

# Just Facilitation: Facilitating Sustainable Social Change in Contexts of Injustice

By  
Rebecca Freeth

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Supervisor: Ms Eve Annecke

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

How do we navigate social change in response to pressing contemporary issues of justice and sustainability? This thesis starts from the assumption that dialogue is an important step towards deepening our collective understanding of these issues and catalyzing change, which provokes three questions. Firstly, what is the relationship between justice and sustainability? Secondly, following Kahane's work (2010) on the practice of balancing "power" and "love" to propel change in stuck social systems, is this enough in contexts of injustice? Thirdly, if facilitators are committed to justice, what does this mean for the principle of facilitator neutrality? Focusing on the particular issue of racial injustice in South Africa and its implications for navigating change towards a more sustainable future, this thesis approaches these questions from theoretical, first person narrative and empirical perspectives. The theoretical work is based on a multi-layered literature review comprising a survey of texts on facilitated social change, a review of sustainable development literature, and a critique of the literature on justice. Reframing these various literatures through the lens of privilege, especially continuing white privilege in South Africa, brings into focus the following theoretical claim: A more sustainable future is inseparable from a more just future (which, in South Africa, means a more racially just future). However, the obliviousness of those who benefit from past and continuing injustice is a stumbling block to navigating collective change towards a more sustainable future, which implies a role for facilitators who are not neutral to injustice, but do not fall into the trap of activism either. From this theoretical platform, I tell stories of my own experiences of whiteness in South Africa and then introduce three groups which met for a sustained period between 2008 and 2011 and grappled with questions of race and racial justice in South Africa. These form the basis of the empirical research, conducted through 25 interviews with group members. The combination of theory, stories and data produces a more comprehensive set of responses to the original three research questions, some implications for facilitators, and an outline for a proposed module at the Sustainability Institute to strengthen students' ability to contribute to dialogues on significant and complex issues. I conclude that when South Africans gather to talk in groups there is a high likelihood that they will want to talk

about race, and that the racial composition of the group will be an important indicator of the temperature, pace and content of the ensuing conversations. The presence facilitators bring to these discussions, beyond their facilitation skills and tools, is an important factor in negotiating a creative path which is neither neutral nor activist. Important too is the role of nature – as a location for these conversations, as a source of presence and renewal, and as a signal to remind groups of a deeper purpose – making tangible the connection between justice and sustainability.

## OPSOMMING

Hoe bestuur ons sosiale verandering in antwoord op knellende hedendaagse vraagstukke oor regverdigheid en volhoubaarheid? Hierdie tesis se uitgangspunt is dat dialoog 'n kritiese stap tot ons gesamentlike begrip van hierdie kwessies en die katalisators van verandering is; en dit opsigself lei tot drie vrae. Eerstens, wat is die verhouding tussen regverdigheid en volhoubaarheid? Tweedens, in opvolg tot Kahane se werk (2010) oor hoe die balansering van "mag" en "liefde" verandering in sosiale sisteme teweeg kan bring, is wat hy beskryf voldoende in onregverdige kontekste? Derdens, indien Ɔ fasiliteerders hulself verbind aan regverdigheid, watter betekenis hou dit dan vir die beginsel, "fasiliteerder neutraliteit"? Spesifiek gefokus op rasse-onregverdigheid in Suid-Afrika en sy nagevolge in terme van veranderingsbestuur tot 'n meer volhoubare toekoms, beskou hierdie tesis hierdie vrae vanuit teoretiese, eerste persoon, en empiriese oogpunte. Die teorie is gebaseer op 'n multi-dimensionele literêre oorsig, wat bestaan uit 'n oorsig oor gefasiliteerde sosiale veranderingsliteratuur, 'n beskouing van volhoubare ontwikkelingsliteratuur, en 'n kritiese beskouing van die literatuur oor regverdigheid. Die herberaming van hierdie literature deur die lens van die bevoorregte, veral die aangehoue bevoorregte posisie van die wit Suid-Afrikaner, skep die volgende teoretiese aanspraak: 'n Meer volhoubare toekoms en 'n meer regverdige toekoms is onafskeidbaar van mekaar. In Suid-Afrika beteken dit essensieel 'n meer ras-regverdige toekoms, maar die onbewustheid van diegene wat steeds voordeel trek uit 'n aangehoue onregverdigheid, is 'n struikelbok tot gesamentlike verandering na 'n meer volhoubare toekoms. Dit skep 'n rol vir fasiliteerders wat nie neutraal tot onregverdigheid is nie, maar wat terselfdertyd nie in aktivisme vasgevang wil word nie. Vanuit hierdie teoretiese standpunt, vertel ek stories van my eie ervaring as 'n wit Suid-Afrikaner, en stel dan die leser bekend aan drie groepe met wie ek oor 'n volgehoue tydperk tussen 2008 en 2011 gesprekke oor ras en ras-regverdigheid gevoer het. Die empiriese navorsing is gebaseer op hierdie gesprekke, afgelei uit 25 onderhoude met groeplede. Die kombinasie van teorie, verhale en data, verskaf omvangryke antwoorde op die oorspronklike drie navorsingsvrae; sommige gevolge vir fasiliteerders, en riglyne vir 'n aanbevole module by die Volhoubaarheid-instituut om leerders in staat te stel om sinvol tot

dialoge oor belangrike en ingewikkelde kwessies by te dra. Ter opsomming: wanneer Suid-Afrikaners in groepe bymekaar kom om gesprekke te voer, is daar 'n hoë moontlikheid dat hulle oor rasse-kwessies sal wil praat, en dat die rasssamestelling van die groep die temperatuur, pas en inhoud van die gesprekke sal beslis. Die teenwoordigheid en ingesteldheid van fasiliteerders, meer as hul vaardighede en gereedskap, is 'n belangrike faktor wat 'n kreatiewe weg kan baan wat nóg neutraal nóg aktiwis is. Ook van belang is die rol wat die natuur kan speel - die lokaal waarin hierdie kreatiewe gesprekke plaasvind - as 'n bron van teenwoordigheid en hernuwing wat dien om mense aan 'n groter doel te herinner: om die verbintenis tussen regverdigheid en volhoubaarheid uit te lig.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EJNF	Environmental Justice Networking Forum
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PW	Process Work
PW1 and PW2	First and second Process Work groups
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UFS	University of the Free State
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

I long to live in a world that is more sustainable and more just. This may sound both idealistic and childish. As my grandmother used to declaim: “The world isn’t a fair place and the sooner you learn that, the better.” Despite this sensible advice, I resist settling into a world that seems stuck<sup>1</sup> in some crucial respects. The ‘stuck’ aspects that worry me most are our human relationships with each other, through the prism of race, and our human relationship with nature, through the prism of natural limits to growth. I will argue in this thesis that gaining traction on racial issues, especially racial privilege, in South Africa is vital on its own merits and that doing so will help to dislodge one of the bedrock impediments to engaging with the unsustainable trajectories in the socio-ecological system. Both are urgent; dire predictions abound about what could happen if we fail to reinvent ourselves post apartheid, and if we fail to re-think our use of natural resources.

I am a facilitator. I guide groups of people through processes designed to generate change in the systems in which they are located, especially when those systems are stuck. I do this mostly through dialogue, working with groups of people who come together because of a shared concern and an aspiration that their engagement with each other will unblock what is stuck and allow change to flow<sup>2</sup>.

A common criticism levelled at dialogue as a means towards social change is that it is too oriented to process and fails to build up momentum towards concrete action. Talking, some say, is a luxury we cannot afford given the urgency and intractability of our social and socio-ecological challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “stuck” suggests a state of inertia, explored on pages 38 – 39 in the literature review on social change

<sup>2</sup> The terms “dialogue” and “conversation” will be used interchangeably in this thesis to encompass more and less formal verbal engagements among people in a group context.

I confess I am very committed to process. Indeed, one of the methodologies I am most drawn to in my facilitation practice is called Process Work, based on process-oriented psychology and the work of Mindell<sup>3</sup>. But, as with all polarities, an emphasis on *process* places it in tension with the *product* of social engagement towards unblocking stuck systems. This evokes the paradox of “power” and “love” in social systems, conceptualized by Tillich (1960) and written about by Martin Luther King Jr. (1968) and Kahane (2010). Their arguments will be explored in detail later in this thesis; one of the implications of their work is that people with a preference for “power” are more purposeful and results focused. They are most interested in product. Those oriented to “love” are more attuned to relationships and usually have more tolerance for process. This is not a new dilemma; my understanding of paradox (informed by Smith & Berg, 1987) suggests that process is on the ascendancy now largely because modernist impulses suppressed it in the drive towards results and outcomes. What are the consequences of over-correcting this imbalance and is the work I do at risk of perpetuating an old cycle?

In short, is there a role for dialogue in the context of inequality, exploitation, prejudice, poverty and exclusion? Three leading thinkers and social innovators of the last century – all of whom are proponents of dialogue, but none of whom fit the stereotype of New Age process “junkies” - express opinions on this. David Bohm, a theoretical physicist, Paulo Freire, an educationalist, and Amartya Sen, an economist, have all advocated dialogue in pursuit of concrete outcomes towards meaningful social change. Bohm, often credited as the father of contemporary dialogue<sup>4</sup>, despaired that the “arbitrarily broken up ... smashed” quality of our thinking was unequal to the task of addressing some of our fundamental social challenges, and indeed, that it had created many of these dilemmas in the first place (in Edwards, 2007:159). He proposed dialogue as a way of seeing our thinking, with its fragmentations and fictions, and hence cultivating “a new kind of intelligence... because we have created a world that requires it” (1989, in Edwards, 2007:164). Freire, writing about changing stuck systems of oppression in Brazil said: “... if it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it,

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<sup>3</sup> Process work is a way of working with groups (as well as with individuals) that is informed by Jungian psychology, physics and Taoism (Mindell, 1995:22). Largely coincidentally, the main source of empirical material in this thesis is based on experiences of a group being trained in Process Work methods. This is not, however, a thesis about Process Work nor is it an evaluation of this methodology.

<sup>4</sup> By, for example, Nichol (1995), Senge (2004) and Edwards (2007).

dialogue imposes itself as a way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity.” (1996:69). Writing about justice, Sen argued for dialogue over blind adherence to fixed principles and rules because it “...makes systematic room for incompleteness which can allow one to arrive at quite strong – and strongly relevant – judgments (for example, about the injustice of continuing famines in a world of prosperity, ...)” (2009:103).

All three conjure up a version of dialogue that is process-driven *and* oriented towards tangible social change towards justice. This is not process for the sake of process, but for the sake of “achiev[ing] significance as human beings” (Freire, *ibid*), “to address the terrible mess in society”, (Bohm in Edwards, 2007:163), or to redress the “persistently grotesque subjugation of women” (Sen, 2009:103).

Inherent in this introduction are my three research questions: What is the relationship between justice and sustainability (that is, between our ‘stuck’ and unequal relationships with each other and our ‘stuck’, instrumental and unsustainable relationship with nature)? When facilitating social change in contexts of *injustice*, is it sufficient to balance “love” and “power” as Kahane suggests<sup>5</sup>? And if a facilitator is committed to justice, what does this imply for their neutrality? Three stories will follow to demonstrate why these three questions are important to me. The rest of the chapter comprises definitions of key concepts around which this thesis is written and a summary of the research findings and recommendations.

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<sup>5</sup> In his book, *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (2010) introduced on page 6 of this chapter and reviewed in Chapter 3.

## Three stories: Locating myself in the three research questions

*“Without a sense of story, understanding becomes piecemeal,  
disconnected, ungrounded and misleading.”*

Reeler, 2008:19

My research questions are a reflection of where I, too, am stuck. I have formulated them in the hope that the experience of reading, thinking, interviewing, sense making and writing, will enable me to gain purchase on some of the issues I wrestle with, as a white South African and as a facilitator. And as a facilitator who is a white South African. In other words, these questions emerge from my own experience and so one way to introduce them, and the connections between them, is through stories. Below follow three stories, one for each research question.

### **Research Question One: What is the relationship between justice and sustainability?**

Soon after completing the introductory module to sustainable development at the Sustainability Institute in 2006, I cut a short article out of the newspaper. I still have it, dog-eared and discoloured. It refers to a comment made by Lindiwe Sisulu, daughter of African National Congress (ANC) stalwart and Mandela’s close comrade, Walter Sisulu. In her capacity as Minister of Housing at the time, Lindiwe Sisulu made it known that the ANC’s determination to build houses for the poor “cannot forever be held hostage by butterfly eggs” (*Mail & Guardian*, March 17 2006). This caught my imagination: bricks and mortar, endless and contested waiting lists for houses, angry protests against inadequate government delivery of houses, the experiences of shack dwellers subjected to cold winters, floods, fire and the threat of eviction. All of this piled up on the one hand. And on the other, a cluster of tiny delicate butterfly eggs. What’s the dilemma? I thought. Build the houses! The sooner the better. A few years later, I no

longer see things the same way. It isn't deep ecology that has swayed me, but systems thinking. I can no longer sustain my either/or thinking. It's not houses for the poor *versus* protecting butterflies. If we build houses that destroy ecosystems, we will solve one problem in the short term and create several more in the longer term. At the same time, neglecting the needs and rights of the poor exacerbates inequality and injustice in the context of the dilemma that the poor will be most vulnerable to climate change despite being the least culpable for carbon emissions (see, for example, Sachs, 2001). What does this mean for the relationship between sustainability and justice?

If I am not a deep ecologist, where do I place myself on the five dimensions of sustainable development in Hattingh's taxonomy (2001)? I locate myself on the mid points between weak and strong sustainable development and between shallow and deep sustainable development. I am oriented to egalitarianism over non-egalitarianism, to participatory sustainable development over top-down approaches and to broad over narrow sustainability. This adds up to an anthropocentric approach which has a more radical orientation towards the social and a more conservative orientation towards the ecological. In my capacity as a facilitator, what does this position offer to social processes navigating their way towards engaged action and how might it constrain - despite a systems paradigm - efforts to create places where justice and sustainability can meet and enrich each other?

Chapter Three of this thesis reviews the literature on sustainable development and the literature on justice with the aim of arriving at a theoretical understanding of where the two meet, which is developed in Chapter Four. Chapter Six presents further insights based on my research investigations. Chapter Seven charts the beginning of a shift in my positioning in relation to Hattingh's taxonomy.

## **Research Question Two: Is the capacity to balance “power” and “love” sufficient to generate social change in contexts of injustice?**

In early 2010, as I started to get to grips with the literature on facilitating social change, I read the just-published book *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (2010) by Adam Kahane<sup>6</sup>. I had heard Kahane, a colleague<sup>7</sup>, speak on the subject a couple of times, and reading the book confirmed my initial sense that what he had to say was important, generally, and useful to my own thinking and facilitation practice, specifically. Kahane writes, “In working on social change, love without power manifests in a feel-good connection that is impotent; it does not and cannot produce real change ... Exercising power with love requires effecting systemic change without destroying what we are trying to nurture.” (2010:46-47). In my notes at the time, I reflected that “this argument seems to answer questions that I didn’t know I had, but triggers avalanches of insight” (January 2010).

A month later I met Adam over a cup of coffee at OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg to discuss some of the insights, and questions, prompted by his book. Adam had a question for me too: was I more oriented to love or to power in my own facilitation practice? That was easy; power of course. He was surprised: “I had you down as much more of a love person.” I was also nonplussed for a moment, but moved on. Towards the end of our conversation, I asked whether Adam thought that power and love together were sufficient to achieve social change. Wasn’t there something missing? He thought for a moment. “My first book was about love, about solving tough problems through fostering connections between people who would not otherwise be sitting around the same table. Then I learned that love without power is a dangerous thing. There may be a third book, about a third thing. But I don’t yet know what it is. Many of these systems of thought have three aspects. Tillich, for example, whose definitions of power and love I based this book on, writes about “power, love and justice.”

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<sup>6</sup> Kahane draws on philosopher-theologian Tillich’s definition of power as “the drive of everything living to realize itself with increasing intensity and extensity” (Tillich, 1960:36) and love as “the drive towards the unity of the separated” (Tillich, 1960:25). See page 43 of this thesis for further discussion of these concepts.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Kahane and I are both part of a consulting group called Reos Partners ([www.reospartners.com](http://www.reospartners.com)).

As I drove away from the airport shortly afterwards, I had a sense of rising excitement. Justice was, for me, the missing piece. I also suspected that this explained where Adam and I had missed each other in characterizing my own orientation to social change. My orientation as a facilitator is neither primarily towards love (relationship) nor towards power (purpose), but towards justice.

Chapter Three of this thesis reviews the literature on justice towards a clearer understanding of its meaning and its application to all three research questions.

**Research Question Three: What are the implications of an orientation to justice for the principle of facilitator neutrality?**

The group of facilitators and coaches being trained in Process Work methods gathered for its third and penultimate module in Johannesburg in October 2009. The previous module had been witness to some fiery conversations between black and white participants, mostly about continuing and unconscious white centrality<sup>8</sup>. Settling back into the familiar circle of chairs – where we learned about Process Work mostly through experiences of being “in process” with each other and then debriefing - we speculated that the heat of the conversations during the previous module was the reason why a third of the group had not returned.

As a backdrop to our gathering, issues of race were simmering in South Africa. One of the issues was the treatment of black workers by white students at the University of the Free State in 2007<sup>9</sup>. Not only did the students force the workers to drink concoctions mixed with urine, but those workers’ humiliation had been captured on amateur video and widely circulated. On the

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<sup>8</sup> This is a term that will be used throughout the thesis to denote the tendency of those with relatively more power or privilege to occupy the “centre” of their social system, which includes assumptions about taking up more space and having more control than those at the margins. This dynamic is visible in relation to race, class, gender and other social hierarchies and has been rendered visible by climate change research – e.g. through comparative measures of carbon footprints at national and global scales.

<sup>9</sup> For more information about this incident, see: <http://mg.co.za/article/2009-10-22-jansen-reitz-support-outweighs-criticism>

third day of this third module, I drove past banner headlines displayed on street lampposts declaring that Jonathan Jansen, the new rector at the University of the Free State, had extended a hand of reconciliation to the four students expelled in the furore that followed, and invited them back to campus on condition that they apologise to the workers. Professor Jansen is a coloured man, the first person of colour to hold this position on a campus notorious for its conservative politics. I was thrilled, thinking: this is exactly the kind of leadership that South Africa needs. As a man who has himself suffered exclusion under apartheid, Professor Jansen had had the foresight to reverse the scapegoating response of his white predecessor. Instead of pursuing revenge, he had given the four young white men a chance to redeem themselves. My hope was that by bringing them back into the university system, not only would the four students have to face up to the consequences of what they had done, but the whole social system might, under Jansen's leadership, start to see that these young white men were products partly of their own making and, perhaps, even start taking responsibility for institutionalized, systemic racism.

With these thoughts, I sat down in the circle of chairs and was startled when a black peer spoke: "I hate Jansen's arrogance; he has no right to do what he has done. This blindness of his scares me ... who do you think he is appeasing? Whites." The temperature in the group rose; black people were angry; white people baffled.

A couple of days previously, our facilitator, Stephen Schuitevoerder, had told us about a dream he had had about our group. A big fire had broken out outside the building we were in and moved rapidly, in a wall of flames, towards us. Taking refuge in a store room behind the workshop room, he had watched smoke pour in under the door and known that there was no escape. He had used this dream to express his sense of urgency that we make progress on the racial tensions between us, and especially that white people wake up in time to see the fire coming their way.

As we talked about the University of the Free State, white people listened to the anger expressed by their black counterparts about the fact that Professor Jansen had failed to ask the cleaners' consent before extending an olive branch to the four students. The cleaners, all black

and mostly women, were still excluded from a deal being cut by a coloured man with white people. As one black member of the group put it: “To us, [the cleaners] are our mothers. It’s opened a bigger wound... We talk about how Mandela’s forgiveness spoilt whites ... People don’t understand the unfinished business of the first forgiveness.” As the penny dropped and white participants started to see what we had been missing, we were given a clear message by our black counterparts that our understanding was not sufficient. “If awareness does not translate into action,” said one person, “it is meaningless.” We were left in no doubt about the growing urgency for change. The flames from the fire in Stephen’s dream were growing higher and moving towards us.

Later that same week, the white members of the group, including Stephen, met to discuss what it would mean to turn our awareness into action. We decided to write an article that would articulate what we were learning about race, and ongoing white centrality, through this process. This initiative culminated in a full-page article in February 2010 in the City Press, entitled “White South Africans must take a stand against racism”.

At the end of the week, Stephen closed the module by making requests to both the black and white members of the group. To the white members, he said: “Please work on your centrality and the power and privilege that we, as whites, continue to abuse on a daily basis.” He asked us to look at our own stories of victimization that, when unacknowledged, perpetuated the cycle of perpetration. “Try to understand”, he urged us, “where whiteness lost its humanity.” He turned to the black people in the room, asking them to “consciously work on using the power you are gaining”. My final words in the group, captured in the notes taken by Stephen’s assistant facilitator, were: “I feel safer and freer than ever before”.

This last statement reveals the profound impact this experience had on me. As a participant, I was intrigued by the role that Stephen had played in sharing his dream, in helping white people listen more deeply than they were accustomed to, to black perspectives and black anger, and in making clear demands on us before the next module. I was also interested in what he was wrestling with himself, to keep the pressure on us to change, without turning the heat up to a

level the group would be unable to tolerate. Reflecting on the second module six months previously, Stephen had acknowledged to the group that his sense of urgency had resulted in “being possessed by a toughness” (course journal, October 2009) in his facilitation style, which contributed to the fact that the fiery conversations about race in that module had left some people hurt and reluctant to return.

What did this mean for facilitator neutrality? What could I, as a facilitator committed to social change, learn? I explore this question theoretically in Chapter Four and practically in Chapter Six.

## **Defining “systems”**

Systems represent a foundational concept of this thesis: complex systems, social systems, ecosystems and socio-ecological systems. Other concepts core to my subject matter will be defined in Chapters Three and Four, but this next section will serve to lay the semantic foundations for talking about systems.

If a system is “more than the sum of its parts” (Dostal, 2005:10), then systems are not – by definition – simple or easily understood at a glance. However, Cilliers differentiates between complicated and complex systems; complicated systems are “intricate but understandable – they can be taken apart and put together again”. Whereas complex systems are “beyond understanding”, primarily by virtue of their emergent properties (2006)<sup>10</sup>. Lewin writes that a complex system is “one whose properties are not fully explained by an understanding of its component parts” (1997:x). The key word is *understanding*; complex systems defy human logic that is founded in more mechanistic assumptions about how the world works.

This thesis is primarily interested in social systems and, secondarily, in socio-ecological systems. A social system is “any group of people who interact long enough to create a shared set of understandings, norms, or routines to integrate action, and established patterns of dominance

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<sup>10</sup> Lecture notes: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at the Sustainability Institute, Stellenbosch

and resource allocation.” (Westley, Carpenter, Bock, Holling & Gunderson, 2002:107). This definition is useful for recognising two aspects of groups central to this thesis. Firstly, that the potential for both intractability and change is located in three places: their ways of seeing and thinking (“understanding”), their ways of being (“norms”) and their ways of doing (“action”). Secondly, that there is potential for (in)justice and (un)sustainability in all social systems (implicit in the phrase “established patterns of dominance and resource allocation”).

Ecosystems are “places on earth that consist of biotic components (life) and abiotic or physical components. These components interact in such a way that a dynamic set of processes produces a complex and diverse set of structures. The interaction is described as self-organizing – that is, structures and processes mutually reinforce each other.” (*ibid*, following Carpenter, 1998 and Levin 1999). Socio-ecological systems describe the co-existence of ecosystems and social systems; this co-existence is increasingly precarious given that the “self-organizing properties of human systems are overtaking the self-organizing properties of ecological systems.” (*ibid*: 105). Westley *et al* explain that: “...in contrast to ecological systems, social systems are structured by the human ability to construct and manipulate symbols” (*ibid*: 107). This has important consequences for the kinds of evolutionary change available to social systems; “cultural change is potentially far faster” than physical change (*ibid*:111). Chapter Three will explore evolution as one of three dominant paradigms for thinking about social change.

If a social system is “any group of people”, the groups I am interested in here are small groups (roughly 10-30 people) that meet for a sustained period with a shared intention. I am not referring to organisational groups but to relatively unbounded social systems. Their primary mode of engagement is dialogue. Like any system, a group is more than the sum of its individual parts. Smith and Berg express this as follows: “... we view the group as a social entity capable of acting as a whole and of expressing feelings and thoughts over and beyond those of its members” (1997:63). Both Bion and Mindell draw attention to the two different levels at which such groups operate; Bion distinguishes between the “work group” and the “basic assumption group” (in Smith & Berg, 1997:40) while Mindell (1995) has founded a body of

Process Work literature on the basis of a group's primary identity (and process) versus its secondary identity (and process). Both sets of ideas refer to the co-existing conscious and unconscious lives of groups.

We live our lives in social systems, big and small. Smaller groups convened specifically for the purpose of thinking and talking together can be places to learn more consciously. According to Smith and Berg (1997:152), the "context has a profound effect on the groups that exist within it", suggesting that members can use the insights, experiences or skills gained in this microcosm to find ways to better adapt to, and survive in, the world outside. A key difference is that these smaller social systems are (usually, not always) facilitated. If well-facilitated, groups can provide a safer place to take risks and hence to learn fast, deliberately and with more feedback than in the wider context itself. This is the rationale for navigating social change processes in groups.

The empirical work of this thesis is based on three such small social systems; each convened for a sustained period with the intention to learn. Two groups met to learn about Process Work; their learning about race was an emergent and unexpected property. The third met with the intention of learning about race, and especially about being white in South Africa.

## **Thesis Overview**

This thesis comprises seven chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two focuses on methodology. Chapters Three to Six present a combination of theoretical, first person narrative and empirical perspectives on social change, justice and sustainability, producing a series of insights into the implications for facilitating social change in the context of racial injustice and concomitant unsustainability in the South African context. Chapter Seven is the concluding chapter.

Chapter Two considers, and provides a rationale for, the "messiness" (Law, 2004) inherent in the hybrid research design produced by my use of both empirical and non-empirical qualitative methods (Mouton, 2001) and proceeds to explain the research principles and process I

followed. The fact that this chapter precedes the literature review exemplifies this messiness; Chapters Three (literature review) and Four (theory building) are treated as part of the research design itself and not precursors to it.

Specifically, Chapters Three and Four represent the theoretical perspective. Chapter Three explores three contemporary social change paradigms evident in the literature: change as adaptation, evolution or development. It then follows a line of argument in the literature that says: development is the most prevalent way of thinking about social change but assumptions about growth and linear progress, embedded in this development paradigm, have been instrumental in creating the crisis of natural limits to growth in the context of growing social inequality. This has spawned an alternative literature on *sustainable* development, which I explore. The collision of social inequality and transgressed “planetary boundaries” (Rockstrom, 2009) ushers in a review of the literature on justice and racial (in)justice in South Africa. In Chapter Four, privilege emerges as a connector of these dots because it engenders a blindness to injustice and unsustainability which can, wittingly or unwittingly, block social change. What, then, can work in the opposite direction to catalyse change? I identify four kinds of catalysts – awareness, action, relationship and power – in the source texts, explore the polarities that form between awareness and action, and between relationship (or “love”) and power, and consider the implications for the work of social change facilitators. Chapter Four concludes by applying these insights to respond theoretically to the three research questions.

Chapter Five builds on the first person narratives of Chapter One, demonstrating my own interest in, and entanglement with, issues of (in)justice from the perspective of white privilege in South Africa and tracing the catalysts of a process of internal change. At the end of this chapter I introduce the Process Work and whiteness groups that provoked more recent changes in my awareness about race and racial injustice and which form the basis of the empirical work of this thesis.

Chapter Six presents and analyses findings from these groups. Interviews with members of the Process Work group are the main source of research material, identifying several contributing factors to the changes experienced in their thinking about, and active engagement with, issues

of race. Foremost among these factors are the role of the facilitator and the set-up arrangements of this group, especially its composition. I dig deeper into these findings by triangulating them with two smaller cases: a second Process Work group, to which I did not belong, and the whiteness group. Chapter Six concludes by returning to the three research questions, this time from an empirical vantage point.

The final chapter pulls the theoretical, first person narrative and empirical threads together into a series of conclusions about the relationship between justice and sustainability, the role of a facilitator working in contexts of injustice, and the tension between facilitator neutrality and facilitator activism. I explore what this suggests for facilitation practice and presence and respond to an invitation from the Sustainability Institute to conceptualise a module – entitled “Sustainable Conversations” - on dialogue facilitation. Consequently, this thesis closes with a practical application of theoretical and practical insights gleaned from my research into facilitating sustainable social change in contexts of injustice.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

*“... method in social science (and natural science too) is enacted in a set of nineteenth – or even seventeenth-century Euro-American blinkers... the consequence is that method is not, and could never be, innocent or purely technical”*  
(Law, 2004:143)

This chapter explains the rationale for, and some principles of, my research design and describes the methods employed and actions taken in effecting this design. It also seeks to justify the choices I made at every step of this process. The design is hybrid; a combination of non-empirical and qualitative empirical research (following Mouton’s typology, 2001) intended to approach the question of facilitating social change in contexts of injustice from both angles and to draw some theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations at the points where the theory and data meet. Three research questions serve to focus the enquiry. Another source of focus, in what became an increasingly unwieldy project, is the principle of congruence, to make logical and ethical connections between what I did and how I did it. Congruence is important in my life and my facilitation practice and, hence, in my research.

Seeking to create sufficient symmetry between what I researched and how I conducted that research is not the same as being tidy. This thesis is both ambitious in its conceptual reach - across disciplines and ontologies of change and justice – and modest in what it can say, empirically, about facilitating social change in contexts of injustice. In-between this sprawling literature and three very local cases (two groups being trained in Process Work methodology and a “whiteness group”) it is inevitably “messy” (Law, 2004).

## Messy methods

This is not a thesis about Change, Sustainability and Justice as grand narratives, but about pockets of painstakingly facilitated change on the micro scale, picking its path through the daily dilemmas posed by injustice and unsustainability. The theoretical component of this thesis attempts to create a bridge between the more epic theoretical legacies in order to establish some conceptual footholds and then to identify some implications for facilitating change. Similarly, the empirical part of this thesis does not purport to explore the grand psychoanalytic theories of group work. Specifically, it is not a thesis about Process Work, despite the fact that the bulk of the empirical work is based on groups facilitated by a Process Worker and constituted to learn about Process Work. In other words, the world of ideas and practices I am researching is cluttered and contested. What does this mean for how I research it?

Law (2004) constructs an argument about social science's relationship to reality. The first stake he places in the ground is that reality is messy and that social science research methods that seek to shed some light on messy reality should be attuned to, and able to reflect, this messiness. He writes, "if we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we're going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know in new ways" (2004:2). Secondly, he maintains that methods are not passive recorders of reality but actively create a version of reality. Thirdly, that reality is often incomprehensible and elusive in its complexity, prompting Law to ask "what research methods might be if they were adapted to a world that included and knew itself as tide, flux, and general unpredictability" (2004:7). Answering his own question, he proposes unlearning straitjacketed methods designed to help social scientists manage their anxieties about uncertainty, and replace them with "method assemblage" described as "a combination of reality detector and reality amplifier" (2004:14). This approach is "broader, looser, more generous" (2004:4) than conventional methods. But he warns that "method, in the reincarnation that I am proposing, will often be slow and uncertain. A risky and troubling process, it will take time and effort to make realities and hold them steady for a moment against a background of flux and indeterminacy" (2004:10).

There is an interesting symmetry at play between the subject matter of my research, facilitation, and the research method itself. In an argument resonant with the one I am building in this thesis - that facilitation is a way of enabling social change and that this begs questions about the facilitator's orientation to justice - Law writes "If politics is about better social (and now, we learn) non-social arrangements, and about the struggles to achieve these, then method assemblage and its products can be judged politically. It does politics and is not innocent" (2004:149). Given that social science, he contends, often operates in a "blinkered fashion" (2004:144), Law asks, "Perhaps ... it is worth considering whether some realities are more just than others? Or whether partial-realities that are more just could be rendered to be more real than they actually are?" (2004:150). In a world that is messy, unpredictable and, as the literature review exposes, also unjust and unsustainable, both researchers and facilitators have a responsibility to be adaptive, unblinkered and oriented to justice. In order to build and sustain this argument in a coherent fashion, my methods are premised on these ideological foundations.

The result is, inevitably, untidy. The research design was shaped by my choice of empirical cases, which were shaped by my research questions, which were shaped by my practice as a facilitator. However, the cases I ultimately alighted upon were ones in which I was a participant, rather than a facilitator. I had been looking in the wrong places. I had to relearn that I have a more productive and meaningful knowledge of something when I am deeply embedded in it, as a participant, than when I am experiencing it as a facilitator. Once I recognized the significance of my location in relation to the empirical work, it was a foregone conclusion that the design was a participant-oriented one. But was it participant observation, or participatory action research? By virtue of both practical and ideological consideration, described later in this chapter, it was a bit of both. Touraine (2000:900) suggests that the line between researcher and "social actor" in the situation being researched is porous and that this is appropriate given that both are operating in complex social situations that are continuously being created, in relationship with others.

This accounts for the design of the empirical component of this thesis but, given the fact that several years of facilitation practice have provoked an enquiry that straddles a broad conceptual terrain, and that facilitation of social change – beyond organisational development – is inadequately theorised, it became clear that the empirical work would need to be anchored in a non-empirical component. I chose to broaden the base of the literature review so that it could address this theoretical gap, refining and bridging between existing ideas about social change and its facilitation in the specific context of unsustainability and injustice. Layered onto this is theorising about blindness to the social environment, specifically the blindness of social privilege, as an obstruction to social change in contexts of injustice and unsustainability. Borrowing from Law, this could be described as theory assemblage. The resulting design is a hybrid; a combination of theory review, refinement and building with participant research. Consistent with my orientation towards Freire’s notion of praxis (discussed in Chapter Three) described simply as “a dynamic interplay between theory and practice” (Maguire, 1987:3) the non-empirical and empirical components are weighted almost equally. I explore the rationale for, and my reconfiguration of, each aspect of the design in more detail below.

## **Rationale for, and principles of, the research design**

### **Rationale for theory building**

*“... for social research to both intellectually develop and to be of use in understanding or explaining the social world, we need theory and theory needs research. There is, in the words of Martin Bulmer, a ‘mutual interdependence’ between the two.”*  
(May, 1993:22).

Facilitation of social change in groups is a practice. For many facilitators, among whom I include myself, it is a practice based on a combination of intuition and learning through trial and error. I did not study books to become a facilitator and it remains a sorely under-theorised field of practice. What conceptual assumptions am I making about this practice and about the world I

practice it in when I say, with both pretentiousness and ignorance, that I facilitate social change? What does facilitation mean? What is social change? I have come to dread being asked at dinner parties what I “do”. Usually, after the first few minutes of trying to explain, neither I nor the polite enquirer are any the wiser. However, those who have themselves experienced being “facilitated” tend to respond with immediate recognition. We know what it is through our, often heightened, emotional reaction to being in group processes and not through our intellectual understanding of it.

Conducting empirical work on facilitating social change in a theoretical vacuum would inevitably create free-floating data. Therefore the first question of the relationship between sustainability and justice seeks to create a theoretical home for this thesis within the Sustainability Institute at Stellenbosch University. The choice of the Sustainability Institute may seem an unlikely home. It grew out of the recognition that my facilitation practice was strong on process but weak on substance. I could support stuck groups to get unstuck but such processes felt increasingly hollow as I realized how little I understood of the content issues those groups were dealing with. I was drawn to the interdisciplinary, complexity-embracing character of the Institute and to the fact that it was engaged with the cutting edge content of sustainability dilemmas. Starting to address this content gap in my practice through completing an initial Bachelor of Philosophy degree in Sustainable Development and Planning in 2008 brought another gap into sharper focus; facilitating good processes with more substantive engagement did not necessarily produce more justice. Indeed, it could disguise, recreate or perpetuate injustice. This question gnawed at me as I facilitated bigger groups through more profound processes and more ambitious content. Reading Kahane’s book, *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (2010) provided the push-and-pull catalyst I needed (described in Chapter Three); it drew me into a far deeper understanding of a tension in my work that I had felt but not grasped at an intellectual level. And it disturbed me because something seemed to be missing. It took the conversation with Adam Kahane, recounted in Chapter One, for him to remind me what it was: justice. This illuminated the second theoretical question, one that was intensely familiar to me as soon as it was formulated: are love and power sufficient for social change in contexts of injustice?

The third research question follows from the second and is more practical: if justice *is* a consideration for facilitators, what does this mean for facilitator neutrality? This I could best learn about empirically, as a participant of two groups engaging with racial injustice<sup>11</sup>.

### **Rationale for a mix of participant observation and participatory action research (PAR)**

Participant observation most accurately describes my location in relation to the groups I studied, while participatory action best describes my philosophical (or political) orientation to the research. As the narrative below explains, I entered both the whiteness and the Process Work training groups as a participant, free of research motives. The shift towards participant researcher developed in the latter stages of each group. That role is most consistent with participant observation studies (Mouton, 2008). However, my ideological orientation is less ethnographic than aligned with the three characteristics of participant action research outlined by McIntyre (1997): an emphasis on lived experience, a commitment to social change and a subjective stance towards justice. While my primary motivation was not aligned with the conventional objective of PAR - to empower beneficiaries of a (usually educational) programme to co-create and then co-own the research into its effectiveness - the line between participant and researcher was more blurred than in alternative designs in two respects. Firstly, I was a participant of the group who became a researcher and later also an interview respondent. Secondly, the other interviewees were invited to remain actively engaged as the research proceeded; they received the transcripts of their interviews so that they could add further responses or reflections, and they were offered an opportunity to comment on the initial findings. In other words, the participants were invited to move beyond being sources of data, to being joint makers of meaning.

The subject matter of race generally, and my growing interest in white privilege specifically, is a further rationale for participant action research. In this, I was most influenced by McIntyre who reflected on her own research with white student teachers: “unlike many other PAR projects

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<sup>11</sup> I was not a participant in the third group included in the research

that are aimed at breaking the silence of the oppressed, the silence that needed to be broken was the silence of the oppressor ... prying open self-criticism among those who occupy the centre in ways that challenge us to think about what life is like on the margins and how we, as the centre, can alter existing inequitable structures.” (1997:23).

While the collection and analysis of data was more typical of participant observation than PAR, the formulation of my research questions was informed by participant action researcher Frankenburg (1993, in McIntyre, 1997) who suggested that “coming to consciousness about one’s racial identity and / or race privilege as white is not ... by any means the same as transforming it.” This supports the move from interview question one “what changes did you experience in terms of your race, racial identity or racism?” to interview question three “what are you doing differently as a result?” in the interviews (see page 26 of this chapter for the research questions).

The overall research design is qualitative, consistent with the subject matter, the sources of data and my position in relation to those sources (Mouton, 2001; McIntyre, 1997).

### **Design Principles**

Congruence was the core design principle; I wanted to produce research in a way that aligned with what I was writing about. In Tillich’s words, “Method and content cannot be separated” (1960:24). I sought to be congruent in four ways so that the overall research design, my approach, my application of methods and my engagement with respondents could add up to a (relatively) coherent whole, and match what was emerging from the literature review. Firstly, the mix of conceptual and empirical work resembles Freire’s notion of praxis, folding in conceptual and experiential influences. Praxis is one part of the conceptual platform on how social change happens developed in Chapter Three and it is therefore both interesting and congruent to apply this approach. Secondly, a core idea arising from the literature I reviewed is that adaptive capacity generates resilience in the face of constant change (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). In the interests of a resilient research project, I wanted to develop my adaptive capacity

as a researcher and to balance being anchored (but not stuck), with being responsive (without losing direction). Thirdly, I wanted my methods to mirror the argument in this thesis that privileged ways of seeing distort what is seen and to uncover the blind spots that accompany my own privilege towards disrupting hegemonic versions of reality. Lastly, the Process Work principle of “deep democracy” helped shape how I approached this research. The fact that I was gathering most of my data from students of Process Work lent weight to this intention. Deep democracy is a principle of listening to the insights of minority voices to strengthen decisions<sup>12</sup>; in this case, choices about the research design. I listened to three minority voices in particular; one which suggested that I be interviewed as well (in the context of her sense of vulnerability during the interview and asking that I experience this vulnerability too), a second which represented the only coloured person in the Process Work group, and a third voice (expressed by two different people) that articulated reservations about being interviewed because they were critical of the Process Work group experience. As a result of these, I agreed to an interview, spent considerable time checking my interpretation of the data with the coloured respondent, and encouraging the minority who had not had a positive experience of the group to express this in their interviews.

This suggests that triangulation is another influential principle in the research design. Triangulation is an “attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.” (Cohen and Manion, 1986:9). I discuss this principle under the subsection entitled “limitations” later in this chapter.

## **The research process: From designing to doing**

This section of the chapter outlines the literature review and theory building process, my selection of empirical cases, the gathering, processing and analysis of the data and attends to

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<sup>12</sup> The term “minority voices” suggests that they represent a numerical minority and / or that they raise uncomfortable issues which it would generally be easier to cast aside on the basis that they are not a concern to the majority. See Mindell (1995:186) and Lewis (2008) for more on deep democracy.

the questions of limitations and ethics. Little can be said about the process of reviewing the literature and refining the theoretical implications for facilitating social change as it is self evident in Chapters Three and Four. More can be said about the empirical work which I recorded in field notes.

### **Literature review**

I started with texts that most influenced my thinking during my undergraduate degree at the Sustainability Institute (by Gallopini, 2003, on sustainability; Cilliers, 2000 & 2006, and Lewin, 1999, on complexity; Swilling, 2002, on bridging the natural and social sciences, and Holling et al, 2002, on resilience) and then weaving in literature that has shaped my own practice as a facilitator of social change processes (for example, Mindell, 1995; Fowler & Biekart, 2008; Kaplan, 2002; Hassan, 2005; Dostal, 2005; Wheatley & Frieze, 2008, Reeler, 2008; and Kahane, 2007 & 2010). I traced many of the thinkers on whose shoulders these writers have stood, hunted through the library of the Community Development Resources Association - a leading social change agency in Cape Town - taken up the suggestions of colleagues, mentors and friends who have “just the book” and pursued loose threads of social change ideas on the internet. After a while, every novel I read, every music track I listened to and every conversation I participated in had something to say about change. In other words, complexity is not just a theoretical contribution to this thesis, but accurately describes how it was researched. The result is an eclectic mix.

A significant number of these writers are South African (such as Cilliers, Cock, Kaplan, Mngxitama, Ndebele, Ramphela, Reeler and Swilling,) or have chosen to live and work in South Africa (including Dostal, Fowler and Kahane). The change being charted in this country has stretched local intellectuals and activists to loosen their grip on their assumptions and think afresh, and has magnetically drawn others to our shores. As a result, there is a deep indigenous resource of material on social change, relevant to my attempt in reviewing the literature to span both global theories and local facilitation of social change in the context of injustice, specifically racial injustice, in South Africa.

I chose to extend the literature review, using it to assemble theoretical material on social change, sustainable development and justice and extract implications for facilitating social change in the context of injustice, so that it could stand as one leg of the research which, together with the empirical leg, would be able to support theory building on facilitation. This decision led me to place this methodology chapter before the literature review.

### **Selection of empirical cases**

In late 2008, when I first started conceptualising this research, I decided to track several projects I was involved in at the time in the hope that one of them would prove to be a goldmine of learning about how to facilitate social change. At that time, Adam Kahane's book had not yet been published and the notion of justice was not part of my research question. Throughout 2009, I closely observed five projects I had been commissioned to facilitate, spanning a project with organisations integrating a gender perspective into their HIV work, to a project with biodiversity organisations challenged to develop adaptive strategies to climate change threats. In the same year, I initiated a first conversation between white peers living in Johannesburg who were interested in deepening their understanding of what it means to be white, towards more self-aware and productive engagement across race. This group continued to meet on a monthly basis hosted and facilitated each time by a different member of the group. I mentioned this in passing to my supervisor who responded to the gleam in my eye by suggesting I track developments in this group too. I had been documenting our meetings out of habit and continued to do so, but with little expectation that it would link to my research on facilitating social change. Without a designated facilitator, how could it be relevant? However, by early 2010, it was clear that the richest source of learning about change – but not necessarily because there was a lot of it - was this whiteness collective.

Choosing this case study brought something else into view. I had joined a Process Work group in late 2008, ostensibly to be trained in the methodology. I was reaching the decision to research the whiteness group at a time when the process work group had concluded three out

of its four modules and I was beginning to recognise its profound impact on my thinking about, and experience of, race and of being white in a mixed race group. The participant in me was immersed in the process. The researcher in me suddenly saw that the experience was a significant site of learning about how to facilitate change and that it could complement what I was learning about change in relation to race from the whiteness group. And, finally, as the justice piece of the conceptual puzzle fell into place following a conversation with Adam Kahane (see Chapter One), it became clear that these two group experiences were, for me, about furthering *racial justice*. I finally had a research project.

### **Gathering the data**

On the strength of a supervision session in late January 2010 at which I made the decision to research the whiteness group, I wrote to its members about the possibility of interviewing them. Ten of the twelve regular members responded, all with enthusiasm for the research. Two months later, at the end of the fourth and final Process Work module, I asked that group's permission too. Given that those present did not represent the full group, I was asked to address this request in writing to all members of the group. I wrote to 25 people<sup>13</sup>. In an email, I asked for permission at two levels: I asked the whole group for their consent to write about the experience of the group, and I asked to interview the twenty people who had attended at least three of the four modules and who lived in South Africa (and with whom I could therefore meet face to face). I attached to this email a sample of my journal writing (on module 1), so that people could respond to the first request having had a taste of what and how I was writing about the group experience.

Within four days, I had received 16 written responses, all of which granted unconditional permission to use the group material, and accepted the invitation to be interviewed. During subsequent weeks, all but four members of the group responded, all of whom had left the group by the end of the second module. Of the responses, one person expressed reservations.

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<sup>13</sup> The group had started with 28 members, three of whom had left early on in the process, notifying the group that they would not return. I wrote to the remaining 25, three of whom had attended only two of the four modules but whose status had not been clarified and who I therefore considered it important to include in the correspondence.

His concern was about the analysis I would bring to the data, mirroring a tension that had surfaced between us – as two white people - during the group’s lifespan, highlighting the diversity among white South Africans on the question of race. 20 people met the criteria for interviews, one of whom had joined a subsequent Process Work group, also convened by Stephen Schuitevoerder, and who I arranged to interview only once that second group had ended in April 2011. The person who had expressed reservations declined to be interviewed. This left 19 members to be interviewed, including myself.

Over the following four months (from late April to late August 2010), I interviewed 17 members of the PW group. One of these people interviewed me in return, bringing the total to 18, with a final interview pending for the reasons described above. I conducted two interviews with Stephen Schuitevoerder, one immediately on completion of our group and one a year later, just prior to his final module with the second group.

Five of the nineteen (myself included) were also members of the whiteness group. I interviewed a further four members of the whiteness group during the course of July, bringing the total of respondents from that group to nine.

### **Conducting the interviews**

The interview format was open-ended comprising a skeleton of three questions for members of the process work and whiteness group:

1. Through your experiences in the closed Process Work / whiteness group, have you experienced any changes relating to race issues, race identity and racism? If so, please reflect on these changes
2. What do you attribute that / those change(s) to?
3. What are you doing differently as a result?

I inserted an additional question for the five people who belonged to both groups, asking them primarily about their experience of the closed process work group, and then inviting them to reflect on the influence of having been simultaneously in the whiteness conversations.

The move from the first to the third question is, as suggested earlier in this chapter, the classic move from attitudinal to behaviour change. I had pause to think about the phrasing of this interview question later when a colleague made the case that: "Attribution is becoming an increasingly unhelpful idea in looking at social process; let's look instead at the idea of contribution as a valid approach ...The edges to attribution are harder than contribution – cranky, crusty science that gets obsessed in the isolating of variables, that all meaning is chased away. Contribution has softer edges, still rigorous, but respects the relationships between variables. So the difference between attribution and contribution is a question of tone"<sup>14</sup> Were I to do this research again, I would change the second question to ask about "contributing factors".

Each interviewee chose the interview site, and most invited me to their home. Where this was not feasible, I conducted three interviews in the respondent's workplace, two in my own home and two more at guesthouses. I was interviewed in the office of my interviewer. Interview duration ranged from one to two hours.

I had two methods of recording each interview: a digital voice recorder and my laptop. The digital voice recorder was used for all but the first two interviews. I gave each of the remaining interviewees a choice about whether I typed during the course of the interview or not. The majority agreed to the combination. For some people, the presence of the recording device was an inhibiting factor. On two occasions, some of the most salient reflections were shared once the device was switched off and after the interview had formally ended. Both times, I

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<sup>14</sup> Sue Soal from CDRA (Community Development Resource Association) speaking in Johannesburg on monitoring and evaluation methods: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010. By attribute, I mean to " ascribe to, regard as the effect of a stated cause" and by contribute, to "help to bring about a result" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990).

paraphrased from memory immediately afterwards and sent it to them with the transcript, asking permission to include this material and inviting them to make any additions or changes.

### **Processing the data**

I transcribed the interviews myself and, as agreed, sent the transcript back to each interviewee with an invitation to read it to a) confirm its accuracy and b) to add any further thoughts it prompted. Half the interviewees took up this offer and sent back the transcripts with corrections (e.g. to place / organizational names and acronyms) and some further thoughts. Given my own work demands, there was a hiatus in the transcribing process from September until December 2010. I completed the last five transcripts in December 2010.

I coded and analysed the transcripts during January 2011, reading each transcript twice (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) first for understanding the full picture conveyed by the respondent and then again to identify themes, which I extracted in three ways. Firstly, I captured information from each interview in a spreadsheet according to three categories aligned to the three main questions: changes in awareness, facilitators of these changes, and subsequent changes in behaviour. Next I coded all responses where at least three people said similar things, producing “themes” which overlapped with, but were not limited to, the information captured in the spreadsheet. This follows the simple repetition approach to thematic discovery and analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). According to Braun and Clarke, a theme “represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set” (2006:10). Lastly, I made notes on anything that snagged my curiosity or surprised me.

Working first with the 58 themes generated by the PW interviews, I found that 13 related to changes people had experienced, a further 21 to factors that had facilitated these changes, and the remaining 24 to a “miscellaneous” bucket of things that had caught my attention, comprising questions and concerns raised, insights shared, and explorations navigated during the interviews. I transferred these themes to post-it notes and then clustered them on large sheets of paper. The first sheet was dedicated to changes and the second to the facilitators of

those changes. About half of the amorphous attention-catchers seemed to correspond to these changes. The second page clustered factors facilitating those changes, again linked to any corresponding “other” themes. I named each emerging cluster on both flipcharts, using language from the interviews themselves. At this point, I had a combination of: individual interview narratives, themes where there was convergence between these narratives, and clusters of these themes.

I repeated the same initial steps of reading and coding with the material gathered from members of the whiteness group, and then changed tack. This shift was prompted by reflections by these respondents that change had been limited and that the potential of the group had largely been unfulfilled. As a result, I pursued two additional lines of questioning: If little changed, what got in the way? And, using inference, to what extent could the dearth of change be attributed to the absence of a facilitator?

## **Limitations**

Two features of this research are that the questions grow out of my own experience and that, just as I am sceptical about facilitator neutrality, I have reservations about the notion of researcher neutrality. While Touraine (2000) suggests that being deeply immersed in a context is valuable, both of these features risk tipping the research into the limiting terrain of idiosyncratic subjectivity. I have sought to mitigate this by adopting a triangulation approach. Bryman (2005:4) describes triangulation as a “device for enhancing the credibility and persuasiveness of a research account.” Nedjat (2007) identifies four types of triangulation: data, method, investigator and theory triangulation. Multiple triangulation describes the use of more than one of these types in one research project; this research has adopted the first two types: data and method triangulation. I have sought to triangulate the data by combining my own narrative with a broad base of interviews and drawing data from three different group experiences. The hybrid methodology described earlier in this chapter accounts for triangulation of method, producing both theoretical and empirical findings in relation to my

research questions. As a result, my immersion and my lack of neutrality are known, declared and ballasted.

## **Ethics**

This thesis draws on material from sensitive group conversations about race, often characterised by high levels of self-disclosure. In order to work with this material ethically and respectfully, the principles of (identity) protection and permission were structured into the design of data collection and presentation of the data. Given that protection of identity cannot always be completely ensured – this thesis will be a public document and someone who knows the group members may read it and be able to identify different “voices” - permission was sought from the facilitator and every member of the group to use this material. They were offered three options: to withhold permission altogether; to agree that the material, broadly, can be used, but ask for specific exclusions; or to agree unconditionally to the use of the material. All 24 respondents gave unconditional access to the material. See Annexure A for a copy of the interview consent form.

The identity of each interviewee was protected by referring to individuals by their race, gender and age, as they ascribed these to themselves. Some chose to give themselves a name as well. The facilitator indicated his willingness to have his own name used.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the research is a combination of a wide literature review, a process of theory consolidation and theory building that anchors the literature in the (unjust) South African context, my own biography, and interviews with 24 people, all of whom I know and with whom I had participated in sustained dialogue about race. The result is messy and the methods are messy in reflection of this reality, creating a hybrid qualitative research design advanced through participatory methods. Sifting through the interview material produced themes which

settled into clusters of change and their contributing factors, providing the basis for analysis and a discussion of findings on facilitating social change in contexts of injustice.

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

How does society change towards a more sustainable and just future? While this kind of question may tantalize, it is too immense to be useful; it simply rolls around in the mind and on the tongue. In order to attempt to make sense of the immensity, I will dismantle it into its three component parts: social change, sustainability and justice. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature relevant to each of these concepts, without falling into the trap of being too abstract or too simplistic. Grand theories abound, but this literature review has a pragmatic, instrumental bent rather than a philosophical one. As the thesis title indicates, I am interested in what it means to *facilitate* just and sustainable social change. Viewing the concepts of social change, sustainability and (in)justice through the lens of facilitation establishes a clear line of questions to put to the literature.

Therefore, part one is a survey of literature on social change focusing on: What does social change look like and how is it catalysed? Part two reviews the literature on sustainability from the perspective of probing how sustainable development differs, conceptually, from conventional development, and making the links to the different modalities of change identified in part one. Part three is a more in-depth critique of literature relevant to the question: What is justice, both as a process and as an outcome? This final part comes closest to tracing grand theories because the idea of justice is integral to all three research questions, namely: what is the relationship between sustainability and justice? When facilitating social change in contexts of injustice, is it sufficient to balance “love” and “power”? And if a facilitator is committed to justice, what does this imply for neutrality? Thus the literature review creates a stepping stone towards attempting a theoretical response to these three questions in Chapter Four. Together, Chapters Three and Four represent the theoretical component of this thesis.

In contrast to the vast literature on change, sustainability and justice, facilitation is under-theorised. To deal with this, I ask the question “what does this (set of ideas about social change) imply for facilitating social change?” at the end of part one of this literature review, and pull the thread of facilitation through the theorizing in Chapter Four so that it can be usefully drawn on in the empirical work.

This literature review has been shaped by a wide variety of thinkers and practitioners. It is necessarily inter-disciplinary, spanning the work of philosophers (such as Rawls, Tillich, Geuss, Cilliers, Fraser), natural scientists - especially those working in the new field of resilience science (Holling, Gunderson, Folke, Rockstrom and Kauffman, to name a few), social scientists (including George, Ramphela, Swilling, Cock, Gobodo-Madikizela, and Sachs), development thinkers (for example, Chambers, Green, Fowler and Carruthers), activists, facilitators and practitioners who, fortunately, are also writers (such as Freire, Kahane, Mindell, Kaplan, Reeler, Lewis and Smit) and journalists and novelists (Lewin, Krog, Vladislavic and Wright). This review has also been influenced by some remarkable thinkers whose ideas have crossed the boundaries between two or more of the core concepts of the thesis. Foremost among these are Amartya Sen (who has written extensively about development and justice, through the lens of freedom) and Martin Luther King Jr. (who, standing on Tillich’s shoulders, moulded the thinking about social change and justice of more than one generation). While Meadows and Dostal provide the core theoretical contribution to systems thinking, most of the writers listed here launch their ideas from a systems perspective and many push the frontiers of complexity thinking.

## LITERATURE REVIEW PART 1: SOCIAL CHANGE

### Introduction

*“Everything is in the midst of change. Fixed things do not exist.”*

(Mindell 2002:7)

Change renders life mercurial. Sometimes we welcome change; it ushers in freshness and possibility. But often change is difficult. It disrupts our plans, upsets our equilibrium and moves us away from what is familiar, creating stress and distress. Even when change is planned, the adjustments it precipitates can be deeply unsettling and we may mourn the loss of how things used to be. If change is both normative and constant, why is it stressful?

Political philosophy recognises that this is an old human paradox (Thompson, 2008). For example, social upheaval in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was epitomized by a balancing act between the seductive pull of liberated human will and the rationality of “progress” on the one side, and a fear of instability, violence and chaos on the other. The locus of change, especially in secularizing Western Europe, moved from the mystical to the human. This bore two sets of consequences relevant to the ambit of this thesis. Firstly, it instrumentalised the relationship with nature, towards the goal of progress. Secondly, it provoked questions about freedom, equality and justice, setting in motion a pendulum swing between disciplining “wicked” human nature to protect the collective (e.g. Hobbes, 1651 in Fernandez-Armesto, 2003) and liberating “good” human nature to benefit the collective (e.g. Locke, 1690 *ibid*). The question of change is therefore closely tied to the question of (social and socio-ecological) sustainability, which is the focus of the second part of this literature review, and to the question of justice, which is the subject of the third and final part of this literature review.

Change holds in thrall not just philosophers but sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and historians – among other intellectuals of the social sciences and the arts – as they seek to create

meaning and find the threads of the story, from the stories of individual change to stories of mass social change. Similarly, change in the natural world has spurred religionists and natural scientists to chart the path, find the source of change, and convince us of their explanation – from creation to evolution. As evidence of humankind’s destructive, even irreversible, impact on the natural world starts to mount, it becomes difficult to keep separate these disciplinary strands of theory.

Rockstrom et al lay out a case for nine interlinked “planetary boundaries” delineating limits to “biophysical preconditions for human development” (2009:474). Of the seven that have been measured, three (climate change, biodiversity extinction rate and disruption of the nitrogen cycle) have already been crossed. The remaining four boundaries (freshwater use, changes in land use, ocean acidification and disruption of the phosphorous cycle) are under threat. Humans are under unprecedented pressure to navigate rapid social change; to mitigate the degree of change we are causing, and to adapt to the changes we cannot reverse.

This thesis is about facilitating social change. From this perspective, the review on social change is most interested in *how* change happens, which narrows the focus to three patterns of change and four catalysts of change emerging from the literature.

### **Three patterns of change: adaptation, development and emergence**

Three distinct ways of thinking about change surfaced from the literature under review: adaptation, development and emergence. All three have been used to describe change in biological systems as well as changes in social systems. Adaptation appears most closely aligned with Darwin’s revolutionary framing of change as evolution. Development conjures up images of human change at various scales, from the individual (such as phases of psycho-sexual and psycho-social development through the lifecycle reference), to the collective (organizational development, community development and national development). Emergence has been popularized by quantum physics and complexity theory, countering ideas of change as either

incremental trial-and-error (adaptation) or as linear, planned, logical and predictable (development).

These three paradigms make different assumptions about the rationale for change, the location of the source of change, and the character of change. Adaptive change is a strategy for survival. Living systems cope with change in their environment by changing (Carpenter & Brocke, 2008; Meadows, 1999). In this paradigm, changes in the system's environment are fundamentally threatening. Adaptation is change in response to change. Development tends to be thought of as aspirational change. The promise of possibility pulls change along in its seductive wake. Far from being a response to threat, development is described as a "process of creating, testing and maintaining opportunity" (Gunderson & Holling, 2002:76). Chambers describes development as "good change" (2005:186). Emergent change is a property of complex systems and is, almost by definition, the least clearly articulated theory of change. Complex systems are thought to self-organise towards "the edge of chaos" (Lewin, 1999:44), a generative place populated by attractors that exert a suction effect towards the vortex. Kauffman posits a theory of deep structure emerging from a narrow range of attractors (the shapers of a few patterns of change). This theory applies to both biological and social systems and represents, according to Kauffman, "order for free" (in Lewin, 1999:25). But the objective is neither survival (as in adaptation) nor progress (as in development). If there is an "outcome" to emergence, it is greater creativity as an ingredient for ever greater change, with new qualities of the system representing novelty (Cilliers, 2000; Wheatley, 2008).

The source of adaptive change is exogenous: "Natural selection concerns simply the adaptation to local circumstances ... the environment changes in one direction, and adaptation tracks it. The environment changes in another direction and adaptation tracks it again, blindly and with no direction." (Lewin, 1999:144-5). On the other hand, emergence is seen as having an internal generator. More recently, complexity thinkers (biologists, mathematicians, physicists, ecologists and anthropologists) have reclaimed Darwin's language of adaptation towards a hybrid theory of self-organisation and selection with "an internal rather than an external engine for change." (*ibid*:58). Theories of development are also a site of tension between intrinsic or

extrinsic sources of change. The nature versus nurture debate continues to rage in social psychology and elsewhere, creating consternation for parents of growing children: How much of their development is genetically encoded and how susceptible is the nascent personality to stressful events, big or small? Funders and practitioners of social development projects are increasingly under fire for attempting to drive change from the outside, often with dire and unforeseen outcomes, prompting Reeler to warn that “we cannot deliver development - it is already happening as a natural process that we need to read, respect and work with.” (2008:15).

Adaptive change is characterized as reactive and incremental, developmental change as linear and progressive, and emergent change as non-linear and unpredictable. The table below captures some of the key distinguishing features of change across the theories of adaptation, development and emergence.

<b>Distinguishing features</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Emergence</b>
<i>Theoretical base</i>	Evolutionary theory	Social sciences (led by psychology and social work)	Complexity theory
<i>Purpose: Why change?</i>	To survive, to persevere	To realise potential and opportunity; to “progress”	To optimize creativity of change
<i>Character of change</i>	Reactive, incremental and often blind, through trial and error, towards greater compatibility with the environment	Constant, linear progression, often towards set objectives	Quantum, unpredictable, non-linear, and disproportionate. “Surface complexity arising out of deep simplicity” (Lewin, 1999:14)
<i>Stimulus for change</i>	Threat. In natural systems, the ultimate threat is extinction. In social systems, threats range from “hot crisis” to “cold stuckness” (Reeler, 2008:12)	Aspiration, growth and opportunity	Attraction towards the edge of generative chaos
<i>Location of the source of change</i>	External	Tension between external and internal sources (nature / nurture)	Internal engine of change
<i>How?</i>	Selection in natural	Planning	Self-organisation

<i>Mechanisms of change</i>	systems. Unlearning what has become maladaptive in social systems (Reeler, 2008)	In bounded social systems, cycles of planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME)	
<i>Direction of change</i>	Any direction, tracking change in its environment	Progressive change, towards realization of potential, maturity or project goals	Towards greater complexity (Lewin, 1999), which is not necessarily more “virtuous” (Cilliers, 2005)
<i>Speed of change</i>	Slow. In social systems, pace may be hampered by resistance (Reeler, 2008)	Slower than we would like, or have patience for (Hassan, 2005; Chambers, 2004). “Most development thinking is essentially gradualist” (Green, 2008:286).	Pace is attuned to the context (Cilliers, 2005). Change can tip from gradual to rapid, dramatic change (Gladwell, 2005)
<i>The relationship between form and function</i>	Infinite number of potential forms, shaped by the requirements of function. Form follows function.	Form follows function (structure follows strategy)	Form and function are co-evolving

Table 1: Comparison of rationale, process and manifestations of change across three paradigms

But change – as a process or as a result of that process – does not belong in neat columns of a table. As Reeler explains: “No unfolding situation contains an exclusive set of change conditions or one particular kind of inherent change process – there are always complex configurations” (2008:14). Sustainable development is one site where adaptation, development and emergence converge, as conceptualised in Holling et al’s Panarchy model of change (2002) which will be explored in part two of this literature review. But its creators issue a warning about any one theory trumping all others. “Once [a theory] seems to resolve paradoxes and once it passes some empirical tests, proponents are sorely tempted to extend its application beyond its natural context ... if a theory explains everything, it explains nothing” (Holling, Gunderson & Ludwig, 2002:13-14).

Their warning is a reminder to dig deeper for alternative ways of thinking about change. Buried in several of the texts included in this review are descriptions of what change is *not*. Gladwell (2000) suggests that change begins where equilibrium ends, Shaw and Stacey (2006) theorise stability as the antithesis of change and Hassan (2005) and Kahane (2010) refer to “stuck systems”. Hassan likens a stuck system to a black hole; a deep vacuum of trapped energy that confounds human skills of perception or comprehension. Inertia sums up this state of equilibrium, stability or stuckness. If inertia is the “opposite” of change, then change is about movement, life, release and renewal. As Hassan writes, when a catalyst of change does exercise its influence, “a river of possibilities starts to flow.” (2005:4).

### **Catalysts of change**

Catalysts of change appear in several different guises. Bullain (2008) refers to drivers of change, Gladwell (2000) to tipping points and Meadows (1997) to leverage points. Warning against the pursuit of any “cheap tickets” to systems change, Meadows describes a leverage point as a “place within a complex system where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything” (1997:1). She names nine levers in her original article (1997), eleven in a revised article (1999) and then provocatively proposes that the only lever more effective than changing underlying paradigms is to “transcend” paradigms altogether (1999:12). What can we understand about these elusive catalysts of change and what is the dynamic that enables them to leverage these changes?

Several writers, from both the natural and social sciences, distinguish between the proverbial carrots and sticks that catalyse change. Mindell (2002) refers to “attractors” and “disturbers” to social change suggesting that we are either magnetically pulled towards the green grass of change, or we are pushed over a precipice of change. Holling and Gunderson (2002) suggest that change in natural ecosystems is a combination of opportunism and disturbance. Theories of adaptation, development and emergence fall into timeworn polarities between portraying change as a reaction to a threat or as a response to the seductive curl of the beckoning finger. Adaptation is precipitated by threat, development is motivated by opportunity. Emergent

change is understood by some complexity theorists to be shaped by “attractors”; states which operate like small whirlpools in a stream, pulling that which is floating in the water towards it (Lewin, 1999:41). All four kinds of catalysts identified below can act as push or pull factors.

### **Four classes of catalysts**

Over the period of compiling this review, I made several lists of the wide range of catalysts different writers credit with making change happen. Eventually, these began to settle into four categories. Once this classification system had emerged, it became increasingly useful and robust. The first category is a composite of the roles of perception (Boyce, 2008; Reeler, 2008; and Kaplan, 2002), consciousness (Ramphela, 2008; Freire, 1996; and Swilling, 2002), thought (Bohm, 1991; Kaplan, 2002; and Dostal, 2005) and memory (Cilliers, 2005; Garret, undated; and Holling et al, 2002) in catalysing change. These all refer to a particular quality of attention. I clustered them together under the (inadequate) label of **awareness**. Most of these authors consider perception, consciousness, thought or memory a prerequisite for change, but not as an end to change itself. In other words, for them, this class of catalysts represents a necessary but insufficient condition for change. The second category depicts **relationship**, where webs of connections are catalysts of change (for example Wheatley & Frieze, 2008; Gillinson, 2004; Pennington, 2008; Bojer, 2007, Cilliers, 2000; Chambers, 2005; Hassan, 2005; and Hill, 2009). Community and collaboration are key words in these texts. The third class of catalysts refers to change galvanized by the cut and thrust of politics, conflict and contestation (Holloway, 2002; Green, 2008; George, 1996; Mindell, 1995). I call this **power**. As Foucault wrote, “in spaces where power is exercised, oppositional power will emerge” (in Ruiters, 2005:128). This dynamic can create rapid and dramatic transformation, or rapid and dramatic more-of-the-same (Ramphela, 2009; Mindell, 2004; Freire, 1996; Holloway, 2002). The final catalyst of change is **action**. Perhaps because heedless action has created so much unwanted change, I discerned a sense of hesitation in the literature about initiating the *doing* work of change. There is a palpable anxiety attached to intervening in, or acting into, complex systems and therefore fewer writers locate themselves here. Those who do, with due regard to the inherent risks, include

the numerous contributors to *Civic Driven Change: Citizens Imagination in Action* which emphasises “self willed action of people to create the society they individually imagine and want.” (Fowler and Biekart, 2008:7).

Few of the writers cited here locate themselves rigidly in only one of these four categories, but offer a hybrid understanding of the different dynamics that catalyse change. Indeed, the dynamic relationship between these categories will be a valuable resource for theory building in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to suggest that there seem to be two polarities, or paradoxes<sup>15</sup>, at play:

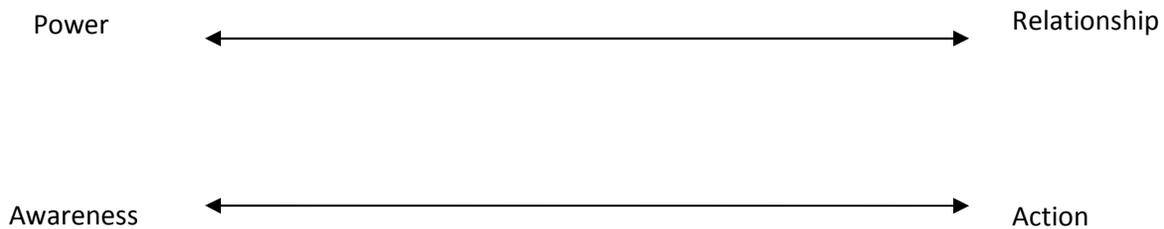


Figure 1: The four classes of catalysts expressed as two polarities

### **What are the implications for facilitating social change?**

The practice of facilitation (literally, “to make easier” from the French verb *faciliter*<sup>16</sup>) works closely with catalysts, using them as resources to make the process of change easier, seeking the combination of pull and push factors that will enable social systems to adapt, develop and/or create the conditions for change to emerge.

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<sup>15</sup> The concepts of polarity and paradox can be useful to facilitators working with social systems that are caught up in the push and pull of change. Practicing facilitators such as Mindell (1995) write about polarity while Smith and Berg (1997) write about working with paradox in groups.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Collins French Dictionary, 1982.

From the literature surveyed, two practitioner-writers stand out for their applied thinking about how to work with these catalysts to enable social change to happen. This is a highly subjective selection, based on the fact that I have found deep resonance with their work and learned much from studying it. The first is Paulo Freire<sup>17</sup>, in particular his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). I was first exposed to his work when I stumbled across Hope and Timmel's *Training for Transformation* year series (1982) as a social work student at the University of Cape Town. Hungry for literature relevant to the South African context in the early 1990s, I found great value in this series and later in Freire's own writing. This was a time when radical transformation to a more just society seemed suddenly within reach. The second is Adam Kahane who first came to my attention through his facilitation of the Mont Fleur Scenarios in South Africa in 1992 to help catalyse this radical transformation<sup>18</sup>. Later, a colleague lent me his first book *Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening and Creating New Realities* (2004, 2007). By the time he published *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* in 2010, Adam had become a colleague.

Freire pulls awareness and action together into a strategy of "praxis" for social change, from oppression to liberation. He states, "Within the word [praxis] we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers" (1996:68) and elaborates that "Action without reflection is activism and reflection without action is 'verbalism'" (*ibid*:47). Kahane's approach to facilitating social change is to harness both relationship and power. He argues, "In order to address our toughest challenges, we must indeed connect, but this is not enough: we must also grow. In other words, we must exercise both love (the drive to unity) and power (the drive to self-realisation) ... If we want to create new and better realities – at home, at work, in our communities and in the world – we need to learn how to integrate our power and our love" (2010:x). Both Freire and Kahane recognize that change is generated by the friction of polarized, or paradoxical, elements. The love-power polarity will be discussed first.

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<sup>17</sup> Freire does not identify himself as a facilitator, but as a pedagogue. I recognise in his work traits similar to that of facilitation and therefore find his work relevant. Kahane does identify himself as a facilitator.

<sup>18</sup> The Mont Fleur Scenarios Project brought together leaders from the National Party and African National Congress to consider, together, the possible futures facing South Africa.

## Love (relationship) and power



This is a well-worn formulation, but Kahane's version seems a fresh and lucid account of this paradox, applied specifically to the challenge of facilitating social change. Conceptually, he stands on the shoulders of German philosopher-theologian Paul Tillich and his famous student, Martin Luther King Jr. Tillich defines love as "the drive towards the unity of the separated" (1960:25), while he understands power to be "the drive of everything living to realize itself with increasing intensity and extensity" (1960:36). King Jr. writes "Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, or economic changes." (1968:42-43). King Jr. also masterfully conveys the nuanced complementarity between power and love: "One of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as polar opposites. Love is identified with the resignation of power and power with the denial of love. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anaemic." (1968:42-43) quoted at the front of Kahane's book on power and love.

Kahane builds on this argument, differentiating between generative and degenerative aspects of love and power. He argues that we are all more attuned to either the love or the power drive and that our lack of consciousness of, or competence in, the other drive means that its generative qualities elude us in the pursuit of social change. The degenerative side of power is driven by a fear of being hurt, which leads to us disconnecting from others. The degenerative side of love is driven by a fear of hurting others, which results in us disengaging from action. Kahane summarises: "Love is what makes power generative instead of degenerative. And power is what makes love generative instead of degenerative" (2010:3). In a short paper prior to the release of this book, he wrote "Power and love are two orthogonal axes that together delineate the space of social change." (2008:1).

## Awareness and Action: Praxis



*“He knew the type. They drove to their televised protests in their snappy little cars, they took their djembe drums on board as hand luggage, they gazed upon exploitation and oppression through their Police sunglasses. And all along they demonstrated that there was nothing to be done. Their radicalism consisted in making manifest the impossibility of change.”*

(Vladislavic, 2004:149).

Freire’s recipe for social change moves through the full spectrum from awareness to action, acknowledging the interdependent relationship between both ends of this spectrum. At the awareness pole he includes perception, dialogue and reflection. First the oppressed must awaken to the causes of their oppression. “This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action.” (1996:31). Dialogue sharpens this awareness: “...a true revolution must initiate a courageous dialogue with the people. Its very legitimacy lies in that dialogue.” (1996:109). Reflection and action are united in praxis. He writes, “Action and reflection occur simultaneously” (1996:109), and elsewhere refers to “reflective participation in the act of liberation” (1996:47). This evokes Cilliers (2005:6): “If a somewhat slower tempo allows a system to develop a richer and more reflective memory, it will allow the system to deal with surprises in its environment better”.

## Conclusion

The literature consulted for this thesis implies that social change facilitators engage with social systems that are responding both to threats in their environment and to their desire for progress and growth. Alongside these expressions of a group’s agency – to adapt and to develop – are multiple interacting factors about which they may know little or which they may

not even perceive, but which will simultaneously produce emergent and unpredictable changes. If this is a facilitator's reality, their skilful employment of the dynamics of awareness, love and power in the social system may enable it to be, to reflect and to act in ways that build tolerance for, and appreciation of, the inevitable "surprises" to which Cilliers refers in the preceding paragraph. However, no facilitator starts with a blank slate, as Mindell's opening quote to part one of this literature review suggests, and facilitators are challenged to work with social change against a backdrop of growing unsustainability (precipitated, following the argument of several authors included in the next section, by an insatiable appetite for development-as-growth) and injustice. It is to the issue of (un)sustainability that I turn next.

## LITERATURE REVIEW PART 2: DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE

### DEVELOPMENT

*"Development is thought to be absolutely necessary, so that we mustn't stop it, no matter what it does to destroy the ecological balance of nature or its beauty, or to turn our cities into unliveable jungles of concrete. But we've got to stop this heedless rush into development, because that way lies in a meaningless life and eventually disaster."*

Bohm, in Edwards, 2007:164.

### Introduction

Part One of this literature review described three ways of thinking about change: as adaptation, as development and as emergence. But development, the prevailing approach to social change, is an idea in crisis. When development is dominated by beliefs in aggressive growth and unidirectional progress, it creates an unsustainable relationship between social and natural systems, and an unsustainable relationship between humans in the social system, driven by dynamics of inequality and privilege (Sachs, 2002). A deeply embedded paradigm about linear

cause and effect, about the universal benefits of economic growth, and about progress is being challenged by the persistence of poverty, inequality and violent conflict. “Development,” remarked David Bohm dryly “... has become a menace” (in Edwards, 2007:164).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence against the development paradigm is to be found in our human encroachment on natural limits. The signals that we are exhausting non-renewable natural resources and that we are overwhelming natural sinks to absorb our waste are getting louder (Rockstrom et al, 2009). As understanding dawns that we are fast approaching significant thresholds of the earth’s carrying capacity, we are brought face to face with the fact that the current model of development is both unjust (now) and unsustainable (in the immediate future). These are separate and compounding consequences. The fourth report of the International Panel on Climate Change indicates some of the impacts of climate change on Africa - already the site of the most extreme global poverty - by 2020 as follows: “between 75 and 250 million of people are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change [and]... yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries is projected to be severely compromised. This would further adversely affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition” (IPCC4 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policy Makers, 1997:11). These projections give rise to nightmares of natural resource wars and unprecedented levels of displacement and migration, alongside the devastation of species and of the finely-tuned ecosystems of which we are a part.

Part two of this three-part literature review starts to lay foundations towards developing a response to the first research question: what is the relationship between sustainability and justice?

### **Development and the mirage of progress**

The idea of progress has co-opted development. In the current era of neoliberal macro economic thinking, development has become conflated with a linear trajectory of growth despite protestations from increasingly mainstream observers. In this context, Gallopin

(2003:36) issues a timely reminder that development and economic growth are not the same thing. “Development is a qualitative process of realization of potentialities which may or may not involve economic growth (a quantitative increase in wealth)”

Progress is a mesmerising illusion, causing us to continually cast our eyes to the horizon instead of paying attention to the present. It “has an internal logic that can lead beyond reason to catastrophe. A seductive trail of successes may end in a trap.” (Wright, 2004:5). When positive feedback (rated by Meadows, 1999, as the sixth most effective lever for change) runs unchecked, it can drive a system to self-destruct, often at surprising speed. Two fatal flaws develop: the system gets addicted to more of the same and loses the capacity to self-correct (i.e. via negative feedback loops) and the system becomes increasingly vulnerable as it gets more specialised. “A civilization is ... most unstable at its peak” notes Wright (2004:84). Gould dismisses progress as “a noxious, culturally embedded, untestable, nonoperational idea ...” (in Lewin, 1999:139).

The narrow conceptualisation of change as linear development and uni-directional growth is at the outer edges of its usefulness, mirroring the decline of modernist ways of seeing, thinking and acting. Enter a new formulation: sustainable development.

## **What is sustainable development?**

The official definition of sustainable development formulated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987<sup>19</sup> implicitly acknowledges the tension between development, sustainability and justice. It describes sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to

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<sup>19</sup> Familiarly referred to as the Brundtland Commission.

meet their own needs.”<sup>20</sup> These ideas of intergenerational and intragenerational justice form the anthropocentric “ethical foundations” of sustainable development (Gallopín, 2003:20).

Since 1987, the tide of literature on sustainability and sustainable development has risen rapidly. However, the language and prescriptions of this literature tend to be both “dangerously vague” (Daly in Mebratu, 1998:503) and hotly contested (Dresner, 2002). The result is a highly malleable set of concepts, fashioned to suit competing, and often powerful, interests. Carruthers (2008: 9), for example, warns that the co-option of the idea of sustainable development by the mainstream neoliberal establishment “dissolves the old conflict between growth and limits.” What has happened to development is in danger of happening to sustainable development.

Sustainability and sustainable development are often used as inter-changeable terms, but there is value in understanding their separate meanings and the relationship between them. Gallopín (2003), a systems thinker, has picked these ideas cleanly to the bone. Sustainability is “dynamic preservation of the essential identity of the system amidst permanent change” (2003:35) achieved by “avoid[ing] the destruction of the sources of renewal” (2003:19). Sustainable development, on the other hand, is a “process of directional change by which a system improves through time in a sustainable way.” (2003:35). In other words, sustainability is about survival (through a combination of “change and persistence” Holling et al, 2002:396), while sustainable development represents directional change without falling into Wright’s progress “trap”.

Indeed, sustainable development is “an attempt at redefining progress” (Gallopín, 2003:20). Folke et al<sup>21</sup> rise to this challenge of redefinition: “... the transition to sustainability derives from [a] fundamental change in the way people think about the complex systems upon which they depend ... from the over-riding goal of increasing productive capacity to one of increasing adaptive capacity, from the view of humanity as independent of nature to one of humanity and

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<sup>20</sup> Source: [www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm](http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm), accessed 16.04.2011

<sup>21</sup> Members of a group of mostly Scandinavian natural scientists who formed the Resilience Alliance

nature as co-evolving in a dynamic fashion within the biosphere.” (2002:4). This is the shift from thinking about change as (conventional) development to thinking about change as (unconventional) adaptation in a system shared by humans and nature.

Folke’s colleagues in the Resilience Network (Gunderson and Holling, 2002) propose a “Panarchy” model of change, harnessing the unpredictability of Pan<sup>22</sup>, the Greek god of nature and dislodging traditional notions of hierarchy. Panarchy represents a leap in thinking about how change happens, incorporating elements of the adaptive, emergent and developmental theories of change discussed in part one of this chapter into a new, and robust, arrangement. This is an important contribution to the thinking about change, resilience and sustainable development and will be explored in some detail here to recover what is valuable from the ashes of change as development, and to introduce a less anthropocentric approach to sustainable development.

### **The Panarchy model of sustainable development**

Two characteristics of Panarchy differentiate it from other models: adaptive cycles of change, and the nested arrangement of these adaptive cycles which enable change to tumble through different levels of a system without causing it to collapse. According to Gunderson and Holling (2002), adaptive cycles comprise four phases: exploitation, conservation, release and reorganisation. Each phase tips into the next, sometimes slowly and sometimes very rapidly. Three properties fluctuate throughout these phases: the potential for change, connectedness and resilience. For example, when a system is in the long, slow phase of conservation, it is at its most stable. Connectedness and internal predictability are high, implying that resilience to external shocks is low. As it becomes more stable it becomes more vulnerable. The potential for change represents a mix of high efficiency *and* high rigidity. When this system is buffeted by a surprise in the external environment, it falls into rapid release, otherwise known as “creative destruction” (*ibid*, 2002:73) unbundling what it has conserved, which becomes available to the

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<sup>22</sup> Source: <http://www.resalliance.org/index.php/panarchy> accessed 21.11.2006

reorganisation phase. This phase is characterised by high uncertainty and high potential for creative change, in which novel re-combinations are innovated and tested, enabling the system to adapt. The authors emphasize that both natural selection and self-organisation have a role to play, which is what Lewin refers to as “self-tuning” (1999:76).

While adaptive cycles in each level of a multi-layered system “maintain adaptive opportunity” (2002:73), the connections between different layers in the Panarchy enable it to maintain integrity. The authors conclude that this “summarises the heart of what we define as sustainability. The fast levels invent, experiment and test; the slower levels stabilize and conserve accumulated memory of past successful, surviving experiments. The whole Panarchy is both creative and conserving. The interactions between cycles in a Panarchy combine learning with continuity. That clarifies the meaning of sustainable development. Sustainability is the capacity to create, test and maintain adaptive capacity. Development is the process of creating, testing and maintaining opportunity. The phrase that combines the two, sustainable development, is therefore not an oxymoron but represents a logical partnership” (2002:76). The Panarchy model of sustainable development appreciates too the role of emergent change in complex adaptive systems: “The emergence of novelty that creates unpredictable opportunity is at the heart of sustainable development” (Holling, 2002:5).

This is a model of change where systems persist through navigating “delicious paradox” (2002:40), by being attuned to both threat and opportunity, being both conserving and creative, and being able to generate novelty. This formulation matches the spectrum of factors Gallopini identifies as “universally required for the sustainability of socio-ecological systems”: “plasticity” (*ibid*), resources, resilience, capacity of response, self-reliance and innovation (2003:17).

The four phases of the adaptive cycle were initially observed in ecosystems but are widely applicable to social and socio-ecological systems too. Seeking to avoid a universal theory and therefore sloppy reductionism, Westley et al (2002<sup>23</sup>), argue that social systems can be

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<sup>23</sup> Authors of a chapter entitled “Why Systems of People and Nature Are Not Just Social and Ecological Systems” in *Panarchy* (Gunderson and Holling, eds. 2002)

distinguished from ecosystems in one key respect. While ecosystems are organised, or self-organise, around the two dimensions of space and time, social systems add a third, symbolic, dimension expressed through our “capacity for representation, for communication and for making meaning” (2002:113). Three capacities flow from this symbolic dimension: our capacity for abstraction, for reflexivity and for anticipation of the future. While these have the potential to produce novelty in relatively short time spans, which is “key to dealing with surprises or crises” (2002:118), these capacities are also all double-edged swords (following Bohm). The advantage, from a sustainability perspective, is that abstraction enables us to make sense and generate meaning, which in turn ratchets up our capacity to self-organise, assume roles, and switch strategies. In other words, we adapt what we do and how we do it to be more resilient to change, instead of having to adapt physically. However, the disadvantage is that we begin to think of our socially constructed world as the real world “and then act in accordance with that invented world, as if it were real ....[with] obvious consequences for the environment” (2002:108). “When people take their interpretations seriously and act on them, the material world may cohere in a different way than it did before” (Weick, 1995, in Westley et al, 2002:108).

## Conclusion

In the Panarchy model, change is ever-present in its many guises of pace and scale. At the moment when change is least possible – in the stability found at the height of the conservation phase – the system is at its most vulnerable to collapse. What does this mean for *sustainable* social change, as it appears in the title of this thesis? Given the malleability of this language, “sustainable social change” has several meanings. On the one hand, change that endures (but is not fixed) and on the other, change towards a more sustainable future. At this point, the language again splits into two meanings: social sustainability (referring to the “dynamic preservation” of social relations) and socio-ecological sustainability (referring to the “dynamic preservation” of the relationship between social and ecological systems, described in Chapter One). Both social and socio-ecological sustainability are relevant to thinking about social change in contexts of injustice.

A more sustainable future is a global issue in the way it has been framed in this chapter, and is also a question of local context. What would be more sustainable depends on what generates unsustainability in a particular place. Later in this thesis, I will argue that injustice is a major threat to social and socio-ecological sustainability and that in the South African context, less than two decades after apartheid, racial injustice constitutes a significant risk to sustainability. This literature review now turns to the question of justice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW PART 3: JUSTICE

*“The aspiration for justice needs to be delinked from the pursuit of conventional development.”*

(Sachs, 2002<sup>24</sup>)

### Introduction

Conventional development, characterized by “growth” and “progress” has not only brought the world to the brink of a sustainability crisis (as argued in part two of this literature review), but has failed to make the world a more just place. If the global environmental space<sup>25</sup> is both finite and disproportionately distributed (Sachs, Jo’burg Memo, 2002) the places at which unsustainability and injustice collide become increasingly evident. Making the connection between injustice and unsustainability as symptoms of the same underlying crisis of development has the potential to wake social justice activists up to the significance of nature, to wake environmental activists up to human suffering, and to wake neoliberalism up to the consequences of exploiting both human and natural resources.

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<sup>24</sup> In his closing remarks at a North-South Dialogue on Sustainability and Justice

<sup>25</sup> A term used by the organisation Friends of the Earth (2002): [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)

Part three of this literature review pays close attention to the idea of justice, laying down a third and final layer of literature analysis. A clearer understanding of justice is a necessary precursor to attempting a theoretical response to the three research questions: What is the relationship between justice and sustainability, are love and power sufficient to generate change in situations of injustice, and what are the implications for the traditional idea of neutrality when facilitating social change in contexts of injustice?

## **What is Justice?**

The idea of justice has exercised philosophers and activists – and many people in-between – spawning a rich but inconclusive literature. Within this literature, a central strand of conversation has developed between Rawls (1971 and 2005), Sen (2007 and 2009), Nussbaum (2003) and Geuss (2008). Both Sen - a student of Rawls - and Geuss are reacting, in large part, to deficits they perceive in Rawls' system of thought. Nussbaum, in turn, is responding to the vacuum she sees opening up in Sen's own work on justice. Fraser (2001:4) slips free of this exchange, which is mostly absorbed with ideas of distributive justice, suggesting instead that justice "spans two dimensions of social ordering, the dimension of *distribution* and the dimension of *recognition*." (2001:4) and arguing that these two dimensions co-exist in a mutually "enriching and complicating" tension (2001:3).

The start of this literature review referenced the historical relationship between social change, freedom, equality and justice. In the context of a changing and secularizing Europe, the modernist dilemma was characterized by a newfound sense of freedom shadowed by the potential for chaos, provoking reams of philosophical enquiry into social order, distribution, competing values and in whose interest decisions are made. These are questions of justice. Hobbes' vision of life as "nasty, short and brutish" was one of justice in modest supply (1651 in Fernandez-Armesto, 2003:149). Others took a more positive view of the potential for a just society. John Rawls was one of these and is credited with having "dominated discussion on distributive justice" since publishing *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 (Thompson, 2008:91). Rawls was exercised by a fundamental question of sustainability in a diverse society: "How is it possible for

there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines?” (Rawls, 2005:4). Conceiving of justice as “fairness” (2005:xv), he proposed, through a thought experiment, two principles towards realizing a just society: “Firstly: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all” (Rawls, 1972 in Comeliau, 2002:173). Embedded in these principles was the idea that any distributional inequalities, in respect of primary goods, should favour the least advantaged (Rawls, 2005).

This theory deserves some attention on its own cognizance before comparing it to competing contributions. Rawls rejected the previously dominant theory of utilitarianism largely because its focus on the majority can render invisible the needs, rights and perspectives of the minority<sup>26</sup> (following Thompson, 2008). However, his move towards creating a stronger alternative is a slippery one because it is based on a thought experiment, involving “rational” people operating behind a “veil of ignorance” (Rawls, 2005:5). Rawls asserts the right to develop his ideas based on “abstractions” of both the individual and society so that he does not have to contend with “distracting details” (*ibid*:12). In so doing, he siphons complexity out of how power operates for the sake of a theoretical argument and falls into Bohm’s trap (in Edwards, 2007) of abstracted, decontextualized thought. The result is a version of justice operating in a sanitized context stripped of the politics of power, and which therefore cannot be applied in the real, complex world. This abstraction is reinforced by his failure to engage with the process of justice or “how a law of people’s might be worked out” (*ibid*:12). He is more interested in institutional procedure. In other words, Rawls personifies the normative school of political philosophy, interested in what justice “ought” to be, rather than engaging with what is<sup>27</sup>. This is the extreme opposite of the empirical or realist school.

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<sup>26</sup> “Deep democracy” defined in Chapter Two (footnote 7) is a facilitation method designed to address precisely this dynamic, as it presents in groups and is discussed in detail later in Chapter Six.

<sup>27</sup> This is not to deny that there is a place for “ought” and for an ideal politics. On the rare occasion when a country can consciously reinvent itself, normative theories can be highly valuable contributors to the debates. South Africa is

Faced with the challenge of engaging with real-life injustices, normative conceptions of justice can be very provocative. Tillich, writing prior to Rawls<sup>28</sup>, observed that “Every decision which is based on the abstract formulation of justice alone is essentially and inescapably unjust” (1960:15). Geuss’s treatment (2008) of *A Theory of Justice* is door-slammingly dismissive on this basis, while Rawls’ former student, Amartya Sen, starts his critique of Rawls with the withering comment that he asks “quite the wrong questions” (2007<sup>29</sup>). The problem with asking “what is a just society” contends Sen, is that, in the absence of a “perfectly just state”, the answers do not have practical application to contemporary dilemmas of justice, and fail to provide a “comparative yardstick that would enable us to identify what is *more* fair” (*ibid*). He describes Rawls’ assumption that human self interest is the only basis for choice as “totally parasitic” (*ibid*). Drawing on his own work on capabilities, Sen is critical of Rawls’ version of justice as the equal distribution of primary goods, which ignores the fact that people have different needs, have different abilities to realise benefits from the same goods, and that they exercise choice using different, subjective, criteria (1999, 2007).

In 2009, Sen published his rejoinder to Rawls: *The Idea of Justice*. For Sen, justice is neither objective nor universal but is to be found in the contrast between what is and what could have been or, put differently, in the tension between normative and empirical versions of justice. Instead of hard and fast principles, he places emphasis on just processes and just culminations of those processes. If Rawls’ just rules and just institutions can blindly produce unjust results, Sen’s alternative is a more participatory, creative, contested (and therefore messy) process. This process draws on human faculties of outrage at injustice (instead of impartiality), of sympathy (rather than cold self-interest) and the capacity to reason. “The plurality [of competing priorities] with which we will then end up will be the result of reasoning, not the abstention from it” he argues (2009:x).

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one such place; one of the architects of the South Africa Constitution, Albie Sachs, credits Rawls as a source of the kind of normative political theory that a constitution embodies (1990).

<sup>28</sup> Tillich’s book was first published in 1954, 17 years before *A Theory of Justice*

<sup>29</sup> During a Symposium at the University of the Witwatersrand entitled “Social Justice in South Africa Today” 21<sup>st</sup> April 2007

However, Sen too pays inadequate attention to the problem of asymmetrical power in these complex productions of relational and comparative justice. He suggests that those with more power have more responsibility but he does not take into account the temptation for those with powerful vested interests to abuse their power in the context of participatory processes intended to establish what is most just.

The strongest criticism of Sen's work is that his is an empty theory of justice. Sen's colleague, Nussbaum, writes that the failure to insert substance into his idea of justice is both noble and self-defeating. "To get a vision of social justice that will have the requisite critical force and definiteness to direct social policy, we need to have an account, for political purposes, of what the central human capabilities are, even if we know that this account will always be contested and remade." (2003:56).

While the literature reviewed is rife with disagreement about the contents (if any) and the principles (if any) of justice, it resoundingly approves of the idea that participation is indispensable to realizing a broadly satisfactory version of justice. Even Rawls, otherwise relegated to the margins of this review, agrees that the substance of justice is produced through "citizens' reasoning in the public forum" (2005:10). Most sources included here concur with Tillich (1960:15) that justice is at its most alive when it is responding to the "concrete situation" as opposed to an abstract formulation of injustice.

Geuss (2008:73) concludes: "It is striking how unclear this concept [of justice] is in ordinary language". How, then, will justice be treated in this thesis so that it maintains a coherent and recognizable shape? The literature shows how difficult it is to say definitively what justice *is* by debunking the idea that justice is a set of laws (Sen, Tillich, Martin Luther King Jr., Geuss and Fraser), that justice is fairness (Sen, Geuss, Tillich) or that justice is synonymous with morality (Rawls, King and Geuss). If, as Sen suggests, *injustice* is something we instinctively recognise (especially, I would add, when it is done to us), perhaps the most useful understanding of justice is the absence, or active dismantling, of injustice. It is at this point of wrapping up the literature review on justice that I assert my own voice.

If I take up Sen's implicit invitation and allow my instincts to define injustice for me, I taste injustice when I bear the consequences of others' choices and actions, especially when they either do not notice this impact or, if they do notice, do not care. Or, from the perspective of the 'perpetrator', injustice is when others pay the cost for my choices and actions and I am unaware or unwilling to do anything about it. The phrase that most aptly captures this subjective version of injustice is "preventable suffering" (Ophir, 1994).

This instinctive response finds purchase within Cilliers' (2003:1) home grown description of justice: "Justice can be understood, if somewhat elliptically, as achieving and maintaining non-exploitative relationships amongst the members of a society without destroying the differences which constitute the society. Law is necessary to achieve this, but justice does not reside in the law itself, it manifests itself in the nature of the contingent relationship between people ... Furthermore, justice does not maintain itself once it has (hypothetically) been achieved. Society is always in flux, and the relationship between its members shift continuously. Justice must therefore be perceived as a *process*"

What constitutes a process that addresses preventable suffering? And how to take into account asymmetries of power? Fraser (2001:11) is more concrete about process and participation and more attuned to power differentials than her counterparts: "Justice here means removal of impediments to the parity of participation." She explains, "For participation parity to be possible, at least two conditions must be satisfied. First the distribution of material benefits must be such as to ensure participants' independence and 'voice'." The second condition "requires that institutionalised patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem." (Fraser, 2001:16). Justice, then, is an emergent property of engagement amongst members of a complex social system where injustice is noticed and where there is willingness to address it. This evokes an added complexity in the face of unequal power relations in that system; creative and participatory justice always has an element of "unenforceable obligation" (King, 1968:118). Applying this in the context of the Civil Rights Movement in America, King concludes that "The ultimate solution to the race problem lies in the willingness of men (sic) to obey the

unenforceable” (*ibid*). Racial (in)justice is the subject of the empirical work in this thesis. The juxtaposition of preventable suffering with unenforceable obligation indicates the need for sophisticated navigation of the territory beyond, as Cilliers (2003) emphasizes, rule-bound justice. Can skilful facilitation help social systems to navigate this tension in the interests of a more just and sustainable future?

## CONCLUSION

Producing this literature review was an experience of reading between more philosophical and more applied texts; a straddling exercise between normative and realist versions of social change, sustainability and justice. From a more realistic and applied perspective, which I favour, I would summarise what *is* as follows: social change is a muddle of more planned and more emergent processes exemplified in the Panarchy model, sustainable development is at risk of becoming a staid and unimaginative public relations “spin” on conventional development bearing little relevance to contemporary threats to social and socio-ecological sustainability, and justice – understood as redistribution, recognition and participation parity - exists between preventable suffering and unenforceable obligation. What this suggests for facilitation is an appreciation of what is, without getting stuck there, and a capacity to work with surprise and what could be – in this case, a more just and sustainable future - without floating away into abstraction.

This literature review sets the scene for exploring (what I will suggest is unsustainable) racial injustice and white privilege in South Africa in Chapter Four. The rest of that chapter holds the literature review up against the research questions to establish some conceptual footholds into understanding what happens when justice enters the frame of sustainable development and the facilitation of social change. What does this mean for balancing love and power in contexts of injustice, and what does this mean for facilitator neutrality?

## CHAPTER FOUR: BUILDING A THEORY OF FACILITATING SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL CHANGE IN CONTEXTS OF INJUSTICE

### INTRODUCTION

*“The increasing human ability to do things has outstripped the evolution of our ability to understand both what we should be doing and the full implications of what we are doing now.”*

(Ehrlich, 2002 in Swilling, 2002:15)

If injustice and unsustainability are prevalent in our social systems, what prevents us from doing all in our power to address them? Particularly those of us who have the privilege to deploy power, leverage and resources in these systems? The literature review revealed a seam of ideas suggesting that limitations in how we see the world distorts how we think about it, make sense of it and then act upon it. Development has been distorted by the illusion of progress, and its successor, sustainable development, is also at risk of being twisted by how it is perceived. Oshry (1996:xi) calls this “system blindness” and observes that “We humans spend our lives in systems ... yet system life remains a mystery. There is so much we don’t see.”

Awareness, according to the literature review, is a necessary catalyst for social change. What, then, are the consequences if blindness, or partial-sightedness, is a more pervasive way of encountering the world? According to Holling, Gunderson and Ludwig (2002), our tendency to see only part of the complex socio-ecological systems we are located in, leads to partial representations and “incomplete theories” of nature and our relationship with it. Mebratu (1988) contends that partial thinking confounds, rather than enriches, sustainable development. This suggests that inadequate ways of perceiving and conceiving of our world can lead to inadequate actions, or to paralysis in the face of overwhelming complexity. Blindness and paralysis represent the degenerative side of the awareness – action polarity of social change introduced in the previous chapter.

This chapter represents the theory building component of the thesis, consistent with the hybrid research design mapped out in Chapter Two. Building on the literature review, privilege emerges as a key concept linking social change, (un)sustainability and (in)justice. Specifically, the chapter traces an argument that privilege is a significant source of blindness, considers what this means for humankind's contemporary challenge to change towards a more just and sustainable future and applies this to the South African context of racial injustice. This chapter returns to the two polarities of catalyzing change and reformulates them as two intersecting axes of a matrix that can map strategies for change suggested in the literature. The second half of the chapter represents a transition, applying this conceptual work to the three research questions with the purpose of shedding theoretical light on 1) the relationship between sustainability and justice, 2) the role of justice in facilitation and 3) the implications for facilitator neutrality. Mouton describes a theory as "a set of statements that makes explanatory or causal claims about reality." (2001:177). Discussions about each of these three research questions will generate three explanatory claims. The end of Chapter Four concludes the theoretical component of this thesis; Chapter Five offers a subjective narrative perspective, leading in to Chapter Six which represents the empirical component of this research on the dilemmas of facilitating social change.

### **Reformulating four social change catalysts**

The literature reviewed in Chapter Three produced four classes of social change catalysts which, in turn produced two polarities, each of which mirrors a strategy for facilitating change proposed by Freire (1996) and Kahane (2010) respectively. Layering the two polarities of catalyzing change onto one another creates a matrix (see figure 2 below) and a way of thinking about strategies for social change. Quadrant 1 combines awareness with power, one version of which is aptly characterized by Freire as "critical consciousness". He articulated the catalytic effect as follows: "the awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents" (1996:18). Quadrant 2 refers to a different quality of awareness, spawned

by being in relationship with others and recognizing their humanity. The third quadrant is located in the lower half of the matrix relating to action and refers to collaborative deeds as a catalyst for change. The fourth quadrant characterizes actions which trigger change through contestation, mobilization or advocacy. This matrix will serve as a template in this chapter to synthesize different strategies mentioned in the literature for change towards sustainability and justice.

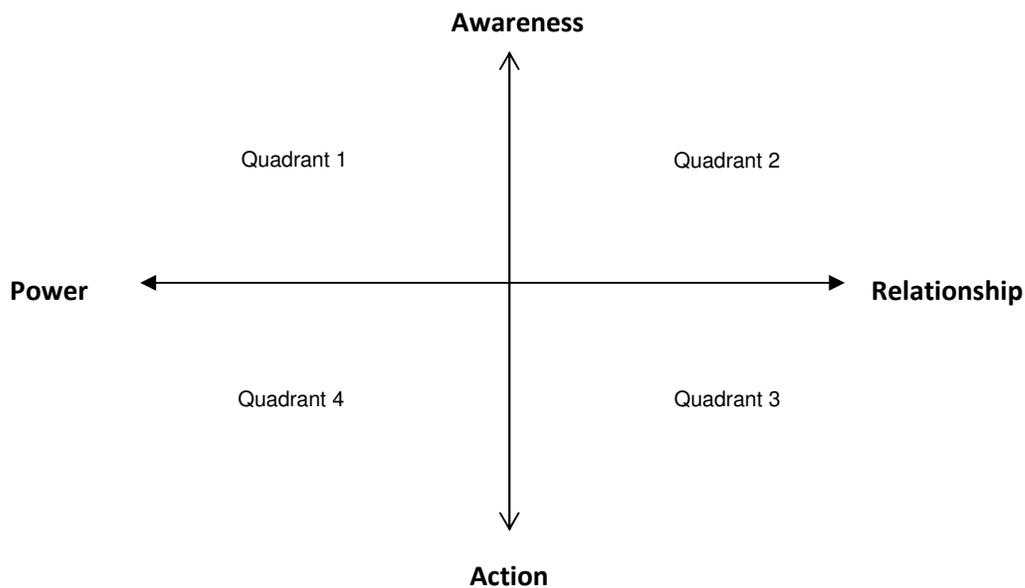


Figure 2: Combining the four classes of catalysts into a matrix

### **Privilege: a crisis of perception**

Privilege is defined as “an advantage, right, favour or freedom from a burden” (Smit, 2009:91). In Chapter One, social systems were characterized as groups where “patterns of dominance” are established (Westley et al, 2002: 17) indicating that power differentials are always present. Smit, drawing on Mindell’s work, describes the interplay of privilege *plus* power as “the differentiated status afforded to an individual or sub-group in a group as a result of the

combination of power and privilege”<sup>30</sup> (*ibid*). I will use this thickened version to denote privilege in social systems and to argue that blind, or unconscious, privilege tends to obstruct change in those systems.

While privilege is not “inherently bad” (Mindell, 1995:53), its unconscious use can be highly inflammatory to those in the shared social system who have less privilege. Freire (1996), McIntosh (1990), McIntyre (1997), Mindell (1995), Allen (2005), Sullivan (2006) and Wise (2008) all write about a dynamic attached, like a limpet mine, to the phenomenon of privilege. Possessing relative privilege distorts ways of seeing, ways of thinking and ways of being in that system. This is especially explosive when the bearers of privilege deny it, or are unaware of it, in systems of inequality. Unconscious privilege undermines both justice and sustainability because of blindness to its own position in the system and blindness to how its behaviour negatively affects those holding less privilege, both people and nature. In the context of the latter, Cock writes that “Nature is a site of struggle, a struggle largely shaped by relations of power and different conceptions of justice ... our current ways of relating to nature are not grounded in a recognition of the intricate and complex ways in which all living things are interconnected.” (2007:1). Sullivan, writing about racial privilege, expresses this dynamic in social systems: “habits of white privilege do not merely go unnoticed. They actively thwart the process of conscious reflection on them.” (2006:5-6). In contexts of injustice, blind privilege can compound the injustice.

The literature reveals three acts of illusion inherent in privilege (following Sachs, 2002; McIntosh, 1990; and Allen, 2004)<sup>31</sup>. In the first case, privilege renders invisible those in the same system who lack privilege. Leaning on the nomenclature of Tillich, King and Kahane, this is power trumping love, producing “reckless and abusive” behaviour (King, 1968:43). It manifests as ignorance and/or complacency. In the second case, people with privilege develop awareness of the inequality and injustice around them, but are blind to their own (active or passive)

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<sup>30</sup> Mindell (1995) uses the language of “rank” to convey this idea. I have elected to use the word “privilege”, in its thickened form, here to avoid using Process Work jargon. Research respondents from the Process Work group mentioned “rank” and so this term will appear in Chapter Six.

<sup>31</sup> Separate to these three “acts of illusion inherent in privilege” is conscious oppression or discrimination by those with privilege. This position is not characterised by blindness and so is not included in this discussion.

culpability in this system. As Allen writes, “people have a much easier time thinking of themselves as the oppressed than as the oppressor” (2004:123). This blind spot has focused many privileged minds of the global north on alleviating the poverty of the global south<sup>32</sup>, oblivious to the relationship between wealth and poverty, and defended against considering wealth alleviation strategies instead (following Sachs, 2002 and Chambers, 2005). Writing about racial privilege, McIntosh reflects, “I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.” (1990:1). This is what King (1968) describes as the “liberal” position regarding those with relatively less power and privilege. The third act of illusion moves one step further, attempting (often unconsciously) to blind the unprivileged other to one’s own collusion with inequality. For example, Allen describes the sleight of hand achieved by “normalizing social space in a way that perpetuates [white] power and privilege while also making it look like this is not what is happening.” (2004:126). This is centrality, where privilege is the “invisible centre that deflects attention from itself” (Steyn, 2001:162) while continuing to exercise the power that accrues to the centre of a social system.

While complacency represents total blindness, embodied in ignorance or disinterest, liberalism and centrality are more complex because awareness and denial compete, sending out double messages and thus often confounding change. The irony is that those with less privilege in the system are often acutely aware of the unfair distribution of power and wealth and are highly attuned to these double messages. “If things clearly need changing yet don’t change, presumably someone or something is blocking that change ... usually the adversary blocking change and / or profiting from the status quo is in plain sight.” (George, 2004:88).

What are the implications of blind privilege for sustainability? Segschneider (2002) and Sachs (2002) argue that middle class lifestyles of the global north, characterised by excessive, and unheeded, consumption and waste have brought the planet to the brink of unsustainability. The sustainability agenda is therefore, they propose, the responsibility of the privileged. Taking responsibility would require first removing the blinkers that obscure the co-existence and co-

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<sup>32</sup> The global north incorporates pockets of privilege in the (geographical) south

creation of privilege and un-privilege and acting against all three kinds of blindness described above. This chimes with the egalitarian version of sustainable development which prescribes that the ecological footprint of the North should not intrude upon the ecological space of the South, and with the intra-generational aspect of justice emphasized by the WCED definition of sustainable development cited in Chapter Three.

Ecological Footprint measurements demonstrate current distributions, between the North and South, of consumption and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. According to WWF's Living Planet Report 2010<sup>33</sup>, humanity's total ecological footprint has more than doubled between 1996 and 2007. In 2007, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 31 OECD<sup>34</sup> countries were responsible for 37% of our ecological footprint, while the combined ecological footprint of 53 African Union and 10 ASEAN<sup>35</sup> countries was 12%. Looking at the distribution of carbon dioxide emissions on their own, 41.4% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were produced by 11% of the population living in high income OECD countries. Five of the ten countries bearing the lightest carbon footprints are in Africa. Research has proven what common sense already knew; a strong correlation between wealth and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. When per capita expenditure doubles, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuel burning and industrial processes rise by 81%<sup>36</sup>.

Blind privilege stymies human change in both social and socio-ecological systems. In social systems, the covert pursuit of continued privilege tends to be more insidious, more defended against and therefore more impervious to change than bald domination (following Sullivan, 2006). In socio-ecological systems, Cock (2007) suggests that the practices of people who "understand", "enjoy" and "protect"<sup>37</sup> nature often have unintended harmful consequences, which are less visible and therefore harder to remedy, than overtly instrumental human relationships with nature. She points out, for example, that the creation of protected areas in South Africa may inadvertently "promote the dangerous idea that nature is separate from

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<sup>33</sup> World Wide Fund for Nature; report source: [http://wwf.panda.org/about\\_our\\_earth/all\\_publications/living\\_planet\\_report/](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report/) Accessed 23.03.2011

<sup>34</sup> OECD: Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development

<sup>35</sup> ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

<sup>36</sup> Source: [www.carbonfootprintofnations.com](http://www.carbonfootprintofnations.com), which cites research conducted by Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Accessed 23.03.2011.

<sup>37</sup> These represent three of Cock's ten ways in which humans engage with nature

civilization” and, more worryingly, make it easier for the million visitors to the Kruger National Park each year to “ignore the living real-world people who are economically and politically marginalized around the edges of the park and who are struggling to obtain material benefits from conservation” (Cock, 2007:5).

Conversely, the conscious use of privilege can enable change to flow. As Sachs (2002:19) wrote in the *Jo’burg Memo*: “The powerful have to yield both political and environmental space to the powerless if justice is to have a chance.” But what catalyses a growing consciousness about privilege? The next section looks at the social change involved in moving away from unconscious privilege and being drawn towards the potential of a more sustainable and just future.

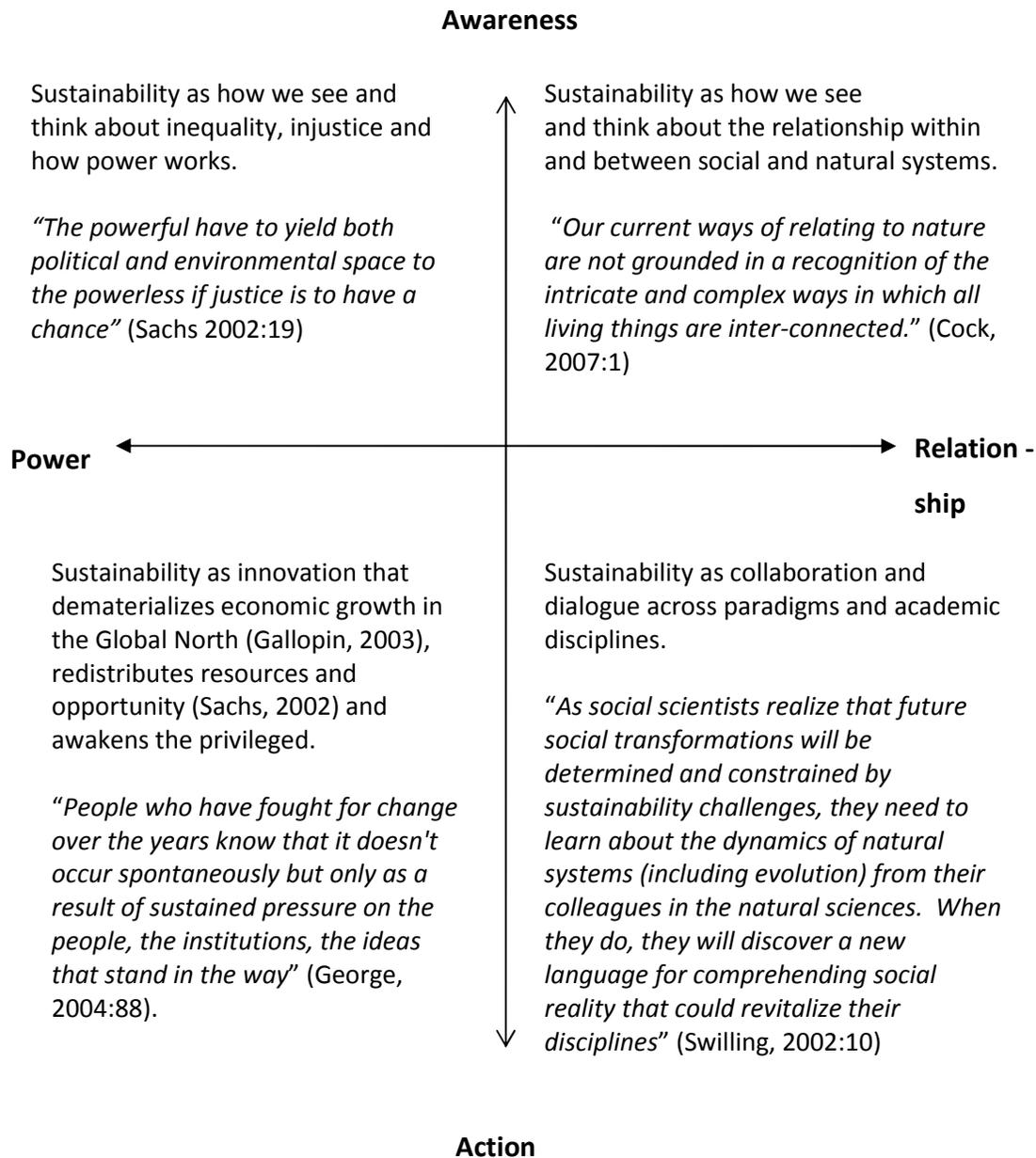
### **A paradigm shift from unconscious privilege to “conscious evolution”**

*A paradigm shift is “a click in the mind, a new way of seeing”*  
(Meadows, 1997:11).

Swilling contrasts our “blind persistence” in breaching natural thresholds with Ehrlich’s idea of “conscious evolution ...inspired by the possibility of sustainability” (in Swilling, 2002:16 & 17). Activists and academics including Margulis and Sagan (1997), Holling (2002), Swilling (2002), Sachs (2002); Ehrlich (2002), Shiva (2005) and Cock (2007) all advocate sustainable development predicated on the renewed capacity to perceive and conceive of<sup>38</sup> our world. How might sustainable development as conscious evolution happen? Figure 3, below, grafts the contributions of some of these thinkers onto the matrix of four catalysts of social change: awareness, relationship, power and action.

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<sup>38</sup> Phrasing borrowed from Kaplan (Observation, Insight and Intervention teaching notes, 2009) who uses the terms percept and concept together to emphasise that what we see, and how we see it, shapes how we think.



**Figure 3:** Mapping sustainability strategies towards “conscious evolution”

This produces four different kinds of strategies, catalysed by a shift in awareness (and either an orientation to the harder edge of tough realities and/or an orientation to the softer edge of connection with others), and/or catalysed by a step into action (again with an orientation towards a more combative stance and/or a collaborative stance). None of these are mutually

exclusive and may be sequential or concurrent. All assume an awakening to the importance and urgency of sustainability, but with acknowledgement that different social systems respond better to some catalysts than others and will be more inclined to pursue different strategies. What ensues may be characteristic of adaptive, developmental or emergent change, or – more likely – a combination of all three.

The idea of “conscious evolution” evokes the combination of adaptive, developmental and emergent change described by the Panarchy model of change, whereby a complex system “aggregates resources and periodically restructures to create opportunities for innovation” through a process of self-organisation (Holling et al, 2002:396). These authors suggest that the role of consciousness in social systems can boost change. “Although we see fundamental similarity between adaptive ecological and adaptive human systems, we propose that the human ones have much greater powers for both rigidity and novelty ... the possibility exists that the locus and speed of the adaptive cycle can be changed by *conscious design*” (Gunderson et al, 2002:328-9, italics added).

In summary, global sustainability is stymied not only by the ecological footprint of the privileged and by the inequality between the privileged and the un-privileged, but by the lack of awareness the privileged bring to these two realities. The issue of privilege has particular resonance in South Africa with its history of apartheid and its status as one of the most unequal countries in the world<sup>39</sup>. This chapter turns its attention to the issue of white privilege as a form of system blindness. Racial injustice remains, arguably, the most pervasive and pernicious issue of social justice in South Africa, especially where it intersects with class injustice. However, the conjoined issues of white privilege and racial injustice are not exclusive to South Africa and the literature explored in the next section is sourced locally and from the United States of America.

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<sup>39</sup> National inequality levels are measured by the Gini Coefficient. The most recent statistic available for South Africa (2010) is that it has a Gini Coefficient of 57.8%, (where 100% would denote that all wealth is in one person’s hands and 0% would denote perfect equality). Source: [hdrstats.undp.org](http://hdrstats.undp.org). Accessed 30.05.2011

## White privilege and racial justice

*“One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of the status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. But today our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change.”*

(Martin Luther King Jr. 1968:199-200)

*“For me, white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great...”*

(McIntosh, 1990:5).

This section will consider how the second and third forms of illusion (liberalism and centrality respectively) manifest in the context of white privilege and will conclude by looking at how white privilege stymies sustainability in South Africa, specifically. This will set the stage for a discussion on the implications of injustice for facilitation.

Sullivan distinguishes between white supremacy and white privilege; white supremacy embraces racism and represents a “conscious leading idea” (2006:55) whereas white privilege tends to reject racism and is often unconscious. She argues that if the bearer of unconscious white privilege consciously rejects racism, the effect is “just as horrific as white supremacy” (2006:55). This is a striking claim when applied to South Africa, where white liberals – some of whom took considerable risks in the anti apartheid struggle – consider themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum from white racists. This raises two points about the role of white liberals. First, it draws attention to the patterns of privilege that continue to benefit most South African whites. Second, it underscores the argument, made earlier in this chapter, that those who deny their privilege may be more obstructive to change than those who know and don’t

care about it. Unconscious white privilege may simply exert a more hidden pressure on the brake pedal to change than conscious privilege.

From this vantage point, white liberalism blocks change while casting itself in more noble terms. Writing about South Africa, Mngxitama asserts that “The role of today’s white activist is in the main to channel black anger into the castrating chambers of the constitutional court ... this process actually serves to shape the desires of black people and lowers their expectations of what it means to be free” (2010:5). Embedded in his analysis is the allusion that white liberals navigated the transition from apartheid to democracy too smoothly, without having to confront how they benefited, whether passively or actively, from injustice. In another context, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: “Over the last few years, many Negroes have felt that their most troublesome adversary was not the obvious bigot of the Ku Klux Klan or the John Birch Society, but the white liberal who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice, who prefers tranquillity to equality” (1968:103). King made a close study of white liberals, suggesting that their activism tends to be provoked by their own sense of discomfort at rampant racial injustice, and that they lapse back into complacency once surface changes have been effected. If the changes go deeper, he suggested that liberals struggle to tolerate the “tension” of the ensuing transformation (1968:106). Based on this analysis, he appealed for action motivated not just by love (i.e. “the drive towards the unity of the separated” Tillich, 1960:25) but by justice. He wrote, “Love that does not satisfy justice is no love at all” (King, 1968:105). In summary, his argument was that the struggle for racial justice needs white liberals to wield their privilege consciously, for the greater good.

This idea of conscious use of privilege reintroduces centrality. White centrality is different to white liberalism and is core to Tillich’s understanding of power. “The nearer to the centre [of a system] an element is, the more it participates in the power of the whole” (1960:44). Negating this form of central power denies the system its “centre of action” (1960:97). Moreover, white centrality perpetuates an idea of “homogenous neutrality” (Steyn, 2001:162). Unconscious white privilege breeds another layer of privilege when whites assume that they are not raced; only blacks are. Disturbing these assumptions, according to Mngxitama, opens Pandora’s

proverbial box. Naming whiteness challenges the new South African vision of non-racialism and exposes an otherwise silenced “demand for justice, reparations and accounting for *unjust privilege*. Seeing white,” he concludes “ends dialogue.” (2009:26, italics added).

This is an unsustainable situation. If blind white privilege blocks change in South Africa but “seeing white ends dialogue”, the net result is an untenable degree of intractability in a social system that is under pressure to change. Seventeen years after the official end of apartheid, 47% of all South Africans believe race relations have improved since 1994, 30% think they have stayed the same and 21% think they have deteriorated. In other words, 51% believe that race relations have not improved<sup>40</sup>.

What might “conscious evolution” of white privilege look like? Krog’s book, bearing the provocative title “Begging to be Black” (2009), is premised on the question of how she - as a white person living as a racial minority with continuing privilege in a black-governed democratic South Africa - can adapt. For her, adaptation means shedding some of her white ways and “melting into” black ways of thinking and being (2009:253). There is more than self-interested survival at stake; she recognizes paucity within whiteness and seeks to immerse herself in a different paradigm, one that she characterizes as black. The imperative to evolve is not a new one. Frederickson, writing 30 years ago at the height of apartheid, wrote “If enlightened self-interest can induce whites to abdicate their privileged position, they may still be able to call themselves South African twenty five, fifty or even a hundred years hence (1981, in Steyn, 2001:149).

The foregoing suggests that unconscious white privilege presents a significant obstacle to change in South Africa and that the people who are least likely to be aware of this obstruction are white South Africans. Ramphela writes that “Continued unacknowledged white privilege feeds a superiority complex that adds salt to the wounds of racism.” (2008: 77). The implication is that while these wounds are still open and continue to be aggravated, attempts to work together as a nation on issues affecting privileged and unprivileged alike, are likely to get stuck.

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<sup>40</sup> Source: Reconciliation Barometer, 2010: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation ([www.ijr.org.za](http://www.ijr.org.za))

I submit that sustainability in South Africa is likely to be stymied by two key dynamics. Firstly, unacknowledged issues of racism may detract from attempts to collaborate across race on sustainable development. Secondly, continued aggravation of the wounds Ramphele refers to could result in a level of violence that will render the nation building project itself unsustainable. Recent years have seen growing hints of the anger that could turn to violence. In this context, Ramphele urges: “Racism needs to be ritualised in the same way that we ritualised closure on brutal political crimes through the TRC<sup>41</sup> process. Black and white people have to confront that past together and agree to set it aside to pursue a shared vision of the future... The generation of South Africans beyond thirty years of age needs to find the tools for transcendence of our racist past to enable future generations to live together in greater peace.” (2008: 80). An implication is that white middle class South Africans have a two-fold change to navigate: away from a position of protected privilege on the basis of race, and towards living within the limits of finite and non-renewable resources on the basis of class.

In summary, privilege as an unconscious habit (Sullivan, 2006) perpetuates injustice because it gets in the way of Fraser’s three things: redistribution, recognition and participation parity. Specifically, unconscious white privilege perpetuates injustice in South Africa by impeding redistribution (of material resources – see Box 1 overleaf – as well as opportunities, access and capabilities), thwarting recognition (through denial about how white privilege continues to centralise itself and push others to the margins) and, therefore, by getting in the way of “parity of participation” (2001). Natural sustainability challenges face all societies across the world to varying degrees and the willingness of those with privilege to notice, engage and adapt is a core variable in rising to the challenges. South Africa’s social fragmentation and fragility, linked to continuing white privilege, renders us more vulnerable than most.

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<sup>41</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) market cap control by black groups

- 2000: 5.7%
- 2009: 7%

Black ownership of commercial land

- 1994: 13% (limited to former Bantustans)
- 2009: 20%

Redistribution of commercial farmland by land reform

- 2000: 0.8% of land redistributed to blacks
- 2009: 5.9% of land redistributed to blacks

*Source: Mail and Guardian (September 24<sup>th</sup> – October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009)<sup>42</sup>*

Box 1: Patterns of Black Ownership in South Africa

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<sup>42</sup> These figures are contested. For example, ongoing research commissioned by the JSE suggests that 17% of available shares in the Top 100 Companies listed on the Exchange are held by Black South Africans (Chandler, 2011). 8% has been found to be owned through direct investment (up from 7% in 2009) and a further 9% through mandated investment. Source: [http://www.jse.co.za/About-Us/Media/Press-Releases/Full-Story/11-10-05/JSE\\_releases\\_second\\_study\\_on\\_Black\\_ownership\\_on\\_the\\_Exchange.aspx](http://www.jse.co.za/About-Us/Media/Press-Releases/Full-Story/11-10-05/JSE_releases_second_study_on_Black_ownership_on_the_Exchange.aspx) (accessed 05.11.2011)

## Theoretical responses to the three research questions

Having made the connection between privilege, (un)sustainability and injustice, this chapter revisits the three research questions towards making a theoretical claim in response to each one.

### Research Question 1: What is the relationship between sustainability and justice?

#### Where (in)justice and (un)sustainability meet

*“...there can be no ecological protection without equity and no sustainable growth without fairness and justice. To think otherwise means to fall back into and defend the simple but very dangerous social set-up of the last century, dividing on the one hand those who have and hold all the rights from those on the other who lack and are denied their rights.”*

(Segschneider,2002:18).

Sachs suggests that development has always been in tension with justice. “Since the Enlightenment, the idea has existed that one can basically skip the quest for justice by diving into development.” (2002:83<sup>43</sup>). The consequences of a single-minded pursuit of economic growth and progress, discussed in the previous chapter, are disproportionately distributed through the socio-ecological system. “Usually, only a subgroup of society benefits from the activities that cause the strongest stress to the ecosystem, whereas the costs of environmental degradation are largely on the account of other groups or society as a whole.” (Scheffer, Westley, Brock and Holmgren, 2002:238). When human labour and natural resources are

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<sup>43</sup> The relationship between development, social injustice and ecological injustice was powerfully illuminated in a gathering convened by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and entitled “Sustainability and Justice: A Political North-South Dialogue” in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002. The gathering produced the Joburg Memo, which Sachs edited. This comment was made in closing remarks, documented in World Summit Papers No.13 ([www.boell.org](http://www.boell.org)).

rendered instrumental to profit, a culture of exploitation can become the norm, resulting in social and ecological injustices. McLaren uses the concepts of “environmental space”, “ecological debt” and power relations to make the links between sustainable development and justice, suggesting, for example, that “neither pollution outputs nor resource inputs should be considered independent of an analysis of the power relations they reflect” (2003:34).

This is environmental justice, described by the South African Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) as “social transformation directed towards meeting basic human needs and enhancing our quality of life – economic quality, health care, housing, human rights, environmental protection and democracy. In linking environmental and social justice issues the environmental justice approach seeks to challenge the abuse of power which results in poor people having to suffer the effects of environmental damage caused by the greed of others.” (EJNF, 1997 in McDonald, 2002:4)

Just as *injustice* and *unsustainable* development represent a downwards spiral, layering justice onto sustainability can create a virtuous cycle. “A sustainable society,” writes Swilling, “is both more equitable in social terms and less dependent on the destructive use of natural resources” (2002:16). The decisive factor is that although the privileged minority can choose whether or not to recognise and engage with poverty and inequality (following the argument made in the previous chapter) an unsustainable future implicates us all, albeit that the poor are more vulnerable. The *Jo’burg Memo* succinctly captures the responsibility this places on those with privilege: “Acting in the spirit of justice does not require [one] to deal with the other, but with oneself” (Sachs, 2002:36).

Hattingh (2001) suggests that justice is the goal of sustainability, whether one holds an anthropocentric or ecocentric position, and that social engagement through “participative democracy” will enable us to make meaning of this goal, relevant to our specific context (2001:28). Shiva pulls justice, sustainability and peace into one equation for social change towards what she calls “earth democracy” (2005:11). Her framing calls attention to the value of differentiating between the two kinds of sustainability under discussion in this thesis: social

sustainability (what she calls “peace”) and socio-ecological sustainability (which acknowledges the systemic nature of society’s relationship with, and dependence on, ecology for our survival).

Following from these arguments, the first claim of this chapter is that a more sustainable future lies in changes to patterns of distribution (Brundtland, 1987), recognition (Segschneider, 2002) and participation (Hattingh, 2001) . In other words, sustainability is inseparable from justice<sup>44</sup>. Traditionally, justice has been an optional consideration for those with privilege. Sustainability is less optional; an unsustainable future implicates us all. When justice is tied to sustainability, it develops new weight.

## **Research question 2: Is the capacity to balance “power” and “love” sufficient to generate change in contexts of injustice?**

Chapter Three homed in on two complementary approaches to facilitating social change, both of which embrace paradox: Kahane’s formulation of power and love (2010) and Freire’s formulation of critical consciousness and action, or praxis (1996). Research question two returns to Kahane’s work while Freire re-enters the frame in responding to the third question.

Kahane summarises his argument as follows: “I am saying that in order to effect social change, our capacity to take the next step that will move us forward depends on our capacity to recognize the state of our power and love.” (2010:56). But the book contains an implicit question about whether these two dynamics and the elastic connection between them really are sufficient to “effect social change.” Facilitating in contexts of social inequality, Kahane notices something missing. Reviewing the unsatisfactory outcomes of a social change process in Guatemala, he writes, “The truth that was inconvenient for the elite in Guatemala (as elsewhere) ... was that to acknowledge fully the unity that the dialogues uncovered would imply taking action to empower others and thereby diminish their own privilege.” (2010:44). After the

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<sup>44</sup> Based on Fraser’s definition (2001) of justice as redistribution, recognition and parity of participation.

exercise, a Guatemalan participant gives him feedback in a letter “I see a certain naïveté in your vision of a balance between power and love ... I think that balance and satisfaction for all are possible in the realm of discourse, but not when you go down to ‘real politics’ in a context of enormous inequality” (Kahane, 2010:45).

What Kahane appears to be hinting at is an excision from the received wisdom of Tillich (1960) and King (1968); that the power-love formulation is incomplete in the absence of justice. King’s statement on love and power continues beyond the extract printed at the front of Kahane’s book. King concludes “...What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anaemic. *Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.*” (1968:43; italics added to indicate the missing text). Tillich, writing prior to this, had argued that the only adequate form of justice is one which deploys the dynamic tension between love and power. Herein lies the potential for a thickened version of justice. Referring to the difficulties of giving substance to the idea of justice (echoed in the literature review in the previous chapter), Tillich suggests that “the rules of justice are created by the interplay of law and conscience” (1960:81), but that the “question of the content of justice drives to the principles of love and power.” (1960:82).

I propose that Tillich (1960) and King (1968) are pointing to a risk that love and power, engrossed in the all-consuming dance with each other that is characteristic of paradox, are rendered oblivious to all else. Decontextualised, the power - love dynamic may become myopic and irrelevant. “Love,” writes King (1968:105) “that does not satisfy justice is no love at all”. This echoes Tillich’s contention that “without justice, there is no reuniting love, because there is nothing to unite” (1960:69). Succinctly put, “Love reunites; justice preserves what is to be united.” (1960:71) and “love shows what is just in the concrete situation” (1960:82). While all three are inextricably linked, Tillich rates justice as more important than either love or power in interpersonal relationships<sup>45</sup> in social systems.

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<sup>45</sup> For Tillich, power is primary at the level of the nation state and love in relationship with God.

Extending Kahane's conceptualisation of generative and degenerative love and power and combining this with King's articulation of the relationship between love, power *and* justice reveals a new stratum of meaning. Kahane suggests that love redeems degenerative power. But for power not just to be redeemed, but for it to be at its *best*, it directs love so that it attends to "the demands of justice" (King, 1968:43). Generative power is "infused with love and justice" (1968:77). Similarly, power redeems degenerative love. But for love not just to be redeemed but to be at its *best*, it realises justice. "Love at its best is justice concretised" (King, 198=68:105). When love is anchored in justice, it reunites past and present injustice with power, the drive for social change.

Justice too, has its generative and degenerative aspects. The generative side of justice is encapsulated in King's statement that "justice at its best is love correcting everything standing against love" (1968:29). The degenerative side of justice is not to be found in these texts. The best rendition of this I have heard is: "social activism that becomes the very thing it stands against".<sup>46</sup> Located in the facilitation role, this is the opposite of neutrality and thus integral to the third research question.

When ANC<sup>47</sup> representative, Pregs Govender, resigned from Parliament in 2002 in protest against what she perceived to be the unjust denial of HIV and AIDS and the injustice of the arms deal, she said: "I have not left power, nor have I left politics. It is critical for each one of us to recognize, to value, and to respect our own agency, our own power and each other's power, and to redefine power: not as the power of hate and fear, but as the power of love and courage." (2007:252). Power as love and courage in contexts of injustice invokes the threefold relationship Tillich and King describe. It is the courage to see when others do not. Being able to see inequality, exclusion, preventable suffering, and the exploitation of people and nature is a condition for being able to act. This brings us back to Freire's (1996) paradox of facilitating social change through praxis.

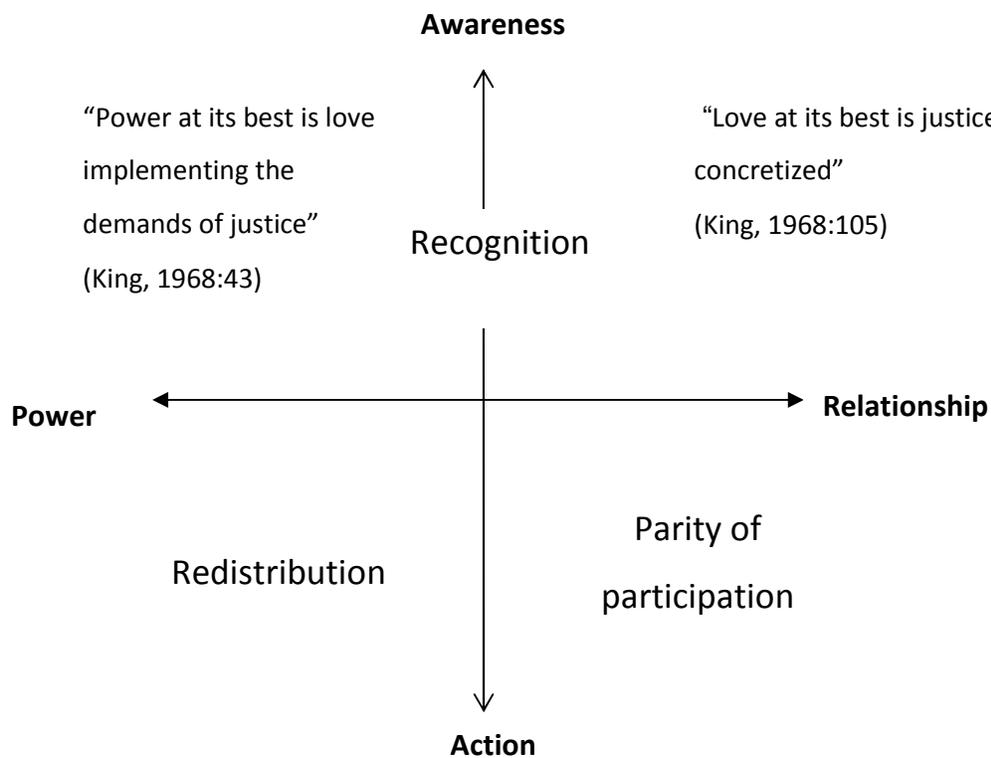
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<sup>46</sup> Source: Stephen Schuitevoerder (facilitator of Process Work group). My course notes, September 2009.

<sup>47</sup> African National Congress, the party that has ruled South Africa since the first democratic elections in 1994.

The second claim of this chapter is as follows: Balancing power and love on their own may enable stuck systems to slip many of their knots. But where injustice is part of that stuckness and is not paid attention to by those with privilege (including the facilitator) any changes the system navigates are in danger of recreating that injustice.

What would it look like in practice to integrate love, power and justice in dynamic relationship with each other? Mapping Fraser’s version of injustice as redistribution, recognition and parity of participation onto the matrix of social change catalysts produces a configuration of strategies (Figure 4 below). Recognition spans quadrants one (a critical awakening to what is unjust) and two (awareness through relationship with others and perceiving their reality too). Quadrant three refers to engagement across these differences, where all have a voice. The final quadrant represents the power of redistribution without which recognition and participation may, over time, dissolve into nebulous strategies. This formulation translates into specific processes and actions available to social systems navigating change in contexts of injustice (Figure 5 overleaf).



**Figure 4:** Mapping strategies to catalyze justice

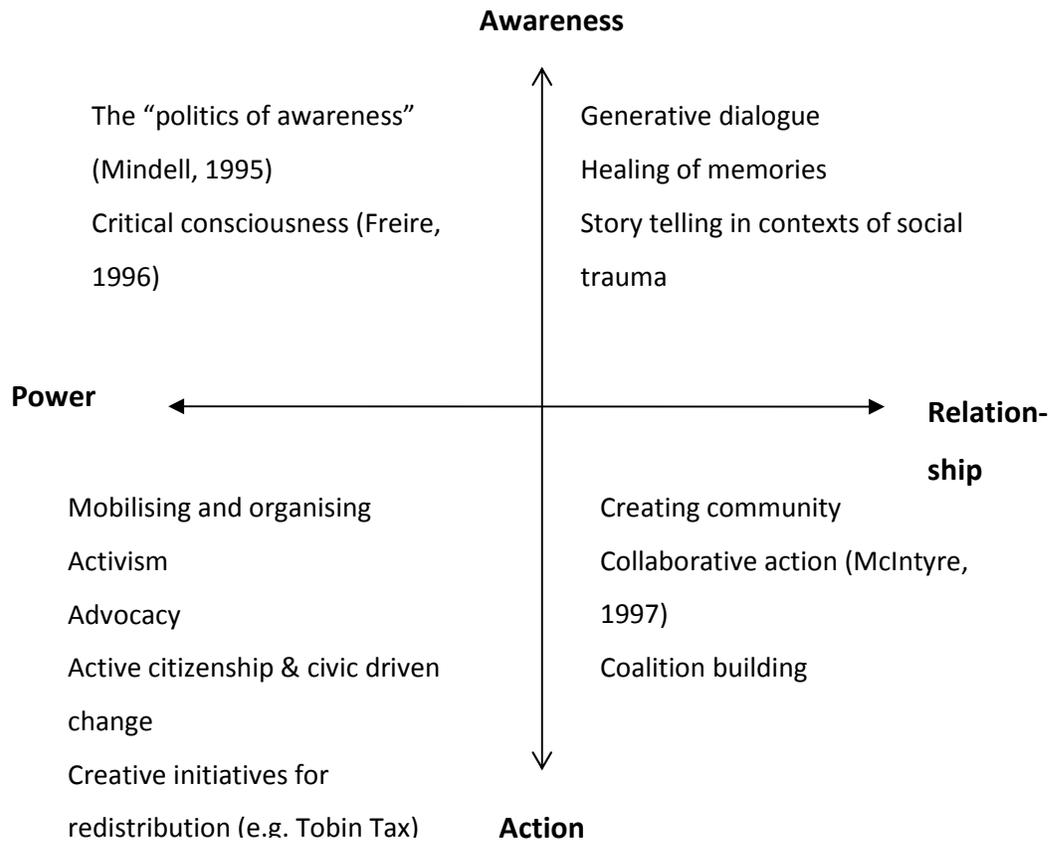


Figure 5: Approaches available to social systems to catalyse justice

What are the implications for facilitators working with such social systems? What does an orientation to justice mean for the conventional stance of neutrality? This leads to the final research question.

### **Research question 3: What are the implications of an orientation to justice for the principle of facilitator neutrality?**

This is more an applied question than a theoretical one and so will receive further attention in Chapters Six and Seven, but a brief scan of the literature will raise some of the salient points here. Freire is unequivocal on the matter: “Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.” (1985:122 in Kahane, 2010:42)

Facilitator neutrality, for South African facilitator Smit, is the capacity to “avoid getting caught up in the psychological dynamics of the group in order to remain attentive to the whole of the group psyche” (2009:105). Fellow South African, Lewis, concurs: “A neutral listener is able to acknowledge her personal opinion, preferences and favoured outcome – and then consciously set these aside. Unless she is able to do this, she can’t give the other points of view her full attention, nor stay with the group’s direction and pace.” (2008:81).

In the context of facilitating work around social injustice - and especially racial injustice - in the South African context, is there a danger of facilitators – and especially white facilitators – taking shelter under the idea of neutrality and thus retreating from an orientation to justice? It would be naïve to assume that facilitators are immune to the pitfalls of ignorance, complacency, liberalism or centrality described earlier in this chapter. If, for argument’s sake, white facilitators *are* blind to the depth of historical and contemporary racial injustice due to their continuing privilege within this system, could a neutral stance inadvertently promote further injustice?

Mindell (1995), credited by both Smit (2009) and Lewis (2008) as a significant influence on their respective facilitation practices and theorizing, offers a far less dispassionate account of the facilitation role. “As a facilitator” he warns, “don't lend weight to adversarial democracy by

assuring a win for one, or even both, sides. Focus on the relationship between the opponents.” (1995:139). This gestures towards Tillich’s idea of enabling justice to surface in the moment. Mindell suggests that “an effective facilitator knows the social issues” (1995:137) and advises facilitators to “speak about economic inequality ... Few people want to be identified with the ‘evil’ capitalist. You may have to play the figure at the top of the economic ladder yourself.” Reflecting on the conscious use of his own centrality in the facilitation role, he explains, “I try to use my social rank as a white, middle-aged man in a heterosexual relationship by stirring up trouble while, at the same time, caring for individuals on all sides. (1995:70). “Stirring up trouble” casts a fresh, provocative light on facilitator neutrality.

There is a thin line at play. When a facilitator advocates for a particular position, they risk becoming part of the group constellation for or against that perspective and losing the capacity to hear all voices towards deep listening by, and resolution in, the group. This is Lewis and Smit’s concern. I will propose a facilitator’s orientation towards justice that is acutely tuned in to signals of injustice in the group, and that can support voices of those with relatively less power to be heard so that the group does not repeat the patterns of continuing injustice in the broader context in which they are located. Mindell characterizes this as the difference between two different generations of social change (which he calls “revolutions”). Echoing Tillich’s version of transformative justice, he writes “In the first revolution, we fought for awareness of position and the influence of race, sexual orientation, ... etc, However, in this second revolution, I am searching for awareness of moment-to-moment experience during interactions... the second revolution is about awareness, because freedom alone does not inhibit the oppressed – as we all know from ourselves – from re-creating another dominating environment.” (2002:115).

The third theoretical claim of this chapter, then, is that there is a tension between facilitator neutrality and facilitator activism and that both represent a trap, suggesting the importance of finding a third position from which to facilitate.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the theoretical perspective advanced in this chapter is that a more sustainable future lies in addressing injustices of the present. The blindness of those who benefit from these injustices is a significant obstacle to change and therefore, to a more sustainable future. This suggests a role for dialogue, facilitated so that all voices can be heard. If the facilitator is blind to justice too - by dint of their own privilege, their quest for neutrality or their activism - they may not be effective in supporting the system to navigate towards a more sustainable and just future.

Chapter Five will chart my own experiences of being white in South Africa, drawing on the idea that stories can breathe life into theories and that theories can enable us to hear stories in new ways.

## CHAPTER FIVE: WRITING MYSELF INTO THE STORYLINE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter picks up where the introductory chapter left off; positioning myself in the story. The three questions at the heart of this thesis are not idle questions. They represent a long term personal interest in justice, a professional interest in how to effect meaningful social change as a facilitator, and a more recent interest in sustainability.

Chapters Three and Four offered a theoretical perspective on these themes of social change, sustainability, justice and their implications for facilitation. Chapter Six will introduce the empirical work; studying the effects of sustained group dialogue on matters of race. The current chapter is therefore both a bridge and a step change. The register is different and the focus is autobiographical. In this chapter, I recount some of the stories that make up my experience of whiteness, privilege, and exposure to issues of social justice. These stories shed more light on why the questions of this thesis are significant to me and follow the injunction of participant research to make myself visible too.

### Growing up

I grew up in England, in the university town of Heslington near York University where my dad worked as an Anglican chaplain. My memories of my first seven years there are of a carefree existence. Our street was lined with identical semi-detached facebrick houses, home to an exclusively white, working class and lower middle class community. Many of the dads worked at the local Rowntrees chocolate factory; unmarked bags of smarties were the currency of our childhood worlds. Most of my clothes were handed down over the fence, having previously belonged to Graham who was a year older than me.

In 1980, when I was seven years old, we moved to Cape Town, South Africa so that my dad could take up a parish job. We lived in the Anglican rectory, in an exclusively white and affluent

community. On my walks down the road to my new school, I was overwhelmed by the size of the sky, the sense of open space, and the alienation between people. I didn't understand it in those terms at the time, but I was deeply affected by how isolated every large house, and every individual on the street seemed to be. There weren't going to be any fancy dress egg and spoon races down this street.

One of my earliest memories after arriving in South Africa was of walking down this same street with a new friend from school. Suddenly, without warning, she crossed the road to walk along the pavement on the other side. Following her, I asked why. She pointed to a black man, now on the opposite pavement. I can't remember what she said, but the combination of (fathomless) fear and hatred in her gesture fundamentally shook my assumptions about how the world worked.

I was deeply homesick for the first couple of years. By the age of nine, I had started to adapt. My parents became more politically involved and my dad brought stories home to the dinner table of people being killed, protests and vigils in townships being violently broken up by police. Those stories left an enduring image of a woman being dragged out of a church, still on her knees in prayer. By the age of twelve, I had joined the Pupils Action and Awareness Group (PAAG), which met so we could raise our own awareness, debate issues and publish a newsletter to let other school children know what was going on. My first article, on children in detention, was censored. I threw myself into this new world with enthusiasm. Suddenly, after years of resentment at having been uprooted, I identified passionately as a South African, with a mission.

## **Building a career**

I was seventeen when Mandela was released. The following year, I chose not to study psychology – my first love – but social work in the Humanities faculty at the University of Cape Town. I had a well-honed rationale: the urgency of change in South Africa meant we could not afford to work one-to-one, long-term, behind closed therapy doors. South Africa was giddy with the potential for massive transformation and I wanted to be part of it. When the time came to

specialise, I chose to combine individual counselling with community development. I saw this as a powerful formula for working deeply and broadly at the same time, supporting individuals to pick up their power and whole communities to mobilize. For my internship in 1994, I worked in the Deaf Community and initiated a voter literacy campaign intended to enable deaf people to exercise their vote for the first time in the 1994 elections. The community I was working with had not voted before by virtue of being black and many were at risk of not voting in 1994 either by virtue of high levels of functional illiteracy. It was a successful campaign. But there were a few complaints that I was not respectful enough in pre-election gatherings, casually turning to invited politicians and using spoken language instead of ensuring that everything was simultaneously translated into sign language. I was surprised by the heat this attracted. After all, I was trying to help and was opening doors previously closed to deaf people. But I put it down to the fact that this was a time of newly-discovered Deaf Power and that those hearing people who worked at the “coalface” were bound to attract some of the criticism really meant for others, especially those who paid no attention to the particular disadvantages and injustices experienced by deaf people. Unlike me.

While doing in-service training, I began to recognise the particular irony of my chosen vocation for the first time. Having no aptitude for languages, and the privilege to remain reasonably complacent about this, I spoke only English. The vast majority of people seeking social work services were not English speaking. No problem, I wasn't interested in traditional welfare-based social work anyway. After graduating, I found work in the non-governmental (NGO) sector, first in an organisation supporting black matriculants to access higher education, and then working with issues of violence against women. Other ironies started to sink in. I was often the only white person in the room. Sometimes that was challenged, and sometimes I felt like an outsider, but most of the time it felt important to be doing this work, and to be bringing my education and other aspects of my privilege as a white South African to bear on situations of injustice and inequality.

I began to identify more with blackness than whiteness, spending much of my time with black colleagues and in black communities. Participating in a vibrant celebration of National Women's Day 1998 in Langa township, I felt an acute lack of a community of my own. Beyond

my own family and friends, the white “community” I came from had no core. It did not gather in this way. A couple of years later, in Glasgow, Scotland, I had a similar feeling as I watched a street carnival led by members of local social housing associations in exotic dress and followed by a flatbed truck filled with residents of the old age home warbling Frank Sinatra hits into their microphones. I stood among the cheering crowds gathered along the pavements as the overweight belly dancing troupe and the out-of-rhythm drumming band went past, and felt bereft. Here was a sense of belonging-to-each-other, a willingness to be part of the collective, with all the benefits and risks that implies, which was altogether missing in my experience of white English speaking South Africa.

## **My catch-22**

In fact I was in Scotland in 2001 to retreat from the complexities of being white in South Africa and to take stock. My role as a white leader in the women’s sector had been questioned often enough that I had come to believe it was not a legitimate role for a white person to play. I needed some distance to re-evaluate my role and my contribution.

I returned to South Africa in 2003 and started working, freelance, as a facilitator. Interested in broadening my range, I was introduced to depth facilitation, modelled largely on the work of Process Work’s founding father, Arnold Mindell. In 2007, I attended a week-long Process Work workshop in Johannesburg led by Stephen Schuitevoerder, a white South African who had become an American citizen and President of Mindell’s Process Work Institute in Portland, Oregon. The group decided it wanted to talk about the issue of race and white members of the group were soon cornered by our inability to see our unconscious centrality in the conversation. One white woman was outspoken about her racist assumptions. The rest of us tried to show that we were not racist, or that at least we had worked on our racism. We ended up being physically confronted by a powerful group of black participants. Eventually, the white person next to me exploded in anger, pounding the floor to emphasize every other word: “I am so sick of being called a racist! I am trying so damn hard but it’s never enough for you! Back off and leave me alone!” I watched and listened to her in horror. Bloody white people, I thought. I can’t stand them. I wish I wasn’t one of them. I tried to stand among the black members of the

group and mirror back to this woman, and other whites, how they came across. But my black peers were having none of it: “You’re not one of us.”

I experienced several phases of reaction to this. Initially, I felt returned to a sense of the catch-22 trap which had precipitated my 2001 decision to abandon my leadership role and, temporarily, South Africa. The trap looked like this: Alienated and angered by normative performances of whiteness, I rejected them by creating distance. I didn’t want to associate with this version of whiteness and I dreaded being seen by black South Africans as belonging within this version of whiteness. Instead, I tended to speak for blackness, articulating an alternative way of seeing the world to white South Africans. But, confusingly, this made black people as angry with me as they were with the white racists I was angry with. As Sullivan writes, “... in the case of a white person who consciously opposes her racial privilege, it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for her to recognize when and how she is the beneficiary of it.” (2006:52).

But this time, moments after returning to this trap, I suddenly saw how patronising my attempts to steep myself in black South Africa were. Not only was I an outsider when I worked with black clients or community groups, but I was often an impediment, holding people back through my own limitations, of language, of cultural insight, and of imagination beyond my own raced experience of the world. Again, Sullivan writes, with heavy sarcasm, that “privileged white women have contributed to the oppression of people of colour ... by speaking out on behalf of the helpless, under-class wretches who are too under-developed to understand or articulate their needs for themselves.” (2006:12). The third phase of my reaction was a realization that instead of black South Africans needing my “help” and expertise, I could far more constructively work alongside other white South Africans to address our unconscious privilege and power so that we could be equal to the task of co-creating with black people the South Africa we dreamed of. As someone who had eschewed what white South Africa represented, this revelation was an anathema to me.

Later, I found a fully-fledged articulation of my newly-hatched thinking. Sullivan explains, “Since habits constitute agency and will, the attempt to eliminate white privilege must involve habits

of white privilege themselves. Rather than despairing or giving up, a person needs to engage in an ongoing struggle to find ways to use white privilege against itself.” (2006:11)

## **Initiating a whiteness group**

After attending a second once-off workshop facilitated by Stephen Schuitevoerder, I decided to test interest in a whiteness group and hosted a first gathering of about 15 white people in May 2008. A core group of about ten people continued to meet each month for the next two and a half years. A different member of the group hosted, designed and facilitated each gathering.

For many months, two tensions kept us stuck, fearful that we would shed members if we confronted these issues too directly. The first was a tension between different kinds of whiteness perceived in the group, arranged along a spectrum from “typical and racist whites” to “activist, not-as-racist whites”. All members of the group attended because they wanted to work on issues of race and their own racism, but those who experienced themselves as coming from an older generation, or from more conservative South African families, felt that their racism was more entrenched, more enmeshed in their everyday actions. They looked at the younger members - some of whom had experienced more progressive upbringings, who rejected racism with more vigour, drew on a more politicized vocabulary - and often felt judged by them. At a meeting in June 2009 where this experience of difference surfaced, one person said “This is the most diverse group I’ve ever been part of”. We laughed until tears ran down our cheeks; anyone happening upon this all-white gathering in the middle of Johannesburg would have found us profoundly homogenous.

We were more aware of the second tension, which interacted with the first, and which seemed impassable for a longer period of time. Spanning similar sub-groups, it delineated a line between those who attended the group for their own “awakening” to unconscious attitudes and behaviours of whiteness and those who treated their growing awareness as a platform from which to more skilfully advocate change among other white South Africans. The former subset told the latter: It’s arrogant to try and “wake” anyone else up; we can only change ourselves. The latter told the former: Unconscious white privilege is actively harmful in South Africa; it is

our responsibility to challenge it. This became characterised as a tension between “neutral facilitation” and “activism”. Given that many of the people in the group were facilitators, an interesting accusation crept into this characterisation: You cannot facilitate if you have an agenda; it renders you incapable of enabling all the voices to be heard.

Exploring these two tensions through many conversations disarmed them, leaving us free to move forward. The possibility of an inter-racial conversation gained ground. This coincided with a vivid story by a member of the group who worked in the education system in Soweto. She spoke about two trends: growing black impatience with white (and coloured) inertia and a growing willingness to make this impatience and rage felt. Sitting in the group we felt keenly that we could not continue meeting and talking just as white people. At the same discussion, the group gave feedback on, and a blessing to, the article written by white members of the Process Work group about holding other whites accountable for racism. Our own inertia seemed to be mobilised into action.

The first inter-racial dialogue took place in late March 2010. Until I arrived at the front door and was seen by the rest of the group, I had been deeply ambivalent about attending. I had failed to bring a black person, as instructed. I had explored with two black colleagues the possibility of their attending, sharing my ambivalence with them and listening to theirs. We had agreed that it would be preferable for a group of black people already in conversation with each other to enter a conversation with the whiteness group, and so they both declined the invitation. I decided not to invite anyone else, fearful of setting them up. Driving to the conversation, I was aware of my own duplicity by attending myself. But I was just too curious to stay away.

The invitation had read: “We are a group of white people who have been meeting for some time to examine and critically reflect on what it means to be white in the South African context with a view to developing greater consciousness about the impact of our whiteness on ourselves and on others, particularly black people. In doing this we are attempting to take responsibility for increasing our awareness around race without having to expect that black people will always educate, challenge or help us, often at their own expense. We recognise that

we cannot increase our awareness only by meeting together as whites and we value our experiences and interactions with the black people in our personal, work and public lives.”

I had written to the whiteness group a couple of weeks previously, saying: “The prospect of the discussion has provoked an interesting inner dialogue in me about how to extend the circle of the people we're in conversation with, without convening it in such a way that we fall into the old traps of white centrality. In other words, a concern that white people are inviting black people to a conversation that we have arranged, at a venue and on a date of our choice, with facilitators we know. Plus, that we have had the opportunity to be in conversation with each other for 18 months and that this is an additional privilege that the black people we're inviting have not yet enjoyed. I've taken these concerns into conversation with some of you and have learned from these conversations that the centrality being exercised here is conscious, not unconscious. I think that makes an important difference. And I think enough momentum has built up to go ahead. But I mention this now in case anyone else has had a similar inner / outer dialogue, so that we can bring full consciousness to bear on this step that we are taking.”

Inside the church hall, I found 19 people in all, sitting in a circle: ten white and nine black. Two facilitators, one white and one black<sup>48</sup> and both members of the Process Work group, were there to guide us through the evening. The conversation had been billed as: “How can we have a conversation about race in South Africa that can build our common humanity?”. We moved around the circle introducing ourselves, explaining why we'd come. There were a range of responses, but most people said they had come because they cannot be fully human unless they engage with the “other”, whether that engagement is about deeply listening to each other's feelings, or confronting each other, or holding each other accountable. This group met three more times in 2010.

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<sup>48</sup> The experience of deciding who to approach to facilitate this group was difficult and illuminated many of the blind spots of the whiteness group. It was never in question whether we would have a white facilitator; the dilemma was whether to invite a coloured or black person to co-facilitate.

## The Process Work groups

Four months after the whiteness group started (in May 2008), Stephen Schuitevoerder formed a “closed group” for a more intensive experiential training in Process Work methods than he had offered in South Africa previously. This group met four times, for six days at a time, over the ensuing eighteen months. Twenty eight people joined this group. The race and gender composition of the group when it formed was 21 white people (12 women and 8 men) and 7 black people (4 women and 3 men). One woman straddled racial identities, both coloured and white<sup>49</sup>.

Twenty two attended at least three of the four modules. Of the six who did not continue beyond the second module, three officially left the group, communicating this to the rest of the members. Five of this subset of six were white women and the sixth was a black man. No white men or black women left the group.

Six people belonged to both this Process Work group and the whiteness group. Stephen initiated a second closed Process Work group started a year after the first. One person, a white man, was a member of both the first and second Process Work groups.

The first Process Work group followed the cliché of group processes through its four modules over 18 months: *forming* in the first module, *storming* in the second, *norming* and *performing* in the third and continue to *perform* in the fourth<sup>50</sup>. The third module is described in Chapter One, resulted in an article written by white members of the group, published in the City Press in early 2010. This article, which called on white South Africans to “take a stand against racism”<sup>51</sup>, received a mixed reception. It was critiqued in terms of its placement in a newspaper that had a majority black readership (none of the “whiter” newspapers wanted to publish it) and in terms of its failure to acknowledge the black people in the Process Work group who had both challenged and supported our process of learning and our decision to write the article. The

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<sup>49</sup> This member of the group identified her racial identity for the purposes of the research at the end of this group as “coloured having grown up white”. Refer to Chapter 6 for further discussion.

<sup>50</sup> Following the stages of group development proposed by Tuckman in 1965. Source: [www.Processexcellencenetwork.com](http://www.Processexcellencenetwork.com)

<sup>51</sup> City Press: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011: “White South Africans must take a stand against racism”

article received an overwhelmingly positive response from about sixty black readers and a handful of white readers<sup>52</sup>. Emails from black people spoke to the issues of change, justice in, and sustainability of, South African society that are at the heart of my own enquiry into how social change happens, for example:

“When I read the article ... I cried, my soul moved and I went through different emotions – from anger, hurt, pain, to feelings of pride, love and forgiveness... I read the article with my 14-year-old daughter because I also want to make sure that she understands that there are people who are willing to take a stand in fighting racism. So that she knows its not just her battle as a black person against white people but that there are also white people who not only understand but who are willing to be part of this great change. I saw hope and pride in her eyes and that for me is the best gift any parent can give...”

“I have a long history of anger towards white people... . My advice is that it is not going to be easy but it is a great initiative that is long overdue. Rest assured that you will be met halfway. It’s a must. Nobody has a choice. We must co-exist harmoniously.”

“I just want to say that I am glad that you are taking a stand against racism. But I also want to say that, you can't do it alone. You need us blacks to be involved too. Racism includes us both”

These, and other responses, held potential for how to build on these foundations with others. The authors of the article discussed collective follow-up actions. Together with black colleagues from the Process Work group, we took up several invitations to discuss issues of race, generally, and whiteness, specifically, on radio and television over the ensuing fortnight. However no further actions took root. Members of the Process Work group were too busy and too stretched by their paid work to take on additional, unpaid work. Some individuals took action prompted or accelerated by their conversations with each other. For example, one person went

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<sup>52</sup> An email address was provided at the end of the article, to which many readers responded.

on to lead two discussions on race at the University of Cape Town, attracting hundreds of students. Another moved faster to realise a long term dream of supporting education leaders at district and school level, piloted at six schools in Soweto. Working with a group of my Reos colleagues, I was involved in initiating a series of public conversations on racial justice entitled “Creating a legacy of racial justice for future generations”. Other actions that represent “social change” are described in the research findings in the following chapter. The thesis turns to this empirical material, based on interviews with members of both Process Work groups and the whiteness group.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although change happens all the time, it is difficult to catalyse and it is unpredictable. My own story is an example of this. As an individual, I am constantly changing, but efforts to support collective and directional change in social systems quickly get mired in complexity. This is the challenge of all “third parties” to change, including facilitators. Does this mean it’s not worth trying? The research that follows traces a process of collective and directional change in three social systems and seeks to learn from them, from the vantage point of facilitation.

## CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents material gathered from 25 interviews<sup>53</sup>, discusses this material and probes what it might mean. At the end of the chapter, the discussion is refracted through the lens of the three thesis research questions. Chapter Four presented a theoretical claim in relation to each question; the current chapter trains light on these questions from another, empirical, angle. The following chapter will pull these together into a final set of findings.

In order to build a body of evidence that can respond to the research questions, this chapter is structured around five, successive lines of enquiry about the findings. Firstly, were the changes experienced and cited by participants significant enough to justify using this group as a site of learning about social change? (This is not a quantitative calculation of significance, but assesses the degree of significance the participants subjectively ascribed to their experiences of change during their interviews). Secondly, what changed? And what, if anything do these changes have to do with justice? Third, what contributed to these changes? Fourth, what got in the way of change? This is an opportunity to hear some of the dissenting views and voices and to disturb any notion that this was a perfect example of facilitating social change. Fifth, where did the process fail to engage with justice?

As the above paragraph suggests, this chapter keeps returning to the question of justice, given that it is not just social change but social change in the direction of justice that is of most interest to me in this thesis. There are three angles to testing whether the real-life changes described in the ensuing pages advance racial justice. Firstly, do these changes bear practical resemblance to the concept of “justice”, defined as a combination of redistribution, recognition and parity of participation, in Chapter Three? Next, do the experiences of participants and

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<sup>53</sup> Eighteen with members of the first Process Work group, two more with the facilitator of that group, one with a member of both Process Work groups and four with members of the whiteness group. I was one of the eighteen PW members interviewed.

stories arising from the groups tell us anything about the relationship between power, love and justice in the more applied description explored in Chapter Four? Lastly, did the facilitator consciously hold an orientation towards justice? If justice did not enter his frame of reference, but participants had a subjective experience of justice as process or as outcome, this will negate my assumption that the orientation of the facilitator influences the process and outcome of the groups they facilitate. These three angles are explored at different points through the chapter.

The main source of empirical information is the Process Work group. In addition, there are two small comparative studies; the first is a subsequent Process Work group run by the same facilitator; the second is the whiteness group in Johannesburg. These two complementary studies create a contrast with the core study in respect of significant findings, thus offering a non-scientific but nonetheless useful test of some of the emerging hypotheses.

Before proceeding, it is worth explaining some of the terms used in the interviews and analysis, most of which derive from the language of Process Work. An underlying assumption of Process Work is that members of a group represent identities that are bigger than them as individuals. When they speak or act, they are understood to do so on behalf of that bigger identity, earning them the epithet of a “voice” or “role”. Some of the interviewees refer to “the black voice” or “the white role” on this basis. “Minority” refers to a marginalised role or voice, not necessarily one that is in the numerical minority in a group. “Rank” describes the relationship between power and privilege, while “centrality” (which is not a Process Work term but became a useful word in the Process Work group) is a form of high rank defined in Chapter Four as an “invisible centre that deflects attention from itself” (Steyn, 2001:162) while continuing to exercise the power that accrues to the centre of a social system.

### **Findings from the Process Work (PW) group**

The Process Work group initially comprised twenty eight people. Twenty attended at least three out of the four modules over a span of eighteen months, from October 2008 to April 2010. The material studied here is based on interviews with eighteen of the twenty, and complemented by an interview with a nineteenth member who also attended a subsequent

Process Work group, and two interviews with the convener and facilitator, Stephen Schuitevoerder of the Process Work Institute<sup>54</sup>. Of the eighteen main respondents, 12 are white and six are black<sup>55</sup>

### **Were the changes significant (enough)?**

I started each interview by asking whether the person had experienced any changes in their thinking about, or experience of, race, racial identity or racism through the Process Work group and, if so, to elaborate on these changes. In the course of answering this question, the respondents provided insight into the degree of significance they accorded these changes. Had there been no change, or had the changes been negligible, there would be no empirical basis for making any claims.

The majority of people interviewed (12 out of 18) spoke about significant and often profound changes they had experienced as a result of their participation in the closed process work group. At this end of that spectrum, remarks about personal impact included:

“...the way I am in the world is different.” (Black woman, 50)<sup>56</sup>;

“I’ve gotten a lot out of this process; it’s really just transformed my life.” (Black female, 48);

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<sup>54</sup> Based in Portland, Oregon, United States of America: [www.processwork.org](http://www.processwork.org)

<sup>55</sup> This racial profile follows the normative description of the group by the facilitator and participants, who tended to refer to engagements about race as “black and white” conversations. The clear line between black and white became more blurred over time, as the issue of coloured identity received some attention. However, given that no one in the group uncategorically identified themselves as coloured (see discussion entitled “A note on race research” p102-103 for more) I have continued to use this less-than-accurate description of the interviewees’ racial profile in this research.

<sup>56</sup> In the interviews, each respondent was asked to identify themselves in terms of their race, gender and age. This lent itself to different interpretations. For example, some people identified themselves as “black”, others as “African”; some as “female” and others as “woman”. Others asked to be identified by their sexual orientation as well.

“It’s been totally transformative... [I] can never think about [race] in the same way again.” (Coloured-having-grown-up-white female, 53);

“[It has] reframed, as I say, my life purpose and the focus of the work I do.” (White male, 50); and

“It has empowered me to do what I’ve been talking about doing [for many years].” (White male, 70).

Some used a comparative before-and-after description to give a sense of the extent of the changes they had navigated, for example:

From “arrogance” to “humility” and from a feeling of disconnection and lack of fit within South Africa to “an incredible sense of: This is my country” (White, gay, male, 51); and

From “thinking that because I had engaged with black people in my life up to that point that I understood enough or had the right to speak for the other” to learning that “it’s inappropriate and inflammatory to speak for the other” and seeing how being white can get in the way of listening to black “racialised experiences.” (White, lesbian, woman, 41)

Three more people described their experiences of change as the continuation of a long-term process. For them, the change was a deepening of awareness, a sharpening of insight or a reminding of issues that had slipped out of conscious attention, such as:

“This has really magnified what I knew.” (African woman, 45);

“It’s been a maturation process of unfolding awareness.” (White female, 42); and

“It was almost like a reawakening, to be confronted by [white racism]. So I started, again, noticing those things that I’d kind of learned to brush aside, or not reflect on, or let them have an impact.” (Black, male, 52).

At the other end of the spectrum, three respondents reported muted change or no change. One felt that it had been a useful, but “slow” and “struggling” complement to a transformation exercise at their workplace. Another learned about white centrality but ended up feeling more “confused” and “unsettled” about race which was experienced as inhibiting any further efforts to engage. A third expressed the view that “no significant change happened” – indeed that the group had been set up in such a way to “thwart” change. Responses from these three participants will receive further attention in response to the fourth line of enquiry: what got in the way of change?

The fact that 15 out of 18 people interviewed rate this experience somewhere between boosting a lifelong process of awareness and life-changing gives confidence to explore the contents of the interviews and to use these as a basis for developing insights into the facilitation of social change where injustice is at stake. The inquiry turns to the changes themselves.

### **What changed? And did these changes have anything to do with justice?**

The interviews generated 57 themes<sup>57</sup>. 14 of these themes related to changes people had experienced, a further 19 to factors that had facilitated these changes, and the remaining 24 to a “miscellaneous” bucket of things that had caught my attention, comprising questions and concerns raised, insights shared, and explorations navigated during the interviews. The 14 thematic areas of change cited by respondents lent themselves to five clusters of changed perceptions, consciousness, thinking and action in relation to race: changing perceptions of the racial other, changing consciousness about the black self-in-relationship, changing

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<sup>57</sup> A theme was constituted by at least three respondents making reference to the same idea or issue

consciousness about the white self-in-relationship, re-thinking race and power, and doing things differently.

The first table maps the themes into five clusters; the second ranks them, re-arranging the themes by weight.

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Changes experienced (by theme)</b>
<b>Changing perceptions of each other: black and white participants</b>	Black participants seeing humanity in white participants
	Black participants seeing white men in the group differently
	White participants hearing black anger differently and being more willing to listen <sup>58</sup>
<b>Changing consciousness about the black self-in-relationship</b>	Sense that “I don’t have to fight anymore”
	Release of a sense of urgency about race issues and racism
<b>Changing consciousness about the white self-in-relationship</b>	Recognising and owning white centrality
	Whites stop talking on behalf of blacks and instead own their whiteness
<b>Re-thinking rank and power: black and white participants</b>	Re-navigating the space for leadership (with blacks taking up more leadership, and a range of moves among whites)
	Learning about conscious use of rank / power
<b>Doing things differently</b>	New levels of investment in, and sense of responsibility for, inter-racial relationships (white and black participants)
	White people taking personal risks and being more vulnerable
	White people learning to enquire of black people, to counter normative assumptions about “knowing” (i.e. unconscious centrality)

<sup>58</sup> Frequently characterised in the interviews as being more able to hear “Julius Malema”

	Initiating workplace conversations about race (white and black participants)
	Inspired to traverse scales of change (from personal to systemic) in their own work as coaches and facilitators

**Table 2:** Mapping changes cited by Process Work group respondents

The changes cited above are ranked below, and tagged according to whether the change was specific to either black or white participants, or relevant to all 18 respondents.

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>59</sup></b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Subset</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>1</b>	66%	Recognising and owning white centrality	White	8 out of 12
<b>2</b>	50%	Seeing white men in the group differently	Black	3 out of 6
		Seeing humanity in white participants	Black	3 out of 6
		Sense that “I don’t have to fight anymore”	Black	3 out of 6
<b>3</b>	42%	White participants hearing black anger differently and being more willing to listen	White	5 out of 12
		Taking personal risks and being more vulnerable	White	5 out of 12
<b>4</b>	38%	New levels of investment in, and sense of responsibility for, inter-racial relationships	All	7 out of 18

<sup>59</sup> In statistical terms, it does not make sense to assign a percentage value to a dataset of six people. The percentages are included for the purposes of giving a quick indication of relative weights of responses.

		Re-navigating the space for leadership (with blacks taking up more leadership, and a range of moves among whites)	All	7 out of 18
<b>5</b>	33%	Stop talking on behalf of blacks and instead own their whiteness	White	4 out of 12
		Release of a sense of urgency about race issues and racism	Black	2 out of 6
		Learning about conscious use of rank / power	All	6 out of 18
		Inspired to traverse scales of change in their own work	All	6 out of 18
<b>6</b>	25%	Learning to enquire of black people, to counter normative assumptions about “knowing” (i.e. unconscious centrality)	White	3 out of 12
<b>7</b>	16% <sup>60</sup>	Initiating workplace conversations about race	All	3 out of 18

Table 3: Ranking changes cited by Process Work group respondents, by weight

Notably, these changes span awareness and action. Similarly, both relationships (“love”) and sense of purpose (“power”) have been strengthened. This will be explored in more detail through individual anecdotes of change later in this chapter.

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<sup>60</sup> This weighting excludes members who were all involved in the same consulting organisation and which embarked on a series of conversations about race internally, in parallel to the closed process work group. Were they to be included, this figure would increase by 44%, to 60% (See quotes from interviewees 11 & 18)

### **A note on race research**

Research on race runs the risk of reifying race. Reporting on findings can easily appear to “fix” racial categories in ways that are inconsistent with the philosophy of the researcher and the intentions of the research. I am aware that I run this risk here. It is worth noting that the starkness of racial representation in the table above is an emergent property of the analysis process; the themes emerged from the interviews; it was in the later process of populating these themes that the racial identity of each respondent was taken into consideration and the clusters constellated in this way. Although this empirical study has race as its subject, it would be betraying its purpose if it did not also serve to disrupt notions of race as a social construct. Therefore, the tabulated presentation of the data will be complemented by a detailed and more complex exploration of race below.

In particular, this table does not do justice to the more nuanced racial identities within the group. Worth particular mention here is the involvement of a participant who identified in her interview as “coloured having grown up white”. As the group process continued, this participant embraced both parts of this identity more strongly, reuniting with members of her family she had been estranged from when her parents “passed” for white, and joining the whiteness group to learn more about this aspect of her identity. There were no other coloured, or Indian, people in this group. Discussing the early findings with her, and the fact that coloured identity was not represented in the table above, this participant offered the following comment: “Even in the findings, it’s hard to work with the in-between. Coloured people are more able to see both / and. The perspective of being in the middle is different to being on either extreme.” This discussion enabled me to locate myself as a white researcher who does not easily hold the in-between perspective on race and who frequently falls into simplistic black/white characterizations of race.

What do the changes in tables 2 and 3 have to do with justice? Where does the empirical meet the theoretical in this thesis? Fraser’s formulation of justice (2001) encompasses two dimensions of justice, redistribution and recognition, bridged by the principle of participation parity.

Several of the themed changes cited by members of the group relate to recognition. White people began to recognize their white centrality and become more curious about black experiences, while black people began to recognize the humanity in white people. While this is important, Fraser warns that recognition in the absence of redistribution results in a sophisticated “politics of status” (2001:2) at the expense of “supplement[ing], complicat[ing] and enrich[ing] struggles for egalitarian redistribution.” (*ibid*:3).

The “things” redistributed as a result of the Process Work experience are not primarily material but instead represent, in my analysis, redistribution of responsibility and leadership for change towards greater racial justice. For example, the sense of urgency about race shifted from black people to a more evenly spread sense of responsibility for engaging with issues of race. However, two respondents made specific mention of material redistribution efforts they subsequently initiated in social systems where they had influence. One has asked that the details not be reported on here, for reasons of sensitivity. A second recognised the injustice of pay structures between white and black consultants in their business and helped to lead an initiative to revise the criteria such that they acknowledged the unique contribution of black consultants, and provided substantial back pay on the basis of these revisions. Both participants attributed these actions directly to the impact of the group on their thinking, as white people, about race and racial justice.

Three of the 14 themes of change match Fraser’s description of “parity of participation” achieved when both the material conditions and the socio-cultural conditions (of respect and opportunity) create equity of access and enable active participation. These changes, each of which was cited by at least a third of the group, relate to white people taking more risks and making themselves more vulnerable, speaking more on their own behalf and less on behalf of black people, and both black and white participants learning about more conscious use of their power. All three themes of change further hint at redistribution of the burden (generally carried by black people) of making white people more aware of how they use their privilege, as the following two anecdotes about white men in the group demonstrate:

Peter, a 39 year old white man, attended a course a few months after the Process Work group ended. He told the following story: “During one of the breaks, I was having a conversation with a young black woman who is having real challenges at work. She’s a professional in a very male dominated environment, white male. She was venting her frustrations and anger. I was listening and then although she didn’t make it a racial issue, I said, ‘You know, this has been my experience of being a white male in South Africa, and what happens to me: if I apply for jobs, people are very interested in what I do and how I do it, doors open, I get exposed to opportunities.’ And she came back to me two days later and said, ‘what you said really helped me understand what I’m thinking because my anger and frustration is at them, but they don’t know it.’” He attributed this ability to hear the unspoken sense of racial exclusion and to respond “cleanly” and non-defensively about the privilege of being a white man to his learning through the Process Work group conversations.

A second member of the group reflected towards the end of his interview, “With all the rank that I possess in the South African context: white, male, Afrikaner, 50, in business, financially stable, etc. etc., you know, I also am at a stage where I need to step back and create space ... If I continue to occupy centre stage the space isn’t there for what needs to come next ... I don’t see it as giving over power or sacrificing; it’s changing my role, changing my place, finding a different awareness...” He attributed this insight to a powerful exchange with a black man in the Process Work group.

### **What contributed to these changes?**

What did participants attribute their experiences of change to? Nineteen contributing factors emerged as themes from the interviews, which I grouped into five clusters. All the factors mentioned by a third or more of the group (i.e. considered a contributor to change by at least six of the eighteen respondents) are shown in bold in the following table.

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Contributing factors (by theme)</b>	<b>Count (out of 18)</b>
<b>Relationship</b>	Make-up of the group: calibre of people who came	<b>8</b>
	Development of a group culture, as a community, container and cauldron	<b>8</b>
	Being witnessed and witnessing each other	<b>7</b>
	Being surprised by a (racially different) Other	<b>7</b>
	Quality of relationships in the group	<b>6</b>
	Shared sense of commitment	3
<b>Heat of engagement</b>	The heat of anger, accusation and conflict	5
	Being “disturbed” or unsettled	5
	Sitting with unanswered and often uncomfortable questions	5
	A highly charged interaction between a black man and a white man	3
<b>Quality and depth of engagement</b>	The presence of deep emotions	<b>7</b>
	Personal stories and biography	<b>6</b>
	Deep and real conversation	5
<b>Resilience factors in the context of heat and depth</b>	Space to reflect between modules	5
	Courage	<b>6</b>
<b>Facilitation, methodology and setup</b>	The facilitator’s skilful use of self and the model	<b>12</b>
	Setup arrangements: pacing and closed nature of the group	<b>9</b>
	A strong conceptual framework and shared language	<b>6</b>
	The facilitator’s performance of whiteness	<b>6</b>

Table 4: Mapping contributing factors by cluster, with weighting

The first four clusters in this table all point to either relationship or power, or the combination of the two, as catalysts of change. When these contributing factors are ranked (see table 6 below) the weighting between them is revealed. Twelve of the nineteen factors were credited by at least one third of the interviewees with having enabled the changes they experienced (ranked from 1-5 below). Again, bold font denotes all factors identified by at least one third of the group.

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Contributing factors</b>	<b>Count out of 18</b>
<b>1</b>	Facilitator's skilful use of self and this model	<b>12</b>
<b>2</b>	Setup arrangements: pacing and closed nature of the group	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	Make-up of the group: calibre of the people who came	<b>8</b>
	Development of a group culture	
<b>4</b>	Being witnessed and witnessing each other	<b>7</b>
	Being surprised by a (raced) Other	
	The presence of deep emotions	
<b>5</b>	Relationships in the group	<b>6</b>
	Personal stories and biography	
	Courage	
	A strong conceptual framework and shared language	
	The facilitator's performance of whiteness	
<b>6</b>	The heat of anger, accusation and conflict	5
	Being disturbed	
	Sitting with unanswered and often uncomfortable questions	
	Space to reflect between modules	
	Deep and authentic conversation	
<b>8</b>	A shared sense of commitment	3
	A highly charged interaction between a black man and a white man	

Table 5: Ranking contributing factors to change

The role of the facilitator and the structural arrangements of the group emerge as the most powerful catalysts of change. Both aspects will be subjected to a closer inspection through the comparative cases. The absence of a dedicated facilitator in the whiteness group offers an opportunity to ask whether the changes in the PW group would have been as significant if it had not been facilitated. Differences in the racial composition of the second Process Work group allow for a deeper enquiry into the impact that the make-up of the groups had on their engagement on issues of race.

It is worth noting now, prior to working with the comparative material, that the facilitator had a role to play, in varying degrees, in each of the top thirteen factors cited (in other words, referred to by at least a third of the group). Four of these thirteen factors were entirely shaped by the facilitator: his skilful use of self and the model (credited by two thirds of the group), the setup arrangements, the conceptual framework and his performance of whiteness. He exerted a strong – but not exclusive - influence over the composition of the group and the calibre of the people who came (almost all the respondents had previously attended at least one workshop run by Stephen). The remaining seven contributing factors all refer to the power of the group process as it developed, and it would be fair to say that the facilitator was one of several change catalysts in this respect. In summary, the presence, skill and design input of the facilitator appear to be highly influential contributors to change.

### **What hindered change?**

In the interests of seeing the fullest possible picture, it is worth also considering what got in the way of change. The research norm of raising majority views to the surface of analysis will be set aside in this section in favour of the Process Work principle of deep democracy. The loudness of the praise for the facilitation thus far is all the more reason to listen to “the wisdom of the minority” to ensure that crucial insights are not drowned out. This minority includes those whose experience was predominantly positive, but who also have expressed criticisms, as well

as those whose experience was predominantly negative. Four inhibitors of change were cited in the interviews.

The facilitator's racial identity was perceived as both a catalyst and an inhibitor of change. Three individual criticisms were levelled at him as a white man (who had left South Africa). One criticism was that his rank as a white man disqualified him from being able to work effectively on race issues. A second criticism was that he was instrumental in creating a majority white group which, by definition, reconstituted inequality. Lastly, that he projected onto the group his own unresolved issues about being white and having left the country.

Several interviewees raised questions about the levels of heat a group can, or should, withstand. "What level of heat is good for change? ... If it gets too hot, then maybe the possibility for change is lower." (White women, 40). Five people expressed the view that fellow members had left the group because it had exceeded their tolerance for heat.<sup>61</sup> For example, "... some people's frames weren't strong enough to handle what was unleashed at times." (White male, 60). One person specifically related this to the facilitator's perceived preference for heat and conflict over a more peaceful and caring approach to change. Three members of the group referred to the facilitator's dependence on verbal interaction at the expense of other forms of expression available in Process Work (such as movement); one wondered "if Stephen had been open to that, and if we'd incorporated that, if there's something else, bigger or just else, that could have happened through the process" (black woman, 50) while the other two perceived this as a "Eurocentric" or "white" orientation which excluded other forms of expression. One person was critical of the choice of venue in Cape Town, suggesting that it symbolised South Africa's racist history and that the failure to acknowledge this aggravated racial conflict in the group.

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<sup>61</sup> However, a similar drop off rate occurred in the second PW group which experienced very little "heat" which suggests that it is difficult to ascribe decisions to leave the group to one single factor

### **Where did the group fail to address injustice?**

The group, comprising middle class members, struggled to engage meaningfully with issues of class. Fraser (2001) perceives this is a macro trend; concern about marginalised identities *per se* can “marginalize, eclipse and displace” the concrete issue of economic inequality rather than serving to “supplement, complicate and enrich” engagement with it, and with the common ground between issues of marginalised identity and poverty (2001:4). A third of the group raised this difficulty in their interviews, offering various hypotheses about its genesis, for example:

... when we tried to bring in the issue of poverty, there was no resonance. But there couldn't have been because most people here were not affected by it, and I dare say most of us – black and white – are unconscious about poverty.” (Black male, 52); and

“It was my one deep frustration that the group didn't vote for the class topic ... it will always get marginalized because the voices are not here to represent it ... How do you access that, when the voices are not in the room? Because that's not an excuse.” (White woman, 42).

Two respondents expressed a more general concern, that awareness about race was not generalised to other areas of injustice:

“Is it good enough to only work on the racism issue and then walk around as xenophobes and homophobes?” (Coloured-raised-as-white woman, 53); and

“... if I feel so strongly that I don’t want a white person to judge me, I therefore would not want to judge any other person who does not look like me, or has their own life. So when I say [that the group was left with] unfinished business for me, I would have liked to see how we apply these tools to the other areas that we battle with as a country” (African woman, 45).

This highlights the relationship between the composition of a group and the issues it chooses to deal with. The two comparative studies, representing groups with more homogenous and more heterogeneous membership, will enable further discussion of this issue.

### **Comparative studies**

Comparative material from two other groups will enable some of the key findings in this chapter to be tested, towards deepening the discussion. The first is a whiteness group in Johannesburg that I initiated some months prior to the start of the Process Work group, inspired by an earlier workshop with Stephen Schuitevoerder. After convening an initial meeting in my home, the role of hosting and facilitating monthly gatherings over the ensuing two and a half years circulated among the group on a voluntary basis. In other words, there was no dedicated facilitator and this comparative study is an opportunity to examine the role of facilitation more closely. The whiteness group had been meeting for approximately two years at the time of the interviews (mid 2010).

The other comparative study is based on a second Process Work group started by Stephen a year after the first one; hereafter the two groups will be referred to as PW1 and PW2 to distinguish them. PW2 enables further enquiry into the make-up of the group, specifically into the hypothesis that the racial composition of the group influences the tone and focus of conversations on race.

## Second Process Work group (PW2)

In 2009, a second group started. Most of the setup arrangements were the same; it met four times over eighteen months, rotating between Cape Town and Johannesburg, led by the same facilitator and assistant facilitator following the same methodology and with the same intention of teaching Process Work facilitation and coaching skills. There were three relatively small differences: the assistant facilitator accompanied the second group throughout whereas she joined the first group for its third and fourth modules, the second group met for five days at a time instead of six, and their last module was held at a new venue in Cape Town as the previous one had closed. And there was one large difference: while white people had been in the majority in PW1, they were in the minority in PW2 and only seven of the twenty six people who joined PW2 at the outset were white South Africans.<sup>62</sup>

The impetus for pursuing this strand of inquiry was fuelled by interview comments made by a member of PW1 who said: "... you have a majority of black people in a country called South Africa. What was represented in the group was a majority of white people. I just saw whiteness. I saw the arrogance of whiteness, I saw the supremacy of whiteness, I saw the domination of whiteness in that group. What I find deeply unsettling is that a white man can run a group like that ... the constitution of that group wasn't representative of the reality of South Africa." (identifying details withheld<sup>63</sup>). As a researcher, and as a facilitator who has a certain influence over the composition of groups I facilitate, I was curious to learn about the effect of a significantly different racial composition. Many members of the first Process Work group credited the depth of the engagement on race between black and white participants as a catalyst of the changes they experienced. Would group engagement on race between a differently constituted group – and one more representative of the South African demographic - be different?

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<sup>62</sup> Of the 26, eleven were black, 3 were coloured, 7 were white South Africans and 5 were white foreigners (three Germans and two Americans). Source: Cathy Bernatt, assistant facilitator.

<sup>63</sup> This respondent consented to an interview, but declined to identify themselves by race, gender and age.

First person narratives on the impact of the racial composition of the respective groups on discussions about race are based on a narrow and non-representative sample comprising the facilitator and a participant (Solomon, white male, 37). Solomon was the only participant to have straddled both groups<sup>64</sup>. Comparing the two, he characterized the second group as “more mature”; there was “more appreciation and attention and skilful use of rank” than PW1. He explained that this group spent less time in group dialogue and more time in small groups or pairs, but that when they did choose topics to discuss as a group, the group invariably chose race, just as the first group had done. However, the tone of these conversations “... was very different. So the black voice didn’t have to attack or defend. It would ask questions and listen, or it would tell stories and be heard, whereas it felt in the first group that there was a lot more fight from both sides, a lot more defensiveness at times from both sides. The eldership<sup>65</sup> from the black voice was a lot stronger in the first group than the white voice in the first group. In the second group, the white voice was less present while the eldership was more spread, as well. So there could be more eldership from the white side too because it was listening, it was sharing the story, curious and interested.”

According to Solomon, the content and temperature of these engagements on race were also different. Instead of developing into heated exchanges about racism, the conversations in PW2 were about a much broader set of experiences of being raced, mostly from black perspectives: “their relationship to rural roots and living between two worlds ... [and] the middle class challenge of a black person was a lot more in the room” (Solomon). In other words, the dialogue was more measured, reflective and spacious.

In his capacity as facilitator, Stephen explained his understanding of why this happened: “because a majority are black people, the result is that black people contextually don’t feel oppressed. It’s almost like you’re going into a black person’s home, as opposed to black people

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<sup>64</sup> A limitation of this comparative study is that it is told through the eyes of two white men, and interpreted here by a white woman. This study might be very different through black eyes and interpretations. However, the intention was to speak to people who could compare the first and second groups and these were the two people who met this criterion. Stephen’s co-facilitator had not been present for modules one and two of the first group.

<sup>65</sup> “Elders” are people in groups who can “function effectively in the group that has power, and at the same time, in the group that has consciousness” (Mindell, 1995: 65-66)

coming into a white person's home." (Interview 2) "In other words, there are things that white people are doing which recreate the race condition ... but we're in the black house now. So [black people] can recognize it and keep going because there's not a domination of the black voice which results in the need for it to explode or come out strongly." (Interview 2).

Did Solomon experience more or less change as a result? Which of these two groups had more impact on his awareness as a white man? Solomon reflects: "... there was a lot of chiselling and refining and learning that took place in the first group, that prepared me to arrive in that space in a role that had a lot more awareness and, still obviously a lot more to learn, but a lot more awareness and depth and skill around my rank and my race." He was received warmly by the second group, despite missing the first module, and his experience there was a smoother, gentler, quieter environment in which to continue learning about race. This took the sharpness out of the exchanges, to the point of being able to "engage with [race] authentically, make jokes about it, not take it too seriously, but know when to take it seriously." Beyond the group, this has sanded down the rougher edges of his own way of engaging about race, and other issues of justice: "... my challenging, or my pushing or my antagonizing has eased off a lot, and it's much more asking questions, offering my experience, challenging in a way that makes the person think, and listening more so I can challenge. Rather than challenging and then forcing them to listen to me. It's not even subtle, it's a completely different orientation." It seems there was a cumulative impact; from being woken up to being included.

In conclusion, composition seems likely to have an impact on what a group chooses to give its attention to and how interaction develops in terms of temperature, pace, levels of camaraderie and levels of conflict. The differences between PW1 and PW2 suggest that the racial composition of any group in South Africa, regardless of whether it has formed to talk about race or not, triggers subjective experiences of belonging to that group, evoked by previous experiences of centrality or marginalization on the basis of race. This accords with, and deepens, Fraser's (2001) idea of participation parity as a constitutive element of justice. While many inter-racial groups in South Africa, given the choice, may elect to talk about race, the space for

negotiating this choice and the potential to spread the focus from race into other issues appear to be larger when there is less heat and more sense of belonging.

### **Whiteness group**

I interviewed nine members of the whiteness group. Five belonged to PW1 as well and focused primarily on the impact of this in their interviews, with additional reflections on their concomitant experience of the whiteness group and the combined impact. The remaining four respondents belonged exclusively to the whiteness group, and responded to the same three core questions about internal changes (subjective experience, thoughts and feelings), factors contributing to these changes, and impact on behaviour. However, when analysing these nine interviews, I pursued a slightly different line of enquiry from the PW interviews. As with the first data set, I was interested in the changes and what enabled those changes. But given that the interviews had revealed several disappointments about the “progress” the whiteness group had made, and given that one of the variances was the absence of a facilitator in this group<sup>66</sup>, I was also curious about what had inhibited change and wondered to what extent this could be attributed to the lack of a facilitator.

These interviews produced 30 themes, including five clear areas of change, ten facilitators of those changes and eight inhibitors of potential / desired change. There was also a “basket” of seven other issues mentioned by at least two of the nine interviewees, which warranted noting them without knowing, yet, their meaning or significance. In this smaller set of nine respondents, two mentions constituted a theme. As before, I transferred all 30 themes to post-its and onto a flipchart sheet where I could cluster them. Using the same four quadrants (produced by the intersection of two polarities: awareness/action and power/relationship) for ease of comparison with PW1. Where the clusters mirrored what had emerged from PW1, I used the same language to name them.

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<sup>66</sup> The rotation of facilitators meant that, although there was a degree of facilitation at each gathering, there was no dedicated role taking overall responsibility for setup arrangements, design, holding the group process, or carrying an overall and long-term intention (for change or other expectations) with the group.

The findings below are reported in a similar fashion to those of PW1 for ease of comparison, but are narrowed down to: degree of significance, changes experienced and contributing and inhibiting factors to change. A short summation, with implications, concludes this comparative study.

### **Were the changes significant?**

The impact of belonging to the whiteness group could be characterized as follows: Two people found it very useful, three found it somewhat useful, despite some limitations, and four people experienced very limited change. Reflections spanning this spectrum include:

“It was a radical step to actually sit down with whites ... [as a result] I feel like I’m more honest about who I am when I’m with anybody, black or white.” (White man, 55?);

“... it kept race on the agenda in an investigatory way [on an] enquiry basis. It was a discipline of having a conversation ... “ (White male, 51);

“My experience of being in the whiteness group has had more impact in retrospect than it has live ... even though I haven’t always felt comfortable with the group, and have struggled and been absent, it’s stimulated a lot of reflection and learning.” (White woman, 41)

“It’s been most useful as a trigger for more exploration outside the group... the changes have been more conceptual - which was useful at the beginning - than directly engaging my heart and soul.” (White female “youthful”);

“In a lot of ways I’ve been really disappointed by the group [but] it has acted as a catalyst in terms of reading the papers and talking about stuff ... it’s sparked a whole lot of conversations with people ... So, I don’t think the white group as a group has changed

my behaviour much, it's changed my understanding of what a deep rooted issue race is in South Africa." (White female, 57)

"I had hoped that the whiteness group would be a really strong place of learning and accountability. I don't think it has been that." (White woman, 37);

"Frankly it felt like we weren't getting anywhere ... but the two [groups] running in parallel have been mutually enriching." (White male, 60)

Whereas experiences of change for members of PW1 were profound and visceral, the impact of the whiteness group was less significant, operating more at a conceptual level than an experiential level. Its significance seems to lie in the fact that it prompted members to more deeply explore issues of race outside of the group, and to start or commit to other race initiatives. Chief among these are the mixed race conversations initiated by members of the whiteness group in 2010, and a dialogue between South Africans and immigrants living in Yeoville, Johannesburg (which one of the whiteness group members helped to host) in the wake of violent attacks on African immigrants.

### **What changed?**

The identification of specific changes in respect of race were more complex for the five people who belonged to both groups given that they ran in parallel and were, as several expressed, "complementary". Therefore, changes in relationships with black people and changes related to the white self are reported here only in respect of the four respondents who belonged exclusively to the whiteness group. The remaining three themes of change are recorded across the full set of nine respondents.

The five themed areas of change are arranged into three clusters: changing perceptions of others, changing consciousness about the white self-in-relationship and doing things differently.

Cluster	Themes	Count
Changing perceptions of others: both (other) white people and black people	Re-thinking relationships with other whites and engaging differently on this basis	4 of 9, or just under half
	Growth in empathy with and compassion for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Other whites</li> <li>▪ Blacks</li> </ul>	3 of 9 or one third 2 of 9
	Changing relationships with blacks	3 of 4 who belonged to the whiteness group only
Changing consciousness about the white self-in-relationship	Owning whiteness, privilege, centrality and racism	3 of 4 who belonged to the whiteness group only
Doing things differently	Initiating or joining other race initiatives	2 of 9

Table 6: Mapping changes cited by whiteness group respondents

Three out of the four people who belonged exclusively to the whiteness group experienced changes in relation to their own sense of whiteness and in their relationships with black people. At least a third of the full whiteness group developed more positive regard for, and experienced changes in their relationships with, other white people.

Although five people made reference to the mixed race conversations they were responsible for initiating – four with enthusiasm and strong praise - only one person mentioned this in response to the question: what are you doing differently? It was as if the existence of the mixed race group had nothing to do with the agency of the whiteness group when, objectively, it was their most obvious “result”. Did it develop a life of its own so rapidly that there was little sense of ownership of it? Or had a “who owns this group?” conversation at the second mixed race gathering made members of the whiteness group wary of claiming credit or agency? This is not

the place to analyse this phenomenon in more detail, but it does suggest that there is more to be understood here.

**What contributed to these changes, or inhibited change?**

Ten factors were credited with enabling these changes, while eight inhibitors of deeper change were identified. Enabling and disabling factors each received a total of 25 mentions; a quantitative indication of the qualitative experience of ambivalence many referred to in their interviews. Several of these contributing and inhibiting factors represent opposite sides of the same coin, or seem to exist in tension with each other. The table below locates these factors opposite each other to indicate this relationship.

<b>Theme: Contributors to changes</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Theme: Inhibitors of changes</b>	<b>Count</b>
Composition of group as white-only	4	Composition of group as white-only	4
Conceptual / theoretical ideas as an entry point	4	Getting stuck at the conceptual level	3
		Stepping back from the “edge” of more emotional and experiential engagement with each other about race	4
Talking about shame towards reclaiming and reframing pride	4		
Not being tied to a single methodology or approach	3	Absence of a dedicated facilitator	3
Relationships in the group and potential for vulnerability and intimacy	2	Lack of safety and connection in the group	3
		Feeling excluded or like an “outsider” in the group	3

Discipline and practice of gathering regularly to talk about whiteness	2	Lack of rigor: insufficient urgency, lack of clear purpose, aims and structure of meetings	3
Learning from real-life incident of centrality and racial exclusion, and being held accountable for it	2	Polarisation on issue of holding one another accountable for unconscious centrality	2
Personal stories / biography	2		
Making connections with own experiences of marginalization	2		
Complement to parallel Process Work experiences	3 of 5		

Table 7: Mapping contributing factors against inhibiting factors, with weighting

Eight of the nine people interviewed mentioned composition, which was the defining characteristic of this group. Four thought that the exclusively white composition was a catalyst of change and four believed that it had undermined the potential for change. While only three participants referred to the absence of a dedicated facilitator as an impediment to change, all seven of the remaining inhibitors of change could, arguably, have been addressed by a dedicated (and highly skilled) facilitator. In other words, an external facilitator could have held a sense of the overall purpose and a structure to support that purpose, could have built a greater sense of safety, connection and inclusion in the group and, from there, could have supported the group when it got stuck, helping it to look at where it was getting caught, especially when individual or collective blind spots were obstructing change (for example around white centrality). In contrast to the PW1 group, the whiteness group remained mostly at the conceptual level. This was useful to four of its members as a starting point, but became increasingly frustrating over time, inhibiting possibilities of leaning on the relationships in the group to take greater risks. This suggests that groups working with unconscious material likely to provoke emotion, such as white centrality in the context of racial injustice, will benefit from external facilitation when making this transition from polite and conceptual conversation to something deeper.

In conclusion, when a group gets stuck despite a stated desire to change, this is an indicator that someone who is not caught in the group dynamic would be useful in helping the group to navigate the polarities of awareness and action, and power and love, and hence to catalyse change. This is a role an external facilitator can play.

The final part of this chapter returns to the three research questions to consider the implications of the empirical findings. The experiences of PW1 and the whiteness group are included here. Having not been a member of PW2 and having the insights of only one member and its facilitator, there is insufficient material from which to draw implications.

### **Implications for research question one: what is the relationship between justice and sustainability?**

Following an attempt to theorise the relationship between justice and sustainability in Chapter Four, the empirical material offers insight into whether attempts to address race in South Africa enable or usurp a focus on socio-ecological issues. On several occasions, issues of climate change, water scarcity and planetary health were suggested as topics of discussion in PW1, but were trumped by issues of race. Two members of the group made specific reference to the displacement of environmental and sustainability issues:

“... we never got further than race. So I think the question around class, the question around the planet, sustainability and those [pause] were always, always, always marginalized...” (White woman, 45); and

“I mean it’s great to be awake human beings in respect of who we are with one another, but we are so asleep to how we are with the planet and the earth and nature.” (Coloured-having-grown-up-white, female, 53).

A third person recounted an experience which offers an alternative perspective<sup>67</sup>. Tracing the personal changes the Process Work group precipitated, he explained that as a white middle aged man in South Africa, he had entered the group feeling a lack of “connection to what is happening”, a sense of being “powerless”. He had been asking himself “how do I fit in?” During the course of the group, and through some heated exchanges about his rank as a white man, he came to a realization that “I can be powerful in how I engage in this society; with a consciousness around my impact ... I’ve earned privilege which I can now use to good effect.” This renewed his sense of belonging which he expressed as “... an incredible sense of: this is my country. I love it and I’m scared of it and I have a deep commitment to making an impact,” From this point, his perspective broadened to “... an awareness of the collective, social, national, global, etc.” and in the interview he mused: “... funnily enough, this process of awareness, through race, has given me the opportunity of developing a consciousness at a universe level, at a sustainability level, in a global sense. It’s given me, it’s challenged me to notice something much broader than race.” (White male, 51).

I propose that the difficulty of focusing on sustainability is related, in part, to group composition. Just as the absence of poorer people’s voices from PW1 meant that the group did not deal with issues of class and inequality, so the absence of nature’s “voice” inhibited the group from engaging meaningfully with issues of sustainability. When the social system excludes conversations about sustainability, it is up to individuals to make the link themselves, as the last story indicates. The consequence is that the pace of change, when navigated at an individual level, is very slow when the issues deserve more urgent collective awareness and change. That this is a matter of group composition may seem a strange conclusion to draw and begs the question: how to bring nature’s voice into a social system? Chapter Seven will consider this question.

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<sup>67</sup> All three references to the issue of sustainability recorded in this section were unsolicited during the interviews

## **Implications for research question two: Is the capacity to balance “power” and “love” sufficient to generate change in contexts of injustice?**

In Chapter Four, I made a claim that where injustice is part of the stuck quality of a social system and is not paid attention to by those with privilege (including the facilitator) any changes the system navigates are in danger of recreating that injustice. In other words, in contexts of injustice, love and power are insufficient to generate social change on their own. Does the empirical research back this up? Was justice present in the group experiences of change, either as part of the process, as an emergent property, or – in the case of PW1 – as an orientation of the facilitator? Earlier, PW1 changes were discussed through the lens of Fraser’s definition of justice to look for clues to this question. This section takes a different angle, exploring the relationship between power, love and justice through stories of dawning awareness of justice beyond the internal group dynamics of PW1 and the whiteness group and two descriptions of justice as an emergent property of PW1. The section ends with quotes from several PW1 participants that suggest they perceived Stephen Schuitevoerder to be holding a deeper purpose, with regard to what I am calling “justice”.

### **Justice as a signal from beyond the group**

Below are two examples, from the first Process Work group and the whiteness group, of the dynamics of love and power inside each group cycling into an ever-tighter knot and only being released when that group’s attention is captured by an issue beyond the group itself that reminds it of the “bigger picture” and galvanises action. Both of these anecdotes have been referred to previously (in Chapters One and Five) and will not be recounted in detail here.

As the second module of PW1 drew to a close, members reflected on where we were getting stuck. One member, coincidentally, introduced Kahane's ideas about love and power<sup>68</sup> and we explored how our drive to connect (especially across racial lines), at odds with our drive to achieve something (especially developing our own skills as facilitators), was creating a sense of paralysis in the group. When we reconvened six months later, several people referred to this, expressing the hope that we could move forward, with less turmoil. During that week, we started to hear each other's perspectives on events at the University of the Free State (UFS). It was the first time the group had worked on a racialised event outside of the racial dynamics within the group itself. Seeing beyond ourselves and our own love - power struggle through the UFS story introduced another dimension – which I suggest is love and power in service of something “more”, i.e. justice - prompting white people in the group to write an article calling for white South Africans to be accountable for ongoing racism.

Similarly, the whiteness group had been battling with our sense of purpose and our relationships with each other for some time when one member spoke, with a sense of despair, about mounting anger and racial tension in schools in Soweto. One of the consequences was that white and coloured teachers, many of whom had worked in Soweto for most of their careers, were being told to leave. My experience of hearing this story is that the group suddenly had a renewed sense of why we were gathered. This account shifted the focus of the group, away from absorption with internal dynamics of love and power, to the urgency of the context beyond the group. As described in Chapter Five, the decision to initiate an inter-racial conversation took root at this time. This is more than power as purposeful self-determination, but suggests harnessing power towards “...implementing the demands of justice” (King, 1968:43).

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<sup>68</sup> Kahane released a paper in 2008 exploring the ideas of power and love, as a precursor to the publication of this book. This paper was receiving relatively wide circulation among the community of facilitators and coaches around the time of the second module.

## Justice as an emergent property

Several people invoked the idea of justice in their interviews (a concept which was not mentioned or prompted in my questions). Two short stories follow, based on the experiences of members of PW1, of justice as an emergent property of love and power “at their best” (King, 1968: 29 & 43)

Lulu, a black 48 year-old woman, recalls previous attempts to express her anger with white people, but “finding myself having to apologise for an anger I feel justified to feel and, in apologizing, I lose myself.” In the PW group, she made an explicit request that white people listen to her, and her “rage” without reacting, defending, or re-assuming centrality. Looking back on this experience, she reflected that “feeling heard... enabled me to be fully human in that moment” and “I can’t imagine how I would, in my little corner, work with rage about *injustices* from the white role ... it had to be in interaction with the role itself that I could heal.” (Italics added). The experience of being witnessed was a way to redress injustice. This experience appears to represent for her, using different language, an integration of power and love. Lulu articulates the love aspect of the changes she navigated in the group as “in your own growth, you need the other to grow as a human being” and the power aspect as learning to “ask for what I want and to get what I want, in relationship”. As a result, her leadership as a black woman, in relation to both whites and blacks, was affirmed and, far from continuing to feel silenced, “I step into the world knowing there’s a community behind me.”

Susan, a white 42 year-old woman, recounted being part of a conversation during the first module which she, belatedly, realised had narrowed into an exchange between white members of the group, excluding black members. Looking back on it, this prompted her to remember “my daily accountability to speak out, not to collude... it’s about having the courage to take a stand for a growing awareness around *racial justice*” (italics added). For Susan, it took a combination of power and love, characterized by courage (as highlighted in the story about Pregs Govender in Chapter Four) to “take a stand” for justice. This version of justice represents the idea of using centrality to support a system to realise itself. Where power, on its own, is the drive towards self-realisation, power *and* love “implementing the demands of justice” (King,

1968:77) expresses a drive towards the realization of a system of which one is a part, but where individual self-realisation may be trumped by what is in the best interests of the whole.

### **Justice as an orientation of the facilitator**

Given that the facilitation role carries substantial weight, it is useful to consider perceptions of whether this role was oriented to change in the direction of justice. Again, this was not the language of the questions or answers in the interviews, but the following quotes identify different ways in which the facilitator's role was seen to catalyse (subjective) experiences of justice as process and outcome:

“[What enabled me to find my voice was] ... the facilitator was always there to catch me if I felt ignored. And I mean, generally, the facilitator was really good in supporting minority voices to speak up. I've never had that experience before, of a role that supports minorities to speak up” (Black female, 48).

“... he has a unique contribution to make and role to play as a South African who gets the issues but no longer lives in South Africa, and is able to come and go, and able to hold up a mirror to us - which is also his own upbringing - and so can own stuff more readily, often, than other white people in the group ... [and] I think he's carved out an inclusivity, an entitlement to the space, a way of listening, that has supported black people's voices and the black role in an unprecedented way. And then, when white centrality would normally silence parts of that, ride over it - with all good intentions - ignore or evade parts of what are being said by black voices, I think he's been able to hold us, as a group, to far deeper listening.” (White woman, 37).

“It was also – and I felt that Stephen was hard on white folks a couple of times – but it was also the way he relentlessly stuck to the race issue and wouldn't let it go. And so he forced me to look harder at that stuff, to be a lot more focused in the way that the conversation was going.... So that insistence, almost like a discipline, on having the topic moved things in me.” (Black woman, 41)

“I think Stephen as a facilitator, had a huge role in bringing awareness to both sides, to all of us.” (White woman, 40).

The implication is that an orientation to justice will be useful to the facilitator’s ability to read the group on its own merits and in the context of the broader systemic issues in which the group is located. Power can be deployed at the level of the group and at a more systemic level. So can love, to make the links between systemic injustice and what is happening in this group, now. Done skilfully, this is not about imposing an agenda but about being deeply attuned to what is happening in the group and beyond the group, and seeing the systemic connections.

### **Implications for research question three: What are the implications of an orientation to justice for the principle of facilitator neutrality?**

I conducted two interviews, a year apart<sup>69</sup>, with Stephen Schuitevoerder, facilitator of the Process Work groups, to learn about his orientation to justice and his perspectives on facilitator neutrality. I wanted to understand whether the PW1 participants’ experiences of change in relation to racial injustice (according to my framing) were a spontaneous emergent property, unrelated to his approach. Or whether there is a relationship between an orientation to justice held by the facilitator and the potential for (more) just processes and outcomes to emerge in the group.

Initially, Stephen distanced himself from my use of the concept of justice in facilitation: “I tend to shy away from ‘justice’ because in my own interpretation, justice has been used in such an abusive and violent way. So it depends on the definition because [if] justice is an eye for an eye, then I think: that hasn’t worked so well.” Later, he reframed justice saying: “...for me, justice is the true emergence of that which has been oppressed and the resurfacing of it and the interaction with it to enrich that which has been oppressed but also the whole.” He concluded:

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<sup>69</sup> The first interview took place on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010, on completion of PW1 and the second interview on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011, as PW2 was drawing to a close.

“Now *that* I’m into, in terms of justice. But not to the point of enforcing it. Because it’s dangerous for the marginalized ... if you force it up, in other words, you become the social activist in the rougher sense of the word, you think you’re doing well but actually if the mainstream is strong enough, that voice just suffers even further.” (Interview 2).

In Chapter Four, I made the theoretical claim that there is a tension between facilitator neutrality and facilitator activism and that both represent a trap. Over the years I have known Stephen, I have often heard him speak about the dangers of activism and assumed that he agreed with the mainstream perspective, articulated by Lewis (2008), on facilitator neutrality. So he surprised me when he said: “I don’t actually believe anyone is neutral; I think neutral is dead. So the concept of neutrality means nowhere for me, no one direction or another; it doesn’t have a view. And I don’t believe we can hold no view.” (Interview 2).

But what about activism? In our first interview, Stephen expressed his usual reservations about activism: “I’m afraid of pure activism that hasn’t done sufficient self-reflection work and sometimes you can’t tell the difference between one side and the other ... For example, look at race: white people screaming at other white people. They don’t look all that different to white people screaming at black people, except for self-righteousness.” (Interview 1). This stance softened, or deepened, somewhat in our second interview, ““If you begin to shift from a *facilitator* role into an *activist* role you are one-sided, which means by your very nature you’re perpetuating another view. Which is OK, but just know that you’re doing that” (italics added). Later, he expanded on this: “The challenge you’ve always got is that if you polarize the other side, you’re in trouble. So I actually think that there’s a deep form of activism that can occur that really is much more about recognizing both your own side and the other side and creating a bridge”. Identifying with this version of activism, Stephen surprised me again by saying: “I’m an activist in that I’m really interested in addressing some of the incredible pains we do to each other.” (Interview 2). Asked to elaborate, he talked about being an activist for “humanity”

As a participant in PW1, I did not experience Stephen as neutral, nor was I looking for a neutral facilitator when it came to issues of injustice. Observing Stephen over the four modules of the group, I saw that he was deeply attuned to what was happening in the group. Moreover, I

noticed that he seemed tuned into a vision of this group's potential (which he held strongly and occasionally advocated). Then he had a third level of awareness, about injustice and in this case, racial injustice, in the world outside the dynamics playing themselves out in the room. This is what I call the "beyond" and the "more than". Time and again when I re-entered the room after a confusing and emotionally demanding previous day, Stephen would frame his perception of what had happened, revealing information – concealed in signals, dynamics, almost in code – that I had been blind to, largely by virtue of my whiteness.

However, at the end of our interviews, Stephen alluded to the danger of holding a vision for this group. Between modules two and three, he had been challenged about his own agenda as a convener and facilitator. Reflecting on this, he explained, "I heard a message that said: 'this isn't yours to hold or build; you're a visitor, know your rank and don't come colonize us.' ... and it's absolutely true and I had to drop my attachment to outcome. It's hard as a facilitator. You invest a lot but it's never really yours so you've got to really work with that".

The first implication in what Stephen is saying is that a facilitator needs to make a conscious choice and not slip into pursuing an agenda. Secondly, that there is a place for supporting the emergence of the "oppressed" or "marginalized" role but that pacing, self-awareness and the skill of framing this process require exquisite attention and care.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research indicates that the PW1 group experienced profound change with regard to race-related awareness and behaviour and that the most significant contributing factor, attributed by the majority of respondents, was the skilful use of self, methodology and tools by the facilitator.

The findings from this group, strengthened and complicated by the two comparative studies, suggest that the composition of a group in respect of injustice (racial or other) in the external context is a useful clue, although by no means a guarantee, of how the group will engage with

that issue. Being aware of the context and seeing the group as a microcosm of its context, and in dynamic relationship with that context, offers a facilitator more informed design choices. If they have a measure of influence over group composition, they may decide to constitute a group so that the optimal conditions for change prevail (again with no guarantees). If they do not have influence over group composition, they will at least have information with which to anticipate in advance some of the issues and dynamics of the group and design the group process (including the design that happens in the moment) in respect of levels of safety, pacing and temperature. This question of influence continues to stir the unresolved question about the location of a facilitator on the spectrum from neutrality to activism. What does it mean for facilitators if, as Stephen Schuitevoerder said: “You invest a lot but it’s never really yours”? Chapter Seven will draw final conclusions about all three research questions, including the tensions inherent in this statement, before extracting some modest implications and proposing the outline of a short course to engender dialogue facilitation skills among students at the Sustainability Institute.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION

### INTRODUCTION

In Chapters Four and Six, I presented theoretical and empirical responses, respectively, to the three research questions. This final chapter pulls these ideas together and adds new insights, gained from experiences in nature, producing a final set of conclusions. From these, I extract two key implications for facilitation practice. I close the chapter and the thesis sketching an outline for a module designed to equip students with experiences, insights and skills in dialogue participation and facilitation at the Sustainability Institute.

#### **A missing piece? An ecological perspective to match the social perspective**

I have been changing too. The process of shifting out of a fixed social perspective towards one that is more appreciative of the socio-ecological perspective started when I first enrolled at the Sustainability Institute and has continued through the process of writing this thesis. The story about the butterfly eggs and social housing told in Chapter One marks the starting point in 2006. Given my anthropocentric location on Hattingh's sustainability scale outlined at the start of this thesis, it was almost an after-thought to include a question about the relationship between justice and sustainability in my research and my efforts to make sense of this question seemed clumsy and plodding at first. As I proceeded to read and review the literature, I was increasingly convinced of the link between them, but my treatment of natural systems, environmental justice and sustainability remained superficial compared to my familiarity with social systems and social injustice. This has detracted from my ability to write about facilitating social change that can help bring movement to the seemingly intractable social and socio-ecological issues I described in the introduction to this thesis.

In recognition of this gap, I decided to enrol on a short course offered by the Schumacher College in England on “discovering the ecological self”<sup>70</sup> before attempting to write the final chapter. On the third day of the course, I spent five hours alone, in one selected and secluded spot on Dartmoor, following instructions to stay there with no distractions and to simply experience my response to nature; my ecological self. Although I spend a lot of time on my own in nature, I had never sat in one place in nature for an extended time and thus approached the experience with a mix of excitement and trepidation. During the five hours, my social justice self had an altercation with my ecological self, producing insights into what my orientation to social justice leaves out. Just as I have critiqued Kahane’s excision of justice in his work on power and love, my interest in the relationship between power, love and justice in social systems has excluded nature.

I experienced, rather than thought about, the difference between a more anthropocentric relationship with nature and a more ecocentric appreciation of nature. I began to see what it was like to experience nature on its own terms. I was moved by the roar of the river and the dance of the tree tops in the valley below me. I felt it was not only reasonable to be moved by natural beauty *and* by social injustice, but it was necessary to be emotionally connected to both. I realized that the experience of nature on its own terms has the potential not only to renew the energy of overwhelmed social justice activists, but to enable activists to widen their perceptive field. In other words, to see the whole system afresh and reformulate “justice” to include what they (and I) have previously been blind to, to observe the world through less jaded eyes and, finally, to see oneself anew.

What, then, are my final conclusions to the three research questions and how does this recent experience add flavour to them?

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<sup>70</sup> The terminology of “the ecological self” is attributed to Arne Naess, 1995; the experience of which is subjective and difficult to define. See the end of my point 3 under the subheading “research question one” in the following pages for Naess’ insights.

## Summary of conclusions

This final assembling of findings is based on the literature and my research as well as on my own growing awareness through the course of living my life alongside the process of writing this thesis. It represents a combination of the published ideas and reported experiences of others, my interpretation of their ideas and experiences, and my own ideas and experiences.

### Research Question One: What is the relationship between justice and sustainability?

1. Fraser's (2001) definition of justice as redistribution plus recognition, bridged by parity of participation, is useful because it does not fall into the trap of choosing between redistribution and recognition, and it recognises both the substantive and the process-based aspects of justice. In their early efforts to make sense of sustainability, Brundtland and her WCED Commissioners drew an unequivocal connection between sustainability and *distributive* justice, both intragenerational and intergenerational (1987). Since then, the environmental justice movement has brought attention to the relationship between *recognition* of the rights and interests of marginalized people and the importance of enabling their *participation* in the interests of both social sustainability and socio-ecological sustainability. Not only is socio-ecological unsustainability unjust (in its heavier and compounding impact on the poor and those pushed to the social margins) but injustice creates social unsustainability. This thesis has established a tight web of relationships between justice and both forms of sustainability: social and socio-ecological. What does this look like in South Africa specifically?
2. The literature shows that most black South Africans continue to suffer the effects of unjust distribution of resources and opportunities, including access to and ownership of natural resources; especially land. On the one hand, this suggests that any group seeking to address seemingly intractable issues of access to water, waste, sanitation, energy, schools, health care, and safety without making reference to future 'sustainability' would grapple with the

stark divide between the middle-class and poor. Given that the poor are predominantly black, the issue of race will stump attempts to work with questions of building sustainable futures. But there is more to the disparity than this. I hypothesised that while this colonial and apartheid legacy persists but is not urgently engaged with and addressed at all levels of our society, levels of anger and frustration will mount and threaten the social sustainability of South Africa. Moreover, that growing exasperation with un-addressed racial injustice will obstruct attempts to engage with issues of socio-ecological sustainability, particularly where these are initiated by white middle class South Africans who fail to demonstrate awareness of their relative privilege. And that this frustration will be exacerbated if their discourse is about reducing consumerism and carbon footprints. The empirical study demonstrated that, given the choice, two inter-racial groups in South Africa<sup>71</sup> chose to talk about race at almost every given opportunity. This suggests that, when such choices are not given, unspoken and unresolved issues of race may sit in the background of other interactions in South Africa, creating misunderstandings, obstructions, and conflicts that may otherwise be hard to understand and resolve. Following from this, facilitators will serve groups' needs if they are skilled at working with both race and sustainability issues and in framing the relationship between social justice (racial injustice as well as class and gender injustice and the intersections between them) and sustainability so that groups can engage meaningfully with these links and make choices about how to work with this complex interplay, towards social change.

3. Alongside the learning from the literature and my research, I have become more aware of the false dichotomy between the natural and social worlds and, following from this, of the risks of perpetuating the illusion that social injustice and ecological injustice are not only entirely separate but compete for attention, action and money. Getting entangled in debates about which is more important and more urgent is a hazardous waste of time and resources. Acknowledging the interdependent relationship between social justice, social sustainability and socio-ecological sustainability is clearest to me when I perceive a continuum between ecology and society. At one end is nature on its own terms. This is the

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<sup>71</sup> Both of these groups were predominantly middle class. If poorer South Africans had been present, the confluence of race and class is likely, I suggest, to have been more visible

ecocentric perspective. At the other end is society on its own terms, with awareness of how humans treat each other; more or less justly, which impacts on social sustainability. Where ecology and society meet somewhere in-between is where the challenge of socio-ecological sustainability arises. How humans treat each other and how we treat nature are part of the same continuum. Arne Naess' description of the ecological self (1995) provides this bridge. He is credited with having said that "the ecological self is that with which we identify ... so there must be identification in order for there to be compassion [for sentient beings] and, among humans, solidarity."<sup>72</sup> Eco-feminist Karen Warren (1996:262) writes that this "relational self ... provides an appropriate notion of self that can serve as a foundation for an ethic of connectedness, appropriate reciprocity or justice-as-care..."

4. If, as Sen (2009), Tillich (1960), Fraser (2001) and others argue, justice is realised through social processes, dialogue is a core human competency. While not all dialogues require facilitation – for example, Bohm (1991) argued that facilitators were only useful in the initial stages of a long-term dialogue process - the empirical work in this thesis indicated the difficulties of un-facilitated dialogue. This ushers in the role of facilitation and the question of the orientation of a facilitator to justice.

### **Research Question Two: Is the capacity to balance “love” and “power” sufficient to generate change in social systems?**

1. The conclusions above indicate that the dilemmas of distribution, recognition and parity of participation, and their impact on both social and socio-ecological sustainability are likely to be present – whether in the foreground or the background – in most social change processes in South Africa. This suggests that facilitating social change with awareness of power and love but without awareness of justice risks inadvertently re-inscribing injustice. Just as love redeems degenerative power and power redeems degenerative love, the dance between power and love portrayed by Kahane (2010) can itself become degenerative if it

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<sup>72</sup> Source: Ecopsychology course notes: July 2011, Schumacher College.

falls into ever-tighter circles. Following the work of Tillich and King, justice can redeem degenerative love-and-power. Stories from the PW1 and whiteness groups suggested that justice can play this redemptive role by bringing in realities, concerns and possibilities that are beyond and more than the (potentially) narrowing focus of love and power in the group itself. Justice can more than redeem; it can enable the realization of power and love in relationship with one another and “at their best”. To quote King (1968:77) again: “It will be power infused with love and justice, that will change dark yesterday’s into bright tomorrows and lift us from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope”.

2. What does this look like in practice, from the perspective of group facilitation? Stephen Schuitevoerder, speaking from this facilitation role, suggested that justice is the “true emergence of that which has been oppressed and the resurfacing of it and the interaction with it to enrich that which has been oppressed, but also the whole”<sup>73</sup> I understand him to be saying that justice is being facilitated when those who have been silenced reclaim their voices and are heard, and when those who did the silencing (actively or through tacit acceptance of a status quo that benefited them) are able to interact with that reclaimed voice to the advantage of both the silenced and the silencers and, ultimately, the whole system. What this implies for facilitation is to enable (literally, make easier) such opportunities. Stephen Schuitevoerder suggests that facilitators should be wary of pre-empting or rushing the arrival of issues of injustice in a group because they have their own pace and logic. If facilitators become proponents of an issue, their agenda not only alienates and aggravates those with alternative views, but may cause risk to those who are personally and negatively affected by that issue. Self-awareness and timing are therefore vital. At the right time, it may be possible to amplify and support silenced voices through a conscious “bridging” role while framing the benefits of change to those who do the silencing.
3. The prevalence of the prefix “re-” in the language employed in these conclusions (redistribute, recognise, redeem, reclaim) suggests that facilitation oriented to justice is also aware of time: past, present and future. If what is past (and, perhaps, continuing) constitutes injustice, *resolution* or *redress* may be an important part of the social changes

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<sup>73</sup> Interview 2: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011

navigated towards a different future. Both justice and sustainability point towards the future, or as the King quote that concludes point 2 above puts it, “bright tomorrows”.

**Research Question Three: What are the implications of an orientation to social justice for the principle of facilitator neutrality?**

1. The literature suggests that facilitator neutrality is compromised by attachment to “personal opinion, preferences and favoured outcomes” (Lewis, 2008:81). What the South African literature fails to attend to, is that many facilitators working in this context enjoy relative privilege with regard to class, education level and, often, race and therefore run the risk of losing neutrality due to blindness inherent in unconscious privilege (as discussed in Chapter Four). But is neutrality always desirable? Lewis makes the important point that a core facilitation skill is to remain open and available to hear all the voices, especially those that would not otherwise easily be heard. However, neutrality might resemble Kahane’s description of degenerative love if a facilitator enables groups to hear, endlessly, all the voices without generating a clear sense of purpose or movement from listening, to awareness, and to action.
2. The experience of being in the PW1 group and the interview material from others in that group leads me to suggest that there is a difference between “giving the other points of view full attention” and “setting aside” one’s own hope of what is possible for this group (Lewis, *ibid*). Stephen Schuitevoerder’s use of himself was seen as a contributing factor to change. More specifically, positive comments on his facilitation by members of the group (a white man and a black woman respectively) that “he was very much with us in the journey” and that “he relentlessly stuck to the race issue and wouldn’t let it go” indicate that he was not perceived as neutral in the conventional sense, and that this was appreciated. Following this, I propose that a facilitator can be deeply attuned to what is happening, and hold – in a way that does not interfere with what is happening – a sense of what could be, which is perhaps more just. Practicing this approach means navigating the inherent paradox between what is and what could be, between being with the group in their current reality,

and seeing the potential for change. Sen's (2009) understanding of justice as neither objective nor universal but as the contrast, in a specific time and place, between what is and what could have been, underscores what this practice might look like.

3. At the other end of the spectrum to facilitator neutrality is facilitator activism. This can resemble King's description of degenerative power as "reckless and abusive" (1968:43) where the facilitator is so fixed to a particular outcome that they lose human compassion and empathy, and, in the name of justice, perhaps perpetuate more injustice. In this process, as the facilitator over-identifies with one part of the system, they risk relinquishing their capacity to see and support the whole system. A facilitator who tries to carry a sense of what *could be* will do well to practice impeccable self awareness so that this sense of hope does not harden into an agenda. Even then, an indicator of a successful group is that it grows to a point where it challenges the facilitator and seeks to do things differently and more independently. This suggests that while a facilitator holds a vision for the potential of a group, they know that the time will come when the group will push back against them and, recognising that this is an important part of any group's maturation, will be able to let go. As Stephen said: "*You invest a lot, but it's never yours so you have to let it go.*"
  
4. Based on my subjective experiences of groups, the empirical material and my insights from five hours on Dartmoor, I propose that what lies between facilitator neutrality and facilitator activism is facilitator presence. Presence has two meanings, both of which are relevant here: presence as the opposite of absence (both literal and figurative absence) and presence as a quality of the "interior condition" of a facilitator of social change (O'Brien, cited in Scharmer, 2009:27). Presence goes beyond technical facilitation skills or knowledge of particular methods suggesting instead that there is "an inner place [which is] the source and quality of their attention" (Scharmer, *ibid*). Presence in a facilitator can act as an attractor to change, inspiring people in social systems to take risks by trying something new. I suggest that presence involves being present to the group process, being present to one's own privilege, being present to the systemic injustices in the context in which the social system is located, and being present to nature. This last aspect is relevant to the question of how to cultivate presence. Different facilitators would recommend a wide range of

practices. I have become aware of the resourcefulness inherent in “the ecological self”. Experiencing nature on its own terms and being free to slow down enough to appreciate natural beauty not only nurtures and sustains, but has the potential to temper the potential to hold an orientation to justice too tightly. Tuning into the rhythm of the natural world can remind facilitators who tend towards activism (as I do) to let go of some of the seriousness and self-righteousness, easing into a more playful frame of mind that is nevertheless conscious, attuned and present.

## **Implications for facilitation practice**

The conclusions reached above hold numerous implications for facilitators of social systems, working towards change in contexts of injustice. Several are relevant to good practice, generally, but I have selected just two implications that have made the deepest impression on me in the process of working on this thesis. The first relates to the social system, while the second relates to the facilitator. They are: the composition of the group and the self-cultivation of the facilitator. Both will be considered briefly below, on the basis that this is a pulling-together of ideas already surfaced.

### **Composition of the group**

Composition includes, among other aspects, the size of the group, how heterogeneous or homogenous its membership, and the balance of different experiences and attitudes (described as “voices”) relevant to the issues that the group will engage with. The challenge inherent in group composition is that while these aspects can have a significant influence on what unfolds in the group, and how it unfolds - particularly when the facilitator favours emergence over rigid adherence to a design - facilitators often have little control over who comes. When working with social change issues in unbounded social systems (i.e. not organisations), the common approach is to widely extend an invitation to join a social process, and see who is interested.

In contexts of injustice, group composition is critical to hearing a diversity of voices and supporting those voices that are usually silent, silenced or simply not attended to.

Three key questions arise with regard to the composition of groups. Firstly, how directive to be in composing a group. Secondly, how to ensure that those who are marginalized (in relation to the issues to be engaged with) are able to access the group and are not inhibited by costs, education level, language, fear or any of the other factors that might get in the way of their inclusion; and, thirdly, how to include nature's "voice" so that questions of the relationship between social and natural systems are also present and available to be interwoven into any other topic of conversation in the group.

The proposed design at the end of this chapter will take each of these into account.

### **Self – cultivation of the facilitator**

Self-cultivation refers to the skilful use of self, including presence, and skilful use of facilitation methods and tools. While training in, and exposure to, a wide range of methods and tools are an essential part of a facilitator's self cultivation, the more interesting aspect is their use of themselves and their presence. Whether a facilitator has technical skills or not, whether they are charismatic or not, members of a group will quickly recognize whether a facilitator has sufficiently deep internal resources to be able to work with the unexpected and unplanned in groups. I propose that this internal resource is a matter of lifelong self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is likely to be a combination of enriching one's learning-through-experience (praxis), enriching one's understanding of one's self (especially one's blind spots), and the ability to create spaciousness (through meditation, or time in nature, or other supportive practices) so that the facilitating self is best able to catch those moments when they are blind, or when the group is blind, or when justice is knocking at the door, and enable the group to realise the opportunities these offer for change.

## **Application: Outline of a new module at the Sustainability Institute**

The Sustainability Institute (in their joint venture with Stellenbosch University) has invited me to submit an outline for a new module to be offered either as an elective module for their Post-graduate Diploma in Sustainable Development Planning and Management<sup>74</sup>, or as one of two compulsory modules attached to the Masters Programme (MPhil) in Sustainable Development Planning and Management. Recognising the importance of facilitated dialogue in creating sustainable futures, the Sustainability Institute envisages a six-day-long module that would equip students with skills to be part of, and to enable, skilful conversations about critical issues. The draft outline below includes a rationale, module aims, learning outcomes, and a proposed syllabus (combining community work, learning journeys, classroom work and small group work) and will be presented to the Sustainability Institute in October 2011. This represents an opportunity to utilise the theoretical framework developed in this thesis while broadening the pool of people able to contribute dexterously to social engagement on matters of sustainability and justice. The working title of the module is Sustainable Conversations.

### **Rationale and design overview**

The rationale for the module is that South Africa<sup>75</sup> faces challenges of unsustainability while struggling to address a legacy of racial injustice. Given that there are few easy answers, one of the most important resources at our disposal is skilful conversation with one another. This highlights the value of increasing the number of people who may not be full-time facilitators, or even think of themselves as facilitators, but who have some basic skills, some knowledge of different facilitation methods and tools, an appreciation of dialogue as a resource to change, and a willingness to take up a facilitation role – often informally – to enable these conversations to move forward, especially when they appear to be stuck.

This design includes time in nature (which may inspire and nurture, at times, and be challenging at other times), time in dialogue (including both affirming and challenging encounters with one

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<sup>74</sup> The Post graduate Diploma course will replace the current BPhil in Sustainable Development Planning and Management, as required by the national policy 'Higher Education Qualification Framework' of 2007.

<sup>75</sup> The Sustainability Institute also attracts students from Southern Africa. This proposal assumes that the course would be relevant to their post colonial contexts too

another), time on one's own, and exposure to some of the most difficult dilemmas we face as we navigate social change in South Africa. In order to traverse all four of these aspects, the module will be located at the Sustainability Institute, a venue with easy access to nature, include walks and time alone in nature and the time will be split between learning journeys<sup>76</sup> into the "beyond and more than", teaching (introducing ideas, case studies, facilitation methods and tools), a diverse experience of groups and learning from varied experiences of being a participant in, and facilitator of, those groups. The design will combine a planned structure (detailed below) with emergent content. The composition of the group will be determined by broader enrolment patterns at the Sustainability Institute and, if this is an elective module, a description in the prospectus that attracts a diverse group. The Institute has worked hard to establish a diverse enrolment track record, and has succeeded in attracting people of different races, ages and backgrounds, from government, business and civil society.

### **Module aims**

The module aims to build awareness, insight and skill by exposing participants to three things. Firstly, to complex and apparently intractable issues that highlight dilemmas of justice and sustainability; secondly, to experiences of participating in conversations in a range of groups - big and small, task-oriented and process-oriented, where there is a high degree of consensus and where there is strong disagreement; and thirdly, to the theory and practice of accessible methods, tools and skills for facilitating conversations in groups.

### **Learning outcomes**

Intended outcomes include increased personal insight, conceptual understanding and practical capacity. Specifically, as a result of participating in this module, students can expect to gain: 1. deeper appreciation of the challenges of social justice, social sustainability and socio-ecological sustainability South Africa faces, and the links between them; 2. deeper insight into their own relationship to these issues and their location on the spectrum of anthropocentric to ecocentric thinking about these issues; 3. deeper insight into their own behaviour as participants in groups;

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<sup>76</sup> A learning journey is an opportunity to observe a system (usually an organisation or project) which is outside of one's own usual reality but which casts fresh light on one's own situation, systems and realities.

4. deeper understanding of the theory of group process and of group dialogue; and 5. greater capacity to facilitate group dialogue, both process- and task-oriented.

### **Core texts**

Texts for a course reader will be sourced from the bibliography of this thesis and will include readings on sustainability, justice, race, dialogue and group facilitation. Core texts will include Bojer, M., Roehl, H., Knuth, M. and Magner, C. 2008. *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*; and Smit, H. 2009. *The Depth Facilitator's Handbook: Transforming Group Dynamics*, as well as chapters from the work of Freire (1996), Bohm (in Edwards, 1989); Kahane (2010); Cock (2008); Fraser (2001) and Shiva (2005).

### **Syllabus**

The Sustainable Conversations module will follow the usual structure of the academic week at the Sustainability Institute, comprising morning community work, classroom work and afternoon group work towards group presentations on Saturday. To this will be added two learning journeys which will be undertaken in the same small study groups. Learning journeys are visits to relevant sites, designed to help the “visitors” see afresh the systems they’re enmeshed in.

The module will focus on experiential learning. While a detailed programme will be designed and circulated to students, daily themes will, to a large extent, take their cue from students’ reflection of their community experiences at the Lynedoch campus, on learning journeys, in their small groups and in the classroom.

Students will be assessed through the usual means: a class test, their participation, a journal, a group presentation and a written assignment.

Each component is detailed below:

### *Morning community work*

Participants will work in small groups for one hour (Tuesday – Friday) rotating between the farming, gardening, cleaning and cooking tasks.

### *Learning journeys*

Each student will have the opportunity to visit, in small groups, two sites that represent complex social justice and socio-ecological sustainability issues within a 15km radius of the Sustainability Institute. Examples include: Women on Farms Project, Scientists at Cape Nature at Jonkerhoek Nature Reserve, the local landfill site, Catholic Welfare and Development in Khayelitsha and Abalimi Bezekhaya in Khayelitsha. There is a robust methodological framework for undertaking learning journeys, which includes journaling beforehand to become conscious of underlying assumptions, travelling to and from the site in silence and debriefing afterwards. The experience will provide case study material for debriefing and discussing in these same small groups during the afternoon session following each visit.

### *Classroom work*

Theoretical input will be limited. The lecturers will offer a short introduction to the theory of dialogue and a theoretical rationale for the module. Students will be acquainted with different ideas of social change as adaptation, emergence or development. Thereafter, any theoretical input will be shaped by the emerging needs of the group. However, the emphasis will be on experiential learning and the bulk of classroom time will be spent as participants of group dialogues facilitated by the lecturers. The purpose will be to expose students to different methods and tools while enabling them to engage in dialogue with each other about critical issues of sustainability and justice and their interconnectedness. Methods and tools will include: Deep Democracy, Circle Dialogue, Open Space Technology and World Café (Bojer et al,

2008). Weather permitting, there will be a guided nature walk, followed by time alone in nature, instead of a classroom-based session on the fourth day.

### *Small group work*

The small groups will be formed on the first morning, prior to the initial learning journey and will meet each afternoon for two hours. Each member will have an opportunity to facilitate their group session, to reflect on that experience and receive feedback from others in the group. The five afternoon sessions will include two learning journey debriefs and discussions about the issues surfaced from the learning journeys, two discussions on case studies proposed by the lecturers that combine socio-ecological sustainability with social justice challenges (e.g. mixed income housing, climate change adaptations, land redistribution) and a final afternoon of group preparation for the presentations the following day.

### *Class test*

Students will be required to submit a summary and critique of a text from the course reader to support their engagement with theoretical aspects in parallel with the experiential nature of the module.

### *Group Presentation*

Each group will make a presentation that tracks its own dynamics, patterns and themes during the week, and relating these to the relevant literature. They will reflect on their individual and collective learning and experiences of change, based on participating in and facilitating their group, paying particular attention to where the group process flowed and where it got stuck and venturing suggestions about why.

### *Written Assignment*

Following the usual structure, each assignment will consist of three parts: a literature review, a case study and a journal. For the case study, students will be required to convene and facilitate a conversation (in their work constituency or among colleagues, friends, or family) after completing the module and to write up this experience. Each case study will include the contents of the conversation, the process and reflections on facilitation methods, skills and roles as well as learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The contents and conclusions of this thesis could be conceptualised as a widening exercise. This research has widened the conventional idea of social justice to encompass social and socio-ecological sustainability and, conversely, the idea of sustainability to encompass justice. It has widened the remit of a facilitator to extend beyond love and power, to an orientation towards justice. And it has loosened some constrictions around the idea of facilitator neutrality to enable a wider expression of that role. These several layers of widening would be misunderstood if they were seen to imply a lax approach to the theory and practice of facilitation, a careless spilling across boundaries necessary to the integrity of this work. Alongside the widening is a deepening, which implies rootedness. Presence is an embodiment of rootedness. A facilitation practice that is both wide and rooted in the ways suggested in this thesis can, I suggest, enable social systems to navigate social change in contexts of injustice in a manner that is both rigorous and expansive.

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## **ANNEXURE A: CONSENT FORM**

### **Consent for interview to be used as material towards MPhil thesis on social change**

I, ..... consent to Rebecca Freeth drawing on the material produced by her interview with me for the purpose of her MPhil thesis in Sustainable Development Management and Planning at Stellenbosch University.

I understand that I have a right not to answer any questions or to end this interview at any stage.

I further understand that:

1. My identity will be protected in any case study material written up for the purpose of Rebecca's thesis, as follows: I will be identified by my race, gender and age group - as I choose to define these. If I would like to be tracked across the lifespan of the group, I have the option of assigning myself a name;
2. If there is anything in the Process Work / whiteness group that I was personally part of that I do not want written about, or attributed to me, I can discuss this with Rebecca, who will remove such details or attributions;
3. I will receive a copy of the transcript of this interview so that I can check it for accuracy and / or add to my responses; and
4. Rebecca will substantiate the interview data with her own, subjective experience of being in the Process Work / whiteness group and with relevant theory. She takes full responsibility for her analysis of these various sources of data.

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....