



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Rationale*

1.1.1. Background

Africa in the twenty first century remains the forgotten continent (Chimere-Dan, 1999). This is the continent where poverty is most widespread, nations are least economically productive, food security is most compromised and HIV/AIDS is most destructive (Moyo, 2009). Africa seems stubbornly depressed. Development thinkers grapple with the forces behind the continent's chronic lassitude, in an era of explosive global progress.

My main interest here, however, lies a long way below the power games of national and global politics and economics. The realities of this malaise are experienced at local level (Russel & Schneider, 2000; Amuyunzu-Nyamongom et al., 2007). Development need is only hearsay in the offices and conference rooms of professional development industrialists. In informal settlements and poor communities, it is life (Marais, 2005). It is in these settings that clusters of people, drawn to hope inspired by their own dynamic movers and shakers, gather to try to solve the problems of their own communities (Salamon, 1994; Kotzé, 2004; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). True social development happens at local level. This is where pathways into inclusion and participation in the economy need to be worn by those bold enough to march out on poverty.

Local social organisational structure is formed of essential threads. The first is local government and local level public service, with all of its potential and opportunity to transform (Friedman, 2002; Ramkisson, et al., 2004; Health Systems Trust (HST), 2008). Alongside this weakly performing potential, the people themselves form local community-based organisations (CBOs) (Edwards & Sen, 2000). This varied network of collectives forms the social fabric that has potential to open the gateways out of the margins (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006).

In an increasingly market-driven world, governments around the globe are withdrawing from their role as the primary deliverers of public services, in favour of service provision by the private sector (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Kilby, 2006; Albareda, 2008). In so doing, the public sector sometimes relinquishes most of its direct responsibility, such as in the provision of electricity in South Africa. For other services, the state provides a poor standard of mass public service, such as in education and health care. This creates the niche where the private

sector competes to provide expensive, better quality services to those who can afford them.

Those without income, living on the edges of core settlements, or in the infrastructure deprived informal settlement areas, find themselves without access to services (Russel & Schneider, 2000; Seekings, 2003). While services are, in theory, available for everyone, in marginalised settings they are frequently offered below a minimum standard to meet basic needs (e.g. medical facilities offered in state hospitals that are so sparsely distributed that they cannot be reached without unaffordable transport costs). In some instances, they are not provided at all (e.g. many marginal localities have no social worker, ambulance service or food parcel distribution). Globally, CBOs and NGOs are emerging in greater numbers to answer these opportunities and fill the niche of services for the poor (Bebbington, 1997; Mirafatab, 1997).

Community organisations may react to this situation in two ways. They can invite concerned donors to fund them to become local level service providers, filling the service gap with non-professional service equivalents or mechanisms for negotiating access to public sector facilities (Mirafatab, 1997; Kilby 2006; Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 4). Alternatively they can confront the tax base of the nation, and demand their constituents' share of its productivity, including the rights and opportunities to actively participate in that economy (Robinson & Friedman, 2007). The latter is the traditional and purist role of civil society - activists and advocates that hold society to account and creating social bridges. The role of activist can be in direct conflict with the former; the emerging role of community organisations in local service provision (Bebbington, 1997; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall, 2007; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Howell, 2008; Winkler, 2009). Although often conflated in organisations, visions and strategies, meeting the immediate needs of the poor is a very different business from addressing the causes for their situation. Responsiveness and activism have been steadily eroded where financial dependency shifts civil society from being government's '*watch-dog*' towards its '*lap-dog*' (Bebbington, 1997, Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; National Department of Social Development (NDoSD), 2005).

To become service industries for the poor, CBOs may enter into subcontracts with government or donor agencies in a model similar to that of private sector service providers (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). In entering into these contracts, CBOs become primarily accountable to those who contract their services, rather than to those who use them (Hailey, 2000; Edwards & Hulme, 1996). Clashes of organisational culture

are inherent to these relationships between CBOs and the large bureaucracies of the development industry (Abrahams, 2008).

CBOs' programmes are generally fluid, highly responsive and strategically vague (Kaplan, 2002; Strode & Grant, 2004). Their systems are necessarily loose, organic and opportunistic. They tend to rely on their knowledge, observation, intuition and good sense in making decisions, rather than a documented and formally justified evidence base. To the extent that they embrace a community-centred culture, they are immersed in participatory, consultative processes. These processes progress at the slow and sporadic pace of community dialogue (Chambers, 1995). They are likely to view satisfying, well-attended or rewarding activities as achievements, with little soul searching on the outcomes or impacts of these activities. Their organisational style may well be effective for their voluntary, locally inspired membership. It is less convincing, however, for the large bureaucracies of the aid funding industry (Bornstein, 2006a; Gasper, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Mebrahtu, 2002; Yachkaschi, 2006). Scepticism and stand-off infiltrate these relationships, and accountability of CBOs, more often of others in the relationship, is a matter of much debate (Lehman, 2007).

The CBO environment is charged with complex, convoluted, multiple, often unsynchronised accountability relationships. Heinrich (2001) talks about the monitoring and evaluation of civil society as being like "trying to nail a pudding to a wall". CBOs are *inwardly accountable* to a volunteer workforce that is both their key resource and their first client. They are *downwardly accountable* to the communities they serve, but without mechanisms for being held to account by these communities, they are potentially out of synergy with their other lines of accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Gray, et al., 2006). Where they are funded, they are also variously and differently *upwardly accountable* to multiple donor agencies and government. These too are seldom aligned to CBOs internal or downward lines of commitment.

In a world where money is power and funding is a cause for desperation, the power held by funding sources for upward accountability tends to overwhelm streams of commitment both to clients and to themselves (Eade, 2007). CBOs come to be dictated to by funders' requirements, that are informed a long way from the needs of communities or organisations (Bornstein, 2006a).

The burgeoning discipline of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been integral to this pattern of funding agencies' need to maintain control and feed their own upward accountability demands. In the fluid, spontaneously structured systems of CBOs with

multiple, interacting and yet contradicting lines of accountability, M&E has not emerged in any systematic form. Thinking, planning and evaluation depend on the leadership style within each organisation. It may be based on observations and community dialogue, or on the authoritarian position of the leader's interpretation of the local situation. It is however unlikely, to incorporate data, reporting or routine, rigorous record keeping (Eade, 2007).

Where relationships with funding agencies become part of CBO life, however, evaluation systems and rules are a requirement (Hailey, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005). These systems range from basic financial auditing to complicated accounting for the effectiveness of interventions. Funder-designed rules and conditions are dictated with varying flexibility and openness by different funder cultures. Virtually all mainstream systems are based on predictive, 'logic-based' models (Gasper, 2000). At contracting, organisations are engaged in time-bound, outcome-oriented projects, which are funded on the basis of predicted impacts, indicators and targets (Abrahams, 2008). This highly structured, linear design paradigm is directly co-opted from frameworks used in military, engineering and private sector contexts in the late 1960s. Despite these linear approaches being vaunted as superior, useful and powerful; they seldom outlive the donor relationship that requires them, and are seldom adopted for any purpose other than to maintain financial relations.

There is little to support the assumption that the logic applied in these settings is appropriate in complex social situations (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006). Instead, they are accused of distorting development, exacerbating power discrepancy, reducing organisational coherence and sustainability, fostering deception and undermining organisational self-assuredness (Bebbington, 1997; MirafTAB, 1997, Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Howell, 2002; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

1.1.2. Development as power

Development can be seen as power to self-determine and achieve a suite of basic human rights (Edwards & Sen, 2000; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008; Taylor, 2009). Power is relative, often to the power of others. Even power over oneself lies relative to a situation. The experience of power is profoundly affected by the processes through which organisations engage with each other (Reeler, 2008). Formal research, intimidating terminology, complicated quantitative approaches, impersonal checklists and dictated requirements of imposed systems constitute the exercising of power

(Miraftab, 1997; Kilby, 2006). When funders control criteria for success, dictate processes for evaluating success, and use financial opportunities to maintain this authority, power is placed firmly in the hands of the developed (Bornstein, 2006a; Eade, 2007). The target audience of the community organisation becomes the wealthy (the funding agency), rather than the poor (their community clients) (Ebrahim, 2005; Kilby, 2006). This power distortion risks warping the organisational psychology of grassroots development organisations (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006).

One consequence of playing by funders' rules is that capable, intelligent, locally knowledgeable development practitioners expend energy inventing indicators and grappling with fine distinctions of funder terminology and communication rules (Bornstein, 2006a). They may spend undue proportions of their time writing reports for which they themselves see little relevance or value, when they could be focusing on leading and managing their organisations (Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

In addition, CBOs, having been established by unpaid volunteers, are rooted in a culture based on the careful use of limited funding (Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001). This is in stark contrast with the "burn" mentality of funders, in their output-oriented environment where the stipulated rate of fund spending, or "absorptive capacity", is a vaunted performance indicator (Chambers, 1995).

Appeasing foreign ethics and wooing the culture of funding, begins to take precedence over a focus on understanding and meeting the needs of beneficiaries (Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Kotzé, 2004). Organisations risk losing sight of their purpose, diluting their integrity, and moulding projects to suit the expectations of those with financial power (Hearn, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a). Utopian vision, the capacity to question and oppose, radical criticism, political activism and control over their own administration are all compromised when organisations become financially dependent (Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000).

1.1.3. The culture of the CBO-service contractor

No longer primarily representatives of their communities and, therefore, less legitimate as members of civil society, organisations come to resemble the private sector more than civil society (Uphoff, 1995). They seek out the commercial opportunities of the specific niche at the low income, third party sponsored end of the services market. While their contribution in this niche is valuable and commendable, indeed essential to a large proportion of the population, it only weakly resembles development (Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Miraftab,

1997). Unless on some level CBOs address the causes for underdevelopment, rather than dabbling at the symptoms and dulling the immediacy to address the causes, they are simply a cog in an inequitable system.

The quality of the funder:service-provider relationship, and the potential for civil society to become a national and global '*guide-dog*', depends on the capacity of community organisations and their funders to engage with each other with equal confidence and assertiveness (Birdsall, et al., 2007). In reality, however, financial power tempts a relationship based on subservience, where community organisations find themselves in unequal and misnamed '*partnerships*' (Kilby, 2006).

Inevitably, despite insistence on prediction of outcomes and spending rates, reality does not happen in the logical patterns imagined by these models at project conception (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Organisational change is not linear or predictable. Organisations are 'contradictory, ambiguous and obtuse' (Kaplan, 2002). Development occurs sporadically. Inertia, crisis, revolution and consolidation are more typical of development processes than the linear predictability of cause and effect (Quinn Patton, 2002). Investment is unlikely to link causally or directly with achievements as planned.

One insidiously damaging phenomenon is that organisations may learn to 'endear' funders through creative reporting, subtle deception, manipulation and selective emphasis (Bornstein, 2006a; Chambers, 2005). The very process of manipulation humiliates, wastes time and emotional energy, instils fear and dilutes internal authority. Funding incentives encourage organisations to shift their focus towards their achievements, and to underplay their failures. In so doing, they lose opportunities to learn, their self-respect and their sense of personal power are eroded and as a result, development becomes undone. Perhaps the most diminishing effect of organisation embracing 'the game' is the loss of the sense of the seriousness of their social role (Bornstein, 2006a). These tensions in the balance of power tend, ultimately, to disempower rather than uplift development partners (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Kaplan, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006).

1.1.4. The funders' case

Large development funding agencies operate at scales of millions in currency, thousands of people, hundreds of projects in dozens of countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010). Funding agencies face risk of being charged with massive scale corruption, or with reallocation of their budgets, and therefore their jobs, unless they can demonstrate their own worth. If their finances are squandered or

stolen, they are held accountable to their own power structures. Some monitoring of the destination of their spending, and the outcomes of their interventions is necessary and critical to their own learning and management (O' Dwyer & Unerman, 2008; OECD, 2008). Conventional, logic-based evaluation is designed primarily to meet these needs (Ebrahim, 2005; Kilby, 2006; Gray, et al., 2006). Any alternative system for evaluation must renegotiate and meet funders' needs for accountability.

While funders may raise the objection that viable, scaleable alternative do not exist (Mebrahtu, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a), processes such as theory of change, Most Significant Change and participatory appraisal have been well described and published since the early 1990s (Chambers, 1995; Edwards, 1999). Despite this healthy discourse among development intellectuals, large scale practice has been impervious to the mainstreaming of these concepts. Until convinced and motivated to change, funders will continue to enforce their current system with its perceived advantages of established mechanisms, convenience and entrenched credibility, despite its inherent inadequacies and negative impacts.

This study is primarily intended to be another drip from the tap of objection. I explore methods of organisational evaluation for CBOs in particular. The aim of these methods is to measure productivity and performance, while meeting CBO learning needs and also attempting to meet the accountability needs of those who fund them. More compelling than method, however, the research should provide practice-based insight on the dynamics of evaluation and organisations' responses to evaluative enquiry, towards informing principles of developmental evaluation.

This research is based on the conceptual framework that evaluation based on grounded theory, rather than predictive positivist paradigms, permits more accurate, useful and empowered communication. In exploring methods that facilitate outcomes being captured primarily from experience, I present pragmatic alternatives to prediction and linearity.

1.2 Problem statement

| |
|--|
| <p>Conventional, predictive evaluation systems used by funding agencies for HIV and AIDS CBOs are too simplistic, rigid, linear and one-dimensional to accurately assess the contributions of these projects in communities, or to facilitate evaluation processes that contribute positively to organisational development.</p> |
|--|

1.3 *Research objectives*

To identify viable evaluation process elements and principles for assessing the outcomes of CBO efforts in building a community-based response to the impact of HIV, which:

- i) Support CBO self-determination and development as organisations;
- ii) Encourage responsive project planning and organisational learning;
- iii) Respond to the accountability needs of funding agencies.

1.4 *Ontology*

Ontology: "*Philosophy: The branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being. Logic: The set of entities presupposed by a theory.*"¹

Ontology refers to a view of reality. It asks us to consider what assumptions, or pre-suppositions, underpin our theory of reality. It describes the world view from which a researcher takes her perspective. Quinn-Patton (2002, p.134) considers ontology to refer to a belief in a single, verifiable truth, as opposed to socially constructed multiple realities². This fits well with the definition. If we assume that there is a truth, and that it can be described and determined, our theory reflects this. If, however, we assume that truth is relative, and can only be described as a vantage point, then theory must be quite different.

Along a 'truth - no truth' scale, I would tend to have 'no truth' leanings. Not, however, to the extent of post-modernism, where no truth means 'any truth goes'. This thesis begins from a standpoint of objecting to the perspective of conventional evaluation that takes its methods to be acceptable. In objecting to this view of truth, and postulating another perspective, there is a clear attempt to define right from wrong in a certain context, and to consider other contexts into which this might be generalised. The moderate view that truth is relative to a social situation and to the realities of a certain perspective would capture the ontology of this study. Discussion on the power over truth, and the power to be the perspective that dominates, underpins this study.

Social constructivism captures this ontology well (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 96). Reality is our own definition and interpretation of events, and is embedded in our responses.

¹ The New Collins Concise Dictionary for the English Language, London (1985)

² Intriguingly, Rossi et al. (1999:422) and Mouton & Marias (1990:19) give this exact example as defining 'epistemology'. For the purposes of this discussion I give 'ontology' the honour.

People have multiple realities influencing how they interact. The theory is referred to as “ontological relativity” (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 97), suggesting that worldviews are relative to perspective, and that empirical or positivist proof cannot prove or disprove their legitimacy.

This worldview has profound implications in the study of development and power from a critical change perspective. If truth is relative to perspective, then the perspective of the powerful will prevail, unless social conscience moderates this power (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 98). Critical theory is therefore the core epistemology that emanates from constructivism in a social development context.

1.5 Epistemology

Epistemology: “*The theory of knowledge, esp. the critical study of its validity, methods and scope.*”³

Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 134) describes epistemology as ‘How we know what we know’. It refers to matters such as objectivity, subjectivity, validity or trustworthiness of our conclusions, and generalisability.

Constructionist ontology is associated with epistemological subjectivity, related to the acknowledge bias of critical theory (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 98). It is necessarily qualitative and emergent (Creswell, 2007, p. 47). Constructivist founded methodologies consider truth to be based on consensus; facts to have no value except within a framework of values (or a story); causes and effects to be an outcome of interpretation; and specific findings to be situation specific and non-generalisable. While a thesis based on the assumption that all truth is relative and non-generalisable might be seen to have little point (Hanrahan, et al., 1999). This must be answered by a value bias towards generating greater equity for the voices of those least heard in policy and practice. With this humanistic (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 179) rights-based value lens on development, constructivist research comes to be hinged in critical theory (Potter, 1999).

The epistemology of this study is therefore best captured under critical theory (Mouton, 2001; Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 79). Critical change research acknowledges a value bias and the ideological standpoint of social contribution, from which the research emanates

³The New Collins Concise Dictionary for the English Language, London (1985)

(Potter, 1999). It may be political, socially conscientious, challenging of injustice or inequity, or motivated by any area in which change is deemed necessary by the researcher. Critical change research does not pretend to be objective (Kelly, 1999, pp. 412). It acknowledges that research is transformative in itself. This knowledge must be acknowledged and held with integrity (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 130-131). The researcher acknowledges herself as a variable in the study (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 548-549).

Mouton (2001) regards critical theory to align with a participatory paradigm, with action research as methodological approaches. The analysis captures this research perfectly. As a meta-methodological study, epistemology is relevant at the two main levels of meta-methodology and methodology.

Diversity and development research are invariably critical. In these sectors, ethics dictate that any intervention should serve a constructive purpose in the lives of participants. This concept is probably not debated. Where evaluation professionals may disagree is around what constitutes constructive change and valuable social contribution. Mainstream evaluation may promote independent, external evaluation as constructive development practice. The ideological standpoint of this study, however, is that 'participatory evaluation' and 'empowerment evaluation' (Rossi, et al., 1999, p. 36 & 58) have primacy in a community development context.

The research comes from a standpoint that questions the supremacy of 'might is right' and the ascendancy of market forces as a determining power. It calls on society to confront evolving dynamics around power, wealth and money with maturity and integrity. As victim of our own global culture we need to confront these systems from within them (Potter, 1999). It is about reining in the monster created, and reclaiming the supremacy of human thought, respect and relationship.

Critical change evaluation is usually based on action research (Potter 1999), and the methodology for this study is based on an interactive, cumulative action research approach, which is described in greater detail in the methods chapter.

1.6 Delineation and limitations

This study uses case studies of facilitated, grounded evaluation, in an iterative action research meta-evaluation model. The aim is to observe and reflect on the quality and results of these evaluation exercises, and to design improved processes in each iteration. Aspects of the evaluation that have worked may be expanded. Aspects that failed were changed or dropped. The criteria of making these changes were a reflection

of the research objectives. How did each element of the process hold power and provide learning? Is it producing information that is useful to management and credible? Would a funding agency be able to use this information in understanding the contribution that this organisation is making to its community?

The target group has been HIV and AIDS CBOs. The geographical areas were Soweto and Lawley in Gauteng, and Mabeskraal in North West Province. These were selected opportunistically, as the areas where organisations volunteered their participation. The study therefore has not attempted to evaluate organisations that are reluctant to engage in reflection, or for whom such communication is threatening or unwelcome.

While the HIV and AIDS sector represents a massive proportion of CBO, it is also a sector that works in very different conditions from traditional CBOs which might focus on local economic development, water or environmental issues. It should be noted that as a result of the wide-ranging impact of HIV and AIDS, the vast majority of social welfare CBOs, including children, nutrition, health, gender, family and social support, have been absorbed into this sector. Nevertheless, dynamics may be different in those CBOs that remain largely outside of core HIV support.

The communities in which organisations were set ranged from the rural village of Mabeskraal, to suburban Soweto, and into the informal settlement of the Lawley area. The research therefore did not extend to city centre, urban settings, or to remote, agricultural rural areas. The data were also not analysed in terms of community type or location. While the environment had profound impacts, each participating CBO was unique and its environment was only one of several determinants. There were therefore few generalisations made around responses in relation to setting. Generalisations around types of CBOs were not the intention of the study. Different CBOs contribute to the building of a process, which should be adaptable and valuable to a wide range of organisational cultures.

The study also focuses on CBOs, out of a range of stakeholders relevant to the research question. Evaluation and donor professionals participate in a reflective questionnaire, but the study methods do not extend to other input from relevant stakeholders. This is largely due to retaining focus on determining a set of methods and principles, and leaving the debate on stakeholders' response to future research. Time, resources and research volume preclude this potentially interesting dimension.

1.7 *Definitions of key terms and concepts*

Most of the terms in the title are self-explanatory. They are defined here largely in terms of how they are interpreted for the purposes of this study. A range of terms that apply to the research method are elaborated in that chapter.

This research bridges two academic communities which are quite isolated from each other and which employ similar terminology with very particular definitions. The business, training and human-resource management world refers to assessment and evaluation in one sense. The broad term, 'research', also loosely overlaps with these concepts. The development world has little interest in assessment, but has made a global discipline out of its interpretation of monitoring and evaluation. Given that this thesis rests in a Faculty of Economics and Management Science, it is important to clarify these definitions as they are applied in the development sector.

1.7.1. Community-based organisations

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are groups of people from a community who come together to serve the needs of their community. They are locally founded, staffed and focused.

Beyond this definition, they are highly diverse. They may be entirely voluntary and operate from beneath a shaded gathering area; or they may have several salaried staff working from local offices. Some are faith-based, others not. Their work may be focused or dispersed, and may include local health and counselling services, material support to vulnerable children and adults, education and awareness raising around themes such as gender and HIV, and a wide variety.

1.7.2. Evaluation

The term evaluation refers to the large and expanding field of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) which has become an increasingly high priority for government, and has been important to international aid agency for several decades.

Monitoring refers to the routine tallying of inputs, activities and outputs, and would encompass budgeting, stock management, human resource statistics and the activities of an organisation. It is useful for budgeting, auditing, resource planning and work plan management.

Evaluation describes the outcomes and impacts of those activities. Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 10), from a development evaluation academic setting, refers to programme evaluation as "*the systematic collection of information about the activities,*

characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, improve programme effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming. ... Evaluative research, quite broadly, can include any effort to judge or enhance human effectiveness through systematic data-based inquiry."

The definitions of organisational development authors, Cummings & Worley (2005, p. 178) are not dissimilar: "Evaluation is concerned with providing feedback to practitioners and organisation members about the progress and impact of interventions"

The term evaluation is also used in organisational behaviour to refer to individual performance management in the workplace (Robbins, et al., 2009, p. 361). It is important to emphasise here that this is not the definition of evaluation that is relevant to this thesis. Evaluation here refers to "understanding the value" of organisations and interventions at a higher organisational level than the individual.

Evaluation is useful for determining and justifying a strategy, understanding a context and its needs, and learning from the strategies of the past to inform management in the future. Have these activities served a purpose? Has a positive difference been made to society by these efforts? If so, is it relevant, meaningful and reasonable relative to its cost? What tells us whether this difference will be sustained or not, and the extent to which underlying causes of the problems are being addressed? Evaluation tells us about the direction and emphasis of future activities towards engaging in a particular situation.

1.7.3. Participatory

Participatory development has an entire, and debated, literature of its own (Robinson & Cousins, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). Like "community" it is a term that is ambiguous and vested in power and interest. Who participates? Who leads? Who follows? Whose voice dominates? Who is not participating in participatory approaches? The use of the term in this thesis does not become absorbed in this debate. 'Participatory' is simply used in contrast to externally driven processes where the power outside of an organisation has control over the processes within that organisation.

For our purposes, therefore, a participatory evaluation gold standard would refer to a process which is requested and commissioned by the organisation being evaluated, where that organisation's members provide the content and focus of the evaluation, where the results are of direct value and use to the organisation, and where the organisation has the right to disseminate its learning where it sees fit. The platinum

standard would be an evaluation that is also facilitated and conducted independently by the organisation through its own learning culture.

1.7.4. Development

The definition of development has evolved substantially over the last 60 years. It began as providing infrastructure and economic support to post-war Europe (Moyo, 2009), which was then extended to former colonies. 50 years ago roads, hospitals, dams and schools were 'development'. Today, the definition would probably be contested if it was given much thought. The Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000) refer to increased primary education, gender equity, reduction in extremes of poverty, access to health care and achievement of basic human rights. National development agendas revolve around improving conditions in communities with least access to employment, services and infrastructure. In global priorities, development refers to wealthy nations' responsibility to divert a proportion of their GDP to low income nations, and to the poor communities of middle-income nations, towards addressing global inequities. In the poorest countries, development often refers to wealthy nations supplying the national treasury with a substantial portion of the funding it needs to manage its affairs. In middle-income countries such as South Africa, it refers to attempting to enable treasuries to open bottle-necks in their own spending in order to reach the poorest.

These are all mechanisms for development, and draw us to a common thread of redistribution of a wide range of resources from the wealthiest to the poorest. To be sustainable, however, this redistribution must take the form of creating access for the poorest to draw in resources and opportunities for their own upliftment and inclusion. Development is underpinned by equity, access and human rights.

1.7.5. Assessment, as compared with evaluation

Although the word 'assessment' is sometimes used as a close synonym to 'evaluation', it has quite a distinct definition in human resource management, training and individual performance circles. Here, assessment generally refers to describing the qualities, progress or needs of an individual (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 217). It is often closely aligned to psychological testing (Robbins, et al., 2001, p. 97). Assessment may relate to questionnaires or other standardised tools for testing knowledge and attitudes (Groesbeck & Van Aken, 2001). Assessment is often quantitative, comparative, and detailed.

This thesis is not about assessment in the sense of individual performance management. For this reason, the word assessment is not used in this thesis, and the use of 'evaluation' refers to the definition given above.

1.8 Underlying assumptions

Reflecting on assumptions at the end of the study, I have assumed that:

- Most CBOs, and those that participated in this study, have sincere intentions to contribute in their communities, and are not simply fronts for generating income for a group of friends. Organisations like this do exist, of course. Evaluation should be able to discern them.
- Conventional evaluation applied to larger organisations is also routinely applied to CBOs. The problem statement would be a non-issue if donors made exceptions from conventional evaluation for CBOs in any case. My observation has been that while expectations might be higher for CBOs than more established organisations for petty expenditure (e.g. receipts for informal transport costs), they might be somewhat lower for outcomes.
- The worst case described under conventional, linear, predictive evaluation below may therefore seldom be applied as rigorously to CBOs. M&E training, however, uses linear planning and indicators as the standard, and strategic and operational plans would routinely be expected to follow these guidelines. Furthermore PEPFAR⁴, in particular, as a funding agency which has worked most generously with civil society organisations has rigid expectations around quantitative reporting and the use of predicted indicators.
- This assumption is also answered by the importance of finding evaluation methods that are effective, even if the conventional methods are being applied less stringently to CBOs in some cases.
- My observations and interpretations are reasonable. Everyone sees the world differently. I sometimes find myself accused of seeing it more differently than most. This assumption refers to the discussions of subjectivity that arise in the methods, discussion and conclusions. Peer review, faithful reporting of peer viewpoints that differ from mine, iterative triangulation and the acknowledgement that there are no

⁴ United States Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, major HIV and AIDS funder, managed for the US government by USAID. It is renowned for substantial expenditure, but with onerous, time-consuming reporting requirements.

doubt various interpretations and missed observations that others will build on, serve to address this assumption.

1.9 Contribution of the study

We live in an age where the gulf between rich and poor, 'developed' and 'developing', has continued to widen despite being an age when awareness, debate and global engagement are at their richest. The development industry and the flow of development aid funding may have potential to be among the key global forces to a future which addresses some of these fundamental tensions. In South Africa, where these tensions are among the world's most extreme, the impacts of inequity are starkest. The challenge of elitist, exclusionary, minority interest, power distorted society, runs deep in South Africa's pathology. It remains an intractable challenge today, despite 20 years of democracy. The majority still have disproportionately little power, opportunity, social access and economic participation.

Community-based organisations, at the front-line of local level development in marginalised communities, are among our society's most valuable asset. In this fabric lies the vast potential for scaled engagement, facilitated upliftment and power taking, as opposed to attempts at power giving. This potential has been largely untapped. In fact, by dispelling the political and representative roles of these organisations, while co-opting them into low-cost service provision and ingratiating them to those seen to be more powerful and important than themselves, I wonder whether their potential is being undermined, rather than optimised.

This research is about finding ways of engaging with this critical social section that facilitates power taking, expresses reality from their context, and dilutes the extremes of power hierarchies. It addresses one of the core purveyors of might in the CBOs sector: that of evaluation and funding relationships, and calls on these disciplines to consider their rights, responsibilities and contribution. It aims to offer methodological alternatives to those disciplines. More importantly, however, it observes the principles of interactions and relationships that may contribute to upliftment, rather than servitude.

To the extent that the potential nascent in this social fabric can indeed stand up and lead, creating pathways out of poverty and exclusion from their own doorsteps, this would be a profound contribution. This research considers a few of the many barriers, and a little of the potential, lying in those pathways.

1.10 Brief chapter overview

The thesis is structured as advised by Hofstee (2006).

1.10.1. Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter is intended to provide the rationale for the research objectives, and justify the value and purpose of the study. It also gives broad delineations of the scope, and the ontological and epistemological perspective.

1.10.2. Chapter 2. Literature review: Situation context

The literature review provides two major thematic areas necessary to the context of the study. The civil society in the development milieu in South Africa, the position of CBOs in this context, and the various sources of interplay around funding agency relationships and approaches, roles, power and accountability are discussed from the literature.

In a second section, the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the study are discussed. Conventional methods for evaluation to which this study reacts in many respects, are described. Principles of complexity, emergence and grounding which I argue define the nature of more developmental evaluation are explained and elaborated.

1.10.3. Chapter 3. Methods: Research approach in brief

The study is essentially a meta-evaluation: it is a continuous evaluation of several evaluations, towards distilling out principles and practice for evaluation approaches that meet the research objectives.

Some of the approaches to meta-evaluation are similar to those of the evaluations themselves, particularly the concept of grounded theory. The methods chapter attempts to delineate these and to remain clear in the face of potential confusion. Distinctions are outlined between the empirical study (evaluation in CBOs) and the non-empirical study (meta-evaluation for methods development).

The study has used exploratory methods development, through an action research framework, with a selection of case study CBOs. The meta-evaluation also used grounded theory, and a more thorough description is provided in the methods chapter than in the theoretical section of the literature review. I have explored practical, feasible, grounded evaluation process elements, while observing the principles for power-balanced evaluation that have emerged.

The methods chapter then describes sampling and data collection and analyses approaches. It concludes by discussing possible sources of error and the ethical considerations of the research.

1.10.4. Chapter 4. Results

The results chapter strongly reflects the iterative, cumulative nature of action research data collection and analysis. It demonstrates the building up of theory over the course of a series of case study experiences by showing the reflection and indicative conclusions as they emerged and were reinforced.

The study began with a series of six case study evaluations with participating organisations, using stories and metaphor in Gauteng. These produced practice and principles for inward-looking evaluation.

One of the key findings of the first research phase was the challenge of determining community perceptions from a method that focused on organisational reflection. The opportunity for a corollary to the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor phase was therefore warmly embraced. This phase involved the execution of Davies and Dart's (1995) Most Significant Change approaches to evaluation in a community in North West province. A second section in the results chapter gives the findings and conclusions of this more outward-looking evaluation approach.

1.10.5. Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter covers three major areas for discussion

Firstly, some pragmatic guidelines for facilitating grounded, participatory, visual and verbal evaluation in CBOs and communities are described.

Secondly, the application of any method depends more on attitude and principles, than on method itself. In this section of the chapter, observations are drawn from the evaluations on the principles and dynamics of effective engagement with CBOs. The implications of this for conducting evaluation that is both organisationally constructive and accurate are discussed.

Finally, employing the lesson that metaphor is a powerful vehicle for learning and communication, the reflections from the study are captured through metaphors around the state of CBOs, and wider development society. The activism, service, internal interests and compliance characters of development organisations are characterised as knights, saints, snakes and sheep, and the implications of these qualities to development and evaluation are discussed. In conjunction with the recommendations

that are outlined in the conclusions chapter, I regard this metaphorical analysis as the essential contribution of this study.

1.10.6. Chapter 6. Conclusion

The conclusion chapter is largely devoted to presenting the main findings, and drawing out key recommendations from them. It provides distinctions between the theoretical, methodological and practical contribution of the study. The research objectives are reviewed, and the study's achievements and limitations against these objectives are discussed. Before closing, the chapter presents some suggestions for further research work highlighted by this study.

1.11 Ethics

Ethics are important to any social research design. In the case of research into development organisations working with HIV and AIDS, they become a central concern. Entry level ethical considerations make every effort to ensure confidentiality. They expect informed consent to participate with a standing option to withdraw at any time. To the extent that group activities permit these policies, they are integral to the study design.

In addition, the principle of utilisation-based evaluation states that evaluation should not only be safe for participants, it should be constructive. The study is designed to optimise organisational and participant benefit wherever opportune.

Despite due attention to ethics in the approach and approval of the design by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, social research remains an ethically dangerous playing field. Most infringements are the result of ignorance or unintended consequences of well-intended engagement. Facilitator awareness, sensitivity and concern for the experiences and emotions of participants underpin ethical practice.

Ethics in the study design are elaborated in the methodology. The results and discussion reflect on the outcomes of ethics intentions in practice, and on the implications and principles for ethics in applying grounded, narrative, developmental approaches to CBO evaluation.

1.12 Additional institutional requirements

The PhD (Organisational Behaviour), of the Department of Human Resource Management in the University of Pretoria's School of Economics and Management Science requires a

two year programme of course work prior to completion of a doctoral dissertation. This course work has been completed.

The study proposal was presented to a post-graduate committee in May 2008, and approved. Approval by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee was obtained in July 2008.

Integral to the submission process, the University conducts a plagiarism test on the text. It has been noted for the purposes of this online scan that sections of this thesis have been published as part of peer exposure. The articles by Konstant (2009a)⁵ and Konstant and Stanz (2009a)⁶ include portions of this thesis. These have been available on internet since March 2009.

The institutional requirement for a peer-reviewed journal article is also acknowledged and will be submitted during 2010.

⁵ http://issuu.com/oa-padare/docs/final_oxfam_msc_report__october_2009__padare_versi/1?mode=a_p

⁶ http://www.ideas-int.org/documents/file_list.cfm?DocsSubCatID=24