards that (Watts, 2015).

Inherent in Watts' statement is a realisation of the shortage of arts education skills within the current curriculum. There is an urgency to fill that gap between teaching and learning artistic skills. RMB sponsors the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* because they see value in the work that the Hillbrow Theatre Project is doing in schools. Watts recognises that the festival gives school-goers and teachers learning opportunities and further advances how the teachers teach. Rather than sponsoring the 'event', RMB sees itself as supporting a long-term project (running eight months prior to the main event). The 'longevity' of the programmes makes it a 'worthy' investment and impact can be measurable over time. RMB recognises the festival's role in redressing the educational and cultural disparities inherited from the apartheid government.

It would also be naïve to assume that the RMB sponsorship is purely driven by a single motivation of playing an active role in social development. They have goals they are trying to achieve through their sponsorship. Their investment in the festival forms part of their Corporate Social Investment (CSI) objectives. It helps them achieve their internal "Proposed RMB Creative Arts Programme Strategy 2014-2017". Speaking about their proposed creative arts programme strategy Janet Watts pointed out that:

> We have an arts programme with very specific goals and by choosing the Hillbrow Theatre Project they can assist us reach those goals. There are three main goals. First goal is that school-going South Africans have access to arts and culture. Second one, if a child wants to pursue the arts, they can take their art form further. The third goal is to improve the quality of children of all abilities (Watts, 2015).

Over the years, the RMB sponsorship has gradually shifted from monetary support to a role which is more mentorship-orientated. Watts claims that their role has matured

to something more sustainable which is geared towards enhancing learning experiences. They invite the Hillbrow Theatre Project facilitators to attend workshops geared towards empowering them in management, facilitation and monitoring and evaluation skills. While it remains clear that the festival still needs financial support, Watts and Bester both maintain that this new arrangement/relationship is mutually beneficial.

Speaking from the context of mutually beneficial partnerships, Clara Vaughan whose second-year students from The Lab conduct an internship at the Hillbrow Theatre as theatre directors for the festival stated that:

> It is beneficial to both Hillbrow Theatre Project and The Lab that there is a partnership because it extends what our students learn and the kind of practical experience they are able to get, and the kind of exposure they are able to get while at the same, it helps the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* support their schools to create better plays and create a better festival (Vaughan, 2015).

The schools are not the only ones benefitting from the facilitation offered by students from The Lab; Vaughan's students also gain hands-on work experience from workshopping scripts, directing productions, and designing the sets for the festival. The impact goes beyond the parameters of high school-goers; it also enhances learning experiences for The Lab students. The educational gap is therefore bridged on both sides.

Government institutions such as the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) have a responsibility to support initiatives such as the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*. Programmes of this nature are linked to their goal of promoting, preserving and developing South African arts and culture activities through facilitating opportunities for women, young people and people with disabilities in order to ensure greater accessibility to cultural activities. The DAC has a mandate to provide financial support

to community arts centres and festivals. The department claims that it "endorses and supports programmes in needy centres that are community-initiated or non-governmental".[36] The *White Paper* (1996:np) outlines the prime role of the DAC as one of "develop[ing] policies which ensure the survival and development of all art forms and genres".

The support from the DAC is as important to the government as it is for the Hillbrow Theatre Project because the state does not have the capacity to take on such tasks on their own. Their funding towards the festival confirms the finding that the arts is an important contributor to cultural transformation (Edgar, 2012:12).

In an interview that took place on 24 April 2015 with Mpho Mabule, Arts Education portfolio holder at the DAC, it became clear that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* sponsors seek to improve the quality of South Africa's education system. This is evident in Mabule's justification for funding the festival; he asserted that:

> MM: It's not funding for zero-funding. Once we identify a beneficiary, we look at what it seeks to achieve and through that, we see how it falls into our mission and vision of the department. I liked the objectives of the festival; it happens in Hillbrow, it happens in the city of Johannesburg. Most of the people who are there would be your foreign nationals. I got to know about this project just post the xenophobic attacks that happened in 2008/2009. That is how it made sense. Their proposal document stated that they wanted to bring all these schools together, all these nationals including our South African nationals.
> ZM: Are those the motivations for funding the festival?
> MM: Yes, that is the motivation; the important thing about this festival is that it speaks to what we do as the Department of Arts and Culture. We have been given a mandate by the government to spearhead something called 'art comforting'[37] (Mabule, 2015).

[36] This goal has been outlined as one of the aims of the ministry of the Department of Arts and Culture on their website: http://www.gov.za/about-sa/arts-culture.

[37] Mabule explains the notion of 'art comforting' as a means of accelerating transformation and facilitating healing post-apartheid through the use of the arts.

Other than the need to bridge the educational gap and facilitate learning, one can also pick up on the difficult criteria that community arts centres have to outline in order to qualify for government funding. For Mabule it is essential for the Hillbrow Theatre Project to highlight the festival's educational benefits in order to be considered for funding. Given his view on xenophobia, the linking of the xenophobic outbreak which took place in 2008 in the Hillbrow Theatre Project proposal put them in a better position to qualify for funding. This is not surprising since sponsors like the DAC have to account for the use of public money. This is evidenced through Kathleen Sullivan's (1991) essay titled 'Artistic *Freedom, Funding and the Constitution*', that argues that "the government cannot fund everything, and so must engage in some selectivity whenever it spends money" (Sullivan, 1991:84). To qualify for government funding, community centres like the Outreach Foundation must align their programmes with the development of its immediate community.

These criteria can be limiting as they essentially regulate the artistic content that community arts programmes must produce in order to qualify for funding. To meet the requirements for government funding, one must engage with subject matters that relates to development and transformation ideologies. However, to create progressive work, it would be ideal if funding was with "the least strings attached" (Sullivan, 1991:95).

4.4 Assessing the impact of sponsorship

While the sponsors that were interviewed claimed that they do site visits during the festival, which Bester confirmed, there was no evidence of rigorous assessment measures beyond their sponsorship. The DAC and RMB all stated that they require a financial and narrative report from the Hillbrow Theatre Project and that they also write a report of their own to reflect on their sponsorship. Although they had committed to

make these reports available for me to review, I have not been able to see them despite numerous follow-ups with the sponsors. It is for this reason that I am unable to speak knowledgeably on the nature of their sponsorship assessment beyond what was said in the interviews.

All sponsors stated that other than writing reports and occasional site visits, they do not apply any other measure of assessment. To them, the increase in numbers is the ultimate sign of growth and consequently success. This was encapsulated by Mabule:

> We are not scientific about it, when I go there and I see the theatre is filled with learners, year in year out the numbers are increasing and you go in there and you see the kids love to be there. Even in the report we do not necessarily specify how they should report but the greater the numbers and access, the better (Mabule, 2015).

These measures of assessing 'success' of a community project based on numbers is illustrated by Rangoato Hlasane and Malose Malahlela (2014:241) in *Bigger than the* Tick-Box*: Defining Interdisciplinary Arts Education to Funders in South Africa*. The two reiterate that "quantity constitutes an important tick on the funder's checklist" (Hlasane and Malahlela, 2014:241). The lack of critical assessment of sponsorships speak to how funding is essentially about ticking boxes. Numbers speak to the issue of access to cultural activities and consequently an exposure to learning experiences. While they are important, they do not reflect other issues such as the relevance of content. While numbers imply 'success', they could also suggest a decrease in the quality of content as more schools mean that resources are stretched. Such measures become more about 'development' and 'access', without larger visions on the value of arts in critical thinking and expression. The concern over growing numbers was raised by Mkhwanazi who asserted that:

> LM: We're reaching forty schools from seven. We're also attracting schools as far as Cape Town. That's the other thing I would say we need to be careful [we need to clarify] is this a South African High Schools Drama Festival? Is it Gauteng's Drama High Schools Festival? Is it Joburg or is it the *Inner-City High*

> *Schools Drama Festival*? So we need to be careful. I'm not a greedy person honestly; I am not a greedy person. I have advised townships to start their festivals for their schools.
> ZM: So would you rather this remains the inner-city festival or are you welcoming the growth?
> LM: I would rather we contain it in the inner-city but if we want to grow it bigger, then other schools must have their own festivals on the side and we just monitor them to be part of the inner-city and they just come for the finals.

The tension of growth being solely measured on the increasing numbers of school participation is an important one to highlight: Firstly, because it is a concern that was raised by other facilitators. Secondly, using numbers as the only measure of growth can put unnecessary strain on already limited resources. Thirdly, capacity can weaken the quality of the content and engagement. While financial support can ease the pressure and enable the Hillbrow Theatre Project to allocate facilitators at schools, this study argues that meaningful educational engagements are more likely to happen in smaller numbers than through scores of schools taking part in the festival. Emphasis on numbers as the measure to qualify for further funding is not a sustainable criterion, and it ought to be problematised if we are to consider quality development of arts education.

Conclusion

From the outset, the study made a claim about how the artistic strategies employed by the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* promotes an appreciation for arts and culture programmes in inner-city high schools and consequently impacts the participants' perceptions of Hillbrow as home. The empirical data shows that when the participants are exposed to cultural productions such as the festival which gives them access to spaces like Hillbrow, the platform can make them rethink the place and the people who transit through it and call it home. Herein lies the significance of the festival as a public arts educational platform.

While the study was initially interested in finding out how community arts centres located in urban spaces such as the Outreach Foundation operated differently from those located outside of the city-suburb, available literature on community arts centres limited the reading of this investigation. However, the study has highlighted that there is a need for newer frameworks of community arts centres that are not limited by site specificities.

The Outreach Foundation like many centres is geared towards redressing cultural and educational imbalances which were imposed by the apartheid government yet continue to linger in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite the centre's urban/city setting, the ideological framing of the Outreach Foundation is in line with earlier community arts centres in that it is centred on community development and empowerment through artistic skills. The manner in which the centre operates demonstrates the complexities and oversight of long-held perceptions of community arts centre framework as being inherently township-based. The centre disrupts the linear framing of community arts centres as a phenomenon which exists outside of urban spaces. In turn, it highlights that community arts centres, despite their sites, are complex and multidimensional. They are flexible and malleable given the different contexts in which they exist.

While the study's attempt was to problematise van Robbroeck's site-specific framework of community arts centres as a 'movement' targeted at black people, the Outreach Foundation's beneficiaries have to some extent reinforced her claim in that the centre also caters to predominantly black people. In this way, the workings of the Outreach Foundation, despite its location, does not negate van Robbroeck's claim. Nevertheless, while van Robbroeck makes an important contribution to the study of community arts, the site specificity of her framework has to be questioned as it

perpetuates the problematic thinking and terminology that emanates from white subjective positioning and, thereafter, perpetuates its own foundational myths.

The empirical data also showed that while arts education is at the centre of the programme, competition plays a crucial part in persuading participation. Although it is evident that competition is a necessary aspect of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*, tensions of merging competition and development were identified in the case of St Enda's impeccable performance track record versus the underperformance of Phoenix College. The disparities between the two schools highlight issues about the development criteria of the festival and the importance of monitoring performance. Out of these concerns comes questions such as; how do community arts-based initiatives assess the development and in this context; how does development manifest in schools beyond winning as a measure? In order to safeguard the fundamental objectives of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* which are premised on arts educational values these questions have to be addressed.

When it comes to funding and external support, long-term partners such as the DAC, Johannesburg Arts Alive International Festival and RMB are more likely to fund programmes that bridge educational and cultural imbalances within our society than they are to fund a festival which solely celebrates school-goers' artistic excellence. This criteria must be questioned as arts education is essentially about artistic expression. However, given South Africa's history with apartheid which still manifests within the schooling system, it is not surprising that sponsors would support educational initiatives which seek to integrate arts education in underprivileged schools.

Despite the competition aspect of the festival, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* is a remarkable development programme that plays a critical role in promoting an appreciation for arts and culture programmes. Through its growth, the festival has given access to high schools that would otherwise not engage in artistic experiences of this nature given their backgrounds. Above all, the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* contributes to positive narratives coming out of Hillbrow which fundamentally destabilises negative perceptions of the space and that is the power of the arts.

Available literature lacks a strong black voice and rarely touches on specific arts centres operating within urban spaces; this has limited the extent of this study and a possible nuanced reading of the Outreach Foundation. Nevertheless, the study has contributed another perspective into a field which is dominated by white scholars. South African community arts centres are complex and multidimensional; and therefore they have to be read according to their varying contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Creative director interview schedule

1. What is your role in the festival?
2. How do you recruit schools to be part of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*?
3. How has the festival changed or grown in the last ten years?
4. Do you feel that the Hillbrow community is aware of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*? If so, how?
5. Why does the festival only target high school learners?
6. How does the festival promote an appreciation of arts and culture?
7. How is the festival helping you advocate for arts and culture programmes in inner-city high schools?
8. Do you think the Hillbrow Theatre Project is effective in introducing arts and culture programmes in inner city schools? If so, how?
9. Do you feel that the festival is creating a community among participating schools? If so, please provide examples?
10. Do you think the Hillbrow Theatre Project is making an impact through the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*? If so, please provide examples?
11. How does the Hillbrow Theatre Project assess the impact of the festival?
12. Do you write an annual report on the festival?
13. What do you feel is the most significant change that has occurred as a result of the festival?
14. How is the festival's aim linked to the Outreach Foundation's mission?
15. How is the festival funded/sponsored?
16. What do you think about Hillbrow as home?
17. Do you think the learners' participation in the festival changes their perception of Hillbrow? If yes, please explain.

Appendix 2: Sponsor interview schedule

1. How did you hear about the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*?
2. What are your motivations for sponsoring the festival?
3. What are you trying to improve or solve through your sponsorship?
4. What is your expected benefit from this sponsorship?
5. What do you think is the main function of this festival?
6. How do you see your role in the festival?
7. How does sponsoring the festival fit in with your organisation's business strategy?
8. How does your organisation assess the impact of your sponsorship?
9. Do you write a report on your sponsorship of the festival?
10. Do you think the festival has a role to play in these learners' lives? If so, how?
11. What do you think about Hillbrow as home?
12. Do you think the learners' participation in the festival changes their perception of Hillbrow? If yes, please explain.

Appendix 3: Teacher interview schedule

1. How did your school become part of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*?
2. How many years has your school been part of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*?
3. What do you think is the purpose of this festival?
4. What motivates your school to participate in the festival?
5. Does your school offer any arts and culture programmes as part of the school curriculum? If not, why?
6. Do you have any formal arts training? If not has the festival been able to assist you to develop artistic skills? If you do is the festival able to help you maintain this?
7. Do you feel that the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival* has a role to play in advocating for arts and culture programmes in your school? If so, how?
8. Do you feel that there is any difference between learners who take part in the festival and those who do not? If so, provide examples.
9. What do you think about Hillbrow as home?
10. Do you think the learners' participation in the festival changes their perception of Hillbrow? If yes, please explain.

Appendix 4: Facilitator interview schedule

1. What is your role in the festival?
2. How does your role fulfil the mission of the festival?
3. Out of the 10 years that the festival has been in existence how many years have you been part of it?
4. Do you feel that the Hillbrow community is aware of the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*?
5. How is this festival helping you advocate for arts and culture programmes?
6. Do you have any formal arts training? If not has the festival been able to assist you to develop artistic skills? If you do is the festival able to help you maintain this?
7. Do you feel that the festival is effective in introducing arts and culture programmes in schools? If so, how?
8. Do you feel that the Hillbrow Theatre Project is making an impact through the *Inner-City High Schools Drama Festival*? If so, please provide examples?
9. Do you think that the festival can be improved? Is so, how?
10. What do you think about Hillbrow as home?
11. Do you think the learners' participation in the festival influences how they perceive Hillbrow? If so, how?