

TOWARDS THE CATTLE ECONOMY: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT  
ECONOMIC LOGIC OF *STOKVELS* AT ESIHLENGENI IN VRYHEID, KWAZULU-  
NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that “Towards the cattle economy: Understanding the different economic logic of Stokvels at Esihlengeni in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted this thesis through originality checking software. The result summary is attached.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signature

Date

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31 January 2019

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the phenomenon of *stokvels* – membership-based savings schemes providing for the social and financial wellbeing of their members as well as entertainment (Lukhele, 1990). The purpose of the study is to identify the existence of a different kind of economy that is not informed by the capitalist logic. The study aims to examine the values that underpin *stokvels* and to locate them within a particular socio-cultural and historical context. This is a qualitative research study and my research approach included fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth interviews and the procedure of genealogy. The study, employing these methods, has enabled me to draw a connection between the Khumalo clan - the generation of Mzilikazi Khumalo who was a friend to King Shaka and is argued to have played a pivotal role in building what is known as the Zulu nation today – and my uncles. In the six months I spent at Esihlengeni, a small village in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, I interviewed 27 people, attended two funerals, one family ritual and conducted two focus group discussions with *stokvel* women. I found that *stokvels* are not centred on an African epistemic framework as anticipated in the problem statement but are still within the capitalist logic of profit and thus do not draw from the community's traditional values. While *stokvels* are informed by the dominant capitalist logic, the community of Esihlengeni still draws from their cosmological worldview that provides them with a different understanding of the economy that is centred on cattle – the means that allow them to perform rituals that guarantee protection and continuity of life - to make sense of their world. Their insistence on the importance of cattle in this community is their cry to be allowed to exist and be recognised as humans that can think for themselves. I conclude by arguing that to understand this community correctly, we need to take the ontological difference seriously that we cannot possibly have only one way of existing. The community of Esihlengeni thus provides us with the economic theory that is centred on life in its totality – that takes both the physical and metaphysical into consideration to ensure the continuity of life. As such, the community of Esihlengeni should be regarded as a gift to be appreciated.

**ISIHLOKO: Ekubuyeleni Kumnotho Wezinkomo: Ukuqondisisa Indlela Ehlukile Yomnotho Wezitokofela eSihlengeni esiseFilidi, KwaZulu-Natali, eNingizimu Afrika.**

**ISIFINGQO**

Lolucwaningo luhlaziya isimo sezitokofela – uhlelo lokonga olunika abayingxanye yalo ukweseka kwezomphakathi, ezomnotho nezokuzijabulisa (Lukhele 1990). Inqikimba yokwenza lolucwaningo ukubonisa ubukhona bomnotho ohlukile, ongatshelwa wumnotho ogxile kwinzuzo, phecelezi ikhephthalizimu. Injongo yalolucwaningo ukuhlolisisa izimiso ezisekela amastokofela nokuwabeka endaweni ethize yezinhlalo zomphakathi-namasiko kanye nomlando. Lolucwaningo lugxile kwizizathu zokuba yingxanye kuloluhlelo, indlela yokuthola imininingwane ixhumanisa ukuchitha isikhathi nabantu, ukubamba ingxanye kwizinto abazenzayo, ukubabuza imibuzo ejulile, nokudweba imvelaphi yabo. Kulolucwaningo, ngokusebenzisa lezizindlela zokucwaninga, ngakwazi ukuxhumanisa isizwe sakwaKhumalo – inzalo yenkosi uMzilikazi Khumalo owaye umngani wenkosi uShaka futhi kuthiwa wabamba iqhaza eliqavile ekwakheni isizwe esaziwa njengamaZulu namhlanje – nomalume bami. Ezinyangeni eziyisithupha engazicitha eSihlengeni - isigodi esiseFilidili KwaZulu-Natali, ngaba nendabangxoxiswano nabantu amangamashumi amabili nesikhombisa, ngaya emingcwabeni emibili nasembenzini owodwa womndeni, ngase ngikhulumisana namaqoqo amabili omama besitokofela. Ngathola ukuthi izitokofela azizinzile kwinqubomigomo yesintu njengoba ngangisola esitatimendeni socwaningo, kodwa angaphakathi komnotho ogxile kwinzuzo, ikhephthalizimi, ngakhoke awasebenzisi imikhuba yesintu yalomphakathi. Noma amastokofela egxile kumnotho oqgamile ogxile kwinzuzo, lomphakathi waseSihlengeni usasebenzisa indlela yawo yokuphila eveza inqubomgomo ehlukile yomnotho ogxile ezinkomeni - eziyisisekelo sokwenza amasiko aqinekisa ukuvikeleka nenqubekela phambili yempilo – ukuqondisisa imvelo. Ukuphikelela kokubaluleka kwezinkomo kulomphakathi isikhalo sokuthi uvumeleke ukuba aphile futhi ubonwe njengabantu abakwaziyo ukuzicabangela. Ngiphetha ngokuthi ukuqondisisa lomphakathi kahle, kumele sithathe ukuhlukana kwezizwe okuyimvelo yempilo ngokuzimisela, ukuthi kungenzeke kube nendlela eyodwa yokuphila. Umphakathi waseSihlengeni ngakhoke usinika inqubomugomo yomnotho ogxile empilweni

ngokuphelela kwayo – uthatha okubonakalayo nokungabonakali ukuqiniseka kokuqhubekela phambili kwempilo. Kanjalo, umphakathi waseSihlengeni kumele ubonakale njengesipho okumelwe sibungazwe.

## **GO YA GO EKONOMI YA DIKGOMO: GO KWEŠIŠA LOTŠIKI YA EKONOMI YE E FAPANEGO YA DITOKOFELE KUA ESIHLENGENI GO LA VRYHEID, KWAZULU-NATAL, AFRIKA BORWA**

### **KHUTSOFATŠO**

Nyakišišo ye e bolela ka ditokofele – dikema tša polokelo tša go thewa godimo ga boleloko go dira gore maloko a tšona a be le boiketlo go tša leago, matlotlo le boithabišo (Lukhele, 1990). Morero wa nyakišišo ye ke go hlaola go ba gona ga mehuta ya go fapana ya ekonomi yeo e sa huetšwego ke lotšiki ya bokepitale. Maikemišetšo a nyakišišo ke go lekola melawana yeo e thekgago ditokofele le go di bea ka gare ga maemo a itšeng a histori, a leago le a setšo. Ye ke nyakišišo ya khwalithethifi gomme sebopego sa nyakišišo ya ka se akaretša tlhohlomišo, temošo ya bakgathatema, dipoledišano tša go tsenelela le tshepedišo ya tšinealotši. Nyakišišo, ya go šomiša mekgwa ye, e nkgontšhitše go laetša kamano gare ga lešika la ga Khumalo – moloko wa Mzilikazi Khumalo yoo a bego e le mogwera wa Kgošikgolo Shaka gape o dumelwa go ba a bapetše karolo ye bohlokwa kagong ya seo lehono se tsebjago bjalo ka setšhaba sa Mazulu – le bomalome ba ka. Mo dikgweding tše tshela tše ke di feditšego Esihlengeni, motse wo monyane go la Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, ke boledišane le batho ba 27, ke tsenetše ditirelo tše pedi tša poloko, moetlo o tee wa lapa le go swara dipoledišano tše pedi tša go lebantšha sehlopha gotee le basadi ba setokofele. Ke hweditše gore ditokofele ga di latele foreimiweke ya epistemiki ya Afrika bjalo ka ge go letetšwe ka gare ga tlhalošo ya taba eupša di sa le ka gare ga lotšiki ya bokepitale ya poelo gomme ka go realo ga di latele ditumelo tša setšo tša setšhaba. Mola ditokofele di latela lotšiki ya bokepitale ye e bušago, setšhaba sa Esihlengeni se sa ntše se latela pono ya sona ya kosmolotši ya lefase yeo e ba fago kwešišo ye e fapanego ya ekonomi ya go thewa godimo ga dikgomo – mokgwa wo o ba dumelelago go phetha moetlo wa go tiišetša tšhireletšo le tšwelopele ya bophelo – go kwešiša lefase la bona. Phegelelo ya bona go bohlokwa bja dikgomo ka setšhabeng se ke selo sa bona sa gore ba dumelelwe go ba gona le go amogelwa bjalo ka batho bao ba kago inaganela. Ke fetša ka gore go kwešiša setšhaba se e le ka nnete, re nyaka go tšea kgopolo ya ontolotši bjalo ka ye bohlokwa ya gore re ka se kgonego ba fela le tsela e tee ya go phela. Setšhaba sa Esihlengeni ka go realo se re fa teori ya ekonomi yeo e theilwego godimo ga bophelo ka moka ga bjona – seo se akaretša bobedi fisikale le metafisikale go kgonthišiša

tšwelopele ya bophelo. Bjalo, setšhaba sa Esihlengeni se swanela go tšewa bjalo ka mpho ye e amogelwago.

**THOHO: U LIVHA KHA IKONOMI YA KHOLOMO: U PFESESA IKONOMI DZO THEVHEKANO DZA IKONOMI DZO FHAMBANAHO DZA ZWIṬOKOFELA ZWA ESIHLENGENI NGEI VRYHEID, KWAZULU-NATAL, AFRIKA TSHIPEMBE**

**MANWELEDZO**

Ngudo iyi i tandula tshibveleli tsha *zwiṭokofela* – vhuraḁo ho ḁisendekaho nga zwickimu zwa u vhulunga u itela u dzudzanyea nga tshitshavha na lwa masheleni kha miraḁo khathihi na vhuḁimvumvusi (Lukhele, 1990). Ndivho ya ngudo ndi u topola u vha hone ha tshaka dzo fhambanaho dza ikonomi dzine dza sa ḁivhadzwe nga thevhekano ya pfuma. Ngudo yo pika u ṭola zwithu zwa ndeme zwo tikaho *zwiṭokofela* na u u wana vhukati hazwo nyimele ya matshilisano na mvelelo kathihi na ḁivhazwakale. Hei ndi ngudo ya ṭhoḁisiso ya ndeme na nyolo ya ṭhoḁisiso yanga yo katela mushumo wa nḁa, u sedza vhadzheneli, inthaviwu dzo dzhenelelaho na kuitele kwa vhutumbukwa. Ngudo dzi shumisaho ngona idzi, dzo nkonisa u vhona vhuṭumani vhukati ha lushaka lwa ha Khumalo – murafho wa ha Mzilikazi Khumalo we wa vha u khonani dza Khosi Shaka nahone hu pfi wo shela mulenzhe zwiḁulwane kha u fhaṭa zwi vhidzwaho uri lushaka lwa ha Zulu ḁamusi – na vhomalume anga. Kha miḁwedzi ya rathi ye nda I fhedza ngei Esihlengeni, kuḁana ku re kha ḁa Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, ndo inthaviwa vhatu vha 27, nda dzhenela mbulungo mbili, nyitelatherelo nthihi ya muṭa na tshimbidza nyambedzano dza zwigwada zwo sedzaho mbili na vhafumakadzi vha *zwiṭokofela*. Ndo wana uri *zwiṭokofela* a zwo ngo ḁisendeka nga muhanga wa nḁivho ya Afrika sa zwe zwa lavhelelwa kha tshitatamende tsha thaidzo fhedzi hu kha ḁi vha nga ngomu ha thevhekano ya pfuma ya u bindula zwenezwo a zwo bvi kha zwithu zwa ndeme zwa sialala zwa tshitshavha. Musi *zwiṭokofela* zwi tshi ḁivhadzwa nga thevhekano thakhulwa ya pfuma, tshitshavha tsha Esihlengeni tshi kha ḁi dzhia u bva kha kuvhonele kwa mvelo kwa ḁifhasi ku vha ḁekedzaho kupfesesele kwo fhambanaho lwa ikonomi yo ḁisendekaho nga kholomo – nḁila ine ya vha tendela u shuma nyitelatherelo dzavho zwi themendelaho tsireledzo na u bvelaphanḁa ha vhutshilo – u itela u pfesesa ḁifhasi ḁavho. U omelela kha ndeme ya kholomo kha tshitshavha itshi sa tshililo tshavho tsha u tendelwa u vha hone na u dzhielwa nṭha sa vhatu vhane vha kona u ḁihumbulela. Ndi pendela nga u amba uri u itela u pfesesa tshoṭhe tshitshavha itshi ri tea u dzhia kuvhonele kwa zwa mvumbo ro khwaṭhisa uri ri sa tou vha na nḁila nthihi fhedzi ya u vha hone. Tshitshavha tsha Esihlengeni zwenezwo tshi ri fha thyori ya ikonomi yo



disendekaho nga vhutshilo ho fhelelaho – hezwo zwi dzhiela n̄ha zwa muvhili na zwa khumbulelwa u khwaṅhisedza u bvelaphanḁa ha vhutshilo. Zwenezwo, tshitshavha tsha Esihlengeni tshi tea u dzhiwa sa tshifhiwa tsho tewaho nga dzindivhuwo.

## **KEY WORDS**

Stokvels, informal economy, African economy, economic anthropology, human economy, culture, African epistemology, Western epistemology, decoloniality, gender, patriarchy.

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## Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ISIFINGQO</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>KHUTSOFATŠO</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>MANWELEDZO</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>KEY WORDS</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>THE PREFIX - U</b> .....	<b>xxi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1 The concept of logic</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1.1 <i>The universe of particularities</i> .....	6
1.1.2 <i>Western epistemology</i> .....	8
1.1.3 <i>Kgomo ya moshate (The royal cow)</i> .....	11
<b>1.2 Background of the study</b> .....	<b>13</b>
1.2.1 <i>Research problem</i> .....	14
1.2.2 <i>Purpose of the study</i> .....	14
1.2.3 <i>Aim and objectives of the study</i> .....	14
<b>1.3 Research approach</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.4 Rationale</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>1.5 Foundational basis of the study</b> .....	<b>17</b>
1.5.1 <i>On Coloniality</i> .....	18
1.5.2 <i>Anthropological grounding</i> .....	20
1.5.3 <i>African Epistemology</i> .....	23
<b>1.6 The structure of the thesis</b> .....	<b>25</b>
1.6.1 <i>Introducing the study</i> .....	25
1.6.2 <i>The findings and analysis</i> .....	27
1.6.3 <i>The conclusions and contribution</i> .....	28
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>2.1 Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>32</b>
2.1.1 <i>Decolonial turn</i> .....	33
2.1.2 <i>Critical theory</i> .....	35
2.1.3 <i>African anthropology</i> .....	37
<b>2.2 The <i>stokvels</i></b> .....	<b>39</b>
2.2.1 <i>What's in the name?</i> .....	39
2.2.2 <i>The role of <i>stokvels</i></i> .....	41

2.2.3 <i>Influences of capitalism in stokvels</i> .....	43
<b>2.3 The capitalist economy</b> .....	<b>45</b>
2.3.1 <i>Historicising capitalism</i> .....	45
2.3.2 <i>The broom that sweeps all</i> .....	46
2.3.3 <i>Totality of the economy</i> .....	48
<b>2.4 Other economies</b> .....	<b>50</b>
2.4.1 <i>Drawing from tradition</i> .....	51
2.4.2 <i>The economy of amaZulu</i> .....	52
2.4.3 <i>The role of culture</i> .....	54
<b>2.5 Thinking from communities</b> .....	<b>56</b>
2.5.1 <i>Ethnographic accounts</i> .....	56
2.5.2 <i>The human economy</i> .....	58
2.5.3 <i>Ubuntu as a foundation for economy</i> .....	61
<b>2.6 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>63</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>3. Introduction</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>3.1 Contextualisation</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>3.2 The field site</b> .....	<b>67</b>
.....	69
.....	70
3.2.1 <i>Historic events of Esihlengeni</i> .....	72
3.2.2 <i>Economic organisation of Esihlengeni</i> .....	73
<b>3.3 Rapport and access</b> .....	<b>76</b>
<b>3.4 Data collection techniques</b> .....	<b>77</b>
3.4.1 <i>Participant Observation</i> .....	78
3.4.2 <i>In-depth interviews and focus group discussions</i> .....	79
3.4.3 <i>Casual conversations</i> .....	81
3.4.4 <i>Genealogy</i> .....	81
<b>3.5 Sampling</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>3.6 Time frame</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>3.7 Ethical issues</b> .....	<b>86</b>
3.7.1 <i>Informed consent</i> .....	86
3.7.2 <i>Confidentiality</i> .....	88
3.7.3 <i>Incentives</i> .....	88
<b>3.8 Limitations and challenges of the research</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>3.9 Analysis</b> .....	<b>90</b>
3.9.1 <i>Organisation of data</i> .....	91
3.9.2 <i>Writing up</i> .....	92
3.9.3 <i>Dissemination of research findings</i> .....	92
<b>3.10 Zulu language in the thesis</b> .....	<b>93</b>
3.10.1 <i>Community in vernacular</i> .....	94
3.10.2 <i>The problems of translation</i> .....	95
3.10.3 <i>Finding concepts</i> .....	97
<b>3.11 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> .....	<b>100</b>

<b>Culture and memory of the people of Esihlengeni: the insistence of traditional values .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4. Introduction .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4.1 The historical context of Esihlengeni .....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.1.1 <i>Analysing genealogy</i> .....	103
4.1.2 <i>UBheje monument and the graveyards</i> .....	106
4.1.3 <i>The museums</i> .....	113
<b>4.2 A worldview of the people of Esihlengeni.....</b>	<b>116</b>
4.2.1 <i>Induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni</i> .....	119
4.2.2 <i>Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili</i> .....	122
4.2.3 <i>Okungapheli kuyahlola</i> .....	126
<b>4.3 The nature of things .....</b>	<b>129</b>
4.3.1 <i>Inherent contradictions</i> .....	130
4.3.2 <i>Ontological difference</i> .....	133
4.3.3 <i>The undying culture</i> .....	134
<b>4.4 African cosmology in the present.....</b>	<b>136</b>
4.4.1 <i>Culture in language</i> .....	137
4.4.2 <i>The case of land</i> .....	138
4.4.3 <i>Singabantu bendawo</i> .....	142
<b>4.5 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Chapter 5.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b><i>Yemuk'inkomo kababa: understanding the economy of cows</i>.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>5. Introduction .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>5.1 The <i>stokvels</i> at Esihlengeni.....</b>	<b>146</b>
5.1.1 <i>Siyakhula Funeral Club (SFC)</i> .....	146
5.1.2 <i>The funeral parlour</i> .....	148
5.1.3 <i>Observing funerals</i> .....	150
5.1.4 <i>Role of cows in funerals</i> .....	152
<b>5.2 Reading of <i>stokvels</i> from Esihlengeni.....</b>	<b>153</b>
5.2.1 <i>The illusion of helping</i> .....	154
5.2.2 <i>Paying attention to nuances</i> .....	156
5.2.3 <i>Peculiarities of <i>Stokvels</i></i> .....	157
<b>5.3 Understanding Economy from Esihlengeni.....</b>	<b>159</b>
5.3.1 <i>The economy of SFC</i> .....	160
5.3.2 <i>The story of ubab'Zulu</i> .....	161
5.3.3 <i>The totality of the economy</i> .....	163
<b>5.4 Towards the economy of cows.....</b>	<b>166</b>
5.4.1 <i>Yemuk'inkomo kababa</i> .....	167
5.4.2 <i>Fathers' cows</i> .....	170
5.4.3 <i>From a different epistemology</i> .....	171
<b>5.6 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Chapter 6.....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Thinking from Esihlengeni: Completing the gender discourse .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>6. Introduction.....</b>	<b>174</b>



<b>6.1 The structure of the households at Esihlengeni.....</b>	<b>174</b>
6.1.1 <i>The inescapable extended families.....</i>	175
6.1.2 <i>Forged nuclear family.....</i>	177
6.1.3 <i>Family values.....</i>	179
<b>6.2. Grounding the discussion.....</b>	<b>180</b>
6.2.1 <i>Gender as a social construct.....</i>	181
6.2.2 <i>Historicising patriarchy.....</i>	183
6.2.3 <i>Limitation of the feminist theory.....</i>	186
<b>6.3 The gendered nature of the SFC.....</b>	<b>188</b>
6.3.1 <i>Stokvels in the ever-changing environment.....</i>	189
6.3.2 <i>The absence of patriarchy at Esihlengeni.....</i>	191
6.3.3 <i>Women power.....</i>	193
<b>6.4 Understanding SFC women within the South African context.....</b>	<b>195</b>
6.4.2 <i>The absent men.....</i>	201
6.4.3 <i>Quest for justice.....</i>	204
<b>6.5 Learning from the <i>stokvel</i> women.....</b>	<b>206</b>
6.5.1 <i>Unlearning feminism.....</i>	207
6.5.2 <i>Thinking is a verb.....</i>	208
6.5.3 <i>Inherent difference.....</i>	211
<b>6.7 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>7. Introduction.....</b>	<b>214</b>
7.1 <b>The summary of the thesis.....</b>	<b>216</b>
7.2 <b>Themes developed.....</b>	<b>220</b>
7.2.1 <i>Mandatory obligations.....</i>	220
7.2.2 <i>Revising gender.....</i>	222
7.2.3 <i>New concepts.....</i>	223
7.3 <b>Meditation on decoloniality.....</b>	<b>225</b>
7.4 <b>Conclusions drawn.....</b>	<b>227</b>
7.5 <b>Contribution.....</b>	<b>229</b>
7.5.1 <i>Doing away with Sameness.....</i>	230
7.5.2 <i>Embracing difference.....</i>	230
7.5.3 <i>Retrieving discarded knowledges.....</i>	231
7.6 <b>A way of concluding.....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>WEBSITES.....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: RESULT SUMMARY FROM ORIGINALITY SOFTWARE.....</b>	<b>260</b>
.....	260
<b>APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: JOURNEYING BACK TO ANHTROPOLOGY: A REFLEXIVE STATEMENT.....</b>	<b>265</b>
.....	265
<b>APPENDIX E: BAB'ZULU'S CASE.....</b>	<b>294</b>

## TABLE OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	xviii
<b>Figure 2 DEFINATION OF CONCEPTS</b> .....	xix
Figure 3 A picture describing what it means to change the story.....	31
Figure 4 Map of Abaqulusi Municipality .....	68
Figure 5 Map of KZN Province.....	69
Figure 6 Map of South African provinces .....	70
Figure 7 A picture of the place Esihlengeni taken by me.....	71
Figure 8 Pile of logs that have been peeled and ready for the trucks. ....	74
Figure 9 Trucks being loaded .....	75
Figure 10 Genealogy from Esihlengeni.....	104
Figure 11 Picture of umalume omncane next to Ubheje monument .....	107
Figure 12 Picture of my uncles and myself at the gravesite. ....	109
Figure 13 Picture of one of the graves.....	110
Figure 14 A picture of a male employee at the guest house I stayed in during fieldwork ....	198

*Figure 1 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS*

ANC	African National Congress
BHHBS	Braamfischer Helping Hand Burial Society
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
MK	Umkhonto Wesizwe
ROSCAs	Rotating Savings and Credit Associations
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAFPA	South African Funeral Parlour Association
SFC	Siyakhula Funeral Club

*Figure 2 DEFINATION OF CONCEPTS*

<i>Stokvels</i>	<i>Stokvels</i> are membership-based savings schemes providing for the social and financial wellbeing of their members as well as entertainment (Lukhele 1990). They are South African's version of Rotating Credit and Savings Associations (ROSCAs) or Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ACSAs) (Mulaudzi 2017).
Economy	Economy is the social relations of human groups establish in order to control production, consumption, and the circulation of food, clothing and shelter. In other words, it is not only the materialities of everyday life that shapes economic processes and practices but also ideas, normative evaluations of such materialities, and questions of identity and community (Krige 2011 citing Gregory & Altman's 1989:1).
Informal economy	To define informal economy, the popular media uses terms such as invisible, hidden, submerged, shadow, irregular, non-official, unrecorded to refer to informal economy. All these activities are activities that are not recorded or imperfectly reflected in official national accounting systems (Losby, Else, Kingslow, Edgcom, and Malm 2002).
Ontology	Ontology refers to the nature of reality and human behaviour and meaning of reality as we know it. It is concerned with what kind of world we are investigating, with the nature of existence and with the structure of reality (Lombo 2017 citing De Vos 1998:241).
Epistemology	Epistemology is the way of knowing that constitute one's view of the world, one's assumption about how the social apprehend its meaning (Musharbash & Barber 2011).
Cosmology	The dictionary (dictionary.com: 2016), defines cosmology as a branch of philosophy that deals with the origin and general structure of the universe with its parts elements and laws and especially with such of its characteristics as space, time,

	causality and free. In other words, cosmology gives worldview of societies.
Zulu cosmology	Zulu cosmology is based on cultural beliefs and spirituality such as ancestry, uNomkhubulwane and Amathongo (Lombo 2017).

## THE PREFIX - U

There is prefix u- that I have used when referring to the people that are part of this thesis. Instead of saying: ‘malume said’ I write: ‘umalume said’. This u- is used in all the people that I had a personal contact with as part of this research. I use the prefix u- to signify that personal engagement. In a way, I bring the participants in this study by making them ‘active’ participants rather than ‘passive’ participants. I also emphasise the point that this thesis is in isiZulu, inasmuch as it is in English where the prefix u- is derived from *u-muntu* (a being). I use the prefix exclusively to the participants as the conception of *umuntu* is not general but is qualified by the practice of *ubuntu*, as such it cannot be assumed. It is this reason that the unknown beings cannot be referred to as *abantu* (plural of *umuntu*) in isiZulu, different races are given different names, for example, a white person is not referred to as *umuntu* but *umlungu*.

***Lakutshon' ilanga* – a song by Miriam Makeba**

*Lakutshon' ilanga* (when the sun sets)

*Zakubuy' inkomo* (cows will return)

*Ndakucinga ngawe* (I will think about you)

*Lakutshon' ilanga* (when the sun sets)

*Yakuvel' inyanga* (the moon will rise)

*Phesheya kolwandle* (over the seas)

*Zakubuy' intaka* (the birds will return)

*Lakutshon' ilanga* (when the sun sets)

*Ndizohamba ndikufuna* (I will search for you)

*Ezindlini nasezitrateni* (in the houses and in the streets)

*Ezibhedlela, eetrongweni* (in the hospitals and in jails)

*Ndide ndikufumane* (until I find you)

*Lakutshon' ilanga* (when the sun sets)

*Zakubuy' inkomo* (cows will return)

*Ndakucinga ngawe* (I will think about you)

*Lakutshon' ilanga* (when the sun sets)

Song available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d99wc8LGDpw>

## **Finding a way**

*The 39<sup>th</sup> episode of Speak Out- an investigative reality show on SABC 2 that assists many viewers and consumers who have been scammed, 'taken for a ride', or robbed out of their hard-earned money by poor or bad service, substandard goods, dishonest business practices and /or exorbitant charges! Speak Out plays the role of a “watchdog” ensuring a fair outcome for the consumer and reminding the public to be more cautious in their purchases and everyday dealings with business and retailers- focused on the Braamfischer Helping Hand Burial Society (BHHBS) in Soweto. In this episode, Speak Out investigated the right to fair and honest dealings particularly people's right to protection against unacceptable conduct as well as false, misleading and deceptive representations has been violated by Daphney Ngubeni, Busie Mabuza and Thuli Ndlovu, who were trusted and selected as treasurers of the Braamfischer Helping Hand burial society. They had stolen over R40 000 from the burial society's bank account. This was discovered in 2013, when Lillian Morolong, 31-year-old mother of 2 and other society members noticed discrepancies with their burial society's account balance in which they discovered that R32 880 was missing and in addition, after scrutinising the society's contribution books and deposit slips, they noticed that R9707.00 never even made it to the bank. The Speak Out investigation was able to make the accused members to admit that indeed they took the money and told the members that laid a complaint that they could take these members to court. But the members that had laid a complaint opted not to take them to court and expressed their gratitude to speak out. According to them, the problem had been solved even though the money was not recovered. What was important to stokvel members was that at least the accused ultimately admitted having taken the money and they also apologised for their bad conduct.*



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1. Introduction

This thesis entitled *Towards the Cattle Economy: Understanding the Different Economic Logic of Stokvels at Esihlengeni in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa* focuses on *stokvels* and attempts to explore a different economic logic outside of capitalism that is driven by profits. What emerges poignantly from the findings is that *stokvels* are not drawing from African communities' traditional values but are still informed by the capitalist logic of profit. This finding did not totally torpedo my initial hypothesis but propelled me to further explore the possibilities of other epistemologies outside of the dominant Western epistemology in search of a different economic logic and system. Thus, the thesis is a bold and daring attempt to tell a story from a different epistemological framework.

*Stokvels* constitutes the core of inquiry for this study. Lukhele (1990) defines *stokvels* as membership-based savings providing for the social and financial wellbeing of members as well as entertainment. Specifically, the social aspect of *stokvels* that Lukhele (1990) alludes to, where members are more concerned with social wellbeing, - with the maintaining of the integrity - of their fellow members over monetary exchange and compensation is the focus of this thesis. Conceptually, the African philosophy that is expressed as *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, loosely translated "I am because you are" frames this thesis. In this African humanist perspective, money is not an end in itself, but a means to build a person with integrity.

With this understanding in mind, I argue that rather than trying to fix the flawed, dysfunctional, irrational and racialised economy that keeps reproducing social inequalities and poverty, it would seem befitting to look elsewhere to find solutions for the modern world. It is in this context that I deploy decolonial thinking. I am using it to examine the logic of *stokvels* with a view to posit other ways of understanding the economy outside of the logic of accumulation. Thus, the thesis is essentially an explorative of life's needs in their entirety and not just material needs.

The approach of this study is in line with that of a study conducted by Moliea among Venda women that found that "the goal for them that makes them not default, more

than receiving money is the fact that others are relying on their contributions” (2010: 68). It would seem that people’s everyday lives such as of the BHHBS members are not informed by capitalist logic that says profit is an end in itself (Graeber 2006: 70), and this confirms Polanyi’s assertion that,

The outstanding discovery of recent historical and anthropological research is that man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets. He values material goods only in so far as they serve this end (1944: 26).

Polanyi writes this observation in response to Smith’s (1776 [1950]) assertion that the liberal economy is universal and natural. Polanyi refutes Smith’s claim and argues that, “[i]n point of fact, Adam Smith's suggestions about the economic psychology of early man were as false as Rousseau's were on the political psychology of the savage” (Polanyi 1944: 25). Seemingly, Polanyi’s critique of Smith’s economics that he presented as universal still stands as the *stokvel* members of BHHBS prove not to be concerned with material needs but are more concerned with the person, something that is fundamentally different from the economics of Smith (1776 [1950]), that privilege material needs over all other needs.

More Salient in *stokvels*, is the aspect of them highlighted by Lukhele (1990). Lukhele points out an entertainment aspect of *stokvels* often overlooked by recent scholarship on *stokvels*. Over years, a common understanding of *stokvels* in black communities, was that *stokvels* were more about entertainment over and above profit. This was observed by scholars such as Kuper & Kaplan (1944), Verhoef (2001) and Calvin & Coetzee (2010) that in some *stokvels* the main feature was the parties where a lot of alcohol was provided. The understanding of *stokvels* as a site of for entertainment is well captured by a musical group called *Woza Africa* in their track: *Istokvela* found in their album titled: *legends of Africa – Woza Africa* released in April 2003. The song is about a person who gets so drunk to a point of believing that a machine is speaking (*lomshini uyakhuluma*). With this song, it becomes clear that inasmuch as *stokvels* were about providing financial support, they were also entertainment sites where alcohol and music was at the centre. The integration of material needs with the social need of happiness would seem to be drawing from an African cosmology where according to Nyamnjoh, “pleasure and work are expected to be carefully balanced” (2017: 24).

However, it must be mentioned that there has been a significant shift in *stokvels* from being party' places to being more of 'societies' that are Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) or Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ACSAs) and burial societies - as in the case of BHHBS.

The shift of *stokvels* towards becoming ROSCAs or ACSAs and burial societies has changed *stokvels* such that the focus is more on supporting the material needs over social and entertainment needs as once observed by Lukhele (1990). The focus on material needs would seem to be a result of the pressure that the capitalist system is exerting on ordinary people such that they need to respond to the problems that are created by the capitalist system (Kenrick 2016). One can therefore argue that *stokvels* have become entrapped within the capitalist system that according to Krige “must not be assumed to be universally applicable (or universally desirable)” (2011: 2). Especially that now we know that capitalism is a child of colonialism – sold as a civilising project – because colonialism was an economic project (Nkrumah 1967). While *stokvels* might have started drawing from a different epistemology other than Western epistemology that produced capitalist system, it cannot be assumed they are still drawing from a different epistemology. More importantly, given that capitalism has been understood as inescapable (Hart 2000) it seems to have co-opted other economic entities such as *stokvels*.

### **1.1 The concept of logic**

The main objective of this study is to find the LOGIC of *stokvels*, which means that the study is not focused on the what and the how of *stokvels*, but on the worldview that *stokvels* draw from as indicated in the narrative inserted in the foreword. The narrative presents a seemingly nonsensical logic when compared to the capitalist logic of profits, for members of the BHHBS *stokvel*, are not concerned about the returns of their hard-earned money – especially given the fact that this *stokvels* is at the area that is impoverished: Braamfischerville<sup>1</sup>. This study is an attempt to provide the why of *stokvels* rather than providing descriptions and definitions of *stokvels*. This for Thornton is the reason to study culture as he posits, “[t]he job of studying culture is not

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<sup>1</sup>According to Moolla *et al* Braamfischerville is a new settlement located in Soweto, South of Johannesburg (2011:139). It is on the border between Soweto and Roodepoort but is part of Soweto. Braamfischerville is a legacy of apartheid spatial planning (ibid).

of finding and then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made under what circumstances and for what reasons” (1988: 25). If culture is about interpreting nature of the world around people (Dlakanyo 2009), it would follow then that culture can be understood as a worldview of a particular society that draws from its cosmology. This is the logic of cultures that cannot be seen or observed because it is not a practice but rather what informs the practice which I argue is outside of the grasp of Western sciences. For Nyamnjoh we must be wary of the descriptions that

reduces science to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ preoccupation with theories of *what* the universe is, much to the detriment of theories of *why* the universe is... Such a narrow view of science has tended to separate the universe into the physical and the metaphysical or the religions, and to ignore the fact that people are ordinarily ‘not content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable’ (2004: 163).

Logic therefore, connects events in such a way that the seemingly ordinary practices reveal the worldview of a people that sustain it amidst all situations. It will follow then that while I observed the phenomenon of *stokvels*, the focus is at the epistemological level, which according to Musharbash & Barber “constitute one’s view of the world, one’s assumption about how the social apprehend its meaning” (2011: 881). The focus of this study is therefore on the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni and my worldview as well because the study is founded on Western epistemology in which the research was conceptualised which informed the research questions and methods. Musharbash and Barber continue to argue that epistemologies “are methodological perspectives because they influence the types of questions asked and the choices of techniques” (ibid). to be epistemological is for me, to acknowledge that at the beginning of this research I had a particular methodological perspective that was rooted in Western epistemology. However, in a quest to understand of the epistemology of the people of Esihlengeni, my methodological perspective had to take their worldview into consideration. I am asking different questions, outside of the Western epistemic “devise formulas to repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse” (Trouillot 1995: 72). To read this thesis correctly, requires us to unthink the accepted discourse of Western epistemology and to open up to other ways of knowing because they exist, as I will later show.

### *1.1.1 The universe of particularities*

My point of departure is that all societies have worldviews that are expressed through culture. Boas defined this as holistic worldview of the people that encompasses: (1) the physical appearance of man; (2) the languages of man, and (3) the customs and beliefs of man that all societies possess (1940: 641). For Diop (1969), these worldviews are informed by the climate of each society. And according to Thornton, “there are certainly differences [among cultures] just as there are differences in climate or personality” (1988: 25). While Thornton (1988) compares differences of cultures to climate or personality, I would like to put his analysis differently, that differences in cultures are informed by climate I choose climate over personality as I find personality fickle as it can result from socialisation, while we have minimal control over climate. If we take this idea of difference emanating from climate as Diop (1969) argues and Thornton (1988) insinuates, it would suggest that societal worldviews as a response to climate will fundamentally differ given differences in climate. For instance, the society in a climate that has favorable weather conditions such that they are able to produce plenty of food, will not obsess about preservation of food as there will be no reason for that, instead it could pre-occupy itself with paying gratitude to nature for its favorable climate conditions. To impose such worldview to societies whose climates restricts growing of food such that their pre-occupation becomes preservation of food, would be illogical at best and oppressive at worst.

It would seem therefore that scholars such as Fanon had taken climate into account when analysing European societies as he argues

Yes, the European spirit has strange roots. All European thought has unfolded in places which were increasingly more deserted and more encircled by precipices; and thus it was that the custom grew up in those places of a very seldom meeting man (1967: 252).

Seemingly, in the above, Fanon is referring to the culture of individualism that informs Western epistemology, as I will show in the subsequent section. However, today we see a worldview of one particular society been transported everywhere to suggest that its climate is universal. An absurd logic indeed as we all know that climate differs from place to place.

What is even more worrying is that the transportation of one society’s worldview to the rest of the world has fuelled the idea of Sameness that in anthropology is a basis of

studying communities (Argyrou 2012). Even though difference is natural, as already argued with reference to climate, anthropology draws from Western epistemology and has insisted on this idea of Sameness. It would seem that this insistence emanates from their inability to comprehend the possibility of societies that are grounded on an epistemology that can produce a world founded on justice. Anthropologists that have sought to embrace differences, have done so within Western epistemology as we see from Douglas's argument,

The rule of comparison will not allow me to compare Lloyd George's unruly hair with Disraeli's flowing locks, for they belonged to different cultural periods in English history (1996: xxxv).

Douglas's claim for difference is based on 'different cultural periods' and not on climate, and this reveals her belief in Sameness. According to Argyrou (2012), this logic of Sameness in anthropology has resulted in a perverted logic where comparison moves from a premise of a defined humanity that suggests that, to achieve a human status all societies have to be the Same as Europeans, meaning that that they are an epitome of what it means to be human. The conception of societies' worldviews as a response to their climatic conditions has completely eluded the Western man and as a result, all his thoughts have become universalised. Hence the thinking that comes from this Western thought moves from an assumption that to be human means to become a European man, also meaning that the European man's needs are therefore the needs for everyone.

Habermas (1986) critiquing the humanistic approach in the case of Foucault, argues that, "rather [the humanistic approach] is in danger of reinforcing the humanism that has been brought from heaven down to earth and has congealed into a normalizing force" (Habermas 1986: 6). What follows from this universalised humanism is the co-option or integration of other societies. According to Biko (speaking on the South African situation where there was a call for integration) integration becomes a process "in which a black man has to prove himself in terms of these values [white values] before meriting acceptance and ultimate assimilation" (1978: 91). Co-option stifles the idea of difference completely in spite of the fact that in reality there are many ways of perceiving the world drawing from different conditions that can contribute to the betterment of this world.

Anthropology runs with the assumption of Sameness by making its discipline a comparative study (Levi-Strauss 1969), assuming that there are similarities when in fact there are differences. In other words, the discipline moves from what Frankenberg defines as “a standpoint, a place from which white people look at themselves, at others, and at society... [using] a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (1993: 1). The desire to compare is not an innocent one, as Crehan puts it correctly, “[q]uest for knowledge has always been entangled with the desire to control. Anthropology tries to understand the organization of other societies outside of the Western societies with a desire to control” (2002: 4). Comparison is important in this regard since if Westerners cannot compare, they lose validation of being good something which is presented as a standard of what it means to be human. These assumed similarities close up a possibility of the universe built on particulars as Césaire imagined, “a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars” (1956: 38), a dream still to be realised. But of course, for this to be possible, Westerners need “to recognise that non-humanistic ways of being are life-ways in their own right that should not be displaced by humanism” (Argyrou 2012: 5). In other words, there should be an understanding that difference is inherent; it should be embraced and respected so that we have a world that is more inclusive - a world of particulars.

### *1.1.2 Western epistemology*

As already argued above, all societies have epistemologies. However, the dominance of Western epistemology has displaced other epistemologies in knowledge production. What needs to be clarified though is that, the West is not necessarily geographical. It is a space that “was created somewhere at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the midst of a global wave of material and symbolic transformation... through which Europe became the West” (Trouillot 1995: 74-5). In this thesis, I use West to represent a way of thinking that begins in the sixteenth century as Trouillot (1995) points out. This thinking according to Dussel (1985) was a rejection of religion. He argues that, “all criticism begins with the critique of (fetishist) religion” (Dussel 1985: 8). So, the modern Western epistemology is about disconnecting to the oppressive religion and thus, thinking for oneself becomes the ultimate freedom. It is in this context that we can begin to understand Kant’s (1781 [1998]) articulation that to think for oneself is courageous because

liberation is possible only when one has the courage to be atheistic vis-à-vis an empire of the center, thus incurring the risk of suffering from its power, its economic boycotts, its armies, and its agents who are experts at corruption, violence, and assassination (Dussel 1985: 8).

Breaking from “darkness” becomes a period of enlightenment as Kant (1781 [1998]) posits. According to Giddens “Enlightenment thought, and Western culture in general, emerged from a religious context” (1990: 48). The sixteenth century becomes a period where this newly formed West begins to ask ontological questions about its existence in relation to nature and its nature being of a religious form it sought to reject. This becomes fundamentally different to ontology of other societies where the questions are about the cosmos, what is out there naturally, whereas the West is about man-made conditions – fetish religion. While the ontology of different societies would differ because of the nature of climatic conditions they are confronted with, Western ontology’s difference is even worse as it is responding to the secondary nature of things, man-made things.

It is within the above stated context that we can appreciate the religious connotation of Western epistemology. Giddens posits, “it is no ways surprising that the advocacy of unfettered reason only reshapes the ideas of that providential, rather than displacing it” (1990: 48) because belief system is irreplaceable. What this enlightenment period produced was

theology and philosophy-science as the cosmological frames competing with each other at one level but collaborating with each other when the matter is to disqualify other forms of knowledge beyond these two frames (Mignolo 2009: 6),

The religious entanglements in the West produces knowledge that can be understood through a religious lens. Through this lens, the West becomes a heaven that can be accessed by dying physically and figuratively, the knowledge it produces becomes the bible that cannot be questioned but must be practiced and applied, the Western man replaces God to echo Grosfoguel (2009) who creates people in his image – civilising them - and is sustained by disciples, to echo Nyamnjoh (2004) who are converted and are believers of Western epistemology. In addition, Western epistemology draws from the oppressive religious system it is rejecting. It uses its tactics (because that is their reality) to mirror itself and thus produces a home for itself a place with strong “economies, armies, and its agents who are experts at corruption, violence, and



assassination” (Dussel 1985: 8). These foundations produced COLONIALISM that was sold as a civilising project with economic interest. This newly formed place called West had to legitimise itself and it did so through the conception of pure reason and the idea of truth.

This pursuit of pure reason and the truth has resulted in the claim of ‘scientific’ knowledge that could be be ‘proven beyond reasonable doubt’ and thus be used to dismiss all other knowledges. Science was thus meant to prove pure reason that is not influenced by belief system whatsoever. However, according to Lakatos

science proceeds by bold speculations, which are never proved or even made probable, but some of which are later eliminated by hard, conclusive refutations and then replaced by still bolder, new and at least at the start, unrefuted speculations (1970: 173),

For Diop, scientific experiments are tedious and have no point, and above all they reveal no intellectual aptitude (1991: 63), because they are in actual fact based on a belief system that is defined as hypothesis. While the pursuit was to reject religion, the end result was religion that had to be taken all over to save the world. What Western thinking has produced “a civilization whose philosophy is based on avoiding deception and self deception and yet ends up becoming a massive deceiver and criminal” (Maldonado-Torres 2008: 243). At the end, “the century of Enlightenment, of rationalist and secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness” (Anderson 1991: 11) while trying to reject “darkness”.

Western epistemology is a product of a society that is oppressive and intolerant to different views as such it employed the same strategies of the fetish religion of having “agents who are experts at corruption, violence, and assassination” (Dussel 1985: 8). These strategies have yielded POWER. It is through power that according to Argyrou, writing in a different context, the West is able to hide its darkness (not that it is not visible to many). This power is demonstrated in “the ability of a group of societies to define the meaning of the world for *everyone, yet again*” (2005: ix). It is reflected in the belief system that the Western thinking cannot be questioned as its apologists, such as Butler ask, “[b]ut how can an epistemic/ontological regime be brought into question?” (Butler 2006: xxx). The power that the West has sought through imperialism and colonialism has claimed to be the beginning and the end, as such, it cannot be

questioned. In short, Western epistemology is a belief system that has become hegemonic and Argyrou argues, that it

means being under the spell of Western ideas that appear to the dominated just as rational, meaningful and necessary as they appear to the dominator... The struggle against Western hegemony is a painful process because it is as much a struggle against one's (colonized) self (2012: 4).

It would appear that its endurance is a result of this hegemony, so entrenched it is that even those on the receiving end of it still view it as rational. This hegemony for Mbembe is a myth that makes this system "the most corrosive and the most lethal... [because] it makes us believe that it is everywhere; that everything originates from it and it has no outside" (2015: 3).

### *1.1.3 Kgomo ya moshate (The royal cow)*

I have argued above that Western epistemology came to be by rejecting religion and replaced it. It would make sense then that it moves from a premise that it sees itself as having to replace god (Grosfoguel 2009). It then presents and positions itself as untouchable in all its endeavors. A similar expression is found in a Setswana proverb: *kgomo ya moshate*. When complete it is: *ke kgomo ya moshate, wa e egapa o molato wa e tlogela o molato* (a royal cow - that is untouchable - you bring it home you are guilty, you leave it in the fields you are guilty, you have to be punished either way). Using this proverb to think about Western epistemology, it has become a *kgomo ya moshate* and the rest become Others who are not entitled to make any contribution to this discourse. So the rest – those that are not Westerners – becomes objects of Western epistemology especially in anthropology as Leach points out,

We started by emphasizing how different are 'the others' and made them not only different but remote and inferior. Sentimentally we then took the opposite track and argued that all human beings are alike... but that didn't work either, 'the others' remained obstinately other (1973: 772).

This anthropological mission as expressed by Leach, reveals the fundamental desire of the Western man to replace God. At the core of this logic, is

both the belief in the unlimited powers of 'man' and its vision of human unity – which generated the conviction that certain 'men' were entitled, indeed, burdened with the responsibility of mastering Other 'men' in order to humanize them (Argyrou 2005: vii),

The quest to redeem the Other no longer ask the question whether what they see is real or imagined echoing Anderson (1991) but it is taken-for-granted that it is real. This is the idea that the Other can be redeemed and become Same as the Western man. This is essentially a discourse of Sameness.

What needs to be highlighted in this desire of Western man to replace god is that he needs to cleanse himself of all his sins so that he becomes an epitome of what it means to be human. Fanon explains this process of cleansing “He [the Western man] belongs to the race of those who since the beginning of time have never known cannibalism. What an idea, to eat one’s father!” (Fanon 2008: 87). In other words, all his sins are now projected to the Other, so that he can be justified in his mission to save and being an exemplary. Consequently, the Western academy and anthropology in particular, is on a mission to save other societies and has not paused to ask: how can other societies save us? A question too difficult to conceptualise while we are still within Western epistemology that is *kgomo ya moshate* – which is not questionable – because we are guilty either way and any action that upsets it is punishable.

However, it is my view that we should study communities “in ways that bring forward the perspective of their world” (Trouillot 1995: 107). Because there are other people who are not only thinking about the world but living in the world while thinking of the ways of making the world a better place. We need to move away from “Plato’s world of Ideas in which the ideas are stagnant, immutable, and eternal” (Ramose 2002: 328), and begin to embrace other ways thinking. Inasmuch that this study was conceptualised within Western epistemology framework, my quest to understand the LOGIC of the people of Esihlengeni is in itself an acknowledgement of other ways of knowing and existing. As such I attempt to bring their epistemology to the fore. Over and above this, the spirit in which this thesis is written is the belief that an African way of knowing is a legitimate source of knowledge from which to draw from in an attempt to make sense of *stokvels*. My belief on the continued presence of existence of other ways of knowing is informed by Argyrou assertion that,

it is naïve to say the least to think that one small group of societies, in an insignificant part of the world, during an infinitesimal (in the wider scheme of things) time-span has reached such a level of enlightenment as to decide for all of us what it means to Be (2012: 8).

The study, among others, demonstrate that despite the efforts by Western epistemology to present itself as the ONLY way of thinking, I believe that it is not as powerful as it claims.

## 1.2 Background of the study

Recently, *stokvels* have been in the spotlight and have been referred to as a ‘hidden economy’ (Mulaudzi 2017 and African Response 2012). The total annual fund mobilised by *stokvels* in South Africa has been estimated at R49 billion (NASASA<sup>2</sup> 2016). Efforts to understand *stokvels* have centred mainly on economical rather than social factors, and the focus has been on their economic viability aimed at benefiting the ‘capitalist’ system (Rose 2014). Many financial institutions have developed an interest in *stokvels* and have commissioned research into the phenomenon. These studies are based on Western epistemology, mandated to discover the reasons why people join *stokvels* so that financial institutions can find ways to attract their members. This seems to be calling for a better way of studying economic projects through research that focuses on values that are not convertible into money (Graeber 2013). Economies should therefore be studied outside of the current epistemic framework that is Western, dominant and exclusive of all other forms of narratives. Studies of economic formations should produce new kinds of economic knowledge that are built on indigenous epistemologies so that economic policies can respond to people’s situations. This opens up a space for multiple economies not alternatives, but different economies that can coexist with one another.

This research project moved from the premise that difference is not a problem and does not or should not equate to inequality. Understanding the logic of *stokvels* should not replace the logic of capitalism<sup>3</sup> but rather produces a new kind of knowledge that acknowledges the existence of different kinds of economies. *Stokvels* are not the solution to all situations but are a solution to a particular situation where individuals could be regarded as victims of the current economic system. This however, does not suggest that the logic of *stokvels* is inherently different to all the existing economies.

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<sup>2</sup> National Association of Stokvels in South Africa (NASASA) wrote this figure in a comment to South African parliament on the then proposed FICA changes: <https://pmg.org.za/files/160202.NASASA.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> It must be noted that capitalism has been contested in Europe. The riots of the English crowd in the eighteenth century, as articulated by Thompson (1971), show that there was resistance against capitalism in Europe.

For instance, *stokvels* can be understood within the frame of mutual aid societies. According to Greenbaum, mutual aids were designed to protect the members from the competitive exploitation inherent in market systems (1991: 97). But more importantly, authors such as Sahlin (1972), Renkiewicz (1980), and Uehara (1990), have argued that mutual aid societies used a different logic to capitalism where profits are not an end in itself. Studying *stokvels* should aim at “disclosing what is not apparent or hidden in the appearance of things, to reveal the specific logic of a social formation and its determinant social relations of production” (Ulin 1991: 74)<sup>4</sup>.

### *1.2.1 Research problem*

*Stokvels* have been studied in order to determine their economic viability so that they can benefit the existing economic system (Mulaudzi 2017; NASASA 2016; African Response 2012 and Naong 2009). Their foundational values have been understood as a mere coping mechanism rather than as drawing from a different economic epistemology informed by a worldview that differs from the European way of thinking (Kuper & Kaplan 1944; Verhoef 2001 and Calvin & Coetzee 2010). There is a need to establish the logic of *stokvels* within a particular socio-cultural and historical context; to understand *stokvels* using an African epistemic framework; to produce knowledge that will contribute to the world economies; and possibly, to produce an economy that is centred on the human.

### *1.2.2 Purpose of the study*

The purpose of this study was to understand the existence of a different kind of economy that is centred on humanity. It aimed to examine the values that underpin *stokvels* and locate them within a particular socio-cultural and historical context.

### *1.2.3 Aim and objectives of the study*

The aim of the study was to critically analyse *stokvels* as an economic system to understand the logic that is fundamental to their existence. The objectives were to:

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<sup>4</sup> When I proposed the study, I had planned to use the citizen’s guide by Hart, Laville and Cattani (2010) that advocates for the human economy that is centred on the human. However, based on the findings and engagements with the broader literature, I then took Polanyi’s argument that “self-regulating economic system on the motive of individual gain... was in the very nature of things impossible” (1944: 155), as such, there is no need to dwell in it as citizen’s guide proposes, but to focus on other epistemologies. In addition, I use ethnographic evidence from other societies with economies different to those based on the Western thought to understand the different logic of *stokvels*.

- Interpret the values that underpin *stokvels*;
- Understand the social systems such as kinship, household, homestead, rituals and religious beliefs embedded in *stokvels*;
- Investigate the connectedness of the past with the present in people's everyday lives; and
- Generate new knowledge of an economy that is informed by a different worldview that privileges humans.

### **1.3 Research approach**

This study aims, among other things, to understand how people make sense of their involvement in societal structures. In order to understand this, I will need to interpret people's activities to explain the reasons for their behaviours. I therefore used a qualitative research approach. As this is an anthropological study the primary research method was participant observation. However, this participant observation approach sought to decentre the researcher's authority as an anthropologist by allowing a multiplicity of different perspectives to emerge in the ethnographic account itself (Ulin 1991: 70). This means I opened up to other forms of acquiring information outside of the discipline such as reading historical records. For this study, historical accounts are used to expose the limitations of Western epistemology to advance the argument of the world built on multiple epistemologies.

### **1.4 Rationale**

*Stokvels* are a growing phenomenon in South Africa and they generate R44 billion annually (Mulaudzi 2017, NASASA 2016 and African Response 2012). The informal economy results from the traditional sector that includes "profitable and efficient enterprise as well as marginal activities" (Chen 2012: 2). In recent years

There is increased recognition that much of the informal economy today is integrally linked to the formal economy and contributes to the overall economy; and that supporting the working poor in the informal economy is a key pathway to reducing poverty and inequality (ibid: 3).

As such, there has been an acknowledgement of the informal economies entities as contributing towards the country's economic growth. However, as Geertz argues about ROSCAS, the potential of the informal economy to increase savings central to sustained economic growth (1956: 241) remains elusive because they are understood as informal.

Geertz continues to argue that, “unless the basic savings habits of the people of a country can be altered, the prospects for sustained economic growth are dim indeed” (ibid: 241). Savings of ordinary people impact on the growth of a country’s economy (*Mail and Guardian* 2013) because it reduces the debt rate. Despite the significant contribution of *stokvels* towards savings the “South African government still bemoans a poor savings culture in this country” (Naong 2009: 262). In other words, *stokvels* are not counted as contributing to savings.

In South Africa, there has been a concerted effort to provide sophisticated economic policies to address the legacy of apartheid (Verhoef 2008). However, these economic policies have not adequately addressed the fact that colonialism and apartheid infiltrated every institution and every social, political, economic, spiritual, aesthetic, and cognitive arena of African life (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986). Colonisation was an economic system that ensured domination on all other spheres of existence (Sartre 1968: 38) and apartheid perpetuated and deepened those legacies. Any attempt to redress the imbalances of the past needs economic policies that focus not only on material conditions but on all spheres of existence because life in other epistemologies supersedes the material conditions but combines the physical and the metaphysical as Nyamnjoh’s (2017) posits.

It is in this context that we can begin to understand the failure of South African economic policies towards the poor, who are predominantly black. A major failure of South African economic policies is that the African economic experience was largely understood within the framework of Western experience and what was seen as different from this Western experience was defined as peculiar and therefore needed to be transformed (Rose 2014). *Stokvels* first came into existence under the harsh conditions of colonialism and sustained many families (Lukhele 1990)). In post-apartheid South Africa, they did not initially attract much attention until recently. It is important therefore to deconstruct the epistemologies used to understand society so that we open up to other possibilities (Foucault 1977). In this instance, *stokvels* should be studied in their epistemic framework as Mafeje attests “it is our duty to study and understand these institutions in their true context” (2001: 63).

Understanding *stokvels* is critical as they contribute to the economy. Moreover, *stokvels* have recently been acknowledged as critical to a cohesive society because of their ability to provide both financial and social capital (Buijs 2002; Krige 2010; Mashigo & Schoeman 2010). But first they need to be understood within the context in which they function, and second, the values that are fundamental to the functioning of *stokvels* must be understood as informing a particular kind of economy. Their connectedness to the historical past is important because “economic development should be compatible with that community’s traditional culture and values” (Rose 2014: 378). Moreover, that the capitalist system has proven to be more detrimental to life itself, as such, some scholars such as Krige (2011), have started to argue for inclusion of economies. As he argues,

It is important, I believe, to offer representations of economic life that are not completely determined by our world’s current predominant form of political organisation (the nation-state and by implication methodological nationalism), nor by our world’s current predominant form of economic organisation (capitalism and by implication its ideological imperatives (2011: 3).

In other words, as scholars, we need to bring marginal economies to the fore, such that they too provide possible alternatives to economy. Because these economies outside the capitalist economy are not just theoretical but are practical as they are being implemented not thought of. More so that according to Sithole, “the failure of intellectuals to confront the theory–practice disjuncture on such political issues makes it possible for certain sections of society to appear saner than others” (2011: 88). It is important therefore to study such entities in an attempt to bring theory and practice together. As such, the understanding of economic entities should take this into consideration.

### **1.5 Foundational basis of the study**

Most economic research has focused on the economy as a separate entity despite the arguments by scholars such as Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925) who argued that not all societies have a fragmented view of the economy. It becomes important therefore to challenge this dominant view that separates economy from other social spheres and expose it for what it is. According to Dussel “accepting this massive exteriority to European modernity allows one to comprehend that there are cultural moments situated “outside” of modernity” (2002: 224), that can provide us with a more progressive view of the economy. Unlike the capitalist economy born of European modernity that has



proved to be creating more problems than solutions, the problems it can never own up to. Appudurai argues that, “globalization produces problems that manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have contexts that are anything but local” (2000: 6), globalisation being a child of capitalism. It is evident that the terrain that involves economy is not easy and thus needs multiple theoretical groundings in order to unpack the entanglements of the systems of domination that transport problems than solutions. The following sections discuss theories that have exposed the interconnectedness of social process that are produced by this modern world.

### *1.5.1 On Coloniality*

Albeit the fact that all African countries have attained independence from colonial powers, the colonial powers are still dominant in the running of the governments and consequently, the everyday lives of the African people. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni these colonial powers are “pedagogies and epistemologies of equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans that are socialized into hating Africa that produced them and liking Europe and America that reject them” (2015: 489). In essence this is a continuation of domination that “has rendered all our vocabulary incredibly” (Wallerstein 1988: 295). Hence Mafeje sees this as a problem “of ideology which precedes and predetermines possible forms of knowledge” (1976: 326). This approach produces coloniality that it “survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of the people, in aspiration of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015: 487). As such, colonialism continues to exist in the present, but has become invisible. For Grosfoguel, “coloniality is the darker side of modernity” (2009: 327). In this context coloniality renders some scholars useless as the system is in such a way that it does not give space for other point of views.

What is more significant with coloniality is that it is a continuation of the past that has the same effect in the present, “[i]mperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly.” (Smith 1999: 19). This feeling was expressed by some African anthropologists such as Vilakazi (1978). He expresses the experiences of the African intellectual in the Western system as follow:

the African is assumed to need the tutelage of even the most junior of Western scholars, and his facts must be checked at every point by referring everything to White teachers,

he is always politically aware that as an academic he has been co-opted into dominant of oppressive system in which he and his group are dominated, and that, through his training, he has absorbed the ideologically oriented values of his teachers (Vilakazi 1978: 241).

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) points out that colonialism and coloniality alienate Africans by instilling self-hate through self-doubt that emerges from being questioned suggesting the lack of credibility in your existence. For Du Bois (1969), these experiences develop double consciousness amongst the oppressed. Dussel explains this process of inculcation of Western ideologies that “the colonial philosophers of the periphery gaze at a vision foreign to them, one that is not their own” (1985: 12). This self-hate gets reproduced by the colonised because “[w]hen they have finished their studies they, like their colonial teachers, disappear from the map-geopolitically and philosophically, they do not exist” (ibid).

So, coloniality is carried through by the ‘former’ oppressed people’s beliefs about themselves that were/are instilled through pedagogies and epistemologies, that they are nothing and as such, they cannot contribute anything as a result, they will always go back to the former oppressor for guidance. Important to acknowledge is the fact that the process of colonisation was forceful – and so is coloniality - as Nyamnjoh points out,

The assumption is made here that such messianic qualities have imbued disciples of this epistemology with an attitude of arrogance, superiority and intolerance towards *creative* difference and appropriation. The zeal in them to convert creative difference has not excluded violence as an option, for the negotiation, no conviviality (Nyamnjoh, 2004: 164).

At the end of it all, all other thinking that comes from outside this epistemology is rendered non-existent because colonialism attempts to collapse everything. As Mudimbe argues, “the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective” (1980: 27), leaves the oppressed shuttered and assumed incapable of expressing their experiences because “that which is marginal is denied identity” (Sithole 2009: 2).

Seemingly, there are benefits to those converted to the system, as they get recognition and inclusion, which for Nhemachena *at al.* (2016) was part of colonialism hence

challenging coloniality should not be a struggle of recognition and inclusion but a space for an authentic African thought. However, Appadurai asks an important question about coloniality “[w]hat special demands does it make upon those who buy into it? (2001: 9). It would seem that being converted to the system is enough, and one has to prove this conviction, by claiming superiority and intolerance towards difference. Initiatives that attempt to challenge this system move from a very precarious position as their very existence is questioned because this oppressive system has presented itself as one size fits all. As such, the responses to this system will be thinking in action as it does not have the luxury to with acting, hence Maldonado-Torres defines decoloniality – a response to coloniality – in such a way that

is never pure nor perfect, and it does not come with a full picture of what a decolonized institution, society, or world can be. Asking for purity or perfection, for a complete plan of action, or for a complete design of the new decolonized reality are forms of decadence and bad faith (2016: 30).

More especially that even colonialism and now coloniality was/is never complete, it changes its strategies and its question such that the responses like cat and mouse (Fanon, 2008). It is indeed sinister to ask for a perfect response to coloniality, as such, this study does not claim any purity, but rather another way of looking at communities that we study as I will show in the subsequent section.

### *1.5.2 Anthropological grounding*

There is no doubt that this is an anthropological study as I used anthropological research tools in an attempt to understand the community of Esihlengeni. I draw from anthropological theorists that have advocated for understanding communities from their paradigm as Adésina explains,

The central issue in the development of a new paradigm is not just about the development of concepts. Rather it is the shift in the framework of thought and, more foundationally, the question of how we make sense of things and how we produce knowledge: this is the epistemological aspect (2002: 102)

This approach assists in understanding communities better and is supported by Nhemachena *et al.* (2016) who call for spaces for African poesies. They define this as “spaces to reimagine; remake and creatively produce African thought that has power to remake the [African] world” (2016: 24). Clearly, studying communities should take into account the experiences of communities as well because there are layers of

existence such as the epistemological difference and the colonial difference<sup>5</sup>. Mafeje, advocating for what is now referred to as colonial difference, argues,

But to impose the same concept on societies that have been effectively penetrated by European colonialism, that have been successfully drawn into a capitalist money economy and a world market, is a serious transgression (1971: 258).

Taking these into consideration, I do not use anthropological tools blindly. The history of anthropology is intertwined with the history of colonialism. As Grosfoguel (2012) argues that the starting point of Anthropology was to respond to the question posed by the ‘European man’ with regard to non-European societies: are these people human? For Thornton because of this question posed, “writing reflected an ironic vision of people who had to be explained, both to themselves and to the rest of the world” (1983: 516), and in these writings, people were created – as inferior and without history.

This indeed has been an anthropological tradition as Tylor believed that “the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier, and that the barbarian stands between” (1874: 31), and therefore the task for anthropologists was to elevate the Other. Anthropologists have admitted to these shortcomings as Evans-Pritchard once pointed out,

To comprehend what now seem to be obviously faulty interpretations and explanations, we would have to write a treatise on the climate of thought of their time, the intellectual circumstances which set bounds to their thought, a curious mixture of positivism, evolutionism; and the remains of a sentimental religiosity (1965: 5).

This admission of problematic foundations of the discipline has not been honest as it is clear that Evans-Pritchard still wanted to hold on to it as he believed in its value. Albeit, the fact that anthropology has been radicalised with postmodern critique of Clifford & Marcus (1986) and anthropological critique of Said (1989), there seem to be going back to these anthropological foundations with Comaroff (2010) still advocating for anthropology. For me, the real problem of anthropology is the fact that it draws from Western epistemology that gave birth to all Western disciplines as we know them, that base is a “[t]he point of view that represents itself as being without a point of view” (Grosfoguel 2011: 6). So, anthropological views on other societies are just their point

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<sup>5</sup> Mignolo (2000) defines colonial difference as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspectives by the colonised.

of views that were not disrupted. As DiAngelo (2011) argues that in a white supremacist world white views are dominant and are never interrupted as such they are taken as a norm. So, the problems of anthropology are rooted in their belief on Western epistemology that produces racist scholarship amongst other things. Rather than dismissing disciplines individually, it would seem logical to challenge the real problem – Western epistemology - something unimaginable and scary to Westerners and the Westernised<sup>6</sup>, but the real problem.

Despite this, I still see value in anthropology because of its conception of culture as its tool of analysis. More importantly, its method of inquiry that enabled earlier anthropologists such as Malinowski and Mauss to bring forth an understanding of other cultures that are (or we are) inherently different from Western cultures<sup>7</sup>. As Hart suggests, “[w]hen we come to consider how anthropology might contribute to the formation of a more just world society, Mauss’ example will be even more influential than at present” (2007: 9). Drawing from Mauss (1925), this thesis thus aims to produce economic knowledge rooted in the community’s logic that is not appropriated into a Western epistemic framework. The significance of this study is in Levi-Strauss’s (1969) proposition that anthropology studies other cultures so that we can learn about ourselves, I would stretch this further and argue that: so that we learn from others who are not part of this modern world that has created more problems than solutions. This thesis, therefore, is not about the betterment of the ‘world’ but is for us, Westerners and the Westernised, to be able to look at ourselves as a problem – something that we have always attributed to Others – and not a solution such that we learn from other cultures that have survived the test of time.

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<sup>6</sup> Westernised are those that are not Westerners but believers of Western epistemology and are allies of Westerners. Those that whenever one brings this issue up, are quick to bring the issue of practicality and that ‘we need to start somewhere’, despite the fact that within these Western standards, there are societies that live in an impractical world that is created by modernity.

<sup>7</sup> I take the fact that ethnography is not exclusive to anthropology as Adésina (2008) has argued, but for anthropology ethnography plays an integral part in the process of analysis and writing up research. Secondly, I take the criticism of studying societies seriously because I argue that studying other societies emanates from the very Western belief of Sameness, that even those disciplines that do not study the ‘Other’, do studies so that they can make generalisation, which is rooted in the discourse of Sameness. My findings in this study as it will be shown later, are suggesting that societies are fundamentally different. The idea of Sameness is the very crime that the Westerners committed and can never be justified, it does not matter from which angle it is argued.

### 1.5.3 African Epistemology

The thesis looks at *stokvels* from African epistemologies. Lakatos in his book titled: *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, proved that Western theories were as faulty and thus cannot be given privilege over other ways of knowing. He argues that

It turned out that all theories are equally improvable... It is sophistry and illusion, a dishonest fraud... all theories have zero probability whatever the evidence, all theories are not only equally improvable but also equally improbable (Lakatos 1967: 171).

I am aware that African epistemologies might be a questionable discourse in the Western academy. But Lakatos (1967) shows that Western epistemology is questionable, this makes all epistemologies to have an equal standing in terms of credibility. Ramose makes this point clear that all epistemologies carry the same weight as such,

where there is no footnotes, there is no reason in the fallacy underlying the demand of the non-Africans to assimilate and integrate the African into the West. At the bottom of this fallacy is expressive of the wish to appropriate experience and history for the sake of sustaining the underlying myth that only one segment of humanity has a prior, superior and exclusive right to reason (Ramose 2002: 7).

So, there has been a concerted effort from those that are beneficiaries of western epistemology to erase all other epistemologies to claim its 'exclusive right to reason', but this does not mean that other epistemologies ceased to exist, if they did, it is only in the minds on the westerners. In seeking answers from other epistemologies is not seeking answers from nothingness but bringing "these cultures to their status as actors in the history of the world-system" (Dussel 2002: 224), to build a universe where everyone can contribute in it.

This thesis moves from a belief that there is an ontological difference between black and white people that result from climate (Diop 1989). This difference in worldviews is evident in the conception of gender in African societies. Amadiume, who in her book: *Male Daughters, Female Husband* shows a totally different organization of a society from Western organisations of society. She argues that, "the gender ideology governed economical production was that of female industriousness... the pot of prosperity, were gifts, women were said to have inherited from the goddess Idemili" (Amadiume 1987: 27), something that cannot be said about patriarchal societies. It would seem that this is a matriarchal society an observation made by Diop (1989) in his research on the

organisation of African societies. This is not peculiar to African societies as Malinowski (1922) made the same observation amongst the Trobriands that women seemed to occupy powerful positions. Oyěwùmí, in her book *Invention of gender* (1997), argues that gender as a construction is constructed differently in different societies. Oyěwùmí (1997) gives a case of the Yorùbá society to show that it is not a gendered society, but rather it is organised in terms of seniority. Indeed, these studies have presented a fundamentally different organisation of other societies that is contrary to the dominant discourse of gender that universalises patriarchy. The thesis then tries to build on these inherent differences to bring forth another way of thinking about the world.

Adésína sees the universalisation of some point of views as a structural problem as he points out,

We are asked to take particular ideas of culture, forms of governance, philosophical expositions, rights discourses, patterns of interpersonal relationship, and accounting for history, among others, as universal, when in fact what is presented in the name of universalism and cosmopolitanism is fundamentally a closure. It involved an erasure; a silencing of non-Western voices and knowledge systems. Discourses with their roots in particularistic histories of Europe and North America are presented as human discourse (Adésína 2006: 134).

Sithole explains this as “the tendency to essentialise paradigms of thought in a way that serves to completely silence certain ideologies” (2011: 82) such as African ideologies. In this sense Western discourses are monologic, which suggests that we are in a dire situation to open up to other epistemologies so that we can begin to have a dialogue such that we learn from each other. In the meantime, those of us that have access to other epistemologies should continue bringing forth these different kinds of knowledges.

This study stands on the broad shoulders of the scholars that have dared to bring other epistemologies to the table for example Amadiume and Oyěwùmí. Despite the fact that their work has remained marginal, in gender discourses, as it does not feed into a popular gender discourse that universalises patriarchy. In other words, these works might seem marginal, but their contribution remains critical as the time is coming for the recognition of other epistemologies, because of the ‘enduring continuities’ that are a result of the fact that the only thing that does not change is change – that is the nature

of things that the Westerners seem to be oblivious to. The fact that Western epistemology has domination the political, economic and cultural spheres, such that there is “invisibility and even extermination of other epistemologies are at the root of Eurocentric fundamentalism” (Grosfoguel 2009: 99), does not mean that change will never come. Hence, it becomes important that we continue producing work founded on other epistemologies so that when that time for change comes, we will be ready.

## **1.6 The structure of the thesis**

This thesis has eight chapters that are divided into three parts. These chapters are organised in such way that makes the reading of the thesis easy. It is written in rhythmic form that almost all sections are divided into three, with each having more or less three paragraphs to form repetition that breaks monotonous dualism of Western discourses to re-enforces the main theme of the thesis that the nature of things is in multiples, as such, the world should be founded on multiple epistemologies such that there is no epistemology superior than the other as they are all responding to their environment. I also use sarcasm and humour to tone down the intensity of the argument. I begin the introduction of the thesis by placing it within the scholarly works that seek to break Western monotony that has dominated production of knowledge in the past two centuries. I also discuss the methods used in the study. I then move to present the findings and analysis. It concludes by tabulating the analytic conclusions that inform contribution of the study. Below I give a brief explanation of the chapters to give the reader an overview of the thesis.

### *1.6.1 Introducing the study*

The introduction of the thesis is in Chapter One where I present the thesis based on the proposal that was supposed to guide the thesis. I first highlight that even though I had a proposal, which was my guiding document, field experiences forced me to look at *stokvels* in a different light than the one as I had proposed. As a result, I change the title from *Towards the Human Economy: Understanding the Different Economic Logic of Stokvel* to *Towards the Cattle Economy: Understanding the Different Economic logic of Stokvels at Esihlengeni in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. This change was informed by the fact that the findings suggested that the idea of the human economy does not draw from the traditional values of the community of Esihlengeni as I argue in Chapter Four. The important part of Chapter One is theoretical basis of the research



problem as it sets the tone of this research, which is dealing with a still active oppressive system. Despite this coloniality of epistemology African epistemology is still at play and as such, we can still learn from it.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature to argue for the importance of this study. In this chapter, I begin by placing the study within three theoretical frameworks namely decoloniality, critical theory and African anthropology. I move on to discuss literature on *stokvels* to trace their origins and assess their relevance in contemporary South Africa. Because *stokvels* are argued to be an economic entity, I then engage broader economic system to make comparison with other economic entities that are outside of the global domain. This section reveals that economy is entangled with other structures of domination, as such, it cannot be separated from other spheres of life, a finding that economic anthropologists made about the organisation of economy in other societies. The claim that economy is an independent entity that can regulate itself is a myth that is impossible to realize. I show the entanglement of economy with other spheres of domination by bringing literature that has presented itself as challenging the capitalist while in fact it is serving the very same capitalist system. I conclude this chapter, by bringing scholarship that has studied societies outside of Western system, to draw lessons and utilise them in the thesis to make sense of the findings. This chapter argues that in order to imagine a just world, there is a need to open up to other ways of thinking, and should be acknowledged in their own right, as they are equally scientific and have been producing knowledge that has sustained societies.

I conclude this introductory section by discussing methodology, which is Chapter Three of the thesis. In this chapter, I show the tools used to show the validity of the study. In this chapter I explain how I mitigated the challenges of ethics and representation that anthropology has always been confronted with. To respond to the ethical challenges posed by participant observation and historical detail, I took the position as storyteller in addition to abiding to the ethical consideration as articulated by the university guidelines. This allowed me to use observations from a position of being a social commentator as such I do not need permission to comment about my observation. This thesis attempted to study the community of Esihlengeni outside of the western epistemology, so I used endogeneity, which is a centering of African ontological discourses and experiences, as the basis of research (Adésinà 2008: 135). This allowed

me to move away from the anthropological conundrum of Sameness that Argyrou (2012) sees as the biggest problem of anthropology in particular and Western epistemology in general.

### *1.6.2 The findings and analysis*

The findings and analysis section is divided into three, based on the themes I developed. The findings are integrated with the analysis to forge harmony and to simplify the quite complicated process of making sense of the community that operates outside the Western system within the Western university system.

In Chapter Four I investigate the connectedness of the past with the present in people's everyday lives. I focus on traditional values to show what informs the everyday experiences of the people of Esihlengeni. I connect these everyday experiences to the historical account through the genealogy of the Khumalo people to show that their culture is rooted in the notion of co-existence, connectedness and fluidity. These traditional values draw from an epistemology that respects difference, values the past and promotes change. While *stokvels* do not draw from the traditional values, the people of Esihlengeni still draw from the traditional values that are carried through knowledge systems embedded in institutions of rituals and language. I pay attention to colonial wars that took place in area, to argue that despite the narrative of being conquered, the culture at Esihlengeni did not die. I connect this undying culture to their cosmological worldview embedded in their traditional values to argue that the belief that the modern world conquered is a myth that is rooted in the conviction of Western epistemology that makes it impossible to see survivals of the presumed all-powerful. I conclude by arguing that there are systems that are more powerful than Western epistemology and have exposed the limitations and ineffectiveness of this system and we need to open up to these epistemologies.

Chapter Five discusses the phenomenon of *stokvels* at Esihlengeni. The findings reveal that *stokvels* are not inherent in the traditional values of the community of Esihlengeni as in this community, the important aspect of funerals, are the rituals for the deceased are not what *stokvels* make provision for – the coffin and groceries. Instead, this study reveals a different kind of economy that is centred on cattle, which are a means to communicate with ancestors to ensure that the journey of the deceased is completed and

therefore they become ancestors who in turn, protects and brings good luck. In this sense, the economy is not just understood in terms of material needs, but in fulfilling obligations that in return will taken care of the material needs. In this community, propitiation of the ancestors, takes precedence over accumulation of wealth, as the former guarantees the latter.

Chapter Six interprets the values that underpin *stokvels* by paying attention to the role of gender, as the *stokvel* that I studied was a woman only *stokvel*. In focusing on gender, the study reveals that contrary to the popular view of gender discourse that depicts women as the ultimate victims of all forms of oppression, black men at Esihlengeni are as excluded and exploited in the economy as their female counterparts. The colonial history of exclusion and exploitation that collapsed gender categories for the colonised is still evident in the present. But more importantly, women at Esihlengeni, draw from their past that they still remember – which is not oppressive but empowering to women - to claim their role in the community. This chapter argues that the discourse of gender equality purported by most feminist groups to address gender oppression fails to articulate the non-existence of privileges of the previously colonised men such that for their women to seek equality to their male counterparts is in fact wanting a lower status of life. Thinking from these realities, the women of Esihlengeni expressed the desire to have men that will be able to build them ‘*izibaya*’ (a kraal in plural terms) a pre-requisite of a home so that they gain the full status of womanhood and thus fulfil their responsibility to ensure continuity of life. The women of Esihlengeni call for the restoration of their men, and the restoration of their culture

### *1.6.3 The conclusions and contribution*

The aim of the study was to understand *stokvels* as an economic system, which proved to have been an ambitious assumption as it turned out that in actual fact, *stokvels* at Esihlengeni were just a capitalist entity to further exploit people such that they are unable to have a life outside of material conditions. To make this point clear, I begin this chapter by ‘narrating’ the story of Credo Mutwa on creation. However, what I did find was that the economic understanding at Esihlengeni draws from a different epistemology. This research responds to the research problem by exposing the limitations of Western sciences such that as Lakatos suggests, there is a negation of

Western epistemology in an attempt to be honest and thus present the knowledge produced at Esihlengeni in its purest form, without seeking permission from the West.

The conclusions made, do not reveal anything new, but they emphasise conclusions that have been made by scholars such as Diop, Amadiume and Oyěwùmí. From this study, I emphasise the following conclusions:

- The traditional values of the people of Esihlengeni draw from a different epistemology that respects difference, values the past and promotes change, as such, this community is ontologically different from Western society and there is no ground for Sameness. These traditional values are embedded in their everyday practices such as the propitiation of ancestors and language.
- Despite the rhetoric of economic freedom, the community of Esihlengeni calls for cultural freedom where culture encompasses politics, economy, aesthetic, spirituality, language, rituals, tradition/customs and everyday cultural practices.
- Women of Esihlengeni call for the restoration of their male-counterparts such that they are able to fulfil their mandatory obligations that ensure continuity of life.
- What these conclusions emphasise unequivocally is the fact that the community of Esihlengeni is not converted to Western epistemology but continue to draw from their cosmological worldview that has been in existence since the beginning of time.

From these conclusions, I then present my contribution that we need to study communities from their paradigms, a call already made by scholars such as Diop, Mafeje, Amadiume, Adésína, Oyěwùmí, Nyamnjoh and Sithole. This study of *stokvel*, therefore, provides evidence of another way of knowing that allows us to think about the economy differently. More salient, is the fact that, as Westerners and the Westernised, our initiatives will always be limited and contaminated as we move from a corrupt system that corrupts even the most radical scholar. The insistence to co-opt societies in our endeavours is in itself corrupt as it assumes the very same Western notion of Sameness. Indeed, we need to meditate our actions deeply as my friend,

Lerato Saohatse would say<sup>8</sup> that sometimes the most revolutionary thing one can do is to do nothing, because of the fact that some things we will never know, and we must not even try to learn those things. As Mutwa (1964) advises, we need to be content with not knowing and not doing - something that the Western man is incapable of practicing. This means that, the real work for us Westerners and the Westernised is a serious introspection that will be enhanced by listening to other point of views. This is a difficult task indeed for Westerners and the Westernised who have for a very long time been made to believe that even when they do not know, but their ignorance is always be better than the knowledge of the Other, and thus can inform the Other.

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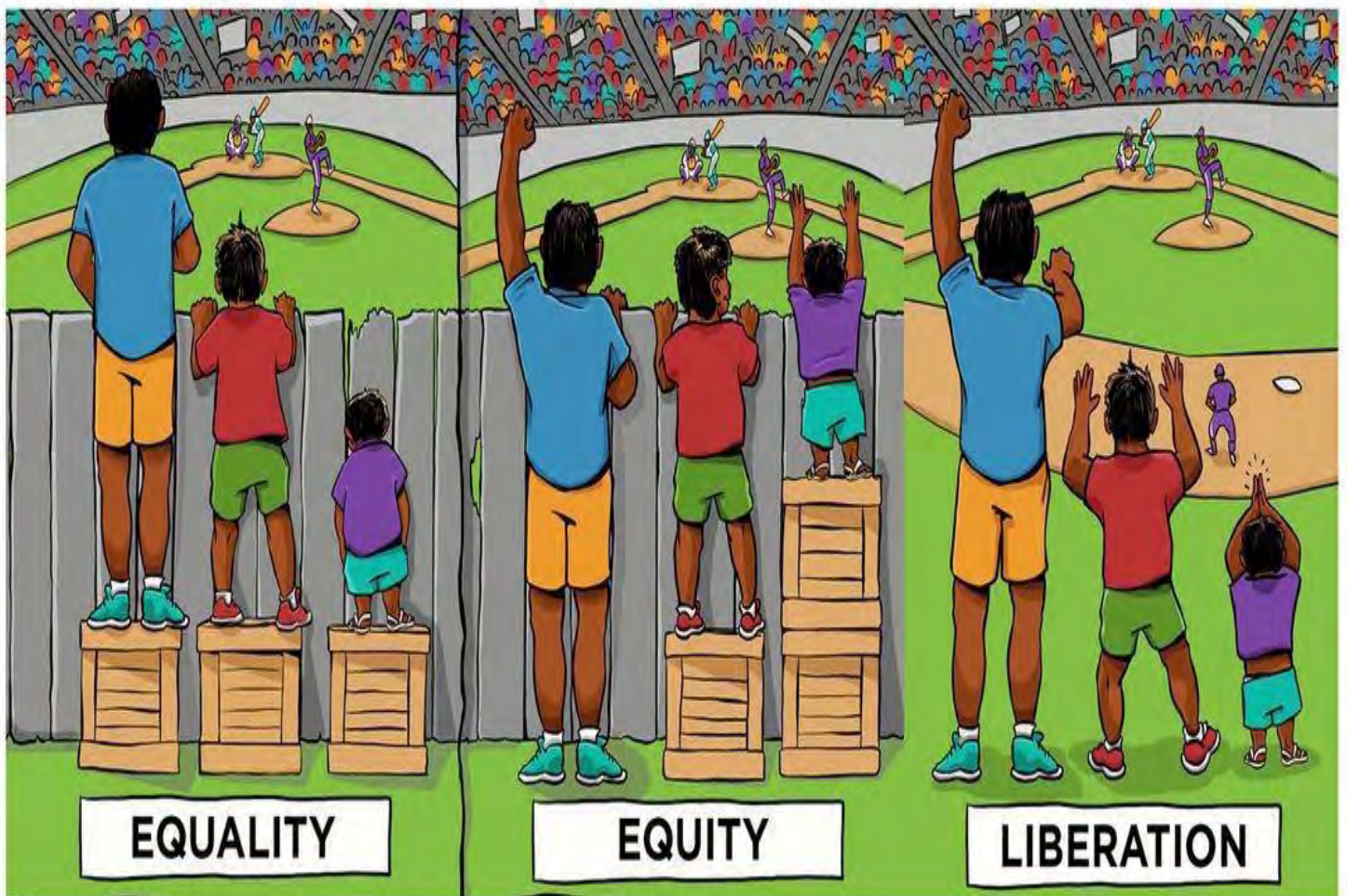
<sup>8</sup> Lerato would express these sentiments when we engage on the role of critical theories such as Marxism and feminism that attempt to infuse scholarship with activism. In doing so, they co-opt communities into their struggle, moving from the very same belief of Sameness, that while there are differences, there are more things that can bring us together. This belief thus insists on working together ignores differences to forge similarities, in the process denying communities the space to express their difference. I contend that even what is perceived as similar, will find different expression in different communities because of the ontological difference that already exists. For instance, poverty might be general, that all communities will be against, but the very same concept of poverty will mean different thing in different communities. For example, for some, poverty would mean lack of materiality such as clean water, electricity, access to formal education and the internet, while for others it would mean the inability to appease the ancestors who alone can ensure good life. As such, while there will be a seemingly common goal to 'eradicate poverty' but that very understanding of poverty would be fundamentally different, then whose definition will carry more weight? Power relations will come into play yet again; such that other views get silenced in the very initiatives that are aimed at liberating. This argument will become clearer in Chapter Six where I discuss the limitations of feminism.

Figure 3 A picture describing what it means to change the story.

This picture can be accessed on: <https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/the4thbox/>



# Don't just tell a different version of the same story. Change The Story!



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2. Introduction

In this chapter I start by discussing the theoretical framework I used to try and make sense of the findings I encountered in the field. I then proceed to look at the literature that focuses on *stokvels* with an attempt to define and critically question their necessity in the contemporary South Africa. I place *stokvels* in the culture of economy where I examine the ‘cultural’ practices of an economy while questioning the existence of economy that is independent of culture. By focusing on moral/solidarity economy and the human economy, I make a connection between the traditional economies and the contemporary economies underpinned by the logic of capitalism. I then move on to historicise capitalism using literature that traces the origins of capitalism and the culture it draws from. I furthermore introduce an African economy rooted in a different epistemology that does not separate life but rather enhances life in its totality. To clarify this kind of economy, I pay attention to the traditional values that birth different economic logics in different societies. Lastly, I discuss literature that argues for different epistemologies outside of the West.

### 2.1 Theoretical framework

This thesis draws from different theoretical frameworks namely: decoloniality, critical theory and African anthropology. While I take these theories seriously, the journey undertaken during this research taught me to look at life in its totality, which includes the past, present and future. The study attempts to understand the community I studied outside of existing academic categories although that will be difficult as this is an academic work and therefore it is embedded within the constraints of academic scholarship. As such, I could have never found one theoretical framework that would help me unpack data such that it makes sense and remains true to its epistemological underpinnings that is outside of the Western epistemology. I cannot claim that I achieved full understanding of the ways of knowing of the community, given my limitation of operating within the Western epistemology, but the different theories I used, I would posit, helped me to unpack the layers in the findings such that I am able to present a readable and coherent argument from Esihlengeni. This section draws from the significance of the study where I sought to bring forth theories in which this thesis finds solace and its voice.

### *2.1.1 Decolonial turn*

According to Maldonado-Torres, the decolonial turn refers

to an epistemic, practical, aesthetic, emotional, and oftentimes spiritual repositioning of the modern colonial subjects by virtue of which modernity, and not colonized subjects herself and himself appears as a problem (2018: 112).

While this definition offers a holistic approach to the challenges brought by the modern world, I am cautious of the presumptuous positioning of ‘colonial subjects’ as a having a homogenous experience. This thesis aims at delving into the different experiences that are a result of different epistemologies in responding to colonial experience. While I admit that there are shared experiences, I argue, there are fundamental differences emanating from people’s worldviews and these differences are ontological, and they can never be observed in the physical world (Argyrou 2012). This ‘repositioning’ therefore should not just aim at multiplicity but should begin with multiplicity to avoid the postmodern approach that emphasises Sameness in its quest to organise to the detrimental of Other – who is silenced by the over-emphasis of the shared experiences and thus shared vision. This however, should not suggest a rejection of decolonial turn, in fact this thesis is

the definitive rejection of ‘being told’ from the epistemic privileges of the zero point that ‘we’ are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and what we have to do to be recognized as such (Mignolo 2009: 3).

If anything, the thesis endorses a decolonial turn and is certainly standing on the shoulders of a decolonial school of thought that aims to produce a different kind of knowledge the kind that is different from what Mafeje (1976) criticised, as a Westernised believe in the bourgeois’ logic and even in their work, they reproduce the bourgeois discourse that is about maintaining order. This thesis aims at disrupting the order that disrupted the flow of life in communities such as *Esihlengeni*. It takes Amadiume proposition that “any work by Third World women must therefore be political, challenging the new and growing patriarchal systems imposed on our societies through colonialism and Western religions and educational influence” (1987: 9), to insist on showing cultural groundings that still exist in communities despite the overwhelming efforts to exterminate them. I firmly place my own work in such framework.



Secondly, this thesis does not define itself as decolonial by regurgitating what decolonial scholars have already uttered, but by also taking seriously the works of anthropologists that have challenged the monologue of the Western epistemic work and its will to dominate all, by showing other ways of existing and knowing such as Diop (1987, 1989, 1991); Mudimbe (1980); Mafeje (1971, 1976, 1978, 1991, 1998, 2001); Amadiume (1987, 1997, 2000); Oyěwùmí (1997, 2003, 2005, 2016); Nyamnjoh (2004, 2012, 2013, 2017) and Sithole (2004, 2007, 2009, 2011 to list just a few. These scholars started asking new questions, not the already posed question as Mafeje points out, “were we always asking ourselves the right questions? Surely an answer is as good as the question it is responding to” (Mafeje 2001: 4). Their call has been that of opening up the intellectual space for other ways of knowing. Sithole for example calls for “intellectual choreography” that she defines as “the freedom of the intellect to use the various conceptual tools at the disposal of a knowledge producer to interpret social phenomena and social reality whilst striving to be objective” (2011: 82). And this approach could indeed enrich the already dried up Western knowledge system as it refuses to acknowledge other epistemologies.

To read this thesis correctly one will need to take into account that 1) I am located somewhere, so the thesis is grounded in African scholarship, and 2) I am a storyteller, even though this thesis follows the university “standards” such as its organisation in terms of structure and the meeting of disciplinary requirements through the use of research tools and so on, I also do so much more in the study. I use everything at my disposal, as will later shown, that will assist me in telling the story of Esihlengeni in an audible manner. I build on to the works of scholars such as Diop who used disciplines of linguistic, cultural and physical anthropology, history, chemistry and physics to retrace African cultures and historicise them (1991: xiv). I thus did not confine myself within the academic canon; I used songs, poems, novels, lectures, seminars, speeches, conversations with people, common sense<sup>9</sup>, imagination and the spirit to make sense of the people of Esihlengeni. In this sense, this thesis is decolonial. In addition, I also use historical accounts to highlight trends in human experiences. Important to mention is that while this thesis is not a historical work as such, like Polanyi, I will “dwell on

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<sup>9</sup> I concede that common sense is a situated knowledge, it is not universal. With this understanding it will follow then that common sense is never common. For instance, my common sense is derived from doubting Western epistemology.

scenes of the past with the sole object of throwing light on matters of the present” (Polanyi 1944: 3).

### *2.1.2 Critical theory*

I contend that economic/Marxists anthropologists’ contributions do not lie in integrating politics and intellectual life as Hart (2014) suggests, but on understanding societies outside of Western epistemology. Even though some Marxist anthropologists have been within the convictions of Western epistemology such that they were unable to see societies outside of capitalism, some, such as Wolf (1988; 1992), correctly argue that societies did have history before their contact with the capitalist system although they were not able to discover that history as Mauss and Malinowski did. It is in this context that I find economic/Marxist anthropologists useful in this study but using Mafeje’s (1976) warning that those who actually label themselves as Marxists are problematic as they still maintain Western epistemology that is founded on the bourgeoisie’ logic. To cut the curse of Western epistemology, one needs to understand the communities from their own paradigms (Adésina 2002; Sithole 2004, 2011).

In short, economic and Marxist anthropologists operated within Western epistemology, and consequently maintained the status quo that Westerners are a standard for/of humanity. As Meillassoux admits that “the concepts of liberal economics, derived from the analysis of capitalist societies, are both inadequate and inappropriate for the analysis of pre-capitalist societies” (1972: 93). However, Meillassoux still finds Marx’s distinction between land as subject of labour and land as “instrument of production” (ibid) still useful even though he admits that liberal economic concepts are inadequate and inappropriate for some societies. His assertion takes Marx’s out of space and time. He seems to advance that even though Marx could be located somewhere, he was able to transcend the limitations of his context and therefore was able to provide relevant analysis that is applicable in all societies. Graeber however, brings a different approach to that of Meillassoux as he argues “genuine materialism, then, would not simply privilege a ‘material’ sphere over an ideal one. It would begin by acknowledging that no such ideal sphere actually exists” (2006: 71), suggesting a negation of the received knowledge of Marxist anthropologists that insist on Marx’s analysis. It does seem that capitalism was born out of crisis or within crisis, as such, even with the radical stance by economic/Marxist anthropologists it remains limited. For Appadurai, “this much

excellent work in Marxist tradition had no special interest in problems of voice, perspective, or location in the study of global racism” (2001: 5), because Marxist scholars could not admit the root of the problem was the epistemology that birth the capitalist system not just the economic system itself.

With the challenges brought by the capitalist economy, as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes clear that there is a need to look elsewhere for solutions. In responding to this, Dussel correctly identifies the problem as embedded in modernity and thus calls for “Trans-modernity”. For him, trans-modernity “demands a whole new interpretation of modernity in order to include moments that were never incorporated into the European version” (Dussel 2002: 223). This can mitigate problems identified by Mafeje that “[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (1971: 6). However, what needs to be pointed out is that what Dussel (2002) is pointing out goes beyond the narrow analysis of the Marxists that reduced capitalist problems as a class problem. Dussel (2002) argues that the capitalist problems are much deeper as they exist at the epistemological level. Hart (2000) points out that even up-to-today, there are people who still hold on the former view of Marxism as the best thing that has ever happened, despites its failure to solve any problems of the class they claimed to represent, today, that class is still here, and in a worse condition than before. Hart writes:

Now the nostalgic left is likely to dream of rebuilding the states which once seemed to carry the aspirations of the masses everywhere. This utopian exercise fails to come to grips with the forces changing our world: virtual capitalism, a corollary of the communications revolution; weakening state management of capitalism; and the apparent dominance of markets driven by ‘wild’ money, that is, money no longer subject to the national controls typical of the Bretton Woods era (2000: 5).

Clearly, this reveals the limitation of separating economy from epistemology, which could be the result of thinking from concrete experiences not in abstraction a point Marx made. If lived experiences of the masses have worsened and the state decapitated, this might suggest that thinking from abstraction – from the invisible – might be necessary. In other words, thinking cannot be limited to lived experiences<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> I take this from the fact that the economy is becoming more and more informal and it has become more difficult to define a working class in terms of Marx’s definition that focused on the shop floor. It has also become increasingly clearer that the problem we are dealing with is not just a class problem but race problem. Grosfoguel (2012) argues that race for white people mitigates all forms of oppression while

### 2.1.3 African anthropology

In Africa, anthropology has always been treated with suspicion due to its connection with colonialism (Hlabangane & Radebe 2016). In response, the anthropologist Kenyatta wrote a book: *Facing Mount Kenya* (1963), that sort to represent the Other of Western anthropology who is himself different. However, this attempt was not that much different from his teacher Malinowski, as it studied Gikuyu culture in English<sup>11</sup>. As a result, anthropology became unpopular with many African universities resulting in them closing the anthropology departments after independence (Mafeje 2001)). In South Africa, however, anthropology remained strong because of the country's history of white people controlling the institutions, a situation that has not changed up-to-today. South Africa has had many discounted African anthropologists such as Vilakazi, Magubane and Mafeje who were vocal in raising the problems of the discipline – and were ignored within South African anthropology. But the pivotal scholars such as Mafeje remained and were able to transcend the narrow politics of the discipline and connect these politics with the broader global politics as he argued, “the intellectual effort was a service to colonialism not because of crude suppositions about direct conspiracy or collusion but mainly because of the ontology of its thought categories” (1976: 318). Mafeje made a major breakthrough, as he brought disciplines together and exposed the fragmentation that served to hide the source of the problems that emanated from modernity.

The Mafeje (1976) tradition continues with relatively recent anthropologist such as Sithole continuing to raise the epistemological issues that affect the discipline.

all knowledge has indigenous origins and can only strive for objectivity and universal application... of thought, there are real challenges on the ground pertaining, for example, to how official development and professional practice have ignored people's

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on the colonised, it aggravates their oppressions. It would therefore make no sense to focus on class over race for the colonised, because their problems first and foremost are primarily race problems. Amadiume (1987) argues that those that would suggest that class should take precedence over race are adding ‘insult to injury’.

<sup>11</sup> In the preface Malinowski, states that Kenyatta underwent ‘training’ that ‘qualified’ him to study his culture. From this I presume that he was trained in English and therefore had to translate the Western concept to understand his culture (something we all do, I am doing exactly that as I am writing this thesis) and in that way his thinking was still within Western epistemology. As a result, a lot of African leaders lost confidence in anthropology and could not see any value in it. This development led to, departments of anthropology suffering a lack of support in most independent African countries (Mafeje 2001).

perspectives of their problems and solutions, merely out of assuming the scientific and analytical superiority of its own discourses (Sithole 2004: 443).

The understanding that thought emanate from somewhere, sheds light in that it exposes the lie of Western science which somehow assumes that there can be a way of thinking outside of location and thus thinking can come from everyone. For Sithole (2004), thinking happens everywhere, but what is more important is that, the located thought is in a better position to respond to problems faced. It is in this context that Appadurai asks this question, “[c]an we find ways to legitimately engage scholarship by public intellectuals here and overseas whose work is not primarily conditioned by professional criteria of criticism and dissemination?” (2000: 14). This, however, should not be about appropriating knowledge outside of Western epistemology, but about allowing people to think for themselves, drawing from their knowledge systems that still exists in many communities. In other words, there is a need to disrupt Western epistemology that “locates manifestations of the Self [Western man] in Other societies in an effort to mediate the opposition and show that Others are far more similar to the West that it may at first appear” (Argyrou 2012: 29). This should also allow other epistemologies to thrive and enter into a dialogue with Western epistemology from a position of strength.

African anthropology is possible because communities are capable of thinking for themselves. It is also possible because we have African people who draw from knowledge systems that are fundamentally different from the Western worldview. However, these ways of knowing as Nyamnjoh posits, are still silenced

Representations of Africa are often blindly crafted without rigorous systematic dialogue with the Africans in question, rather than reflecting on the way that competing perspectives and epistemologies within and beyond our discipline require a reconsideration of the analytic mechanisms through which we understand Africans’ social worlds (2013: 133).

As such, African knowledges are still viewed as inferior because real knowledge is out there, in the selected minds of Westerners, and seldom, the Westernised individuals. This according to Mudimbe, “anthropology and philology and all social sciences can be really understood only in the context of their epistemological region of possibility” (1980: 29), which means that the universal notion of knowledge is just a myth. More so, that “these sciences as well as their trends, their truths as well as their experiences,

being derived from a given space, speak from it and, primarily, about it” (ibid: 29). It would seem logical therefore to embrace difference in all spheres of life where all societies are allowed a space for self-determination. To insist on universalism that excludes other people is an injustice, but for imperialism, it is presented as good and normal while it turns reality upside down, “the abnormal is viewed as normal and the normal as viewed as abnormal” (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986: 28). African anthropologists have a task at hand, to continue to write ethnographies that show the knowledge systems of other societies as evidence that thinking happens everywhere, instead of dreaming about one human race maybe we need to dream about co-existence. The understanding of *stokvels* therefore is better placed within the tradition of African anthropology so that they are understood within an epistemological grounding that is still in existence.

## **2.2 The *stokvels***

As early as the 1940s *stokvels* had begun to draw attention as an economic response to the hardship experienced as part of urban life (Kuper & Kaplan, 1944). According to Verhoef (2001), *stokvels* were started by women who had migrated to the city and had a hard time finding employment in the formal sector, such as mining. In order to survive they therefore had to turn to a range of informal economic activities such as domestic work, food selling, beer brewing and selling, and so on. In addition, they had to find ways to stretch their household income and save for the future (ibid: 260). Even though it was women who started *stokvels*, men now make up 42% of the membership (Mulaudzi 2017). For Lukhele (1990), *stokvels* were not just about savings but also and most importantly, about entertainment. Magubane argue that this was a result of colonial conditions that restricted Africans participation in the markets and who therefore needed to create support systems for themselves (1971: 429). In this light, it would seem that *stokvels* are not just an economic vehicle but have a broader social context.

### *2.2.1 What's in the name?*

According to Calvin & Coetzee (2010) the name '*stokvel*' originated from the term 'stock fairs', the rotating cattle auctions of English settlers in the Eastern Cape during the early 19th century. While this information can be questionable as none of the people interviewed and the literature reviewed could confirm this, the fact of the matter is that

the word *stokvel* cannot be traced to any South African local languages<sup>12</sup>. Based on the sound of the word and the way it is written, the word does not connect to any of these languages. What is also important to note is that the name *stokvel* is often used loosely to describe different kinds of savings and insurances, it is not a word that is strictly used to describe one particular activity, but any activity that includes people coming together to save money (Mulaudzi 2017). *Stokvels* have also evolved over time such that it does not mean what it used to mean during the 70s and 80s, for instance, it is no longer viewed as being about entertainment as Lukhele (1990) points out but has now become about economic relief and providing financial support in times of need.

For Verhoef (2001), *stokvels*, also known as *mohodisano*, *umgalelo*, or *gooigooi*, are a type of Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA). These names are basically explaining what *stokvels* do. For instance, *mohodisano* is a Sotho/Tswana name that means to ‘pay each other’ meaning rotation *Umgalelo* is a Xhosa word that means to pour, and again it a name that explains what *stokvel* does, they all pour something that will be shared later. *Gooigooi* comes from the Afrikaans word: *gooi* which means to throw, when used in the township slang it is to put aside small change. These names suggest that the *stokvels* have fundamentally changed from their origins that incorporated the social elements but now focus on financial needs. The names given to the *stokvels* allude to what many theorists have shown about *stokvels* that they are a response to the environment and thus a coping mechanism. The names clearly show that they do not draw from traditional values but from the conditions that communities find themselves in Kuper & Kaplan (1944) and Ardener (1964). It is important to note that the definition of rotating credit is unable to cover all forms of rotating credit found worldwide (Anku-Tsede 2013: 150). Although *stokvels* can be viewed as ROSCAs, one should not negate the fact that they have a specificity that needs to be explored. It would seem that *stokvels*, in South Africa are a coping mechanism which have, in recent years been spoken of a ‘hidden economy’ – that though does not participate in the formal financial institutions - has been incorporated into the mainstream economy and thus their informality has become questionable.

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<sup>12</sup> I am using local instead of indigenous because in this thesis I posit that all people are indigenous somewhere. I take Sithole’s argument referring to knowledge production that all knowledge is indigenous somewhere, I add, so are the people.

According to Geertz (1962), among the Arisan in rural Java, there exists a tradition of families helping each other to survive. If there is a problem in a particular family, an entire neighbourhood will come out to assist it and at the end the family will throw a big feast to show appreciation. The family, together with other families will also – to other households in need, do the same way it was helped (1962: 244). Geertz argues that ROSCAs draw from this traditional value of families helping each other. Geertz (1962) is supported by Bascom who argues that to survive under harsh conditions migrants had to draw from their ancient economic institutions (Bascom 1952). However, in the South African context it is not clear which traditional value do *stokvels* draw from other than being a coping mechanism. And also, the *stokvels* cannot be understood as *eSusu* from Yorùbá culture. The *eSusu*, which can be regarded as ROSCAs, are an ancient economic system of the Yorùbá people based on the same logic as *stokvels* (ibid). According to Bascom, “there is no European institution which is strictly comparable, or which suggests itself as a model from which the *eSusu* might have been derived” (1952: 69). While *eSusu* are inherent to Yorùbá culture, the same cannot be argued about *stokvels*, as even the names that are given to them do not reflect any inherent traditional values. It would seem befitting therefore to understand the role of *stokvels* in order to gather the values that inform it.

### 2.2.2 The role of *stokvels*

Although it is argued that *stokvels* are an economic response to capitalism, they can also be viewed as responding to social needs as argued in the introduction (p. 2); and this is beyond the capitalist logic of profit. *Stokvels* have proved to be concerned about the happiness of members and is expressed as an entertainment component of *stokvels*. Magubane (1971) attributes the entertainment aspects of *stokvels* to harsh conditions that people have historically wanted to escape. It would therefore seem from this argument that *stokvels* are a coping mechanism. As such, they can be understood as imposed on Africans, after the “Western system destroyed social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility” (Rodney 1982: 254-255). *Stokvels* have become important in saving money but also in ensuring that people “keep the connection between them and ‘home’” (Maynard 1996: 106). Their members often consist of people coming from the same area. According to Scott (1985), coping mechanisms such as *stokvels* can be understood as the weapons of the weak. In South Africa, these mechanisms sustained communities under the harsh



conditions of apartheid. So, the saving components, was never just aimed at addressing the material needs but can be read as insisting on the relations that are broken by the system and on forging a sense of belonging in a place that has alienated people from their community.

Clearly, *stokvels* are a creative response to the harsh realities of a new environment and can therefore not be seen as mere coping strategies (Krige 2010: 6). This should suggest that *stokvels* are informed by a different logic from the fundamentally dualist Western logic (Karp & Masolo 2000). The question they seem to address is “how economies transactions are implicated in processes of political articulation or discontent, and in the shaping of new and emergent identities” (Hull & James 2012: 9). Thus given their focus, they can be understood as a political response, similar the Scotts’ *Weapons of the weak*. Their creativity can thus be understood as resistance more than people drawing from their members’ traditional values. In a system that is aimed at destroying human relations such that people are concerned with narrow individual needs, the best form of resistance would be to find creative ways to insist on these human relations and find ways to create new ones. These creative ways, are fundamentally oppositional to the system of oppression as their aim is to resist the oppressive system but they should not be associated with traditional values.

This seemingly holistic economic approach of *stokvels*, is not holistic when defined from the paradigm of the community of Esihlengeni that believe on the continued existence of those that have passed on (Koenane 2014; Ramose 2002; and Adésina 2002). It would seem that this ‘holistic’ approach of *stokvels* is in actual fact not so holistic as it does not take into account the rituals that surround their members’ belief system but narrowly focuses on narrow material needs of those that are still alive. It is in this context that I choose to use creative instead of holistic. It would seem that the authors that have argued that *stokvels* are holistic have are studied communities using Western epistemology and, in a way, imposed concepts on these communities because from an African perspective, holistic is inclusive of the metaphysical not just the physical realities. Mafeje, attributes this misconception to the fact that intellectuals “were products of the capitalist imperialist era... they were an integral part of that movement as well as its agents” (1976: 317), as such they produce knowledge befitting Western knowledge system not knowledge that is rooted in the communities’

worldview. *Stokvels* would need to be understood from the community's perspective if they are to contribute to a different understanding of the economy.

### 2.2.3 Influences of capitalism in *stokvels*

To understand *stokvels* holistically such that we are able to understand their foundations, will require some historical background of the emergence of similar entities. As it were, capitalism can be understood as an economic system born of crisis. Mafeje (1976) argues that sciences were born out of the resistance of the masses and were meant to give order. The resistance against capitalism is seen even in the most passive forms that Scotts (1985) refers to as the weapons of the weak. However, these forms of resistance have never discouraged the capitalist agenda as Mudimbe points out that, "if colonialism was inconsistent with economic development, it was at least, since its inception, quite consistent with its own economic interests and objectives" (Mudimbe 1980: 7). In other words, despite the efforts of rejecting it in Europe - where it was born – it was transported to other parts of the world with the same intentions to maximize profits. And the consequences of this economy in its colonies do not necessitate "to consult the classical Marxist writers" (Nkrumah 1967: 4), as when it came to the colonies it changed its colours and was not just capitalist, but racist too. When it came to the colonised it was no longer the same as when it left Europe. For the colonised societies, they had to deal with capitalism that had a surname: RACE. Thus, there can never be a universal ideology to challenge capitalism. It is in this context that we can understand the creativity of *stokvels* quite unique to other economic entities that respond to capitalism. They are responding to a unique predicament, even though they are responding to capitalism like other entities.

The universalist foundation of Western thinkers remains in motion and Marxist theory continues to be sold as a universal solution to capitalism, even though the colonies have never been confronted with a pure capitalist economy benefiting the bourgeoisies at the expense of the working class. The West is completely oblivious to the fact that there were other ways of knowing outside of Western logic. It is continuing with its problematic analysis that reduces everything into materialism. It is in this context that according to Graeber

Critical theory thus ended up sabotaging his own best intentions, making power and domination so fundamental to the very nature of social reality that it became impossible to imagine a world without it (2001: 31).

Because it has embraced the universal logic it cannot see beyond what is dissected in the West, as the West is the universe. Thinkers such as Césaire have identified the limitation of Marxism. He argues,

What I want is that Marxism and communism be placed in the service of black people and not black people peoples in service of Marxism and communism. That the doctrine and the movement would be made to fit men not men to fit the doctrine or the movement (1956: 150).

In essence, Césaire speaks to the whole Western attitude that came with the readymade solutions that somehow were believed to fit everywhere. Marxists were no exception, as such its ideology needs to be investigated as well. For Graeber, “it [Marxism] also took those very Western cultural standards as the ground of everything it wished to criticize” (2001: 25). And this, became its limitation in terms of coming up with a more genuine critique to capitalism. Thus, it ended up serving capitalism in the sense that it emphasises the fact that thinking can only be done in a particular region of the world.

The universalisation of capitalism has influenced all other economic entities such that the nuances that could be reveal different economic logic are silenced. Notwithstanding that such entities exist as a response to capitalism and thus have to give in to the demands of the capitalist’s system. For instance, the *stokvels*’ reasons for savings has become about accumulating (Matuku & Kaseke 2014) instead of resisting the need to accumulate, as such they feed into capitalist demands. However, what needs to be stated categorically, is that capitalism in the colonies was different from capitalism in Europe, as Mafeje points out,

It then becomes evident that at Independence African countries lacked a national bourgeoisie of any sort, unless concepts are used in a loose and meaningless way... African state capitalism is neither a colossal class conspiracy in origin nor an outcome of pre-existing African forms. It is a product of as well as a response to colonial underdevelopment (1978: 29).

This quote reveals two things, that even after capitalism some societies: 1) could not produce real bourgeoisie and 2) still drew from their different cultures. It makes sense therefore that *stokvels* would have a different approach to an economic understanding even though they are responding to capitalists needs and influenced by it. As such,

*stokvels* do not draw from a different economic system, but are a product of the capitalist system but that opposes the system it gave birth to it.

### **2.3 The capitalist economy**

So far, I have been talking about capitalism in relation to other things. It might clarify many things if we come to this monster directly to locate its origins and its intentions. It is an institution that is man-made. What needs to be clarified further here is the ontological difference of the society it birthed. Capitalism has presented itself as universal and therefore taking a natural form by providing the evidence that ever since its conception it has survived all forms of criticism. For Masolo “capitalism is not an attitude of mind that stops with mere material gain to satisfy an immediate material need, but as the scope of life based on individual and free initiative” (1980: 424). To universalise capitalism, at best suggests that all cultures could produce a capitalist economic system, at worst, it denies other cultures ontological difference and thus the ability to express different economic logics that are not founded on prosperity of individuals. To deny the different logics hides the abnormal worldview of the Westerners that imagined something as barbaric as capitalism to be defined as progress (Césaire 1956). But more importantly, this denial prevents possible alternatives to this dysfunctional economy.

#### *2.3.1 Historicising capitalism*

Liberal economy as we know it today is founded on Adam Smith assertion that propagated for the individual’s self-regulation, moving from an assumption that everyone can feel ‘pity and compassion’ for others (1776 [1950]). This position based on the invisible pity and compassion, was opposed by Marx as he advocated for a move from the concrete. Marx in his book *The Grundrisse* criticises materialism that lacks dialectics in the face of the human practice of transforming nature and oneself. For him, production of knowledge is a result of the material development of the relations of production and forces of production (1857-8 [1973]). As he was advancing his thinking, Marx (1858 [1965]) took a task to study economic formations that preceded capitalism to locate it in history. He traced private ownership of the means of production to feudal system (1858 [1965]). Graeber correctly argues that, “capitalism is a product of history, that it was preceded by other types of economic formations and that it is bound to give

way, in turn, to a different one. (Graeber 2006: 96). As already showed in the previous sections that capitalism is not universal. Masolo continues to elaborate this point:

it is impossible to see how capitalism could be present in African traditional society from the point of view of Marxist theory. Instead, even in modern times, what this capitalistic intrusion has produced is not its image as Marx pre-conceived would be resulting case, but rather a state of underdevelopment, a peripheric dependent capitalism or better still, a state of accumulation on a world scale (Samir Amin), a state of feudal societies (Masolo 1980: 426).

Diop emphasises the fact that African societies never had the economic formations presented by Marx (1858 [1965]). He argues “Africa never had the rural capitalist who was the farm-owner acting as intermediary between the true owner of the soil and the expropriated agricultural wage-earner” (Diop 1987: 150).

It would seem that the economic formations of the pre-industrial Europe were informed by its history that as argued in Chapter One, section 1.1.2 that what we know as West today is a product of Europe that, “was “shut in” since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which prevented – despite the efforts of the Crusades – any contact with the most weighty elements of the culture technology, and economics of the “Old World”” (Dussel 2014: 12). It is this isolation that can be interpreted as coming out of age of Europe that gave birth to the capitalist economy that is centred on individuality. But certainly, other societies had been in existence and had very matured economies that were not trying to establish themselves. This is history that the West has been working very hard to dissociate itself with, hence they want to claim that life begins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – their enlightenment period - and all the centuries that preceded the 16<sup>th</sup> century should be forgotten by everyone as they do not exist in their history. Yet capitalism, despite its distinctly Western routes is often presented as if it is universal – to use an analogy – it is the broom that sweeps all.

### *2.3.2 The broom that sweeps all*

Referring to Western feminism that presents itself as necessary and a solution to all societies, Nzegwu (2012) argues that it is the broom that sweeps all. I want to use this analysis to capitalism and its converts, who project it as inescapable and argue that all thinking should begin with capitalism as there is nothing outside of it. Economic anthropologists such as Mauss (1925) and Polanyi (1944; 1957) have attempted to go

beyond capitalism in their economic conceptualisation. In fact, Malinowski (1922) attempted to make sense of the traditional economy when he focused on the kula, the trading system in Melanesian New Guinea that he defined as “rooted in myth, backed by traditional law, and surrounded with magical rites” (1922: 86). The point was to show the sophistication of the natives’ economy, as Westerners believed that the natives’ systems were simplistic because the minds of the natives were simple (where the hierarchy placed white English men at the top, and everyone else below, in a Darwinian social evolutionary sense). Malinowski’s attempt to prove that the natives or the primitives had something to offer to Westerners was followed by Marcel Mauss (1925) in his book titled: *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. He argued against the capitalist economy by focusing on the notion of gift amongst Archaic societies. This revealed that economic worldview is fundamentally different from society to society. Later Dalton went on to argue that “the differences between primitive economic organization and our own are so great that a special set of concepts, leading ideas, and terms are necessary to analyse these subsistence economies” (1969: 65). Dalton introduced the importance of developing the concepts as a way to acknowledge the fundamental difference of other societies in terms of their economy. Many economic or Marxist anthropologists celebrated this view, as I will elaborate later.

Capitalism was thus a base or the reason to understand other societies, as Marxist anthropologies had come to understand that the capitalist system was detrimental to many societies hence the need to identify a different economic logic outside of the capitalist logic. However, these attempts were met with the view that the dominance of capitalism has destroyed all possible values that gave rise to a moral economy in a context of pre-capitalist peasant societies that was driven by economic justice (Scott 1977: 3). Anthropologist such as Wolf supported this totalising conception of capitalism. He points out, “many societies which were habitually treated by anthropologists as static entities were in fact produced and constructed in the course of the global expansion of capitalism” (Wolf 1988: 753). According to him, the dominance of capitalism has destroyed other societies. He states, “anthropologists have to shift their emphasis from society to the individual, with the individual maximizing, strategizing, plotting or creating, inventing, and altering the inherited circumstances of life” (Wolf 1988: 760).

The belief of capitalism as an omnipotent that penetrates everywhere and conquer all which is a myth. have been adopted by many, and scholars such as Comaroff & Comaroff have based their work on looking for “sub-cultures, informal economies, and marginal minorities, for ritual and resistance to capitalism” (1999: 280), because in their belief, there is nothing that can be found outside of the capitalist system. For Rose, the efforts to understand cultures within the capitalist framework results in a fact that

culture is viewed as something to be adapted to capitalist use - where the best aspects of an indigenous culture are commonly understood as those most easily adaptable to capitalism (2014: 378-37).

While economic or Marxist anthropologists might seem to be against capitalism, their belief that capitalism is everywhere serves the very system they claim to fight as whatever they find in other societies gets co-opted to as it is the most powerful according to their belief. Responding to this, Rose suggests that “in order to base a community’s contemporary economic development on traditionalist ideas, one must first understand what traditional indigenous values and practices are, and from there an inclusive and bottom-up approach” (2014: 379). Clearly, according to this suggestion, there is no thinking of replacing the capitalist system as the earlier economic anthropologists such as Mauss (1925) attempted to do, to think of an alternative economic system altogether. Graeber posits, “[b]ut for a nineteenth century evolutionist, for instance, the point of gathering the data about a particular society was to determine where it stands in a grand historical series, and to discover how its existence might reveal something about the universal history of mankind” (2001: 21), not to co-opt societies into the capitalist system.

### *2.3.3 Totality of the economy*

The understanding of other societies’ economies has been founded on comparing them with the capitalist economy, which is an anthropological foundation of comparing the Other as argued in Chapter One. However, the ethnographies that have been discussed so far, reveal something that is totally different to the Western economic worldview and an economy that is based on ‘gifts’. While Western economy is centred on profits, it would seem that these economies are centred on obligations. According to Hann, ethnographies are a result of people “who study the full range of actual human societies [hence they] emphasize the diversity of forms of exchange and their motivations and

resist what they consider to be seductive reductionisms” (2006: 221). It becomes clear that in order to understand other societies’ economies, it is important to understand them in their culture in order to provide a full understanding of the societal belief system, which is inclusive in the economic behaviours. Most of the economic anthropologists can be credited for this, as they were able to identify the fundamental difference between Western economy and the economies of other societies.

Another significant difference between Western economy and the one of other societies is that it is holistic as Levi-Strauss argues,

These native Hawaiians’ utilization of their available natural assets was well-nigh complete – infinitely more so than that of the present commercial era which ruthlessly exploits the few things that are financially profitable for the time being, neglecting and often obliterating the rest. (1962: 2).

This would seem to be a more holistic approach that had observed by Firth as he argues, “primitive societies have been governed by social criteria, moral rule, ritual proscription” (1929: 8). It should be noteworthy that this inclusive economy draws from a particular belief system where everything has life, even the so-called natural resources. It would follow then, that nothing would be solely for individual’s indulgence. This belief system will thus guide the ‘gifts’ – that are a cornerstone of the economy in some societies – that Mauss argues as “prestations which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested” (Mauss 1925:1). Because of the connectedness of the physical and the metaphysical (from the conception of the living-dead), individuals are aware of the obligatory nature of giving for there are consequences of not doing such. For Graeber, this belief system also enhances good relation amongst the group as he argues, “Gifts act as a way of creating social relations. They create alliances and obligations between individuals or groups who might otherwise have nothing to do with one another” (Graeber 2001: 27). This kind of organising society seems to be able to discourage greed, a disease that seems incurable amongst Westerners.

What it would seem we need to come to terms with is the ontological difference between Western and other societies that Diop’s (1991) attributes to the climate. Diop argues that Westerners were faced with scarcity hence the obsession with material needs but also the need to always have more as their reality has been that basic needs



such as food are not guaranteed. The same cannot be said about other societies. Graeber observed the lack of emphasis on material needs on other societies,

While any society has to produce food, clothing, shelter and so forth, in most societies the production of such things as houses, manioc, canoes is very much seen as subordinate moment in larger productive processes aimed at the fashioning of humans (2001: 71)

It can be argued therefore that the future of the world would be in understanding that life is whole, while material needs are important, but so are the spiritual needs as they ensure harmony in social relations. This is something that people of the world have not experienced since the advent of capitalism and the domination of Western epistemology that has suffocated other ways of existing, other ways of knowing. As such, Western epistemology has deprived societies an opportunity to grow “on their own, by means of internal growth, interior necessity, and organic progress, without anything exterior coming to warp, alter, or compromise this growth” (Césaire 1956: 35). But that does not mean that societies have not grown on their own, but this growth has not found expression in Western epistemology as it is always referred back to capitalism.

## **2.4 Other economies**

It would seem befitting to look at other economies, a task that many economic anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922); Mauss (1925); and Polanyi (1944; 1957) undertook to argue that there were other ways of understanding economy that was more comprehensive than Western capitalism that separated economy from other social spheres of life. Malinowski can be argued as the first economic anthropologist with his in-depth study on the Trobriands. The first important discovery he made was that it was not possible to study the economy of this community outside of its culture. Second to this was the fact that its form of economy, the *kula* “is not a surreptitious and precarious form of exchange. It is, quite on the contrary, rooted in myth, backed by traditional law, and surrounded with magical rites” (Malinowski 1922: 86). Even though these economic anthropologists seemed progressive in their outlook of other societies, they did not reject the Western foundations in which their studies were standing on<sup>13</sup>. They

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<sup>13</sup> In the previous section I showed that capitalism is embedded in an epistemology that is not universal but WESTERN. Rejection of Western epistemology, in this thesis, is also about rejection the notion of universalism that Western epistemology is advancing. As such, rejecting Western epistemology should open up a space for other epistemologies so that we can start relating to the Western way of knowing as one of the ways of knowing not the only way of knowing. While Western epistemology might not be inherently wrong as it gives meaning to its environment, it has become wrong by imposing this meaning to all other societies in the academy.

did however; shed light to other ways of understanding economies that were informed by other cosmologies, such that we are able to build on them. In this section, I give a brief description of economies that are outside of capitalism as evidence that they do exist, and my call for looking elsewhere is not calling for imaginary economies but economies that exist and have a different worldview of life.

#### *2.4.1 Drawing from tradition*

Ethnographic accounts that are presented in this chapter are evidence that there are other ways of knowing; it is befitting therefore to focus on such knowledge. With an understanding that unlike Westerners, societies produce knowledge to respond to the realities of the environment and learning from such knowledge will yield to proper knowledge that Masolo advocates for

for a thought born out of, based upon and reflecting our particular experiences within a historical progress will lead to a true African philosophy as an intellectual undertaking conditioned in its attitude, mood, and orientation by realities of environment (1980: 423).

However, for Ramose, to achieve this ‘choreography’ of knowledge, we will,

need to have the patience to take anew; the strength to redo that which has been undone; the strength to invent instead to follow; the strength to “invent” our path and to clear it of ready-made, those petrified forms that obstruct it... the struggle for justice, the struggle for culture, the struggle for dignity and freedom (2002: 38).

Being in the academy becomes a struggle, if we are to bring other ways of knowing. As such, this struggle is not just an economic struggle, but is the struggle to exist as fully human, a struggle for self-determination and indeed, a struggle for difference. And all this can be achieved if we open space for learning, to learn from knowledges that have survived all subjugations. More important, this struggle to open space for learning is premised on what is already there, that we need to find ways on how to bring to the fore.

For this thesis, it is important to mention that in its endeavours to join in this academic struggle, it acknowledges that there are thinkers who have paved the way, it is not starting from scratch but building on to our predecessors, to maintain connectedness and forge continuity. Indeed, I am not starting from abstraction but from the already discovered knowledge that has proven that capitalism could not have been conceived

in some societies as Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1925; Firth 1929; Polanyi 1944, 1957; Levi-Strauss 1969; Diop 1987 and Graeber 2001, 2006 have shown. I take seriously the advice from Amadiume that

Third world women can ignore historical and cultural differences only at their own peril, in view of the damage already inflicted by colonialism and still being inflicted by neo-colonialism and western feminism imperialism (1987: 9).

The tradition of the scholars that challenge the monotony of Western epistemology is founded on the existing knowledge as Oyěwùmí points out that her work is based on Ifá as Yorùbá thought system to “exhumes subjugated knowledge that was transmitted orally originally” (2016: 12). With this, I assert that there is a lot of work that has been done to prove that there are many ways of knowing, more work needs to be done in advocating that these ways of knowing still exist, this thesis provides that evidence. What I need to state categorically though is that advocating for these other ways of knowing is not to argue for the replacement of Western epistemology, but to argue that it exists among others and its strength and weakness can only be weighed amongst those not upon self proclamation.

#### *2.4.2 The economy of amaZulu*

This study moves from a position that, while there are similarities in societies, there are differences. To avoid, making blanket statements, I start by focusing on amaZulu as a group not as blacks or Africans because they have their culture that converges but at the same time have some divergence from other African nations, hence they are amaZulu. I focus on amaZulu because the people of Esihlengeni are amaZulu and as such, their economic conception is informed by the Zulu cultural belief system. However, this does not suggest that the Zulu understanding of economy is ontologically different from other African belief systems as their natural setting is similar, which is the basis for ontology.

AmaZulu have a cultural practice called *Ukuisisela*, which according to Koenane “refers to lending the needy neighbor a milking cow” (Koenane 2014: 181). Normally young couples or people, who had just arrived in the area, would be given a piece of land and those with many cows would lend them milking cows (in Chapter Four I explain in detail the importance of cows amongst amaZulu). Central to this concept is the responsibility that is entrusted to the person that is being lent the cattle. While the

person is not really expected to bring back the cattle if he is still using them, but if he fails to practice the responsibility that he is entrusted with to exercise the act of kindness on another person, he is told to bring back the cows: *azibuye emasisweni* (the cattle that have been lent must return). This cultural practice is thus centred on obligations more than prosperity of the individual; the person is shown kindness so that he shows kindness in return to others, not the person who lends him the cattle. Second to this, the person is not expected to bring these cattle with 'interest' but only the cattle that were given to him. Again, this seems to be informed by a different logic than the capitalist logic of profit, but on kindness.

Another cultural practice that is about taking care of the material needs of others is the concepts of *ukuthekela*. According to Lombo

*ukuthekela* (borrow but with no intention to return the loan) ... meant, that in a time of need or famine, those without corn or potatoes or any kind of vegetable to plant for their families would come and *ukuthekela* or ask for the plants they did not have. It is noteworthy that *ukuthekela* did not mean the borrower would pay back what he had borrowed (2017: 28).

This concept seems to be building on the concept of *ukusilela* but acknowledging that sometimes people will need things that will not be able to 'return' and that should be understood. Those that have also knew that they have an obligation to help, because if someone came and said: *ngizokwethekela* (I have come to ask for free), the giver knew that what he/she is giving will not come back but had an obligation to give anyway.

For Polanyi, this obligation to return/mutuality results from the fact that some societies exist as a community rather than individuals. He articulates this fact,

The individual's economic interest is rarely paramount, for the community keeps all its members from starving unless it is itself borne down by catastrophe, in which case interests are again threatened collectively, not individually (Polanyi 1944: 26).

Clearly, as Westerners and Westernised it might be difficult to understand the logic of this practice, and we might be tempted to go back to Adam Smith and argue about the natural kindness of individuals. But here, it is not just kindness, but obligation, that failure to honour it has negative consequences. With the concept of *ukusisela*, it was clear that if the person fails to honour his obligations, they would take the cattle back, which would have the negative consequences. For *ukuthekela*, it would seem that the

consequences are dependant on *umuntu* (please see the explanation in the prefix u-) as he/she is expected to practice *ubuntu* (I explain this in section 2.5.3).

According to Koenane “African economic ethics incorporates deep spirituality” (2014: 182), which means that it does not just focus on the material needs but understanding that those that have passed on remain present in the everyday life (Masolo 2010), hence they are referred to as the living-dead (Ramosé 2002). As such,

the idea of wealth is inseparable from the idea of *Badimo*, *Amadlozi* or the living-dead who with their participation in the events and activities of their communities are ever present in an African economic system” (Koenane 2014: 182).

This understanding of economy enforces the obligations that people have because they know that the ancestors – who are most powerful, and their wrath is feared – should not be upset as they are capable of taking everything. This belief system therefore ensures that people do honour their obligations. So, it is not just “kindness” of individuals that makes people to respect the cultural practices such as *ukusisela* and *ukuthekela*, but an understanding that there are consequences of not obliging. The proper way of understanding economy in the society such as amaZulu, would then mean that one has to go beyond materialism but infuse spirituality, which seems to play an integral role in making sure that people do remain kind to each other. Economies that are founded on individuals having to account on themselves would indeed struggle to ensure that people respect their obligations.

### 2.4.3 *The role of culture*

What I first need to put forward in this section is that, despite the overwhelming arguments that suggest the total disruption and erasure of cultures, I posit, they still exist. Masoga and Kayah support this claim as they argue,

despite the extraversion and disarticulation of knowledge production in Africa, the catastrophic history of the continent (slavery, colonization – and Apartheid and globalization) has not completely destroyed the African intellectual and spiritual heritage (2010: 6).

This is by no means reducing the devastating effects of colonialism that according to Sartre it “was an economic system that ensured domination on all other spheres of existence” (1968: 38). Boas (1940) defines culture as the all encompasses of the spheres of existence. Drawing from Boas, and the definition already presented in section 1.2 (p.

3), I take culture as an institution, which embodies the societies' worldview that is derived from the cosmological grounding informed by climate. So, in culture, there are many segments that are embodied in it such as: cosmos, politics, economy, aesthetic, spirituality, language, rituals, traditions/customs, cultural practices and everyday expressions. The postmodern/postcolonial definition of culture as ever-changing and in-between (Comaroff & Comaroff 1997, 2002 and Bhabha 1989, 1994, 2012) probably talks to the everyday expression/activities, but certainly, it does not talk to the worldview that encompasses the belief system. As such, culture becomes critical as a tool of analysis as it opens up to epistemologies of different societies. It is this definition of culture that encompasses the belief systems of communities that this thesis focuses on and attempts to show how it is expressed in the community of Esihlengeni.

To understand culture, I take anthropological approach as limited and as such there is a need to focus on both the belief systems and everyday existence of communities, "but [also] from history, from world conditions" (Bruner 1997: 275-6). This is to take Lakatos seriously who argues that "once a theory is "refuted" by experimental (by their rule book) it is irrational (and dishonest) to develop it further: One has to replace the old "refuted" theory by a new, unrefuted one" (1970: 194). To insist on purity of anthropological groundings after it has been refuted is to be irrational and dishonest, the latter being equivalent to participating in crimes that has sought to silence and erase other ways of knowing. A logical thing therefore is "to abandon efforts to give a rationality explanation of the success of science" (ibid: 181), and present communities from their own paradigms whether they fit the prescribed categories or not because the priority should be honesty. This approach enabled this research to expose the limitation of the hypothesis that, the *stokvels*' economic logic seems to be drawing from a different epistemology from the one of capitalism. As such, I used the culture of the people of Esihlengeni to read the findings to make sense of the logic of *stokvels* as I had proposed for the study.

As already shown in the previous section that the economy of amaZulu is more concerned about the obligatory roles that are centered around appeasing the ancestors. This belief system supports Polanyi's analysis that "in the long run, all social obligations are reciprocal, and their fulfilment serves also the individual's give-and-take interests best" (1944: 26-7). Even though these obligatory roles do not seem to be based

on exchange, it is noteworthy to pay attention to the fact that this community draws from a cosmological belief system that perceives life as a gift, – which ancestors give - as such a person is born with obligations, to sustain this life as Graeber points out “[a]ny person is himself made up of the very stuff he exchanges, which are in turn is the basic constituents of the universe” (2001: 19). This is the cultural belief system that in 2018 still governs the behaviour of the people of Esihlengeni, as I will show in the subsequent chapters, in spite of the claims that culture is ever-changing and in-between. This does not suggest purity that there are no external influences but is emphasising the difference that still exist in this community that cannot be found everywhere. This cosmological belief system is still there and has not changed<sup>14</sup> despite the cannibalistic capitalism that remains dominant. The question therefore is: what can a society with its sole foundation is based on self-regulation where individuals have no obligation to sustain life but to satisfy individuals’ material needs and fantasies defined as freedom, learn from the community such as of Esihlengeni?

## **2.5 Thinking from communities**

The task at hand is to find other ways of knowing that are outside Western epistemology with an attempt to imagine a possible world that is inclusive of other cosmological worldviews. The question then is how to bring all these cosmological worldviews into the centre<sup>15</sup>. Studying *stokvels* can therefore play an integral part in finding new values on which to base an economy that addresses the challenges we face today. An economy informed by a different worldview, not a coping mechanism, might give that economy a human face, which is perhaps an important contribution that Africa has to offer in this world (Biko 1978).

### *2.5.1 Ethnographic accounts*

Economies from other societies are not driven by the prosperity of Adam Smith, but instead provides security for their members. This understanding of the economy was further elaborated by Mauss (1925 [1990]) in his conception of the Gift exchange. For

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<sup>14</sup> I explain this ‘unchanged’ cosmological worldview in Chapter Four when I discuss the notion of co-existence that the fact that communities would seem to have embraced other ways of knowing, sometimes it is because they draw from a belief system that endorses a notion of co-existence.

<sup>15</sup> The centre that Dussel argues is actually not a centre that all cultures can be regarded as the centre but is the centre that the Western man decided on and thus started to view the world from itself and in relation with itself.

Mauss, the gifts exchange was an evidence of something outside of the Western individualism and argued that the gifts exchange was founded on obligation which was founded on communality. Graeber explains Mauss's intentions as follow:

Mauss was interested in finding a universal moral ground for a criticism of capitalism and looked to other societies for clues to the shape of institutions that might take its place (2001: 256).

It would be correct then to argue that these early economic anthropologists, their ethnographies were an attempt to show that there is a fundamentally different conception of economy outside of Western logic of individualism. Firth supports the claim I am putting forwards as he argued, "It is sufficient for our purpose to call attention to the fact that the study of the economic organization of primitive peoples deals with a fundamental aspect of human culture" (Firth 1929: 32). Firth further elaborated,

To label the most primitive peoples now existing in diverse parts of the world as the representatives of the oldest sphere of culture, and on this basis to lay down the characteristics of what must have been the primal form of economy, the *Urwirtschaft*, is not a statement of historical fact but a pure assumption (ibid: 23).

In a way, Malinowski, Mauss and Firth accepted the ontological difference of the primitives – that their economic worldview was fundamentally different from the Western one that is founded on accumulation - even though they did not articulate their positions as such.

However, some anthropologists such as Thurnwald that would follow Malinowski *et al.* would use Tylor's conception of societies that the 'primitive' were in the developmental stages of progress that Westerners had passed. Thurnwald argues that, "Primitive economics as studied in the preceding pages is not distinguished from any other form of economics, as far as human relations are concerned, and rests on the same general principles of social life" (1932: 288). But others continued in the tradition of Mauss who believed that the primitives were drawing from a different belief system than Westerners, such as Polanyi. For Polanyi, the logic of profits amongst the Trobriand was non-existent as he argues,

In such a community the idea of profit is barred; higgling and haggling is decried; giving freely is acclaimed as a virtue; the supposed propensity to barter, truck, and



exchange does not appear. The economic system is, in effect, a mere function of social organization (Polanyi 1944: 28)

In such a society, what would seem evident is the fact that the prosperity of the individual is not prioritised over the group as Polanyi continues to argue that “there are, as a rule, individual partners in Kula who reciprocate one another's Kula gift with equally valuable armbands and necklaces, preferably such that have previously belonged to distinguished persons” (ibid: 29). The point here is not for an individual to find ways of making profit but to make sure that he returns the gift, which can be described as an obligation.

Douglas's in her research amongst the *Lele* of the Congo found that there was the *Lele raffia* was a gift-exchange, which was not trade (1958: 116). This would be followed by Levi-Strauss (1969) who argues that, the Hawaiians' economic practices are holistic as compared to the western one. These findings support the earlier ethnographies that I have explained above that point to a totally different worldview of the economy; a worldview that is centred on the connectedness of humanity and hence there are things can never be sold such as life. Drawing from his experiences in Madagascar, Graeber advises that we should embrace difference as he writes,

to move from understanding how different cultures define the world in radically different ways (which anthropologists have always been good at describing) to how, at the same time, they define what is beautiful, or worthwhile, or important about it” (Graeber 2001: iv).

This approach would allow us to understand that there is no way to make sense of the world, that what is worthwhile in some societies is not in other societies. In this sense Graeber (2001) is calling for a totally different economy that draws from his observations that somehow suggest that there is a view of life that does not revolve around material needs, but on other non-tangible spheres of life. This in a way that is consistent with the early economic ethnographies that unequivocally revealed a different economic thinking that incorporated life in its totality.

### 2.5.2 *The human economy*

The human economy tries to forge economic practices that are more concerned about the person instead of profit (Hart 2013). The proponents of the human economy, Hann and Hart, posit that “an anthropological study of human economy, then, must take a

broader view of the standard of living and address a wide range of human needs and motivation” (2011: 8). In other words, understanding of economy should go beyond material needs to encompass the whole worldview of the communities that are being studied, which in my view, should go beyond Western epistemology. But then Hart goes on to argue that human economy “must be informed by economic vision capable of bridging the gap between everyday life and humanity’s common predicament, which is inevitably impersonal and lies beyond the actor’s point of view” (2013: 3). This for me suggests that the human economy must be understood within the capitalist predicaments and this contradicts their earlier claim of understanding “economies’ epistemological premises”. Hart (2013) thus is no different from the earlier anthropologists who have devoured so much that capitalism is inevitable that I interpret as believing in its supremacy. Hart argues that “Globalization is irreversible, and we have to extend our normal reach to address its contradictions... We urgently need to make a world where all people can live together” (Hart 2013: 3). So, for Hart, we need to accept capitalism by finding ways to deal with it as he shows in the story below:

Lindiwe -- a middle-aged Zulu woman who once worked in a factory and is now a domestic servant in Durban -- rents township accommodation from the municipality and travels to and from work in informal minibuses (“taxis”). She looks after her mother, who is crippled and receives a state pension, and her brother's young daughters since he has AIDS. Her teenage sons are unemployed and drifting into crime and drugs. Her husband disappeared over ten years ago. She sells cosmetics to neighbours in her spare time, shops once a week in a supermarket and at local stores the rest of the time. She attends a prosperity church, has joined a savings club (stokvel) there and owes money to loan sharks, but doesn't have a bank account. She lives in a society that might be characterized as “South African capitalism” but has only a peripheral connection to it (Hart 2013: 5).

According to this insert, Lindiwe’s life is an evidence of capitalism and thus there is no other side to Lindiwe’s life that can reveal another way of being according to the story. As such, capitalism is real in all situations and all places hence he posits,

Our political task – and I believe it was Marx’s too – is to reverse that order, not to help people escape from machines and money, but to encourage them to develop themselves through machines and money (Hart 2013: 25).

In this quotation, it becomes clear that Hart does not argue for eradication of capitalism but rather the incorporation of communities into this system. Even though he claims that his political task is at an epistemological level. It is not clear though how Hart

defines epistemology because if epistemology is a way of knowing, it would mean that people on their own, drawing from their ways of knowing, will find ways to make sense of the supreme system of capitalism and therefore find ways to respond without being ‘encouraged to develop themselves’. But also, it would seem that Hart is unable to imagine a world without capitalism, as people must only be assisted to think – because ordinarily they are not capable – and must ‘develop themselves through machines and money’. This is universalising as he continues, “I prefer to identify a human economy as existing everywhere in dialectical tension with the dominant economic institutions of our day” (2013: 24). This suggests that there can never be a system outside the capitalist system. Hart suffers the same fate of the anthropologists that came before him, that used themselves as the standard of humanity and thus saw themselves as radical when they proved the ‘Sameness’ to echo Argyrou (2012), of the people they studied because in their view, they can never be people who can demand something different from their ‘human’ needs. This fate emanates from wanting to understand other epistemologies using Western epistemology that does not know how to accept what it does not know hence when it encounters difference, it wants to compare with itself, if it does not see any similarities it colonises defined as civilising. In the case of Hart, colonising is helping people with the machines.

Mafeje would dispute this seemingly corrupted reading of Marx, as according to Mafeje (1976), Marxism is a different epistemology from Western epistemology and as such, it cannot be co-opted to Western epistemology. Meillassoux supports this view on Marx as he argues that,

His [referring to Marx] foremost purpose is to show that capitalism is a product of history, that it was preceded by other types of economic formations and that it is bound to give way, in turn, to a different one (1972: 96).

Using Marx to make capitalism better is actually appropriating him as according to Meillassoux, he was actually advocating for a different system outside of capitalism. Contrary to Hart’s view, and he admits to this difference, Graeber (2006) pays attention to the African economy:

For David [Graeber] the term “human economy” refers to an earlier period of human history that survives in ethnographic accounts of primitive, exotic peoples. It’s an old story, but a powerful one, and he tells it well. The objective of a human economy is the social reproduction of people. (Hart 2013: 24)

In this way the human economy does not provide an alternative economic logic outside of the capitalist logic as its name suggests. In fact, I would argue that it is within the capitalist logic and as such, cannot be classified with other forms of economies such as the economy of amaZulu. The human economy would seem to be a copying and coping mechanism of capitalism. Its economic logic that does not call for an eradication of capitalism, but strategies to cope. As such, it suggests that capitalism should remain, and communities build from it just like we are building from enlightenment (Hart 2013), despite the devastating experiences that have been endured as a result of enlightenment. The human economy becomes a classic example of the ways in which Western epistemology hides its darker side - as I have already argued that it hides itself - by developing new ideas that seem to be challenging it but drag us back to it.

In this section I attempted to show how economies have always been understood in relation to capitalism with an underlying assumption that there is nothing before capitalism and the Western society. I also showed that the human economy that has presented itself as challenging capitalism is, in fact, deeply entrenched in Western epistemology and thus, reproduces the very same system that it claims to oppose. In order to come up with an economic system that is outside of the capitalist system, one will have to unthink (to echo Kenrick 2011) capitalism and think from the communities' logic to understand other conceptualisations of economies from other epistemologies.

### *2.5.3 Ubuntu as a foundation for economy*

The study focuses on the African economic perspective and juxtaposes it with everyday experiences of the people of Esihlengeni. Koenane (2014) and Ramose (2002) have argued that the African economy is founded on the principles of *ubuntu* that Sithole defines as

a philosophy of life which suggests that people have a moral obligation to enhance each other's welfare as well as their social environment... they have over emphasized the notion *ubuntu* as one of welfare, or solidarity among human beings. *Ubuntu* is a philosophical discourse in its own right that has been stifled in the historical configurations of social ideology and completely frustrated in practice" (2009: 9).

If this is the case that means that the economy of the people cannot be separated from other social aspects, guided by caring for others. An economy that is inclusive of other spheres of life cannot be defined as the economy in fact but a way of life and can

therefore be understood as what Nyamnjoh (2017) describes as the universe of Tutuola where the physical and metaphysical are not separate but are in sync. Important to clarify, this balance is not dualism but is about embracing life in totality.

Clearly, this is an economy that draws from a different epistemology from Karl Marx's one that saw material needs as separate from the metaphysical. In other words, the economy founded on *ubuntu* will afford us with a "possibility of decolonisation of humanity' (Zondi 2014: 126), such that the Western worldview is cracked by presenting an alternative to its economy, notwithstanding the results of the democratic government in South Africa. For Ramose, democracy without justice is unethical, so the legal system that protects the injustices as it would appear in the South African democratic institutions is unethical. Ramose continues to argue that

The injustice is apparent in the recognition that there is neither a moral basis nor pedagogical justification for the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonized Africa (this applies to all endeavors to decolonize) (2002: 4).

It does not make sense therefore that even in our liberation discourses, we still draw from 'Western epistemological paradigm'. Central to decolonisation will therefore be to build our social systems on the philosophy of *ubuntu* as defined in the previous paragraph. In this, we will have a society that does not talk about the economy as a separate entity to other spheres of life that ends up being an end in itself rather than a means to an end, where the end is obligatory of kindness to others.

If we posit that *ubuntu* is a philosophy that does not separate life, but is centred on maintaining relationships, it would follow then that the economy that will be founded on this philosophy would not occupy itself with material needs but rather focus on justice. In other words, restoring justice would mean to shy away from the epistemology that by its virtue, produces racism, capitalism, wars/violence, patriarchy, and homophobia (Grosfoguel 2009) amongst other things. True activism will be inclusive of all these spheres of domination and thus will be at an epistemological level. Activism will not draw from the separatist Western logic, as Amadiume suggests about feminism that, "it seems to me, therefore, that to expect Black women to separate racism from feminism or to minimize racism in favour of class... is adding insult to injury" (1987: 6). Central to this activism, is the fact that it not at 'giving the other a human face' but

is about to bring new questions to the ‘centre’ with evidence that comes from other ways of knowing to ask the question again: what is human? The important task ahead, especially to the intellectuals that are in the position to access other knowledges embedded in languages, rituals and cultural practices of other societies, is to bring those knowledges to the fore, so that we are able to judge Western epistemology in relation to other epistemologies, the task that economic anthropologists started and has not been completed. Completing this task, would be to build an economic system founded on *ubuntu* that privileges ethics over profits.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Just like the picture inserted at the beginning of the chapter, this thesis aims at changing the story – not to co-opt, validate or even, redeem other knowledges. Appadurai (2001) suggests that there are other ways of existing that draw from a system that enables them to co-exist with other epistemologies. In the chapter I discussed the literature that I used to ground this work and the literature that is challenged by the findings. I have sought to show that in spite of the gigantic scholarship work that have been produced in the last two centuries, there are epistemologies that we have not touched in order to complete the knowledge and thus shape the world in a more inclusive way. This has resulted in a vicious cycle of approaches re-inventing themselves with new names but still standing on the same Western epistemology. Taking all these challenges into account, this thesis is grounding itself in theorists that have identified these limitations so as to reveal other ways of knowing that still exist in societies despite claims by Western and Westernised scholars that the capitalist system has disrupted EVERYTHING! I conclude by showing that a more just world is possible if we open up to other economies that are founded on different philosophies such as *ubuntu*.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3. Introduction

Methods in anthropological research play a critical role as they determine the rigour and credibility of research. This is especially the case for qualitative research that depends on interpretation by the researcher. This chapter begins by contextualising methods within Western epistemology to show its limitations. It moves on to discuss the procedures undertaken during the study by integrating them with my experiences. I then fuse my personal experiences in the field with ideas by theorists that have attempted to go beyond Western epistemology. I use concepts such as endogeneity which for Adésinà “refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centering of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work” (2008: 135) to interpret the findings. I conclude by arguing that even though I could not escape Western epistemology, as I have been trained in it, and my study is within this framework, I was able to go beyond it to tap into the worldview of the community of Esihlengeni such that I revealed the connectedness of the economy with their spirituality, which gives a total different view on the economy, compared to the Western capitalist economy.

### 3.1 Contextualisation

When I proposed methods during the research proposal phase, I indicated that I would be using qualitative methods, as this is anthropological research. I was mindful of the epistemological challenges in relation to the social sciences as argued by Mafeje that, “the problem is not one of single disciplines but rather of bourgeois society and its relativist methodology, *positivism*” (1976:325). As early as the 1920s, anthropologists had started to see the limitations of their discipline. Malinowski, who is often viewed as the father of fieldwork in Anthropology, started talking about these limitations when he argued that “nothing is so misleading in ethnographic accounts as the description of facts of native civilizations in terms of our own” (1922: 176). Anthropological challenges continued as the 1980s marked a postmodern turn in Anthropology with authors such as Asad Talal, James Clifford and George E Marcus challenging the issues of representation in Anthropology. Said (1979) in his book on orientalism argues that in fact the East exists because of the West, as all that the Westerners wrote about the

Orient was based on the lens they were using. For Clifford (1986), ethnographic accounts can be understood as fictions. Clearly, the sins of the forefathers still haunt Anthropology<sup>16</sup>. However, these debates remained within Western epistemology. They certainly were not challenging Western epistemology per se, in the way that Mafeje (1976), for example, did. They divorced anthropology from the broader limitations of the social sciences. For Nyamnjoh, the limitation of the postmodern turn is rooted in the fact that anthropologists still use singular approaches that are Western in order to interpret the social world (2013: 134). Nhemachena *et al* attribute this to the continued intellectual dependency on the Global North (2016: 28). Clearly, the epistemological grounding of the discipline poses a challenge and seems to be inescapable.

It would seem that these foundational problems of the Western episteme and anthropology in particular are not a matter of choice as “all positivist anthropology, no matter how brilliant, is *degenerate* by virtue of its ontology and epistemology” (Mafeje 1976: 331). They are thus a result of the epistemology that views the world from a one-dimensional position that excludes other ways of knowing. Nyamnjoh elaborates:

Such a narrow view of science has tended to separate the universe into the physical and the metaphysical or the religions, and to ignore the fact that people are ordinarily ‘not content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable’. It tends to limit reality to appearances, which it then seeks to justify (without explaining) with meta-narratives claiming objectivity and a more epistemologically secure truth status. Under this kind of epistemology, reality is presented as anything whose existence has, or can be, established in a rational, objective manner, with universal laws operating only in perceived space and time. (2004: 163)

The one-dimensional approach is not just about the scientists but also the knowledge that this epistemology produces. Nyamnjoh points out that “Often missing have been perspectives of the silent majorities deprived of the opportunity to tell their own stories their own ways or even to enrich defective accounts by other of their own life experiences” (2004: 178). It is in this context that when I was in the field; I opened up to the community’s belief system in order to understand even those things that I could not ‘see’. However, to avoid stereotyping the community of Esihlengeni, I took the view that community was part of the global matrix of power and therefore connected

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<sup>16</sup> I argue that the problems facing Anthropology are epistemic and changes have to be made at an epistemological level as well.



and disconnected at the same time; that “(their) lived existence is multi-layered, contradictory and context-situated ... that people are not ‘either’/’or’; we [they] are often many things embedded in one” (Adésinà 2002: 106). With this understanding of the community, I enlisted the members help to reconstruct my information on the economy.

This study aims, as Argyrou posits out in his book titled: *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique*, “to decentre the West and to open up space for other ways of thinking and being in the world” (2012: 2). This means I used decoloniality, African anthropology and economic anthropology to help me interpret the data while putting people in categories. I attempt to give a narrative that is grounded on the ‘lived existence’ of the people, not the narrative that is based on the “‘imagined communities<sup>17</sup>” (Anderson 1991). I follow Argyrou, who uses anthropology

in a kind of theft in its own right – the ‘stealing’ of the discursive logic, methods and conceptual tools of anthropology and more broadly, of Western episteme, which it uses to talk about Anthropology and the West. (2012: 9),

I use the Western episteme to tap into other epistemologies that it has tried to silence, other ways of knowing. It is in this context that even though anthropological methods have been questioned, I take Comaroff & Comaroff’s position that they can still “disclose deep truths about everyday existence” (2010: 531). Hann & Hart also “strongly favour retaining ethnographic methods, but argue that they must be complimented, not just by working at multiple field sites, but by a stronger commitment to the use of history at both middle-range and macroscopic levels” (2013: 13). In addition, I would argue that the shift from looking at the ‘other’ to the ‘self’ strengthens ethnographic methods immensely as the main criticism of Anthropology has been its way of looking at the ‘other’. Authors such as Hamilton, Smith & Worthington (2008), Denzin, (2003), Ellis & Bochner (2000), Reed-Danahay (1997) and Hayano (1979) have called this an auto-ethnography “where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture” (Holt 2003: 18).

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson (1990) argues that to understand communities properly, one needs to understand their belief systems which include life in death, otherwise without understanding this integral component of human existence, what we think we understand about communities is what we are imagining.

### 3.2 The field site

This research was conducted in Vryheid in the northern part of the KwaZulu-Natal province. Vryheid falls under the AbaQulusi municipality – see attached Map 1. In this municipality, 63% of the population live in rural areas, mostly in scattered homesteads known as *imizi* in the tribal areas<sup>18</sup>. Historically, coal mining contributed significantly to the local economy of Northern KwaZulu-Natal. However, over the past 15 years a number of mines in the area have ceased their operations. This has had a negative impact on the regional economy, and consequently there is a high level of unemployment (Ntshangase 2014: 25).

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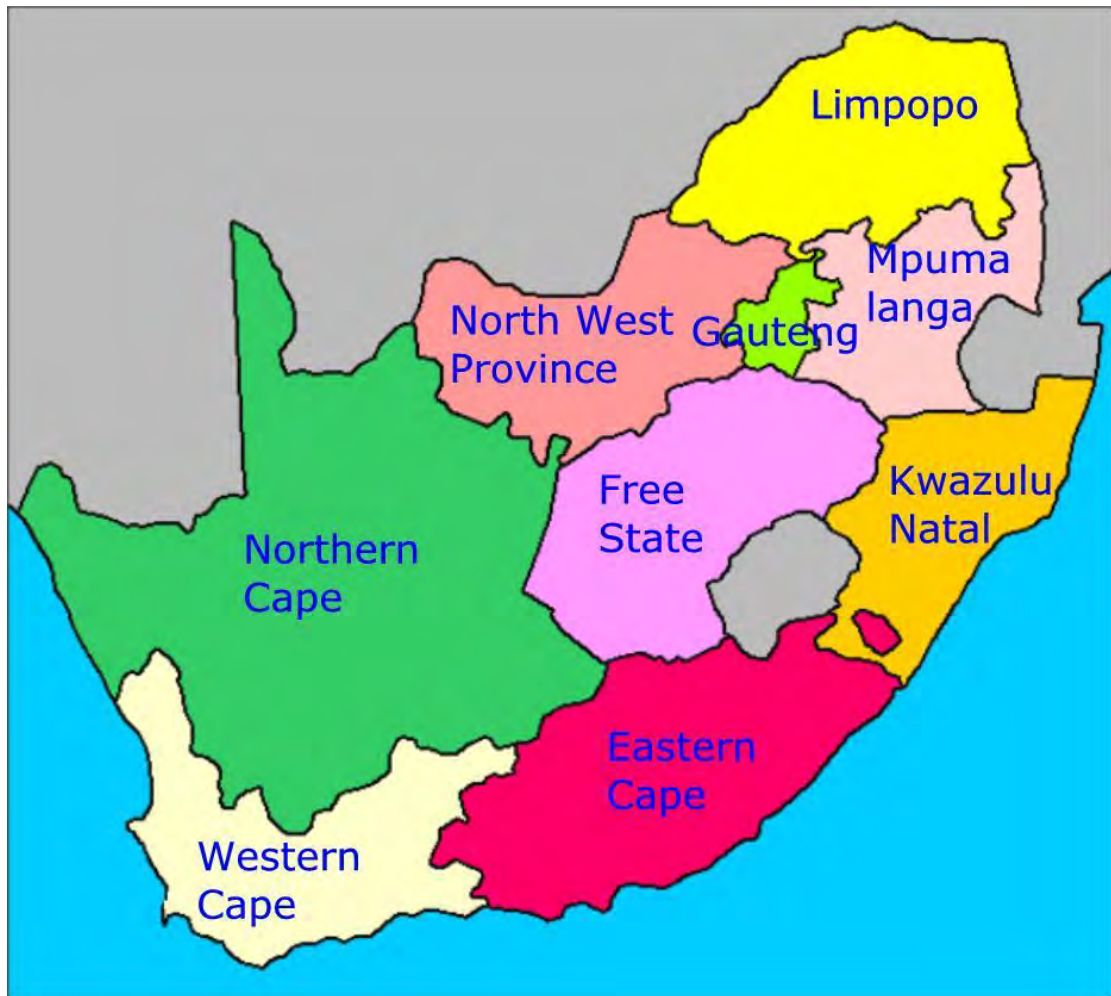
<sup>18</sup> ‘Tribal areas’ refer to the areas that still have traditional chiefs in addition to local councillors. However, this is used with caution as Mafeje (1971) challenged the concept of tribes and argued that in an African context, tribes were the invention of the colonialists.



Figure 5 Map of KZN Province



Figure 6 Map of South African provinces





I chose this research site because I was familiar with the village members as some of my family members live there; it was therefore easy to gain access. I also speak the same language as the people in the area, which made it easier for me to obtain first-hand information without requiring translation. But what was more interesting is that Vryheid is the centre of the two major wars around land dispossession, namely, the battle of Encome and the battle of Isandlwana.

*Figure 7 A picture of the place Esihlengeni taken by me*

This is a picture of Esihlengeni taken during my first visits. It shows the view you see as you enter the village



I went to this village on the third week of my fieldwork and instantly decided on the village as my research site. I decided on Vryheid much earlier because of my familiarity with the site, but I still needed to choose the village, as Vryheid is very vast as already

mentioned in the research site section. There are two reasons that made me decide on this village: it was the story I heard from umalume omncane that they had not been dispossessed of this land as the Khumalo clan and secondly, that they are of direct lineage with King Mzilikazi Khumalo. In Chapter Four I explore the connection between King Mzilikazi and the Khumalo clan at Esihlengeni to make sense of their insistence on the cattle economy that I discuss in Chapter Six. What was also intriguing about this village was its greenery (as the picture shows) despite the drought that had just hit Vryheid and its surrounding areas. I wanted to know more about this area and its economic aspects as at face value it seemed to be better off than other villages in Vryheid.

However, after spending six months in the field, I discovered the sad reality that in fact, people were dispossessed of this land<sup>19</sup> and they had to become farm workers in the land they once owned. And that, majority of the land is owned by the private companies although there have been initiatives by the government to buy this land back and give it to the people. But this process has been rather complicated, and it is discussed in detail in Chapter Four where I discuss the land question as understood as an economic vehicle by the government in relation to the traditional values that give meaning to *stokvel* at Esihlengeni.

### *3.2.1 Historic events of Esihlengeni*

When I chose this research site, I had no idea that both these historic battles: The battle of Isandlwana and the battle of Encome took place in this area of Vryheid. I knew about these wars from school as they were taught as part of the history and in my mind, they were far behind in the past. What was even more interesting was that there are museums created around these wars. Because part of my research was to make connection with the past and present I had to visit these museums. From the museum visits I was able to make the connection between people's attitude towards the economic principles and their past. This connection is discussed in detail in Chapter Four where I argue that the ancestral belief system at Esihlengeni should be understood as an undying culture.

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<sup>19</sup> I learnt that the people of Esihlengeni were actually dispossessed of their land during the early 1900s by the Germans and have remained in the land as farm workers until 1994, when the African National Congress (ANC) took over power in South Africa. The ANC led government began to buy land from the farm owners, a process that is still taking place as per the interview with the ward councillor of the area.

Another interesting point about the museums was that with all the people I interacted with while I was in the field, which were all black, none of them had visited both the museums. In the community they are regarded as tourist attractions. My cousins, when they heard about our visits to the museums with my uncle, did not understand why I was interested in them because I was not a tourist. I tried to explain to them, but I do not think I was ever successful in making them understand the role of museums – that they are not necessarily for tourists but for community members as well. While the government saw a need for these museums, to community members it did not seem to play any significant role except for the history of defeat as they narrated these stories<sup>20</sup>. My uncle was very passionate about the battle of Esandlwana as according to him, amaZulu won that battle and you could see the pride in his eyes as he narrated what he says he was told by his father. His belief is not far from some of the historical accounts as the narrative from the museum is that amaZulu won this battle but were defeated on technical issues as they did not follow the rules of the war as were prescribed by the British. However, for younger generation – my cousins - that little victory meant nothing because they are oppressed as one of my cousins said: *kodwa baphethe abelungu baba* (but white people are in-charge father) and they all laughed. At the beginning of my fieldwork I never understood the community's attitude to the museums, but as I started writing and understanding the community from their epistemological perspective, I started to understand that they have a different understanding of the events and the meanings attached to them which is informed by their philosophical grounding of *ubuntu*, that I explore in Chapter Five.

### 3.2.2 Economic organisation of Esihlengeni

According to the ward councillor of Engome, forestry plantations have become the main source of employment, and it is a very exploitative industry as Timberwatch – an organisation that watches forestry industry – argues in its website ([www.timberwatch.org.za](http://www.timberwatch.org.za)). Clearly, the industry is exploitative by its very nature, as these are multi million companies (Monti and Sappi). Even though forestry plantations seem to be the only visible employer, none of the people I interacted with were

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<sup>20</sup> I use these narratives in conjunction with the recorded history on the battle of Encome and the battle of Esandlwana in Chapter Four to interrogate their impact on the present day existence of the people of Esihlengeni



employed in forestry; they knew the conditions of employment from the people they know who work there. This could be attributed to the conditions of employment, which are not just minimum salaries but the hard labor of the job itself where people have to peel the bark from trees with their bare hands, without protective gear.

*Figure 8 Pile of logs that have been peeled and ready for the trucks.*



The trucks then come and pick up these timbers. Apparently, the trucks belong to different sub-contractors too, and according to Mbusiseni, these subcontractors are not local people, while there is high level of unemployment amongst the local people. However, it was difficult to verify this information as I did not get to interview the sub-contractors but could just observe.

*Figure 9 Trucks being loaded*



The forestry industry might paint a gloomy picture of employment prospects for the people of Esihlengeni, but it is not the whole story. There are interventions by the government that attempt to transform this industry such that it benefits the community. According to Vusi (not his real name) – the chairperson of one of the committees that was appointed by the community members of Esihlengeni to oversee the funds allocated by the government as a compensation for the dispossession that they endured – they are tasked to uplift the community economically. The ward councillor further elaborated that the government has embarked on programmes that aim at returning the land to the people at Engome and to make sure that the land that is given back to the people does not become redundant – that it continues to produce. The government has

developed options in which communities can choose from depending on their needs. These options include taking over the tree farming business, leasing the land to private companies to continue with tree farming and taking the land back where community members can start cooperatives with subsistence farming. To get an understanding of these interventions I visited two more Voting Districts (VDs) at Engome that the ward councillor suggested namely: Stanford and Emahlabaneni who decided on different options than the one that the community of Esihlengeni chose, to continue with the business that was happening and run it by themselves.

### **3.3 Rapport and access**

In anthropology, gaining access is the most important thing as this sets the tone of the research. For Malinowski, the researcher “ought to put himself in good conditions of work, that is, in the main, to live without other white men, right among the natives” (Malinowski 1922: 6). Obviously here a researcher is a ‘white man’ and thus the assumption is that the participants are different. I was aware that conducting research at home does not necessarily guarantee one rapport with the participants. However, the fact that I was not familiar with the field site, but I was a relative to some of the participants made it easier to develop rapport. During my stay I tried to re-learn as much as possible from the community members in order to avoid behaving inappropriately.

The truth, however, is that I had an advantage of being accepted in the community as I was part of it not just because I am black and speak the same language but because some of the community members were my blood relatives. As Evans-Pritchard writes that research:

require(s) for understanding a thorough knowledge of people's language and also an awareness of the entire system of ideas of which any particular belief is part, for it may be meaningless when divorced from the set of beliefs and practices to which it belongs (1965: 7).

As a native researcher I can say that I have “an awareness of the entire system of ideas” and that made it easier for me not just to access the research site but to understand most of the things that were taking place and the manner in which they were taking place. The unfamiliarity of me having been away from the area played a minimal role; at large I was one of them, they were not different, and I was not looking for difference as Lévi-Strauss (1966) suggests. But also, as argued in the earlier sections that I tried to move

away from Western epistemology that is founded on the Otherness that for Argyrou (2012), is the basis for anthropology as it seeks to prove Sameness as the ontological assumption is that there are Others who are inferior than them – the researcher. Instead, for me, as Fanon (1967) suggests, this research is not about learning from those that are different from me but is to recognise the full humanity of all human beings such that there is no standard to measure humanity but recognition for all.

### **3.4 Data collection techniques**

This is an ethnographic study that used participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, casual conversations and historical records (which included historical stories from key participant). Geertz defines ethnography as “establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on” (1973: 6). I attempted to use all these techniques. I adopted Malinowski’s (1922: 6) approach that he proposes to his students that they must use different methods. These different techniques maximise the validity of the findings.

The techniques used to collect data play a significant role in research and thus there is a need for a thorough preparation before the field. According to Malinowski, “the student must possess real scientific aims, and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography” (Malinowski 1922: 6). Important to mention is that the techniques used do not necessarily make this study anthropological, as these are the techniques used in other disciplines too. For Adésinà,

The claim to field method (ethnography) as a defining aspect of Anthropology is equally intriguing. Ethnographic technique was used before the rise of Anthropology and is used in other disciplines beyond Anthropology (2008: 143).

In essence, research is interdisciplinary by its nature and what makes it different is ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ (Said 1989: 213). Methods therefore cut cross disciplines hence Foucault distances himself from the politics of methods as he argues “I should not like the effort I have made in one direction to be taken as a rejection of any other possible approach” (Foucault 1970: xiv). In highlighting this point, I want this study to be understood outside the limitations of methods, as in this study I embrace different techniques to mitigate disciplinary confinement.

What I prioritised in this research was not the disciplinary foundations but my role –

where I constantly asked myself: why am I doing this? With this constant question in my mind, being in the field forced me to rethink my training over and over again. Foucault writes, “Discourse in general and scientific discourse in particular is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different methods” (Foucault 1970: xiv), so I understood my limitation and thus open myself up to other ways of knowing to mitigate my limitations. It is in this context that Fanon, even before Foucault, had called for the suspension of methods, as he found little value in them because “human reality is incomplete, and, as a result, it forever escaped the structures of anyone’s methods” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 98). This must be understood within Western epistemology as for Nyamnjoh, African epistemology is capable of understanding even the unseen,

the popular epistemologies of Africa build bridges between the so-called natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical, rational and irrational, objective and subjective, scientific and superstitious, visible and invisible, real and unreal, explainable and inexplicable; making it impossible for anything to be without also being the other... The real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental or the inexplicable (2004: 166).

So, the ‘complexity’ that Foucault (1970) mentions is rooted in Western epistemology that attempts to know everything and prioritises other senses over the other, ignoring the meta-physical. Importantly, this ‘complexity’ must not be imposed to all societies as Nyamnjoh (2004) points out in the above citation. Following Nyamnjoh’s definition of African epistemology, I opened to this possibility and thus I was able to understand the spiritual component of the economy, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

### *3.4.1 Participant Observation*

Participant observation played an integral role in this research as it allowed me to access information that I would never been able to get during the structured interviews. Most of my interpretation is informed by my participation in the field. During my stay, I was privileged to be able to attend two funerals and the heritage celebrations to honour the South African Heritage Day holiday in September 2016. The first funeral that I attended took place in the first weekend of my arrival and it was one of Thandi’s<sup>21</sup> client, and

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<sup>21</sup> Thandi is malume’s daughter from his second wife, so she is my first cousin. She is also the owner of the funeral parlor. Thandi played a significant role in this research especially during my first visit as she would take me around with her husband and tried to explain many things that were puzzling to me. Her contribution is highly valued in this study.

she asked me to help her with recording the funeral proceedings. The second funeral I attended was in December, it was one of the members of the Siyakhula Funeral Club (SFC) – the *stokvel* group that was my case study. I had already left the field when the funeral was arranged but they told me about it as I had expressed interest in attending one of their funerals. I went back for it and used the visit to fill in some gaps I had identified. These two funerals are discussed in detail in Chapter Five where I discuss the emergence of *stokvels* at Esihlengeni – the village that became my research site in Vryheid.

As a researcher that was part of the family of some of the participants, I had to attend some events, and participant observation became a natural thing. Such activities included *ihlambo* also known as *umsebenzi wokukhuphula* (the ritual that was performed to raise a person to his/her final destination) that was performed by umalume for one of the relatives that passed a long time ago. In addition to all the events and activities, I also attended other activities that might have seemed not relevant to the study but helped me to understand the community at a closer level. One such activity was a wedding of Thandi's that I attended in October. Most of the time was spent in the community at my uncle's – umalume omncane<sup>22</sup>- house and I talked to a number of people who would come to consult with him. But some of the people that came for consultation were not local people; they came from far and they would sleep at my uncle's house. Observing the interactions at my uncle's house played an integral role in the interpretation of data as I could contextualise some of the things that I was told in the interviews.

#### *3.4.2 In-depth interviews and focus group discussions*

I conducted eleven in-depth interviews with key informants. The first person I interviewed was umalume<sup>23</sup> as I wanted to map out the field and understand the issues that were pertinent around the area. In as much as I had my interests, I wanted to respect the community by having them indicate to me what is important to them so that I fuse

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<sup>22</sup> Umalume omncane (younger uncle) is my key participant, who was chosen based on his status in the community. He is first a traditional healer but also an official imbongi (praise poet) of the Khumalo clan. The reason I chose him was because of his knowledge of the historical background of the area.

<sup>23</sup> Umalume (uncle) is my mother's brother and he was more of my assistant in the field, but I prefer to call him my guide because the role he played was more than of the assistant because of our relationship, and his insights which shaped this research.

that with my research. Even though I followed this protocol, in the interviews I made sure that I keep to the interview guide so that I did not lose the focus of the study. For umalume, recording and recollecting historical facts was important and thus part of this study became about reconnecting the past. I discuss this in detail in the following chapter. The second person was umalume omncane (younger uncle). I had three formal interviews with him, as he was my key participant with many informal interviews as I spent a lot of time at his house. I also interviewed the ward councillor so that I could understand the area and the challenges faced by the people in the area. I interviewed Vusi (not his real name), my second cousin, who is the chairperson of the committee that oversees reparation money from the government – as the community qualified for compensation from the government for those people that were dispossessed of their land, Thandi and Boy (not their real names) – malume omncane’s assistant in isiZulu is *uhlaka*, and four executive members of the SFC.

I also conducted two focus group discussions with *stokvel* members. Each focus group discussions consisted of eight women between the ages of 28 and 47. Interviews and the focus group discussions contributed immensely to the research because I had prepared questions from participant observation and casual conversations. Even though I had prepared questions these were more of the guide as I allowed the discussion to take directions that participants decided on. For instance, in one of the focus group discussions I had wanted to know more about ways in which they make income because in the formal conversation I had with my uncles they had told me about people working in the forest under very harsh conditions. The group however, was more interested in talking about struggle around getting the money to buy cattle and I allowed this discussion to continue, as it turned out to be an important part of the study.

I recorded my data with a tape recorder and through field notes. I used a tape recorder to capture everything that the participants said. This allowed me to concentrate more on the interviews. I was fortunate that all the participants that I interviewed formally did not have any problem with being recorded, so I recorded all the formal interviews and the focus group discussions. I also wrote field notes. Every time I got a chance, I wrote notes. This was an important data-capturing tool, as I would be spending most of my time doing participant observation. To improve my field notes I used a field diary to jot down my thoughts.



### 3.4.3 Casual conversations

Most of the information that helped me to understand my work was from casual conversations when people did not know that the information they were sharing could have been of value to me. For instance, when we were driving back from the graveyards (this visit is explained on the genealogy section in Chapter Four) umalume omkhulu<sup>24</sup> started pointing at the families that received monies from the company that was 'leasing' their land. This became a very interesting discussion between my uncles as they started talking about irregularities around the land issue in the area. Most of the information from the discussion was explored in the interview with Vusi who was mentioned in this conversation and I then made a follow up on wanting to know more about this issue. The reason I had to follow up on this question was because it was important for the study on *stokvel* to get an understanding of economic resources of the area as that could have had an impact in people's involvement in *stokvels*.

Casual conversation helped me to uncover information that I would not have asked in the interviews, as I would not even have thought of it. Such information is the information I got from three men I once gave a lift from the village where I conducted my fieldwork to town - Vryheid. As we they were asking for lift they used a phrase: *singabantu bendawo* that caught my attention, which means, we are people of this place. I used this concept as part of the analysis and discussed in detail in Chapter Four on understanding the values attached to the economic worldview of Esihlengeni as it turned out that they are drawing from many experiences including their past and present.

### 3.4.4 Genealogy

I did not plan to use this research tool when I proposed the research methods for the study, but the historical stories led me to this research method. Doing genealogy proved to be a difficult task as there were lots of going back and forth, but I think in that back and forth I got a lot of information that later became an integral part of the study. According to Tamboukou, "the genealogical approach provides the lens for distortions to come into focus through the examination of personal narratives" (2003: 202).

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<sup>24</sup> Umalume omkhulu (older uncle) is my mother's second cousin; his father is my grandmother's brother.



Furthermore, it takes into account that history is not linear but has curves and is discursive - as reality is forced to fit the scope of the already defined categories and thus discursive formations produce objects which they speak about not reality (Foucault 1970). Or, as per Trouillot, “when reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs” (1995: 72). The process of doing the genealogy was long and daunting at times as my uncle would remember other stories and would start narrating them instead of sticking to the genealogy of the Khumalo clan, as that is what we had set to do. But eventually it became an important tool for the research as it allowed me to formulate questions and identify possible participants that I believed could inform the research. As Malinowski argues “the value of doing genealogy as an instrument of research is that it allows the researcher to formulate questions that are clearer to the participants” (1922: 15). More importantly, doing genealogy enabled me to draw a kinship chart that revealed the connection of the Khumalo clan with the whole area of eNgome – a district in Vryheid, under which Esihlengeni village falls. This became a significant part of this research and it is discussed in following chapter in relation to the economic worldview of the people of Esihlengeni.

The information I got during the drafting of the genealogy needed verification with some documented information as the information I was getting from umalume omncane was based on memory. I am not suggesting that memory could not be accurate, but I needed to understand the selection of my key informant’s memory and the selection of the documented information. I took genealogy as part of ‘scientific discourse’ and thus analyzed the information I got from it (Tamboukou 2003: 11). For umalume omncane, uBheje<sup>25</sup> was the main person to whom I needed to connect everything and everyone. Trying to validate the information I was getting from my participants I had to use other sources that, although there is very little written about uBheje as he was not a prominent leader in history even though he is highly respected in the Khumalo clan. Kunene writes

Shaka laughed and said: ‘Bheje is truly a great trickster. He has chosen for me the oldest and feeble beasts and left behind the best of his herd. You, too, were foolish, you did not inspect the hidden valley. There you would have seen the best beasts of the

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<sup>25</sup> uBheje is the brother to uMashobane, the father of King Mzilikazi Khumalo who was King Shaka’s right hand man but later parted ways with him and founded the Matabele kingdom (Mthwakazi), Matabeleland, in what became Rhodesia and is now Zimbabwe (Howcroft 2016).

land. But let the son of Khumalo enjoy his wealth. After all, these people are relatives of Mzilikazi. Once they were a great nation, but were destroyed by Zwibe (1979: 291). In this passage, we get a glimpse of uBheje, even though it is vague. I use this in collaboration with the stories I got from umalume omncane to reconstruct the history of the Khumalo clan because to them he is the hero and they insist on remembering him as such. And maybe this is similar to what Anderson described about Fermin of the Indian who was extinguished but “many of his political grandchildren became obsessed with ‘remembering’, indeed ‘speaking for’ them, perhaps precisely because they had, by then, so often been *extinguished*” (1991: 199). And maybe for the Khumalo clan holding on to Bheje’s legacy is precisely because they have been extinguished as a nation and have become part of amaZulu. I discussed this possibility in Chapter Four.

### **3.5 Sampling**

I used genealogy to map the field, but this also helped me to identify other participants that I believed could play a significant role in laying out the study. One such participant is the ward councillor. In addition to this, participants for this research were recruited by means of convenience sampling, or social network sampling. I looked at the genealogies and kinship of the participants that I know personally, and they directed me to other participants. I also used purposeful sampling by interviewing the people that I thought would contribute positively towards this research such as the ward councillor.

When I started the research, I had aimed at interviewing approximately 20 participants, where five of those participants would be key informants that I could interview more than once to clarify issues that would arise from the field. Because of the length of time I spend in the field I managed to interview eleven key informants and six of them I interviewed more than once. The participants that I interviewed more than once are highlighted in the genealogy chart that is shown in the following chapter. I also conducted two focus group discussions that each had eight participants. In total, I interviewed 27 participants. Of the 27 participants that I interviewed, 21 were women and participant’s ages varied; my youngest participant was 24 years old and the oldest was 75 years old. In my sample I included umalume because even though he was more of my field assistant, I got a lot of information from our casual conversation that informed and shaped the research.

### 3.6 Time frame

In addition to the fact that I already knew the people of Esihlengeni and that I speak the language, I spent six months in the field collecting data. I divided my stay in the field in three phases that I defined as:

1) The introductory phase, which took place in February and March 2016. I mainly spent time trying to understand the area. During this phase I visited the museums and drove around many villages around Vryheid. I was also able to identify Esihlengeni as my research site after the visit to this village.

2) Data collection phase was in June and July 2016. During this phase I identified some participants and started with the interviews. This was the most difficult phase in the field as I felt that I was not getting what I was looking for. I discovered that the concept of *stokvel* was fairly new in this village as there wasn't much information around them. I really spent most of the time trying to think about my research and what I was not getting. However, this became data in itself and I use this experience to interpret the data.

3) The filling the gap phase, was in September and October 2016. It was in this phase where I really collected data. I conducted most of the interviews during this phase and the focus group discussions. The "a ha" moment also happened during this phase: when I went to the Bheje monument with my uncles, when I met ubab'Zulu during one of the focus group discussions, and when I gave three men a lift to town. I discuss these incidences in detail in Chapter Five as part of my findings.

I went back to the field in December 2016, but this was a brief visit and I only spent a week. This visit was really more of filling in the gaps, but in fact, I went to attend the funeral where the SFC was burying one of their members. Including the last visit to the field, I spent a total of 37 weeks in the field and this allowed me to get a good grasp of Esihlengeni and the politics around this area.

What is important to mention is the fact that this research did not begin when I started doing research because I make use of the knowledge that acquired by virtue of being umZulu, which is inherent in language as Abdi argues,

it has also its value systems, moral sanctions, inherent emotional expressions, and special sentimental attachments. These all create a specialized and un-severable

relationship between a language and the person who is native to that language (1998: 254),

as such, I could connect data with these value systems. In addition to the Zulu language, my knowledge was enhanced by the fact that Vryheid is my home because it is a place of origin to my parents, as such, I have a relationship with the place. I draw from Kenyatta's approach when studying the Gikuyu. He posits that "I can therefore speak as a representative of my people, with personal experience of many different aspects of their life" (1938: xx). While I would refrain from using the word 'representative' I speak with confidence because I speak from a position of knowing the culture of Esihlengeni because I have insights that I cannot shy away as that would disadvantage this study.

Taking the received knowledge into account, Oyèwùmí, argues that growing up in the Yorùbá culture "provided ample opportunity for me to observe and reflect on the personal and public aspects of living culture" (1997: xvi). It would be of disservice to ignore such wealth of knowledge that can privilege the study. This inherent insight when studying one's culture provides a different narrative that is not just informed by listening (*ukuzwa*) but by feelings (*imizwa*)<sup>26</sup> as well. As Lindgren (2002) observed in historical accounts presented by the members of the group provide a different narrative as he points out that "When Nyathi writes on amaNdebele history, he is simultaneously engaged in self-defining project and when western authors write on this history they are engaged in a project of defining others" (2002: 58). So, studying one's group involve other senses that would reduce objectivity but try to make sense of the seemingly nonsensical as part of 'self-defining. Important to clarify, this making sense is not redeeming as Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) would posit because the starting is believing that the "nonsensical" is sensical. This cannot be acquired in a set time but by being part of the group, but more importantly, by believing in the value systems of the group.

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<sup>26</sup> *Uku-zwa* (to hear) and *imi-zwa* (feelings/senses) have the same root word because they are not separate. This means to hear and to feel are not separable, hearing is to feel and feeling is to hear. In other words, one cannot understand by just hearing what is said, but must feel what is said in order to understand.

### 3.7 Ethical issues

This research abides by the code of ethics of Anthropology Southern Africa (Bell 2014), the body of anthropologists in southern Africa. Before I started with research I applied for permission to conduct this study from the Department of Anthropology & Archaeology ethics committee. The permission was granted. The most important ethical consideration that I adhered to, was the scientific honesty, where I declared the limitation of the methods upfront and my positionality as a researcher. But secondly, and perhaps equally important, the self-determination of participants was maintained where participants were informed about the study and allowed to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. These are standard ethical considerations in the social sciences research. I took the view that ethics were beyond the academic standards of doing research but more about embracing the epistemology of the people of Esihlengeni that is normally excluded in scientific research which according to Said is the exclusion that is not pronounced and yet is fundamental to what we do and should be part of ethics (Said 1989: 212).

#### 3.7.1 *Informed consent*

In anthropology informed consent has been challenged because of the nature of ethnographic research (Bell 2014). However, I provided research participants with informed consent forms, which I read to people who are not able to, and those that are able to read, read for themselves, in order to ensure that they clearly understood why they are being interviewed. The informed consent form explained that the purpose of this study was purely academic, and that the research participants were not going to benefit from it directly. The participation was voluntary and if they did not want to participate they had a right to say so. Furthermore, even if they agreed to participate, they were not compelled to answer all the questions.

However, the consent form proved to have limitations as the line on what they are consenting became blurry because as the research unfolded in the field and new questions became pertinent such as the role of cows in the conception of the economy and as such I had to expand on this issue of cows. For instance, during one of the focus group discussions, women talked about the importance of *izibaya* (a kraal in plural) in building their homes. When I probed more on this issue I found that it was connected to the understanding of the economy even though I had told them that we were going

to talk about *stokvels* (I discuss this in Chapter Five). I wondered whether the women when consenting to the research on *stokvels* were also consenting to discuss their conception of *izibaya*? This question remained with me, but what was comforting was the fact that I did not intentionally hide any information from participants. What I did not tell them was what I did not know at the time of the interview. I guess this is providence of ethnography.

As Bell argues about the challenges of the informed consent that it “is an extraordinarily poor fit with ethnography” (2014: 9), in this study, informed consent proved to be limited with chance encounters, as I couldn’t necessarily get informed consent. The classic case is of bab’Zulu and the three young men I gave a lift from the village to town. In the first encounter with these participants I did not think they were going to be part of my research and I did not approach them, but they approached me. Ubab’Zulu approached me after one of the focus group discussions wanting me to help him on the problem of the cows I discuss this story in Chapter Five to show how it became an integral part of research. The point I am trying to make here, is that, when I have this first encounter with him, I had no clue that this information will become a window through which I could make sense of the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni. What I did though was to ask permission from him to write about this story in the thesis, which is also complicated because in as much as he did agree I am aware that his comprehension of a ‘thesis’ is different from my explanation and the understanding thereof.

The case with the three young men I gave a lift is rather different as it was not the story they told me, but the phrase they used: *singabantu bendawo* (we are people of this place), which I then explored with other participants. This revealed the deep sense of connectedness of the life of the people of Esihlengeni, and this I discuss further in Chapter Four. While it was possible to go back to bab’Zulu to ask for permission to use his story because I had his contact details, it became impossible to find the three young men because I did not have their contact details and I could not even remember their names. These were the limitations of the informed consent form that I encountered in the field, which in anthropology can be interpreted as strength of its methods because people cannot rehearse their responses because of this spontaneity.

### 3.7.2 Confidentiality

Although this research does not deal with sensitive issues, participants were assured that any information they provided was confidential. This meant that the information they provided was not going to be used publicly in a way that identifies them. Pseudonyms are used in the research report in order to protect them. But I also understand that people are not only individuals but also part of the community. This means that the information about the community might affect the individuals. As Said (1989: 220) shows about the book: *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Scott 1985) the “theoretical paradoxes and aporias faced by anthropology” are at the foundational level of the discipline. He further argues that by Scott writing about this resistance it therefore ceases to be resistance because it is now in the open. But at the same time, by him writing about this resistance he contributed to how communities should be understood.

While protecting participants takes priority in this research, telling the story of Esihlengeni becomes more important in this research as its primary objective is to provide evidence of other epistemologies that the Western science tries to argue against.

### 3.7.3 Incentives

Participants were not offered any incentives when they took part in the study. In order for them to understand my role, I explained that I was a student and that the study was a requirement for getting my degree. However, I paid for transportation of umalume and would provide lunch for him. I would also buy him ‘drink’ to quench his thirst. At umalume omncane’s home I would bring some small groceries sometimes because I spent a lot of time with him. For the focus group discussions, I provided refreshments for the participants. Thandi, refused any kind of incentive I tried to offer, but towards the end of my research I bought her, her husband and their daughter small gifts to thank her for her kindness.

## 3.8 Limitations and challenges of the research

This research tries to address a very complex issue. Time constraint was a challenge, as data needed to be collected within six months. I used different methods, as indicated in the methodology section, to minimise this limitation. The other challenged during

this research was that life for all the participants was not structured according to university disciplines, hence they could not talk about culture without talking about politics, economics, sociology and so forth. Malinowski makes this point clear about conducting research that, “[a]n Ethnographer who sets out to study only religion, or only technology, or only social organization cuts out an artificial field for inquiry, and he will be seriously handicapped in his work” (1922: 11). This is the challenge of Anthropology as a discipline founded in Western epistemology which dissects communities and thus when faced with the whole, is unable to make sense of the whole.

But also, the foundation that sees communities as resources to extract from to make sense of what is extracted in isolation. It is the foundation that anthropology, as a child of imperialism (Mafeje 1978), cannot escape. Mafeje further posits, “the intellectual effort was a service to colonialism not because of crude suppositions about direct conspiracy or collusion but mainly because of the ontology of its thought categories” (1976: 318). As a result, Mafeje continues to argue that for positivist anthropologists it is impossible to disconnect with the foundations of the discourse (ibid). The challenge of doing scientific research in general, and anthropological research in particular, is that one has to contend with the fact that the problems are ontological and thus one has to go to a place that does not exist in terms of the discipline. Another problem with anthropology is the youngest discipline had to justify its existence and thus claimed the ontological difference to other disciplines to give itself the credibility as Adésínà points this out,

A discipline’s claim to being mono-methodological is hardly a positive reflection on its credibility. Research problems suggest the research techniques to adopt not the discipline; most research issues would require multiple research techniques, not being wedded to a particular research technique (2008: 143).

The claim that disciplines make is a Western invention, as life is not fragmented but a whole and thus wanting to claim an ontological difference of the discipline is in itself defeatist of any perceived progress as life is inclusive. Hence in this research I attempted to go beyond discipline but focus on what the community of Esihlengeni presented me with in terms of the *stokvels*, and the economy in general.

When I started with research, I was heavily influenced by Western epistemology of finding problems so that I could come up with solutions. And also, I depended on the



separatist logic that I struggled to understand the community as it was moving from a different epistemology like the one defined by Nyamnjoh (2004) that is connecting everything. I had to open to other worldviews, which meant challenging my convictions on science and the discipline. It was after I had challenged my scientific convictions that I started hearing the people of Esihlengeni. While I cannot claim the full comprehension of the people of Esihlengeni, I was able to go beyond Malinowski's problem, by drawing from scholars such as Mafeje who made a contribution that went beyond the limitations of Western epistemology as he suggested that we need to understand communities in the vernacular – where the concepts that we use, find meaning in communities. I show this in Chapter Five when I discuss the role of cows in *stokvel* and in Chapter Six where I discuss the understanding of gender from Esihlengeni.

### **3.9 Analysis**

As already indicated in the introduction that this study took the approach of endogeneity, as an attempt to move away from one epistemological point of view and bring other ways of knowing which are centred on other belief systems other than the western science. In this way, I move from a premise that there is a possibility that societies are ontological different and thus there is no need to look for Sameness as anthropology does. Taking from Argyrou who argues that “Sameness can never manifest itself in the world - the attempt reproduces Otherness – which is difference understood as culturally inferiority” (2012:1). I then took Mafeje warning as he posits:

In their belief that knowledge grows by accretion and that it is a result of specialized subjects (the scientist) who is able to extract knowledge from an object-world, they have overlooked the important principle of the reversibility of the subject-object relation in knowledge formation (1976: 325).

I viewed the community of Esihlengeni as the producers of their knowledge and as such, I changed from a position of being a scientist who produces knowledge to a narrator who narrates the knowledge produced at Esihlengeni in order to contribute to the body of knowledge – to honour a claim I made when I proposed this study. In Chapter One, I explain the importance of taking the position of being a narrator rather than the producer of knowledge in details. I drew from scholars such as Amadiume (1987) and Oyëwùmí (1997) who made a sterling contribution in the body of knowledge. Learning from these scholars, I was able to reveal a seemingly different

epistemological grounding of the people of Esihlengeni that I try show throughout the thesis.

In addition, to elaborate the epistemological grounding of the people Esihlengeni, I believed in their cultural belief system as it opens up to other possibilities to understand this communities such that we learn from them as Levi-Strauss (1966) once suggested. It is in the ‘enduring continuities’ that I place the findings of this study. Bruner argues, “New narratives do not arise from anthropological field research... but from history, from world conditions” (1997: 276). It is my intention to reveal the connections between the past and the present and perhaps to show the hidden functions of power, which Foucault (1978) argues is how power sustains itself. The reason is the one Anderson suggests that “[a]wareness of being in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of ‘forgetting’ the experience of this continuity – product of raptures of the late eighteenth century – engenders the need of a narrative of ‘identity’” (1991: 205). In this sense, the people of Esihlengeni are allowing us to imagine a world outside of Western invention. In order to be able to understand the knowledge presented by the communities, the process of organising data should be thorough.

### *3.9.1 Organisation of data*

Organising data was not an easy task as I had data that I collected using different research tools. I started by transcribing the recorded interviews and focus group discussions. I used the fieldwork diary as in it I had many themes that I would jot down when I thought they were coming from the field. I grouped the data from the transcriptions based on the themes from the diary. Data that did not fit in the themes that I formulated during my proposal stage formed new themes. The second phase of this process was to incorporate observations from participant observation and this included visits to the museums and the funeral that I attended.

The themes overlap, as the thesis is about one thing: economy. I group themes in three sections that I discuss in Chapter Four, Five, and Six. Chapter Four grapples with the traditional values that are founded on the philosophy of *ubuntu* as a means through which the community of Esihlengeni makes sense of the economic understanding. Chapter Five focuses of the rituals that I attended and their meaning of economy in

terms of cows. And Chapter Six is on gender, which revealed the need by *stokvel* women to restore their men and the insistence on cows.

### *3.9.2 Writing up*

The predicaments anthropologists find themselves in are ontological as Malinowski (1922) points out that are a result from the behaviour and the memory of the living men. Geertz supports Malinowski's articulation and argues that; anthropological writings are themselves interpretations that depends on the researcher (1973: 18). As such, writing processes are not innocent as Said shows:

The native point of view, despite the way it has often been portrayed, is not an ethnographic fact only, is not a hermeneutical construct primarily or even principally; it is in large measure a continuing, protracted, and sustained adversarial resistance to the discipline and the praxis of anthropology (as representative of "outside" power) itself, anthropology not as textuality but as an often direct agent of political dominance (1989: 220).

The aim of this study is to contribute by bringing the knowledge from Esihlengeni with little interpretation, as the information gathered is not just data but knowledge. To achieve this requires stopping to look for differences, but becoming different, which means understanding that I come from a different epistemological grounding. With this in mind, what I hope to do is to follow Anderson's suggestion that "we do our slow best to learn the real, and imagined, experience of the past" (1991: 161). This requires abandonment of research categories that we take to the field and thus imagined communities, but rather to "place human lives and life in general first rather than making claims for the 'transformation of the discipline'" (Mignolo 2009: 20).

### *3.9.3 Dissemination of research findings*

This research is mainly for my doctoral studies and that was explained thoroughly to all the participants and as such, it would be distributed as per the requirements for the degree. However, some of the participants such as my umalume omncane and the ward councillor did express the interest in getting the final product of this research and it is my plan to do so. But also, in the field I met ubab'Zulu who presented me with his case and I made a commitment to take his case to the relevant offices and it is a promise I intend to keep. As a child of Esihlengeni, reporting back to the community will not be a once off exercise as Smith points out,

Reporting back to people is never ever a one-off exercise or a task that can be signed off on completion of the written report. Some of my students have presented their work in formal ceremonies, to families and tribal councils; one has had his work positioned amongst the wreaths which have surrounded the casket of a deceased relation. Some have been able to develop strategies and community-based initiatives directly from their own research projects (1999: 15-16).

Even though this research is driven by the fulfilment of a degree, I will undertake the dissemination of the research findings to the community at a later stage. The report back would be to honour the people who requested it and the promise I made to them. In addition, as a child of Esihlengeni, I will continue to be part of this community and when the need arises to talk about the findings I will share them, as such, it will never be a “one-off exercise” (ibid).

### **3.10 Zulu language in the thesis**

In Chapter One, I introduced this study by arguing that its focus is on the LOGIC of *stokvels*, and as such this thesis should be read from an African epistemology which requires that we begin to think about concepts outside the Western thought. I therefore first paid attention to the language as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that “Our language gave us a view of the world” (1993: 11). In addition, according to Fanon “a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language” (Fanon 1967: 18). In other words, language has the ability to preserve a person’s worldview, which means that languages can afford us the epistemological groundings of different societies.

However, paying attention to the language does not mean fitting the language into already existing categories that are defined by other languages as Myburgh (1942) did. Myburgh in his book *EZAKWAZULU: An Ethnographic Study of the Zulu in the Vernacular*, Myburgh (1942) recorded the already identified social practices by the Western discourse without the intricacies and nuances of these practices in the Zulu language. I would argue he lacked the worldview of the Zulu language that is even captured in the proverbs that “are the foundation of social and cultural wisdom and therefore serve as the basis for formulating concepts that govern social relation” (Asimeng – Boahene 2009: 62). I would posit that one’s language is a window through which to access ways of life that may be suppressed by the dominant culture that draws

from other epistemologies. In this thesis, I use language as a resource to understand the community of Esihlengeni. Second to language, is that I am mindful of translating the epistemologies, as such I do not assume that there are universal concepts, so the concepts that are in this thesis are exhumed from the field. Below, I expand on the issue of a vernacular, translation and concepts to give the reader a lens through which to understand the study.

### *3.10.1 Community in vernacular*

As already posited I used endogeneity as an approach in an attempt to understand the community of Esihlengeni from their standpoint. This approach, I argue, enabled me to make sense of the traditional values that govern the behaviour of the people of Esihlengeni. To study communities in vernacular requires a change of mindset of the scholar such one is able to open up for many possibilities because languages like culture “eludes any form of simplification” (Fanon 1967: 160). This requires opening up to our limitations and unlearning the Western knowledge that is premised on dualistic and atomistic approach (Kenrick 2011). Hence Mudimbe suggests that,

rather than simply accept the authority of qualified representatives of African cultures, I would like to study the theme of the foundations of discourse about Africa... it is in these very discourses that African worlds have been established as realities for knowledge. And today Africans themselves read, challenge, rewrite these discourses as a way of explicating and defining their culture, history, and being (1980: 3).

In other words, understanding communities in vernacular would mean to question the foundations of *kgomo ya moshate* (the royal cow) – the knowledge that is produced within Western epistemology and has presented itself as unquestionable (ibid: 11). By vernacular, I draw from Mafeje (1991)’s explanation that it does not mean just the language, but the way of existence of that particular community such that we do not parachute outside concepts in but dig deeper into communities to find concepts that best describe their experience. It cannot be that we can have just one way of understanding societies, and that there can be just one way of knowing while the world in its natural state is different. Indeed, people of the mountains will have a different view of the world from the people of the plains. Another important issue to ponder is the reason for research. It is my belief that we do not just study communities to understand them but to uncover the knowledge in communities that can help us understand the world better.

This is a mutually inclusive process that is necessary if we are to imagine a better world for everyone who lives in it.

Studying communities in vernacular will require us to have courage to denounce Western knowledge when necessary. The experiences and existence of the colonised communities cannot be reduced to the colonial experience because colonialism did not succeed in erasing everything. Even though the colonial experience explains the responses of the colonised, however, other systems of knowledge are still in existence and are embedded in languages, rituals, culture and people's memory. It is these responses that I argue, are in vernacular thus communities must be studied in vernaculars – in their paradigm of knowing. This is how the community of Esihlengi has been studied.

### *3.10.2 The problems of translation*

It would seem that if studying communities in vernacular means finding concepts embedded in the systems of knowledge within the communities, then translation is not necessary. While societies might have seemingly similar concepts, it does not follow that the conceptualisation of those concepts emanate from the same cosmological understanding of the world. For instance, though it seems that all societies have a conception of God in some ways; however, it does not mean that the idea of God is the same in all societies. While for Westerners, through the Christian faith, God has a human face, he is regarded as the father, the son and the holy spirit in isiZulu the conception of God is not expressed in a human face but rather a force that is different from a human form: *uMlenze munye* (one legged), *uMvelinqangi* (one that existed before everything), *uSimakade* (the one that will forever be). This is a God that is too big to be consulted by just one person; as such a person cannot have a personal relationship with God. The ancestors become that force that one can have a relationship with that one can negotiate, plead, and appease. But God, can only be approached as a group, not individually.

It is in this context that we can begin to understand the Zulu cultural practices such as *Ukweshwama* that Dlakanyo defines as “a traditional thanksgiving that has been practised by the Zulu nation for time immemorial before the harvesting of crops” (2009: 1), an acknowledgment of a force that provides a nation a favourable climate. We can

also begin to appreciate how there is also a drought, the nation will gather and collectively plead with the force. Clearly, the fact that societies have a conception of God, does not mean that the conceptualisation of a God is the same everywhere. Thus, the Christian God in isiZulu has a different name from the original isiZulu name. The Christian name of God is *uNkulunkulu* (a direct translation is *nkulu* - big, then *nkulunkulu* is big big). The name of a Christian God could be a reflection of translation that introduced new concepts, because clearly, amaZulu have a different understanding of God and thus within their indigenous vocabulary they could not find an equivalent name to describe what was explained to them by missionaries, hence they created a new name - *Nkulunkulu*. When we translate we also create. It is paramount therefore that in an attempt to understand communities we do not translate but work towards understanding communities in their own accord.

Translation cannot capture the essence of the conceptualisation of the world, which is informed by climate as posited in the introduction. In actual fact, translation is a perverted logic given the complexities of languages as Oyèwùmí argues “[I]n many English translations, the preference for *awo* as secret instead of mystery is also suggestive” (2016: 21). In other words, in translation, researchers bring their judgments and, in the process, corrupt the translation especially when words are taken out of their epistemic framework. The same applies when attempts are made to translate Western epistemology into other languages, where researchers not just translate their vernacular into Western languages but translate Western concepts into their local languages Adésínà explains this clearly,

The central issue in the development of a new paradigm is not just about the development of concepts. Rather it is the shift in the framework of thought and, more foundationally, the question of how we make sense of things and how we produce knowledge: this is the epistemological aspect (2002: 102).

In other words, defining concepts in vernacular means a shift of paradigm at the epistemological level and thus disrupt the flow of thinking of a particular society, as it now has to engage with concepts that are not aligned with its cosmological worldview.

In addition, translation does not take into account that when concepts do not have equivalent names in communities that are being studied, it does not mean that they do

not exist<sup>27</sup>, but that there is another layer not explored. For instance, in isiXhosa, there is a saying that: *umlomo uyadala* (mouth creates), in isiZulu, this is expressed through not pronouncing (*ukuphimisela*) things that are believed would disrupt harmony. In this sense, naming becomes a sacred process that gives birth to what is named, while not naming something is destroying it even in people's imagination. Things that are regarded as *amanyala* and/or *ihlazo*<sup>28</sup> (lewdness/obscenity and shame) would not be named because naming them would be to acknowledge them and therefore to make them permissible – to create them. *Amanyala nehlazo* (lewdness/obscenity and shame) are not named as they are being 'unthought' so that they do not find expression. Insisting on naming *amanyala nehlazo* in communities that draw from different epistemologies other than the West is not only to impose Western ways of thinking but to also violate of societies' ways of purification by injecting *amanyala nehlazo*. For instance, in isiZulu we do not have a name for paedophiles for whatever reasons. Hence some things did not find expression in this thesis because even though they happen, they are being unthought.

### 3.10.3 Finding concepts

In order to understand communities correctly we need to understand the concepts that exist in those particular communities. Having argued above that doing research in vernacular is not just about the concepts, it does not mean that concepts are not important. Concepts are critical as they are the tools that we use to produce knowledge. Doing research in vernacular therefore means that one does not come with colonising and silencing concepts to study communities but draws concepts from the people as well. It is also important to take into consideration the power relations that are at play in the production of knowledge. These relations often create problems for those who are on the receiving end as Mafeje explains:

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<sup>27</sup> For example, in isiZulu, an ocean – *ulwandle* has no plural form because it is believed that there is one ocean with many islands. As such, there are no names of 'different' oceans as conceptualised by the Westerners. While mountains and rivers have names, an ocean is just *ulwandle* wherever you are because it is understood as one. So, naming 'oceans' in isiZulu would be tampering with their belief system that if taken to task might be proven to be correct, but that is beside the point, the point is: it would be to impose a particular worldview over theirs.

<sup>28</sup> *Ihlazo* (shame) is something that is most feared amongst amaZulu because it is regarded as something that questions your humanity – the ability of being *umuntu*. *Ihlazo* therefore serves as a self-censorship, that makes people not to do 'wrong' even when they are alone because the embarrassment of shaming the family, the community is unbearable. People who are no longer afraid of *ihlazo* are regarded as people who have a dead consciousness and are as good as dead.



Those on the receiving end cannot help adapting to the imperatives of the imposing forces and intrusive values. Whether this is referred to as “acculturation”, “civilization”, “westernization”, or “selective borrowing”, it never wipes the slate clean. Local modes of thought and behavior persist in one-way or another... This might be a sign of their inability to see the wood for the trees due to the persistent use of received designated categories (1998: 98).

Mafeje points out that even under conditions of Western imposition, own thinking still continues in communities. If we are true to the quest of knowledge, we need to be true to the methods that will help us acquire that knowledge. This means that we cannot just import concepts in our pursuit of knowledge, we also need to interrogate the concepts we are using to see if they help us achieve our objective. If they do help us, we can embrace them but if they do not we should discard them. Masolo emphasises this point:

For only that direct responsibility for a thought born out of, based upon and reflecting our particular experiences within a historical progress will lead to a true African philosophy as an intellectual undertaking conditioned in its attitude, mood, and orientation by realities of environment (1980: 423).

While I did not develop concepts, I opened up the concepts I used so that they are understood from the perspective of the community rather than make the community fit the concept. Césaire made an important point when he resigned from the Communist Party “That the doctrine and the movement would be made to fit men not men to fit the doctrine or the movement” (1956: 150). Hopefully other studies will be able to develop concepts from the communities, and thus produce knowledge founded on multiplicities of epistemologies – of the theorists (who are often the representative of Western epistemology), of the communities, and of their lived experiences.

Coming to Esihlengeni from within (as explained in the section 3.4) allowed myself to tap into the different system of knowledge represented by, among others, the language that the community members use to make sense of life. Lindgren (2002) argues that when studying communities from within, one engages in a process of not just defining the community that is being studied, but of defining the self as well. This means that one does not just take data as presented but is fully engaged, and thus is listening with ears and feelings, which propels one to ask the probing question of: WHY? For instance, on the question of writing, it has become an accepted knowledge (even by Africans) that Africans are oral people implying that did not have a history of writing

in spite of the fact that scholars such as Tuchscherer have conducted studies that showed that historically, Africans had a writing system that was communicative and decorative at the same time as exemplified by rock art (2007: 42). But because these writings did not ‘fit in’ to what the researchers knew, Africans were said to not have a history of writing. The important point here is that most research work has been pre-occupied with the whats and hows of communities and this seems to have an underlying tone and assumption that these communities are not capable of answering the WHY question. Hence most early anthropological research made the societies they claim to be ‘primitive’ societies primitive. This takes us to what was posited in Chapter One that this study is more interested in the LOGIC of *stokvels*, and is focused on answering the WHY question.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The chapter discussed the methods used in the field to collect data outside Western epistemology. I further discussed challenges of ethics that were experienced as the field unfolded as they could not be predicted before the fieldwork experience. I place these challenges in broader Western disciplines that claim the ability to know all and argue that this claim is flawed as other societies are informed by different cosmologies? I showed this by drawing from theorists that have studied communities using the endogeneity approach, which transcends Western epistemology and thus reveals the limitations of Western concepts. I conclude by showing that even though I moved from Western epistemological framework as a base for the research, I opened up to the community’s epistemology that uses connectivity of all life’s facets. More importantly, in this chapter I bring the lens through which the community of Esihlengeni was studied and therefore suggesting that the same lens be used in interpretation and analysis of data. As such, this chapter does not only argue that the study is valid based on how it was conducted but on how it is to be read as well, hence it provides the tools to read it. The following chapter expands on the tools to understand this study by showing how epistemology of Esihlengeni plays itself.

## Chapter 4

### **Culture and memory of the people of Esihlengeni: the insistence of traditional values**

*Prospero, you are the master of illusion. Lying is your trademark. And you have lied so much to me (Lied about the world, lied about me) That you have ended by imposing on me An image of myself. Underdeveloped, you brand me, inferior, That's the way you have forced me to see myself I detest that image! What's more, it's a lie! But now I know you, you old cancer, And I know myself as well. ~ Caliban, in Aime Césaire's (year) page) A Tempest*

#### **4. Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni that will assist to make sense of the community of Esihlengeni in their conception of the economy. I read the genealogy that connects my uncles with King Mzilikazi Khumalo to reveal the mobility and fluidity of identities that is embedded in the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni. By tapping into African philosophy carried through language, rituals and everyday activities I argue that the people of Esihlengeni insist on their traditional values that draw from the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is centred on inclusivity of the past, present and the future. This philosophical worldview is born of a different epistemological grounding that allows the people of Esihlengeni to manage the seemingly irreconcilable way of life. I conclude the chapter by arguing that the people of Esihlengeni cannot be understood using Western epistemology as their existence is founded on a different epistemology. As such, there is a need for a holistic approach in the production of knowledge that allows people to articulate their lived experiences, using their cosmos to breakaway from the dominant Western epistemology that has presented itself as universal. For it is through the holistic process whereby the thinking starts from a position of multiplicity that we can achieve true diversity of ideas that can give birth to a possibility of a better world.

Referring to the difficulties that black people went through during the colonial period to the apartheid era, Madikizela-Mandela writes:

Solitary confinement was designed to kill you so slowly that you were long dead before you died. By the time you died you were nobody. You had no soul anymore and a body without a soul is a corpse anyway. It is unbelievable that you survived all that. When I

was told that most of my torturers were dead, I was so heartbroken. I wanted them to see the dawn of freedom. I wanted them to see how they lost their battle with all that they did to us, that we survived. We are the survivors who made history. (2013: 234).

Using the history of Esihlengeni, in this chapter I want to place the experiences of the people Esihlengeni in the context of Madikizela-Mandela's (2013) utterance, to tell the story of survival of the oppressed and ways that allowed them to survive. In a way, this chapter is about the story of triumph that is often never told since academic focus is often on the devastations that were caused by the wars, such that communities are 'saved', but the means that such communities have sought to restore themselves are never a focus.

#### 4.1 The historical context of Esihlengeni

In Chapter Three I posited that part of the reason I chose the place of Esihlengeni as my research field site was because of its connectedness with King Mzilikazi who formed the Ndebele nation of Zimbabwe. According to Kunene (1979: 291), the Khumalo nation under Mashobane – the father to King Mzilikazi - was once a great nation as he writes imitating King Shaka, "Once they were a great nation, but were destroyed by Zwide"<sup>29</sup>. It is in this context that I wanted to understand the role that this history played in the everyday lives of the people of Esihlengeni. This historical epoch did not just assist me in understanding the everyday life of the people of Esihlengeni, but it became a window through which I was able to access the epistemological groundings of the people of Esihlengeni in particular, and amaZulu in general. First that the identity is fluid as it changes over time, and second, that mobility is inherent in this culture, as it will be shown later.

Second to this, I used umalume omncane, who is *imbongi* (a bard, using Mafeje's (1967) suggestion to parallel him with the Celtic Bard – part historian, critique, social commentator and one who chants invocation) and a *inyanga*<sup>30</sup> (a herbalist) to tap into

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<sup>29</sup> This shows that even the great king Shaka, did acknowledge the greatness of the Khumalo nation before being conquered by king Zwide of the Ndwandwes

<sup>30</sup> The word *inyanga* is a homonym, sometimes it refers to a moon or a month. What is important to mention though is that in isiZulu, homonyms are not names that mean different things that are not related as in English. For example, in English, shed: can be a noun to refer to an outhouse to store extra stuff and it is also a verb to refer to remove layers, so these things are not related. However, in isiZulu, the herbalist, the moon and the month are all related in terms of their roles but also, they inform one another. For example, *inyanga* the herbalist relies on the moon when he/she is looking for herbs, but also the herbalist through his/her healing capabilities, he/she brings light in darkness just like the moon. This is

the historical account of the people of Esihlengeni as he was able to explain the dates of events that happened in the past using in what Van Vuuren calls “a unique dating system” (2010: 11). For Van Vuuren, imbongi’s role is key to the memory of the community; as such umalume omncane was key in the historical account of the Khumalo clan, and the amaZulu in general. I used his memory as a lens through which the memory of the community of Esihlengeni is kept to the insistence of the traditional values that are part and parcel of the everyday experience that draw from a belief system that has escaped the influences of the modern-day traditions. In addition, according to Van Vuuren on praise poets “the conscious drawing of the date ‘file’ as embedded in individual and collective memory seems to complement a person’s individual recollection” (ibid: 12). Praise poetry makes references to persons, events and places - they reflect the background not only of social life but also on the country (ibid).

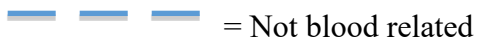
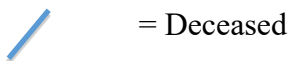
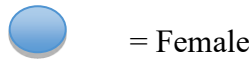
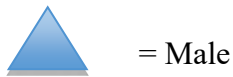
I argue that a society that produced these kinds of people who have the gift to communicate with ancestors while at the same time draw from their community’s collective memory, shows that it is a society that embodies memory in their everyday existence. This kind of memory ceases to be in the past but becomes forever present such that it becomes part of cultural practices. This memory is significant as it demystifies the myth of total erasure of cultures, but reveals a complicated situation embedded on inherent contradictions, ontological difference and co-existence. The community that takes into account this nature of things is the community that draws from an African epistemology that is different from Western epistemology. I show this in two ways, through analysing the genealogy and through analysing the graveyard and a monument of UBheje.

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important to mention because in this study I deduce meaning from words because naming of things in an African epistemology reflects the connectedness of nature as opposed to atomistic nature of Western epistemology.

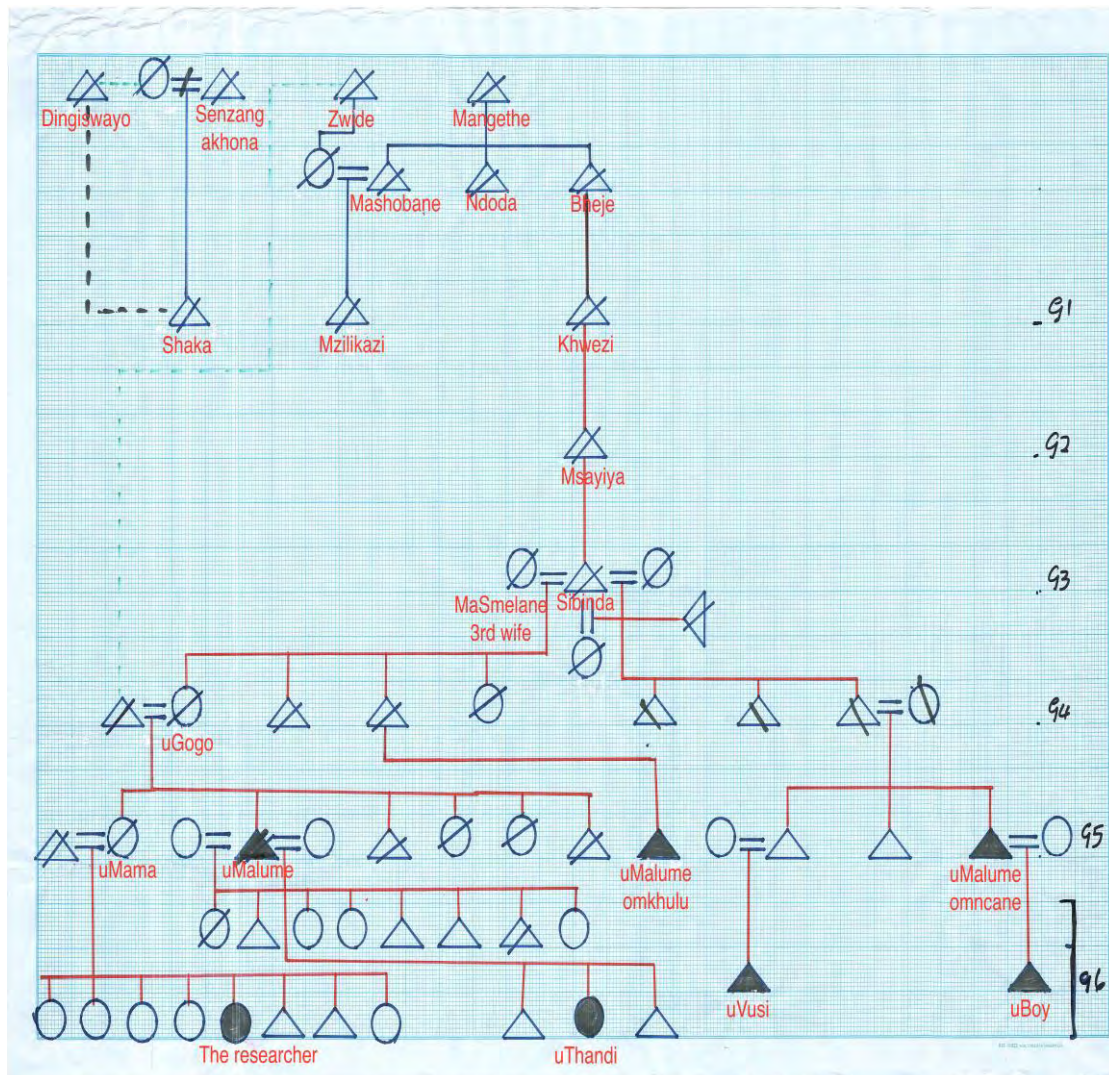
#### 4.1.1 Analysing genealogy

Below are the symbols in the genealogy chart and their meanings.



The red line signifies the blood line and the dotted line symbolizes the same nation. All participants are shaded including myself. G represents generation, and in this genealogy chart, the first generation is with King Shaka and King Mzilikazi as they founded what is known today as amaZulu and amaNdebele of Zimbabwe respectively. All participants in the study are shaded including myself. This genealogy played a pivotal role in unearthing the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni. During the process of drafting this genealogy which had a lot of pauses and back and forth moments, when it eventually finished, it had force me to go back in history to make sense of the many historical accounts that I thought I knew such as the Mfecane – “a myth of cataclysmic period of black-on-black destruction in the era of Shaka” (Cobbing 1988: 487). The stories my uncles told me during the drafting of the genealogy, contradicted my understanding of the historical accounts as they had good stories to tell about the relations that King Shaka had with the Khumalos and Bheje in particular whom they adored. In their narration of the historical account they revealed the fluidity of identity that is celebrated as they took pride in being related to amaNdebele of Zimbabwe and they viewed them as their brothers while they took pride in being amaZulu.

Figure 10 Genealogy from Esihlengeni



This genealogy chart shows that King Mzilikazi is the son of King Mashobane who is the brother to uBheje whom my uncles claim are his descendants. But because uBheje remained at Engome, a place that was under King Shaka who was a friend to King Mzilikazi, then he became umZulu, while his Nephew King Mzilikazi went on to start his nation that is now known as the Ndebele nation. In this historical account, we see people that once belonged to one nation and in sixth generation – first one being Mashobane - they belong in two different nations.

King Mzilikazi parted ways with King Shaka with reasons that were never clear from my uncles' narrations. According to Cobbing (1988), there are many historical versions of why King Mzilikazi left King Shaka. One of the stories told is that King Mzilikazi

left because of the Mfecane. Nyathi argues that “mfecane is in line with apartheid philosophy – whites moving into the area did not take away land from the blacks” (2005: 5). In fact, historians such as Rasmussen (1978); Cobbing (1984, 1988); Lingren (2002); Nyathi (2005) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) dispute the mfecane as historical account behind the reason for migration in within South Africa. Lindgren, using the historical account of the Ndebele as narrated by a Ndebele historian Nyathi, argues that “Mzilikazi loved being independent” (2002: 61). For Nyathi, “it was Griqua raids on the Ndebele – in search of cattle – that forced King Mzilikazi and his people to consider moving on” (2005: 5). According to not so trusted history – as Cobbing argues - King Mzilikazi moved north where he fought and conquered many ethnic groups that were incorporated into his nation, but others refused and ran away to maintain their ethnicity, one such groups were amaNdebele of South Africa (Delius 1989). However, according to Cobbing,

far from destroying Sotho civilization, the Ndebele establishment between 1829-1836 are of a flourishing well-administered, grain growing people... The Ndebele displaced and absorbed, they did not exterminate (1984: 11).

Indeed, the historical accounts on the formation of amaZulu and amaNdebele nations<sup>31</sup> remain controversial. This, however, is not surprising because historical accounts result from the agendas of those that write it (Oyèwùmí 1997; Lindgren 2002) as Cobbing attests, “Ideas of the Lifeqane (mfecane) tell us much about the missionaries, perhaps more than about the 1820s in African history” (1984: 10)<sup>32</sup>. Nonetheless, my uncles remained proud of their history as they understood and narrated it to me.

As such, I read the genealogy from a cultural historical perspective not from the South African historical texts, as these texts are highly dependant on the agenda of the historians. What is evident in the genealogy and in the historical account narrated by my uncles that identity is fluid. Second to this is that communities are mobile. As such, I read the mobility of King Mzilikazi as rooted in culture that in its epistemology believes that mobility is part of growth, as I will show in the subsequent sections. In

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<sup>31</sup> I am using nation because in isiZulu there are no specifications of groups as in English. in isiZulu nationality is *ubuzwe* and this would also mean ethnicity.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, an interesting question is that if everyone was running away from King Shaka why were white people flocking to South Africa? And also, if there was famine, why it did not seem to affect the missionaries? Indeed, the history of the Mfecane and famine is telling us more about the historian/missionaries than South African history.



other words, it is founded on the philosophy of *ubuntu* that according to Ramose it is in motion because it is becoming *umuntu* (a being) not being *umuntu*, which suggests that an identity cannot be fixed<sup>33</sup>. Hence, we see King Mzilikazi forming a new nation of amaNdebele. The historical account of the people of Esihlengeni, from the genealogy reveals two fundamental knowledge about life that 1) identity is fluid and 2) mobility is inherent as part of existence, which draws from the African epistemology embedded in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

#### *4.1.2 UBheje monument and the graveyards*

On our first meeting with umalume omncane, he told me about uBheje, one of the legendary Khumalo chiefs - from which we draw our lineage. He told me that we have to go to his monument so as to learn more about our history. I agreed to come with my uncle, even though I was not sure if the visit to the monument would benefit my research. I kept on postponing this trip hoping that my uncle will forget about it, but he did not. Eventually I gave in and gave my uncle the date for the visit. He was really excited about this visit and even invited his brother – umalume omncane - to join us on for the trip. For me, this visit was out of respect for my uncle, but at the same time, I believed that I would find some kind of information that probably I would use for the research.

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<sup>33</sup> Important to mention is that the fluidity of identity that I am advocating for here is not suggesting that people have no identity but that identity shifts. My uncle's and me included have an identity: we are amaZulu - notwithstanding the fact that the Zulu identity is questionable (Haas and Zulu, 1994). With no doubt, we practice the Zulu culture, we speak isiZulu and we believe in the Zulu traditions. My argument does not deconstruct identity but in fact it affirms it.

*Figure 11 Picture of umalume omncane next to Ubheje monument*



On our way to the monument, my uncles told me about the history of the Khumalos: that they were never defeated by King Shaka but worked together with him. However, Bheje – the brother to Mashobane, King Mzilikazi’s father - heroism still remained elusive, at least in my view. I could not understand how a person who had to hide in a cave, while the rest of the men were at war, was heroic. But I could not express this

view to my uncles as it would not only be disrespectful but would also hurt their feelings. It was clear to me that they really adored uBheje. Obviously, they are not the only ones in their adoration, the whole Khumalo clan seemed to feel the same, hence they built a monument for him. It is not the purpose of this research to understand the whole history of the Khumalos but the worldview of my uncles and this is explained later in the chapter.

We continued with our journey. On our way back from the monument, my uncles insisted that we pass by the graveyard of our ancestors. Even though I had no energy after this disappointing visit to Bheje monument, I had no energy to contest my uncles, so I agreed to drive past the graveyard. The road was terrible to say the least. At some point I had to stop, and I told my uncles that I could not drive anymore, it was really scary, and I was now worried that the university car could be damaged by the stones and gravel road. They understood, so we parked the car and walked. As if the monument was not enough disappointment, the graveyard was even worse, there was nothing there! I got more depressed. I watched as they were pointing at the ‘graves’ (that were invisible to me) trying to explain who those people were and how I was related to them. I listened but my heart was no longer there, and my mind was everywhere trying to make sense of all of this. At the same time, I was physically tired and could not go down the hill; I had to ask uBoy – my uncle’s assistant that we travelled with everywhere we went because he carries my uncle’s bags - to go there so he could take the pictures at a closer look – as my uncles were insisting that I get the pictures.

*Figure 12 Picture of my uncles and myself at the gravesite.*



My uncles were showing me the graves of our relatives but from where we were standing they were invisible to me but they could see them and went on to explain who they were.

Figure 13 Picture of one of the graves



This is the picture of the grave taken by Boy who went down the hill to take a picture at a closer position, as it was impossible to see the graves while standing on top of the hill.

I left the place feeling more confused as I really struggled to make the connection with what I was studying and the information that was presented to me. And also, I could not reconcile my uncle's attachment with their past, which to me was devastating as it revealed their defeat. While I understood that the dead are important in many black communities, as Ramose explains,

death does not totally discontinue the life of these departed beings. Instead, they are believed to enter into and continue living in a world unknown to those left behind. On the ground of this belief the departed are called the living-dead (*abaphansi*) (Ramose 2002: 236).<sup>34</sup>

Adésinà (2002) emphasises this point as he posits that death is not the end of life, but it continues through ancestors who are in another state of existence that allows them to

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<sup>34</sup> The word *abaphansi* literally means those that live underneath the earth. This would seem contrary to the Christian belief of heaven that is above which contradicts the Western law of gravity.

ever present. However, honoring and respecting the dead is not linked to graves per se, so I remained baffled by my uncles' attachment to these graves.

For Van Vuuren, drawing from his accounts through consultation work on land claims, and his research amongst the Ndebele people argues that, "Graves as mnemonic tools interlock the memorised past with present as far as the ritually significant genealogical link is concerned" (2010: 16). He further echoes James (2000; 2009), that, "In the land claim process, claimants hold the perception that proof of graves and family cemeteries provide them with ultimate proof of occupation and the right of access to land" (2010: 17). In this context, it explains that my uncles were trying to communicate with the graves that Esihlengeni is their birthright.

To make sense of my uncles' attachment to the graves, I had to understand the land discourse in contemporary South Africa. According to James (2000), in post-apartheid South Africa there has been the policy on land reform that is aimed at land restitution. In Chapter Three, I discussed government's initiatives that are part of the compensation of being possessed land that according to the ward counsellor, are aimed at alleviating poverty and restore justice. These projects were a result of land restitution. In other words, the people of Esihlengeni had been given their 'land back' through the process of land restitution. The attachment that my uncles have to the graves, can be understood as a divergent from the cultural past but a convergent to the government's narrative that have identified graves as 'informal' evidence in land claims as James explains:

People reclaiming land are affirming their right to a seat of identity linked to long standing family ties which also stretch forward into the future. They combine ideas of traditionalist communalism with the image of being one of God's chosen people brought back from exile into the promised land. Tied to this, there is the strong motif of a place freed from outside interference (2000: 158).

My uncles' insistence of showing me the graves was a way of giving me evidence that the stories they were telling me were legitimate. But what must be stated clearly is that the importance of graves in cultural belief systems is not integral as James points out that:

Although propitiation of ancestors is central to customary religious practice, the canonical texts in South African anthropology carry no indication of its needing to be

carried out at grave site. Traditionally these were in any case not marked out for special attention, being simply contained within the cattle byre (2000: 147).

This is in line with my uncles' articulations that all the important activities in relation to the ancestors are done in the cattle kraal. Having said this, it does not mean that graves were never regarded as sacred hence the concept of *ukuphonsa itshe esivivaneni*, (throw your stone upon a pile of stones) where one acknowledges a space where a person died at. In addition, as the environment and circumstances change, so do the cultural practices. In the absence of cattle kraal (an enclosure for cattle), because of the land dispossessions and illegal evictions of black people, it would seem logical for people to use graves as the replacement for the cattle kraal.

It is not correct therefore to insinuate that the usage of graves as the evidence in the land claims is opportunism as James suggests. “[m]ore ambitiously, members of new regional elites with links to hereditary chiefs imagined themselves reclaiming entire lost empires” (James 2009: 228). This statement is problematic at many levels. For one, the land restitution for James is entirely about materialism; clearly drawing from a Western epistemic framework and in her articulation, it is never about disruptions and atrocities people endured and thus wanting closure by means of restorative justice. The second problem is the premise she is moving from: that she understands everything and can represent all point of views. This is assuming a ‘God-eye-view’ that removes her from her positionality and hides her biases.

For me, the usage of graves in the land claims becomes reasonable in the attempt to redress injustices of the past. It would be misleading therefore to suggest that people like those from Esihlengeni are fantasising about lost empires as their identity is founded on fluidity as I have already shown through the story of King Mzilikazi. Indeed, this is quite a complex process as James points out that the question of ‘whose land’ have been a matter of dispute (2009: 228). Especially that Cobbing argues,

It (mfecane) was the myth of 'the first great [intra-Bantu] tragedy of South African history' giving way to an era of (European-introduced) enlightenment that began at that moment with the victory of the settler voice... All were eventually compelled to adopt European boundaries and concepts of private property, witness the destruction of their land use systems, and suffer their re-emergence in caricature... The violence of forced

removals was conjured away with new euphemisms and lies. Whites could now legitimately fight for what was 'by right ' theirs (1988: 518).

The complexity therefore is not just on this question, but for all the stakeholders, depending on the side a person is on, as the understanding of this process is informed by one's epistemological underpinnings - knowingly or unknowingly – which gives a particular perspective. And thus, that perspective can never be viewed as bias-free and objective but in whose interest and agenda is in support of and depending on which epistemology the questioner is drawing from.

#### *4.1.3 The museums*

It is important to mention upfront that these historical accounts of the battle of Encome and the battle of Isandlwana are contested. Lombo (2017) argues that historians differ on the accounts of these wars. I am not using this information to represent a true account of these wars, but to interrogate the narratives about these wars, especially the controversial narrative of the battle of Encome known as the War of the Covenant, meaning that an agreement was made between the Boers and God. The Battle of Encome took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838. The museum covers this war in a rather strange way. The museum is divided into two sections: the Zulu section, the Afrikaner section, which is situate across the river (on a dry river bed with a bridge that takes you to the other section). The Zulu section has a free entrance while in order to access the Afrikaner section one needs to pay R30 per person and R40 for a car. The stories told in these museums are not the same. It is important to note that these museums were not built at the same time and for the same purpose. As such, these two museums want to achieve different things and this is explained by the different presentations of the historical events.

After this visit, I wondered about the representation of this historical event. More so, that the narratives were so different. For the Boers, the narrative was of the Boers slaughtering black people to a point that the 'river' turned into blood, while the Zulu version was that there was never the river in between. Even though the Zulu version does accept the defeat, they question the number that the Boers claim they killed but also the fact that there were no Boers that were killed. What was evident in the Zulu museum is that it was a mirror of the Boer museum, with an attempt to tell the same story but differently. For instance, the Afrikaans museum attributes their victory to the



covenant they made with their God – infusing religion with war. And in the Zulu museum there are pictures of the *izangoma*<sup>35</sup> (healers) who are believed to have played a critical role in preparing for the war. I argue that both museums are drawing from a Western epistemology even though the Zulu museum attempts to incorporate its African spirituality, but it is constrained by the attempts to correct this past instead of just retelling history on its own terms even if it does not fit in the ‘accepted’ historical accounts as my uncles did when they were narrating about good relations King Shaka had with Bheje. There is no connection of this war with the invasions that the Boers that was already happening during this period especially in the Boer’s museums as Cobbing argues,

Continuation of the slave trade at the Bay and of settler expansionism towards and beyond the Kei, was accompanied by the Boer invasions of the highveld and British penetration into Natal to produce new patterns of demand for forced labour between the 1840s and 1860s, demands that were met by similar arrangements to those of the 1820s. And they in turn gave way to more modern though equally brutal processes of proletarianization (1988: 518).

It can be deduced that the battle of Encombe was about settler expansion that was met by resistance. Both the historical text and the museum information should be read with an understanding that the writers and the museums curators have an interest in the construction of history and thus serve particular agendas.

The second museum is dedicated to the battle of Isandlwana and is run by a government institution - Amafa/Heritage KwaZuluNatal, which is a commemoration of the war that took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879 between the Zulu Kingdom under the king Cetshwayo<sup>36</sup> and the British Empire in South Africa. It is a very small museum that has only rondavel with public toilets and a small information centre. It displays some

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<sup>35</sup> Here I must emphasise the importance of *izangoma* -plural of *isangoma* - (healers) The name itself means: *isa* – it looks like, *ngoma* – a song, in other words *isangoma* is something that is like a song, as such they are sometimes referred to *abantu bengoma*: people of song. A song cannot be seen but is felt, so is *izangoma* as people with ancestors that are not seen but felt. This therefore, allows a fluid gendered identity because they are understood as having in them ancestors that could be of any sex. Second to this, *ingoma* has a rhythm that balances or aligns the vibrations of nature to bring stillness, which is important in dealing with all kinds of situations. *Izangoma* are thus regarded as people with the gift of this rhythm.

<sup>36</sup> King Cetshwayo was the son of King Mpande – the brother to King Shaka. But the story narrated is that in fact King Cetshwayo was King Shaka’s son but they had to hide him from King Shaka because apparently King Shaka did not want to have sons because he believed they were going to kill him for the royal seat.

artefacts of the war such as spears and guns and plays a video of a reconstructed battle with a narrator. But the battlefield is preserved, which is a huge piece of land. On the site of the battlefield, there are only white stones for white soldiers that died in the war. In addition to these white stones, there are memorial tombstones of all the white people that died in this war. But black soldiers are not mentioned in any historical way in this battle ground.

The narrative in this museum is offered in a video format is that King Cetshwayo never wanted to fight but the Queen wanted the land. The battle was a decisive victory for amaZulu and caused the defeat of the first British invasion of Zululand. The British Army had suffered its worst defeat against an indigenous foe with vastly inferior military technology. Isandlwana resulted in the British taking a much more aggressive approach in the Anglo–Zulu War, leading to a heavily reinforced second invasion and the destruction of King Cetshwayo’s hopes of a negotiated peace. According to the tour guide in the museum, King Cetshwayo was captured and taken to England, he did not come back alive. The invasion of Zululand by the British meant that they had a right to dispossess people their land. The laws imposed during this time were restricting the number of cows the blacks could have, and the introduction of taxes. This in a way was an attempt to force people to work on the farms that used to be their land – basically people were dispossessed of their land and were brought back as slaves<sup>37</sup>; there was

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<sup>37</sup> I use the word slave to express the experience of the farm workers in South Africa that has continued till this day. I do not want to water down these experiences especially that I have a personal experience because my mother grew up on a farm. All her siblings ‘entered the farm’ (*ukungena iplazi*), which is not employment but working in the farm so that you can be allowed to live there. This means that people have to work without any monetary compensation, but for a place to stay. Each member of the family had to work for 10 years before they could be released to go and work elsewhere for money. For farm people, in order for them to start early to work for wage so that they can support their families, they needed to start working in the farm very young, which is child labour. According to my mother, my aunts and uncles, started *ukungena iplazi* when they were around ten years of age. This meant that they started going to the cities to look for work when they were in their early twenties. The jobs in the farms included working in the field, looking after cattle and domestic work in the house. These jobs were not gendered but dependent on one’s age. My uncle told me that when he started *ukungena iplazi*, he was working in the house as a cleaner because he was too young to work in the field. According to umalume, *ukungena iplazi* was not just about working for free, but it was working hard and if there was anything that went wrong uMatatane (the owner of the farm that my mother’s family lived on) would beat them. These harsh conditions must be understood in the context that one of the reasons of the Mfecane according to Cobbing (1988) was the fact that the Boers wanted to continue with slavery when the British had abolished it. One can deduce that the slavery treatment in their farms continued, with slight difference such as allowing people to eventually go and work at some point. While I am aware that slavery has come to define a particular experience based on the kidnapping of Africans, I contend that there are experiences that happened outside of this newly definition of slavery that can lose the intensity of the abuse that people endured, and some are still enduring if we call them in different names other than slave. My mother is the only one who did not ‘enter the farm’ because her father said they needed to have at least one person

also confiscation of cows to force people to go and work so that they could pay taxes. These wars are normally defined as colonial conquest, but what is becoming evident is that according to the Zulu rules of engagement, these were not conquest and thus the narration of them being conquest draws from a different epistemology that institutionalised colonialism as I will show in the following sections.

#### **4.2 A worldview of the people of Esihlengeni**

While the people of Esihlengeni live in the ‘modern’ world, I argue that they are still drawing from their epistemology that has always existed. One most potent transmitter of this epistemology besides their belief system of ancestral propitiation is memory. One of my key participant’s, umalume omncane, is a traditional healer and an official *imbongi* (praise poet) for the Khumalo clan. But what was intriguing about my uncle was that he knew all *izibongo* (praise poems) of all the Zulu kings starting from King Shaka to the present Zulu king, King Zwelithini. His memory was mind blowing, and as he would recite these *izibongo*, he will also tell you the where, when, what and why of all the phrases in the poem. This therefore is not surprising as according to Van Vuuren,

The memory of settlement of the ruling class is well preserved. Such memories are anchored in praise, which clear references to genealogy and royal incumbents at the time, more or less exact location and settlement layout (2010: 150).

Acknowledging the importance of memory and its reliability, the land restitution process in South Africa has viewed this as part of the testimony; however, this has challenges as some judges still doubt the credibility of *izibongo* even though they are connected with landscape of the environment in question (Van Vuuren 2010). The fact that some people doubt the role of memory should not be the reason that we discard the role that it can play in the sustenance of some communities. For the purpose of this thesis, I use collective memory of the people of Esihlengeni that is expressed through language and in rituals, to argue for a different epistemology that co-exists with western epistemology in the community. In addition, the genealogy that connects my uncles with King Mzilikazi forced me to open up to other ways of defining identity.

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that goes to school. Because she was the youngest and uMatatane did not know about her, she was hidden and had to leave her home when she was young to go and live with relatives who were not living on the farm so that she could go to school.

In this chapter I use language to make sense of the data that was presented to me, and it is through language that the traditional values are transmitted. There are no formal institutions to teach these values but by growing up within the community, being conversant in isiZulu and believing in the Zulu belief system enables one to tap to this epistemology, as I will show below. Lombo supports this claim as he posits that Zulu cosmology is encompassed in language that encapsulates cultural beliefs and spirituality (2017: 14). The community of Esihlengeni proved to be still grounded in their traditional values as it is shown in their understanding of death and their continued ancestral propitiation with their insistence on cows. In this section, I use three proverbs: *Induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni, indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili, and okungapheli kuyahlola*, to show the different epistemology in which the people of Esihlengeni make sense of their world.

There is a dominant view that seems to suggest that colonialism disrupted everything and left nothing of people's epistemology. Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) believe in the omnipotence of colonialism as they present a very convincing scenario of the Tswana's relationship with the colonisers to argue for a total disruption of African cultures:

The Tswana might not have been persuaded by the substance of the claims made by the churchmen, and their world was not simply taken over by European discursive styles. Yet they could not avoid internalizing the term through which they were being challenged (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 213).

According to Argyrou, this suggests that, "the native conscious was colonized at the level of tacit incorporation by local population of European assumptions' about the nature of reality" (2005: 18). To me, it would seem that Comaroff & Comaroff are using class analysis to understand race struggle where the European working-class consciousness was influenced by bourgeoisie culture. Notwithstanding the fact European working class drew from the same epistemology of the bourgeoisie, as such they had a similar culture, differentiated by their economic standing. But more than that, the presentation of capitalism as all powerful seems to draw from Tylor's belief that "European 'man's' ability to subordinate nature explained European superiority of the rest of the world" (Argyrou 2005: 12). Having such scholars in mind – who believe in European superiority which according to Mbembe (2015) is a myth to be

demythologised – means I have to draw from everything that has ever written to argue that not all aspects of cultures were disrupted, some things could not be ‘disruptable’.

These knowledges that were not ‘disruptable’ are kept in the systems of knowledge such as language. According to Oyèwùmí,

Language is preeminently a social institution, and as such it constitutes and is constituted by culture. Because of the pervasiveness of language, it is legitimate to ask what a particular language tells us about the culture from which it derives. Language carries cultural values within it (1997:40).

It would make sense therefore to pay attention to language if one attempts to exhume the supposedly ‘dead’ or completely disrupted knowledges. As such, I pay attention to language and use proverbs as a source of legitimate knowledge because proverbs are a useful means of studying a people (Nyembezi 1963). To support this, Oyèwùmí (1997) argues that in Yorùbá culture, language and oral traditions is constitutive of the world-sense to interpret the social structure, amongst other things. Fasuke emphasizes the point that languages, though proverbs are a valid source of knowledge and she argues,

if systemized, Proverbs can give a penetrating picture of the people’s way of life, their philosophy, their criticism of life, moral truths and social values... in Africa, proverbs have a different function and level of theoretical meaning that make them key components as well, as expression of a culture’s viewpoint on variety of important topics and problems (2006: 50).

The myth of total disruption is baseless if one takes into account that language – with emphasis of proverbs - for instance is a source of knowledge. As such, this knowledge is embedded in a deeper level of society such that they can revive the consciousness that according to Comaroff & Comaroff (1991) is colonised unconsciously. However, if one contends that cultural knowledge is at an unconscious level, one can argue the opposite of Comaroff & Comaroff that the unconscious level cannot be colonised. Through proverbs, the unavoidable internalization of colonialism is challenged by manifestation of people’s worldview. This is the worldview through proverbs that I make use of to make sense of the logic of the people of Esihlengeni as it is explored in the following sections.

#### 4.2.1 *Induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni*

The literal meaning of this proverb is that the most beautiful (fighting) stick is found in other nations. It is normally used when someone marries outside of his/her nationality. But to understand it better, one needs to understand how it is used in everyday life. In this sense, a foreigner – outside of Zulu culture - bride/groom is referred to as a stick. Amongst amaZulu, the stick is important, and all men should always carry a stick so that should anything happen they have something to use to protect themselves. A stick in the context of marriage can be understood as finding someone that will bring new skills to the family so that it grows in all aspects of life. If we take into consideration that these proverbs came about from observation and experience, this means that in order for this culture to come with this proverb, they must have had travelled and brought foreign objects back to observe that the objects that were brought back could actually be good for the society.

It will follow then that if the society is founded on embracing foreign objects it is a society that embraces change. It is not therefore surprising that this society, will not just embrace foreign things, but will also welcome and appreciate visitors or travellers for they know that *izandla ziyagezana*, when they want to travel, will depend on the kindness of people so they need to be kind as well. I would argue that this culture of travelling (as shown in the previous paragraph) informed how visitors would be treated because when one travels, he/she depends on the host people for survival. So, in us taking care of strangers was from understanding that people do travel, and they should be accommodated. The traditional values are thus drawn from life experiences not from the abstraction of imaging a world. bell hooks (2004) in her introduction of the book titled: *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, cites Ivans Van Sertima's work on *They Came before Columbus* to argue that in fact Africans journeyed to America before the colonisers and they did not colonise. I would posit that the reason they did not colonise was because travelling was part of their way of life – a different epistemology, as it will be shown in the subsequent sections.

In 2014, the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) held a public conversation with its patron - the former president of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki - on the contribution that Africans can make in the globe's politics. One of the questions from the floor was questioning the clause on the Freedom Charter

declaration that: South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people (Historical Papers Research Archive, 2013). His response was that, in African culture, we welcome visitors, so as the African National Congress (ANC) they were not going to allow visitors to change their way of being; hence they were fighting for being Africans. This declaration was founded on the insistence of/for African humanism. This is in line with what I will argue in following chapter that when one pays close attention to the war cry of amaZulu, one can deduce that they were actually fighting for their father's cow, which represent their culture and thus the ability to exercise their culture. Using the argument posited by the former president of the Republic of South Africa, the struggle has been on living with foreigners in harmony. Building from that frame of thought, outsiders are not necessarily enemies - until they prove otherwise - but people to be taken care of. President Mbeki could not be understood using Western epistemology and indeed his response created discomfort to many Western converts including myself at the time. This emanates from reading the freedom charter using Western epistemology's understanding of the land that turned land into property to be owned by individuals. And thus 'belonging' is understood as 'owning', something indeed foreign to Africans, as land, like all other natural resources, cannot be owned because it provides life, like oxygen.

The concept of *ukusisela*, and *ukwethekela* that I explained in Chapter Two, (section 2.4.2, p. 52-52) would seem to be a continuation of this culture of taking care of strangers, perhaps because the amaZulu understood that they were strangers at some point. And it was with the kindness of other that they survived because of the philosophy of *ubuntu: umuntu umuntu ngabantu*. President Mbeki as he was responding to the questions continued and argued that as the ANC they were not going to change their worldview because of foreigners but they insisted on being who they are – being human. In his speech, *I am an African*, on behalf of the ANC in Cape Town on 8 May 1996, on the occasion of the passing of the new Constitution of South Africa, he emphasises the African epistemology in the formation of the constitution as he said, “The constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes and unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender of historical origins” (Mbeki 1996). While it might seem that Western epistemology

has affected all facets of our lives, there is insistence of the African worldview, but the unfortunate part is that often it is read from a Western perspective.

This traditional value shows the natural worldview of the people of Esihlengeni and amaZulu in general that suggests the world founded on co-existence where foreign things are appreciated such that growth is dependent on drawing from the knowledge of other nations. As such it is not preoccupied with domination and purity but growth for they knew that with their ancestors on their side, protection was guaranteed.

According to Adésinà:

This is one in which the coexistence of opposites and the open-ended outcome of social interaction or contending social forces provide an analytical framework devoid of teleological discourse... The cultural is embedded with contradictory forces (2002: 102).

Clearly, as the above quote points out that co-existence is natural, the community of Esihlengeni draws from this fact of nature, therefore is not driven by fear of the unknown but trusting the power of their ancestors and nature. This would seem to be acknowledging difference and wanting to learn from it. Something that Westerners as argued in Chapter One (see p. 8) have to learn, as they have buried themselves in the Sameness ideology and this becomes their response to every situation. Thus, they cannot account for difference except insinuating to be the first people who are ahead of everyone – depriving people their humanity.

It would seem that the discourse of Sameness eliminates other ways of knowing by erasing them. Ndebele (1980) questions this kind of thinking by questioning the treatment of illnesses. He writes:

But the thing is there are those of us who consider that healing people is not just a matter of X-rays, needles, and drips. No. it is also restoring that person to a complete human balance: to make him a father again, or a mother again, or an uncle again. To make a person continue to wonder about the world, and his place in it. Now you see, the way healing takes place in hospitals, it's like marshalling an army against germs. The germs die, but so does part of the person. No, I think there has to be some kind of democracy in the hospital. And such a spirit will help to restore the natural democracy of the human body and the world around it (Ndebele 1980: 238).

What can be deduced from this kind of healing is that it is embedded on Western thinking that is unable to deal with difference hence it eliminates. While other societies



conceive that sometimes pain signifies life and thus the ability to manage it such that people are able to tolerate pain, is a way of healing. A society uses elimination methods when it is unable to solve problems: removing of teeth, breasts and amputating of legs and arms as a form of curing is an inferior society. Clearly, this so-called superior system fails to understand the most basic aspect of life: balancing the opposites, but rather, it amputates, it removes, it silences, at worst, it exterminates. Multiplicity therefore should be the foundation of life in general. While there is existence that believes in the empirical evidence to support claims and so on, others believe in both the visible and the invisible as part of the universe and believe that life is everywhere, and no one has authority over anything in the universe – all are equally important, both the living and the nonliving<sup>38</sup>, both the visible and the invisible the latter advance that the most important things in life cannot be seen with our naked eyes for example, oxygen. So, opening up to other ways of knowing should be the foundation of our quest to unearth different knowledges such that we can learn from them.

#### *4.2.2 Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*

In order to understand *Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*, which literally means that you ask a path from those that are ahead of you, requires us – Westerners and Westernised - the Western thinkers to move away from a worldview that sees the past as behind and thus invisible. This proverb is normally used referring to the fact that people older than you know better because they have life experiences. As I will show in Chapter Five that those who have passed on continue to live, so the reference is inclusive of those that have passed on which implies that they are also ahead. The wars that discussed at the beginning of this chapter I argued that for amaZulu, these colonial wars were the struggle of culture, their forefather's culture, expressed in: *Yemuka inkomo kababa* (my father's cow is being washed away) – I discuss this in the following chapter. With this understanding that the direction is found from those that have lived, it makes sense that the people of Esihlengeni, would insist on their culture as defined in Chapter One. As umalume emphasised that we should always follow *imilayo yawokhokho* (our forefathers' instructions). That while communities might be affected by the modern

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<sup>38</sup> Important to note is that in an African worldview everything on this planet is regarded as a living entity, the fact that we do not understand how it is alive does not mean that it is not alive, hence we respect everything, even stones.

world, there is insistence to the past as their future lies in this past that has undiluted wisdom. It is in this context that in Chapter Six, women at Esihlengeni are insisting on cows so that they are always in good terms with those that are ahead as they are the one who can give. The tragedy thus, becomes when the ancestors turn their back on you - *abaphansi bekufulathela*. Clearly, in this epistemology, elders are respected and honored. More so, that they are not disconnected with those that came before them even though their nationalities might have changed, but the community of Esihlengeni still draws from the same epistemology, as such they understand that wisdom comes with age, it is the elders that are custodians of knowledge.

The perspective of Esihlengeni, that upholds respect for the elders finds resonance with the claim made by Oyěwùmí (1997) in the book: *The invention of women*, that states that in fact, amongst the Yorùbá people, seniority takes precedence over gender. This is precisely because in some societies thinking is informed by life experience, not imagination as observation without experience requires one to imagine how life could be. Ndebele makes this point even clearer when he writes

I have grown up to this point in my life, and there is not a single piece of the world in my hand. And you; you are too young to have it in your hands no matter how much you can claim to know it. That will come with time. You have your whole life to learn from (1980: 278-9).

Clearly, this is contrary to the Western system that privileges thinking from abstraction over thinking from lived experiences. As argued in Chapter One, the emergence of Western epistemology as we know today is founded on disconnecting with the past where in the philosophy of Descartes doubts everything (Argyrou 2012) and thinkers such as Kant (1781) who sees courage in thinking for oneself. This is the premise of rejecting prior knowledge as it is seen as oppressive and backwards. However, the society that gave birth to the people of Esihlengeni sees value in the prior knowledge as it provides direction because life can only be understood from experiencing it, not just thinking about it but rather that the philosophy (epistemology) that people have is informed in a deeply embodied experience and the continuity between past and present<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising then that in institutions such as the university, that are founded on Western epistemology, they encourage thinking over experience. In these institutions, people are encouraged to publish young, before achieving clarity of mind. However, in an African epistemology, knowledge production is dedicated to people who having lived life, people with clarity of mind and young people

Production of knowledge in African systems was allocated to those who have lived. In the Zulu culture it is believed that *indaba isegudwini*: (proper analysis is in a dagga pipe) is true, because it is the elders, men in particular, that smoked this dagga pipe as they analysed societal issues. It was believed that smoking dagga enhanced clarity in one's mind great for meditation and helped reach an analysis of society from an elevated vantage point and a heightened spirit<sup>40</sup>. Amongst amaZulu, men who were now tasked with the responsibility to produce knowledge would also be crowned with *ungiyane* - a wooden/iron ring-like crown worn by elder or respected males in the Zulu culture (Isizulu.net dictionary 2011). According to umalume, when *ungiyazane* was crowned, one had to perform a ritual to let the ancestors know about the stage he is entering so that they continue to guide him. This indeed draws from a different epistemology than the one that releases people who have life experience and say they must retire. Thus, its thinking is informed by imagination. In essence, it promotes fiction that is presented as knowledge. In African societies, while emphasising the wisdom of elders, does not negate the strength of young people hence they say *inkuzi isematholeni* that the great leader is identifiable in the calves. In this system the youngsters, because they have a lot of energy, are responsible for implementing the knowledge produced by those who have come before them – dead or alive – such that when they reach the stage where their strength will be weakened, their minds will be sharpened and then join the *onjingalwazi* what can be loosely translated thinking tanks in Western framework.

In addition, *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili* also brings up the concept of time: that the past is in front of us or those who have passed on are in fact in front of us, not behind, as Western epistemology will contend. For instance, generally speaking in English which is one of the languages that encapsulate Western epistemology, the past is behind. The conception of time result from the fact that,

For African philosophy human beings make time and they are not made by time.

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are made to understand that: *ubude abuphangwa* (one must not rush to grow up). Notwithstanding the fact that age, like gender (as already pointed out in the explanation of *izangoma*) is fluid and can be transcended. For example, a young person can receive a calling from the ancestors and thus inhabit an old spirit that will make him/her older. But this is an exception, ordinarily; a child is a child and thus cannot produce knowledge.

<sup>40</sup> However, amongst amaXhosa, it is the women who smoke the dagga pipe (*inqawe*).

Therefore, it is both natural and logical to live in time... As such, it is distinctly relative rather than absolute (Ramosé 2002: 236).

The genealogy of my uncles shows that their existence as amaZulu started less than 300 years ago, but that was not the beginning of life itself and they are fully aware of that fact, as in their *izithakazelo* - an extension of *izibongo* (surnames)<sup>41</sup> - they still call uMzilikazi ka Mashobane a reference to a time before they become part of amaZulu. Lindgren analyzing the categories within amaNdebele of Zimbabwe argues that “[t]he *isibongo* places an individual within one of these categories of origin” (2004: 178). In other words, the more they move forward, they still move backward to connect with their origins. So, their seemingly new identity is in actual fact not new as it is still connected with their identity of origins. In this sense, time is within their framework as such, the past is in the present. This conception of time, questions even the idea of the beginning, that other societies find it important to state and thus have developed an epistemology that is founded on the BEGINNING. Abdi distinguishes African time from European time. She argues, “Unlike time in the European culture and European worldview, which is practically commodified, time in Africa is always present, abundant, and friendly” (2007: 54), this I would add, result from the fact that we conceive time in non linear terms: past, present and future, but the past is in the future while the present and the future co-exist, hence we say: *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*.

To emphasise this aspect of time I want to recall a period in my own life. In 2010 I worked on a project that was part of the FIFA 2010 World Cup and our role was to create forms of entertainment while at the same educate tourists/visitors about the history of South Africa. As part of our mandate, we were to find stories of origins that we would perform to educate them about our origins as Africans. The search had to focus on both written and oral stories. That was the most difficult task we have ever had, we did research and we could never find any folktales about the stories of origins in all the South African languages (excluding English and Afrikaans). The stories we found were stories that were influenced by western myths of origins if they were not

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<sup>41</sup> *Isibongo* in a proper translation is praise, which actually tells one’s history or genealogy. For example, when I tell people my surname (*isibingo*), amaZulu will be able to say: Bhungane, Makhulukhulu, Mthimkhulu, Mashiya amahle engathi awenyamazane, Ngelengele anzipho ezinde ngokuqhayana, Ndlubu zamila emthundweni, basically narrating my whole history as these names explains my forefathers and their experiences. If one probes, my whole history is embedded in a surname. *Isibongo* therefore connects one with the past, which means that the seemingly new identities are not necessarily new as they are always interlinked with the origins.

translations of those Greek mythologies. During this time, I never understood why we could not find these stories, it is until now that I am going back to this experience and understanding what could have been the problem. First, the project had made assumption that all societies have myths about origins. This is less important for the section. The point that is important, it is the point about time, that the assumption was also that there is the conception of the beginning in all societies without questioning why other societies will be preoccupied with the beginning. Looking at the belief system of the people of Esihlengeni where life does not end but continue into eternity, as such, life is a never-ending circle. It would seem to me that it is a young society that will still remember the beginning or pre-occupy itself with the beginning. For other societies, life has always existed. Argyrou (2012) argues that it is in this context where a people contend that life is continuous that will recognize those that have come before them and therefore ask a way/direction from them rather than trying to figure the directions themselves.

#### 4.2.3 *Okungapheli kuyahlola*

The direct translation of it would be: what does not come to an end calls for the wrath of ancestors. In other words, when something that should come to an end, does not end, people should be worried because it calls for devastation. The equivalent English version of this proverb is the only thing that does not change is change. However, this seemingly equivalent proverb in English does not speak to the consequences should one attempt to fight change, it assumes that change will always happen. The Zulu version of this proverb, however, does not just posit that the only thing that does not change is change; it goes on to warn those that would resist change, which is natural, that they will call for the wrath of the ancestors. Understanding the phrase *okungapheli kuyahlola* in its context where *ukuhlola* means something that is calling for the wrath of the supernatural being/ancestors, it is understandable that they would yearn for change for if it does not happen something worse than the current situation will happen. Change is not a choice but a necessity for life to continue. Adésinà explains the need for change beautifully,

The social fixity of society is only hegemonic at the level of the myths of the ruling powers of every society. The only fixed feature is not that things remain the same or 'traditions' remain fixed; it is in fact that the only constant thing is change (2002: 99).

When looking at the historical account of Esihlengeni, through genealogy, it would seem that there has been some stagnation in terms of the status of belonging and identity if one begins their history from the 1820s. However, their recent past – as shown in the genealogy chart - shows the vivid changes that in the sixth generations, their nationalities have changed drastically – they have changed from being the AmaNtungwa to AmaNdebele and AmaZulu respectively as already argued in the previous sections. But since the 1900s, their state of affairs has remained the same as a result of colonialism, that introduced new epistemology that does not take into account the mobility of identities. While change is inevitable, there exists a possibility that there will be systems that might present themselves as unchangeable and thus render the nature of things unnatural, by preventing change, which is natural.

Wallerstein (1988) and Nyamnjoh (2017) are of a view that no one can prevent change. For Wallerstein, this historical reality that seems to be permanent “is the reality of enduring but not eternal sets of structures” (1988: 291), which means that it will come to an end at some point because it is not ‘eternal’. Nyamnjoh continues this argument that change will come as he articulates, “if hierarchies of social actors and actions exist, it is reassuring to know that nothing is permanent or singular about the nature, order and form of such hierarchies” (2017: 8). Maybe the question is when will this system come to an end? More important is the fact that the current system is working against nature as it refashions itself and thus presents itself as natural. The people of Esihlengeni live with knowing that even this capitalist system is not permanent, hence they continue practices their epistemology amidst the dominant views that have rendered them useless and demonic in the context of Christianity.

The historical context of Esihlengeni presents a case of mobility that was driven by the conquest of the early wars. What is fundamentally different with these wars and subsequent conquest is that those that were conquered were integrated into the newly formed nations and were not perpetual conquered. In an African context, being conquered was not permanent as Lindgren (2002) shows with the formation of amaNdebele who was formed by different nations as they were moving north – that some they conquered, and others came willingly to join them. Today, my uncles are fully amaZulu even though their ancestors were AmaNtungwa, which shows how identity shifts. Just like AmaNdebele of Zimbabwe, despite the different groups that

were absorbed, according to Cobbing (1988), along the way, today they have an identity as amaNdebele, and it does no longer matter to them what nationality they were before the King Mzilikazi's rule.

This attitude is ontologically different from that which came with the European conquest of Africa, which I argue was not full conquered, as even up-to-today those that are understood as being conquered are still outside the nationality of the conquerors. This fact becomes much clearer if we read history from an African epistemology that defines conquering as absorbing rather than oppressing. This idea of conquest precede the colonial logic that in its pursuit to conquer and – under the guise of civilisation/development – never integrated those that it supposedly conquered and was 'civilising' into the super nation and treated them as sub-human to echo Fanon (1967). For Césaire (1972) the European conquest is no different to holocaust because at the heart of it, the European conquest that later became colonization was about questioning the humanity of those that looked different to them. Césaire (1972) is correct to equate this process to the holocaust as they both were about questioning the humanity of those that they believed were different. It is in this context that we can begin to understand the insistence on Sameness from Westerners. This insistence at best, tries to cleanse the Westerners of the past genocides that their forefathers committed, at worst, it universalises colonialism as it suggests that what they did could have done by everyone if they were in their situation. In doing this it denies ontological difference, that there are societies that in their expression of humanness and drawing from their belief system would never have advocated what Westerners did.

The argument for ontological difference can help us understand the community of Esihlengeni. When my uncles took me to the monument of uBheje, they were saying, we are a people in motion, our conditions today are not important. Especially that these concepts are indigenous elsewhere as Sithole (2011, 2004) correctly argues that all knowledges are indigenous elsewhere in as much as everyone is indigenous somewhere. Although there is a prevalent logic that defines other people as fixed in one particular location – objectifying people by saying that they are like grass that grows in

one particular place<sup>42</sup> - while others belong everywhere suggest that they – Westerners - are the citizens of the world, which justifies their dominating/colonising of the world. Of course, this logic of ‘indigenous’ is used as a guise to hide the connectivity of the past and the present. My articulation, however, does not suggest that there were never territories occupied as this might imply that there were no land dispossessions. What I am rather challenging is the logic that seems to suggest that there are people who just came from the sky and thus belong everywhere while others can have a claim of just one small geographical location that has been indicated by the powers that may be as their ‘indigenous’ location. I have used the example of language to uncover the social structure from which the people of Esihlengeni make sense of the world around them. It is important therefore to place this worldview in the broader ways of existence that transcends epistemologies.

### **4.3 The nature of things**

In this section, I tease out the nuances of the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni to connect it with other ways of knowing while arguing for its uniqueness. The manner in which Western epistemology has presented itself is that it is universal, and thus natural. However, its ‘naturalness’ contradicts the nature of things – as I will show in the subsequent sections - as we see from Esihlengeni. The case of King Mzilikazi shows that there exist another way of understanding societies outside of Western epistemology. But people who are converted to the Western epistemology (the Westernised) become oblivious to the realities because they have become ‘blinded by sight’ as Nyamnjoh (2012) expresses the challenges of Anthropology. For Adésinà, even when they tried to remove the Western lens “more substantively is that most did not overcome the epistemic framework of the Western scholarship that they sought to displace” (2002: 91).

I remember when I was pregnant, all I could see was pregnant women and when I mentioned this to my sister, she told me that, “it is because you are paying attention to pregnant women”. However, the fact that all I saw were pregnant women did not mean

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<sup>42</sup> This view of objectifying people is also expressed by Ramose in the interview by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Part 1) responding to the question of the Khoisan people being the only people that are ‘indigenous’ in South Africa (Conversation of the world, 2016)



that all women were pregnant, in fact most women were not pregnant, but my focus was on those that were pregnant and thus selecting them in a big pool of women. That is why tourists will always come in Africa and see the lions while I – having been born and bred in Africa – have not seen a lion with my naked eyes, as I have never been to the Kruger National Park and other game reserves because I am not interested in seeing lions. When we visit the United States, all we see is progress, we never see homelessness of people, which in some states such as California is really in your face. We rather see the glitz and glamour of the country as that is what we go to America for. We go there to witness the American dream. In other words, we only see what feeds into the normative narrative of Africa being uncivilised and thus in need of being saved while America and Europe are seen as the epitome of civilisation. However, the fact that there is a dominant script about societies, does not mean that the script is true or natural.

#### *4.3.1 Inherent contradictions*

Credo Mutwa on the story of creation which (it is not a folktale as sometimes presented but a story he wrote drawing from African epistemology)<sup>43</sup> writes:

may the great spirit who is Lord Almighty And Paramount Chief of all Grant that neither Flame nor Cold Shall ever win War, Because whosoever beats the other – The sun, the moon, the earth and stars and all that live shall cease to be! (1964: 7).

According to Adésínà – writing in a different context - this is similar to “[t]he narratives of Òrúnmìlà, that much of Yorùbá ontology, are dominated by such thinking and logic: *t’ibi, t’ire, l’adá ilé ayé* the world was created in the cohering of contradictory forces” (2002: 101-2). These stories could be read from a scientific perspective that for every action, there is an exact opposite reaction. This means that we need the opposite to balance life. The opposite can thus be understood as contradictions that life depends on and which is natural. In other words, these natural contradictions sustain life; the fact that when we are in the day, others are at night and when others are in winter others are in summer, is the manner that life sustains itself. And also, that even living things are different such that while others will survive better in cold weather others will survive better in hot conditions, hence there are animals that hibernate. As Mutwa posits, life depends on these contradictions and wanting to create Sameness is destruction because

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<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that this story is not a folktale, it is Mutwa’s creation thinking from Western epistemology but drawing from an African epistemology

life depends on these differences. When we look at the traditional values of the people of Esihlengeni, it becomes clear that contradictions are embraced as my uncles did not see anything wrong with them being amaZulu and amaNdebele of Zimbabwe being their brothers. While they understand that nothing stays the same forever, they also understand that some things must not change, like the belief system/cosmology that governs their behaviour.

Important to note is that while there are natural contradictions, but there are also man-made contradictions. For instance, in the case of African Americans as Du Bois points out:

This waste of double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand (thousand) people, - has sent them wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves (1969: 47)

These unnatural contradictions (the self-shame/loathing) are a menace to society as they result in schizophrenic behavior where individuals have to develop split personalities to survive. It is important to mention that this condition results from double consciousness that is not restricted to African Americans but to most black people that occupy white spaces. In the case of South Africa, it is mainly the middle class, but definitely not everywhere. At Esihlengeni, they experience a white world differently for example, they live in a community that speak their language, even white people at Esihlengeni speak isiZulu and thus do not have a burden of speaking the language of the master. However, this does not suggest that they are not struggling but to show the different struggles. For instance, from a Western worldview, they are struggling economically because of the high unemployment rate in the area is shown in Chapter Three.

Molefe Kente Asante (2007) in the book *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Towards African Renaissance*, begins by narrating the story of the eagle that was raised as a chicken. Amongst other things, the story shows the crisis of being black people who live in a white world<sup>44</sup> for instance African Americans proximity to whiteness is very close as

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<sup>44</sup> I argue that there are many worlds that are co-existing in spite of the attempts by the Western world to erase them because co-existence is a nature of things.

compared to Africans (based in Africa) proximity to whiteness. It is important not to universalise this kind of contradiction. These contradictions emanate from the fact that their physical attributes cannot find expression in the social world they occupy. Differentiating the man-made contradictions and the natural one becomes critical and we need to understand that not everything needs decolonisation. The experiences of African Americans and the black middle class anywhere in Africa and the world cannot be universalised.

Second to the nature of contradictions are the many worlds that people live in as already argued that at Esihlengeni people have mastered the art of navigating the two worlds they occupy. For instance, most of the people of Esihlengeni go to church, but they still believe and practice their ancestral belief that the church demonises. Adésinà articulates the experience of the people of Esihlengeni as something normal about the lived experiences that “The negotiation of multiple identities - sometimes contradictory, sometimes not - is something we do everyday” (2002; 102). But these contradictions must be understood in two ways: they could either be contradiction created by internal factors or external factors. Nonetheless, the people of Esihlengeni are able to manage them as they come from a society that teaches them to live with contradictions. They draw from a system that embrace natural contradictions and thus don’t try to fight them, unlike the Western system that claims coherence. While the nature of life is contradictory, but others are a result of the system that claims that all humans are equal, but others are more equal than others as George Orwell (2003) posits in his novel – *Animal Farm*. As I will show in the following chapters the people of Esihlengeni, are classic example of a community that draws from a different epistemology outside of Western system while they live in the society created by the Western system – the modern world. In this sense, they are the epitome of a community that lives in contradictions - one is inherent to their culture but the second it was imposed on them. For the people of Esihlengeni even when they find themselves in an unnatural contradiction, they are still able to manage them as they draw from a different epistemology. In other words, we must be mindful of the contradictions because while contradictions are natural, and the latter are created by abnormal conditions that need to be redressed.

#### 4.3.2 *Ontological difference*

What I have tried to show as I argue for the nature of things is that the worldview of societies was different from the very beginning of human existence. This argument supports Argyrou (2012) argument that the Sameness can only exist at the metaphysical level. In other words, the different ways we make sense of the world has its basis in ontology, or ontological difference. For instance, in some societies, the snow is real while in other societies it does not exist. Ontological questions give birth to the epistemic frameworks, it means that the difference of societies is epistemological. A way of knowing is informed by a particular belief system, that interpretes what is real. In this way, the belief system gives meaning to life and how things should be understood. For Westerners, the belief system has been coined as ‘scientific’ suggesting that it is based on ‘facts’ (something that can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt), while in actual fact it is rooted in religion as it can be seen that the enlightenment was actually a rebellion against church authority (see Chapter One p. 8). The case of Esihlengeni provides us with evidence that different worlds can co-exist, but this is difficult to understand from a Western point of view founded on the discourse of Sameness.

Argyrou (2012) argues that Sameness can never be properly expressed as difference as even at the very beginning, - we all draw from different belief systems that enables us to make sense of the world in different ways. While some will move from a premise of a separatist logic between the physical and the metaphysical, others will move from a premise of inclusivity between the physical and the metaphysical and as such, the difference is ontological and informs the epistemologies that guide our ways of being. Du Bois posits,

“all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (1969: 95).

We are all created with the ability to make sense of the world not to be represented by others. In other words, equality should allow to different ways of knowing of what it means to BE! Equality should mean that different societies are able to self-determine outside of the Western frame of human rights. AmaZulu for instance, believe that *Idlozi lakomunye umuzi alithethelwa komunye umuzi* (one cannot practice his/her ancestral propitiation in someone else’s house), which I posit, is the highest level of

understanding difference and respecting it. It is in this sense that most Africans cannot preach their way of worship as the assumption is that everyone has their own which is different from others.

The community of Esihlengeni has a singular experience that Césaire (1956) beautifully explains as that is reflected in their historical accounts and is based on their epistemological grounding. In this worldview, their way of life can never be imposed on others. Their response to their current conditions is unique and could never have occurred anywhere else in the world.

#### 4.3.3 *The undying culture*

It is common knowledge that all African cultures believe in the existence of ancestors, and this has been the belief since time immemorial. The belief in ancestors is still present today. I shall tap into this belief to first show my understanding of the people of Esihlengeni, and secondly to show how cultures do not die. In addition to the cultural belief in the ancestors as evidence of an undying culture, there is conception of death in the Zulu culture that also speaks to the persistence of cultures. Death in isiZulu is *ukushona*, which literally means to disappear. Disappearing is not permanent as what has disappeared can reappear again. For instance, when the sun sets, we say in isiZulu *liya-shona* (it is disappearing) and then it obviously rises again. The belief in ancestors would seem to emanate from this understanding that life never dies, but it disappears just like seeds that disappear and reappear again, and this understanding of life is applied to people as well, as such, people do not die, but disappear and come back again as ancestors. Accordingly, if life does not die, cultures do not die too. In spite of the dominance of colonialism, communities have survived, and cultures remained. Ndebele, writing in the context of apartheid in South Africa, where the system's main focus was to eliminate black people, writes, "I had crushed him with sheer force of my presence. I was there and would be there to the end of time: a perpetual symbol of his failure to have a world without me" (Ndebele 1980: 276). Indeed, the system (apartheid and colonialism) that has claimed all supremacy has failed to eliminate other ways of existing, other ways of knowing.

According to my uncles, and this is general knowledge amongst amaZulu, during wars, when someone would die the slogan would be: *Uyadela wena osulapho*, which means

the fortunate ones are the ones who have departed. In this sense, among amaZulu, death was never understood as negative but as a way through which we connect to our ancestors. All death is thus accepted because there is no belief of hell but a reliance on the living to do the right thing such that one arrives to one's final destination which is to be with one's ancestors. In the following chapter I will explain death and show that it is understood as the beginning of the journey hence it is common hearing people saying *uhambe kahle* (go well) when they are talking to the departed during the services dedicated to the person who has passed on. Clearly, death in some societies is not the expression of finality and the end, but the beginning of a journey. While death should be prevented, it should not be prevented to the detrimental of those that are living because life and death are not necessarily separate. In this sense, death can be understood as a solution when the people have to go so that they can be in a better position to do right by those who are still alive. Indeed, to understand this logic requires one to move away from epistemic framework that believes in finality of life or even worse, in perpetual 'garnish of teeth', but in life circle that is eternity and forever present – in different forms.

The community such as the community of Esihlengeni continues to live in spite of the dominance of capitalism. Hence, the rituals that surround death are still regarded as important as they are understood to be an integral part of the society and that keeps the flow of life. If we take death as a rite of passage that continues the flow of life, those that are departed can be defined as liminal entities that according to Turner "are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between position assigned by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (1979: 95). In this sense it becomes important for the community to be in the position to accomplish all the required customs so that those that have departed can acquire their full status of being ancestors. Following this chain of thought, it becomes clear why then death is not feared in such communities. Biko who drew from this epistemology understood that part of the liberation struggle was for people to overcome their fear of death, which was not natural and thus not inherent in all societies. He advises, "So if you can overcome the personal fear for death, which is a highly irrational thing, you know, then you're on the way" (1978: 152), because he knew that the fear of death was not natural but created. Death then becomes necessary, and the society that will base its development purely on the prevention of death becomes the civilisation of death. Césaire (1972) posits, in a different context, that an

obsession with the prevention of death would prevent the flow of life. In fact, the current civilisation with its emphasis on the 'right to life' is the very civilisation that prevent lives by not allowing other ways of knowing to contribute to the world knowledges. While communities have insurmountable problems emanating from the west, they still have their ways of knowing that helps them to continue living and as such, death is not a primary problem, but the death of their culture is. So, while right to life is important, there should also be an emphasis on right to cultures as well and – that allow people the freedom to draw from their own belief systems.

In this section I have argued that while there are things that could be universalised because they are natural, differences in belief systems are ontological. The issue of African people's belief in ancestors has raised the issue of inherent contradictions. The argument is that since some Africans who are mostly located in modern urban society subscribe to western values, it follows that the African belief system is contradictory. What this argument fails to appreciate is that while all black people live in the modern world that is founded on there are Africans who have never experienced the Western world, and thus do not share the anxieties that comes with inhabiting the modern capitalist world experienced by people influenced by the modern world. It is within the context context of minimal association with urban capitalism that the culture at Esihlengeni has survived.

#### **4.4 African cosmology in the present**

In the previous sections I have demonstrated the cosmological worldview of the people of Esihlengeni and have argued that to date it is still in existence. The question is how then do we understand this epistemology? How different it is from Western epistemology that so much informs the spheres of power, of knowledge and of being? In section 4.1.2, I introduced the land discussion to show the different epistemologies regarding land. However, the Western foundations in the systems of governance in Esihlengeni are visible as they inform the policies that the country should follow. Nevertheless, the belief systems that are outside of Western epistemology are still prevalent in the communities, and this I will show in the subsequent sections.

#### *4.5.1 Culture in language*

In Chapter Three and section 4.2 respectively I argued that language is a reliable source of knowledge. To emphasise this point Abdi argues that,

unwritten languages used by traditional, oral societies have valid and time-tested values for learning about, and managing community affairs as well as sanctioning unwanted practices, responsibly exploiting environmental resources, and even creating specialized literary sub-cultures within one main culture... there was also the omnipresence as well as the importance of the method of narrative, storytelling, and proverbs that were all powerful components of the idea and command transfer formulations and implementations in these societies (2007: 44).

In other words, culture is not just carried through language but is engraved in people's subconscious such that cultural belief systems are a way of life, and they become common sense, hence what is considered common sense in one society is not necessarily common sense across societies. To elaborate this clearer, I narrate an experience from my daughter's school, St Martin: On the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 I attended a breakfast meeting at St Martins School in Rosettenville, South of Johannesburg where they were introducing a new principal for the school. The new principal spoke and gave us a background of his teaching experience. One story that stood out for me was his experience from one of the schools he taught in the Eastern Cape. This is how he narrated the story:

One Friday on my way to school I met with one of our pupils who was in a school uniform but was heading the cattle to the dip. I then stopped and asked why was he not going to school? He responded by saying that this was part of the municipality demands that every last Friday of the month they take the cattle to the dip. And then I asked the boy how many cows he had? The boy said he did not know and then I asked, how would you know if one of your cows would go missing, the boy answered, I will look and then I will know. Being puzzled by this, the headmaster when he arrived at school, he asked if there were boys who had cattle and the response was overwhelming yes and then he asked if they knew how many were they? There was silence and then repeated the question he asked the boy he had met earlier and the response from one of the boys in the class was exactly the same: I will look and I will know. The headmaster concluded that this was a mystery to him that he was never able to solve in all the years he spent in that school. The point he was making was that he is not coming to solve all the mysteries in this school, but to work with all the stakeholders in the school.



For the headmaster, the above was a mystery but to me it was not, because I grew up knowing that cows were not just numbers but had names. I remember one in specific, Ujamludi: that according to my mother was one of our grandfather's favourites as it was strong and could fight well. My mother used to narrate these stories with such fond memories. For her and her family members cows were personified and could never be 'things' that were counted, but animals that you could have a close relationship with and thus know them by their names. This is a classic example that shows that what is a mystery to some people it can very easily be common sense to others. It is in this sense that Credo Mutwa posits in his story of creation that "some things we must never try to learn" (1964: 7). This is to acknowledge our limitations critical when studying communities. We must come to terms with the possibility that some things shall never be understood and must be at peace with not knowing them because if we do not accept this premise, we risk creating cultures about other people that might not be true. And knowledge is embedded in language. For example, the naming of cattle is a linguistic exercise, but it carries the knowledge of cattle in the Zulu culture.

#### *4.4.2 The case of land*

In this section, I focus on land – a contentious issue in South Africa – I seek to understand its economic viability in an African context since the overall topic of the thesis is on the economy. Secondly, I will engage the question of values in relation to land since historically land has played an integral part in societal traditional values. I will seek to understand what does this mean within the context of contestations around the land question? Especially that the contestations have become dominant in the public domain subsequent to the newly proposed amendment on the land reform clause, which insinuate expropriation of land without compensation<sup>45</sup>. Against this backdrop, it will be difficult to rush through this section to avoid making unsubstantiated statements. I also need to put upfront that in this section I read the land question and land claims without making unwarranted assumptions, but with the understanding that there are many players in this issue. Taking this into account, I give the perspective in which I

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<sup>45</sup> This has been a motion that one of the minority parties in parliament, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has been advocating for and after the newly elected president Cyril Ramaphosa, the ruling party – ANC – has supported the motion. The discussions are now on the implementation of this policy in a less destructive way as the new president has stated. The legislation has not changed yet, so far it is only the report that recommends that Section 25 should be changed.

ground my reading on the land question without jumping to conclusions. But more importantly I show complexities not just on the understanding of land, but on the involvement of all the stakeholders who all have a stake in these conversations, including scholars that often present their views as objective when in fact, they draw from Western epistemology that assumes detachment when in reality they are not immune from biases and have interests to protect. Important to mention, I do not exclude myself from having biases.

If African epistemology was taken into account, the current debates that are happening in the country on the amendment of the constitution would not exist. The arguments by organisation such as AfriForum<sup>46</sup> are arguing that,

The distortion of the past relates to the assumption that white land owners inevitably obtained land through oppression, whereas most of the land owned by white people was legally bought. There were also cases in the 1800s where the Voortrekkers took possession of uninhabited land (AfriForum, 2018).

Besides the fact that information is disputed by some historical text as shown in section 4.1, AfriForum is consumed in its defence of the land which is within Western epistemology of ownership. Clearly, Western epistemology still has a dominant voice and thus the debate made by AfriForum and COPE are informed by the Western epistemic framework. According to Berry, writing on the land question in the African setting:

French and British authorities claimed that “by right of conquest,” all “vacant and owner debating less” land belonged to the colonial state. Vast tracts of land were often judged “vacant and ownerless” on the basis of cursory inspection or none at all, and then sold to European buyers, or awarded to private concessionaires who promised to “develop” the land by exploiting its mineral and forest resources (Berry 2002 cites Suret-Canale 1971; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1972; Hailey 1956).

South Africa is not different, similar accounts can be traced back to the early 1800s (Cobbing 1984, 1988). What has worsened the South African situation is that after the English colonialism there was the Boer conquest that came with even more stringent tactics, under the system eventually called apartheid. It becomes important to try and understand the land question from an African perspective as our history does not begin

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<sup>46</sup> AfriForum is an organisation formed to protect the rights of the Afrikaners and other minority groups post 1994.

in 1652 – with the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck if we contend that there were people on the land and if we take those people seriously. As indicated in the introduction, King Mzilikazi saw the cattle, not land, as means to part ways with his friend King Shaka.

Jonas Gwangwa, a South African jazz musician, has a song titled: *Afrika Lefatshe la Badimo*, (Africa, the land of the ancestors) where he elaborates the African worldview in terms of the connection with the land. The song starts by describing Africa’s way of life in an appreciative manner and then in the chorus he sings:

*Lefatshe ke la Badimo, Badimo ba ke ba Magosi, Magosi a ke a o papa, bo papa ba ke ba rena, lefatshe le ke la rena weeee!* (This land is for the ancestors, the ancestors are for the kings, the kings are for our fathers, these fathers are ours, and therefore this land is our land).

The most significant thing with the song is the connection with spirituality – which gives the sense of Being. From the song’s perspective, land is not just property, but also about connection with people, through it that we can understand, have a sense of who we are. Diop’s view supports Jonas Gwangwa. Diop argues,

The African king, however powerful, was easily persuaded that the soil did not belong to him; this is especially applicable to immigrant kings; they easily accepted the sacred authority of the original occupants, even if the latter were presently without any material power (1987: 149).

Clearly, individuals did not ‘own’ the land but were custodian of it. It is in this context that we should understand the fluidity of identities among Africans, as there was no permanent connection to the land, as the land was there to provide and sustain life. It is important though to mention that even though people did not own the land there were territories linked to particular people as Mafeje posits, “There was vacant land but no free territory. Whatever territory they traversed or coveted turned out to be the domain of one African tribe or another” (1986: 105). It is in this domain that we can understand land dispossession because when we point out that people did not own the land, sometimes this argument is, misinterpreted deliberately so, to mean that there was no dispossession, as people were just moving around. Ramose in the interview he had with Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016) correctly argues, that the constitution turned privileges into rights referring to property clause where white people had a privilege to land because of the 1913 Land Act. He further argues that the new constitution protects ownership such that those that got land through the 1913 Land Act have a right to it.

However, the latter is only sustainable when it rests on a denial of history by organisations such as AfriForum (2018) that argues that most white people legally bought the land.

Indeed, the fact that Africans never owned land is a popular discourse that Oyěwùmí<sup>47</sup>: elaborated on when dismissing claims that African women were oppressed because of their exclusion from owning land. She attests that, “African land tenure was the collective right to land. There was no individual ownership of land and this necessary mean that life was not commodified” (Oyěwùmí in Proceeding report 2015: 9). To emphasise this point, she then cited a popular quote by Nigerian chief who exclaimed: “I conceive land belong to the vast family of which many are dead, few are living, and countless members are yet unborn.” The point here is that, as Africans, we had a different relationship with the land that did not view land as a commodity but part of life, like oxygen that no-one can claim ownership of it, but respect it as it gives us life. If this is the case, then how do we explain the insistence of the people of Esihlengeni on ‘belonging’ – which is different to owning the land. And how to we account for this shift from understanding the land as part of life to land as a commodity, as belonging to us?

James (2002) who argues that there are opportunistic tendencies in the land claims in South Africa would seem writing within the framework of land reform of post-apartheid South Africa that begins from the 1913 Land Act which was followed by laws on excluding and evicting black people such that it was illegal for them to own land. This framework excludes the pre-colonial Africa, so this radicalism she is referring to is limited to the Western understanding of land as a commodity that can make profit and thus should be owned. This perspective is not drawing from a different epistemic framework of understanding the land other than the Western framework which has a beginning date and as such, regards experiences that do not have a date as not legitimate. It becomes clear that in the question of land South Africa draws from fragmented historical accounts, as the starting point is not the same. This is despite the advice posited by Van Vuuren, that “the memory of land and its human products and

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<sup>47</sup> Oyěwùmí was presenting in the Third Pan-African Roundtable Dialogue, held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe, 21-23 September 2015.

produce needs to be understood in the historical context of loss of land and former territories in the colonial and apartheid period” (2010: 9). Van Vuuren suggests that there should be a holistic view that includes even the memory of loss, which is going beyond the western way of understanding of history, which privileges the tangible over the intangible. In this sense, land reform should not be based on negotiation but must disrupt the status quo that deprived others the rights to ‘ownership’ and we hope that with this proposed amendment, we will see more radical approaches that will include other epistemic frameworks such as the African epistemology beyond the Western property clause of ownership, that I explain in the next section.

#### 4.5.3 *Singabantu bendawo*

*Singabantu bendawo* (we are people of this place) is the phrase that was commonly used by the people of Esihlengeni. I knew this concept before going to the field but when I was in the field, it was triggered by the conversation I had with some young men who requested a lift from me to go to town. In Esihlengeni, as in most rural villages in South Africa, transportation is a challenge and people rely on lifts (hitch-hiking) to get around and to go to town. I gave people lifts to town when I felt it was safe to do so. One day three young men asked for a lift, and I was a bit hesitant because of high incidence of violence against women in South Africa. I decided to be straightforward with them and asked them how I could trust them? The young man who was their ‘spokesperson’ replied: “*Singabantu bendawo*”. After this reply I decided to give the young men a lift because when their ‘spokesperson’ said: “*Singabantu bendawo*” I heard him saying: “We can never do anything that can jeopardise our sense of belonging in this area, because this place is the only thing we have”. Of course, this was not their interpretation since I never verified it with them. Although I was familiar with this expression, it lingered in my mind, such that I had to explore it with other participants in field. How can we understand the fixation to the land by the people of Esihlengeni when they still draw from the African epistemology?

It would seem that through this expression: *singabantu bendawo*, the people of Esihlengeni were drawing from the Zulu economy that I discussed in Chapter Two that points to an obligation to the land. To be people of this (particular) land comes with responsibilities such as that of doing right to others derived from the concept of *ubuntu* explained in Chapter Two. According to my uncles, to be ‘*umuntu wendawo*’ (a person

of the place) Esihlengeni, means to abide by the Zulu culture, which is founded on the philosophy of *ubuntu*. In this context, land as a provider of belonging also mean it is a living being that dictates how people should behave. So, not only is land not a commodity, but it is a living organism that can reject a person if a person is not living by its rules. This is similar to Kenrick's analysis of the *indigenous* that they are "defined by inclusive processes that are aimed at ensuring the establishment and maintenance of relations of equality with all human and no-human persons" (2011: 23). While I cannot agree with this concept of equality, I agree with his analysis that the nonliving in Western epistemology is regarded as living beings in an African epistemology and can give rules that should be followed. I was therefore not wrong in my interpretation that the young men were saying: "we cannot harm you", because they have an obligation, and should they fail to abide by this obligation to do no harm they will lose their right to belong in Esihlengeni.

While in the recent past, land has become part of what people own, the concept of ownership is not inherent to local people's cultures. Clearly, in a pre-colonial Africa, land was never owned, let alone owned by individuals (Oyěwùmí 2015). But also, belonging and owning are different words that do not mean the same thing as already posited in the reading of the Freedom Charter. In an African context, the land gave a sense of belonging but was not owned. It is in this context that Oyěwùmí posits, "the lack of historicisation of our history talk to coloniality of knowledge, where Africans stop paying attention to their past and rely of the received knowledge" (Oyěwùmí in Proceeding report 2015: 9). Coloniality of knowledge in this context, erase the historical process of colonialism. Berry explains as follows: "In their on-going struggle to get the customs right, colonial rulers produced knowledge that was hegemonic in intent, but unstable in practice (2002: 645). Oyěwùmí thus suggests that "If Africans are to overcome their contemporary predicament, they must abolish colonial identities, narratives, and practices and reclaim their subjugated knowledges" (2015: 8). In essence, we need to kill the imperial man that we embody, better put by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) that we need to 'decolonise our minds'. In our field of study, before we pay attention to the nuances in communities, let us always try to answer Ngũgĩ 's question: whose culture are we using to understand communities? I would like to propose that the cosmological worldview of the societies we study should be at the centre of our analysis so that we eliminate what Nhemachena *et al.* (2016) describe as

distilling and purifying African knowledges with Western concepts because these knowledges are knowledges in their own right.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

To argue against Western epistemology from within itself can be daunting as in Western institutions it is normative and natural as such, it is like arguing against oneself. To expose its shortcomings and reduce it to the level of all other ways of knowing or to place it below them even requires a thorough and eloquent articulation if we are to make a little dent to its “pure and perfect” portrayal. At the beginning of this chapter I presented Césaire’s poem which I used as an interlude for the thesis as it seems to capture this rather complicated experience of the memory of the people. A people that have been lied to through a discourse of total disruption of colonialism and through its economic system: capitalism. Indeed, this is a lie and that advances an illusion, what Césaire refers to as “imposing on me an image of myself” through research that continues to produce people’s experiences as mute under the guise of radicalism or even worse, salvation of the voiceless.

In this chapter I interrogated the historical account of the people of Esihlengeni with an attempt to link it with their cultural practices. In this way I showed that their traditional values are drawing from a different epistemology that embraces change and differences of cultures. I then discussed the traditional values of the people of Esihlengeni, to emphasise the point that they draw from a different paradigm that is in line with the nature of things that: life is in motion, contradictory and societies are ontologically different. In order to be able to penetrate the philosophical underpinnings of the communities we study, we need to study them in their vernacular such that they do not only give us data but the tools of analysis and refrain from using received concepts that imposes the researcher’s interpretation on the data collected resulting in fictional accounts. This chapter concludes by arguing that in order to understand the communities we study, one has to understand the parallel existence of the past and present. When this is factored in, the results are such that while there is devastation brought by the capitalist system, equally so, there is continuity drawing from the people of Esihlengeni’s epistemic framework, which gives them life, and that completes the story.

## Chapter 5

### *Yemuk'inkomo kababa: understanding the economy of cows*

#### 5. Introduction

*Yemuk'inkomo kababa*, according to umalume, is a war cry historically used by the Zulu warriors during battles. It is especially remembered for the significant role it played during the various battles with the British colonists. The cry was an inspirational force that carried the warriors through the many difficult battles they waged. The cry literally means 'my father's cow is being washed away'. Being washed away by the river in isiZulu refers to a deep sense of loss that is not just in the present and the future, but loss that cannot be recouped. It is in this context that when a married woman decides to leave her husband she is said to be: *uyemuka* because the ancestral processes of marriage cannot be undone as a result the loss is permanent. I decided to use this war cry as the title for this chapter as it captures the significance of cows in the community of Esihlengeni, an issue I explore in the chapter. As it will be demonstrated later in the chapter, I argue that the battles that amaZulu were involved in were centred around cows, expressed by amaZulu as 'the father's cows'. I use this claim, that battles/wars were centred on cows, to interpret the logic of *stokvels* at Esihlengeni. What becomes evident is that *stokvels* in Esihlengeni do not incorporate traditional values from the community but rather reveal the devastating effects of capitalism, where people become 'zombies' (to echo Comaroff & Comaroff 2002). The discontinuities between communal values and the ideas underpinning *stokvels* suggest that the community of Esihlengeni cannot connect with the logic of *stokvels* as they have a different economic conception expressed through cows. This ethnographic account allows us to think differently about the strategies to empower communities such that their worldview is taken into consideration when developing interventions.

Important to mention is the fact that the *stokvel* that I observed at Esihlengeni was a burial society, which coincides with the fact that the *stokvel* that sparked my interest in these entities – the Braamfischer Helping Hands Burial Society (BHHBS) - was also a burial society. In my attempts to understand the phenomenon of *stokvels*, funerals became an integral part of this research as I wanted to understand the role of *stokvels* in practice. The funerals that were observed reveal that cows still play an integral part of the economy in the community of Esihlengeni, not just as a means to provide for



material needs but also as a medium to communicate with the ancestors. In this sense, *stokvels* do not seem to be drawing from the traditional values as they do not cater for these fundamental needs. The community of Esihlengeni insists on a different understanding of the economy, not centred on just material needs but life in its totality and expressed in the understanding of cows as medium to communicate with the ancestors.

### **5.1 The *stokvels* at Esihlengeni**

It took me a while to find a *stokvel* group in Esihlengeni as my uncles were directing me to other issues that they thought were important to the work I was doing. When I finally found the members of the *Siyakhula Funeral Club* (SFC), the *stokvel* group that became a case for this research, I was ecstatic. I had a list of questions I wanted to ask but obviously, with qualitative research, things never go as planned. I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with the secretary of the SFC and focus group discussions with members of the *stokvel* groups. These interviews did not provide me with ‘new’ information as I had imagined or hoped for, but they gave me information that proved pertinent to help us in understanding *stokvels* within the current economic system and thus forcing us to think differently about the economy.

#### *5.1.1 Siyakhula Funeral Club (SFC)*

The councillor directed me to uMaNkosi (not her real name), the secretary of the SFC, as his wife is a member of this *stokvel*. According to MaNkosi, the SFC was formed in February 2015 by a group of five women. She is the one who initiated things after she had attended a funeral in KwaNongoma, a nearby town, about 40 kilometers away, where her sister-in-law resides. UMaNkosi said the *stokvel* women who were serving people nice food, in nice uniforms, impressed her. She asked her sister-in-law, who is a member of this *stokvel*, about the *stokvel*. The sister-in-law then introduced her to the chairperson of the *stokvel*. The chairperson advised her that she must recruit at least 20 members and they can start the *stokvel* under their umbrella (which she referred as *undlunkulu* (the main house where decisions are made) so that they get support from them. In turn, when the *undlunkulu* is having a funeral, they will have to support them with a R1000. She took the advice and when she came back home she started recruiting people and it was really easy to find members because women in the community

believed that they needed a *stokvel*, an initiative that will help them in the event of death as funerals have become expensive and people can never prepare for death.

In January 2015 uMankosi recruited 20 members and went back to *undlunkulu* where she and the recruits were helped with the drafting of the constitution and also advised to elect the executive committee that will be signatories to their bank account. They were advised to elect people that they trust and elected five community members to occupy the positions of chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, deputy secretary, and treasurer. The first instalment was in February 2015. So far it has 37 members and it still operates under the guidance of a society that her sister in law recommended to her – the sister *stokvel*. The joining fee is R110 and after paying it members contribute R55 every month. Before one is accepted as a member, she has to go through a 'waiting period' of three months, and, once a member, your policy lapses if three months passes without making a payment. The *stokvel* covers the immediate family members: your spouse, your children and your mother and father in law. Children who are married are excluded and people who live with you but are not your children are also excluded. The children covered must be your biological children. Since its conception, it has had four funerals (including the one that I attended in December 2016). In the event of the funeral, the *stokvel* women start by contributing R20 which is quickly taken to the family so that it can buy food for the people who will be sending condolences. But the R20 contributions are also a community norm in the event of death of a community member. After the initial R20 contributions, the executive members of the *stokvel* then goes to withdraw R5000 and take R3500 to buy groceries for the funeral and after the funeral, they give the family of the deceased the remaining R1500. However, this is flexible, depending on the needs of the family, for instance, in the funeral that I attended, the family did not have any other policy and they did not have money for the mortuary and the coffin, so they requested to be given the R5000 for the funeral expenses and they relied on extended family members to buy groceries for the funeral.

So far, they have had four funerals and two funerals in KwaNongoma, where they had to contribute R1000 as per the constitution. However, they have since withdrawn their membership from *undlunkulu* because they realised that they do not have enough money as their *stokvel* is still new. According to uMaNkosi, this withdrawal has not damaged the relationship with *undlunkulu* as they can still consult them should a need

arise. Counting the funerals, they have had and the two in KwaNongoma they have withdrawn R22 000 in one year. It was for this reason that they decided to withdraw their membership from *undlunkulu*. They pledged to rejoin undlukulu once they have enough money in the bank. When I asked whether they receive R1000 when they had funerals, uMaNkosi said they did not qualify to receive the money but she was unable to explain the details of the process. It is not clear what is the role of *undlunkulu*, other than the drafting of the constitution and the advice they got from them when setting up the *stokvel*. UMaNkosi said, if there is something that they do not understand or confuses them as they are still new in this *stokvel* they are welcome to go to *undlunkulu* for advice.

During the focus group discussion, I asked the members of the *stokvel* why they decided to join the SFC. One of the members responded by saying:

For me it made sense because before this *stokvel* it was our burden when a family had lost its member to contribute with the money we did not have. This has made things much easier for us, as we don't have to bring anything as the Siyakhula provides for everything. We just go there to cook and serve people, but we don't have to worry about food anymore.

It would seem that funerals put a strain on the community as the members have a responsibility to one another. The *stokvel* plays a pivotal role in lessening the burden by drawing from its coffers during such times, since money is a scarce resource, given the high unemployment situation in the community. However, the fact that the SFC has rules that excludes other family members creates some problems as members of the *stokvels* still have to contribute for the family members not included in the *stokvel*.

### 5.1.2 *The funeral parlour*

In the introduction (p.2), I argued that there has been a shift in understanding of *stokvels*. They are increasingly seen as part of the Rotating Saving and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) and burial societies. Because *stokvels* are a new phenomenon at Esihlengeni, according uThandi, there is quite a close link between the burial societies and her business. I was fortunate that uThandi owns this funeral parlour and I did not just interview her but was able to sit with her in the office and see how she actually ran the business. UThandi started work as a consultant at Old Mutual where she was selling funeral plans to pensioners. This exposed her to the funeral industry and in 2001 she

started Funeral parlour. She is still selling funeral policies but now she also has a mortuary, sells coffins and hires out cars. She has different packages that aim at accommodating different needs of her clients. She is a member of the South African Funeral Practitioners Association (SAFPA). To be a member of this association you need to cover all your clients with Old Mutual for your business to be legalised. According to her, Old Mutual protects them should they have more claims at the same time. However, if that never happens, Old Mutual benefits just like all other insurances. In other words, uThandi takes policies for her members with Old Mutual to protect herself should she get claims that will exceed her capacity. It would seem that the entity often presented as a *stokvel* is actually an insurance policy.

UThandi saw being part of the SAFPA as an advantage for her business as it helps it become effective. To emphasise the importance of being a member to the SAFPA, she said:

Another advantage of being a member of the association is that you can provide the services to your clients wherever they are in the country because you are not working alone. For instance, if your member works in Johannesburg and passes away, you can find a funeral parlour in Johannesburg that is a member of the association to take your client to the mortuary while you are making arrangements to fetch the body.

Because of her membership in the association, Thandi has clients all over the country, and this has made her business stronger. Her company also works with *stokvel* groups as a way of ‘helping’ them address their needs at the time of grieve. To stay in business Thandi knows that she must come with innovative ways to outplay other funeral parlours and lure clients. Thandi makes her profit by providing funeral services, which include: mortuary, the undertaker, the coffin, and the cars that transport the family members to the graveyard. The payment for these services is deducted from the payouts of her clients’ policies. Any remaining money is given to the beneficiaries of the policies.

One of Thandi’s recent innovations is a new coffin, designed for the Shembe<sup>48</sup> people who believe that people should not be buried with a coffin, as they regard it as a Western

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<sup>48</sup> Shembe is also known as ibandla lama Nazaretha – an African initiated church founded by Isaiah Shembe in 1910 that has about four million membership. It is a blend of Old Testament-based Christianity and African Zulu beliefs (Oosthuizen 1976).

idea. So what Thandi's company does is to wrap the body with an animal skin, from an animal that was slaughtered to accompany a person, put in a coffin and then take the bod wrapped body out of the coffin for the actual burial and bury it wrapped with animal skin. Thandi's company designed a coffin that can be folded and taken back to her parlour. When I asked if Shembe people pay for this coffin she said yes and further told me that this coffin was actually more expensive as compared to other coffins because it was custom made. Shembe people pay for it despite the fact that uThandi would take the coffin back and re-use it again. Thandi's business seems to be very aggressive in trying to get clients in all possible ways by tapping into what communities are doing and improving on the service.

What was interesting though is that while uThandi was aware that she runs a business, she was also convinced that she was helping people and doing more than just normal business. She states:

You know when the business is slow, I always pray and say to God, you know that I am not running this business for myself, but I am helping people, there are many people who are dependent on me that I am helping through this business.

I always had a problem with Thandi's logic that her business is about other people while she is the main beneficiary. In her business, she did not have permanently employed people, all her workers were 'temporary' staff and when the business was slow she would tell them not to come. She was the last person to lose and yet she prayed to God using other people as a negotiating tool with God.

### *5.1.3 Observing funerals*

As already mentioned above, on the first weekend I attended the funeral of Thandi's client. Inasmuch as this was an enriching experience for the research, it took a long time for me to realise this because when I attended the funeral, I had just arrived in the area and I was still making sense of the area rather than the events. The second funeral was at the end of my fieldwork, in fact I had already gone back home but uMaNkosi called me to let me know about it as I had expressed a desire to attend a funeral managed by their *stokvel*. The funeral that I attended, in December, was similar to many funerals that I have attended. Somehow, I got a sense that this community wanted to be like 'everyone else' outside the area and not necessarily responding to the internal

challenges of the community. However, when I explore the rituals within the funeral I got a very different picture, as will be revealed in the following sections.

The funerals had a seemingly standard programme that had about five items and a programme director. The programme included speakers that represented family members, neighbours, friends, colleagues and the preacher. At the end of the service, the hearse came to take the coffin to the graveyard. In the graveyard, the service was very short as the pastor prayed and then said few words as the coffin was going down into the grave. There was a lot of singing during the closing of the hole. Once they were done with everything, there was a closing prayer and then one of the family members made an announcement to invite the mourners to pass by the house for refreshments. Back in the house, the *stokvel* women were there to dish up for the people what seemed to be a standard meal of all the funerals in black communities I have attended: pap/rice with meat (from the cow slaughtered for the deceased) and some vegetables: spinach and pumpkin and salads: beetroot and coleslaw.

When I went to attend the SFC funeral I asked umalume to accompany me, as that was the norm when I was in the field. On our way back umalume, as we were talking about the funeral, told me that what I had witnessed was not the whole funeral but part of the funeral. He then explained that in Zulu culture, a funeral is a process that begins on the day when a person dies until he/she finally reaches his/her final destination, the ancestral realm. This process involves many rituals and it is these rituals that determine whether a person reaches the final destination or not. According to umalume, the first ritual is to collect the person's spirit from the place where the spirit left the body; this requires *ihlahla* (a branch of a particular tree) that carries the spirit until burial. But before the spirit can come home, there must be a goat that is slaughtered to inform the ancestor about the spirit's whereabouts, which is followed by the slaughtering of the cow that accompanies the deceased as it is believed that the journey is long. For Lombo, "The slaughtering of the cattle offers him the medium to talk and negotiate with his ancestors" (2017: 4). Because now there are mortuaries, the deceased's body arrives the day before the funeral. And again, there is also communication with the ancestors as the body enters the yard and the house. In the morning, when the body leaves the house to the graveyards, again there is communication with the ancestors to inform

them about what is happening. The ancestors are involved in every process. They are considered to play a very important role in the funeral proceedings.

#### *5.1.4 Role of cows in funerals*

As already mentioned, the funeral is a process, the actual funeral ceremony does not represent the end of the process. After the funeral, there are rituals that should be performed as part of the process such as the rituals to release the deceased's belongings and *ukukhuluma inzilo* (to take off the mourning clothes). Umalume did mention that these rituals depend on the family traditions and are more or less the same, with small variations. The final ritual and the most important one according to umalume is the ritual of *ihlambo* also known as *umsebenzi wokukhuphula* (the ritual that is performed to lift a person up and send him/her to his/her final destination). Once this last ritual has been performed, a person can thus be classified as *idlozi* (an ancestor), in this way, those that are related to him/her can then ask luck, protection and direction from him/her. It is in this context, as umalume explains, that he was performing the ritual of one of our cousins, who passed away in 1994. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, umalume had this ritual and I had to attend to represent my late mother as this was her nephew that needed to be welcomed by the Nxumalo clan (my uncle and my mother's clan), hence all my uncle's siblings had to be there or their representatives thereof. It was in the context that my late cousin's children do not seem to be progressing on life, all three boys that have completed schooling were unemployed. It was some of these reasons that propelled my uncle to want and intervene by conducting this ritual.

It would not make sense to study funerals and not connect them with other forms of rituals in order to establish a correlation between these processes. For my uncle, the reason he was doing this ritual after so many years was that he was not the person to do it, but his wife or his children. But he realised that they did not have the means to do the ritual and he therefore had to step in. What led to him stepping in was that his children were experiencing problems which were getting worse by day and he attributed this to the fact my late cousin was still hovering in spiritual space, he had not reached his final destination because the right rituals had not been performed for him. So for the sake of his children, he had to do perform this ritual on their behalf. As umalume was explaining these rituals, I realised that the *stokvel* was not focusing on those needs but on what I call capitalist needs, which will be explained later. Umalume then listened

to the members of the family, maternal relatives that are ancestors because *bakhushulwa* (literally means were raised to the final destination). It is in this context that umalume had to do this ritual for our cousin because he wanted his children to be able to ask that their paths be cleared so as to advance in life and receive protection. With this understanding of the funeral, it becomes clear that the cows are the centre as all the rituals require slaughtering, and the main one like the funeral and *ihlambo* require the slaughtering of cows. I unpack this in the subsequent sections.

In both the funerals, men seemed to be dominating all the activities even though women, according to me, had provided more because of the *stokvel*'s role. I had to ask umalume about the dominance of men in funerals. Even though for umalume, my question was nonsensical because to him it was obvious that women could not perform these rituals. He responded to me laughing: can women have the strength to hold firmly to a living cow and slaughter it? He continued and explained how difficult it was to slaughter a cow, hence it requires men. Umalume, I felt missed my question, as I was not just referring to slaughtering of the cow as I did not witness that in both funerals, but I was referring to the fact that men were the ones who were doing all the talking when they were communicating with ancestors – when they were taking the body to the graveyards and when the body was going down the grave. And maybe for umalume, my question lacked common sense as Krige points out that, “men and boys herded the cattle, milk the cows, pour the milk into the calabashes or even wash the milking utensils, for women may have nothing to do with any operations connected with cattle” (1977: 26). Umalume must have been baffled by my naivety. The importance of cows is clear in funerals as they are not just needed during the funeral but in the rituals that come after the funerals to ensure that the deceased completes his/her journey.

## **5.2 Reading of *stokvels* from Esihlengi**

When I proposed the study, I began by presenting a case of the Braamfischer Helping Hands Burial Society (BHHBS) to show a seemingly different logic of the *stokvel* from the mainstream capitalist one. The BHHBS logic is in line with the arguments made by a number of scholars that have studied *stokvels* such as Matuku & Kaseke (2014); Mashigo & Schoeman (2010); Moliea 2007; and Arko-Achemfuor (2012) to list just a few, have argued that *stokvels* are not driven by money but are built on values that promote taking care of each other. Such arguments created interest in *stokvels* because



we live in the world that emphasises individualism, to hear about communities that seem to reject that logic is intriguing. The study, however, reveals information that pokes hole on such a conception of *stokvels*. The *stokvels* studied have certain requirements that raises questions 1) there is a ‘waiting period’ of before members could qualify to claim in the event they lose a family member that is covered in the *stokvel*; 2) if members are unable to pay, their membership lapses and 3) the help members get depends entirely on their contributions not on the needs of the members.

### 5.2.1 *The illusion of helping*

Greenbaum who studied mutual aid societies in the United States, which are similar to *stokvels*, states that “mutual aid societies operated within, and of necessity accommodated to, the larger political and economic system” (1991: 97). This suggests that we need to understand *stokvels* and similar initiatives within context as they emanate as a response to the harsh realities of a new environment that has been created by the capitalist system and can therefore not be seen as mere coping strategies (Krige 2010: 6). For Buijs (2002), they (mutual aid societies) are a form of insurance rather than of savings; they are a support system, something that might be argued with *stokvels* as presented by the BHHBS. According to Karp & Masolo (2000), this suggests that *stokvels* are informed by a different logic, which is fundamentally different from the dualistic Western logic. However, this conception overlooks the fact that communities are constrained by the capitalist system. Taking Greenbaum’s proposition, it would follow that given that they are a response to a particular economic system, they will use the logic of the very economic system, since they are operating within it. Greenbaum showed with black mutual aid societies that “some participants were learning how to be capitalists” (1991: 97). This happens even when these formations “were designed to shield the members from the competitive exploitation inherent in market system” (ibid), the *stokvels* and similar formations often end up becoming exploitative just like the bigger corporations that are driven by profit. As we saw with SFC, their constitution is about protecting the *stokvels* not the members because 1) there is a ‘waiting period’ of before members could qualify to claim in the event they lose a family member that is covered in the *stokvel*; 2), if members are unable to pay, their membership lapses and if they pay membership, the help they get from the *stokvel* depends entirely on their contributions.

*Stokvels* have been in the spotlight and have been referred to as a ‘hidden economy’ (African Response 2012). And because of this, efforts to understand *stokvels* have centred mainly on economical rather than social factors, and the focus has been on their economic viability aimed at benefiting the ‘capitalist’ system (Rose 2014). The focus on the economic viability of *stokvels* has obscured the other limitations of *stokvels* and downplayed the capitalist nature of *stokvels*. For instance, the fact that *stokvels* run like businesses have been ignored. And also, the fact that they are not organic to communities but are a result of indirect ‘marketing’ as we have seen in the case of Esihlengeni, that they started their *stokvel* because of what they ‘saw’ elsewhere. And even the way the money is spent is feeding to a capitalist logic – glamorous funerals that do not cover the basic needs of the community members such as the needs of rituals that follow funerals. So, the biggest beneficiaries are business people, in this instance, funeral schemes. In this way, the community of Esihlengeni can be understood as part of the global matrix of power and is forced to use the logic of the dominant economy – the logic that says: adapt or else! – and responding to their harsh realities by adapting to the system negates whatever values they might have. The SFC seems to be rooted in a logic other than that of helping as it runs more like a business and as such, it does not respond to the challenges of making sure that all funeral necessities for those in dire situations are taken care of.

From the above, it would seem that the idea that *stokvels* are rooted in the logic of moral or solidarity economy where "It is scarcity not sufficiency that makes people generous" (Fafchamps cites Evans-Pritchard 1992: 49), does not seem to be true in the case of Esihlengeni. The argument that when people are in dire conditions they become generous as Fafchamps (1992) suggests cannot be universal, it would seem that it is located in a particular space in time.

While it might be tempting to ‘universalise’ such behaviours as Thompson does with the pre-industrial revolution, “The confrontations of the market in a “pre-industrial” society are of course more universal than any national experience. And the elementary moral precepts of the “reasonable price” are equally universal” (1971: 135), it would seem that there are other factors that should be considered such as the external economic influences. So, this argument by Fafchamps that, “whenever economic and social conditions are such that individual survival is extremely uncertain without some

form of mutual insurance, informal solidarity mechanisms tend to emerge naturally” (1992: 149), is not true everywhere. At Esihlengeni, the *stokvel* did not ‘emerge naturally’ but was copied from elsewhere – KwaNongoma.

### 5.2.2 *Paying attention to nuances*

The argument by scholars such as Faschamps and Thompson of universalising behaviours, does not take into account changing times and suggests that poor communities are homogenous and immune from external influences and thus stagnant. Bähre highlights the problem with this view in her studies of poor communities in South Africa by arguing that economic theories have romanticized community relations and thus failed to account for “solidarity to conflict, rivalry and social constraints” (2007: 36). In fact, this ‘romanticisation’ of community relations is a result of the markets and this has made poor communities more vulnerable as they have become the target of products marketed. The truth is as seen at Esihlengeni, poverty makes communities more divided. Bähre in the township in Cape Town observed that, “Reluctant solidarity encapsulates that help, particularly under conditions of destitution and hardship, does not result in extensive unifying bonds of comradeship, but in small bonds fraught with social tensions” (ibid: 52). In fact, what makes sense in Faschamps claim is that, “When poor rural communities are hit by a major shock, say, a flood, drought, or famine, the solidarity system often seems to breakdown” (1992: 165). The community of Esihlengeni, thus presents a case of a community that has been broken down by the high level of unemployment and is unable to provide support as suggested by *stokvel* proponents. The SFC is thus a means to save for themselves so that they are able to have a ‘decent funeral’ rather than help all their family members let alone the community at large.

To make sense of the *stokvels* we need to pay attention to nuances, that are not emphasized in the broader literature that deals with *stokvels*. The argument that is normally propagated in the literature around *stokvels* is that they use values from the community. Mulaudzi citing Ramagoshi & Landman (2013) writes “The *stokvels* groups are there to help community members embrace ubuntu” (2017: 30) which suggests that *stokvels* draw from traditional values. With all the disruption that has taken place, many black communities still view family differently from Western view, hence some Western terms cannot be translated into African language. For instance, the

idea of an extended family and immediate family is a foreign concept. In isiZulu, a family is *umndeni* whether it is extended or immediate, it simply means blood relations. It was interesting when uMaNkosi was explaining the members that are covered by the *stokvel*. She was struggling to explain the fact that your relative's child that lives with you is not covered because he/she not your biological child. This was clear that they did not draft the constitution themselves but got it elsewhere as she said that they were helped by *undlunkulu*.

It is important that we understand that communities such as Esihlengeni are part of the globe and therefore we should not expect 'purity' while they are dealing with harsh conditions brought to them by global forces. In Esihlengeni, the *stokvels* covers the 'nuclear family' and not the extended family as one would expect from such an entity located in Africa. This is a clear indication that they are not informed by a local logic but by a foreign one. This detail, among others, does not come out clearly in the literature on *Stokvels*. I am aware that there are different kinds of *stokvels* and not all of them would have the need to define the family, but if we pay enough attention we might be able to pick up fundamental groundings of *stokvels* that are not traditional and cannot even be associated with these communities. As survival entities, they have developed coping mechanism drawing from whatever that is in their disposal. But more so that the capitalist is actively penetrating the communities at all levels by luring people with elusive success and support while it continues to make a profit. *Stokvels* have a capitalist element to them, though they might have a human aspect to them one can still detect profit thinking within them. They are a coping mechanism within a capitalist system. These findings are actually the opposite of the hypothesis I had when I wrote the proposal. The people of Esihlengeni show us that the coping strategies cannot be read as drawing from a different economic logic from the capitalist logic.

### 5.2.3 Peculiarities of *Stokvels*

As argued in the previous section *stokvels*, like ROSCAs and Mutual Aid societies, were meant to help people to cope in a new environment. Verhoef (2001) this point as he argues that women who had migrated to the city started *stokvels*. In the cities, *stokvels*, have a long history as they have been around since the beginning of the migrant labour (Krige 2012). But in Esihlengeni, *stokvels* have proved to be a fairly new phenomenon; as it is a place where migrant worker come back to – it is home.

However, because of unemployment in the cities many people have come back or are deciding not to go to cities, as it is known that the prospects for employment are minimal. This brings new dynamics to the area and can be defined as the second defeat – the first defeat being the one that forced them to go to the cities in the first place. The struggle of the violation of ‘the African’s right to life’ has been exacerbated by what I call the second defeat, which means people of Esihlengeni are ‘doubly’ oppressed as the first violation has not been resolved. This is taking into account the government’s interventions discussed in Chapter Three. But as shown, these interventions have not yielded any progress so far, which means the community of Esihlengeni lives in this ‘double’ oppression that they are still trying to make sense of it because it is new.

Historically Esihlengeni, as 'home', depended on people working in the cities and then returning there to rest (alive or dead). Most of the financial activities took place outside of the village and remained centred on subsistence farming. The money, where needed, would be provided by people working in the cities since it had become difficult during the colonial era to completely live without money as colonisation forced African people “to enter into money economy” (Hart 2001: 2). The case of *Siwela Funerals* is an example of this history, as some of her members are still people working elsewhere but view Vryheid as their home. Indeed, the case of Esihlengeni presents a peculiar situation that fits Mafeje’s description “They (African societies) are not isolated or self-contained. They are simply a backward or distorted part of the capitalist system” (2001: 39). This is most evident in the policy that Thandi’s Funeral parlour provides, which is centred on migrant workers and caters for people that die in the cities and come back home to be buried. This is indeed a response to a ‘distorted part of the capitalist system’. Even though Thandi was convinced that she was helping people to practice their culture, she is using a capitalist logic, she is running a business and is interested in profit, a foreign idea to Africans when one takes the logic of the economy of the traditional communities into consideration, as presented by Malinowski (1922); Mauss (1925) and Polanyi (1944). Masolo also posits, “the African social organization can still not be identified with capitalism” (1980: 424). It can be argued therefore that *stokvels* are not rooted in African values as they are centred on profit and not so much on helping, as demonstrated in the cases of Thand’s Funeral parlour and in the constitution of the SFC.

To want to argue that *stokvels* are drawing from traditional values is to ignore a significant aspect of *stokvels* that they are a response to the problems created by the capitalist system. In fact, according to Rose, “culture is viewed as something to be adapted to capitalist use - where the best aspects of an indigenous culture are commonly understood as those most easily adaptable to capitalism” (2014: 378-379). *Siwela Funerals* is an example of this phenomenon, as they have adapted coffins to accommodate the belief system of the Shembe people while still (or primarily) offering an expensive project. And this is also in line with the organisers of the Mutual aid societies in the US as according to Greenbaum

They had marshaled their early successes at creating collective organizations into ambitious capitalist empires, in pursuit of advice offered by the best economists and social scientist of their time, both in both in and outside of the Black community (1991: 113-4).

Even though the SFC did not show the ambition of turning the *stokvel* into business, but their relationship with *undlunkulu* (which is not clear as I did not explore it) does suggest a capitalist ambition. For example, a SFC has to give *undlunkulu* R1000 every time they were running a funeral.

this economy is itself an integral feature of millennial capitalism—that odd fusion of the modern and the postmodern, of hope and hopelessness, of utility and futility, of promise and its perversions (Comaroff & Comaroff 2002: 283).

In essence, *stokvels* – within the context of ‘millennial capitalism’ – are not driven by the logic of the people but by the ‘modern and postmodern’ phenomena of maximising profit at all cost while also hiding this aspect of itself. Ngugi wa thiong’o (1986), presents capitalism as having affected the lives of people in much of Africa, even in the most remote corners of the continent. And the imperialist rule, as Ngugi wa thiong’o puts it, is evident in the logic of *stokvels* at Esihlengeni.

### **5.3 Understanding Economy from Esihlengeni**

There is no doubt that the *stokvels* are a response to societal economic challenges as argued above. It becomes important therefore to understand the economic framework of communities studied, and in this case, Esihlengeni in order understand the role of *stokvels* holistically. So far, I have painted a picture of a community that is in devastation. This picture might suggest that the members of the community have no agency whatsoever. If that be the case then the question would then be, what is the point

of studying them? The people of Esihlengeni are living with the contradictions of the modern world, but also the contradictions of life itself (Adésinà 2002). While they accept the solutions that are presented to them, in this instance, the *stokvel*, to address the artificial needs of the funerals – fancy food and the coffin, which I argue are capitalist needs, they also insist on doing all other rituals that surround death and demand cows. Seemingly, cows cannot be converted into money as according to umalume, these rituals need physical cows, that will groan when slaughtered, a symbol that the message has been sent to the ancestors.

The case of Esihlengeni thus provides us with what Graeber (2001) observes about the African economy, that it is concerned with the reproduction of people, and most importantly, that it draws from a different epistemology than Western epistemology and thus does not exist within the limits of capitalism, as will later be shown. This, I argue, is a complex economic system that is inclusive of the physical and the metaphysical aspects of human life. It is in this context that I move away from the human economy, based on Western epistemology, as per Hart's definition and argue for the economy of life.

### 5.3.1 *The economy of SFC*

The economic logic of the SFC as presented in section 4.2.1 proves to be nothing short of the capitalist logic. What is different though, is the need that the SFC women raised in one of the focus group discussions – the need for kraal. This I will explore in the following chapter. What I want to point out here is that, while the capitalist logic is evident, there is another economic logic co-existing with the capitalist logic in the community. But this is not easy to identify as Graeber points out:

It is becoming increasingly obvious that what those who celebrated post-modernism were describing in large part simply the effects of this universal market system, which, like any totalizing system of value, tends to throw all others into doubt and disarray (2001: xi).

The existence of a different, non-Western economy of Esihlengeni is normally doubted because it does not refer to itself as an economy. And, because of this, it is not identified as an economy as in the eyes of many western scholars, nothing can co-exist with the capitalist God. For Graeber (2001) capitalist institutions do not exist in some communities. However, the economy of Esihlengeni is a different type of economy and

cannot be understood in the separatist western logic, as it is all-inclusive of various aspects of society. Malinowski (1922) has observed a similar social structure elsewhere that does not use the western separatist logic. At Esihlengeni, the economic logic is expressed by the act of communicating with the ancestors who are believed to have power to bring good or bad luck. Not taking this into account when addressing traditional communities such as the community of Esihlengeni, for Meillassoux (2006), results in disaster. Although it is too early to argue for the failure of government's intervention at Esihlengeni, it is clear however, that the traditional values are not taken into account in these interventions. For example, the issue of the restoration of cows is not on the government's agenda for the community, according to the interview I had with the councillor.

The community of Esihlengeni is drawing from a different epistemology and thus cannot find theoretical frameworks available for comprehending it, since these frameworks are grounded within a Western epistemology. For Nyamnjoh, to understand communities like Esihlengeni one will have to

include, inter alia, perception, experience, memory, sensation, impression, evidence, reason, reflection, intention, intuition, introspection, imagination, doubt, faith, humility, mind, body, self, language, symbolism, values, myth, belief and speculation (2017: 32).

In this sense one can begin to make sense of the role of spirituality in human existence. Adésinà invokes it even in academic matters “moments of what one should call divine inspiration or illumination are no less central to knowledge production - even if most are embarrassed even to mention it” (2002: 13). This means that to understand communities fully, one needs to go beyond the limitations of Western epistemology that only focuses on empirical evidence and thus ignore the metaphysical, which is very much a part of the everyday existence of the living. Embracing this approach should, therefore, enable us to better understand the community of Esihlengeni. Thus, to refuse to understand the epistemological grounding of the people of Esihlengeni is in fact to refuse progress itself.

### 5.3.2 *The story of ubab'Zulu*

On the day I was conducting the focus group discussions with *stokvel* women, a man in his mid-sixties approached me. He had been there since the beginning of the FGD but



was sitting a little bit further from us to show that he was not a part of the discussion. I had thought he was waiting for one of the participants when I found him there. As he introduced himself, it turned out he had been waiting for me as he wanted to discuss something with me and was hoping that I could help. We sat down, and I listened. Ubab'Zulu, had lived in this area all his life and had only left to work in Durban where he would save money and buy cattle, a normal thing to do for men of his time and of this area. In 1991 his 15 cows were confiscated by the owner of the farm he lived in at the time and he opened a case, but he was sent from pillar to post and he ended up hiring an investigator in 2005 to investigate what happened. According to the documents (these documents are attached as appendix) he showed me he was advised to re-open. According to the investigation, the police had never opened the case when he reported it.

While I was listening and looking at the papers that ubab'Zulu had given to me, I could not help but wonder why ubab'Zulu could not let this go since his cattle were confiscated in 1991. However, I could not express this feeling to him, I listened. Trying to respond to his question I had to think in terms of his rights in this context and the more I thought with my very limited understanding of the law, the more I came to the conclusion that ubab'Zulu had no case. But how do I tell him this, he has kept these documents for years because he wants justice. Indeed, *icala aliboli* (a Zulu idiom loosely translated: crime committed does not expire until justice is served). Even in the democratic South Africa, ubab'Zulu could not get a sense of justice in a sense of getting his cows back; he still did not get the 15 cattle that were confiscated by a white farmer. The story of ubab'Zulu left me feeling defeated, useless, because I knew that there was nothing much I could do to help him and yet he had so much hope in me. Even though I represented power to the people of Esihlengeni by virtue of being a 'researcher' in actual fact I had none.

The insistence of ubab'Zulu on making a connection might render him insane. The papers he carries around as the evidence of the crime committed against him actually state that there was never a crime reported. Even though bab'Zulu might be seen as a madman, but he speaks eloquently of his social world (Comaroff & Comaroff 1987: 193). Just like the madman in the story of the Tshidi in the Comaroff & Comaroff, ubab'Zulu can be seen as making visible connections we have not made regarding the

experience of the people at Esihlengeni “between the elements of the contradictory worlds; one who bears the insignia of continuity quite literally on his chest” (ibid: 203). The situation in Esihlengeni, as the Comaroff & Comaroff continue, “offered genteel society an image of itself that it would rather forget” (ibid: 2003-4). The story of ubab’Zulu and the situation in Esihlengeni is real, but uncomfortable to confront especially if we want to believe in a world that is forever changing. Unlike in Tshidi, in Esihlengeni, it is the normal people who are making the connections and have always made these connections not because of their capitalist experience but because they are drawing from a worldview that enables them to respond to all situations. While the funerals, as observed, take into account the modern inscription, the people have maintained their belief system through their rituals and this is true for other aspects of their life, like weddings, as will later be shown.

This story would not have made sense if I did not attend the funerals and thus understood the information about the rituals as umalume explained. To understand ubab’Zulu in context requires us to understand these rituals. Ubab’Zulu is insisting on regaining his cows, which represents his ability to provide and conduct rituals that will protect his family and, therefore, perform his role as a man. So, without cows, he is unable to perform his role, which renders him useless, as his manhood is defined by his possession of cows. The *stokvel* women are, on the other hand, tasked with a different responsibility of providing food in the funeral. The *stokvel* assists them to fulfil this role, but the funeral is not complete without the cows. It would seem important therefore to also assist men as well to fulfil their role of providing cows if the *stokvel* is to make a significant impact on the lives of the people of Esihlengeni.

### 5.3.3 *The totality of the economy*

As seen in the previous sections, cows are the medium through which the community of Esihlengeni communicate with the ancestors to ensure protection and good luck. It should be noted that cows are not just important for the events centred around death, but for life in general. I mentioned in the methodology chapter that while I was in the field I had an opportunity to attend the wedding of Thandi’s friend. When we were

there, I learned that in actual fact it was *ukuvunywa kwabakhwenyana*<sup>49</sup> (welcoming the grooms) and is normally referred as a traditional wedding which is followed by a ‘white wedding’ for those people that believe in it and have the money to do it as this is the more expensive wedding. Umalume, did not attend this wedding, I was just with uThandi. As I was finding my feet in the field, I realised that all the rituals were somehow connected to my interest in the economy even though I did not know how at that moment. It is in this context that when I got an opportunity, I asked umalume about this wedding. According to umalume, *ukuvunywa kwabakhwenyana* is part of the process of the wedding, just like the funeral, wedding is the process that begins with the *lobola* (loosely defined as bride’s wealth, but it is not as it will be shown later) negotiations. For Hart, referring to the economy, writes that, “In Africa, for example, it takes the form of cows being exchanged for women in marriage as a source of legitimation for children” (2013: 24). This is not peculiar as amongst black people, there is a belief that *lobola* is an exchange of some sort as we now look at it from a Western epistemology that is centred on exchange. It is in this context that in contemporary settings, *lobolo* has been given many meanings, for instance, cows are converted into money hence it is understood as selling and buying. But according to umalume, this is a corrupted version of the *ilobolo*.

In the process of *ilobolo*, as umalume posits, there can never be a formula on how this process can be done, as there are many things that are taken into consideration for instance, the family circumstances and the situation of the groom just to list a few; hence it is regarded as a negotiation process. However, there are components of the process that cannot be ignored, the three cows: *inkomo kababa* (father’s cow), *inkomo kamama* (mother’s cow) and *inkomo yokumngenisa* (a cow to take with to enter the in-law’s kraal). These three cows are non-negotiable and are a standard in the *lobola*. If the groom does not have enough cows, in today’s context, enough money, he has to make sure that he has the three cows because without them, there can never be a wedding. And umalume explained the role of these cows as follows: first, there must be a cow that will be slaughtered for *ukuvuma abakhwenyana* (welcoming of the

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<sup>49</sup> For this ceremony, a groom is referred in plural ie. *aba-khwenyana* instead of *um-khwenyana* because it is not just about him, but his whole family that is welcomed. This ritual is sometimes combined with *umembeso* (giving of gifts to the family members by the bride, the groom also does give his in-laws the gifts but on a separate ceremony). *Umembeso* includes even those that have passed on emphasising the fact that they still partake in the everyday activities.

groom), the ceremony that I attended with my cousin. *Ukuvunywa kwabakhwenyana* is the first communication with the ancestors to tell them that there is new member of the family *umkhwenyana* (the groom). Another important aspect of this ritual is that, the groom and those that accompany him must see the beast to be slaughtered before it gets slaughtered as an assurance that he is not tricked of being accepted by the ancestors as that can trigger the ancestor's vengeance when he participates in family rituals and has not been introduced properly. In this instance, this cow can never be converted into cash as it is now done mostly in the cities<sup>50</sup>.

The second cow is the cow *yokumkipha* (to take the bride out of her family). This cow is slaughtered to let the ancestors know that one of their children is leaving their home and they must then walk with her to her new home. Again, this cow cannot be converted into cash as it must be slaughtered. The last cow is the one that she takes with so that if she is marrying into a poor family, she must not starve. But in her new family, they must slaughter a cow *yokumngenisa* (welcome her in the family) and she must get inside the kraal so that the ancestors of the new family know her and thus protect her. It is clear that these three cows that are slaughtered can never be converted into cash as they are the integral part of the rituals centred around the wedding. In this sense, there is no selling and buying of the bride as it is normally argued by some of the proponents of 'equality'<sup>51</sup>. What is important to be remembered, is that the groom has to be welcomed in the bride's family – *ukuvunywa kwabakhwenyana* - something that is often forgotten when we talk about gender discrimination. According to umalume, this was important because being part of the family means that he has to enter in the kraal during the rituals, which becomes a sacred place and someone who enters there and is not known can face the wrath of the ancestor. This applies to the bride as well hence there is a cow that is slaughtered *ukumngenisa*. Krige argues that, "the cattle kraal was a sacred spot... The beast would be killed for sacrifice inside the kraal after the elder man of the house had liaised and negotiated or pleaded with the ancestral spirits. (1968: 35, cited in Lombo 2017: 54). It would seem that in this community cows, physical cows – still play a

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<sup>50</sup> The approach of equating *lobola* to bridewealth corrupts the interpretation of *lobola* which draws from a different epistemology. These are challenges of translation I explained in Chapter Three, that translating epistemologies requires believing in the epistemology not just understanding it.

<sup>51</sup> As stated in the previous footnote that *ilobolo* is not bridewealth but it is the communication with the ancestors just like in the funeral process.

significant role and cannot be replaced by money as the modern world would want to posit – that everything can be converted (wealth/economy) into papers.

Above I have highlighted the significance of cows in the community of Esihlengeni, and that while they can be seen as part of wealth their role exceeds that, as they are a medium to communicate with the ancestors who, alone, can protect and give life. What we see at Esihlengeni is similar to what Koenane asserts,

in Africa the idea of wealth is inseparable from the idea of *Badimo*, *Amadlozi* or the living-dead who with their participation in the events and activities of their communities are ever present in an African economic system (2014: 182).

It is against this backdrop that we should understand the important role of the kraal as during the rituals, the presence of the ancestors fills this space. The role of cows in relation to the kraal can also be traced to a Zulu cultural practice called *ukusisela* (lending of cattle). The practice highlights the fact that there can never be a home without a kraal. According to Koenane, *ukusisela* “refers to lending the needy neighbour a milky cow” (2014: 181), and Lombo defines it as, “giving someone who have no cows a few calves as a start-up for his new stock” (2017: 6). All these authors see *ukusisela* as helping the needy and do not delve into the role of cows in the entire existence of amaZulu. Nussbaum (2003:23) provides a better explanation of the concept by giving an example that states that typical of ubuntu, as defined in the Zulu cosmology, is a tradition called *ukusisa*. *Ukusisa* is a practice whereby, to support a newly married family, who are also new to the community, one of the families in the community would lend cattle, a cow and a bull, to the couple, wait for the cattle to give birth to a calf and then take back their cattle. The calf would stay with the newcomers, leaving them both with their own venture capital.

#### **5.4 Towards the economy of cows**

The centrality of cows in South African politics is a well-known fact and can even be traced to protest songs – old and new. Many protest musicians such as Miriam Makeba and Caiphus Semenya, just to name a few, have articulated this phenomenon. Miriam Makeba expresses this in song that goes

*Ilanga litshonile bafana mazibuye izinkomo zobaba, siyolobola ngani na maniyeka i'nkomo zobaba, zemuka nomoya, yebafana thathani izinduku niyobheka izinkomo esigangeni.* (the sun has set my father's cows must return,

how are we going to “lobola” if you allow my father’s cows to go with the wind, boys take the sticks and go and look for the cows in the wilderness)

Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d99wc8LGDpw>

According to this song, cows are something to fight for as without cows we would not be able to exercise culture and ensure continuity. Using these songs, in the subsequent sections, I unpack the symbolic meaning of cows in Esihlengeni as an attempt to argue for an economic system that draws from a different epistemology other than the western epistemology that gave birth to capitalism.

Simphiwe Dana, a young jazz musician, expresses a similar sentiment in her third album titled: *Kultur Noir*, produced in 2010. The album has a song titled: *Zobuya nin’ iinkomo* that goes

*Zobuya nini iinkomo emathafeni ezizwe, ophola nini amanxeba, soyeka nini ukuzizonda. Zemka inkomo zethu zemka nondiva bethu, ndiva bethu bangcono kunawe, besho behlezi phezu kwakho.* (when will the cows return from the fields of foreign nationalities, when will the wounds heal, when will we stop hating ourselves, our cows are being washed away by those I hear, I hear them say they are better than you, saying this while they are sitting on top of you)

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7lOmVlgw1A>

This is a protest song, talking to black people in an attempt to awaken them to fight for their cows. What becomes clear here is that cows are representative of culture, and a rejection of culture results from self-hate, so the healing of the wounds would seem to start from loving ourselves and practicing our cultures with pride. In this sense, the people of Esihlengeni have not learnt to hate themselves as they are not colonised because they draw from a different epistemology that recognises those that have passed on and amongst the ancestors are people that have never encountered the colonisers and thus were never colonised.

#### 5.5.1 *Yemuk’inkomo kababa*

*Yemuk’inkomo kababa* (my father’s cow is being washed away), the war cry for amaZulu, was uttered at a first encounter with the whites. It would seem, from the war cry that for amaZulu, the cows, their fathers’ cows, was the most important resource to fight for. While the land question might be important, even back then, cows seem to have taken precedence over all other resources, as they are critically important to their

existence. It is interesting to note that the war cry, alludes to the fact that the cow, so important, so worth fighting for, belongs to the father. Indeed, this is a different epistemology, where people sacrifice their lives for their fathers' 'possessions'. This is a different epistemology from Descartes who doubts everything and Kant who sees courage and freedom in disconnecting from those who came before them and thus think for themselves. amaZulu seem to be moving from a different premise, that their fathers' way of life, rather than theirs, should be defended. Indeed, this draws from a different episteme, different from Descartes, of thinking self, amaZulu seem to be saying that they want to keep thinking that has been established already, and this thinking is worth fighting for, not their own will to think.

If we agree that, for amaZulu, historically, wars were fought over cows, it should make sense then to unpack the concept of cows according to them. Krige argues that:

Important as cattle are in the economic life of the tribe, they would never be held in such high regard or occupy the position they do in Zulu society, were it not for their enormous ritual value. Cattle and goats are not only the link between the ancestors and their living descendants but are the only means whereby the Zulu get into touch with the ancestral spirits to make known his wants or ask for blessings (1977: 94).

For Krige, cows and goats “are the only means whereby the Zulu get in touch with the ancestral spirits, make known his wants or ask for blessing”. If this is the case, it would seem logical therefore for cows to take priority in the hierarchy of needs because without them, there is no communication and therefore no protection, as Krige posits. The centrality of cows amongst the Zulu is also observed by Lombo, who writes, “cattle themselves were once at the centre of the Zulu life” (2017: 2). The response, from the government ‘to return land’ to the people – as I have shown in the earlier sections - is not informed by the logic of amaZulu. It is against that background that we should understand ubab’Zulu’s struggle for his cows. Bab’Zulu’s question can be understood in Simphiwe Dana’s song that asks, ‘when will the cows return from the fields of the foreign nationalities?’ The following question then becomes: what is the meaning of cows for amaZulu?

Krige’s argument is important in answering this question as he clearly points out in the quotation presented above that the importance of cows is not just economic but spiritual as they are a link to the ancestors. When I explained the funeral and the wedding, I

showed the involvement of the ancestors, supporting Koenane's claim that the ancestors are forever present because they are involved in all aspects of the events. That is why even when the newlyweds give birth to their first child, the child must *ishukelwe imbeleko*, which literally means: plaiting a goat-hide "blanket" used for carrying a child on a woman's back. In Zulu culture, this process is a ritual that requires the slaughtering of a goat to let the ancestors know about the child so that they can protect it. This highlights the constant presence of the ancestors who should be acknowledged at all times. This belief propels amaZulu to fight for their fathers' cows, in essence, their sense of being. The wars that they have historically engaged in can therefore be understood as wars to maintain their ways of knowing, ways of living, their difference, their refusal to be co-opted into the modern world as they have ways of their fathers that they believe in and that they feel they are doomed without. So, their struggle is the struggle to exist in their own way, not an economic struggle, as some of us who have been baptized in Western epistemology would posit.

Articulating the uniqueness of amaZulu, and the people of Esihlengeni in particular, is not to preach and seek to convert others into this epistemology but to give evidence of the existence of a different epistemology from the Western one. This is about advocating for co-existence of different epistemologies as all societies are the same, and thus capable of making sense of their world. This difference, which is fundamental, will make it difficult to forge coalitions, as I will argue in Chapter Six. If we take the position of difference to be at the beginning of human existence, then we must admit that each and every society will find what is important to it as informed by their cosmology and that can never be comprehended by those outside of it. The latter also means that our differences are ontological. Much of postcolonial theory, in so far as it fails to recognise this fact, and in its emphasis on Sameness – the concept of in-between by Bhabha for instance - silences other ways of knowing. Sameness is also at the heart of a lot of practical interventions that advocate for coalitions and alliances. But with this Sameness, one quickly realises that the standard is Western: what Westerners want, we should all want, and acquire, that we must first be Westernised. This is the problem with many initiatives, the society they aspire to is in actual fact a society made in an image of the West. For Simphiwe Dana, the need to create our society in the image of the West is a result of the wounds inflicted on us, the wounds that have not healed. She asks: when will these wounds heal? The response to Simphiwe Dana is that the wounds



in some communities is mitigated by their epistemology that they still uphold to this day. This question is however pertinent to us who are suffering from the spell of Western epistemology that is cast on us by politicisation, education, Christianisation, urbanisation and recently globalisation.

### 5.5.2 *Fathers' cows*

In the above section, I have argued that the insistence on cows can be understood as the insistence to keep the connection with the forefathers and the epistemology they upheld. In this section I am attempting to show the symbolic nature of the cows to understand the insistence to this way of knowing. Miriam Makeba asks how are we going to *lobola* if we let fathers' cows to go with the wind? This question is not just on *lobola* as money exchange as it is now believed, but as a way of life. According to umalume, there are three cows that are important for *lobola* and these are slaughtered in a manner that includes various members of society, including ancestors. On funerals, as important as the burial rituals are, the point is always to ensure that life in the community continues. The role of the *stokvel* is not very different from the initiatives of the government that are aimed at alleviating poverty as per the counsellor. I argue that these interventions are rooted from a different logic that separates economy from cultural practices. While the aims are good at the surface, I argue that they are ultimately detrimental to the community of Esihlengeni who draws from a different epistemology that privileges life in its totality.

What is intriguing is the fact that despite the dominance and aggression of the capitalist system, the people of Esihlengeni are still living through their belief system and have not been converted by the western way of life. Their insistence on cows and thus on practicing their belief system can be understood as a mode of resistance and thus provide us with an alternative to the modern world as Lugones (2010) argues. In this sense, they have not been conquered. Cabral points out that, "For as long as a section of the populace is able to have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation" (1974:12). The people of Esihlengeni know what they want, and they are living it, they do not have/need any representation and spokesperson. They have always insisted in fighting for their father's cows despite the many projects and initiatives that suggests otherwise. The question that follows is that what enables the people of Esihlengeni to continue in their belief system despite the 'thorough' process of

colonisation that in South African was followed by the apartheid system which attempted to completely wipe off their humanity? A process Cabral describes as, “Indeed, to dominate a nation by force of arms is, above all, to take up arms to destroy or at least, to neutralize and paralyze its culture” (ibid). But a culture that infuses the physical and the metaphysical is difficult to conquer unless you convert its people into a different belief system such that they reject their belief system, the mission of the missionaries that failed in some communities. For as long as a people have not lost their belief system, they cannot be defeated. The people of Esihlengeni, despite the misfortunes they have experienced, they are still adamant in their belief, in their forefather’s way of life, for they believe they have fought for them and they will continue to fight for them for as long as they uphold their culture and its teachings.

### *5.5.3 From a different epistemology*

Seemingly, the SFC women have a different understanding of the economy to the mainstream one, as posited by Adam Smith, whose starting point was an individual disconnected from the collective whole. It would seem that the women of Esihlengeni, just like the women from the BHHBS, are concerned with different things other than self-enrichment, as Smith would suggest. The people of Esihlengeni may seem to have suffered a number of defeats as according to the information I found in museums. For one, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838 they lost the battle of Encome in what is commonly known as the Battle of Blood River, as it is believed that the river turned into blood, a story disputed in another part of the museum. Then there is the second defeat that occurred on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879 the battle of Isandlwana (See section 3.4.2 and 4.1.3 where I discuss information from these museums). This might seem like amaZulu were totally defeated from the two wars and have lost everything including their culture and ways of knowing.

It is surprising, against this backdrop, that the people of Esihlengeni are still connected to a sense of who they are and are still insisting on their way of life. When I first arrived at Esihlengeni I saw pathologies and devastation everywhere because I had bought into the myth of the omnipresence of the capitalist system that penetrates every society and is inescapable. Having visited the museums, this belief was reinforced, and I could not believe that people could survive such defeat; as such in my eyes they were mere victims and thus could not provide me with any knowledge but just coping strategies

and mechanisms. This belief compelled me to commit to writing a radical thesis that will liberate the powerless victims of Esihlengeni, who have not read the books that I have read. When in the field, spending a lot of time with my uncles, I started wondering about all the attempts that have been made and have failed. Attempts to change the conditions of the people of Esihlengeni and help them achieve progress as defined in Western terms. I was troubled by what Maldonado-Torres sees “as the liberal temporality of slow to no change in the name of order” (2016: 4). But I started doubting the convictions I had of progress, the civilization that could not solve its own problems (Césaire 1972 [1952]). This doubt on the convictions I had when I first arrived in the field allowed me to open up to other possible ways of understanding the world. This opening up enabled me to understand the story of ubab’Zulu anew, and this story became a breakthrough that led me to hear what the people of Esihlengeni were on about on the importance of cows. I also came to appreciate that what is happening in Esihlengeni is not a universal story but the story of that particular community.

The undying spirit of the people of Esihlengeni cannot be understood without delving into their epistemology. This is an epistemology that incorporates both the visible and the invisible. It is an epistemology that is based on a belief in the ever-presence of the ancestors. The people of Esihlengeni, in so far as they are grounded in this epistemology, they live their daily lives guided and informed by the people who have never had any contact with Westerners and have no understanding of their power, as they have never experienced it. These are the people who strengthen them and thus provide them with the knowledge that is unimaginable among the colonisers and the colonised – the educated, Christianised, politicised and urbanised – those who believe in the inescapable modern world and thus refuse to acknowledge the contradictions that exist in communities such as in Esihlengeni, where they have funerals in the modern way but continue with the rituals as per their fathers’ teachings. In this sense, if the people of Esihlengeni are oppressed in anyway, their solution would never come from the very epistemology that has oppressed them. As Sankara observed, “[t]here can only be salvation for our people if we radically turn our backs on all the models the charlatans have tried to sell us for some 20 years” (1988: 3). Not only that the culture of Esihlengeni is alive, but it provides us with a different understanding of human existence that privileges life in its totality. According to Lombo, “This practice is unknown in capitalistic and individualistic culture” (2017: 47).

The endogeneity approach is critical in studying communities like Esihlengeni as it eliminates the disease of just one approach, Western epistemology, which deprives us of other knowledges that promotes life in its fullest. Endogeneity allowed me to hear the people of Esihlengeni when they say: *Yemuk' inkomo kababa* - the war cry expressed at their first encounter with their colonisers. To this day the cry remains as real in Esihlengeni as the community is still involved in a battle to retain the father's cows.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The case of Esihlengeni presents us with evidence of a constrained and weak community, weakened by the devastating experience of a neo-liberal economy. This situation has left the community disoriented and *stokvels* become just another concept imposed on them. *Stokvels* worsen community members' difficult conditions rather than better them, as suggested by many scholars that have studied *stokvels*. In this chapter, after paying attention to the devastating effects of capitalism while trying to show the possible economic system built on an African worldview, which is different from the worldviews upheld by the proponents of the human economy, I argue that an understanding of economy in Esihlengeni is not separate from other spheres of life, concerned with the continuity of life, hence the insistence on cows. I suggest that a better economic approach will have to delink from the liberal economic approach at an epistemological level. Once delinked, we can as Africans, begin to understand ourselves from our culture and concrete experiences. In order for this to work, we will need intellectuals who are detached from Western ideologies so that they are able to create concepts that will assist us to better understand communities different from Western communities. When we understand communities in their own accord we will be able to produce knowledge that will enable people To Be! The following chapter focuses on the gender issues as observed from the field and seeks to provide a different lens to understand gender, a perspective grounded in the community's point of view.

## Chapter 6

### Thinking from Esihlengeni: Completing the gender discourse

*[S]omebody/anybody sing a Black girl's song, bring her out, to know herself, to know you, but sing her rhythms carin/struggle/hard times, sing her of life, she's been dead so long, closed in silence so long, she doesn't know sound of her voice, her infinite beauty, she's half-notes shattered. Without rhythm/no tune, sing her sighs, sing the song of her possibilities, sing a righteous gospel, let her be born, let her be born, and handled warmly. Poem by Ntozakhe Shange*

#### 6. Introduction

This chapter focuses on *stokvels* from a gendered perspective. It starts by looking at the structure of the household in Esihlengeni in order to understand how gender politics play themselves out in light of the assertion made by some studies that *stokvels* are more a form of insurance than of savings; they are a support system (Buijs 2002). This study reveals the limitation of the gender discourse in the South African context, largely informed by feminist theory; the theory which universalises the oppression of women while failing to deal with the nuances presented by historical accounts and the cosmological worldview of the women of Esihlengeni, among others. To make this argument explicit, I use the play: *The scream of the dying moon*, which assists in contextualising the findings from Esihlengeni within the broader South African politics. The analysis shows that the *stokvel* women are not just concerned about the material needs that *stokvel* provide for but are even more concerned about the protection of and continuity of life.

#### 6.1 The structure of the households at Esihlengeni

As already shown in Chapter Three, Esihlengeni is a village where a lot of households have sustained themselves through the migrant labour system characterised by young men leaving the village for work and women remaining behind to raise children. The return of many males, because of lack of employment in the cities, has changed the structure of many families at Esihlengeni. Of all the women that took part in the study, only three had husbands that were away, the rest lived with their husbands. The notion of absent fathers is taking a different shape as men are now present in the village. They are often seen in the fields but are unable to provide for their families because they are unemployed. So in some sense, while men are a feature of the community, it can be

argued that they are 'absent'. The community still upholds traditional values such as polygamous families, and all the women with unemployed husbands still lived with their in-laws resulting in multigenerational homesteads. However, there is also the sense of newness as there is an idea of nuclear families, which is not inherent in the culture of Esihlengeni. For example, the three women that had employed husbands also lived in their own households consisting of only them, their children and their husbands (when they were home for holidays)<sup>52</sup>.

### 6.1.1 *The inescapable extended families*

As already discussed in the previous chapter, all the women that were part of the *stokvel* group were married. Of the twenty-one women that were a part of the study, only three of them had their own homes. In the focus group, they mentioned that one of the challenges that the *stokvel* brings is the fact that it singles out their 'immediate' family while most of them still live with their extended families. As one said:

*kusho ukuthi izingane zo-anti azivikelekile uma kungavele okuthile siyobukwa kabi ngoba phela kuyaziwa ukuthi sizadlala isitokfela*

(it means that our sister-in-law's children are not protected, if anything should happen to them, it will create a serious tension because they know that we are part of the *stokvel*).

Even though this has not happened in this *stokvel*, because it is fairly new, members were anticipating the potential tension that could arise in the event that those who are not covered by the *stokvel* should die. In other words, the *stokvel* has solved some of their problems but there is a possibility that it will create new ones. The fact that the *stokvel* does not cover extended family members presented a problem to the worldview of the people of Esihlengeni because their understanding of family is fundamentally different from how it is conceived in the west. For instance, the *stokvel's* idea of family as 'nuclear family' does not resonate with the community's one where one's sister's child is one's child rather than one's relative.

What came out though from the *stokvel* women was that they did not want to change the *stokvel* rules as they made perfect sense to them. Their frustration was that they were unable to leave their in-laws and start their own homes where they could be fully

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<sup>52</sup> This is the community that draws from the tradition that believes that it takes a village to raise a child, so the child does not belong to the mother and the father but to the village.

women and be able to make their own rules. As it did not matter how grown they were, as long as they lived with the mother in laws they remain children – the same is true even with their husbands who remain perpetual children in the presence of their fathers. One of the *stokvel* women during the focus group discussion said:

*uMankosi ungcono ngoba unomuzi wakhe, thina sisenkingeni ngoba sisahlala nomamezala, ayikho into esingayisho*

(umaNkosi referring to another *stokvel* member, is better because she has her house, unlike us who are still staying with our mothers-in-law we have no voice).

However, for *stokvel* women, having their own homes was also difficult as there was a prerequisite that was almost impossible to fulfil given the conditions of the community – to have *isibaya* (a kraal) which cannot exist without cows. According to the women of Esihlengeni, *isibaya* was a prerequisite for the home. While there are many villages that are fairly new without *izibaya* (a kraal in plural), *stokvel* women seem to be reluctant to follow that trend and cited problems that could emanate from being away from the extended family such as the support system that their extended family provide when they have to do some errands. Others also mentioned the fact that their homes will not have dignity because their men are not employed

So, having *isibaya* was important because even if the husband was not employed, if he had *isibaya* he could still be a dignified man because he would be able to fulfil his responsibility as explained in the previous chapter. The second challenge of having homes that did not have *isibaya* was that, what would happen “*uma kuvela umkhuhlane*” (when health problems arise) focus group women said this simultaneously. *Umkhuhlane*, literally means flu/colds, but is also used to refer to a serious illness and death. Lombo, citing Ngubane (1986) explains this as follows:

the Zulu people understood that illness was a sign that the cultural life of the ill person was not in accord with the balance that ancestors expected. Various ethnologists agree that for the Zulu people, this imbalance, could cause or lead to the “ancestral vengeance” which could result in illnesses, death of cows and people or continuous bad crops. The Zulu people call it, “*idlozi lisifulathele*” meaning “ancestors have their backs turned to us” (2017: 35).

For the first aspect of *umkhuhlane*, which is flu/colds, the cows will help because cows’ milk is also used to treat colds. The second aspect of *umkhuhlane*, which could be serious illness a cow can be slaughtered as a means to *ukushweleza* (ask for forgiveness

from the ancestors for any wrong doing on their part that might not have realised that angered them such that turn their back against them to allow the unexplainable illness or death where cows are used to perform all the necessary rituals so that the deceased can reach his/her final destination and thus join the ancestors where he/she will be in a position to protect the living beings, as explained in Chapter Five<sup>53</sup>. While women could make ends meet, like build houses, to acquire cows was difficult as they could not inherit them because their fathers-in-law have, for the most part, lost their cows, like in the case of ubab'Zulu, and cannot even purchase them because their husbands are unemployed. In this sense, the *stokvel* does not address the fundamental challenge of having cows that will grant women their full womanhood and ensure protection that will prevent bad luck.

### 6.1.2 Forged nuclear family

I could unfortunately not follow the three women from the *stokvel* group that lived with their nuclear family home to understand how nuclear families find expression in this community. My experience with uThandi - whom I spent a lot of time with - became a window through which I got an understanding of the complications of the 'nuclear' families. UThandi and her husband both have children from previous relationships/marriages as well as their own. The husband's children live with their mother, as for Thandi's son, it is not clear where he stays as he does not seem to have a bedroom in their house. The house has three bedrooms – their bedroom, their daughters and the third was said to be the visitor's bedroom. While her husband's children have bedrooms in their mother's house, her son does not. I never asked why, but there is a tradition that says a child born out of wedlock belongs to the grandparents from the mother's side, so I am not sure if that was the reason that his son could not be part of her new family<sup>54</sup>. The point I am making here is that even though her family

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<sup>53</sup> That having cows enable a man to have good relations with the people he is living with because should *imfuyo* (livestock) and his children ruin other people's belongings – in today's context it includes even if a boy impregnates a girl out of wedlock - he will be able to pay damages known as *ukuhlawula*. Second to this, cows allow one to be in good terms with the living-dead through performing necessary rituals. And lastly, cows enable a man to be in good terms with the unborn by being able to live them the inheritance. It is in this context that *ukusisela* (explained in Chapter Two) was important, not just as an economic system but as a means to help others to fulfil their obligations to do right.

<sup>54</sup> According to my uncle, the child that is born out of wedlock becomes the child of the grandparents and if one parent gets married they leave the child behind to protect the marriage. However, there are rituals that can be performed if one of the parents wants to take the child with, but for my uncle, is to always better to leave the child behind. It would seem that uThandi took my uncle's view to leave her eldest son with her parents.



looks like a ‘nuclear’ family, it is not and cannot be nuclear in a true sense of the West conception of nuclear family. While Thandi’s family setting was presented as a nuclear family, but it was informed by traditional values and belief systems as I will show below.

Traditional values as argued in Chapter Five show that men should be protectors of their families and cows are a means to fulfil this role. It would seem therefore that in urban areas, where there are no cows, this role is expressed in monetary values where a man must be seen as being able to provide for his family. For instance, uThandi owns and runs a business. However, none of her friends and clients know that she owns the business. Even some of the family members do not know this. I also did not know until she became my research participant and I started probing. The assumption is that it is the husband that owns the business. More so because the business is named after her husband’s surname. If I did not do the research, I would never have known that she owns it and that she actually started it and her husband joined her, not the other way around. When I asked her why she did not tell people that she owns the business, she said she did not want people to take advantage of her. It would seem that Thandi decided to give all the ‘authority’ to her husband by giving her business her husband’s name. This could be to give an impression of having a husband that has *isibaya* and can be ‘in-charge’ which came with some kind of respect from the community. Hence the *stokvel* women wanted their men to find employment so that in addition to the cows, they can bring dignity to their homes as they said:

*ayikho into iqeda isithunzi somuzi njengendoda engasebenzi* (there is nothing that takes away the dignity of the family like an unemployed man).

The government’s endeavour to empower women (as shown in Chapter Three on the economic organisation of Esihlengeni) seem to be futile in a context where women yearn for strong men that will give them dignity and protection.

While it might seem that there are nuclear families where men are providers, in the case of uThandi it would seem that this nuclear family is forged and as such it is not real. But more importantly, this giving away of ‘authority’ to men should be read at another level where women are insisting that men should be in a position to protect their families as part of the belief system. In Chapter Five it became evident that the role of men as protectors who must provide cows that are a means to communicate with the

ancestors is inescapable. So, the empowerment of women that does factor in this responsibility of men is separating the needs that in some communities are inseparable.

### 6.1.3 Family values

The focus of the study was on *stokvel* women in an attempt to understand the reasons why most women would be interested in *stokvels*. However, because of how my uncles understood my reasons for coming to Esihlengeni, they would insist that I spend time with them. As a result, I ended up spending a lot of time with Boy (my uncle's assistant) because when I had come for my participant observation at my uncle's house, I was always the only female, as my aunt would just come to greet and disappear, and granddaughters would come only to bring us tea or food and again disappear. I never got to know them and what they do exactly. In some instances, this was a bit uncomfortable to be surrounded by older men, more so because I was interested in *stokvels* that are run by women, but this gave me an opportunity to make sense of family values as posited in the public discourse. What I could gather from my conversations with umalume omncane was that two of his daughters were not staying at home because one of them was working as a nurse at Benedictine hospital in KwaNongoma – a nearby village - and the youngest one was at the university in Durban – one of the cities in KwaZulu-Natal province - where she was pursuing her teacher's degree. The discussions that are centred around women are often fuelled by the belief that women are always in less fortunate situation as compared to their male counterparts a point that my uncle's family dynamics dispute.

In my pursuit to understand *stokvels*, I was also interested in understanding how the gendered inequalities played themselves and the role, if any, that families played in aggravating or mitigating these challenges. In the interviews with women, these values did not come out clearly as the emphasis was on the unemployed men who were unable to fulfil their roles of providing cows. It becomes difficult to understand how these roles are passed on or are learnt by members of the community in a pragmatic manner. Participant observation at my uncle's house provided an opportunity to make sense of the gendered roles that are normally perceived as oppressive towards women in the public domain by spending a lot of time with Boy. Boy is an eldest son of umalume omncane from his second wife; he was 28-year-old, unmarried and did not have any

children. He had never worked except as an assistant to his father. He also did not finish school and I never got to know the reason for this.

Spending time with Boy made me wonder about the privileges that are associated with men. Boy did not possess any power; this could be said about many men in Esihlengeni who were unemployed and had no prospects of a decent employment as the only option would be to work in forestry farming and earn a salary that would not allow them to buy cows. In Esihlengeni, the power and the privileges of men remained elusive and this challenged the claim that patriarchy is universal, as it will be shown in subsequent sections. It is normally argued that boys are taught or learn to be patriarchal from their homes. However, spending time at my uncle's house it was not clear in what ways was Boy learning to dominate women from my uncle without access to material resources. It would seem that the emphasis on domination of men undermines the fact that patriarchy is also transmitted through material privileges that men have. In the absence of these material privileges it becomes difficult for men to exercise what they have been taught or learned (that is if they are taught to dominate women as this cannot be assumed). Even if Boy could have learnt the idea of being powerful but without cows, his chances of finding a wife to exercise his power were minimal as women preferred men with prospects of having cows such that they are able to build them homes, that then allow them to be fully women. It seems that in Esihlengeni, even the physical power is muted by the lack of material power, as I did not witness any domestic violence throughout my stay in the field<sup>55</sup>.

## **6.2. Grounding the discussion**

I think it is important that before I begin with the discussion of the findings in this chapter that I put some propositions and theoretical groundings that the chapter is using to analyse the findings. In Chapter One section 1.1, I posited that this study is not interested in the how and what of *stokvels*, but on the LOGIC of *stokvels*. In other words, it is not just about what people say, but more about what people do in relation to their epistemological framework. As such, the chapter uses the data that was mainly

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<sup>55</sup> Which might sound very strange given the statistic of domestic violence in South Africa. But this is the truth of this research, there could be a number of reasons why I did not witness any violence, that is neither here nor there, the fact is that I did not witness any violence. It should be noted though that I did not stay in every participants' home to see what happens behind closed doors.

collected from participant observation and connect it with 1) traditional values of the community of Esihlengeni presented in Chapter Four and 2) literature from the colonised scholars in general and African scholars in particular that have advocated for other ways of knowing outside of Western epistemology. More importantly, I locate these findings within the South African politics to show the sinister of gender politics. So, the reader has to bear in mind that I read gender using the traditional values to reveal the coexistence of different epistemologies, the contradictions of life and the continuity of cultural belief system.

Secondly, I propose that the reader allows me to use the concept of gender from a Western perspective (that I defined in Chapter One, p. 4) even though I aim to show that in some societies gender does not exist, if it does, it is not in a hierarchical manner but is flattened and thus gendered roles do not carry any privileges but are rather complementary. While I use the concept of gender, I am taking into account the colonial difference and the cosmological worldview of the community of Esihlengeni. This chapter thus attempts to reveal “the unnamed, [and is] the exposure of whiteness masquerading as universal... [it is] examining how white dominance is rationalized, legitimized and made ostensibly normal and natural” (Frankenburg 1997: 3), by using the everyday experiences of the women of Esihlengeni.

### *6.2.1 Gender as a social construct*

To understand the women of Esihlengeni and what they are going through requires us to first understand the concept of gender. Understanding gender is pertinent because gender as we know it is a cornerstone of family units and when family is attacked, it destabilizes communities and society at large, as Nzegwu argues,

[f]amily destabilization attacks the very foundation of societies... greater attention should, therefore be devoted to understanding the sources of this destabilization as well as the impact of contemporary global policies and adopted values of families and how these, in turn, feed social pathologies that are an anathema to good governance” (2012: 5).

Some African scholars such as Amadiume, (1987), Oyěwùmí, (1997) and Nzegwu (2012) have studied gender and have argued against its universalisation. Oyěwùmí defines gender as a social construct. According to her, gender is

[a]n institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals [based on their body-type], orders the social processes of everyday life, and is built into major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics (1997: 23).

She further argues that gender has been universalised by imperialism which injects Western problems where they do not exist, as such; gender categories are not natural and universal (Oyěwùmí 1997; 2005; 2016). This argument is supported by Wilkinson who argues that, “[g]ender in any case is a term coined precisely to show that... although nature have made me female, nurture has ensured that I have become a woman” (2002: 354)<sup>56</sup>. The idea that gender is cultural and sex is natural and thus sex precedes gender has been debated as Lugones posits, “More contemporary analysis has introduced arguments for the claim that gender construct sex” (2010: 744) and Judith Butler (2004) is one of the proponents of such argument, however, the argument is still within Western epistemology that portrays women as individuals separate from a community. And also, Butler (2004) prefers to define gender as a norm rather than a social construct, which is secondary to construction.

To understand the women of Esihlengeni, I question the idea of gender as universal by attempting to show its localisation in Esihlengeni. In Esihlengeni, gender is understood differently. For example, the women there feel obliged to provide materially, very different from how women in the West think. Lugones states:

I move to read the social from the cosmologies that informs it, rather than beginning with a gendered reading of cosmologies informing and constituting perception, motility, embodiment, and relation (Lugones 2010: 749).

When drawing from a different cosmology, gender seems to mean something other than what it means elsewhere. To assume gender as a universal concept in the community like Esihlengeni is to deny the members their own difference – that according to Lugones, enables one “to unveil what is obscure” (2010: 747). Lugones argues that gender discourse “hides the resister as fully informed as a native of communities under

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<sup>56</sup> In fact, in African languages when you try to explain gender and sex it becomes nonsensical because there is no difference between gender and sex, in isiZulu they are both referred to as *ubulili*. Amadiume (1987) argues that the fact that many African languages do not have gender distinctions and thus not necessarily gendered. The insistence of using these concepts in African communities has tended to alienate researchers from communities, as members of the community often cannot grasp the logic of researchers. This could be the reason why there is a belief in many black communities that once you get too educated you become mad because I think, educated blacks start using concepts that do not exist in communities instead of challenging those concepts.

cataclysmic attack” (ibid). In other words, if we use gender as a universal concept that also mean women everywhere are dominated, then the women of Esihlengeni cannot be understood as resisting the continuing oppression from the system but are more like victims of universal “patriarchy’ which will forever remain elusive as it is everywhere and has always been there. Drawing from Lugones, we should be able to argue that Siyakhula Funeral Club (SFC) women are not just victims of the Western system but are active in defining themselves and their roles, as they are resisters of the foreign concepts imposed on them but that fail to resonate with their epistemic framework. The women of Esihlengeni are constructing gender outside of its Western definitions that position women as weak and provided for, by actively responding to their everyday challenges, which requires them to provide for their families as their male-counterparts are unemployed. In fact, they are like the women during slavery: “the slave system defined black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned” (Davies 1983: 5).

The construction continues as life is in motion such that identities are shifting to a point where women have to take responsibilities usually associated with men. This is abnormal according to the Western construction of gender where women are supposedly weak and in need of being taken care of. Supporting Davies, Weiss (1995) argues that during colonialism Black women were masculinised and turned to subhuman women. The latter shows that gender is not a fixed identity as it is defined by roles each gender has to perform at a particular time. But this also means that gender is fluid as it is open to influences. For Oyěwùmí, the current tendency at universality in relation to gender is linked to “The UN Women's Decade ... because it institutionalized and systematized on a worldwide basis a particular Western way of viewing the human body. Colonization set this process in motion” (1997: 177). As part of decolonisation it would seem that this concept in the colonised world need to be reviewed as it is clear that it is not inherent in all societies but is located in particular contexts.

### *6.2.2 Historicising patriarchy*

In the previous sections, I have argued that gender is a construction, as such patriarchy cannot be universal. We must submit that patriarchy emerges after the construction of

gender because it would not make sense for the opposite to happen<sup>57</sup>. Understanding that patriarchy is situated is important and thus it needs to be historicised. In this particular case of Esihlengeni, if we are to talk of patriarchy, then we will have to locate it, not just in space but also in time. We will have to identify its point of inception, rather than assume it has always been there. The case of Esihlengeni should also help us to better historicise gender relations and patriarchy such that we are able to imagine a different society devoid of the assumed male domination that the feminist envy and thus aspire to, hence their call for equality. It would seem there is no one size fits all when it comes to gender because societies are responding to different circumstances differently. Oyëwùmí emphasises this point,

If gender is a social construction, then we must examine the various cultural/architectural sites where it was constructed, and we must acknowledge that variously located actors (aggregates, groups, interested parties) were part of the construction. We must further acknowledge that if gender is a social construction, then there was a specific time (in different cultural/architectural sites) when it was "constructed" and therefore a time before which it was not. Thus, gender, being a social construction, is also a historical and cultural phenomenon (1997: 10).

Indeed, the fact that we speak of gender as a constructed phenomenon suggests that there was a time when it was not there. To see patriarchy everywhere and in all communities is to essentially render it natural. But if it was so universal then feminist theorists would not engage in such a struggle. We cannot fight for breathing of a different substance other than oxygen, for we have not found any society that breathe a different kind of air to believe that oxygen is not natural and is not good air to breath.

The argument that universalises patriarchy falls short at many levels as I have already argued that the only reason we resist something it is because we believe it is not natural and we know that it is not natural because we have learnt that it does not exist in some spaces in time. In this sense, it becomes logical then to historicise what we perceive as the problem and is not natural. The problem of not historicising and contextualising patriarchy perpetuates the very idea of patriarchy we are trying to undermine because we give it a status that it does not deserve, of being everywhere. Magubane (2010)

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<sup>57</sup> For me, it makes sense that we start by giving roles and based on those roles we claim domination, without these roles, domination cannot be justified. With this logic, I would imagine that gender construction precedes patriarchy.

warns us of the unintended consequences of feminist scholars who, when writing about Sarah Baartman, cast her life in narrowly gender terms when in actual fact Sarah Baartman was objectified because of her race. The point of the exhibitions on Sarah Baartman was to show that black people were different and biologically inferior to white people, in the service of colonialism. Sarah Baartman was never targeted as a black woman per se but as a black person. This was in line with the science of the time that was trying to prove the biological difference and inferiority of the Other. Hence the skull of the white male Irish that was paraded at the time to prove that the Irish were inferior. Clearly, this was not a gender issue but a race issue<sup>58</sup>. Magubane argues that the insistence of feminists on universalism is meant to hide race, she writes,

Rather, the ways in which she has been constructed as a theoretical object highlight the inherent dangers in the deployment of any theory without due attention to historical specificity. In particular, it points to the problems that occur when race and gender are universalized and, thus, reified (Magubane 2010: 60).

Historicising becomes important because it will help us not to repeat the unjust past such as the colonial project. Thus, contextualising arguments is critical, a journey that, according to Adésinà, shows

the importance of historical sociology; one that goes back to before late colonialism and how Indo-European influences profoundly reshaped many African societies—a process that is ongoing (2010: 14).

The case of Sarah Baartman reveals another important issue regarding identities that they are fluid. She is, of late, defined as a Khoi, an identity which is, by some strange logic often spoken as separate from that of black people. Indeed, we have not always been black; Khoisan, Nguni (Zulus, Xhosas, Ndebeles, Swazis), Sothos, Tswanas, Pedis, Tsongas, Vendas, Afrikaners and South Africans<sup>59</sup>. What does this say therefore about the fixation of gender as an identity? It would seem that historicising patriarchy will reveal the identities much different from the identities that we see today, maybe

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<sup>58</sup> This corrupted story of Sarah Baartman continues to be corrupted even on the idea of her race. In South African politics, Sarah is now identified as a Khoisan an identity that was not given to her when she was abducted. This is a problem that Trouillot (1995) identifies as imposing the present to the past.

<sup>59</sup> It is important to mention that even though these identities are an invention, they have become real as they are now lived. For instance, in the white supremacist world, I cannot deny my blackness as I am treated as such and my experiences of being rejected in the world are real. But knowing that they are not natural enables me to continue the struggle for a better world that will not reject any human beings.



the identity of a white woman in power, we do not know, and we will never know unless we attempt to excavate the past, in our own terms.

Feminists should learn from Levi-Strauss (1967) who argues that people need to go outside of themselves in order to understand themselves. The inability of Western thinkers to understand that there are societies where patriarchy does not exist, which should strengthen their argument, is absurd. I see this refusal as a refusal to go beyond the enlightenment project as argued in Chapter One (section 1.2.2). If we then agree that gender is a construct, historicising it becomes important and to know what was there before the construction and this is what African scholars such as Amadiume (1987) and Oyěwùmí (1997) have tried to do. The feminists have to do the same.

### *6.2.3 Limitation of the feminist theory*

The starting point here is that all feminist theories and feminisms are a response to the domination of one gender over the other. There is also an assumption that gender domination is EVERYWHERE with variations of course. My argument, however, is that this is not true to all communities as already shown that there are ontological differences rooted in cosmological worldviews to factor in. As also shown in section 6.1.1 that the case of Esihlengeni presents a peculiar situation where women are not oppressed by their male counterparts but by an invisible system, which they cannot even articulate. The men at Esihlengeni are devastated and do not have the means to oppress even if they wanted to, but also, they do not have the means to fulfil their role as men – to protect their women which renders them useless. The pertinent question becomes, in the absence of domination of men, how then do we understand gender in Esihlengeni? For some, the answer would be obvious: through feminism, because somehow feminism has presented itself as the omnipotent theory to understand gender discourse, it can just be tweaked to fit all situations.

The concepts of feminism, just like patriarchy, are concepts that cannot be uncritically accepted. Nzegwu raises an important point regarding feminism

Feminism, a priori, injects patriarchy and the category of gender into cultures because its underlying standpoint presupposes the existence of unequal relations of power between males and females... Once the feminist methodology is applied the society is assumed

to privilege male viewpoint and concerns, and any instances of sex difference will automatically appear as instances of female subjugation (Nzegwu 2012:10).

Using gender as a category requires one to use mainstream feminist theory. While feminism contributed towards exposing sexism in Western societies, it must be emphasised that it was speaking for Western women who wanted inclusion into a system that excluded them. For the situation such as Esihlengeni, feminism becomes highly problematic because it hides other forms of oppressions by only seeing gender oppression over and above all other forms of oppression because, for it, patriarchy is the ultimate enemy.

It is in this context that we begin to understand the “insistence on using the white man as a model of freedom and white male privilege as the ideal that should inform social transformation [that] ignores the fact that white privilege, is a pathology” (Oyěwùmí 2016: 220). Feminism is not concerned with the colonised but with acquiring the full status of humanness – white man privilege within the capitalist system: a pathology – which is a highly problematic stance on the part of feminism to demand inclusion in an oppressive system rather than its eradication. In this sense, feminism becomes as colonising as capitalism because it universalises patriarchy such that it naturalises it. Feminism should rather be concerned with domination because to pursue equality with men while ignoring domination, can only entrench other forms of inequalities. For example, the ascendancy of white women to the status of their white male counterparts can only mean that they are the new ultimate oppressors, dominating other groups, like black people. Feminist theory is a double-edged sword that gives an illusion that it is challenging the system while curbing radical initiative by deviating all its initiatives to the vanquishing of patriarchy not domination of one group over another. It does this by hiding the white supremacist order – capitalism – that gives birth to patriarchy in the first place. In Lorde’s analysis, one can begin to interpret feminism “as an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concerns” (2007: 3), because clearly, in the colonised, patriarchy is not the only, or even, the main concern.

To keep the oppressed occupied with the master’s concern: gender, feminism derives a new strategy that includes other forms of domination to respond to discomfort from the colonised groups. This is coined as intersectionality that for Crenshaw is an experience

that “is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (1989: 140). She further suggests that “any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (ibid). This however, still assumes that black women are the ultimate victims by flattening all forms of domination. By doing so, this fails to show that race in the white supremacist world is an organising principle that aggravates or mitigates all forms of domination (Grosfoguel 2012). Secondly, this does not account for gender-lessness in the oppressed communities where oppressed men are stripped of all privileges. In such communities, women cannot aspire to any form of domination but justice.

Feminism therefore is a diversion from real problems faced by the colonised. Even though it is evident that feminist theory is not applicable in the absence of patriarchy, it will insist on its relevance by inserting itself. As Wilkinson does by claiming that “[f]eminist views, after all, are not that different from African humanist communitarianism with its emphasis on relationships and the welfare of the group over-riding individual glory and honour” (2002: 358). While this is true it is not a complete truth, as I have shown in Chapter Two where I discussed the concept of *ubuntu*. At the centre of *ubuntu* is justice, hence the saying *ikhotha eyikhothayo, engayikhothi iyayikhahlela* (the cow licks one that licks it, the one that does not gets kicked) and: *izandla ziyagezana* (hands wash each other) were used to emphasise centrality of reciprocity in the concept of *Ubuntu*. Which means failing to abide by this philosophy of *ubuntu* has consequences, something that is normally hidden in the appropriation of the concept of *ubuntu* in the political arena. What is central to the African humanist is not just “the welfare of the group over-riding individual glory and honour” but it is justice that gives people their full human status where they can determine their freedom, by not being spoken for. As such, the women of Esihlengeni have different aspirations, theirs is not to occupy the position of power like their male counterparts: 1) because their male counterparts are equally as oppressed and 2) because they draw from a different cosmology that encourages complementary roles that are not hierarchical as I will show in the subsequent sections.

### **6.3 The gendered nature of the SFC**

My point of departure was women only *stokvel* in an attempt to understand the gender dynamics in the community. When I proposed the study, gender was one of the concepts

I intended to pay attention to, as literature on *stokvels* had emphasised the gendered aspect of them. Authors such as Matuku, & Kaseke, (2014); Arko-Acheamfour, (2012); Moliea, (2010); Buijs, (2002); and Verhoef, (2001), to list a few, have argued that women are at the centre of *stokvels* because of the role they play in their families, and *stokvels* enable them to stretch their little money and afford them with an opportunity to provide for their families. The literature on *stokvels* supports the statistics on gender that have argued that women are the ultimate bearers of poverty. According to Armstrong, Lekezwa & Siebrits “women become *de facto* heads of household” (2008: 18), and “the poverty rate among female-headed households was 60% compared with 31% for male-headed households” (1998: 3). However, as Oyěwùmí cautions us that “it is not the statistic that constitutes evidence for postulating the male privilege worldview; rather it is the worldview of the researcher that in the first place led to constituting knowledge in the form of gendered statistics” (2016: 19)<sup>60</sup>. Based on these statistics, it would seem that women are forced to come up with strategies to mitigate these harsh conditions. It is in this context that gender became one of the concepts that I consistently had in mind to help read my data. Especially that the harsh conditions that women are faced with are violent and presumably require urgent interventions.

### 6.3.1 *Stokvels in the ever-changing environment*

In Chapter Five I argued that *stokvels* do allow women to perform their roles, to be able to provide during funerals. In this chapter, women expose the limitations of the *stokvel* as it separates their role from their male counterparts. I argue that the groceries and

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<sup>60</sup> These statistics always have a crisis undertone implying that there is an urgent need to respond without questioning them. They are also followed by solutions that have a price tag which should be implemented without comparing these solutions with other ways of knowing. The fact that statistics are not neutral but depend on the agenda of the researcher (Oyěwùmí, 2016) is often ignored. We are not allowed to ask the reason WHY the statistics look in a certain way. The attempts to question them are always met with irritation by the proponents of the statistics. I argue this against backdrop of the “AIDS crisis” era in South Africa where there was an outrage against President Mbeki’s response towards the ARVs. This is a classic example of how statistics were used as evidence to purchase solutions without questioning them. I know that this is probably a simplification of a multifaceted issue as I do not have evidence to dispute the reports that were saying three hundred thousand people had died because of AIDS. But what I am bringing here is the critical issue that is often ignored, for example, in the case of AIDS the role of the pharmaceutical companies who had vested interest in saving lives were funding researches that produced some of those statistics. Especially that these pharmaceutical companies were providing these ARVs at a very exorbitant price with no offer of donating ARVs to show their commitment in saving lives. If the outrage was centred on Mbeki refusing to accept free drugs the arguments would indeed be different. It would seem that while science claims that there is no absolute truth, there are sciences – that produce statistics - with absolute truth that should not be question but be accepted and applied.

coffins provisions address capitalist needs; needs that are not linked to traditional values of the community. When participating in the *stokvels*, women in Esihlengeni draw from their cosmology that teaches them to provide, to respond to the need that needs addressing during the funeral, though serving the need will ultimately serve the capitalist system. To understand the SFC women, we need to understand them in the past and present, that they have not forgotten their cosmological understanding of their womanhood. They use their cosmological knowledge to respond to new challenges brought by the capitalism, for an example in the funerals they provide food and the coffin. But these needs are not inherent to the community and are not linked to traditional values as, historically, the people had to provide for the family of the deceased and the need for the coffin was not there. Instead the most important need to address was that of acquiring a cow, as my uncle explained (see Chapter Five, section 5.1.4).

According to the members of the SFC, their *stokvel* is necessary because it enables them to buy food for the funeral. I must mention that I do not assume that being tasked with buying food is oppressive towards women as that would be premature. In the focus group, women expressed their gratitude on the ability to provide the necessities during the funeral. One woman said:

*Isiyakhula (the stokvel) isiza ngempela ngoba bekunzima kakhulu uma kunesifo ngoba bekungenala sikhalela khona kodwa manje sekungcono kakhulu*

(Siyakhula helps a lot because it was difficult when we were faced with the burial as there was nowhere to get help, but now, it is much better).

The responsibility of women to take care of their families is not peculiar to the women of Esihlengeni as scholars such as Amadiume (1987) have argued that women in African settings were not dependent on men as they had their own economic freedom and thus were able to provide. It would be thus misleading to read the *stokvel* within the gender discourse that assumes the role of women as oppressive per se. It becomes important therefore to understand the responsibility of the SFC women in context.

From the above argument, it becomes apparent that gender is not natural as women perform different roles depending on where they are. For instance, the provisions of food by the women of Esihlengeni in the funeral would seem to be drawing from traditional values that according to Amadiume (1987) were informed by women's

economic freedom, but today this role is informed by today's conditions. It is therefore true that gender is a construct, and the process of this construction is continuous as life conditions are forever changing. Just like all the identities, gender identities are not fixed but change over time. It becomes problematic to claim a permanent solution that respond to gender, which always assumes the dominance of men over women and do not take into account the ever-changing environment. The women of Esihlengeni are in the past and the present at the same time, - because are in the conditions designed by the advent of colonialism in a supposedly 'post' colonial environment. At Esihlengeni, they are in motion because they draw from a traditional value that says: *okungapheli kuyahlola* (as explained in Chapter Four) and the philosophy of *ubuntu* that is founded on becoming – being in motion. Solutions cannot be permanent and cannot come from outside but should emanate from this community. And more importantly, because women are faced with different challenges, their roles will be different and thus cannot be universal<sup>61</sup>. This is postcolonial at its best, that tries to embrace difference but cannot escape the Western foundations inherent in it of universalising the problems such that they find the space to provide SOLUTIONS, again, the biggest problem of the Western man as argued in Chapter One, that led to all the ills we see emanating from colonising that was understood by a Western man as a civilising project!

### 6.3.2 *The absence of patriarchy at Esihlengeni*

The main role of the SFC is to bury their family members, which is not a role that should be performed by women alone. In a patriarchal community where men dominate, it becomes difficult to imagine an autonomous entity such as SFC that allows women to access the money that their male counterparts do not have. How do we then understand patriarchy in the community like the community of Esihlengeni? As argued in the previous sections that the women of Esihlengeni seem to be drawing from a different epistemic framework and thus the domination of men is not evident in their community. Their men even in the current situation are unable to dominate women because of lack of material resources. Even if we decide to focus on 'reality'<sup>62</sup>, their

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<sup>61</sup> It is in this context that even the names of different feminist groups keep changing as they are faced with different challenges and thus struggle to find the name that can express their challenges faced by all 'women'. In her article, titled: *ufanele uqavile: Blackwomen, feminism and postcoloniality in Africa*, Pumla Gqola, tries very hard to show that in all the differences that women face, they have one common goal: to tramp patriarchy.

<sup>62</sup> In many instances studies are done as a response to a reality but the cause of that reality is rarely connected to the super structure. And also, the fact that reality is subjective is hardly acknowledged.

reality as observed in this study does not indicate any form of oppression and domination by men as already argued in section 6.1.3 that even physical domination was not observed in this community. Gender assumes the domination of men in all societies. However, at Esihlengeni, men proved to be weakened and thus not dominant. Interestingly, this lack of power by the men in Esihlengeni does not yield any positive result for the women of Esihlengeni but instead, they are left more vulnerable where they cannot even reach their full status of womanhood because of the connectedness with their male counterparts, contrary to Westerners' belief that patriarchy is all encompassing and inescapable, in this community patriarchy does not seem to have an expression.

It should be noted that the conditions of the men of Esihlengeni are not unique to Esihlengeni as Oyèwùní observed,

The paradox of imposition of western hegemony on African women is that the elite women who derive class privileges from the legacy of the colonial situation appear to suffer from the ill-effects of male dominance the most. From the women in the lower classes, their experience of male dominance is muted, probably because it is overshadowed by socioeconomic disadvantages (2005: 358).

This Western hegemony that seeks to integrate all women into Western values excludes other women, like the women of Esihlengeni, as those included are included on the condition that they articulate their 'experiences' in such a way that the coloniser can hear and understand and, in that way, the women of Esihlengeni are not only excluded but silenced as well. It is therefore not surprising that it becomes difficult to find literature that expresses the experiences of women such as the women of Esihlengeni because the language used does not have the words to express such realities.

Second to this, is the fact that the present experiences of many colonised people are a direct result of the system created by an Imperial man<sup>63</sup>, as Magubane argues,

Rather, it is the system, produced largely by adult white men, that is itself degenerate and operates to produce and reproduce the image of the Black woman and child as hopelessly degraded (2008: 102.8).

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<sup>63</sup> In this instance, the Imperial man is the Western man who is a product of Western epistemology that defines humanity by excluding others and thus embarking on a mission to save the Other which as we know today resulted on imperialism.

But it is not always connected to this fact, but in a very twisted logic, it gets argued as part of the ‘culture’ of the colonised. By insisting on this connection, I argue that in Esihlengeni, the concept of patriarchy where black women are inferior does not exist, it is just a theory that when used, hides the dehumanisation of a black man who remains weak and unable to fulfil his role to protect his family. The usage of these concepts can only continue to colonise the communities “whereby the darkest impulses of the European self are repudiated by attributing them to the Other” (Magubane 2008: 102.3). From where I stand, I see patriarchy coming from somewhere and injected into all communities and then ending up appearing as the real problem. To understand the community of Esihlengeni correctly, one needs to pay attention to people’s experiences by historicising them for their reality is rooted in their past and present experiences.

### 6.3.3 *Women power*

According to Butler,

the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists (Butler 2006: 5).

From this quotation, it would seem that the Westerners have finally seen the light that patriarchy is not universal. But before we get excited, we need to dissect the argument put above. Butler does not specify the people who have “widely criticised” the universalisation of patriarchy. Given the fact that it is African scholars that have boldly challenged this notion, I would assume that Butler is referring to those scholars. If my assumption is correct, then Butler’s argument is an appropriation of African cultures as the argument posited on gender from the critical scholars in Africa is that gender is fluid and it is not hierarchical. It is within the Western societies that gender identities carry the right to dominate or a curse to be subjugated.

In fact, many African scholars have demystified the belief that all cultures are inherently oppressive to women. Scholars such as Sudarkasa (1986); Amadiume (1987); Atkins (1993) and Oyëwùmí (1997, 2005, 2016) have conducted studies that show that gender roles according to African cultures are complementary rather than about super-ordination/subordination” (Sudarkasa 1986: 101), because they were not



hierarchical. In Esihlengeni, we see a community similar to the one Oyěwù mí observed amongst the Yorùbá people, where

the notion of an “unsexed humanity” is neither a dream to aspire to nor a memory to be realized. It exists albeit in concatenation with the reality of separated and hierarchical sexes imposed during the colonial period (2005: 359).

The Western idea of men being providers and protectors at the same time in Western societies left women with no role to play and thus objects. This however, cannot be said in African societies, as it will be shown later that women were actually providers while men were protectors as they draw from a cosmology that promotes complementarity over domination. In addition, there is compelling evidence that shows that patriarchy is not inherent in African cultures. Amadiume and Oyěwù mí point out that many African languages are not gendered<sup>64</sup>. Sithole (2013) further stretches this argument by arguing that within the context of kinship and love relationships in the Zulu culture there is no sexism. For instance, your spouse is also referred to as *umlingani*, which literally means your equal<sup>65</sup>.

According to Sudarkasa, most literature has failed to reveal the gender neutrality in many African societies as scholars come with “preconceived notion of a unitary status for female and male, respectively, is probably what led many students of African societies to paint such misleading pictures of the status of African women” (1986: 101). In addition, Di Leonardo further reveals this fact, that gender oppression is not inherent in African cultures in her argument that, “European culture and class politics ... were transposed into racial distinctions and reverberated in the metropole as they were fortified on colonial ground” (1991: 87). So, even colonisation was not gendered it was rather dehumanising where there was no gender and class as both men and women were treated the same in some instance where even jobs that in Western societies were gendered, in the colonised, they were not. The seemingly oppressive cultures as are often defined today, are a result of the European culture where in actual fact, when it came to the colonies, what was perceived as a lower gender and of a lower class became race. They did not see gender and class in the colonies but race, which then became

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<sup>64</sup> This is also true in the Zulu language, names that refer to women always have *kazi* as a suffix which makes a word bigger. For instance, a son is *indoda-na* (a small man) and a daughter is *indoda-kazi* (a big man) where *indoda* means a man.

<sup>65</sup> Others might argue that this equality is just a cover up not an actual practice as women call their husbands: *ubaba* (father) but ignore the fact that men do call their wives: *umama* (mother).

inferior irrespective of gender and class, the colonised in the eyes of the coloniser, was a classless and genderless society<sup>66</sup> and thus these communities became just an inferior race. The *stokvel* women were therefore in-charge of the *stokvel* not because it empowered them but because both the colonial experience and their traditional values do not allow them to be dominated by men. This is something that some of Western scholars such as Butler (2004, 2006) are only coming to terms with. They still do not fully grasp it as they still understand it from an individual perspective rather than a communal and societal experience.

#### **6.4 Understanding SFC women within the South African context**

In Chapter Five I focused on *stokvels*, I argued that while *stokvels* are an existing phenomenon in Esihlengeni, they are not inherent to this community but are imposed. It becomes important to understand the gendered aspect of the *stokvel* and the issues that are at play by bringing the case of Esihlengeni to broader South African politics. As Magubane argues “a journey across the space of empire is a journey backward in time and thus absolves the philanthropist from having to deal with the thorny contemporary issue of race.” (2008: 102.19), where the emphasis becomes the corrupted past to avoid discussions about the present conditions that black people are confronted with. Or the emphasis will be on the present that is disconnected from the past and thus becomes difficult to bring the past to the present. To make this issue clearer, I use the play: *The dying scream of the moon* as a lens to unpack the complexities of gender in South Africa.

##### *The dying scream of the moon*

In August 2016 I took a break from the field as I had conferences to attend in Johannesburg. To unwind, I went to the Market Theatre to watch a play titled: *The dying scream of the moon*, written by Zakes Mda and directed by John Kani. The play formed part of the 40th anniversary celebrations for the Market Theatre and was staged in the newly renamed Mannie Manim theatre at the Market Theatre. The play ran from 28 July to 21 August 2016 and was about the challenges of the present that but rooted in the past. The play had three cast members: The piano player – a black male, one black woman referred to as Lady, who have come to the farm to claim her land back, and one

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<sup>66</sup> I am not using ‘classless’ as in the conception of Marx.

white woman referred to as Missy who owns the land. The most striking part of the play was the silences that were so loud, and the invisibility that was so visible, the black men and white men. The part on the silences that are loud and the invisible visible drew my attention and I attempted to use it to make sense of Esihlengeni. Using the play, I removed the popular lens; the gender discourse and tapped into the unpopular and uncomfortable nuances of our today's reality in an attempt to unearth deeper forms of oppression that still persist in communities and are a hindrance to any type of intervention.

In general, the play received positive reviews with one the reviewers saying

The play is a product of Zakes Mda's works and it is no surprise that the piece is pregnant with politics. Many of the issues raised in the piece are still social ills that are prevalent in today's society. In an intelligent way, the play is centred on the land question, which is about the economy to show how the ills in our society emanate from the land dispossession that results in economic exclusion. (Sassen 2016: 1)

The play can be understood as insisting on establishing a connection between the past and the present in a context where black South African are normally told to move on and forget about the past. A dialogue in the playing is revealing

*Missy: Why don't you People forget?*

*Lady: How come the Jews aren't told to forget Holocaust? Then why are we told to forget?*

While many reviewers did get the issue of land raised in the play, the focus became gender and patriarchy. Many reviewers were quick to say the play was about patriarchy and they completely ignored the piano player and the fact that there was no white man in the cast, a significant aspect of the play. I attribute this quick conclusion about the play to the lens we use to read situations, which was my main challenge in the field - not seeing 'men'. The gendered lens silences racial oppression because we are quick to want to find what 'unite' us and thus silence the differences, which I argue are the main reason of the continued oppression and dehumanisation which occurs when we do not allow others to speak for themselves or from their conditions and localities.

Ngxande one of the reviewers writes

It is because they do, in fact, have many names, many faces and many personal narratives all orbiting the same scorching fight against patriarchy, institutional racism,

sexual violence, cultural oppression, heteronormativity and the fight for ownership of one's Self (2016: 1).

For Ngxande, the play was about intersectionality, based on 'individualism'. While this is true, there are many nuances in the play that I feel he did not pay attention to. Ngxande over-emphasises the gender aspect of the play

The play relays the oppression of women in patriarchal society through the belittling Missy experiences in her profession and family life, and the double oppression of black women through Lady's similar struggles with the addition of being black under South Africa's apartheid regime (ibid).

However, white reviewers were not impressed. As Jennifer de Klerk writes:

When Zakes Mda writes a script and Dr John Kani directs it, we have a right to expect good theatre, not political point-scoring. Admittedly the many young black members of the audience received it rapturously as they were obviously being told exactly what they wanted to hear. I was annoyed by the stereotyping, the lack of characterization, the clumsy ebb and flow of the contrived plot, the implausible backstories and the so-called relationship that developed out of nowhere... The end was again greeted rapturously by many of the audience. I saw no resolution, no attempt at compromise, no common ground and no hope. God help South Africa (2016: 1).

Another white reviewer, Robyn Sassen, in support, states:

Both characters are written too one dimensionally and there is no wiggle room for nuance, or levity, particularly with the white character (2016: 1).

There is no doubt that the central theme is justice as Lady has come to claim her land, an integral part of the South African economy and history. There is also no doubt that the play brought a lot of uncomfortable feelings to many white people as it went to the past and took white people to a place that is very uncomfortable, the historical injustices that are often deflected by making noise about the present incompetent government. It would seem that the white reviewers' irritation with the play lies in the fact that the play brings forth the issues, such as the issue of race that according to them does not belong in the South Africa of today. However, the play, in essence problematises the gender discourse by highlighting complexities that show the entanglement of gender with race. In the play, Missy asks the piano man – old enough to be her father - to bring water to show that black people are perpetual children in the eyes of whiteness. On the other hand, Lady was a chief in command in the *Mkhonto Wesizwe* (MK), while Missy was

not allowed to carry a gun in the South African Défense, demonstrating that these two entities were drawing from different worldviews where black women had to do what their male counterpart are supposed to do – offer protection – while white women could not do what their male counterparts did because they were ‘protected’ and I would argue that they were drawing from a system that does not recognise women as equals. However, all the reviewers say nothing about that. The reason they cannot make the connection, I argue, is because they have made the play what it is not about, patriarchy, when the play is about land dispossession. However, because of the dominant discourse on women oppression, it is difficult to see anything outside of it, it is as if we are blinded by the idea of patriarchy. These are the issues I want to tease out in order to understand the community of Esihlengeni when we bring gender discourse as articulated in the mainstream discourse.

#### *6.4.1 Demasculinisation of a black man*

*Figure 14 A picture of a male employee at the guest house I stayed in during fieldwork*



At the guesthouse I stayed in during the fieldwork this man worked there, and I would see him every morning taking orders from the owner (a white woman) and then sweeping and mopping amongst other things.

Esihlengeni, the significant encounter between black and whites was through the wars at Encome and Esandlwana discussed in Chapter Four. In these encounters, black men were protectors and were at the forefront during these wars. The men of Esihlengeni are devastated today and depend on women for their survival. This reality is depicted in the play; men do not exist anymore like the timid piano player who is taking orders from Missy and is defended by Lady who reprimands Missy for sending him to fetch water. In Esihlengeni, a man has become a Boy – as in my cousin Boy, who is weak and timid, just like the guy in the picture that shows the collapse of gender identities, where both men and women do the same demeaning jobs of sweeping. If the biggest problem of our modern world is patriarchy, it would make sense then to turn our focus on men, attempt to find ways to take away their power rather than give women power because the existence of patriarchy suggests that power corrupts. If power has produced this biggest monster called patriarchy, let us find ways to take this power away from men. It would be interesting to find the power that Boy and the piano player possess. The lack of focus on the power that men have, has made us unable to understand men like Boy and the piano player in the play. I argue that the failure to focus on these nuances has resulted in failing to see that while in some societies men are masculinised, in others they are demasculinised and this demasculinisation of men leaves women vulnerable as they have to play both roles of being women (providers) and men (protectors) at the same time.

bell hooks argues that “[t]he gender politics of slavery and white-supremacist domination of free black men was the school where black men from different African tribes, with different languages and value systems, learned in the “new world,” patriarchal masculinity” (hook 2004: 4). What bell hooks does exceptionally well is to show how patriarchy is not inherent to all men as it has to be taught and learnt. This idea debunks the myth that patriarchy is almost natural. The case of Esihlengeni continues the arguments made by bell hooks but from a different perspective of demasculinisation. Unlike slavery, in Esihlengeni, men were/are demasculinised by land dispossession, cattle theft, taxes and other forms of subjugation, now retrenchment

and lack of employment. Indeed, these are different forms of slavery that do not teach men to dominate women but have reduced them to children. However, this devastation happens hand in hand with the memory of the colonised embedded in their cosmologies, spirituality and languages.

For the most part, feminism refuses to believe that there could be societies that were not oppressive to women. Because Western modern society is considered advanced, progressive and thus better, it is unthinkable to feminists that there could have been anything better than it. So, when evidence emerges that there are societies that seem to show something different like the Haitian revolution as Trouillot posits that “what happened in Haiti also contradicted most of what West told both itself and others about itself” (1995: 107) that it was indispensable, scholars tend to ignore it. But the so called advanced the Western system has given birth to the gender-based violence we witness today – using the feminist definition of domestic violence of course – and thus the solutions to this violence can never come from the very same system.

This demasculinisation of men still continues today, it is not only in their dispossession and exploitation but also in the refusal that they can be restored. The classic example in the case of South Africa was when the former deputy minister of the Department of Higher Education Mduzuzi Manana, who admitted to slapping a woman in a club in Fourways, north of Johannesburg (Shange & Goba, 2017)<sup>67</sup>. This incident became a national shock and most people condemned the former minister, and, as a result, he resigned from his job, pleaded guilty in court of the assault and profusely apologized to the victim. Interestingly, one of the popular talk show hosts in one of the popular radio stations in South Africa, Criselda Dudumashe commented on the issue. Her point of view was different from the popular view that condemned Manana. She tried to put a human face to the man by writing about her personal experience with him. She did not justify his conduct but was appealing to the country that he be rehabilitated and on the basis of his conduct during the process, be given a second chance as from her experience

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<sup>67</sup> While the story of Manana is used to argue for a different case here, however, it reveals an issue of concern – of empowered black men through education and money that abuse black women. This would seem similar to the observation made by Oyèwùmí (2005) on the elite African women who seem to be the ones who are more on the receiving end of patriarchy. Could this be the result of imbibing Western values that are inherently patriarchal such that those that are schooled in Western values reproduce these ills in their everyday lives? Indeed, this is a matter of concern that requires a study of its own.

with him he was a young man with potential. I cannot even begin to articulate the reactions to her post on social media. I guess all those people were entitled to their opinion inasmuch as she was. However, the harsh reaction she received from social media resulted in her losing her job as a talk show host and some if not most of her sponsors (Zeeman 2017: 1).

The point here is that in a highly feminised society, there are things that are permissible and that are not. Nyamnjoh (2004) points out this dynamic with a citation from Eagleton:

promoting beliefs and values congenial to [its dominance]; *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself (Nyamnjoh 2004 cites Eagleton 1991: 5-6).

The above discussion exposes the silencing of Criselda Dudumashe who attempted to present a view different from the mainstream one on the incident. Collins argues; “Domination operates by seducing, pressuring, or forcing... members of subordinated groups to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group’s specialized thought” (1990: 226). The latter seems to hold in the South African context. We are all coerced to see our situation from a “specialised thought” of the dominant feminist groups. If we do so we are rewarded and applauded if we do not, we are punished, just like in the case of Criselda Dudumashe. The efforts therefore of demasculinisation of the black man are forever present as seen in the case of Boy and the men of Esihlengeni in general.

#### 6.4.2 *The absent men*

Most rural communities in South Africa live with the reality of the absence of men because of the migrant labour system. However, because of the scourge of unemployment; in Esihlengeni, men have returned ‘home’ and they are physically visible. Despite the physical visibility of men, their role in supporting their families remains invisible as they do not have the means to become visible. It is not therefore surprising that in the play, even though a black man was there, he remained invisible, as he had no ‘meaningful’ role in the conversation between Missy and Lady. The story presents us with a very interesting and brilliant way of engaging gender issues within



the South African context, dominated by foreign literature. The mainstream literature on gender is oblivious to the nuances of our situation; where we are so dehumanised to a point where gender categories do not exist: it is not uncommon, for instance, to see a black man, taking orders from a white woman. On the contrary, in the play, a black woman was masculinised to take responsibility for the man that was taken away from her. It is in this manner that black men – taking the history of dehumanisation into account – take orders from the white people in general. The play is correct therefore to have Lady as the one who has to come and claim the land, as there are no black men anymore. Just like in *Esihlengeni*, women are forced to protect themselves by empowering men, as is the case with *uThandi*. The women of *Esihlengeni* need to restore their men so that they are able to buy cows and create homes for them, and, in turn, they can become fully women. Once restored, the men too can attain their full manhood.

The play brings another dynamic to the issue of absent men: it is not just black men that are absent, but white men too. But the twist is, the white men are absent physically but are omnipresent. The land that Lady has come to claim from Missy is the land Missy inherited from her father. While black men are physically there in *Esihlengeni*, materially they are invisible. They do not have the cows that guarantees protection for their women while white women are taken care by their father's inheritance and their husband's employment. In the case of black people, this is similar to the story of *bab'zulu* – as explained in Chapter Five who was still crying for the cows that were confiscated. Seemingly, the problems that the women at *Esihlengeni* are battling with are the creation of white men. For black women, the patriarchal system that gives domination to white males has left them in a vulnerable position where they have to fight on their own with no cows while the very same patriarchal system leaves white women protected and with the land. It would not make sense therefore to imagine a unified wage of war against patriarchy by women, as some are victims of this system while others are beneficiaries.

The absence of white men is evident in the South African politics. The Zuma rape trial presents us with a perfect example that absence<sup>68</sup>. The trial generated a lot of interest, both locally and internationally, but the verdict did not please everyone. A lot of people, especially those with a feminist bent, felt the verdict was unfair on Khwezi. To them all the evidence pointed at Zuma being guilty<sup>69</sup>. But while Zuma was acquitted by a court judge, the judge himself was never questioned; instead, critics would rather talk about the ‘courts’ as working against women. The focus on the court served to hide the white man in the court. While judges are human beings that have opinions and agendas, this has rarely been raised as an issue in the South African gender discourse. But also, the fact that the courts come from the very Western system, it should follow that if they fail women, it would, primarily be because of their patriarchalism that they are embedded in. In other words, those that are serious about the conditions of the violated need to be sceptical about the solutions provided lest they find themselves reinforcing the very system they are trying to fight. This brings the issue of the inability of feminist groups to name and shame judge Willem van der Merwe to the fore. The only person who dared to question the person is the former Constitutional Court Judge, Judge Yacoob:

I have a serious difference of opinion... I had a serious problem with the Zuma judgement... If it were me, I would have set aside the judgment,” he was quoted as saying. “Trials and judges do not decide the truth... judges never know the truth (News24 2014 - Sapa).

Even after Judge Yacoob had released his statement in 2014, the condemnation of Judge Willem van der Merwe in the South African public discourse is still yet to be heard. Instead, there has been a lot of condemnation against Judge Yacoob, especially from the ruling party because his statement tarnished the judiciary system that is supposedly impartial. The condemnation was so harsh that he had to re-articulate his view (News24 2014). What has always been questioned is the innocence of Zuma, who was acquitted of the charge by the way, but never the judge, a white man, who is like gravity that is

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<sup>68</sup> This was a trial where Van der Merwe decided at the time that the state had not proved beyond reasonable doubt that Zuma intended to commit rape and he questioned Khwezi’s credibility in his judgement.

<sup>69</sup> This is in the context where many groups such as ‘Save South Africa’ have come out to defend the country against President Zuma who is said to be corrupt.

invisible, but its impact has devastating effects on black people, to ubab'Zulu who was dispossessed of his cows and Khwezi, whose real name is Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo.

#### 6.4.3 *Quest for justice*

South Africa has been celebrated worldwide for its constitution. According to Pillay, “The 1994 South African constitution introduced one of the world’s most elaborate democracies” (2004: 590). However, there is a growing discomfort amongst many black people because the constitution has yet to bear any tangible economic benefits to alleviate the abject poverty faced by many black communities. The play allowed me to unpack the various issues faced by many South Africans. The main claim that the play makes is that while the economy and gender are intertwined, race gives meaning to the realities of South Africans. To make sense of the *stokvel* women, it is important to have this in mind. It is not surprising that the *stokvel* women are in support of their male counterparts. The atrocities experienced by black people, their dispossession of land and cattle still persist in the present, but the euphoria that came with democracy has rendered them invisible. In order to see them, one needs to pay attention not just to what is said but also unsaid.

The call from the women of Esihlengeni for *izibaya* highlights the economic destruction of black men that can only be understood when we bring white men to the fore, who still control the economy of South Africa (MacDonald 2006). Both Lady and the *stokvel* women want justice. In the play, Lady demands her dignity by wanting her land back just like the *stokvel* women who insist on having homes that have *izibaya* – because it is the cows that assure continuity and protection. For Lady it is the land that will assure continuity and protection. Reducing the struggle of the women of Esihlengeni to a gender struggle hides the story of ubab'Zulu (Chapter Five), who lost his cows through theft. Now his sons will not have the inheritance that can enable them to build *izibaya* for their wives. It is this connectedness that the communities are formed on, not the separated logic that is illogical as it is not geared towards the sustenance of life.

The quest for justice must be understood in the context of the continued demasculinisation in South Africa. For instance, on 16 of August 2012, South Africa experienced one of the worst massacres since the dawn of democracy; 33 mine workers were shot dead after a long strike for decent salaries. Until now the story of Marikana

has not found expression or been analysed from a gender discourse because it contradicts the dominant discourse that black men are the perpetrators of violence. Scholars such as Marinovich (2012), Bond (2013), Alexander (2013) and Duncan (2013) have articulated how the incident is an indication of the continued exploitation and dehumanisation of the black body. However, the attempts made, by the proponents of feminism such as Breyne & de Smet (2017) have tried to reveal the devastating effects of the incident by bringing forth how it affected the widowed women. But in doing so they ignored the fact that there are bodies who were crucified, people who died because they were not seen as real human beings but rather tools that are disposable. Their argument,

dismantling of the dominant, mediatized discourse of commemoration of the Marikana killings, which focussed on the masculine, violent and ‘tragic’ nature of the event. In this respect, we explore the omnipresence of feminine vulnerability (Breyne & de Smet 2017: 13).

Indeed, the story of Cebisile has been silenced. This is his story:

Cebisile Yawa (24) was one of the victims of the massacre. He was from Cala in the Eastern Cape. He began working for Lonmin in 2007. On 16 August 2012 Cebisile was killed at scene 1 after being shot twice by the police in the upper back and the buttock. He was the sole breadwinner in his family and left behind his young daughter, parents and five siblings. According to Andile Yawa, Cebisile’s father, “I was forced to stop working due to my ill health. My son took over my job in the mine. He went to Marikana in 2007. Cebisile took over my responsibilities. He was our only breadwinner” (South African History Online 2016).

Cebisile took over his father’s responsibilities at a young school going age. He had to quit school to do that. But the full story of people like Cebisile, young black men who quit school because of harsh circumstances are never fully told. The story of black men who become disposable in the capitalist system are never properly told. The story of Boy does not seem to have any significance to a society that has pronounced that it is only the black girl and woman that is not safe and that the men that have to go underground every single day do not matter. The dominance of feminist theory makes it difficult to show the oppression of black men because race is equated to gender and both are universalised. But the latter wrongly suggest that all men are privileged. At the core of feminism, a child of capitalism, is the protection of capital. Magubane states, “Colonialism’s sin is not the sin of race prejudice, but rather of having introduced and promoted economic backwardness” (2008: 102.10).

The emphasis on women is, in actual fact, a means to silence voices expressing different ideas of the economy. Among these are voices that seek to sustain life rather than destroy it, such as the voice from Esihlengeni. Instead the voices that are allowed expression are voices that advance the capitalist system, often under the guise of undermining it. The one such is the *stokvel*. The SFC, for example, inasmuch as it assists the women to fulfil their responsibility, it fails to address the life of its members holistically. Its main concern is profit that according to Mulaudzi is nature of *stokvels* (2017: 99) and, in its pursuit, would rather cut costs by reducing the family to a nuclear family rather than holistically address the needs of the people of Esihlengeni. It was with this in mind that I brought the play into the study, to open up gender discourse such that we have honest discussion and not rush to universality of gender but localise it. I am aware that I attempt to say things that are not permissible in the public discourse but are real in Esihlengeni, and to say them “truly and simply” (Okri 2014: xi) in the pursuit of justice.

### **6.5 Learning from the *stokvel* women**

While there has been a concerted effort from the government – looking at the social grant – to empower women, it would seem that the women of Esihlengeni are refusing to give up their men for they understand that without them it will be the end of life. Their comprehension of the economic empowerment through their involvement in *stokvel* seems to take a holistic approach of not just focusing on the material needs but the metaphysical as well. They can be felt in the utterances by bell hooks as she meditates:

I have not given up on black men. And black men have not given up on me. At times black males have been the force in my life searching for me, laying hands on my broken spirit... helping me to choose salvation, helping me to be whole. Black females and males can use this myth to nurture the memory of sustained connection with one another, of a love that has stood and can stand the test of time and tribulation. We can choose a love that will courageously seek out the wounded soul, find you, and dare to bring you home again, doing what must be done to help put the bits and pieces together again, to make us whole. This is real cool. This is real love (hooks 2004: 152).

It is in this context that we can begin to understand the women of Esihlengeni as they draw from a different epistemology that is not separatist but sees men and women as

people that can have complementary roles, not to be conquered or hated. The women of Esihlengeni present us with a possibility of a different world that has different priorities and needs, to be connected with the spiritual world over material needs.

### *6.5.1 Unlearning feminism*

In previous sections I have argued that gender is a construction and therefore not universal. Wanting to understand communities within the preconceived power relations that do exist in some societies is some kind of sickness and we have to hallucinate and see things that do not exist. As Amadiume posits, “other peoples and their cultures were seen through European eyes” (2005: 83), and thus there is a need to see them in their own eyes. The ungendered life of Esihlengeni requires us to first unlearn the feminism as it assumes that all societies are gendered. In this sense, it should be ok not to be a feminist, if we accept that not all societies are patriarchal. Accepting that there are societies that are not patriarchal is admitting that there are fundamental differences in societies, something that an imperial man cannot contend with as argued in Chapter One (section 1.2.2).

The denial of difference deprives us from learning and opening up to other ways of knowing to produce a different kind of the world. A different world from this capitalist world that we all have come to understand its flaws as they are forever present even when it tries to correct them. As Amadiume posits:

European feminists... seek possible ways out of their historically oppressive patriarchal family structure... inventing single-parenthood and alternative affective relationships... in the African case we do not need to invent anything. We already have a history and legacy of a women’s culture—a matriarchy based on affective relationships—and this should be given a central place in analysis and social enquiry. (1997: 23). 16

The women of Esihlengeni do not seem to be convinced by the separatist promises of this modern world as they insist on making the connection between their problems and their male counterpart. They seem to be insisting on the fact that if their men had cows they would not be having the problems they are having. They are not using gender as a category to make sense of their situation but are using their lived experiences to make sense of their world. But when using feminism to understand communities is like doing what Biko (1978) warned us about that a white person will kick you and then come back and tell you how to respond to the kick.

Unlearning feminism will allow us to learn about a different kind of economy that takes into cognisance the importance of taking care of each other, taking care of the animals – as there are not objects to dominate but a medium through which we communicate with the ancestors<sup>70</sup> and the land we occupy as it is not ours, but we are just custodians of it. With this understanding of the earth, we would not be talking about global warming, a problem emanating from extracting for our own individual desires. And also, it will allow other voices to speak so that we have a dialogue, not a monologue that has dominated gender discourse: PATRIARCHY. This has delegitimised other forms of dominations, other experiences because the only legitimate experience is being dominated by men and the systematic oppression of one race by another disappears where black men still take orders from a Madam and sweep floors. Indeed, as Adésinà argues:

A method of knowledge that proceeds with imaginary/mental constructs of the philosopher's own choosing can comfortably remain in the realm of imaginary constructs or make foundational propositions (primitives) that have little bearing on lived experience or grotesquely distort it (2004: 5)

Gender remains an imaginary construct of the feminist scholars in communities such as Esihlengeni where men are dependent on their women to survive because their cows have been taken away from them. To understand such communities correctly it necessitates to unlearn feminism because it is not applicable everywhere.

### *6.5.2 Thinking is a verb*

At the beginning of this chapter I posited that my focus here is what people do more than what they say because I believe that actions are informed by thinking. Thinking is like breathing; every person, all communities and societies are capable of thinking. Indeed, what has been the problem is that Western epistemology has suffocated communities by bringing categories to extract data (Nhemachena *et al.* 2016) that will be analysed elsewhere – the same logic used with raw minerals – in this case, the communities become like minerals, objects that cannot think. The failure therefore has

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<sup>70</sup> It would seem that this is the reason that most Nguni people do not eat most animals except for cows, goats and chickens because these animals are believed that they can be spoken to, to pass or carry the message to the ancestors. Eating meat here is not about indulgence but is part of the rituals.

been largely these imaginary constructs of the researchers (Adésinà 2004) that have produced imaginary experiences.

Thinking should emanate from the experiences, like the “Haitian Revolution thought itself out politically and philosophically as it was taking place” (Trouillot 1995: 89). Women of Esihlengeni are thinking, questioning and consciously acting. They are refusing to accept the world as defined by powers that may be because their experiences prove that ‘power’ has lied to them. As a result, they want the restoration of their men such that they have their protectors, more so that men are their fathers, their uncles, their sons, their loving husbands, not their abusers – the image purported by feminists’ scholars. It is important to allow people to think and denying them to think is to suffocate them to death, the condition that many black communities have lived – of suffocation. At the centre of the women empowerment project, it is the restoration of the black men to create safe places for women.

To understand the women of Esihlengeni, it is important to understand them within history not outside of history and take into account their pre-colonisation existence because they are not just responding but drawing from traditional values that are also a product of thinking. However, historicising does not suggest that the community of Esihlengeni is static as Nzegwu points out that “adaptation were the two dominant principles that families had to deploy to survive” (2012: 29). In addition, Oyèwùmí, support this idea of survival of cultures and argues that,

the recognition of the profound, impact of colonization does not preclude the acknowledgement of the survival of indigenous structures and ideological forms... indigenous forms did not disappear though they were battered, subordinated, eroded and even modified by the colonial experience (2005: 359).

It would seem that in the community there exists quite a complicated situation where the past co-exists with the present. But also, that in the true sense of life, change is inevitable even if there was no colonisation. This is the foundation of *ubuntu*, which acknowledges the permanent state of change (Ramosé 2002). As such, this culture founded on *ubuntu* - people in motion would permit change. It is in this sense that historicisation should be understood, certainly not as fixed culture. Fanon posits that,

Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to



the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigure it, and destroys it. The effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance (1965: 169).

In this perverted effort, which has tended to freeze cultures, traditions that were employed in particular space and time are brought up as African. But this is a gross misrepresentation of what is African. What is normally presented as African in public discourse is, for the most part, nonsensical and when analysed carefully does not talk to the cosmological African frameworks<sup>71</sup>. But it is also important not to confuse the *Ubuntu* idea of ‘motion’ as explained by Ramose (2002) with postmodernism, as the difference is significant. Lugones (2010) argues that postmodernism fundamentally advocates for hybridity within the constraints of western epistemology as they struggle to express the difference at the level of different worldviews. In other words, they are trapped within the universalism curse.

Traditional values that the women of Esihlengeni draw from allow women to fully contribute in the sustenance of communities. Atkins argues that “gender roles were not so constricting as to prevent females in the Northern Nguni (which includes Kwa-Zulu, Eastern Cape etc) society from achieving social, economic, and political power through the strength of their personality, domestic labors, or other specialized endeavors” (1993: 46). As such, according to Krige, “The men played little part in agriculture; they merely hew the bush where new fields are to be cultivated, and at harvest or in spring may sometimes help with the reaping” (1977: 2). In other words, the women were in control of the agriculture, an important aspect in many societies. For Amadiume, “few linguistic gender distinctions make it possible to see certain social roles as separate from sex and gender, hence the possibility for either sex to fill in the roles.” (1987: 30). Clearly, women had their autonomy in African societies.

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<sup>71</sup> One of the examples is the issue of women taking their husbands’ surnames. It has become common knowledge to many people that this practice is ‘cultural’ and some will go to an extent to use *ilobola* – bride wealth – as the reason for this practice, failing to traced the origins of this practice to Western culture. In many African societies children take their father’s name, but never take their husband’s name. This practice can be trace from the fact that up-to-this day, in many rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal, women still keep their father’s names. For instance, a married woman is called by her surname with prefix *uma*-originally it was *oka*- (of) as such, in today’s context I am umaRadebe but in the olden days I would be okaRadebe. In these communities, the change of surname only happens in the marriage certificate and the identity document, a foreign practice indeed.

It is against this backdrop that in the absence of men, women in many African settings could fulfil any role because in their cultures gender roles were not hierarchical. However, the problem that they are now facing is that their male counterparts have been weakened such that they cannot play any role in the family structure. What we see here is the women drawing from their past to respond to today's challenges. Many scholars such as WEB Du Bois, Amilcar Cabral, and CLR James argue in support of the above claim that there are cultural aspects of native and enslaved people that survived the onslaught of a conquering people (cited in Gordon 1996), that even today we can still see the philosophical grounding of the past. Oyěwùmí (2016) stretches this argument in her recent book: *What gender is motherhood: Changing Yorùbá Ideals of Power, Procreation and Identity in the age of Modernity* by pointing out the problem of wanting to argue for the complete erasure of African cultures as the obsession of the colonised intellectuals. She argues:

the African elite have been so schooled in Western race and gender primitivism that today many fail to recognize that African societies had their own spiritual identities and distinct ways of thinking and organizing before European conquest (Oyěwùmí 2016: 6).

Even though Africans have gone through the process of colonisation, they remember their way of doing things and these are still found in today's cultures. This is what the women of Esihlengeni are drawing from, as it is the knowledge that is in the present.

### *6.5.3 Inherent difference*

The community of Esihlengeni renders feminism irrelevant at an ontological level because it draws from traditional values that did permit domination of one gender over another. But also, in the present situation given the fact that men in this community do not have access to money, which provides power to dominate. Drawing from the past and present, unlike the professional intellectuals trained in Western epistemology, the women of Esihlengeni are thinking without restriction of capitalist benefits that have trapped many Western scholars, they think like the 'Haitian Revolutionaries' who

were not overly restricted by previous ideological limits set by professional intellectuals in the colony or elsewhere, that they could break new ground – and, indeed, they did so repeatedly (Trouillot, 1995: 89).

As such, the difference is inherent, it is at the epistemological level because the traditional values they draw from are informed by *ubuntu*.

Taking into account the inherent difference to tell the story of the women of Esihlengeni, I follow Lugones's approach, which she explains as follow:

I want to follow subjects in intersubjective collaboration and conflict, fully informed as members of Native American or African societies, as they take up, respond, resist, and accommodate to hostile invaders who mean to dispose and dehumanize them. And thus I want to think of the colonized neither as simply imagined and constructed by the colonizer and coloniality in accordance with the colonial imagination and the strictures of the capitalist colonial venture, but as being who begins to inhabit a fractured locus constructed doubly, who perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the "sides" of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relations (2010: 748).

It is in this context that I was able to see the women of Esihlengeni as theorists, theorising from lived experiences - not thinking within the imaginary construct of science. But importantly, drawing from their traditional values. If we accept that knowledge is produced from lived experience, then we can make a claim that there are different knowledges not just hybridity that somehow assumes sameness in difference. The assertion that there is hybridity fails to account for the contradictions that while there is fluidity there is permanency, while there is sameness but there is difference in which people will respond to the very same conditions based on their cosmologies. The colonial difference accounts for some of this difference, which is normally hidden by the proponents of hybridity. And for Lugones "[t]he emphasis is on maintaining multiplicity at the point of reduction-not maintaining a hybrid "product", which hides the colonial difference-in the tense workings of more than one logic, not to be synthesized but transcended" (2010: 755). In other words, this hybridity, does want to accept that there is a society that can make different demands, depending on the colonial difference, I add, and cosmological difference such that there is nothing that can bring us together – this on the imperial man does not sit well as he/she loses the only power he/she has, to provide solutions. Sameness in this instance would then mean that we are all capable of thinking for ourselves.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the discourse of gender in Esihlengeni. From Esihlengeni we learn that gender is a social construct and therefore the concepts used to understand

communities like the community of Esihlengeni, such as patriarchy are not adequate. I explored the gender discourse in Esihlengeni alongside the broader global gender discourses and this has, by and large, demonstrated that gender is a product of capitalism. The approaches that use patriarchy to understand the realities of communities like Esihlengeni cannot do justice to the conditions of such communities, if anything, they misrepresent them in ways that serves the system. Paying attention to the South African political landscape, we learn from this chapter that there is a continued oppression of people such as the ones in Eshlengeni. In Esihlengeni, the unaddressed legacies of the past include the stealing of cows by white people as exemplified by the case of bab'Zulu (discussed in Chapter Four). In understanding the *stokvels* in the South African context I showed that there are things that are not permissible in the public domain such as the honest discussion of race and gender which have become tools to silence race engagement. However, there is insistence on the quest for justice by the women of Esihlengeni who yearn for the right things: the possibility of becoming fully women and the protection of their families which can be achieved through cows.

Ntozakhe's poem weaves the seemingly fragmented arguments to show that in 2016 (when I was in the field), twenty-two years into our democracy, members of communities like Esihlengeni are still unable to exist as fully human because their song has not been sung, it remains dead, closed in silence for so long... [they are] half note shattered'. This poem must force us to take the women of Esihlengeni seriously, who are persistent in thinking outside the capitalist logic while drawing from their traditional values that promote the sustenance of life. In that, I argue that they complete the gender discourse as they present the side that is not normally discussed when we engage the discourse. They present the side advancing the empowerment of black men and the lessening of their burden. The story of Esihlengeni is one of many stories and is by no means a universal story. It is, however, an important story as it reveals aspects that we need to pay attention to, in order to complete the story. But more importantly, it exposes hidden truths of a community that, when viewed through mainstream gender lenses, can never be comprehended.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7. Introduction

I was drawn to *stokvels* by the story I presented at the beginning of the thesis (p. 1). The narrative suggests that people's everyday lives draw from an epistemology that is different from the Western one. The latter informs the capitalist logic that "profit is an end in itself" (Graeber 2006: 70). I undertook a journey to uncover this way of understanding economy. The economy that I have presented in this thesis draws from a culture that is centred on obligations. As I conclude, I shall bring Credo Mutwa's epic – *isanusi* (*isangoma* that predicts the future) - from the book *Indaba, My Children*. The epic is written in poetic form and draws from an African cosmology. It reads:

No stars were there – no sun,  
Neither moon nor earth-  
Nothing existed but darkness itself –  
A darkness everywhere.  
Nothing existed but nothingness,  
A Nothingness neither hot nor cold,  
Dead nor alive-  
A Nothingness far worse than nothing  
And frightening in its utter nothingness

For how long the Nothingness lasted, no one will ever know;  
And why there was nothing but Nothing is something  
We must never try to learn...

And this ferocious battle, which started so long ago,  
Today still rages unabating, and shall yet proceed  
Till Time shall cease to flow.  
And the Wise Men of the tribes relate  
That if the Flame one day shall win,  
All that exist shall perish  
In one consuming Fire,  
While is victory goes to the Spit of Cold

All living things shall freeze to death!

May the Great Spirit who is Lord Almighty  
And Paramount Chief of all  
Grant that neither Flame not Cold  
Shall ever win the War,  
Because whosoever beats the other-  
The sun, the moon, the earth and stars  
And all that live shall cease to be!  
May both antagonists fight forth for everlasting Time,  
Because on their unceasing conflict  
All Life depends

The story is a classic representation of the cosmological perspective that the thesis is attempting to highlight that: 1) some things we will never know, 2) some things we must never try to learn, and 3) life is founded and depends on contradictions. The story is a good way to summarise the thesis as it captures the underlying theme in the thesis the idea that human reality is incomplete and thus we cannot make absolute claims about it since it is situated and is always in motion. This thesis does not claim any new discoveries but builds up on existing knowledge and emphasises the importance of evaluating epistemologies in order to refine the process of knowledge production such that it represents the experiences of those that we study in an honest manner. This is the contribution that the thesis seeks to make. The study is also a response to Fabian's (2006) call that in anthropology, we need to formulate philosophical and epistemological practices that would better and allow us to recognise the people we study as coevals, not people frozen in time.

As posited in the introduction of the thesis, the study is within the discipline of anthropology. The project is an ethnographic study of the people of Esihlengeni. Ethnography has received criticism from postmodernists such as Fabian (1983, 2006); Clifford (1986); and Clifford & Marcus (1986), on its representation of the Other. However, these critiques are within the Western canon (Grosfoguel 2011). Fabian points out, "I do not aim my critique at 'Western philosophy' but at anthropological discourse" (2006: 147), The various disciplines from which the criticism has emerged

are themselves Western, while they differ in their focus, they are all children of European enlightenment, that Mafeje (1998) has argued is the father of imperialism. My embracement of ethnography, I should state, is not naïve I am critical of the Other. I take Argyrou's critique of Sameness seriously, so much that I attempted to study the community of Esihlengeni from its base, that is, its epistemology, not so much to compare it with others, but to learn from it. While some are moving from a position of doubt as to whether they are human or not, and thus seek themselves in others, as Clifford alludes "the version of the 'Other' is the construction of a 'self'" (Clifford 1986: 23), and Fabian agrees "(we) seem to require alterity for sustenance in our efforts to assert or understand ourselves" (2006: 148), others are moving from a position of knowing who they are, and when they interact with others, it is more to enhance themselves rather than try figure out who they are. The thesis also draws from a different epistemology, which does not begin by questioning the existence of the other, so as to validate him/her as in the case of the enlightenment or the rebirth of European moment which was based on asking what is human (Trouillot 1995: 75). This study rather seeks to build on what already exists.

### **7.1 The summary of the thesis**

The first chapter introduced the study by giving the background of this research. It established that *stokvels* have been studied in order to determine their economic viability so that they can benefit the existing economic system. Their foundational values have been understood as a mere coping mechanism rather than as drawing from a different economic epistemology informed by a worldview that differs from the Western way of thinking. This study attempted to establish the logic of *stokvels* within a particular socio-cultural and historical context; to understand *stokvels* using a different, African epistemic framework; to produce knowledge that will contribute to the world economies; and possibly, to identify and support economies that are centred on the continuity of life. The purpose of this study was to identify and explore the existence of a different kind of economy that is not informed by a capitalist logic. The study aimed to examine the values that underpin *stokvels* and locate them within a particular socio-cultural and historical context. The study critically analysed *stokvels* as an economic unit to understand the logic that is fundamental to their existence.

The second chapter reviewed literature that discusses economy and that also links it to the *stokvel*. It shows that literature on *stokvels* has been written from a Western perspective and thus presents them as emerging from the traditional values of communities while in actual fact they are a coping mechanism that do not even allow communities to bring their traditional values into them as they are informed and guided by the capitalist logic of profit. To argue this point explicitly, I explored the culture of economy and established that the mainstream economy is entangled in the liberal economy of Adam Smith, embedded in Western thought that, among others, is expressed through the capitalist economy. I historicised the capitalist economy and this revealed the colluding systems that have ensured the sustainability of capitalism under the pretence of it being natural and thus universal. I argued that there are economies outside of the capitalist economy that anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925) observed. I then posited that the traditional economy of amaZulu – the nationality of the people of Esihlengeni – is similar to these economies, driven not by individual accumulation but by the continuity of life. The insights from the study enables us to learn from other epistemologies founded on different belief systems. I concluded this chapter by arguing that the economic system of Esihlengeni is founded on the principles of *Ubuntu* – an African philosophy centred on human relations (Ramose 2002 and Sithole 2009) - that allows people to adapt to change without losing the essence of their existence. I argued, from the findings of the study, for the existence or a different economic logic that is founded on obligation where first, a person is expected to give before accumulating wealth and second, a person becomes a man because he is able to give. In this society, wealth is not a privilege but a right.

The third chapter discussed methods used in the study. I posited that the methods used go beyond Western epistemology as I used the community's paradigm as a basis of this work (Adésinà 2008). This allowed me to move away from the anthropological conundrum of Sameness that Argyrou (2012) presents as the biggest of anthropology. Methods in the anthropological research play a critical role as they determine the validity of research. More so, of qualitative research that depends on the interpretation of the researcher. This chapter began with a contextualising of the methodological tools I used in the study and placed them within the larger debates in order to show their advantages and the disadvantages. It moved on to discuss the procedures employed during the study and engaged this process with theories that advocate and challenge



qualitative methods. It concluded by arguing that even though there are challenges with the methodological tools I used, the tools have enabled me to unearth stories from the community. The tools have enabled me to explore the connectedness of the past with the present and better understand the economic practices of Esihlengeni, with a focus on the logic of *stokvels*. I concluded this chapter by providing a way to read the thesis in order to understand the people of Esihlengeni correctly, as this research studies the community in vernacular as Adésínà (2002) and Mafeje (1991) posit, and thus deals with the concepts that emanate from within.

Chapter Four, Five, Six and Seven presented the findings of the study. The fourth chapter titled: *Culture and memory of the people of Esihlengeni: Insisting on traditional values*, focused on culture as part of memory to understand the logic that gives birth to the economic understanding of the people of Esihlengeni. While *stokvels* are not informed by traditional values, the people of Esihlengeni still draw from traditional values hence *stokvels* do not make sense to their existence. In this chapter I historicised the traditional values by paying attention to the genealogy of the Khumalo clan that reveals an epistemology that respects difference, values the past and promotes change. This epistemology is carried through the rituals that they still practice and is embedded in their language. It is in this context that in 2016, the people of Esihlengeni are still insisting on the economy that focuses on life in its totality. It is against that backdrop that I argued for a holistic approach that allows people to articulate their lived experiences, using their epistemology and to break away from the uni-versity approach – that presents itself as the ONLY space to think from, founded on just one point of view that presents itself as the only point of view (Grosfoguel 2011).

The fifth chapter titled: *Towards the cattle economy*, looked at the *stokvels* in Esihlengeni in order to determine the economic logic that informs them. Many scholars that have studied *stokvels* have argued that they are a source of support for those uprooted from their rural home backgrounds by poverty, and living under harsh conditions of a new environment, often a city context. It would seem that *stokvel* operating in a different context; the rural home context presents us with a different logic altogether, demanding to be read differently. This is a case of Esihlengeni; *stokvels* in the community are a new phenomenon that attempts to address the peculiarities of their forever-changing environment. *Stokvels*, in Esihlengeni do not reflect traditional values

of the community but rather reveal the devastating effects of capitalism where people are turned into 'zombies', to echo Comaroff & Comaroff (2002). The space provided by the *stokvel* is such that the members are unable to challenge the *stokvels* rules that do not reflect their cultural belief system. The study has identified a different kind of economy, centred around the cattle, which are a means to communicate with ancestors. It has demonstrated that the concept of economy in Esihlengeni is inclusive of all various aspects of life. The practices of *stokvels* do not resonate with this idea of the economy in so far as they are focused on the narrow needs of the funerals; the coffin and the groceries.

The sixth chapter titled: *Understanding the Women of Esihlengeni as Thinking in Action: Completing the Gender Discourse* discussed the role of women in *stokvels*. The literature on *stokvels* shows that women dominate *stokvels* even though statistics indicate that *stokvels* are not gendered. This study revealed that in the community of Esihlengeni the concept patriarchy is irrelevant as the *stokvel* studied proved to be an autonomous structure where men had no say over it, something unimaginable in a patriarchal society where men are supposedly controlling everything. In fact, what was observed in Esihlengeni was the powerlessness of men, which suggests that taking power away from men does not translate into the empowerment of women because women were as weakened as their male counterparts. Instead, the weakened men leave women more vulnerable as women of Esihlengeni revealed that they could not reach their full status of womanhood when their men did not have cows, without which they cannot build their own homes, and move out of their mother-in-laws' houses where they feel like perpetual children. The women of Esihlengeni's call for the restoration of their male counterparts proved to be drawing from traditional values, which are not patriarchal, and if anything, promotes complementary relations between men and women in the community. The women in Esihlengeni's call is meant to inspire a fight for the continuity of life and they see their obligation as that of creating an enabling environment for their men to be able to fulfill their responsibilities that would further ensure that the community is protected, and life is continued. I posited that we need to learn from the women of Esihlengeni, who are not corrupted by the feminism but drawing from their past to make sense of the present and secure the future.

## 7.2 Themes developed

The focus of the study is the logic of *stokvels*, often misrepresented as drawing from traditional values of communities in which they are based. The findings of this study dismiss that position and suggest that *stokvels* are just a mere coping strategy that is not central in the economic worldview of the people of Esihlengeni. The picture emerging from the study is that of a worldview that exists independent of the capitalist logic and upholding a different perspective of life. The study exposes the limitations of Western epistemology, perceived by its converts as inescapable, because it has presented itself as such. Proving Argyrou's argument that, "Whatever presents itself as immutable, natural and necessary... must be exposed for what it is: arbitrary and groundless" (2012: 8). Though the study is not a presentation of timeless truths, the insights that emerged from it are ground breaking and force us to acknowledge the fact that colonialism is/was not as powerful as it has been made to be. It has not conquered everything under the sun; it has certainly failed to penetrate the belief system of the people of Esihlengeni.

### 7.2.1 Mandatory obligations

History tells us that the colonial project was an economic project, that "the Westernized other looked increasingly more and more profitable to the West, especially if he could become a free laborer" (Trouillot, 1995: 80). What seems obvious is the fact that with colonialism everything was collapsed into economic value for the accumulation of the individual. Within this framework, societies are defined in economic terms. Anthropologists such as Malinowski have gone out of their way to think outside of this framework and find other ways of conceiving society and the economy in an attempt to surpass the reductionist view of the colonial and liberal economists, which in their opinion, has created more problems than solutions. If we are to fast forward to 2016 in Esihlengeni, I found a similar case of an economy that is not centred on accumulation but on obligation that is honored through cows, hence it aptly named 'the cattle economy'. However, the cattle economy takes a different route from that of gifts. Because in cattle economy, what is central is the propitiation of ancestors who in return give wealth. The reciprocity of the cattle economy occurs more in the spiritual realm than the material world, though it has concrete consequences for the material world. The obligations in the cattle economy is to do right by the ancestors and by the cultural rules that are expressed in rituals.

The economy of Esihlengeni lends itself to being addressed as an alternative economy. But to do so we must first make sense of the belief system that gives birth to its logic. The fact that it begins with obligations before accumulation, suggests that human life does not occur accidentally. The community of Esihlengeni believes that life comes from the ancestors as explained in Chapter Five, where I narrated the journey of the deceased. Second, it insinuates that one is born into wealth that enables him/her to honour the obligation. This belief feeds into Diop's (1991) claim that the differences in societies/communities' worldviews emanate from the climate. If societies' epistemologies are informed by their climate, it then makes sense that a climate that restricts growth would breed an epistemology of accumulation whilst the one that produces plenty would give birth to an epistemology centred on obligations, because there are means to do so. It is in this context that we should understand the concept of *ukuweshwama* (defined in Chapter Three p. 94), which can be loosely defined as a national thanksgiving, *ukusisela* (explained in Chapter Two p. 53), meaning that the person in need should be borrowed cows to enable him/her to be *umuntu* (a person) – who can fulfil his obligations and thus acquire wealth and *ukwethekela* (Chapter Two p. 54), to give with the understanding that the person who is in need is not in a position to pay you back because his/her situation is not permanent.

The question now would be, in a seemingly poor community such as the community of Esihlengeni, why would they insist on the belief system that is founded on the members being born into wealth? This question is pertinent especially drawing from the belief that Africans could not be Westernised as they were “destined to be slaved” (Trouillot 1995: 77) and regarded as an inferior race. However, as indicated in the earlier sections this research is studying the people of Esihlengeni from their own epistemology. Thus, it would seem to me that the question itself is a problem as it asks the question from a Western epistemology that has reduced wealth into materiality. What I have tried to show throughout the thesis is the fact that life is inclusive of the physical and the metaphysical. While the community of Esihlengeni might seem to be impoverished materially, it is also evident that they are rich in terms of their cultural beliefs and, to them, what is important is to be able to exercise their culture since it has sustained them for centuries. So, the cattle economy should not be understood in material terms but in

holistic terms that defines ethics – doing right - in terms of obligations that are at the centre of this economy.

### 7.2.2 Revising gender

Notwithstanding the fact that this study was not on gender, however, gender is central in understanding communities as many studies and consequently policies are gendered. As such, I too, paid attention to gender disparities that were observable in the field. This study found that *stokvels* were not responding to gendered needs of the people of Esihlengeni. While they enabled women to provide for the funeral, they could not provide for the cattle that complete the funerals. The separatist understanding of gender in the structure of *stokvels* revealed that the understanding of gender is not universal. As such, it is not natural but fluid just like all other identities. What is striking about Esihlengeni is the fact that women still believed that *ubuhle bendoda zinkomo zayo* (the beauty of a man is his cows) and they insisted that they want men with cows. As shown in the previous section, the cows do not represent wealth in Western sense but are a means through which people are able to fulfil their obligations and to continue practising *ubuntu* – the belief of taking care of one another. Important to emphasise is the fact that *ubuntu* is not about forgiving, but for-giving – being able to give. Ramose (2002) posits that there can never be *ubuntu* without justice, where what was taken unjustly must be restored. In the case of Esihlengeni, justice would be the return of cows that were confiscated so that men at Esihlengeni are able to fulfil their obligation to build their wives homes with kraals.

Another important conception of gender that was observed at Esihlengeni is the interconnectedness of the sexes. It is almost impossible for the women of Esihlengeni to imagine themselves as separate from men, as to them, men, just like them, are meant to ensure the continuity of life. The wellbeing of children they give birth depends on the ancestors that should not be angered by not performing necessary rituals as required. While it is their responsibility to provide as argued in Chapter Six, it is men's responsibility to ensure that they are protected. It is in this light that women of Esihlengeni are not concerned about the issues of equity or equality, but the restoration of men because if men are not able to perform their duties, they too will not be protected and be able to prosper in the process. To place this in the historical context of Esihlengeni, it would seem that black women are tired of being on their own, given that

they were deprived of their men for a long time due the migrant labour system, and now they need their men to lessen the yoke they have been carrying from the days of colonialism and Apartheid.

It is in this light that I argue that the feminist discourse falls short. By universalising the women experience and emphasising on similarities it denies women the right to decide what is important to them based on their culture and experiences. Secondly, the universalisation of patriarchy ignores the fact that there are different epistemologies outside of the Western epistemology that was born from a deprived climate and, as a result, presents domination as the only means to wealth. Subtly, the feminist discourse hides the benefits of white women that result from the interconnectedness of the sexes. It hides the fact that men are not just husbands with power to dominate but are also fathers that provide privileges they have acquired by enslaving, dominating and exploiting those that were deemed lesser beings, irrespective of their gender. So, the similarities between women of different races are imaginary as the experiences and aspirations differ from both a cosmological worldview and a colonial experience. As such, the women of Esihlengeni, are concerned about the continuity of life, and in that they need men, since without them, life is conceived as impossible.

### *7.2.3 New concepts*

While anthropology has made immense contributions to the understanding of other societies, the challenge confronting it remains as we still often study societies from the standpoint of Sameness. This is a result of scholars that refuse to understand other ways of knowing since they believe that to be “radical means going to the roots, not ignoring them” (Fabian 2006: 144). A point that Maldonado-Torres makes, “we find repeated gesture of searching for European roots as a response to its ‘crisis’” (2006: 128). Even those that define themselves as radical, admitting that the Western sciences are a problem, the solution very often resort to solutions from the West, ‘the best thing that has ever happened to humanity’. Fabian, for example, argues that we cannot ignore the West, we have to go back to it to find answers to the problems it has created. What becomes clear from Esihlengeni is that the roots that Fabian is insisting that we return to, are not capable of comprehending the belief system of Esilengeni, as it is not comparable and commensurate within the Western system. The question now is how do you understand from a Western empirical perspective that which cannot be seen with

naked eyes; heard with biological ears; and comprehended by limited minds? Surely an answer to this cannot exist from a Western standpoint.

For the reasons mentioned above, I turned to the scholars that dare go beyond Western epistemology. Diop, Amadiume and Oyëwùmí played a pivotal role in this venture and produced groundbreaking knowledge that the Westerners and the Westernised have not fully comprehended, because their work has not been classified as classical material as per the academic tradition in African universities. Within this tradition, students are told to use Western scholars to validate their thinking, for example students are refused to write about power without reading Foucault. What if students, in a similar vein, were told that: they cannot study African culture without reading Diop; they cannot study gender without reading Amadiume and Oyëwùmí? These scholars have helped me to read the community of Esihlengeni from its own epistemological grounding and to learn about its understanding of the economy. Going beyond the Western epistemic framework has enabled me to unpack the belief system that this community draws from without the pressure to use the preconceived Western concepts that are used to fit, to judge and to compare societies that we study. Just like Diop, Amadiume and Oyëwùmí, I studied systems of knowledge at Esihlengeni, by drawing from my own connections with the community, in addition to the scholarly material, tools, knowledge and training I employed. This has enabled me to better grasp what I was confronted with.

To go against the grain of dominant scholarly concepts influencing my research, I studied the community of Esihlengeni in their vernacular, as Mafeje and Adésina advice. This is definitely not about the mere translation of concepts found in communities. For instance, I did not bring the notions of the cattle economy in Esihlengeni, but I found it there. This notion represents a knowledge that is not tainted by scholarly discourse. I would argue that this knowledge is something akin to the Haitian Revolution. Trouillot posits that the Haitian Revolution was unthinkable among the Westerners because of the conception of the Africans as beings not capable of thinking. More so that the “Revolution was not preceded or even accompanied by an explicit intellectual discourse” (Trouillot 1995: 88). Using the Western concepts that begin by the assumption that there is no knowledge in African communities, and if there is, it is backward and inferior, there was no way I could have discovered the knowledge that I did a knowledge like the Haitian Revolution that “expressed itself mainly through

its deeds... [challenging] the ontological order of the West and the global order of colonialism” (ibid: 89). The latter knowledge is written and kept in books, but knowledge can be stored in the everyday existence of a people, a space that that cannot be colonised as it is in motion, a knowledge of a people becoming (Ramose 2002).

### **7.3 Meditation on decoloniality**

Western epistemology is an epistemology born of crisis. It was confronted with the industrial revolution at its infancy (Mafeje 1976). Its survival has been based on its battles with new revolutions. Part of its strategy has been to co-opt these struggles for its survival. It is no wonder that despite the hope generated by critical voices and theories “Africa and its people continue to be understood in terms of lack, incompleteness, deficiency and inadequacy” (Zondi 2015: 100). In other words, the problems at the beginning of the Western epistemology that questioned the humanity of others has not been resolved as Africans are still in question and mainly because of the Western man that assumed the role of God “with sole purpose of enslaving other” (Maldonado-Torres 2006: 113-4) to maximise profits. This Western man has to cleanse himself and

the most terrible aspects of himself onto the savage and thus renders himself innocent and clean once more. Then, in the process of saving the savage and purging him of his sin, the savior is further elevated and made more Godlike (Magubane 2008: 102.4).

It is in this context that we need to meditate, to theorise because the theory is important insofar as it correctly identifies the ‘power and conception of knowledge’ that produces the problems of the modern world. Secondly, the theory is important in so far as it historicises conceptions of knowledge, exposes their locations and emphasises the fact that these conceptions are not natural. I argue that this thinking is born out of a colonial wound that is felt, even to this day, by those who have love for the self, and are disturbed by the inferiorisation of other ways of knowing.

It is within this intellectual framework that Grosfoguel (2011, 2012) has emphasised the importance of defining the system properly. And, for him, a proper definition of the system is a holistic definition. He defines it as: European/ capitalist/ military/ christian/ patriarchal/ white/ heterosexual/ male (2009: 18). I take this definition as a theoretical breakthrough as it encompasses all the ills of the modern world. To simplify the definition, I would present it as a WESTERN EPISTEMOLOGY system that produces



racisms, capitalism, patriarchy and all other isms and phobias. In other words, the worldview of the Westerners drawing from their cosmos and belief system, has produced all isms and phobias of the modern world. The putting of Western epistemology in capital letters and as separate from what it produces becomes critical as it serves as a constant reminder for all our initiatives the real enemy is Western epistemology that produces all the social ills in our societies. Any struggle whose primary objective is outside of fighting the Western epistemology is not the struggle of those that live with the colonial wound and still have self-love.

Decoloniality therefore gives hope to communities such as the community of Esihlengeni, in a world that seems to suggest that there is only one way to redemption: Westernisation as Magubane points out

Irish, Italian, and Jewish – all had to engage in a historical process of repudiating Blackness and adopting attitudes of extreme prejudice towards African Americans in order for them to become, on one level, “hyphenated Americans,” and on a more fundamental level, White (2008: 102.20).

With this logic, colonialism becomes only an economic project that the “[c]ommerce and economic development hold the key for. What goes unspoken, of course, is the fact that the ascendancy of the Irish was also linked to their becoming White” (Magubane 2008: 102.22). The above, in emphasising 'the economic project' downplays racism and invisibilises it. With this outlook, the system that produced colonialism is never interrogated, instead the focus is on what it produces. And for Africans, the impact of this superficial analysis is devastating, as what is brought back in the analysis is the discourse of Sameness that now finds expression in the sciences of origins that suggest that life began in Africa. With these arguments, “The Other” completely ceases to exist albeit a tiny remnant of her survives in us. The Other is not even a memory, she is only the vaguest genetic trace” (Magubane 2008: 102.22). As such, the blacks especially in Africa, must just adopt the thinking that the West has produced if they want to prosper.

The fact that Africans have been adopting Western solutions since their independence without yielding any results is hardly mentioned. What is often emphasised is the corruption of their leaders rather than of the system. What decoloniality provides us with is the space for difference as it does not assume that there is only one route to salvation as Mignolo argues, “there cannot be a decolonial global design for it that were

the case, it would be the reproduction of ego-centered personalities who have the master key of decoloniality” (2013: 1). In line with this view, the community of Esihlengeni finds a space to express its hopes drawing from its own epistemology. The case of Esihlengeni seems to find theoretical support from decolonial thinking as the latter starts from the premise that there are many ways of existing that the Western system has sought to suppress and erase by claiming to be the only space of thinking. Decoloniality calls for a de-linking from the Western super power such that thinking becomes democratised and communities like Esihlengeni becomes legitimate spaces for intellectual reflection and their contributions are acknowledged. Furthermore, within the decolonial framework, knowledge from such communities cannot be treated as a mere coping mechanism that should be incorporated to the ‘real’ thinking of the West. Such knowledge, that has stood the test of time, are likely to be recognised as powerful resources that can give us a sense of where we come from. The recognition of such knowledges becomes urgent given the fact that Western knowledge has not solved any problem, even the problems it created and yet, and in a twisted logic, still claims to provide the world with solutions.

#### **7.4 Conclusions drawn**

The conclusions drawn here, take into consideration the fact that the community of Esihlengeni is the community that draws from a philosophical grounding of *ubuntu* of becoming. It is thus a community that is striving to become *abantu* – Beings. As such, the conclusions are in line with the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, they are not fixed but responsive to the present conditions while maintaining the cosmological underpinnings that do not change – the belief that life is constitutive of the living, the living-dead and the unborn. The views expressed by the people of Esihlengeni who participated in the study are, therefore, informed by this cosmological worldview. A view which provides a conception of knowledge that is fundamentally different from Western epistemology and that draws from a climate that was, and still is, fundamentally different that of other societies. As such, these conclusions are themselves not universal, but allow us to imagine a different world from the current one, a world that allows different ways of existing. I drew three main conclusions from the themes emerging from the findings

- a) The traditional values of the people of Esihlengeni draw from a different kind of epistemology, an epistemology that respects difference, values the past and promotes

change. Thus, is ontologically different from Western epistemology of Sameness. It is founded on learning from others while remaining true to its core values, which is based on the philosophy of *ubuntu*. Boas expressed the potential contribution of such an epistemology that

Knowledge of the life process and behavior of man under conditions of life fundamentally different from our own can help us to obtain a freer view of our own lives and of our life problems (Boas 1940: v).

And he was correct as the case of Esihlengeni shows. But what is important to emphasise is the fact that not all societies need to embark on this journey, as they might not have disconnected themselves from the source. This is a journey for Westerners and the Westernised to undertake to learn about their ‘life problems’. Traditional values, as highlighted by the study, are embedded in systems of knowledge such as belief systems, cultural practices, rituals, language and everyday activities of a people. In this sense, these values are undefeatable as they live in people’s memories, souls and spirit.

b). There is a need for cultural freedom and not cultural relativism as advanced by earlier anthropologists such as Boas advocated for. And such freedom has a holistic basis captured by the idea of culture. I explained culture in the introduction that is as part of the cosmology that encompasses politics, economy, aesthetics, spirituality, language, rituals, tradition/customs and everyday cultural practices of people. Culture was once defined as “one of the most pernicious delusions that ever-vexed mankind” (Tylor 1874: 112). The cultural freedom I am advocating for is inspired by the fact that despite the dominant rhetoric of economic freedom, the community of Esihlengeni is calling for cultural freedom so as to be able to fulfil their obligations and become *abantu* who can practice *ubuntu*. This culture begins with the fulfilling of obligations, then proceeded by material accumulation. Thus the importance of *ukusisela* as Ramose (2002) and Koenane (2014) point out; and *ukuthekela* as Lombo (2017) posits. For the people of Esihlengeni, wealth is not about personal pleasure but a means to fulfil obligations. Hence to have wealth in the midst of poverty does not make you *umuntu*. It would seem that this worldview emanates from the climate of plenty, hence the attitude of giving first before accumulation. And if this is the case, it would imply that the Westerners have a worldview that is informed by lack, hence their preoccupation with material resources that, from their climatic background were scares.

c). There exists the possibility of an economy that is not centred on accumulation. This conviction, in part, emanate from my listening to the women of Esihlengeni who call for the restoration of their male-counterparts, such that they are able to fulfil their mandatory obligations of ensuring continuity of life. It becomes clear to me that for the women of Esihlengeni, it is no use to have wealth with no surety of the continuity of life. And to them, that can only happen if their men are also part of it, they cannot see themselves outside of men, and thus, there is no separation between sexes. At the end of the day, the separation of sexes is illogical as in any society people play different roles at any given time. Contrary to the dominant view, colonialism did not conquer all, the culture at Esihlengeni is still real and alive. It still upholds i ancestral ts age old ancestral belief system. Community members continue to fight for culture, for what they belief and practice everyday. Its persistence also demonstrates that the Western system is not that powerful, it is limited, it would seem, by its emphasis on materialism. The case of Esihlengeni is the story of triumph that is unthinkable to many Westerners and Westernised as it is not informed by the Western ideology but draws from its own culture. The belief of Esihlengeni people, of having the ancestors in all their activities, ensures that they transcend the colonial space. Their resolve is strengthened by the fact that, among them, there are those who have never had any contact with the colonisers and are unaffected by their ‘pernicious delusions’. As such, they live with no anxieties of Western prescriptions.

## **7.5 Contribution**

The role of research is to contribute to the production of knowledge. It is however important to note that what is often presented as new knowledge is not necessarily new everywhere, it is only new in the Western world. The knowledge resonating with established ideas in non-Western worlds but remaining unfamiliar to the West is critical in the opening up of space, so that sources of knowledge are diversified. Secondly, the knowledge that is outside the Western categories can assist in curbing the colonising knowledge produced in the Western institutions, depending on the willingness of the intellectual to do so, of course, as Mafeje puts it, “the intellectual effort was a service to colonialism not because of crude suppositions about direct conspiracy or collusion but mainly because of the ontology of its thought categories” (1976: 318). These contributions therefore, should be read as thinking in action as I am as conflicted as many intellectuals that are trained in Western methods.

### *7.5.1 Doing away with Sameness*

According to Lévi-Strauss “Anthropology is the science that makes humanity the primary object of investigation” (1967: 20). The biggest crime of anthropology has been the creation of the ‘Other’. This ‘Other’ has moved from being given humanity to being assumed to having a key to what it means to be human. While the latter gives a quite honorable gesture, it moves from the very same position of giving the ‘Other’ humanity as it assumes that we all ought to be the Same! Maldonado-Torres notes the dangers of this thinking

A world structured according to the relations between master and slave creates, as it were, a field of gravitation that makes aspirations for humanity collapse into aims for inclusion and projects of assimilations based on the ultimate value of the master’s kind of life (2006: 131).

So, all the efforts of giving and receiving of humanity, when they happen within the Western thought, are bound to reproduce the ‘Other’, irrespective of how glorified the ‘Other’ is presented and represented. It would be best, therefore, to rather than obsess about others, to focus on ourselves as objects of investigation, something that scholars such as Fanon (1967, 2008) began to theorise their own conditions and experiences. Fanon was clear that he was theorising himself. Fanon writes, “Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles” (2008: 7). In essence, we need to come to terms that we cannot understand the ‘Other’. The endeavours to include or represent the ‘Other’ further colonise him/her as Ndebele argues “the varied richness of life is lost sight of and so is the fact that every aspect of life, if it can be creatively indulged in, is the weapon of life itself against the greatest tyranny” (Ndebele 1983: 236). Overly obsessing about Sameness and having same needs creates great tyranny that, in our age and world, is advocated by Western epistemology.

### *7.5.2 Embracing difference*

In Chapter Two, when I was historicising capitalism, it became clear that the capitalist system and the Western thought are different sides of the same coin. Western thought is born of the logic of wanting to dominate, as such it cannot dominate what it does not know, hence its curiosity. But because it is not in the nature of things to know everything, this thought has to lie by using theories that were are not provable as

Lakatos (1970) shows. And in the open, its ideology has been proven redundant by the Haitian Revolution, as Trouillot posits,

They (Haitians) were “unthinkable” facts in the framework of Western thought... The unthinkable is that which one cannot conceive within the range of possible alternatives, that which perverts all answers because it defies the terms under which the questions were phrased (1995: 82).

The framework of Western thought cannot comprehend difference hence it creates hierarchies that have resulted in “degrees of humanity” (ibid: 81). A crucial lesson therefore for the Westerners and the Westernised is to learn to understand difference, to learn to appreciate that which is different from you is not necessarily lower or above but merely different. And key to this difference is that it is not there to be understood but To Be. If there is something we can understand about it, great and if there is nothing we can understand, we must let go and come back to ourselves to make sense of who and what we are, a project that can last a lifetime.

### *7.5.3 Retrieving discarded knowledges*

The Western system in its quest to dominate, disrupted, discarded and disregarded all other systems of knowledge. It deployed violence and deceit to ensure its victory. Books were created to legitimise the deceptions about the ‘Other’ and to replace their knowledge systems. However, it did not realise that what was discarded and disregarded was kept safe in the memory, souls and the cultural practices of the colonised. So, for those of us who are part of these communities violated by the Western quest to dominate, as part of redemption, it is our duty to retrieve the knowledges that have been subjugated for centuries to bring them to the centre as these knowledges are part of world knowledges and they still exist.

## **7.6 A way of concluding**

The study, drawing from the lived experiences of the people of Esihlengeni, concludes that the community of Esihlengeni is thinking from their philosophical orientation that is best captured by Thandiswa Mazwai’s sixth track – *vana vevhu* in her debut album titled: *Ibokwe*, released in 2009. An extract from the song reads:

*Andihambi ndodwa, ndikhatshwa ngomakhulu bam nezinyanya zam, akh'nto uzoyenza, uw'namandla we, ngeke uy'mele lento' yenzayo.* (translated: I am not walking alone, I

am accompanied by my grandmothers, my ancestors. There is nothing you can do. You will not be able to stand the consequences of your actions).

The song is about a community that has been surrounded by its ancestors, and as such, has survived all the atrocities presented in the thesis and continued to produce knowledge. Albeit the fact that this community has survived, there is still a need to acknowledge the crime that has been committed against it, as the deputy principal at Jeppe High School for boys, addressing white pupil stated, “no matter how kind and generous you might consider yourself, if you deny that a crime has occurred, then you are subtly working to defeat the ends of justice”<sup>72</sup>. The argument of the undying spirit of the people of Esihlengeni, is by no means an attempt to undermine the gravity of the crime committed against them, as that will be to defeat the ends of justice.

The knowledge produced by the people of Esihlengeni can contribute positively to the world knowledges as it is a knowledge informed by a different worldview, the kind that privileges continuity of life. It debunks the Western knowledge that views the economy as the centre of human existence and suggests that ethics can inform human existence - indeed a man shall not live by bread alone, but by doing the right thing too. It presents an economy centred on the ability to be in good terms with the living-dead who alone can guarantee protection, continuity of life and prosperity. Unlike a Western epistemology that moves from the premise of accumulation for individuals and then advocate for self-regulation by regulating everything for the benefit of the few and the domination of the many. The thinking from Esihlengeni suggests the opposite that one must do right and follow the ancestral rules in order to prosper. But central to this, is the fact that wealth is not an end product of one's actions but a gift from the ancestors, hence the mandatory obligations that come with it.

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<sup>72</sup> This is taken from a transcript of a speech recently given to pupils of Jeppe High School for Boys in Johannesburg by deputy principal Kevin Leathem. It was co-written by his wife, Tammy Bechus. I first saw this transcript on facebook on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2018.

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**APPENDIX A: RESULT SUMMARY FROM ORIGINALITY SOFTWARE**

**Towards the cattle economy:  
understanding the logic of  
stokvels at Esihlengeni in  
Vryheid, KwaZulu Natal, South  
Africa**

*by* Nompumelelo Zodwa Radebe

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## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **RESEARCH TOPIC**

TOWARDS THE HUMAN ECONOMY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL INQUIRY OF THE LOGIC OF *STOKVELS*

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

This research is conducted to fulfil the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the subject anthropology at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

### **WHAT PROCEDURES ARE INVOLVED?**

During the study you will take part in-depth interviews or participate in the focus group. That is, you will be asked to discuss your views regarding *stokvels*. If you are asked to participate in the focus group you must know that there are no wrong and right answers and everyone is entitled to his/her opinion. I will not judge you in any way on the answers you will give.

### **WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason.

### **MAY ANY OF THESE STUDY PROCEDURES RESULT IN DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE?**

If you do feel uncomfortable about discussing certain questions you may decline to do so. The discussions/questions will be held in a language that you understand.

### **WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?**

The study does not foresee any potential risks to participants.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?**

There are no direct benefits that you will get by participating in this study. However, your participation will help me fulfill my doctoral degree and furthermore the information you will give will help to produce knowledge on informal economy that might assist in understanding *stokvels*.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information obtained during the course of this study is strictly confidential. Results of the study that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information, which identifies you as a participant in this study.

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. In your understanding, what is a stokvel?
2. Please tell me about your stokvel group?
3. Why did you decide to join the stokvel group?
4. How has it changed your life?
5. What do you like the most about being in a stokvel group?
6. What do you dislike in the stokvel?
7. Is there a thing you would like to change in the stokvel?
8. If yes, what and why?
9. Before you joined the stokvel group, how did you manage the necessities that the stokvel caters for?
10. Is there anything you would like to discuss in relation to stokvels?

## **APPENDIX D: JOURNEYING BACK TO ANHTROPOLOGY: A REFLEXIVE STATEMENT**

### **Abstract**

The reflexive statement talks to the journey of the thesis and was triggered by the family ceremony I attended in Vryheid, not long after I had completed my fieldwork. The event took me back to my fieldwork experiences. I use this experience to create a conversation on the issue of anthropology as a colonial project. I argue that anthropology is not the only academic discipline tainted by colonisation but the entire Western sciences as they all have their basis in “bourgeois imperialist ideology” (Mafeje 1976: 310). These disciplines often hide this reality in their everyday dealings with non-Western communities. In spite of anthropology’s colonial past and present, I believe all is not lost with the discipline. I argue that anthropology can still play a pivotal role in the democratisation of the academy by recognising the existence and even strengths of non-Western epistemologies. This process can be aided by the fact that anthropology has unfinished business with the enlightenment project, that has posed the question “what is man”? To answer this ontological question, I argue, we must also hear from other epistemologies. I conclude with the contention that some of the major challenges we are confronted with today stem from the fact that we are still using the tools of Western epistemology for both our scholarship and activism. We use the tools from Western epistemology to dismantle the world it has created. Thus, even in our quest to change the status quo, we keep on reproducing it. For this reason, it is very important to pause and locate the root of the problem.

### **Introduction**

This study was first conceptualised in the year 2014, but its journey got me reflecting on my very own life journey from childhood to adulthood. The study, it would seem, has far reaching ramifications and its impact goes beyond its formal scope. I am heavily indebted to all the people that have crossed my path and contributed to it, deliberately or accidentally, and certainly the people that have been part of my life: my family, community, friends and comrades. I want to also acknowledge the spaces that enhanced different perspectives of the world, the university through the courses offered, conferences, seminars and summer schools, as all these prepared me for this journey. But more importantly, the person whom I owe my wholeness: the critical mind, the spiritual grounded-ness and the unconditional love of the self, my mother. This work is



a continuation of her scholarship, not written in any books but inscribed in the belly of my existence. She nurtured and harnessed an inquiring mind, to make sure that it does not get lost in the wilderness but is always able to come back home to the self. She made sure that I never lose the African worldview through her musicality that transformed every occasion, every situation and every mood. Her artistry in storytelling created many possible worlds in my mind that, even up to this day, I still remember, the world of unanabahuye for one: a character in one of many folk stories she told, still exist in my imagination. Through the praise poetry she performed in all-important family gatherings, where she brought all those that have passed to the present such that they partook in those seemingly mundane ceremonies, she reinforced the importance of remembering and connecting with the self, in a world that celebrates amnesia and disconnectedness.

These memories are engraved in my soul and I always retrieve them every time I feel lost in the journey. I was able to use these memories in my study because I employed endogeneity, an “intellectual stand point derived from a rootedness in the African conditions “knowledges and ontologies discourse”” (Adésína 2008). In addition, I moved away from a ‘colonial library (to echo Mudimbe 1980) and tapped into African knowledge embedded in our languages, cultural practices, belief systems and in our spirits. Through the means of auto-ethnography, I became aware of my standpoint, a position influencing my analysis (Ngunjiri 2012). I embraced and used my personal experiences, among others, as a lens through which to make sense of the knowledge presented to me. In this way, I could comprehend things that ordinarily I would not, for instance, my uncle’s ceremony that seemed strange in my Western logic but made sense from an African perspective.

### **Setting the scene**

On 14 July 2018 my cousins conducted a ceremony for my uncle: *umsebenzi wehlambo* (purification ceremony), usually conducted a few months or more after the funeral. I remember engaging in an intriguing conversation with my siblings after the ceremony. The conversation was inspired by our perceived wasteful expenditure we observed during the ceremony, comparing it with my mother’s ceremony that was conducted in 2016. To put this into perspective, the purification ceremony requires a slaughtering of the cow for purposes of communicating and pleading with the ancestors to allow the

deceased to reach his/her finally destination, a place where the deceased can transform into a fully-fledged ancestor. This ceremony sometimes is referred to as *inkonzo yokumkhuphula* (which literary means a ceremony to lift up a person to a higher place). In the strict sense of the word, the event is not a ceremony, but a ritual. This is not the only event that occurs after the funeral, there are other events carried out as well, such as *ukukhumula inzilo* (to take of the mourning clothes) that a wife of the deceased wears for a period of time after the death of her husband. How the event unfolds, slightly differs from family to family, but the basic requirement is that a beast must be slaughtered. This would be, at the very least, the second beast slaughtered since the funeral.

My uncle had two wives and his children decided to combine the ceremonies: *umsebenzi wehlambo* and *ukukhumula inzilo* for his wives. This meant that three cows were slaughtered on this day: one for the *umsebenzi wehlambo* and two for *ukukhumula inzilo* for our uncle's wives. Witnessing the slaughtering of three cows in one day, for only a few people attending, a hundred at most (consisting of family members and the neighbours), shocked us. This ceremony did not make sense to me and my siblings. For me, what later, after the ceremony, became more intriguing was our analysis of the ceremony. Our concern on the day of the ceremony was that the ceremony was a waste of money given that our cousins are not wealthy, that they spent so much money in just one day did not make sense to us. We went on with my siblings to argue that the ceremony was based on the lack of thinking, as the logical thing to do would be to save that money for future considerations. We were convinced that their action was utterly nonsensical. On reflection, I am not sure what we wanted our cousins to save the money for because it is not like when one is stringent with money one can buy himself/herself out of the capitalist stranglehold. What is becoming clear now is that our analysis was rooted in a materialist conception of needs, forgetting the fact that a man shall not live with bread alone.

This experience took me back to my fieldwork. It reminded me of the initial challenge I experienced in the field (and that I wrote about in Chapter Three), it took me to my uncles' 'obsession', as I interpreted it, with the graves and the uBheje monument, it took me to the story of ubab'Zulu (that I explained in Chapter Five), that I saw as an inability to let go of the past. These experiences were too depressing for me when I was

in the field. As a result, I would spend most of the time alone when I was not doing fieldwork, despite the fact that I had many relatives to converse with. What exacerbated my frustrations was that when I first arrived in Vryheid the community had a water problem associated with the draught that had descended on the country at the time. I was personally not affected by the problem as I was staying in town<sup>73</sup>. I witnessed an incident in Bhekuzulu Township, the only black township in Vryheid, where one of my cousins' lives: a white male supplying the community with water. This white man did not ask for any compensation. He would come again on other days to 'help' the community with water. As a token of appreciation, community members would collect any amount of money from the community to give to the white person what they referred to as 'petrol money'. Some old man, a community member, was tasked to hand over the money. Seeing a man at his age almost kneeling down when handing money to the white man and calling him *baas* (an Afrikaans word meaning boss), a man who seemed young enough to be the old man's son, was depressing. I lost it on one of the days. On seeing him 'disrespecting' himself before the white man, I went to him and asked: *kodwa yena uwathaphi la manzi uma kunesomiso?* (but where does he get water if there is drought?). I knew talking to an elder the way I did was not right. He did not answer me, he just left the scene. It was not fair to me that black people had to suffer this much when I knew that some people, less than 7 km away (in Vryheid), had plenty of water, such that they would even use it to water their gardens. I was also aggrieved by the fact that even those white people who lived closer to blacks, the farmers, were spared of the suffering that the black communities were subjected to as they had bore-holes. I felt that the people of Bhekuzulu Township were too passive by not mobilising against this 'injustices', as I saw things. What I was not taking into account was that the blacks in Vryheid probably did not prioritise the situation as they could have seen it as a temporary inconvenience. I know that probably my gut was correct given the historic background in the place but, on the same token, I feel my 'radicalism' undermined the agency of the people of Vryheid.

My last visit to Vryheid was in the month of September 2016. The 24th day of the month is celebrated as a Heritage Day in South Africa and seems to be an important

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<sup>73</sup> Vryheid is like many small towns in South Africa, is occupied by the majority of the small population of white people that basically run the economy of the area.

day for the people of Vryheid. As it was on a Saturday that year, it was celebrated the whole weekend by the community. Everyone celebrated and seemed so happy. The feeling was contagious, so much that it jolted me out of my chronic depression, felt all the time I went to the field. Seeing people singing and dancing on the day made me proud to be umZulu. That was something I truly appreciated during the fieldwork, my first such experience. I relished what I saw, the artistry in the singing and dancing among ordinary people. It felt like I was the only one without the skill of *indlamu* (a traditional Zulu dance) that came so naturally to the people of Vryheid. These experiences took me back to my early years at my grandparents' house during school holidays where there was so much laughter, so much singing, so much dance and so many stories told. I really felt nostalgic and wondered what has happened to me to lose such artistry that seemed to bring so much happiness (I hope this question becomes clearer later in the paper). I wondered how the people in Vryheid had maintained this happiness. I realised that maybe the answer is not so philosophical, even though the focus of this study is philosophical. The answer seemed to lie in the climate. The fact that they are in an environment with so much sun and have genes (melanin that according to Morison (1985) is a natural sunscreen) that allow optimal absorption of Vitamin D<sup>74</sup> and which, amongst other things, produce 'happy genes' is the reason they are happy. Their happiness is therefore natural rather than political or psychological, as some are prone to argue that such happiness in the midst of suffering is a mere coping mechanism. Thus, for some people, happiness cannot be bought or possessed as the Western logic would have us believe but is from things we cannot control. But also, it would seem to me that some people in Vryheid are not obsessed with questions that we so grapple with in the West, the questions, "are you human?", "Do you have a soul?" "Do you have civilisation?", "Do you have history"? And the list goes on (Grosfoguel 2012). These questions would seem relevant to the Western thought that itself emerges in the 16<sup>th</sup> century after being suppressed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Dussel 2014; Trouillot 1995). These questions are not universal, and the people of Vryheid seemed happy to ignore them and rather insist on living.

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<sup>74</sup> Vitamin D3 is the precursor steroid hormone calcitriol that regulate the expression of many genes in most tissues of the body (Feldman, D.; Krishnan, A.V.; Suvan; Glodannicy, E. and Feldman, B.J. (2014). The Role of Vitamin D in Reducing Cancer Risk Progression. *Nature Reviews Cancer* 14, 342-357)

The possibilities offered by the people in Vryheid and elsewhere that there are people who are not engaging with these primordial Western questions, who probably are not even aware of the questions, made me realise that not everyone is occupying the Western world as we are, and not everyone is as closely connected to whiteness as we are. Smith makes another example, of the Arab Americans, who “does not signal that they will be assimilated into U.S. society, but that they will always be marked as perpetual foreign threat to the U.S. world orders” (2012: 74). Reflecting on the study, it has become increasingly clear to me that proximity to whiteness has its own peculiar challenges that certainly cannot be universalised. The failure to transcend the zone of proximity can only complicate things. In our zone of proximity, our closeness to whiteness, we find ourselves as people whose existence is constantly questioned, but also of believing the questioner and the questions he poses. Such a conviction is a problem, as will be shown in the subsequent sections.

The reading of our uncle’s ceremony by my siblings and I, seems to have been influenced by our proximity to whiteness. It would seem we were responding to the questions that are always posed to the black people in the Western world. My cousins conducting the ritual seemed not to care or even know the ‘questions’ let alone attempt to respond to them. For them, what seems to be important is to do what their culture dictates, not what the Western world tells the rest of the world to do; to save in order to live. Our cousins seem to be living in order to save themselves<sup>75</sup>. One can thus deduce that our cousins seem to insist on drawing from an African epistemology that is still present despite the hostility of Western epistemology that presents itself as all powerful, so much that it would leave no stone unturned. It would seem that they are drawing from the philosophy of *ubuntu* that, according to Ramose, “is an ongoing process impossible to stop unless motion itself stopped” (2002: 231). They are drawing from a philosophy that is fundamentally different from Western epistemology that presents itself as beyond time and space (Grosfoguel 2012). Western epistemology, in spite of its limitations, often presents other epistemologies as outdated, requiring development and civilisation. As Magubane posits, “the darkest impulses of the European self are

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<sup>75</sup> In Chapter Four I explained the role of ancestors is to protect and they need to be appeased in order for them to protect and give blessings. So, if my cousins did not do my uncle’s ritual in a manner that my uncle would have wanted it to be conducted, their future would be compromised and no money in the would protect them from the wrath of the ancestors.

repudiated by attributing them to the Other” (2006: 102.3). My suspicion is that the African epistemology that our cousins still draw from in 2018, operates at a higher level that eludes all the attempts by the Western world to suppress it. They draw from the belief system that transcends any form of stagnation as it is in motion, the only thing that is constant. As such, any stagnant tradition cannot draw from the philosophy of *ubu-ntu* (becoming), which is always in time and yet in constant motion. It would seem that the belief system of my cousins does not change but dictates change.

This reflexive statement is an attempt to tease out these lifelong lessons, to show how they played a role in giving birth to this unique piece, a thesis that draws from everything that ever touched my life. I highlight the major shifts in my thinking that happened in the field and challenged the ground I was standing on. I further show the clarity of mind that was achieved in this journey, that allowed me to dissect the theoretical framework such that I came to better understand the purpose of the study and even change my original focus. I was also clarified of the misconception that the community of Esihlengeni was a political formation, a creation of colonialism, a dominated community requiring my political support. On the contrary, rather than perform a predominantly political role there, I found myself producing a disciplinary scholarship, albeit a critical one. In this study, I propose that anthropology should move away from a discourse of representing the Other to that of representing the self and thus fulfill the humanist project of enlightenment, of freedom and of democracy. My thoughts on the discipline are also informed by my experience during the fieldwork. The experience from my uncles’ ceremony, in particular, exposed the limitations of my scholarly thinking and political consciousness. But in spite of that, I kept on resorting to Western thinking, which suggests that even in our “wokeness” state, the Western man that lives in the Westernised can always creep in and challenge all radical initiatives whose aim is to dismantle the Western world. I conclude by arguing that there are no holy cows in the Western world and therefore all theories should constantly be subjected to scrutiny to avoid repeating the 'sins' of the Western world.

### **Standing on the Western ground: The problem of the problem statement**

Coming back to the study, it is befitting to start by highlighting that this study was grounded in Western epistemology, which is the foundation of the Western academy. By virtue of being a qualification-based study, it had to follow the academic rules even

though I was hoping it will also become a ‘political’ (undisciplined) project that has a practical element to it for the upliftment of the community of Esihlengeni. Being an academic project, I had to formulate a proposal that had a problem statement, an imagined problem to solve. The problem in this case was the seemingly illogical economic practices amongst the blacks that needed resolving. The economic concepts of amaZulu – *ukusisela* and *ukwethekela*, founded on the principles of obligation rather than accumulation, preventing problems rather than creating them was inconceivable in my initial stages of the thesis. The Western ground I was standing on lacked a grasp of other societies resulting in it injecting its problems everywhere and assuming that all societies are obsessed with their material conditions. This according to Mafeje, is a result of the fact that the sciences as we know them today are the result of the industrial revolution in England, hence the focus on order and progress (1976: 311). The industrial project and the thinking related to it was brought to the rest of the world as a civilizing project that we now know was a colonising project. Colonialism, though a historical solution to Western problems, cannot be regarded as a virtuous project, and, indeed, it proved an oppressive instrument for non-Western people. Thus, what appears and is experienced as a solution in one context can easily be experienced as a negative force in another. We need to be alert to these possibilities as ignoring them might result in a downward spiral for all.

Being situated at the university poses a unique challenge in the exploration of non-Western epistemologies for the point of departure in the university is Western and thus it is very difficult to operate outside the West. Working within has a tendency of converting those within to mimic 'the Western man' who takes upon himself to go and solve imagined problems in other societies. For Spivak (2010), this is a result of the fact that the academic project is driven by the assumption of the Western man as a subject that represents the other. According to Mbembe, this stems from

traditions in which the knowing subject is enclosed in itself and peeks out at a world of objects and produces supposedly objective knowledge of those objects. The knowing subject is thus able, we are told, to know the world without being part of that world and he or she is by all accounts able to produce knowledge that is supposed to be universal and independent of context. (2015: 9).

The radical scholarship is yet to address the problem of the Western man as the knowing subject. The so-called radical scholarship has tended to reproduce the very same logic

of universality where the Western man represents the rest of the world. Continuing with the very logic of universalism that stifles all other epistemologies outside of the Western world. Foucault for example, has popularised the idea of discursivity, suggesting understanding communities outside of the already established categories. This is sinister, as one would wonder how can something outside of the known be known and who has the power to bring it forth? A question that Trouillot asks, “can historical narratives convey plots that are unthinkable in the world within which these narratives take place?” (1995: 73) It would seem that the idea of the discursive stem from a Western man “devising formulas to repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse” (ibid: 72). It would appear then that there is nothing outside of Western thinking. This certainly has a religious undertone: “In the beginning there was nothing but the Western world!” It is certainly an idea born from a cosmological worldview developed during the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and cloned as science and therefore factual and natural. Western epistemology’s presentation of itself as scientific discourse hides the fact that it is a belief system. It is against this backdrop that we should also understand the thinking of the Western world as problem oriented rather than solution driven. But more importantly and dangerously, Western thought has a mythical dimension to it. According to Mbembe, “Whiteness is at its best when it turns into a myth. It is the most corrosive and the most lethal when it makes us believe that it is everywhere; that everything originates from it and it has no outside” (2015: 3). This myth has been advanced as representing progress that “is at the foundation of all modern science” (Dussel 2013: 13, footnote 13) though “cannot be proven empirically” (ibid). This is a myth that needs to be demythologised (Mbembe 2015; Argyrou 2012).

For anthropology, the Western foundations of representation have proven to be problematic. The important question to address in relation to these foundations is “how could representation be something to know with when at the same time it was itself a thing to be known” (Argyrou 2012: 12). This question is even more pertinent when it comes to anthropology because its object of study is the Other – those that are understood as different from the Western man. It is within this context that we should understand early anthropologists such as Tylor (1874) embarking on a mission to demonstrate that no matter how different the Other seems, he is basically the same as the European man. Thus, in studying the Other, the early anthropologists were studying themselves, or so they believed (Levi-Strauss 1966). However, it would seem that in



their quest to learn about themselves, they went about it the wrong way by studying the Other using Western epistemology which produced myriad of challenges. More dangerously is the method used to understand the Other, the world and subsequently themselves, which makes the Western man the knowing subject. This subject according to Said “analyzes, amasses evidence, theorizes, speculates about everything – except itself” (1989: 212). So, the Western man moves from being a knowing subject to be a known subject that does not need any scrutiny. The question of “who speaks? for what? and to whom?” (ibid) is irrelevant when it comes to him. Indeed, these are the basic foundations of anthropology that have become very problematic. I contend that in today’s context, a European man still needs to know himself if he has to compare himself with other Beings, but the strategy has to change on how to get to the knowledge about other Beings. But more importantly, it is important to study the European man, who is the real native (Argyrou 2012) in order to understand the kind of society that has produced him and to respond to the anthropological quest of knowing the self.

Anthropology has long begun to question itself so as to find better ways of responding to its central question. However, most radicalism in anthropology has tended to render anthropology useless. For instance, Clifford & Marcus (1986) *Writing Culture*, exposed problems around the knowing subject and concluded that ethnographic text were actually fiction. However, this seemingly radical anthropology did not escape the problem of Sameness as they claimed to represent all anthropologists, yet again. For Clifford (1988), Malinowski's questionable ethnographic studies was evidence enough to throw the baby with the bath water. This extreme response to problems is, indeed, typical within the Western canon (Grosfoguel 2011). It is clear that they did not realise that these problems were very much a general feature of Western scholars with no access to the language, the culture and the cosmological grounding of the societies they were studying. For instance, my mother a staunch Christian, (so much that at her funeral, the pastor said when rapture happens and he does not see her he will know that it is not rapture) would always tell the story of her father who passed away in 1973, but who in 1983 visited her to tell her that she should leave my father and he (her father) would walk the life path with her. A message she honoured and left my father. In 2006 when she was 62 she took an early retirement and got her provident fund, with some of the money, she decided to do a ceremony to thank her father. We all went to Vryheid, to her brother’s house where the ceremony took place. I do not know the details of what

happened exactly because we arrived on the day of the ceremony when the slaughtering had already happened. However, our uncle told us that those who wanted *isiphandla* (a hand bangle made from a goat skin) could get it, and my brothers and I got one. I wore *isiphandla* just to show that I was proud of my Zulu culture but not that I believed in what it is worn for. The point I am driving at here is that, even though we were raised by a Christian woman who took us to church every Sunday, sent us to school and raised us in an urban area, she still exposed us to another epistemology, the one that taught us that people do not die but continue to live even when they have passed on. This is the knowledge that I preserved, and when I needed to use it, I could retrieve and put it to use. This sets me apart from anthropologists that do not have it. As an African, I bring a unique experience to the discipline. This experience addresses the challenges that Clifford & Marcus (1986) raised, where knowledge would be seized from a community which is a “mine from which data is extracted” (Nhemachena *et al.* 2016: 20) to be polished elsewhere. My role as an anthropologist is rather to bring different knowledges to the fore. Evans-Pritchard has made the appeal that we should forgive the flaws of earlier anthropologists as he argues, “if some of the theories (anthropological) put before you appear rather naïve, I would ask you to bear certain facts in mind. Anthropology was still in its infancy” (1965: 5). My take is that we should not just forgive anthropology, but we should come up with corrective measures to ensure that the responsibility assigned to the discipline is attained and that the humanist project of enlightenment is realised. This is achievable because the non-Western societies drawing from non-Western epistemologies still exist, co-existing with the Western world. The epistemology that gave birth to the unthinkable Haitian revolution (Trouillot 1995) and the epistemology of the people of Vryheid still exists. As such, we can remain true to the original foundations of the Western science in general and of anthropology in particular.

### **The everyday life of communities: A decolonial dream**

As already asserted that this study is within the Western world, so when I started the research I was driven by the ‘problem statement’ that suggested that *stokvels*, a membership-based savings scheme, providing for the social and financial wellbeing of members as well as entertainment (Lukhele 1990) were a growing phenomenon and thus important to understand the logic thereof. My suspicion was that they were drawing from a different economic system, as they did not seem to be driven by profit.

However, the recent focus on *stokvels* by scholars such as Verhoef (2008, 2002, and 2001) have tended to completely overlook the entertainment part that in actuality used to be an integral part of *stokvels*. Where entertainment is mentioned in relation to *stokvels* it is reduced to a coping mechanism. This take on *stokvels* is strange in that when I grew up I remember *stokvels* being understood as some sort of parties where people would bring money for contribution, buy food and alcohol from the host, and everyone would have great fun. It is noteworthy that the idea of *stokvels* as parties has subsided because of the rise of clubs in the suburban areas that are generally safer and provide more status. As such, *stokvels* have become more of Rotating Saving and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) and burial societies. Though *stokvels* have become ROSCAs and burial societies, a different worldview from the Western one still finds expression in these spaces. The worldview is very much the type discussed in the Braamfischer Helping Hand Burial Society used as a point of departure for the study, where the *stokvel* would be more concerned with a person's well being than the money it has accrued.

Interestingly, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2018, the South African National broadcaster (SABC), channel 2 known as SABC 2 aired one of its shows *Ke Zaka* (literally meaning 'this is money', where *zaka* is a slang for money, used mainly by baSotho, baPedi and baTswana) that helps *stokvel* members to maximise profit from their savings. In this episode, the focus was on a *stokvel* group: *Dynamite Burial Society*, a male only *stokvel* that had a problem with their members not paying their membership fee. To try resolve the problem, they wrote to the programme requesting assistance. What was intriguing though, was that, even though some members were not paying their membership fee, they were able to buy alcohol for their own enjoyment during their *stokvel* meetings. For the presenter of the show, this was outrageous, and he expressed concern that *stokvel* members were not taking their *stokvel* seriously enough. Clearly, the presenter is unaware that in the past, alcohol was an integral aspect of the *stokvel* culture. It is obvious that his views are informed by the dominant view prevalent in the media that has reduced *stokvels* to ROSCAs and burial societies. But what is also interesting is the insistence by *stokvel* members to bring back the social aspect of the *stokvel* as seen in the Helping Hands Burial Society and entertainment as in the case of *Dynamite* burial society. The insistence on the social and entertainment aspects of *stokvels* by *Helping Hands Burial Society* and *Dynamite* burial society seems to be geared towards

members' happiness much in line with my uncle's ceremony that chooses doing right by the ancestors over capitalist frugality. It is this everyday life with its mundanities that seems to give meaning to communities. This life can provide us with rich 'data' in our endeavour to explore possibilities of a better world. It would seem that these communities have a totally different perspective on money. While in the Western world the preoccupation is materiality and how to make provision for it, these communities prove to be more concerned about doing the right things from a culture point of view. In this way, they reveal an interesting logic, fundamentally different from the Western one. It seems that the wars at the beginning of colonialism such as the battle of Encome and the battle of Isandlwana were fought over cattle as expressed in the war cry, *yemuk'inkomo kababa* (my father's cow is being washed away)<sup>76</sup>. From a cultural point of view, it can be argued that amaZulus were victorious in these battles as their culture is still intact in their communities and the people are practicing it without any anxieties. These communities are persistent in living out their culture, drawing from their own belief systems. Steeped in the world that encourages people to save and to live within stringent budgets, god knows for what, the *Helping Hands Burial Society* seems to advocate for a different value system in their insistence that members who are guilty of stealing money apologise rather than repay the monies stolen. A different value system is also advocated by my cousins who are slaughtering three cows in one day and spend on food to appease the ancestors, the same seems to go with *Dynamite* burial society whose members would buy alcohol and enjoy each other's company even when they do not have money to pay their monthly contributions.

The everyday life of the *stokvel* members and my cousins in Vryheid show that although members of communities are affected by capitalism, it would seem that they do not obsess about it. They seem to have lives so much vaster than it and its dictates. Inasmuch as these community members are in the Western world but it would seem that there are parts of their lives that are not linked to the "imperial/colonial organization of society" (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2009: 132), indeed a decolonial dream. While the Westernised need to decolonise to be able to delink from the nightmare (ibid),

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<sup>76</sup> As explained in Chapter Three that a cow among the Ngunis is a means to communicate with the ancestors, which is an integral part of their culture as such, a cow is a representative of culture as without cows you cannot exercise this culture.

other communities have nothing to de-link from as they have always drawn from a system that is not linked to the Western logic. This is not thinking from experience but from a different cosmological worldview and insisting on it, a dream for decoloniality. This would seem to be confirming what Tlostanova & Mignolo argue that “decolonial option is an option among many already existing ones” (ibid: 144). It is clear therefore that the Western way of life, of materiality, is not the only way of living as these communities show us and material needs are not the only needs worth attending to all the time. In these communities, we are also witnessing a rejection of the view that knowledge can only be produced from lived experience. We come across a knowledge that is informed by a cosmological worldview and that has always been present in some societies. More importantly, they are debunking the myth that suggests that all societies are or have been colonised. Rousseau's statement might just have been informed by such an observation

It is an extremely remarkable thing that after the many years that Europeans have spent tormenting themselves to convert the savages of various countries of the world to their way of life, they have not been able yet to win a single one, not even with the blessing of Christianity” (Rousseau 1984, Cited in Maldonado-Torres 2009: 123).

Evidently, local modes of thought persist one way or the other but remain invisible to us Westerners and Westernised because of our inability to see the wood for the trees (Mafeje 1998: 3), our limited materialist outlook on life.

### **Journeying back to anthropology: rethinking my role in the academy**

My experience in Esihlengeni has inspired me to reflect deeply on my own life in academia within the Western context. The Western world is a world characterised by the entanglements of various forms of oppression (Grosfoguel 2011). This world, with all its entanglements remains a colonial world, as Grosfoguel notes, “we still live in a colonial world” (2008: 607). We must, however, also clarify that not everyone lives in this world, or to be more nuanced, the levels of being in this world are not the same for everyone but depends on one’s proximity to whiteness. It is the proximity to whiteness that I have increasingly become sensitive to<sup>77</sup>. This sensitivity, the awareness, feels like

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<sup>77</sup> What I need to highlight is that my proximity to whiteness is not just based on being Christianised, being in the urban area and being educated, but the fact that when my parents separated, it meant that we were removed completely with the rest of the family in such a way that we did not attend any family gatherings for 20 years. While other people who would seem to be in a similar situation as mine, some

a log in my eye has been removed. I now see clearly where I am located. This study has helped me to locate myself properly and know that I belong in the discipline of anthropology and my contribution belongs in anthropology. However, claiming my belonging in anthropology is a struggle in itself.

I came out from the study with greater awareness that there are other worlds outside of this colonial world. It is within the context of this realisation that I came to own the idea that my experiences were uniquely mine. I found myself accepting the fact of my positionality made it difficult for me to forge any allegiance with the communities in Vryheid and Esihlengeni in particular, because of my proximity to whiteness. When I realised that I embodied Western values, inculcated in me by Christianity, urbanisation and education, the level of my education even, I had to accept that I could not join hands with the people of Esihlengeni without bringing my personal issues. I found myself asking a very difficult question: What I am doing? Why am I doing this research? The honest truth was that I was doing it for the qualification. I then realised that I was actually being baptised to the discipline I had come to detest over the years and had wanted to dissociate myself from at all cost. But now that I am here, still in it, what is my role?

First, because my existence is situated in two epistemologies: Western and African epistemologies, the knowledge I bring is therefore different. For instance, getting the right information from the people of Esihlengeni required a certain positionality, the unique ground that I happened to occupy. While I am standing on a Western ground, I am also exposed to an African epistemology by virtue of my culture, language, home education and upbringing. I am not fully convinced by Western epistemology even as I have also been educated within it. I move about it with an element of doubt. This doubt has enabled me to move away from the starting point of abstraction or concrete, as Western epistemology would dictate, and rather base my scholarship on both abstraction and concrete experience to produce knowledge in response to concrete challenges I am confronted with in the discipline and in life. Even though I doubt the Western epistemology, I am aware that I have “no option but to play the dominant

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still had access to other worldviews from partaking in extended family gatherings. So, my proximity to whiteness is unique and cannot be generalised.

game. The crucial question is how to play it” (Argyrou 2012: 6). For me, playing this game fairly means being as authentic as possible. I do not consider assimilation as much as it is about contributing to the much-needed knowledge allowing the discipline of anthropology to fairly make a comparison of different societies. Drifting away from the community of Esihlengeni should not imply docility within the system, but clarity of issues and of one's struggle within the discipline and the system. But more importantly it is about awareness of one's location and positionality in relation to one's experiences and struggle, learning to appreciate where one is, and as for me, I am currently located in the discipline of anthropology.

Locating myself within the discipline of anthropology has its challenges. For one, I have experienced a great deal of suffocation as an anthropology student and continue to experience it as a faculty member of the university. I am located in a university space with symbols that over-glorify certain bodies and present them as examples of ‘pure-excellence’ (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 5). A space that has demanded that I unlearn everything I learnt from my social and cultural context, representing it as “nothing but folk knowledge, barbarism and superstitious” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 11). A space that taught me that my knowledge of being umZulu was inadequate, as it was not filtered through the Western lenses (Nhemachena *et al.* 2016) and true knowledge was that produced by Gluckman (1940) among others. To make sure that I learn the ‘correct’ knowledge, the knowledge was even conveyed in isiZulu by the likes of Myburgh (1942) in case English did not succeed in conveying it. I experienced anthropology as an alienating space because of “an overly Eurocentric index of knowledge production in Africa and globally” (Nyamnjoh 2017: 22). Now I find myself embracing a discipline that I have been its object of since its very beginnings. A discipline that presented me as “hopelessly degraded” (Magubane 2006: 102.8). But truth is, it is not my degeneracy that must be eradicated but rather the degeneracy of the system (*ibid*).

Consequently, this project is a protest against the injustices I experienced, and I am still experiencing as a perpetual student/scholar. I am 'returning' to the discipline of anthropology to play a part, to continue the scholarship of those who came before me, scholars such as Mafeje who insisted that we study communities in the ‘vernacular’. In other words, that we study societies in their own terms and not to force them into Western categories, as Nhemachena *et al* (2016) cautions. The proposition that Mafeje

made is a practical proposition that scholars such as Amadiume (1987) and Oyěwùmi (1997, 2016) have heeded, and have since produced knowledge that is not filtered through Western lenses. So, I have come back to the discipline to continue the project of decolonisation. Such knowledge should resuscitate the humanist project that is the foundation of the Western sciences. To be clear, my decolonisation pursuit is not about creating a new world, I leave that for others, mine is to make sure that while we are in this Western world as the Westernised, we enjoy the promise of enlightenment; of freedom and of democracy (Kenrick 2011).

### **The struggle ahead: coming face to face with coloniality**

The decolonisation call of democratisation and equality is certainly also a call to confront the issue of coloniality in the discipline of anthropology. In other words, decolonisation should expose systematic exclusion and the silencing of other knowledges outside the Western paradigm. A classic example of what I see as the silencing and exclusion of the other, African voices for one, is the article by Comaroff published in 2010, titled: *The End of Anthropology, yet Again: On the Future of an In/Discipline*. In this article, Comaroff brilliantly outlines the epochs that seem to have dented the discipline, but also shows the resilience of the discipline because of its unit of analysis: culture. However, in this enticing article, Comaroff makes a huge omission, he ignores Mafeje, who, in 2001 wrote a very detailed and thorough article titled: *Anthropology in Post Independence Africa: End of an Era and the Problem of Self-Redefinition*. Among others, the latter article engaged Comaroff & Comaroff's work. According to the editor of the American Anthropology journal, Boellstorff, "you need to demonstrate you are pushing a conversation forward – but this is impossible unless you show you are aware of the conversation" (2010: 354). Comaroff's silence on Mafeje is worrying, one is not sure whether he is not aware of Mafeje or if he is aware of him and deliberately rubbishing his contribution by not acknowledging it. Indeed, one is left wondering about the conversation Comaroff is having, if he is consciously omitting important engagements and their possible conclusions or if he is so set on reaching a particular conclusion that he deliberately overlooked Mafeje, an African scholar.

To highlight Mafeje's contribution to debate - In 1976 Mafeje started the conversation on the future of anthropology in his article *The Problem of Anthropology in Historical*



*Perspective: An Inquiry into the Growth of the Social Science.* Comaroff conveniently seems to overlook Mafeje who contributed what I believe was seminal work on the challenges faced by the discipline and successfully shed light on the foundational challenges of the discipline and more saliently, pointed out that they are not uniquely anthropological. It is troubling that a South African anthropologist, that is if Comaroff still regards himself as a South African, will see no value in having a conversation with a fellow South African anthropologist engaging in a similar topic of great importance to the discipline. This is certainly feeding into Sithole's argument that scholars allied to the Western school of thought side-lines or marginalises African thought. She states, "avoiding at all costs and vehemently discouraging, African or local schools of thought" (2009: 2). Maybe I am being unfair to Comaroff to expect him to engage Mafeje, as Comaroff is not questioning the Western epistemology but is defending it. Perhaps this should be expected from him, as Boellstorff puts it, "there is no requirement regarding which school of thought or intellectual conversation any particular manuscript draws from" (2008: 282). But it should be mentioned that in this state of permissibility, that seems to democratise the discipline, there remains some element of coloniality and it must be confronted and addressed.

Decolonisation is an ongoing project in South Africa that, in recent years, has been intensified by the *Fees Must Fall* and *Rhodes Must Fall* movements, calling for a decolonised education, among others. However, it is important to acknowledge that, in actual fact, the decolonisation project was already in motion at the beginning of colonialism, as argued by Tlostanova & Mignolo (2009). Indeed, the early anti-colonial wars formed a foundation for current modes of resistance, struggles against being made non-human in Westernised spaces, founded on ideals of "equality, liberty and fraternity". I am now "returning" to the discipline with an important task at hand. I come back to the discipline to call for a decolonial anthropology that is born "with histories, sensibilities and still open wounds of global coloniality" (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2007: 142), a call to transform the discipline to its totality. Because decoloniality has "a strong influence on 'nurturing', shaping and transforming subjectivities, which are disputed, in other realms, by religious orders and market gurus" (ibid). I come back to bring the knowledge from Esihlengeni to stand side by side with the knowledges from elsewhere such that we no longer draw from one epistemology but from many ways of knowing. Anthropology still has the task of

researching the knowledge of the 'Other' but this should be done outside its dualistic and atomistic approaches as Kenrick (2011) suggests. Nhemachena *et al.* argue that Africa is "a continent with inherent knowledge yearning for epistemic independence and majority status" (2016: 21). This is not knowledge for its own sake, but important knowledge to help the Western world to answer its ontological question of who is human. As such, anthropology desperately needs this knowledge, so that we are sure that the comparison made is fair and justified.

### **Futuristic anthropology**

I want to contend that the future of anthropology lies in its going back to its original foundations as Kenrick posits "democracy and science [should be] the daily practice of keeping lines of communication open in order to enable knowledge to be generated and decisions to be made collectively" (2011: 32-3). This can only happen through transformation, diversification and democratisation in the discipline such that the humanistic project of enlightenment is achieved. Van Gennep best articulates the hope for anthropology thus, "I would say that ethnography in the twentieth century will provide the foundation upon which a new philosophical conception of mankind will be based" (cited on Kenrick 2011: 16). So far, I have articulated the importance of knowledge in anthropology, but it is not knowledge for itself that I am interested in but, most importantly, the manner in which the knowledge is produced. True, anthropologists drawing from different epistemologies can contribute to this kind of knowledge and to the diversification of knowledge. Secondly, anthropology can contribute to the appreciation of a dynamic at play between objects of knowledge and tools of analysis. Anthropology has been premised on the idea that we study the other in order to understand the self. This approach has resulted in the self as a knowing subject that has also remained unknown. Basically, the unknown subject is the 'Western man' who from the beginning of his time has been trying to figure himself out. It will follow then that the true object of study should be the Western man. The future of anthropology lies therefore on knowledge about the unknown subject, the Westerner that should be placed alongside the knowledge of the Other.

Indeed, it would seem important for the discipline to understand a society that gives birth to a man whose sole mission is to save the Other, a man whose story should be eternally preserved, as Margaret Thatcher states, "the story of how Europeans explored

and colonized and – yes without apology – civilized much of the world is an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage” Kenrick citing Solomon & Black 1994: 154). The other day I was having a conversation with one of my white colleagues about the politics and experiences of black people in the Western world and she mentioned something that was quite unexpected and made me ponder. She said, while she fully understood my point, but most of the time when she is with her family, and, to a large extent, when she is in her community, she always feels that she does not fit in. This triggered something in me, that as anthropologists we study people, but we know very little about white people, and this is probably the case the world over. Nyamnjoh (2012) has pointed out the existence of an over-representation of black people within scholarship but without any serious engagement with their epistemological grounding. His point has been met with white fragility (see an article by Isak Niehaus, a response to Nyamnjoh’s article) an attitude that DiAngelo expresses as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (2011: 54). Clearly, we do need to understand what it means to be white living in a white supremacist world, a world that makes you a centre of the universe. What pathologies might result from an ego enlarged at the expense of other Beings? Indeed, it would seem that the future of anthropology lies in knowing this unknown subject.

But also, studying around (to echo Nyamnjoh 2013) is as equally important. It should be seen as a part of studying the self and can help us better understand those that have been incorporated into the Western world but not completely. Fanon had begun to study this category of people in his *Black Skins, White Masks*. Anthropology, therefore, should surpass Kenrick’s idea of ‘unthinking Eurocentrism’, which is confined to methods based on atomistic and dualistic approaches, but he completely excludes the subject with a ‘god-eye-view’ (2011: 14), his epistemology and the system that produces pathologies linked to it. Comaroff also presents a narrow view of anthropology in his claim that anthropology is necessary to produce knowledge “about the human predicament [of Western and Westernised human] – and how best to make sense of it in the perplexing history of the present” (2010: 533). Before we talk about 'Indiscipline, trans-discipline and post-discipline', anthropology still has an enormous task ahead. The task of helping us understand the society that has produced men that have Hitler among them (Césaire 1972), men that have committed gross atrocities, and continue to do so in the guise of redeeming the Other, men with an excessive greed that

their sole preoccupation is accumulation. Only then can we reach Van Gennep's hope of contributing to a new mankind that could perhaps give birth to a new world.

### **Coloniality in decoloniality: a case for contention**

While I propagate for decolonial anthropology, I am mindful of the limitations that decoloniality operates within, which I think are important for decoloniality. Albeit, decoloniality does not shy away from asking questions, not just about the world and the other, but about the self as well: how are we a problem? Decoloniality is not a closed project, but a form of thinking in action (Maldonado-Torre 2016). In decoloniality we are implementing theory while we are still thinking about it. It echoes Mafeje, "clear identification of issues is as important as fighting in the streets or in the mountains." (1976: 333). And Fanon's final prayer, "O my body, make me always a man who questions" (2008: 181) which calls for a constant questioning of all our endeavours. By such persistent interrogation, decoloniality has made an important contribution. The interrogation has also entailed the questioning of inclusion and acceptance by the Western scholarly establishment and thus has helped us break away from the colonial 'European gift' of representation (Argyrou 2012) that has kept the rest of the world in bondage. But importantly, in its insistence that we always question, include question our actions, it has enabled us to locate our struggle such that we do not reproduce what we seek to eradicate. It is in this context that we can appreciate Fanon's reflection, "Since I was born in the Antilles, my observations and my conclusions are valid only for the Antilles" (ibid: 7). This is the spirit with which I bring my point of contention in the discussion.

My first point of contention comes from the assertion of the matrix of coloniality of power, knowledge and being. An idea that I believe should be scrutinised as it insinuates that Western colonialism is inescapable. A view that Comaroff & Comaroff also believe in as they argue that "capitalist modernity has few, if any, exteriors that its exclusions and its outsides are integral to its inner working" (2013: 20). This for me, is a myth that Mbembe (2015) alludes to. Comaroff & Comaroff using the same logic of colonial matrix of power argue that "there is much south in the north, much north in the

south” (2013: 20) <sup>78</sup>. While decoloniality of Comaroff & Comaroff might be questionable given their positionality, their argument is not far from that of some decolonial scholars from the global south such as Tlostanova & Mignolo, who also believe that the destruction of coloniality will emanate from within as there is nothing outside of it. In their words, “modernity/coloniality inadvertently, generate critical dimension from within and in its colonial side it nourishes the seed of decolonial consciousness” (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2009: 144). One wonders where does the idea that there are other epistemologies outside of Western epistemology come from, if Western epistemology has penetrated everything. For me, this thinking is similar to Foucault’s idea of the panopticon that nobody is able to see except him. Or even worse, it is an extension of what Bhabha calls the in-between, which is the Western creation as this in-between is the result of colonialism. This view contradicts what Grosfoguel envision as a decolonial world

that a truly universal decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal (one particular that raises itself as universal global design) but would have to be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as oppose to a universal world (2011: 4).

It would seem that Tlostanova & Mignolo contradict the very decolonial claim that there are many ways of knowing. In fact, the belief that the West has no exterior can be considered a form of “epistemic racism [which] is the inferiorization of non-Western epistemologies and cosmologies to privilege Western epistemology as the superior form of knowledge” (Grosfoguel 2009: 98). It would seem to me that the idea that colonialism colonised everything as, at best, is self-defeating, and at worst, is colonial. The claim also suggests that the decolonial scholars embody the imperial man’s 'god-eye-view' that sees everything and is everywhere.

The second point of contention is the activist component of decoloniality. That element of decoloniality is, in many ways, a result of Western epistemology. Nyamnjoh succinctly states,

because this epistemology is closely entangled with ideology and hegemony, it leaves little room for critical thinking even as it celebrates Cartesian rationalism. The result,

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<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, in this article they claim to be speaking from Africa, and one wonders how Africa is different from the logic that Africa has so much of Europe/North America as Europe/North America has so much of Africa, so where exactly are they speaking from?

quite paradoxically, is an emphasis on doing rather than thinking, and all attempts at serious questioning are rationalized away” (2004: 165).

There is an emulation of God here, as Maldonado-Torres contends, “Modern imperial man is no pagan. He does not divinize nature, but rather becomes himself God” (2006: 113-4). In this mode of doing, the myth of Sameness (Argyrou 2012), he resurfaces to forge coalitions. In fact, decolonial scholars such as Lugones (2010) and Mignolo (2009) have argued against Sameness through their articulation of the colonial difference. I want to stretch that argument further, that it is not just the colonial difference but an epistemological difference as well. “Sameness can never manifest itself in the world - the attempt reproduces Otherness” – which is difference understood as cultural inferiority” (Argyrou 2012:1). For Maldonado-Torres, “Western philosophy, particularly Western metaphysics, is characterized by the forgetfulness of Being and by a denial of ontological difference” (2007: 249). If we are to be true to the idea of pluriversal communities then communities such as the community of Esihlengeni would not need Marx or Fanon, as we do. In the earlier section, I have shown that the fact that people are seemingly living a Western life does not mean that they have been totally swallowed by it. The life of the people of Esihlengeni is not dominated by the capitalist system and its demands but by the upholding of values and beliefs that, for the most part, predates the capitalist system. Insisting to be part of the ‘struggle’ in communities, such as Esihlengeni is a refusal to acknowledge our positionality and proximity to whiteness. It is a refusal to allow communities their right to difference. As my friend Lerato Seohatse would say, understanding that part of being Westernised is to be a doer, and therefore, the most revolutionary thing that one can do, is to do nothing for others.

Being schooled in the Western system, according to Nyamnjoh, presents one with “an epistemology that claims the status of a solution, there is little room for introspection or self-scrutiny, since countervailing forces are invariably to blame for failure” (2004: 164). Understandably, it is difficult for Westerners and Westernised to come to terms with this. Activism is not always a sacred cow as it is often presented and always has its blind spots. For example, Jefferson was an activist of note, a freedom fighter and yet he had his blind spot: he owned slaves. The idea of activism as a noble act seems to feed into Foucault’s analysis, which is within the Western canon that politicise everything. For instance, he argues “if one is interested in doing historical work that

has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question” (2007: 174). For Spivak (2010), this line of thinking is rooted in the compelling desire from the Westerners to remain subjects and thus represent the subaltern. As such, when we take any scholarship uncritically we risk entrapment in the Western while performing decoloniality. Ndebele cautions

You see, too much obsession with removing oppression in the political dimension, soon becomes in itself a form of oppression. Especially if everybody is expected to demonstrate his concern somehow. And then mostly all it calls for is that you thrust an angry fist into the air. Somewhere along the line, I feel, the varied richness of life is lost sight of and so is the fact that every aspect of life, if it can be creatively indulged in, is the weapon of life itself against the greatest tyranny (1980: 236).

It is my submission that there is coloniality in decoloniality. The colonial aspects of decoloniality are found in those parts of the scholarship that advances a politics of radical rupture from the Western world while, on the other hand, denying the existence of authentic non-Western elements among us, non-captured aspects of our realities or other people's realities that we can draw from in our thinking, imagination and actions. The case of Esihlengeni demonstrates that we are not all totally and equally captured by the West and its capitalist economy, and this fact has yet to be appreciated by decolonial scholarship and activism. Scholars such as Wallerstein believe that the Western world will come to an end. He posits, “We can be certain that there is a *cairos*, a TimeSpace of which transformation does occur, a TimeSpace in which we all exercise our free will for good or ill. And when it comes, we choose our new order (Wallerstein 1988: 296). Dussel contends, “We stand at the threshold of a new age of history given the exhaustion of the premises upon which modernity is founded” (2013: 17). For Tlostanova & Mignolo, “the 500 years of Western imperial domination – is ending” (2009: 139). But until then, we should find spaces that are authentically ours, and communities such as Esihlengeni are true examples of such spaces.

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# APPENDIX E: BAB'ZULU'S CASE

SAP 21

**SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS**  **SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE**

P/Bag X 5087

Verwysing Reference	
Navrac Enquiries	Snr Supt. Mbele Insp. Sibya
Telefoon Telephone	035 - 8361013
Faksnommer Fax number	035 - 8361014


**OFFICE OF THE STATION  
COMMISSIONER  
NONGOMA  
3950**

16 November 2005


Mr Zakhele Ernest Buthelezi  
Supervisor SWB Staff

**COMPLAINT : 74/5 COWS TAKEN AWAY FROM OWNERS IN THE YAR 1991  
CAS NO. 101/08/91  
YOUR LETTER WITH CAS 101/08/91 DATED 2005.11.16 REFERS**

1. I hereby wish to report that the present Station Commissioner of Nongoma police station was appointed as such on 2005.08.01 and transferred to Nongoma police station on 2005.08.08 . He was never at Nongoma police station before the above mentioned date.
2. According to police station records the case of stock theft CAS 101/08/91 was never reported at Nongoma police station. No case of 74/5 cows know by any member of Stock Theft Official.
3. Enquiry can be made at SAPS Ngome.

 **SNR SUPT.  
STATION COMMISSIONER : NONGOMA  
SA MBELE**

/ink

  
My Country,  
Mizantsi  
Afrika  
1970  
Celebrating 30 years of unity



**INVESTIGATED AND COMPILED  
BY  
MR HLABEZAKHE ERNEST BUTHELEZI  
PRIVATE LAWYER**

Case No	101/08/91
Vryheid Magistrate Court	0344131350
Vryheid Stock theft	0349899042
Vryheid Stock theft	0349899127/130
Magudu Police Station	0344141014
Engome Police station	0349671881
Nongoma Police Station	0358361013
Bruwer	0349671881
Bruwel Fax	0349671866
Vryheid stock theft unit	0349899042
Magudu Ngwenya2.02/05	0344141014
Phongolo magistrate Court	0344131350 Fentel
Ms Smith Fax	0344132098

Investigation started on the 2/02/05

On this day I phoned Phongolo Magistrate Court with the intentions of getting a docket, I've spoken to Mr Fentel who than refereed me to the Klerk Miss Zama who promised to phoned me back later this day with the information about this docket. The time was 13.10 PM

On this day of the 29/03/05 I phoned Zama again for the second time and she told me that she gave all the information to Mrs Smith who deals with the dockets.

On the very same day I phoned Mrs Smith and she told me to write her a letter with the whole information as well as the case No and I did that on the next day on the 30th/03/05  
This is the fax No She gave me 0344132098

After waiting for a respond from Mr Bruwer for so long, on Monday the 12th of Dec I decided to give him a call and find out what is delaying him to respond to my letter. I phoned him at 10.00 and lucky I got hold of him, he promised to respond on this very same day before 15:00 PM so I had to wait mor hours to come.

On Tuesday the 13th of Dec at 9:00 I again phoned Mr Bruwer making the follow up. He said he is busy with it and he will fax it within an hour. I had to wait again.

On this very same day at 15:00 Pm I phoned again still making the follow up with Captain Bruwer and he said he had a wrong fax number so I gave him the number again. At 15.25 PM this day I finally received a respond fax letter from Captain Bruwer.

My conclusion with this investigation is that, the community of Engome should re-open this case so that at the end they can be ab to claime back their money for these cattles, there is no other way this can work without re-opening or opening a new case for this cattles.

Compiled by



Mr H E Buthelezi

On the 31st of March 2005 at 12.04 PM I have faxed the letter that Mrs smith had required. After some few minutes I phoned her to find out if she has received my fax, and she confirmed that she has my fax. In our talk over the phone she then changed the statement and says they do not have the docket it is kept in the police station.

I reminded her about our conversation over the phone and she then promised to get the information as well as to phone the owner of Demoniah Farm and she will get back to me on Wednesday of the 6th/04/2005 then she also said I must have a case number and that I will get it from Ingome police station and they only keep the chat sheets, but if I have the case number she can help me.

On the 11th of April 2005 at 15.00 PM I phoned Magudu Police Station and I spoke to inspector Nkwanyana who promised to check the docket on the system and call me back the same day. Mr Nkwanyana phoned me back on my cell on the very same day as he promised and he never got this case number in his system he then suggested I must check with Ingome police station, he phoned me at 15.13 PM.

On this day of the 11th of April I again phoned Mrs Smith who promised to phone me last week Wednesday and she never done that, so I phoned her at 15.50 PM and she told me that she phoned around to the police stations and no one knows anything about this case No.

On this day of the 11th of April at 15.55 PM I also phoned Engome police station and I spoken to Mr Shamase who refereed me to inspector Hibbert and she told me that their cases ends on 50 not more than that, so she said I must phone Nongoma police station and find out from them.

On the 12th of April at 09.55 Am I phoned Nongoma Police Station and I talked to Mr Zondi the superintendent in short the station manager (Untsumpa) who told me that I must phone after 5-10 minutes because Mr sbiya who deals with the dockets was not in the office at that time.