



## The New Freedom Fighters of South Africa

Hip hop artists searching for interpretations and solutions in a changing society

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Image on the cover: Jovi (Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness), Jungle (Deep Soweto) and Cyrus (Dungeon Shack) in front of a mixture of picture of the township Soweto and the city, symbolizing the controversies and contrasts in the lives of many young Sowetans.

“We want this uhuru, we want our freedom  
We were liberated from white power  
But do not be misled: the struggle goes on  
A greater war is ahead of us  
The war of consciousness  
From black white to yellow  
A consciousness of the soul  
With dedication we will succeed  
Our spirits will sort to unlimited hight

But my words  
Some might misunderstand  
They think its only black consciousness  
But look deeper  
Than my skin color  
I am a conscious young woman  
Who wants uhuru (freedom)  
Me and my Bantu people  
We leading this revolution of emancipation  
We living the truth and never compromising

This is for my men, my woman and my child”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These are the lyrics to the track ‘Men, Woman and Child’ by Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness (track number 3 at the CD).

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## Preface

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“This moment. Feels so good. This moment is mine. The skyline of Jozi (Johannesburg). Just above the wing. Three sunbeams shine through the clouds exactly on the television tower. The skyline of Jozi. Jozi again. The plane turns. I expect it to descend, but it seems especially for me, it goes up just a little, takes a turn south-west. There, this view is for me, it tells me I am back. The two towers and the rows and rows of colorful houses. Little sheds in the garden a villa now and then. A bright orange light seems to shine back from the ground. Straight into my heart. Soweto again. The plane turns towards the east. And passes huge white roofs, many small blue squares in the very green large gardens before it turns to land.”

Soweto again. Doing a three month research on music in Soweto was a dream that came true. I had met Soweto briefly a year before, during a short research on creative initiatives in the township for the organization Music Mayday South Africa. Our few meetings were enough to attract me enormously, to poison me and draw me into his arms. My colleague said to me: ‘what is it with you and Soweto, you have been there more often in your first week in South Africa than I have been there all my life and it is ugly’. Soweto has fights, drugs, unemployment, poverty, litter, guns, diseases, Aids, shacks, inequality. But so much more if you take the effort to go there: music, fashion, parties, spinning cars, togetherness, *gezelligheid*. It is a place like anywhere else in the world, where its people are faced with daily struggles and where the youth has wild dreams and aspirations like youth anywhere else.

She surprised me: how can you live for 25 years in a city and not have seen the township? I understood, Soweto is a world on its own within South Africa with its very own characteristics. Viewed from the outside as the place of crime and sometimes of Mandela and 2010. But that is not the characteristic of Soweto that attracted me. Its seductiveness is its people. Not the one or the two that finished their long walk to freedom, but the many people. They are the heart of Soweto: proud, creative, independent, stubborn. Full of passion, belief, wisdom and most of all creativity.

That brief research did not give me any answers. It only gave me questions and admiration for the perseverance and inventiveness of the young people of Soweto. They might be poor in economic capital but are rich in social networks and in finding solutions. They are initiative takers, creating opportunities to realize dreams, building on the road towards improvement, equality.

I wanted to know more about these youngsters and I wanted to learn from them. It was a dream to come true to do research on these creative initiatives in Soweto. And it has been beautiful, those three months. The people I met, the people I got to know better, they inspired me in persevering, in believing in myself, in humanness and in viewing the world from a different angle. Most of all they inspired me to be strong. It is these youngsters that are taking upon their shoulders the tough task to build the road for their communities and the many people that are still walking, towards freedom.

And then I came back. I missed the take off and landing of my flight, because I was so exhausted of all the lessons learned, all the information gathered, all the impressions and at the same time heart broken to leave Soweto and its people. I slept. If I would have known the length and the toughness of the journey that was ahead of me in writing my thesis, I probably would not have slept so nice.

It was a tough, heavy and long journey. Of over 100 books and articles, and I believe over 500 pages written. I landed that day, but I did not really land. My supervisor explained to me I had landed physically but yet had to land emotionally to be able to take a distance from Soweto and my fieldwork that is needed to write critically. I am not sure if I have ever landed completely. Half of my heart really is in Soweto and will be there for some more time I believe.

I went back a year after my fieldwork. And I collaborated with one of the bands of my main informants on a tour through Europe. I have spend much more time with my informants after my fieldwork. I believe I needed that to be able to complete this journey. At the same time there are still many questions open and there is still so much that I do not know about them and feel I have to know to write about them.

Therefore I want to emphasize that this thesis is written through my eyes. It is an analysis by me about my informants. All these papers are my writings, my words. I have used

the words and lyrics of my informants, but I made the selection. I believe I did take a step back from my field and my informants. And that I have come a long way from my first writings to what my thesis ended up to be. But really academic, I am not and will never be just as Anthropology can never be. Also, I did not write this thesis to complement to academic theories, nor for the sole function of getting my grades. My aim with this thesis is to shed another light on Soweto than on Mandela and 2010, to shed a light on the many people, especially on the young proud independent artists: their creative solutions to heavy daily struggles and their dedication and humanness in leading the many people to a better future: to freedom. I dedicate this thesis to the New Freedom Fighters of Soweto.

From the bottom of my heart I want to thank my sources of inspiration, my supporters, my coaches without whom I really would not have finished this almost never ending journey:

I want to thank the rappers and the audiences in Soweto at the Sunday sessions for hosting me, accepting me, letting me in into their crazy little world. I thank Dvd, Moses, Shugasmackx, Dome, F Eezy, Qba, DJ Zakes, Lee, Osmic, Sanza, Trevor, Devious D, D Boy, Dark Spark, Juvenile, 985, PO, Danger, Vikindiku, Streetpop (Professor, Zothani, Wandile – may he rest in peace), Neon, Enzo, T’do, Exit, Siphon and all others for their time and openness in the interviews.

Deep Soweto, thank you guys for the welcome and warm feeling you gave me. I enjoyed, loved, never will forget the days chillin’ at Jabulani Flats. Keep on pushing, keep on believing, keep united. You made me feel safe at all the sessions, made me feel comfortable and made sure that I would always get home safe. You had my back, have my back and that feeling is worth so much. Thank you Salas. And thank you Thula, accompanying me to the sessions and giving me the space I needed to do my research.

Cyrus, thanks for picking me up at the white church many times, when I still could not find the way to Dungeon Shack and to your house myself. You have been so patiently, so friendly, so open. I always feel I wish I could do more for you and your business. Keep on hustling Cyrus, do not give up, do not give in. This hard, tough, rough, road will lead to a better future.



BCUC, thank you so. I was never alone in Soweto and will never be. Kgomotso, Hloni, Luja and Jovi, you feel like my family. Kgomotso, you were there for me ever since I smashed that beautiful turquoise Mazda. From that moment on I knew, we will always be together. The nights out dancing until the sun comes up, the chants and chills in Tex' garden, the days in the swimming pool, playing snooker at Ipelegeng, bumping hip hop in the rental cars. So so so many amazing memories. I can not thank you enough for letting me in, for being together, for your faith in me, your patience, your understanding, your openness. I feel more me, worry not about the wrong things and enjoy all the little things so much more when I am close to you. I thank you for that from the bottom, bottom, bottom of my heart.

I thank my colleague-student Janske, whose amazing perseverance to work towards the finish of her thesis kept me going and gave me the feeling that I am not alone. Thanks Jans, for the coffees together, the lunches in Bushuis, spotting mice. I wish you so much strength in finishing yours.

I thank my sister and my brother Marloes and Tim and my very dear friend Annelies for their help to straighten up my '*kromme zinnen*' and to keep coaching me.

My supervisor Thomas Blom Hansen for his enormous patience and for giving exactly the small directions that I needed to find the way myself.

*Mama en papa voor hun enorme betrokkenheid en constante ondersteuning met alles wat ik doe, ook al lijken mijn beslissingen in hun ogen soms impulsief en risicovol. Jullie zijn mijn absolute basis, mijn fundament waardoor ik sterk kan zijn en kan zijn wie ik ben. Dank jullie wel vanuit de grond van mijn hart. En voor de telefoontjes iedere dag in mijn kluizenaarsweek.*

Jovi, you make me more me. You inspire me and strengthen me. This journey of completing my thesis would have been so much harder, longer, tougher and more meaningless without your coaching. Our talks on the phone about my thesis always made me see the puzzle coming together. I frustrated you. But still you took the effort to help me out. You brought me back to me. A journininini is finished now. Not for my grades, but for a bigger mission. Thanks for your patience and for the many beautiful memories. The future is bright.

It was a tough journey, but full of sweet memories. I am happy to have finished this or this part of it, because I know, hope and believe there are many more journeys for me to work on, for me and the people of beautiful Soweto.

**“If you would ask me what is the greatest thing in the world,**

**my answer would be:**

**It is people, it is people, it is people”**

## Glossary

Alutha	Struggle
BCUC	Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness: 'a band but above all a human movement consisting of four unique individuals combined to greater power' <sup>2</sup>
Cipher	a circle formed by hip hoppers in which rappers free style, flow rhymes, reacting on each others rhymes
Dagga	another word for weed
DJ	disc jockey
Deep Soweto	a movement consisting of approximately 30 young creative artists from Soweto collectively pushing the company Deep Soweto and the revolution
Dungeon Shack	a group of friends from Meadowlands Soweto who collectively organize rocking events on Friday nights and second Sundays of the month to give a platform for local talent and instill the youngsters with knowledge
EP	'Extended Play': used by the artists for a short version of an album on a CD
Ganja	another word for weed
Mix tape	compilation of songs of different recordings on a CD
Pantsula	another word for gangster fashionists
Punch line	the final sentence of a joke
Sunday Sessions	weekly gatherings of hundreds of hip hoppers in Soweto, held at the friendly hijacked public spaces; also viable markets where artistic products and perspectives on society are exchanged
Tsotsi	another word for gangster
Ubuntu	taking care of each other, based on reciprocity and humanness
Uhuru	freedom

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<sup>2</sup> See biography BCUC on their myspace ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))

## Introduction

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Every Sunday a specific street corner is the witness of the gathering of hundreds of baggy jeans, raw beats, pit bulls, big beer bottles, rhythms of a drum, punch lines, cookies and dagga, boos and wows, mix tapes, rap crews and ciphers, sprayed sneakers, afro-hairdos, spinning cars, dance moves and rap talent. The black youth of Soweto friendly hijack public places, tap electricity from the neighbors to plug the sound, clear the garbage dump to make space for a stage on which battles over rhymes, beats and styles are fought.

These so called Sunday Sessions<sup>3</sup> are the sites where merchandising and EPs, but also social meanings, identities and perspectives are exchanged between the hip hop artists and the audience. Little crazy worlds, where specific rules apply, communicated in the tiniest things like unclean shoes and one tight jean. Of these little crazy worlds, I try to make sense in this thesis.

These little crazy worlds are situated within an even more crazy world, full of changes, insecurities, problems, expectancies and opportunities that present changes of globalization, individualization, consumerism, economic empowerment; past heritages of racial inequality, hero-ized political leaders and the icon of revolution; and aspirations for the future bring. The Sunday Sessions are the space for the black youth in Soweto to locate themselves in, make sense of and change this crazy world around them, through the framework of hip hop.

Throughout this thesis I emphasize on the production of the popular cultural form hip hop in Soweto as the site of the formation of identities, interpretations and creative solutions. More than the reflection of the crazy surrounding world, I view popular culture as a site for social and political struggle. As Hall (1981) points out:

“Popular culture is one of the sites where the struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged; it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where the hegemony arises and where it is secured” (239).

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<sup>3</sup> See for an introduction to the Sunday Sessions: playlist introduction, video 1.

The sites of popular culture provide means, instruments, weapons by which the social space of society can be negotiated and transformed. Not mainly is the area of popular culture significant because it forms a site for identity formation, but especially because they constitute the space for constructing consciousness, social categories, histories, social and political perspectives and for maintaining and contesting social relations of inequality (Mahon 2000: 474). In short, the site of popular culture that sometimes is regarded as unimportant and low culture, it can be a significant area of social and political activism.

Not only the music produced, or not mainly the music that is produced, but the looks, appearances, style around it are the weapons in this activism. As Rose (1994) explains, style is an integral part of the life of the youth and as much as about fun, about resistance:

“developing a style that nobody can deal with – a style that can not be easily understood or erased, a style that has the reflexivity to create counter dominant narratives against a mobile and shifting enemy as the most effective ways to fortify communities of resistance and to reserve the right to communal pleasure”. (223)

My main question that I put central in this thesis is: **How do hip hop artists search for interpretations and solutions in the changing society of Soweto, South Africa, through their artistic production?**

I situate the practices of production of the artists in their social context, characterized by the common heritages of the past, problems of the present and aspirations of the future; conditions of material constraints and opportunities; cultural frameworks and tensions between economic and aesthetic goals. My thesis therefore shows how global and local processes converge with individual struggles to reshape social life by the use of the cultural forms.

Besides answering my main question, it is my aim with this thesis to show admiration to the creative inventions of the artists, of the people of Soweto to walk together towards a future of freedom.

## **Research methods**

To answer my research question, I conducted field research for the duration of twelve weeks in the period between the beginning of December 2007 and the end of March 2008. I used mostly the anthropological qualitative research methods of interviews, participating observation and informal conversations, completed with secondary material like magazines, music and video material.

### *Interviews*

In total I have conducted approximately 40 interviews with 6 persons. Most of them were artists from Soweto, but I also interviewed record company owners, event organizers, radio DJs, producers, artist managers and music shop owners. It was easy to get in touch with most of my informants. The regular events gave me the opportunity to meet many artists and set up interviews. Through the snowball effect one informant often connected me to many more.

My work and weeks were structured. On Monday I would take the morning to reflect on my collected data so far and plan the rest of the week. I walked to the garage to buy air time and use the afternoon to make appointments for the rest of the week: one interview a day, five a week. In the mornings I interviewed, and in the afternoons I took the time to work them out and elaborate on my notes, thoughts and feelings about the interviews.

The interviews mostly took place at the residence of the informants. In that way I could situate my informants better in their livelihoods and sometimes meet the important people around them. The interviews were characterized by easiness and openness, questions towards me about the music scene in the Netherlands and music on the background. An atmosphere of informality I noticed opened up the space for my informant to answer and elaborate on whatever he found important and made me more comfortable to ask all the questions that might seem 'stupid' questions in the eyes of my informants (like asking what an EP, and asking for the third time what the revolution is really about). That atmosphere of informality I strengthened by not using my recorder and working from a topic list in my head instead of structured questions on paper.

At a certain point I felt that instead of interviewing as many artists as I could about their enrolment and thoughts about Soweto's hip hop scene, I needed focus on conducting in-

depth interviews. In those interviews I used methods as life stories and event analysis to get a view on the trajectories and decisions in their musical careers.

### *Informal conversations and participant observations*

Most of my data I believe I received not from interviews, but through informal conversations. At a certain point I felt that holding interviews with certain informants did not give me much more information. Instead just through 'hanging out' and spending the day together in the company of the other members of the movements, gave interesting and important data on the group dynamics and relations. Partly because of my conscious decision and partly because we got along so well, I mostly 'hung out' with the guys from Deep Soweto, Cyrus and Dungeon Shack and the guys and girl from BCUC. Those days together jamming at Mapetla, recording at Mofolo, taking the train to Naledi, listening to music at Ipelegeng, watching movies in Jabulani where my most important days of researching through informal conversations and participant observation.

The Sunday Sessions, the Friday nights at Meadowlands, Dungeon Shack and the Backyard Sessions at White City were important opportunities to grasp the interaction between the audiences and the artists and the artists among each other. I often felt at those events that I should have had more eyes and ears. Besides watching, listening, talking and feeling I took film footage and pictures to be analyzed. The regular events made sure that I met up with most of my informants every week, which was important in the follow up of interviews.

### *Secondary research material*

The hip hop magazine Hype was an important source of information. Even though most of my informants were not named or written about, it gave me an insight on the subjects that played a role in the field of hip hop, like the tension between the economic and artistic goal of making music, about the discussions and debates about the artists who 'made it', and on the scene of the South African music industry.

The only access to radio and television I had when I was in a taxi or on a break out of Soweto. Fortunately some of my informants recorded the broadcastings were they were part

of and could I join two of my informants to the recording studios of the hip hop program 'Shiznizz'. I do not believe this has hold back important information, for most of my informants were not part of the broadcastings.

I gathered a tower of CDs in my room consisting of recordings of my informants. At the Sessions I collected many EPs and mix tapes of the hip hop artists. That tower is an important source of information of musical lyrics. I spend long afternoons with Jovi behind my computer to listen, rewind and translate word for word the raps of Deep Soweto, BCUC, F Eezy and many more.

The documentary that two young Dutch filmmakers made about the Sunday Sessions in November 2007, has inspired me and helped me to present and to communicate the feeling of the Sunday Sessions.

#### **My position in the field<sup>4</sup>**

'You don't know what it is like to live here', Jovi said. He explained how I do not know. How I do not know what it is like to not eat a whole day. How I don not know how it is like to only drink water, because it will fill your stomach and forgets about its emptiness. How I do not know what its like to not eat a whole day and than be expected to give an energetic and perfect performance.

I do not know what it is like to be hungry, to have no money for food and I will probably never know, never have to experience. He made me quiet, in a shock for a little moment, because I suddenly realized how different our backgrounds, how different the daily struggles that we face in our lives and how little did I know about his live, their lives, even through I had been in Soweto, hanging out with them for about a month. It made me realize that I only had yet seen a glimpse. How little did I know after many interviews and many moments together.

I was getting comfortable just a little bit, more open and a louder mouth. But I was whistled back immediately. Jovi and me were in a fight, it was late at night, we were far from his place and he wanted to leave. I wanted to drive him back in my rent-a-wrack, told him he

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<sup>4</sup> See picture 2



can not walk the streets this time of night, not here. 'Let me drive you'. How could I even think that I would know just a little, how could I even think about telling him what he can not do in Soweto.

'You're acting like you're superior. We [members of Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness (BCUC)] are different. We don't agree with being victim, being inferior. We stand above you here and you should acknowledge that. Cause if we don't like you and you're walking the streets, they will decide: she's not cool, lets take her money. You step all over the place. You step on toes. Watch out'.

Of course he got out of that car. To show me where I stand: I do not know, certainly do not have the right to tell him and I should watch out. The smallest tiniest things could always end up in fights like these. I learned during the way to turn down my direct, open, confident maybe sometimes received as arrogant 'European' way of communicating. Instead to be humble and never comfortable. Always extremely sharp in being humble and act inferior in my relation with all my informants but especially with BCUC and especially with Jovi.

'You are acting like you're superior: you are acting white. We don't want to treat you as a white person. We treat you differently from all other white persons. Because of who you are and your bond with us. But don't make us remember that you're white. You're acting white. Things have changed and you are whiter than ever. And that's not a good thing. Cause white means colonizers, slavery, oppression and knowing better'.

To be called 'white' by my informants and especially by BCUC was the worst what they could call me. White was associated with money, with arrogance, knowing better as Jovi explained even with colonizers, slavery – in short: the enemy. I tried my best to not be white. I remembered I was happy with myself and proud when someone said at one of the sessions 'you dance like a black girl!'. I was thrilled.

I stood out completely at the sessions, being white, being a girl, being not from Soweto. I took my advantage with it. Everybody at the sessions was mostly caught up in their own clan. Except Cyrus, nobody walked around at the sessions. Especially not the girls. They were incorporated in the crews. The rappers are each others enemies and everybody belongs to a certain clan. Salas to Deep Soweto, Cyrus to Dungeon Shack, Jovi to BCUC. Nobody is on his own, her own, but me. I was on my own every session, walking around like Cyrus. But

instead of doing business I hung around, chat and danced with the different crews. I went from Deep Soweto, listening in the cipher to the guys from Slaghuis, going with them to buy drinks, to Dungeon Shack discussing business. I felt I was the only one at the session legitimate to do that without losing connection with one of them. I felt that was the advantage of me being white, me being different and me being not from Soweto. The rules along which the youngsters and especially the girls were incorporated into different crews, did not work on me. The number one rule of dividing into crews is the zone. Me not being from Meadowlands, not being from Diepkloof but from Amsterdam and the only one from Amsterdam, I was indefinable. I belonged to nobody, no crew and still I was given the opportunity to mingle with all of them. I felt my own, quite free and still safe at the sessions.

I tried my best to be neutral, humble, open, myself. All the crews knew I was doing research and it was in the importance of my research that I moved between the crowd and speak to different crews. I felt to be open about my research was important to be able to move around freely at the sessions and so I made sure people knew: I always had my notebook around. It gave me the opportunity to mingle. Me being from Holland and interested in the music, gave me the advantage that nobody doing business at the sessions would pass me. I was approached by many artists, not just to exchange material, but also because I believe they regarded me as a possible connection to outside of Soweto, to overseas and to so much more: to investment, to media exposure, to international touring. It worked against me as well, as I often felt especially now afterwards that I disappointed some of the rappers of not being able to be that connection. And it has always been in my mind that they present themselves to me different of course (more cohesion, more professional) than to each other.

Of course he got out of that car. To show me he did not need my fancy transport. That I might have money, but that in no way gives me the power to say anything. I was white, so I had money I often felt was the general view. And even though that might not be true in sense, indeed my accessibility to economic capital is far bigger. I tried to work against it: come by foot or minibus instead of cars to the sessions, not wearing anything fancy, not carrying cameras.

My relation to BCUC and to Jovi was quite different than with my other informants. The four members of BCUC and especially Jovi were close friends of mine since I met them

and spend a lot of time with them the year before. My relation with them was more intense, which had its advantages and disadvantages.

Without my closeness to Jovi and BCUC I am sure that I would not have gathered half the information that I got. It gave me the opportunity to get a far more insight into the lives of the young artists in Soweto, I would never have got otherwise. He gave me insights, views, background information that was absolutely indispensable for me in my thesis. We could talk for hours, days, nights, weeks. But not only the insight information he told me, hanging out with BCUC, which often felt like not part of my research but as days off, actually gave me most important insight information on the views and relations within the band. Us being close also led to intense and fights, like the one in the car. But those fights meant a lot to me because it was in these conflicts that I really saw their views and opinions and that I learned about my position in the field.

### **My informants**

In this paragraph I introduce you to my three main informants and the three main characters in my thesis and the movements they present: Salas - leader of Deep Soweto, Cyrus – initiator of Dungeon Shack and Jovi – member of Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness.

Salas, Cyrus and Jovi are three completely different persons: in looks, in music and in views. But more than that, they have a lot in common. They are South African black young men who are born and raised and live in Soweto. Salas and Cyrus are in their mid-twenties, Jovi was 30 at the period of my fieldwork. They were born in the late seventies and early eighties, when the streets were the domain of street gangs, of hippos and enormous violence. Teenagers at the switch of regime, the inauguration of the first black president. Teenagers at the time of change, when the BEE period began. The generation that is expected to make money, to be BEE, to not focus on the struggle against apartheid, but to be part of the development of the country.

Salas, Cyrus and Jovi are not or not yet part of the economic elite. All three come from poor – in economic sense – families. They experience economic hardships and economic worries of taxi rates going up, bread getting more expensive, how to get through the week and how to get that few Rands for the bus to school for their little brothers and sisters. But

there is income. They are not the poorest of the poor. They live in houses of stone, not squatters but certainly not villa's.

The three men are living with their families – the parent generation, like most of the youngsters in Soweto. For culture reasons, because it is simply not done like it is here in Holland that when you reach the age of 18-20 you move out to stay with friends, peers or alone. And for economic reasons, they could not afford the rent of a place for themselves. The family house guarantees a shelter and food. But that advantage comes with pressure to bring in cash and contribute to the household. All three young men feel the pressure of their families to contribute to the household.

Salas, Cyrus and Jovi enjoyed basic schooling. They finished or left unfinished their matrix and did not have the chance to pursue further education as high school or university. No vocational education that leads to easy employment in the time of Black Economic Empowerment. But Salas, Cyrus and Jovi are by no means uneducated. All three followed short courses, training sessions and workshops in the arts scene – theater, music, event management. Their level of education is higher than that of many of their peers on the streets.

They are out of school now and some would say unemployed. You can say they are unemployed, but they are not without a job. They are bosses of their own, pushing their own initiatives (in collaboration with their crews) as they are trying to make a living as musicians.

They share one more important thing: they believe that Soweto is not yet free, that revolution is needed and that they are the chosen ones to lead the people of Soweto towards freedom. They agree on one important thing: that they are the new freedom fighters of South Africa. They are rich in terms of other capital: in connections, in style, in inspiration and spirituality. That is as much as Salas, Cyrus and Jovi have in common.

#### *Salas – Deep Soweto<sup>5</sup>*

Salas is the leader of the movement 'Deep Soweto'. Their 'headquarters' are not far from where I stay. One taxi, ten minutes, four rand fifty and I arrive at Jabulani flats. This is where

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<sup>5</sup> See picture 4

Salas lives as well as a few other members of Deep Soweto and where they grew up together. Salas lives with his mother and his little nephew, in an apartment at the ground floor; cozy, yellow and neat. Jabulani flats consist of seven or eight 'flats' of three floors high and sheltering 441 two and three bedroom apartments, built in the sixties. The flats are rented but the authorities of Johannesburg are putting them for sale now. The status of the flats is not very well: roofs are leaking, walls are cracked and windows broken. But it is a lively area, with laundry hanging outside, kids playing between the flats, a guy selling popcorn, sweets and cigarettes and a group of young guys 'chilling' behind the shed: Deep Soweto.

When Salas was younger, he made money through selling hot dogs at sports events. It did not make a lot of money, he explained. The salary was so low, that if he was relying on that, he could just make enough for the transportation from home and back. But he made more, in his own way. Came back from working days with a lot of cash. Salas explains that a few years ago, he made his money through carrying a gun, being involved in small criminal activities. When his friends went to jail he put away the gun, being afraid to end up his life in jail as well. He decided to take another route in 2005. Instead of pursuing his criminal activities, he initiated a musical movement: Deep Soweto.

The movement, consisting of approximately 30 members started in 2005. At that time the youngsters from Jabulani flats gathered in weekends in a club down the road. The youngsters used the club as platform to showcase their rap and boast skills and to exchange hip hop music. Salas was the one to suggest that the youngsters from Jabulani Flats bound their skills and form a crew together in order to get their rap music to a higher, more professional level and to expand the reach of their rhymes to outside of the club,

Deep Soweto's members have in common that they all in some way contribute to the pushing of the objective of Deep Soweto: music as a tool for revolution. The crew consists of rappers, graphic designers, b-boys, DJs and photographers. But also of young people who contribute with their marketing skills, network, ideas or by having a car and driving Deep Soweto around. Foremost they are involved in Deep Soweto because they are business partners contributing their resources: skills, time and network into the growth of the company: Deep Soweto.

The members are not all from Jabulani Flats, they come from all over Soweto. But Jabulani Flats is their headquarter. Where they spend their free hours – free from family duties and on the side jobs – in togetherness debating about strategies for pushing the music, debating about the past present and future of Soweto, debating about the revolution, where they share dagga and write their lyrics, battle each other in ciphers.

Salas is the un-debated, undoubted leader of Deep Soweto. He is the one to make business decisions – when to drop the mix tape, arranging performances (beyond the sessions). He is the spokesman when it comes to interviews. Even though he is not the musical most involved – he does not rap, does not perform, does not feature on the mix tapes- he is accepted as the leader of the team.

#### *Cyrus – Dungeon Shack<sup>6</sup>*

Cyrus lives in Meadowlands, in the north side of Soweto. He lives in a small stone house with his younger sister and his mother. I visit him there where he is hanging out with his friend rapper Devious D and his girlfriend, a fashion designer. The house is simple and sweet, like Cyrus. A television and a warm, open and friendly vibe. Broken couch, broken window, broken wall. This is where Cyrus grew up, where he went to school and where most of his friends live. The area 1852, the most important factor of socialization for Cyrus.

Ever since 1996 Cyrus was into music and hip hop. He started writing his own raps. In 2002 Cyrus initiated together with his friends from Meadowlands the movement ‘Dungeon Shack’. Together they put up regular events to form a platform for artists in the north of Soweto. Every Friday a garage of one of the Dungeon Shack members is the stage for rap, spoken word, beat box, DJ, comedians and break dance talent. It is a place to socialize, drink beers, meet each other and play pool whilst listening and watching what Meadowland has to offer in hip hop talent. Every second Sunday of the month Dungeon Shack goes big and hosts a Sunday Session at a sports field in 1852 area. Dungeon Shack started from the passion and contribution from a few friends, all artists collaborating to create a platform to showcase their

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<sup>6</sup> See picture 5

and fellow-Meadowlands' talent, who all shared the mission: 'to bring knowledge back and to improve the community through art'.

Let me introduce you to one of Dungeon Shack's events on Friday in that garage:

"It's Friday night. It's Dungeon Shack night. Meadowlands. It is the first township of Soweto and the maziest one. Huge huge huge and easy to get lost in. But I find it and park in front of a house. There's Cyrus. He takes me into the yard. It's homely here. It's like a party underneath a carport. There's music: hip hop and boys boys boys sitting on beer cradles. There's Black label<sup>7</sup>, lots of it and about 50 people are standing and sitting under the roof. There's a pooltable in the middle. Caps, sneakers, baggy jeans and T shirts. From the kitchen window the DJ plays the beats. Two speakers, one mic and rappers on 'stage'. The crowd is all ear. Joins in at the punch lines. Moves on the beats. In between the raps, Smokey is entertaining the crowd. Offering me 192 cows. Chicken song: 'Fry that chicken, fry that chicken, eat that chicken, eat that chicken, put fillin in that chicken'. Cyrus is not feeling well. But the audience and Smokey beg him for his track. No way he's not gonna get on stage. And so he does. 'One for your mind, body and soul'. 'What did you think of it', he asks me when I'm about to drive back to White City. I loved it! The talent, but even more the vibe. The crowd, involved. A nice nice good warm and easy vibe. 'But there are some cats', Cyrus explains, 'who don't come here for the music, but to chill, socialize, party. That's not good. They should listen. We're trying to teach them to listen. They should keep quiet and listen, because it's the message."

*Jovi – Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness (BCUC)<sup>8</sup>*

The moment I saw him, oh he made an impression. With his very hip sunglasses, his colorful T shirt 'Just talented' and his jeans low low low, his muscular body full of tattoos and his daring hairstyle so African: I was cursed immediately. This is Jovi: very black, very male, very proud of where he comes from. Left arm: the skyline of Jozi and a microphone. Right arm: number eleven, meaning unity in diversity: it stands for the musician he is within a band, stands for unique individuals united in greater power: Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness (BCUC).

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<sup>7</sup> Black Label is one of the cheapest beers you can find in the township. It is brewed locally and liked by lots because of its name and disliked a lot because of the taste.

<sup>8</sup> See picture 6

Jovi is number two in a family with six children. He lives with his parents, younger brother, sister and the ten year old twins in White City. His parents own a house, a third, a pink third with a piece of green lawn that Jovi keeps perfectly short and neat. Living room, small kitchen, bedroom and brand new bath room shared with seven. Jovi stays in a tin shed in the yard with his brother and his huge speakers.

As young kid Jovi worked in town, selling sweets at the bus station. Surrounded by peer groups and crime, he got into crime and made more than selling sweets could ever give. In his teens he joined a theater group that rehearsed at Ipelegeng Community Centre around the corner of his house. Together with the theater group he toured through Europe twice in the beginning of the new millennium. He quit crime, seeing a brighter future in pursuing a career in the arts.

After a few years, Jovi decided to quit theater and to spend his time on doing what he wanted to do, what he felt he was called to do and what he could do best: make music. In 2003 he started together with friends he met through poetry sessions and jam sessions the band 'Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness'. It was a band of many members at first, but after four years BCUC got down to four members: three guys (Hloni, Luja, Jovi) and one girl (Kgomotso), four different individuals with backgrounds in fashion, poetry, communication and theater.

The music that BCUC makes is a fusion between Afro-ethnic sounds and urban soul, of English, Zulu, SeSotho and other African languages. Strong beats of the drum are blended with guitars, a saxophone sometimes and sounds of small instruments: bells and whistles, topped by rap, singing and howling voices. The combination of instruments, the sound and the rhythm of BCUCs music are completely different of the music that Deep Soweto, Cyrus the Virus and my other informants make. BCUC definitely is not part of the hip hop scene as Deep Soweto, Dungeon Shack and the other artists in my research are. The members of BCUC do attend the Sunday Sessions now and then, but are not the regular Sunday Sessionists as Cyrus and friends and the members of Deep Soweto are. Also they do not perform at those hip hop Sessions: they can not, because their performances need more equipment than is available at most of the sessions. But they do perform at the Backyard Sessions and



Streetpop Sessions where they often share the stage with the rappers from Dungeon Shack and Deep Soweto.

It is an important feature to keep in mind, that BCUC has a very different position within the field of hip hop than the other two movements. Nevertheless I believe that they are part of the same field of production, share many characteristics of producing music and listen quite to the same rules in the field. I have therefore chosen to incorporate BCUC and Jovi as my main characters in my thesis. Elaborating on their views, styles and music I believe contributes a lot to the points that I want to make in my thesis.

With music as their first and most important 'business', BCUC decided to broaden it to organizing events. They started an event company Eleventh Elements Production and organize events in Soweto, aimed at giving local artists a platform to showcase their skills.

Besides spending time on their businesses: recording, rehearsing, writing, performing, organizing events, most time they spend together as friends: go out, socialize and hunt for clothes and accessories. They are more than close friends, soul mates. BCUC is their life and they share that highest goal in life: professionalize in music in order to fight for freedom.

### **Reading my thesis**

In chapter one I describe the setting of Soweto. I elaborate on the birth of the township, the struggle against the apartheid, on how it became the symbol for revolution and on the living situation today. In chapter two I explain my theoretical framework and I divide my research question into sub-questions. By the hand of these sub-questions I elaborate how my third and fourth chapter are structured, which contain my fieldwork data. My analysis is summarized in the conclusion.

Through my thesis in the footnotes you will find a reference to play lists, to pictures and to a CD. The pictures and the CD you will find at the end of my thesis. The play lists refer to short videos on youtube. To make it easy to retrieve the right video on youtube, I have prepared a playlist. To view the videos:

- surf to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
  - sign in: username *jwaanders* and password *Soweto*
  - go to 'play lists'
  - here you find a list of the chapters: click on the chapter to get a list of the videos.
  - click on the video to play
-

## Chapter one

**The setting: Soweto and many people taking the long walk to freedom.**

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### Introduction

It is lovely here<sup>9</sup>. I am standing on top of the Oppenheimer<sup>10</sup> tower, looking over Soweto. I can stand there for hours and hours just looking at life in Soweto passing by. This is what you can see from up here - Soweto: the two towers painted FNB; painted Mandela soccer ball and jazz musicians; Maonya mall, the biggest shopping mall of Gauteng with an eight screen cinema and the signs that lead the busses to the Nelson Mandela and the Hector Pieterse museum – the history of two “accidental” struggle leaders and western consumption. But from here, I will point you to the houses in between, the pink one, the yellow one, the blue one. Imagine all the different stories behind those doors. Many stories, many people. And I will point you to the Jabulani flats, to the hostels and the trains. To the north, there is Dungeon Shack, to the west – Graveside, to the east – Slaghuis, to the South – 1808, and over there Ipelegeng Community Centre where the Backyard Sessions are held. I will point you to the taxi driving by, to the young man and his trolley filled with vegetables selling door to door, to the mhakozis selling food at the streets, to the car spinning just for fun and to the green beetle passing by bumping hip hop. And from here you can not miss the icons of Soweto, but easily forget to look at everything in between. It is easy to miss the many stories of many people taking the long walk to freedom that is by far not finished yet.

In this chapter I will give you a view on Soweto and describe this complex place in a way that will not miss the houses in between. A place in transformation (as all places always), a place of many people, but known to the world as the symbol for revolution because of two iconized “heroes”.

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<sup>9</sup> See what I see: picture nr 1

<sup>10</sup> In 1959 the residents of the township Sophiatown in Johannesburg were forcibly removed. Ernest Oppenheimer, the first chairman of the mining enterprise Anglo American Corporation was appalled by the housing shortage and arranged a loan for the construction of additional housing. This tower is a testament to his contribution.

## 1.1 Soweto: the symbol of revolution

Soweto is a conglomeration of townships that lies approximately fifteen kilometers South West of Johannesburg, covering about thirty square miles. Official figures put Soweto's population to be close to 900.000 citizens<sup>11</sup> (similar to Amsterdam), but popular estimations lie around 4 to 5 million (which would mean over 10% of South Africans live in Soweto)<sup>12</sup>. The area that is called Soweto, is divided into 32 townships<sup>13</sup> and is separated from the city of Johannesburg by the mine dumps that you can see clearly from up here at the tower.

Behind those mine dumps, out of sight, close enough for cheap labor and far enough not to "dilute the white race", the white city council relocated thousands of black people from the city of Johannesburg in the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the forties and fifties the township grew enormously and out of proportion when the apartheid government evicted millions more black people from the city and forced them to stay behind the mine dumps where they had build rows and rows matchbox houses which were far too small and too few and of poor quality. The amount of available houses, as well as the sanitation and social services, were far from sufficient. The population was jammed into the small houses, unemployment rates were enormous and living in Soweto was marked by poverty and horrible living conditions (Bonner and Segal 1998).

In 1963, the area behind the mine dumps was given the name South Western Townships, in short Soweto (31). It took only fourteen years for the whole world to know the name Soweto, when it became an international symbol for the struggle against the apartheid regime: against the regime that excluded blacks from many civil, political and economical rights such as the right to vote, to move freely, to own property and to work and which confined black people to inferior housing, education, social services and transport systems. This system killed their self worth and instituted a superior – inferior relation between white and black (Lipton 1985: 14-15).

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<sup>11</sup> Estimated at Census 2001 896.995 ([www.soweto.gov.za](http://www.soweto.gov.za)).

<sup>12</sup> The minister of housing in Gauteng Province claimed in his speech on occasion of the handover of title deeds in Soweto in 1999 that Soweto 'has an estimated population of no less than 4 million' (Mashatile 1999).

<sup>13</sup> For a map of Soweto see picture 2.

### *1.1.1 Resistance in Soweto: street gangs and subculture*

Soweto was a very fruitful breeding ground for political resistance in the 70s and 80s with its screaming poverty and high rates of unemployment. The streets were war zones and the security forces of the apartheid regime were the creators of extreme violence against the people of Soweto. In 1984 and 1985 president Botha declared the State of Emergency and Soweto was placed under strict emergency regulations. The power of police and army were virtually unlimited. Residents were not allowed in the streets after 4 am until 10 pm in the morning, military vehicles called 'hippos' swarmed the township, soldiers randomly fired teargas and stray canisters shattered windows, setting the houses on fire. In these harmful and violent times young people - often unemployed, poor, without promising future outlooks - were easily recruited by anti apartheid collectives as well as political associations, student movements and street gangs. These three social movements were important actors in mobilizing young people into collective action. (Bonner and Segal 1998: 116).

Street gangs, also known as 'tsotsis' had been a conspicuous feature of Soweto life in the sixties. Despite the reputation of thuggery, intimidation and criminality that was associated with these groups of youngsters, gangs often started simply as a way of passing time together. Due to insufficient education, many youngsters spent their times on the streets, rivaling with other groups, fighting for girls, smoking and drinking (65). In the 70s and 80s the street gangs politicized and became known as the Comrades: 'brothers in struggle'. They perceived themselves as 'moral guardians': protectors and defenders of the communities, soldiers dedicated to the struggle for liberation of the people (113).

The street gangs in the 80s fought in the struggle by fighting for their territory - the streets - rendering them ungovernable, uncontrollable, and dangerous for the local and national authorities. They want to ensure that the young people in Soweto remained 'loyal to the cause', which meant that anyone who acted against them was deemed 'an enemy of the people' and could be expected to be 'disciplined' (114). In the roaring 80s the ungovernable streets of Soweto were ruled by the street gangs, which had created some kind of alternative self governance through local 'courts' to maintain the social order and loyalty to the cause. Ways of disciplining varied from not going to school (and attacking those who did), burning

down shebeens<sup>14</sup>, to the practice of placing a burning tire around a victim's neck (commonly referred to as 'the necklace') (127). Different street gangs varied in their views of the struggle and discipline methods and were fighting against each other over territory and power to rule the streets.

The street gangs in Soweto were known as the trendsetters of fashion, music and dance moves. The street gangs in the 50s and 60s grew out to inspire sub cultural styles known as tsotsis and amapantsulas, that distinguished themselves in language ('tsotsitaal' – another name for street language in Soweto), dance moves ('toy toy')<sup>15</sup> and their styles of clothing ('sporties' caps, bold colorful shirts with the names of the crews, suits). Fighting over territory was not only done by violence, but creating an own distinct culture has always been an important aspect of the street gangs. Music, fashion, language and dance moves communicated the identity of the group and often praised the revolution in disguise. They were the tools for the construction of a common identity and common ideology that was an important ingredient in the collective action, belief and power of the street gangs (60).

The ideology of the Black Conscious Movement that became popular in the 70s underlined the need for a common ideology and popularized the creation of a black proud identity. The Black Consciousness Movement focused on the problems of self-worth and identity. The charismatic young spokesperson Steve Biko came to be popular among many young black South Africans and referred to:

“Black Consciousness seeks to instill the idea of self-determination, to restore feelings of pride and dignity to blacks after centuries of racist oppression. It is an attitude of mind and a way of life. It is the realization that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (73)

That the most potent weapon was indeed in the hand of the oppressed was underlined by the street gangs and their violence against 'sell outs' – (against those who collaborated or where suspected to collaborate with the apartheid regime or security forces). Many youngsters in the

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<sup>14</sup> Shebeens are illegal drinking houses. By some Comrades they were seen as the source of making youngsters more passive in the struggle, drowning them in alcohol and therefore as enemy of active struggle. (Bonner and Segal 1998: 125)

<sup>15</sup> Toyi-toyi was a militant dance, brought to South Africa by MK recruits from the training camps in Angola (Bonner and Segal 1998: 113).

townships were inspired by the BCM's call for the restoration of black self confidence and self assertion. This resulted in the flourishing of sub cultural styles where black proud was communicated through looks and hairdos (75).

In the times of apartheid artists were referred to as 'cultural workers', working in the service of raising political awareness and mobilization. The circulation of music was little, due to the control and censorship of the apartheid regime on the broadcasting media and to the international boycott on South African products that kept artists within borders. Relative isolation did facilitate interesting developments in local music genres and local appropriations of international rock, soul and jazz. In the townships music and performing art local artists fed themselves with the hunger of expression. Artists managed to extrude some very powerful and at the same time often commercially successful popular music, theater and dance, due to the loyal patronage of township audiences. The stages could be found in backyards, community halls and shebeens (Coplan 2005: 10).

The forming of a collective identity were always the area of disagreement, debate and conflict. The rivalry between gangs, student associations and political groups contributed to a rather weak state of collective resistance against the apartheid regime. The difference in view of the Black Conscious Movement which saw the revolution as a black one against the always and for ever paternalistic whites, and the youth league of the African National Congress (ANC), for whom the revolution was part of enacting a non-racial future of South Africa, caused a lot of conflict between political and student movements and associations in Soweto. The street politics that had emerged by the comrades in times of ungovernable streets were often the sight of conflicts between gangs over territories, the authority to rule and the processes of judgment and punishment. The street gangs were the cause of a lot of outrageous violence not only against sell-outs, but also against each other (Bonner and Segal 1998: 120).

### *1.1.2 Two accidental "heroes" and many people*

Even though the revolution spearheaded by youngsters might not have been that accumulated, the protest of Sowetan youth in 1976 forever made Soweto the symbol of collective resistance against the apartheid regime. The source that fueled the uprisings was the anger of schoolchildren about the grief and deteriorating quality of education: not enough

schools, not enough equipment, not enough teachers and most of all an incredible unequal distribution of resources between black and white educational institutions. The announcement of the state to make Afrikaans – a language hardly mastered by the schoolchildren and more importantly the language of the oppressor - a compulsory medium of instruction in black schools, was the occasion for a mass strike of the Sowetan schoolchildren. On June 16, 1976 thousands of children marched the streets of Soweto. As they bumped into the police, the police opened fire. Many children were killed, among which the 12-year old Hector Pieterse (Bonner and Segal 1998: 83).

A black and white photograph of the severely wounded young boy in the arms of his friend shocked the world and symbolized the Sowetan schoolchildren's uprisings; the resistance of courageous Sowetan youngsters and the horrors of apartheid. That day a "hero" was born: Hector Pieterse.

Another "hero" came alive at the moment he was put on trial for leading the armed wing 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' of the popular anti-apartheid party the ANC. In 1963 the world saw the horrors, inhumanity, racism of the apartheid regime in the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela. By the time he was released from prison, 27 years later, Nelson Mandela had grown into an 'international media colossus', even though he had only given just one interview in all his 72 years of age (Nixon 1994). His release from prison was broadcasted world wide. In the four decades that followed, the world gave him over a hundred awards for his resistance against discrimination and his embodiment of love and peace between races, among which the most prestigious one: the Nobel Peace Prize. Nelson Mandela became one of the worlds most famous and one of the least debated heroes in history, grasped by Nixon in the terms 'nearly-messianistic' and 'Mandelaria' (1994). Nelson Mandela's international media known-ness is bond to Soweto because that is the place his house stood where he used to live with Winnie Mandela, and because the Freedom Charter, the law of the ANC, was signed in Soweto,.

However, in Soweto Nelson Mandela nor the ANC are un-debated at all. His position in the negotiations after his release from prison was and is much debated and questioned by the people in Soweto.



It was generally assumed and expected that the abolishment of apartheid would be accompanied by immediate change, progress and peace. But the negotiations between the National Party and the newly un-banned parties were complex and took long. Living situations in Soweto and in South Africa deteriorated and a violent struggle broke out between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Within a short space of time over a thousand people were killed by this violent outbreak in Soweto – more than during the struggle against the apartheid regime (Bonner and Segal 1998: 156). While in white media the conflict was described as black-on-black violence, as proof that they could not live in civilized peace with each other, for many blacks it was obvious that there was a ‘hidden third power’ involved. That hidden power was thought of as the last convulsion of the white apartheid regime that wanted to ensure that the ANC did not gain political dominance that easily (147). While the country was on fire and conflict, Nelson Mandela was shown on television negotiating in the luxurious hotels with the ex-apartheid government while having coffee and eating biscuits. Not surprisingly he was criticized often for giving in too much, for talking too long to the white man instead of fighting in exchange for economic wealth. He still is criticized for that among many young Sowetans.

Even though it was not only Soweto that resisted the regime, it is the township of Soweto that came to be known as the ‘symbol of apartheid terror and the symbol of heroic struggles of its people against that terror’<sup>16</sup> and to the world as the symbol for resistance against racism.

I have put “heroes” in brackets. Soweto in the view from our media in Europe is almost never mentioned without those two symbolic persons. It would not surprise me if there is no book written about Soweto that does not capture both of them. Neither do I, because Soweto as the symbol of resistance against racism that my informants drew upon would not be half as strong without the birth of those two. But Soweto is not Hector Pieterse plus Mandela, nor are these “heroes” that inspire my informants. Soweto is not made by two heroes but by many people. Soweto’s resistance was and is the work of many people, not of two “accidental” struggle leaders.

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Sisulu in the foreword of ‘Soweto: a history’ Bonner and Segal 1998: 7)

## 1.2 Soweto: not yet uhuru

The artists in Soweto that became my informants were born between the schoolchildren's uprisings and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. They were born in the late 70s and early 80s, when the streets were the domain of street gangs, of hippos and enormous violence. By the time they reached their teens the apartheid was official abolished and the long walk to freedom<sup>17</sup> that Nelson Mandela had walked was over. Many academics call them the after-struggle generation,; they are in their twenties now, in the bloom of their lives after the apartheid struggle in the "new found freedom".

But I believe those academics are too soon, too eager, too fast. This generation is not an after-struggle generation. They were too young to have been part of the groups marching the streets in the uprisings against the apartheid regime and at the same time not too old to have memories of teargas, brothers marching and the streets being a war zone. They are in the middle of the struggle. Not against the apartheid regime, but in the struggle for improvement, transition, opportunity. Hard work is to be done in this generation, transforming the place. They are still experiencing the crime, the hardships, the poverty, the violence and are expected to work towards peace and economic prosperity. Now they are said to have the chance, they are the ones expected to fight for it and grab it, know how to grab it with two hands. The pressure is immense to develop, for the whole of South Africa and not only for the president. The pressure is on the generation that my informants are part of. A generation of struggle, a generation in transition of which is expected a whole lot of improvement. They are the freedom fighters of today under the pressure of finding the solution in the complex period of transition.

### *1.2.1 New and old problems and finding new ways to solve it.*

The switch in regime, the "new South Africa" came with the expectation of progress, development and above all, equality. It brought change, but it did not bring all the positive changes that were expected. It brought economic opportunities, a new black elites new white poors and a new socioeconomic stratification. It brought new thinking about the social divide

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<sup>17</sup> Here I refer to the autobiography of Nelson Mandela 'Long Walk to Freedom' (1995).

of South Africa's society as it was no longer "two countries in one: a Black and a White". And it brought new cultural influences, as the media brought in the world (read American) through music, visionary, styles of consumption, youth culture (Nuttal 2004: 432). Academics argued for the focus on the new found individual freedom of young South Africans, new ways of imagining and their limitless opportunities to clay and play new identities, free from the focus on race, on politics and on resistance (Nuttal and Michael, 2000). But it did not change. Soweto did not change overnight from a war zone, characterized by poverty, crime, harsh social services and lacking electricity and drinking water into a peaceful happy place. Nor did South Africa change overnight into an equal society without discrimination and without economic power based on race. The struggle for equality goes on, the walk to freedom is not finished yet. And it is up to this young generation to find the route to walk, the name to walk in, because it can no longer be in the name of anti-apartheid.

Ashforth (2005) argues that the most important sector that did not change and is the cause of most conflict, contrast and insecurity in Soweto is economics. Economical change was encouraged by the new government through implementing the program of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). As most of the country's economy was controlled by a very small white minority, BEE was launched to transform the economy to be more representative of the demographic make-up of the country and to bring more equality. It gave economical opportunities to social groups that were previously disadvantaged under the apartheid government. Its measurements focused on more black employment and more black ownership. The introduction of BEE and the liberalization of South Africa's economy led to years of economic growth and gave birth to a new black elite. And to a new market for consumption. However, the BEE measures only reached the wealthier part of the black society, leaving masses of poor even more poor, creating a greater gap of inequality (Ashforth 2005: 28).

The economic growth did reach Soweto and changed the township enormously in the last ten years, for better and for worse. The opening to the Western market brought it all: shopping malls with eight screen cinemas, Burger King and McDonalds, fancy clubs and impressive soccer stadiums, sanitation and electricity, and spacious villa neighborhoods on the hills. It brought luxuries to some but not without Western patterns of conspicuous

consumption and stress, pressure and disappointment that unfulfilled aspirations and dreams of economic wealth can give. While some families got to improve their matchbox house into a villa, most have not and are still obliged to double up with a second family or to rent a shed out in order to be able to earn some income. Inequality within South Africa and within Soweto rose to dramatic standards.

Many Sowetans are economically poor. A few made it to the new black economic elite, but sixty percent of the households live from less than 1500 Rand (approximately 120 Euro) a month. A household living from this income might survive reasonably comfortably, but does not have enough income for consumer items that many of the family would believe necessities. Soweto occupies a position roughly in the middle of the socioeconomic spectrum of the country as a whole. The situation in most other townships, especially in the rural areas, is far worse with less competent social services and less income (Ashforth 2005: 25). But in comparison to the former white suburbs, even the relatively wealthy parts of Soweto are economically inferior. The spacious living conditions on the hills of the suburbs of Johannesburg are incomparable to the situation in Soweto in terms of the size of properties and available services. In the space of one villa, a whole street lives in Soweto. And that one villa on the hill is still in the hands of a white person.

Most people in Soweto are not employed in a regular paying job. Unemployment rates are striking, especially among young people. Of the people in Soweto over sixteen who are not disabled and not following education, 59.5 percent is not employed in full time work. Most of the working people in Soweto are not earning high wages. Two thirds of the employed are working in unskilled or semi skilled occupations and only 0.8 percent of employed Sowetans occupy managerial positions (in 1997) (Morris 1999: 7). Unemployed Sowetans have few opportunities for employment. The number of unskilled and semi skilled jobs has declined and at the same time the competition for the existing jobs became more severe due to migrants from neighboring states. But many jobs are found and created by Sowetans in the informal sector. Many people try to make money their own creative way, by pushing their own businesses try to make ends meet: from selling sweets and washing cars to renting out backyard rooms.

In short, about half of the adults in Soweto are financially dependent upon someone else (Ashforth 2005: 28). Ashforth's analysis of financial dependency in Soweto states that most people survive because of the concept of *ubuntu*: "a person is a person through other people" which means a sense of living together, taking care of each other, also financially (28). Households survive because others feel obliged to share and support their families, friends and neighbors. This means, as Ashforth points out, that to be a member of the family or the social group is to have the right to food and shelter, but at the same time to feel the pressure to share and distribute any wage that is earned. It makes the households being able to survive (28).

Soweto is a dangerous place to live in, with extremely high levels of crime, HIV / Aids, road accidents, diseases and poverty. Soweto is a contrasted place to live in with shacks with the sharing of ubuntu and huge shiny shopping malls, fueling the western individualistic conspicuous consumption. Soweto is a place of development but of not enough in the view of many people. Roads are there but waiting for street lights; children have access to schools but education could have been better and the biggest hospital in the Southern hemisphere is in Soweto, but people could have been better cared for than they are. Many Sowetans are thriving but the general standard of income hardly goes up with 60 percent of households barely at subsistence levels (25).

Ashforth (2005) argues that the emergence of dramatic socioeconomic inequality and great expectations that now mark South Africa present enormous problems of interpretation for particularly those who are not part of the elite. According to Ashforth he question 'why?' cannot be answered by referring to the oppression of apartheid like in the past. He states that the question in Soweto is not "Why are Whites rich and Blacks poor?" but "Why are some Blacks rich and others not?" (93). Ashforth argues that the absence of collective suffering from the burdens of apartheid causes a 'transition from widespread consciousness of collective power to individual and collective powerlessness' (95). The lack of interpretation is filled, so he argues, with the belief in what he calls 'witchcraft'.

I agree with Ashforth that the old and new insecurities that many Sowetan face, demand new interpretations. But more than finding interpretations, the young generation is occupied by finding solutions to those insecurities and opportunities that inequality,

economic growth and globalization bring. The question I argue is not only “Why are Whites rich and Blacks not?”, nor “Why are some Blacks rich and other not?” but very much “How do we get rich collectively?”. In my thesis I argue that the young generation keeps the revolution going to recreate the consciousness of collective power. And in doing that, they use new ways of imagining and the new possibilities that the cultural influences bring.

## Chapter two

### **Theoretic framework: the field of artistic production.**

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The Sunday sessions are a creative and viable market place created by the Sowetan youth on the streets, independent from the music industry, where they valorize punch lines and flows. Where they battle over who is the best, the most real, the most authentic artist. The Sunday Sessions are a creative outlet of exchanges. Raps on stage in exchange for wows and appreciation from the audience, and mix tapes, dagga, space cookies, sneakers, merchandising are sold in front of the stage. But at the Sunday Sessions more than that is exchanged. This is the territory, this is the field created by the young hip hop artists in Soweto where they present their rules, their ways of thinking and their revolutions. This creative place that they build give the artists the opportunity to communicate and negotiate a common identity, a cohesion, strengthen the consciousness of collective power of the hip hop scene. But at the same time the artists and crews are fighting and striving for distinction against each other, authenticity, for authority to set the rules of the game: to decide who gets wows and who gets boos, what kind of dance moves are in, what EPs should be sold and which dagga is the best. And those might seem little, unimportant things, but actually are about something way bigger, namely about finding solutions to the insecurities and opportunities that Soweto in transition brings them. That is not the work of an artist alone, but of the whole field of the Sunday Sessions.

#### **2.1 Distinction**

That those little things like hairdo's, big beer bottles and baggy jeans are not unimportant things, is what Pierre Bourdieu argues in his book 'Distinction' (1984). He developed a theoretical framework in which he is concerned about how aesthetic taste of those little things is the expression of the social stratification in society. Bourdieu claims that one chooses to distant oneself in society from lower groups and presents one's social space to the world through taste and style, like clothing, language and food. Taste and style he views as nothing

like innocent choices of a person, but determined by lessons learned during upbringing and socialization, ever since the earliest childhood (177).

One's specific taste and style is according to Bourdieu not a choice, but a logic outcome of one's background in society. Society he argues, is divided into different distinct groups of backgrounds, he calls 'class fractions'. Every class fraction is determined by a distinct compilation of three kinds of capital: economic, social and cultural. The first two capitals can be explained as material assets (economic) and connections and networks (social). Bourdieu views the cultural capital as the most important and used 'marker' of a distinct class. It is the form of knowledge, an internalized code that equips a person with appreciation, empathy and competence in understanding cultural artifacts (Bourdieu 1993: 7). The knowledge gives a person the power to understand the little things that mean big things in the social stratification of society (Bourdieu 1984: 69).

Every class fraction differs in their amount and specifics of cultural capital. They have their own codes, own aesthetic preferences, own little things. Taste and style and little things are therefore indicators, markers for different class fractions and at the same time function as weapons of distinction in the social stratification of society. The class fraction equips their youngsters with those specific tastes for certain style that guide them towards behavior that is expected and suitable for the class fraction and to the position in the social stratification that the class fraction belongs and with aversion towards other behavior (466). This equipment that more or less determines the role in society one takes, Bourdieu calls 'dispositions'. As dispositions are shown in little things, these cultural artifacts are weapons of distinction and of reproduction of the social stratification of society.

Besides taste and style, especially in the production and consumption of art, cultural capital matters. Art only exists when the spectators are equipped by the knowledge, the internalized codes to decipher and recognize a work of art (Bourdieu 1993: 37). As it is the class fractions that teach the young ones about codes, there is often a homology between the background of the artist and the background of the spectators. By producing and consuming the art, both artist and spectator show their distinction, their position in the social stratification of society.



## 2.2 Artistic production

### 2.2.1. *The structure of the field*

That art can never be an unique expression from the artist alone, derives from the view that the work of art only exists when known and recognized, 'socially instituted' as work of art (Bourdieu 1993: 7). It needs spectators capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art. And so the production of the object of art might be materially done by a solitaire artists, but one needs to take into account, as Bourdieu argues, 'the production of the value of the work .. of the belief in the value of the work' (7). That in mind I said, those little but big things as the rhythm and the flow, the punch lines and the beats are not the work of the artists alone, but of the whole of the baggy jeans, the one tight jeans, of the whole of the field of hip hop in Soweto. The strategies of the artists need to be placed into the setting of the whole of that field. In the book "Cultural fields of production" (1993) Bourdieu gave me the framework to position the artist in the field.

The field is the term that Bourdieu introduced as the social setting where the artist operates from. It is a relatively bounded space in which specific codes and rules apply of what is considered a valid work of art (8). Every legitimate participant in the field has to have the knowledge to understand the rules and to understand the meanings of the little things: the rules about the flows, the punch lines and the baggy jeans. The field distinct itself with those rules and little things from other fields. For instance in the field of Kwaito or jazz or house in that matter, different rules about how to dress, how to sing and how to do business are valid.

Every field has its own specific rules, but is structured in the same way. Bourdieu explains how the field consists of a range of positions that the artists take. According to the specific rules of the field the positions in the field are structured and hierarchized. The valorization of positions in the field depends on the kind of capital that is at stake in the field (social, economic, cultural). The artists in the field take available positions or create new positions as high as they can on the hierarchy in the field. The higher the position in the field, the higher the profit that the position brings. As nobody enters a game to loose, the artists invest the capital that they have in the most advantageous way as possible, so that it will bring most profit (8).

The field is a playground for the struggle between participants over available positions, striving to occupy or retain the position that rewards them with most profit, be it economically or culturally. In the field of hip hop in Soweto all the artists strive for the position of being the most successful, no one of the rappers climbs on stage to get bood or walks around selling their mix tapes without selling any.

### *2.2.2. double hierarchy and the horizontal spectrum*

Every field is the same in its structure and in the game that is played, but the kind of capital that the players play for is different and so is the logic in every field that determines the structuring and the hierarchy of the positions. But Bourdieu explains how almost no field can totally implement their own specific logic, because they are connected and interdependent. The more “autonomous” a field is, Bourdieu calls it, the more the field can listen to its own and only its own specific rules (38).

The field of production of art according to Bourdieu is characterized by the struggle between domination and dominated by the field of economics (41). The field of the production of art in perfect autonomous sense Bourdieu explains is determined by cultural and symbolic capital (39). The players play for symbolic capitals like honor, prestige and appreciation and the one to get that is the one who shows best that he is equipped with the specific cultural knowledge, aesthetic preferences, understanding the codes about the little things. On the other end, in perfect heteronomous sense, the field of the production of art is subaltern to the field of economics (39). The players play for economic capital like materialistic and monetary rewards and the one to receive those is the one who knows best the rules of the market. The struggle between the influence of those two different and opposite fields define the character of the field of artistic production. All actors in the field of artistic production have to handle the balancing of the two. Bourdieu views the economic and the symbolic as two ends of the horizontal spectrum of positions in the field of arts and explains how every actor positions itself according this line (188).

On the economic end of the spectrum, the artists compete over accumulating economic capital. The strategies that they use are based on economic conscious calculations following the economic rules, the laws of the market. The artists produce to supply for an

external demand and tries to be as commercial viable as possible. The more mass production the better, because it generates more economic profit. That is why Bourdieu calls these artists the large scale-producers (39). Success in this sub-field, as Bourdieu calls it, is measured in sales: in the numbers of works of art sold, in the monetary revenue it brought in. An artist in this sub-field aims at economic profit and is successful if it receives it. Large-scale producers are found working in the many Dollar, many Rand industries, the commercial entertainment sector, where art and entertainment is about making money. This sub-field within the field of art is quite open: to be able to join it as an actor in the field, there is not much need for cultural knowledge: the rules are simple, the rules are the market laws.

On the other end of the spectrum, the artists compete over accumulating symbolic capital like prestige and recognition (39). The cultural end of the spectrum is what Bourdieu calls the 'universe of belief' (15), where the value of a work of art only exists because of the spectators belief in it. Where success is not rewarded because of countable, tangible materialistics, but because of negotiable, interpretable, intangible beliefs about the aesthetic power of the artist. Bourdieu explains that in this end of the spectrum:

'It is not so much about what are the specific properties of the magician, or even the magical operations and representations, but rather to discover the bases of the collective belief, or more precisely the *collective misrecognition*, collectively produced and maintained, which is the source of power the magician appropriates' (81).

It is based on belief and only belief in the collective subfield where rules generate from about who gets rewarded the most symbolic profit: appreciation, honor, prestige. The kind of capital that is important in being able to follow these rules is not economic capital and the knowledge needed is not that of the logics of the market, but the capital that matters is cultural, the knowledge that gives one the ability to see the specific traits that are valorized and the meaning of the matching codes. The strategies of the artists on this end are not based on market laws but on knowing and showing the specific codes of the sub-field that valorize specific traits, according to the specific collective belief. The field is quite closed, because to be a legitimate actor in the field one needs to have a certain level of cultural knowledge that is required to understand and recognize the works of art as art. Bourdieu calls this sub-field within the field of artistic production the sub-field of restricted production (39). The profit

that the restricted producers aim for is not material but symbolic. Success is measured not in monetary gains but in things like applause, appreciation and celebrity. The restricted producers are often the artists that are not found in commercial industries, but in the alternative industries and sectors.

The producers on both end of the spectrum work in the same field but are completely opposed to each other. The large scale producers are subject to economic laws and produce in the aim to make money. The restricted producers strive for autonomy from the economic laws, from external demands. The restricted producers adopt the innocent mystified view of producing solely from within, excluded from any external demands, creating art for the sake of art, the unique creator. This makes the restricted producers anti-economics, anti-commercialists. The ordinary laws of the economy in this subfield are reversed: the pursuit of economic profit is condemned and the value of the art work is in no means in consonance with the material production of the work. At the cultural side of the spectrum the artistic field the artists that play the game are benefiting from showing not to make art for economic profit's sense. They are having an interest in disinterestedness of economic gains and are disavowing economic capital. The symbolic profit that is gained from these anti-economic strategies is what Bourdieu calls the 'profit of disinterestedness (15). The economy of this subfield is based on economically viewed: the winner loses. It is as Bourdieu calls it a 'bad-faith' economy where you earn bad when you do good (15). To be able to take this position in the bad faith economy is risky, because it brings no economic income. One can only stay in this position for some time, if one has alternative resources to serve for basic needs as food and shelter.

The field of artistic production is characterized by the opposition between two ways of structuring into hierarchy: economic laws versus specific cultural laws. The opposition between art and money. The artists are faced with a dilemma in positioning oneself along the lines of this spectrum. In doing this artists are engaged in the struggle concerning the very definition of the meaning, the status of art and the artists (187).

At the Sunday Sessions both principles of hierarchy seem to be in place. On stage the artists are trading with the audience: the rhymes, the lyrics, the beats, the melody, included the appearance of the rapper – his looks, shoes and hairdo, in exchange for WOWs and BOOs:

for appreciation and prestige. On the field next to it the artists are trading from their back packs: the newest mix tape for 60 Rand, the merchandising and the DVD for 100. The sessions and the field of hip hop in Soweto are characterized by the complex and interesting combination of both kind of interests at stake: economic and symbolic. The way the artists pursuit success as a combination between economic and symbolic rewards: they want the wows and they want the Rands. Understanding and analyzing their strategies I do by describing the position taking of the artists in both principles and explaining the complex relation between the double hierarchy.

### **2.3 Authenticity and authority**

On the horizontal spectrum artists are striving over the question about what art is and the opposition between art and money. Besides positioning themselves horizontally, Bourdieu argues for another dimension in the struggle of the field of artistic production: the struggle over who sets the rules of the hierarchy. This is the struggle over authority, a struggle that is fought between individuals within sub-fields and between the collectiveness of the sub-fields. A fight over the power to draw the field, to distribute capital, to rule. A struggle between new comers and the consecrated – the long have been in the field. Bourdieu argues there is a two-dimensional space and two forms of struggle: horizontal and vertical (186).

In the economic end of the spectrum, authority is earned through economic capital. The power of authority lies with the persons dominating the market and the field in economic sense. In this end of the spectrum it is relatively clear who legitimately has the right to authority, as economic capital is more or less measurable. In the cultural end of the spectrum on the other hand, authority is based on accumulated recognition, prestige and honor. As these are not measurable and tangible, authority in this end of the spectrum, the legitimacy of authority is less obvious. Therefore it is in this sub-field especially important for the artists to prove that position they take is legitimate.

#### *2.3.1 Feeling for the game: authenticity*

That prove, Bourdieu argues is based on “sincerity” which in his words is ‘only possible – and only achieved – when there is a perfect harmony between the expectations inscribed in the

position occupied and the dispositions [of the artist]' (95). This sincerity or in other word "authenticity" is based on 'the natural fit' or the homology between the disposition of the artist in society (the equipment received by the class fraction) and the position in the field. To make that fit, is what Bourdieu calls the 'feeling for the game' (17). Someone has feeling for the game when he knows the codes about the little things so well, that he can bend them in his advantage. He can play and clay with little things in order to make it seem that the possession of one's capital (the dispositions) align with the expectations of the position. In the symbolic field were everything is about belief, more important than the possession of capital, is the feeling for the game, authenticity.

A work of art in the sub-field at the cultural end of the spectrum is valued high, if it is backed up by an authentic artist who is believed by the others in the field as sincerely and honestly occupying a "high" position. Kooijman (2008) agrees, pointing out that authenticity is never inherent in an object of art, but instead of inscribed it is a symbolic value ascribed to it, or rather to its artist, because it is based on the impression that the audience has of the artist<sup>18</sup>. Even though authenticity is about a natural felt homology, Kooijman points out that 'its naturalness does not come naturally but rather is a self conscious act on the part of the person represented'<sup>19</sup>. Using the feeling of the game, artists manipulate, construct and manage their image, the impression that others have of them, controlling the behavior of others towards them. In doing so, Kooijman argues that artists exaggerate, invent, make up and fake authenticity to be perceived realer than real, truer than true that he calls 'fabricating the fake' (2008b: 144) ).

In Bourdieu's terms authenticity lies in the collective belief of the spectators in the magic of the magician / the artist (1993: 81). It is therefore build on the rules, the specific codes, logics of the field. Created in what Goffman (1959) calls "stage routines": small groups acting as collectives in forming certain rules and codes that everybody in that group understands of how to perform an image as individual that is perceived as authentic by the group that matters. Because authenticity and homology are judged and valued by the

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<sup>18</sup> Source: Lecture Kooijman "Pop and authenticity" at the University of Amsterdam, department Mediastudies, 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2008

<sup>19</sup> Source: Lecture Kooijman 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2008

audience, the rest of the field, constructing authenticity is not the product of the individual managing their impressions, but the collective activity of all the participants in the field. The codes are a symbolic language that translate between dispositions and the positions to take. Collectively drawn these codes direct the judgment of homology and thus of authenticity of the artist and work of art. To gain authenticity, the artist needs to have the ability to see and understand the collective codes, and to have the feeling for it to present a logical fit between his image and the expectations of the crowd.

### *2.3.2. The struggle for authority: newcomers and consecrated*

The struggle for authority is the struggle to convince the others in the field that you are the one to draw the rules (Bourdieu 1993: 95). Within the sub-field of large-scale authority is accumulated with economic profit. Within the sub-field of restricted production authority is accumulated with authenticity. In the whole of the field different sub-fields of producers compete with each other for authority in the whole of the field and the stakes that matter and are distributable in the whole of the field.

Bourdieu divides two kind of players in this struggle: the newcomers and the established – the dominated and the dominators (83). The established group, Bourdieu explains mostly is the instituted industry, that created and are maintaining a consecrated market functioning on the commercialization of art. The dominated are the newcomers, who have not played or won games before and have not yet accumulated economic and symbolic capital. The newcomers are mostly the artists that are not part of the industry, cannot get into the industry and create their alternative ways to produce and distribute their works of art.

The established producers in dominant position strive for maintaining the structure in the field through defensive strategies (83). For them the world is as it should be: they are in top, enjoying the profits. The strategies that they are using are aimed at keeping the field, the market closed, keeping the newcomers out so they can keep all the profit to themselves. The capital that they have at their disposal is economic and symbolic capital. The newcomers who are dominated in economic capital and the set rules in the field, try to change the rules in the field and turn them upside down: they are on the bottom and should be on top. The only way they can gain a foothold in the field and market is to disavow the economic interest and

worth of economic capital on which the domination of the established producers is based, to undermine the legitimacy of the dominating position of the established. While they can not beat the established in economic capital, they try to beat them in symbolic capital. In that the focus is on cultural capital: on the need for authenticity and unique, honest creation from within. They condemn and blame the established of being completely the opposite of authentic: of producing for external demand instead of from within, of being in the field for money, not for the art. The strategy of the newcomers is to distinct themselves clearly from the other end of the field. Kick, resist, oppose against all the things related to the mainstream: money, mainstream, commercial, (inter)national fame, awards, etcetera. Instead they come up with an alternative, create a collective belief around it, trying to gain so much appreciation and recognition, that they can defeat the established in symbolic capital and overturn the hierarchy (83).

### *2.3.3. Symbolic capital and economic*

The newcomers place themselves in a bad faith economy, a risky position in which economic profit is disavowed that seems very irrational. But, Bourdieu argues, the interest in no profit on the short run, guarantees economic rewards on the long run. In the end the disinterest in profit does contain a form of economic rationality (1993: 97).

Bourdieu explains the newcomers on the long run aim for the same thing as the established producers are defending: economic profit. They are trying to overturn the hierarchy of the field but without disturbing the principles on which the field is based. Bourdieu calls it 'partial revolutions' (77), as the newcomers only want to turn around the world, but not change it. He argues that the newcomers try to defeat the established in the amount of symbolic power accumulated (prestige, appreciation and celebrity) in order to gain the authority that is needed to gain control over the distribution over economic capital. That way the symbolic capital would be converted for them into economic capital. In the end then symbolic capital serves as the legitimate version of economic capital for newcomers, as Bourdieu explains:



‘economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain condition, and always on the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits’ (75).

Therefore the symbolic belief and the disavowal of the economic interest, Bourdieu explains is not a simple ideological mask and also not the complete neglecting of economic interest. But it serves as why new producers ‘whose only capital is their conviction can establish themselves in the market’ (75). And why only the ones who are capable of staying disinterested in economics, do not go for economic capital on the short run: ‘those who can come to terms with the constraints of the bad-faith economy’ can reap the economic profits of their symbolic capital in the long run’ (75).

#### *Conclusion and sub-questions*

It is in this theoretical frame that I place my research question:

**How do hip hop artists search for interpretations and solutions in the changing society of Soweto, South Africa, through their artistic production?**

In the next two chapters I describe these interpretations and solutions in the production of hip hop in the field of Soweto. I focus separately in the next two chapters on the symbolic aspect and the economic aspect of the artists’ strategies in the production, to be able to grasp the dynamic between interpretation (more or less symbolic) and solution (more or less economic), as well as the struggles in the field: newcomers versus established and the battle for authenticity.

#### *Symbolic positioning:*

The class fraction equipping one with certain capital (dispositions) and cultural knowledge guides one to specific aesthetic preferences, a certain style. The participants within one field, within one subculture must be from the same class fraction. This leads me to my first sub-question:

**What is the common class fraction of the artists in the field?**

I believe that the class fractions brought the youngsters towards hip hop. The youngsters with a specific background feel attracted to the sub-culture of hip hop in the township. Hip hop

gives them a framework to show through little things their position in social stratification. To understand their position in society leads me to my second sub-question:

**What are the specific codes that matter in the field?**

As those codes and rules in the field are not the work of the artist alone but of the whole of the field, I ask in my third sub-question:

**What is the collective belief that forms the foundation of the field?**

In the field the artists struggle for authority to draw the rules of the field and change the specific codes. In doing that, they use their feeling of the game to conform to the specific codes and the collective belief of the field. I will elaborate in my third chapter on how the participants in the field of hip hop struggle over authority through authenticity.

*Economic positioning*

While the artists in the field of hip hop in Soweto place themselves on the symbolic side of the spectrum. The fundament of the field is based on belief. The performances on stage are valued with boos and wows. But at the same time the Sunday Sessions are markets, where products are sold. My fourth sub-question is:

**How is the supposedly antagonism between economic and symbolic capital explained by the artists in the field?**

The Sunday markets are relatively new alternatives to the established mainstream market. In my fifth sub-question I focus on the relation with the mainstream industry :

**How do the artists strive for a foothold in the market as newcomers against the established producers?**

In my last sub-question I fuse the economic and the symbolic aspects and elaborate on the economic logics of pursuing the symbolic fundament of the field:

**Is and how is symbolic capital in the end transformed into economic capital?**

The little crazy world, the little crazy things, will all through this thesis not seem so crazy anymore. But actually quite logically, inventive and smart. In the conclusion I go back to my main research question and evaluate how these little crazy things eventually serve to make more sense of the crazy surrounding world, making it less crazy.



## Chapter three

### Symbolic positioning: not musicians, not even artists, but freedom fighters.

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#### Introduction

'It is bigger than music, it is bigger than me, it is bigger than all of us. It is not about making music, it is not even about making art, it is about the revolution. Aluta continua. Continue the revolution, by doing the only thing that I know to do: make music'

Jovi, BCUC.

Deep Soweto do not call themselves a crew, but a movement. Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness do not call themselves a band, but a human movement: 'the leaders of the new dawn'<sup>20</sup>. Cyrus does not want to be called a musician, not even an artist, but a freedom fighter. Because they claim not to make music to make music, as musicians would, but they make music to continue the revolution. They see music as an instrument in a greater goal of pursuing freedom in which they take the role as warriors and soldiers, movements of warriors and soldiers, spiritual leaders: the new freedom fighters of South Africa.

That revolution sets the artists in the field of hip hop free. Free from other fields: dividing the "us" and "them", giving the field the legitimacy to exist and a collective identity. As "they" are making music, the "us" are in a total different field aiming at something way bigger: creating revolution.

The Sunday Sessions are the stage on which that revolution is communicated. Through music, but even more through the little things around it: the looks, the sound, the appearance on stage, the yells, the big beer bottles. It is the cooking pot of cohesion, cooking one and the same meal for everybody at the sessions, that makes them all believe and know the codes of revolution. At the same time the Sunday Sessions are the battlefield where the artists compete, debate, battle over the exact ingredients in the cooking pot, over the exact codes and little things. They show sameness and difference.

The revolution is where the field of hip hop in Soweto is built on. It is the fundament, the collective belief and the bigger aim. It makes the field of hip hop a symbolic world,

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<sup>20</sup> See MySpace BCUC ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))

positioned on the symbolic end of the horizontal spectrum. In this symbolic universe with its own rules, it is about the little things, the knowledge to decipher them, authenticity and the world of economics turned upside down.

The three sub-questions that I answer in this chapter are:

- **How can the class fraction of the participants of the field of hip hop be described? In other words: what do the hip hoppers have in common?**
- **What are the specific codes that matter in the field?**
- **What is the collective belief that forms the foundation of the field the field?**

In the first paragraph I focus on the specifics of the class fraction that the hip hoppers have in common. Where do they speak from, who are they in the social stratification of contemporary South Africa? And how does that lead them to embrace the sub-culture of hip hop?

In the second paragraph I elaborate on the collective belief of the field. How do the artists interpret their position in society and how do they turn it into dignity instead of un-success? I elaborate on the specific language of the little things that they create from the inspiration of hip hop and history to communicate the collective belief and their position in society.

In the third paragraph I describe the case of three artists in the field. How do they interpret the revolution? How do they communicate the revolution? How do they strive for authority to change the codes of the field while at the same time conforming to these codes? And how do they draw upon history, the icon of Soweto?

I conclude with the argument that as much as music is a weapon in the bigger mission of revolution, the revolution itself is the weapon that feeds the collective belief of the field that makes the field of hip hop exist.

### **3.1 From class fraction to hip hop**

“You know the meaning of the word freedom?

You are dumb to believe that we are free”

This is an often made “joke”, might seem harmless, but it is one of those little things that means a lot. That harmless joke communicated the most important belief in the eyes of the artists: that Soweto is not free. Or at least, not for them. In this part of the chapter I elaborate on where they speak from: the youngsters for whom Soweto is not yet free. Belonging to the economic dominated class, with aspirations that are not fulfilled. Those class fractions, I argue, led them to embrace the American hip hop music that found its way in around the middle of the 90s and found their peers in the American youngsters from the “ghetto”. They use the American hip hop culture as a framework, an example, an inspiration to develop their own sub-culture, stretching and changing it into a more local, Soweto thing. The Sunday sessions inspired by hip hop give the platform to do so.

### *3.1.1 Class fractions: who are the hip hop artists in Soweto?*

The artists, my main informants and the artists at the sessions have a lot in common. More than that, they all live in Soweto and they share many characteristics of living in Soweto. Here I generalize, since there are of course exceptions in the many artists at the Sessions who I do not know.

The artists concerned here, are the “left behinds” of the new black elite. The Black Economic Empowerment measurements and the economic growth reached many Sowetans, but not them. While their neighbors are topping up their houses with second floors, they are still living with their whole families in that simple small matchbox house. While the guys on the other end of the street are driving around in the newest BMW convertibles, or at least in a car, most of these young guys are walking to the sessions, because sometimes even the taxi is too expensive<sup>21</sup>. While the shopping malls and adverts bring in commodities and consumption culture from all over the world (read American) and certainly bring the aspiration, these artists can not fulfill that aspiration. And while internet is promoted everywhere as the door to the world, to possibilities, to improvement, they hardly have access

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<sup>21</sup> Many members of Deep Soweto walk to the session for this reason.

to it<sup>22</sup>. The digitalization for now seems to dig an even bigger gap between the haves and the have not's of which the hip hoppers in Soweto belong to the latter<sup>23</sup>.

Most of these young men do not have a full time job, nor do they have the opportunity to follow further education. They are “unemployed” (in brackets for they would say being employed in pushing the struggle). That means they have no regular income to bring into the household, nor do they have a full day occupation. They need not to be at school or at work during the day. And so a lot of time is spent on the streets. Socializing with peers is one of their main occupations. “Hang out” on the streets. With beer being cheaper than Coca Cola and dagga (weed) being cheaper than cigarettes, this can have devastating results. As crime is high in Soweto, some of my (and I believe more than I know) informants were or are involved in criminal activities, ranging from selling weed to hijackings and robberies.

Another commonality is that they are all young men. The average age at the sessions is around eighteen to twenty five<sup>24</sup>. As young men, living with their families – their parental generation and some with their children – they are expected, pressured to bring in food on the plate, to contribute to the household. But at the same time they are in their adolescent years, looking for fun, for girls, for making an impression on their peers.

It is from this angle that they speak. Their peers are making it, earning money, buying clothes and buying cars, improving their matchbox houses, having a job in the city, socializing in the fancy clubs and online – enjoying the new freedoms that the transition in South Africa brings. But they are not. That new freedom has not reached them and did not give them what it gave others: money. They are left at the bottom of inequality, instead of worrying about which movie to watch at the eight screen cinema in Maponya, they worry about the taxi rates going up and about what to eat the rest of the day. On first view, they are

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<sup>22</sup> This shows, from the fact that at the moment of my research, almost none of them have posted clips or songs on the internet. Only BCUC had a MySpace account with information, but not yet with music and videos.

<sup>23</sup> The access and use of internet by the youth in Soweto has changed enormously ever since I ended my fieldwork. While the gap is still enormous, it brings many new opportunities for the young artists.

<sup>24</sup> With Jovi and the members of BCUC slightly older than most of my informants.

poor, hang out on the streets and fight. At a first glance, they are poor, hanging out on the streets all day and fight.

Summarized and generalized, the class fraction where the artists in the field of hip hop speak from is the poor, streetwise, fighter. Low on economic capital, but rich in social and cultural capital (that I further elaborate in chapter four). Facing growing inequalities and not being able to grasp the economic opportunities (yet) in these times of globalization, consumerism and individualization, are the common experiences that drew these young guys to the same sub-culture.

At this time, in this setting it was the hip hop culture, the American conscious rappers that they felt aligned with. It gave them the framework to change what being poor, being streetwise and being a fighter indicates: not un-success but dignity.

### *3.1.2 Framework for dignity: hip hop*

The “new situation” in the 90s in South Africa demanded a new musical framework to symbolize the new feelings, new possibilities and new influences of the country for black youth. The opening up to international media brought inspiration, music and sub-cultures from all over the world (or at least from America). To protect local music in accelerated globalization to catch up for all the years that South Africa closed itself towards the world, laws were introduced that made it mandatory for the radio and television stations to spend at least 20% of their air time to locally produced music. The new social situation for black youth and the new possibilities of the media demanded a locally produced music culture. The answer was Kwaito (Coplan 2005: 15). Allen (2004) describes the musical style as:

“a South African blend of hip hop with European and American dance music, especially house and techno, and pop... dominated by an unyielding, pounding bass beat that was marginally mediated by other cyclically repeated rhythmic modules [with] instrumental backing [that] tended to be entirely computer generated. Snatches of catchy melodies were layered and looped around the vocal parts that tended to be .. inspired by rap” (2)



Kwaito soon became popular in the township. It was not only the music, but a whole culture around it of dance moves and dress codes. It symbolized in a first place the townships and the poverty struck areas, that came to be associated with 'cool'. The word itself came from the combination of 'kwaai' (meaning cool in Afrikaans) and 'to' from township (Steingo 2005: 333). The dress code around it, became known as "Loxion Kulcha" (meaning township style in Zulu) (333) and was inspired by the youth in the townships.

At the same time Kwaito was associated with the new black elite and consumer culture. That was symbolized in popular accessories like golden chains, cars and branded clothes. It was about celebrating the new material revenues that were coming and expected to come with the new situation of South Africa. It symbolized the aspiration of wanting to be part of the new black elite, about getting rich.

Kwaito was a break from tradition. The political, resisting element that **was obvious** in South African popular music for so long, was not there in Kwaito. Kwaito's verbal texts (mainly in its first years) were about dancing, having fun and enjoying the new found freedom instead of sociopolitical issues, resisting and revolutions.

Black youth in the townships embraced the "new" South Africa that Kwaito expressed and embodied: a free South Africa, united, happy, free from struggles, positive, full of hope and of money (Steingo 2005; Allen 2004; Stephens 2000). Coplan (2005) argues it was:

"the new sound for the post struggle young black lions and lionesses: a prideful, even predatory roar of pleasure hunting" (15).

As it symbolized that, it was soon taken up by the mainstream music industry and turned into a many million Rand business (16). The original township underground music culture became mainstream and reached many more than the black youth in the township. The music became a national, international symbol of the free happy South Africa. But the more Kwaito became successful in the mainstream music industry, the more it lost its popularity among the black youth in Soweto.

Previously embraced, halfway the 90s a group of black youth turned against Kwaito. I believe there were two reasons for this turn around. First of all, Kwaito that once was "theirs"

had become the sub-culture of the nation, politicians, rich stars. The control over the style, the content, the little things was taken out of the hands of the youth in the townships and was now controlled by the industry: huge companies as YFM and Loxion Kulxha. Secondly, for this group the few years that passed by since the start of Kwaito did not bring the economic wealth and the development that the black youth in the townships expected. These youngsters were struggling everyday with issues as poverty, crime, leading hardship lives. Their aspirations were not fulfilled and no longer could they sympathize and align with the image of South Africa that Kwaito symbolized: happy, struggle free and money. Success in Kwaito was indicated by money, cars, international fame, but these youngsters from the streets were fighters and poor. In Kwaito they could no longer find an interpretation of why, they could not find dignity in who they are and in having fun and forgetting about politics, they did not see the solution to the insecurities that they were faced with.

These youngsters needed a new framework to fit their position in the stratification, to give them an explanation of why the new developments are not advantaging them. They needed a framework to turn the world around: to see and present themselves – poor, street and fighters – not as victims of individual incapability of not being able to grasp the new opportunities, but to find dignity in that. That framework they found in hip hop.

Halfway the nineties hip hop found fertile ground in South Africa. The subculture presents itself as the sub-culture generated at the end of the seventies in the poverty struck ghetto's of New York as an expression of the latino and black youngsters faced with social isolation, economic fragility and shrinking social services. The black youngsters from the townships were inspired by the American raps about the same insecurities as they were facing. Hip hop used the ghetto as source of identity, undermining stigma's as poverty and social marginality. The ghetto: a place of poverty, crime, street gangs, isolation was turned into a proud place and a vibrant creative outlet in which there was place for pleasure as well as critics on society. To be from the ghetto, to be street, poor and fighter in the sub-culture of hip hop was considered 'cool' and at the same time through the music it provided a 'black

CNN: an alternative media to the white mainstream media for the black youth to voice themselves<sup>25</sup>. Hip hop provided the medium for ‘the voice of the margins’ (Rose 2006).

That voice of the margins was what the black youngsters in the townships would love to be. The hip hop that came from America gave them the framework to form a collective voice from the margins. Halfway the 90s “Le Club” opened its doors in Johannesburg centre. This was the first place to play hip hop music and to offer the young crowd an open stage for hip hop sessions. When the place closed down at the end of the 90s, the young inspired Sowetan youth started to organize their own events in the township.

As it fitted the origins of hip hop and as there was no other possibility, those events took place on public spaces, empty fields between the streets of the townships. Here the sub-culture of hip hop developed from being imitated to being used as reference and inspiration by the young Sowetan guys to form their own field with specific codes, rules, little things and their own meanings. The Sunday Sessions as they became known, gave the platform for the sub-culture to develop into a very local sub-culture, where slang and vernacular<sup>26</sup> rap replaced most English raps, local dance moves replaced break dance, mow hawks slowly replace caps, Jozimental<sup>27</sup> clothing replaced the American brands and djembe’s slowly replace the computer generated beat<sup>28</sup>.

### 3.2 Collective explanation and specific codes

Hip hop functioned as a common ground for a large group of black youth in Soweto and gave a framework to organize weekly gatherings: the Sunday Sessions. Hip hop inspired the youngsters to find dignity in the elements *street*, *poor* and *fighter* which fitted their position in new South Africa: not free.

At the Sunday Sessions this was further developed into a collectively understood language of little things, specific codes that communicated these elements. A symbolic

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<sup>25</sup> Chuck D, rapper of militant rap group Public Enemy from the States. Cited in Van Stapele 2002: 10)

<sup>26</sup> Vernacular rap refers to rap in the African languages of which there are eleven spoken in Soweto (among which the most common Zulu and seSotho)

<sup>27</sup> Jozimental is a hip hop clothing brand from Johannesburg. (jozimental.ning.com)

<sup>28</sup> For example BCUC originated from hip hop inspired to their own sound in which the djembe plays a leading role.

language that is only understood and only matters within the field of hip hop. The alphabet the youngsters draw upon in making this language contains examples of their American peers, but more importantly of a rich history of resistance and struggles and of the revolution.

This alphabet does not only reflect their position in the social stratification of the contemporary South Africa, it also tries to interpret and answer the question of why they are not part of the black elite. The answer is that the revolution is not finished yet, freedom is not there and they are the freedom fighters, their duty is to lead the many people to freedom.

### 3.2.1 The specific codes

The elements of common ground: street, poor, fighter are translated in the field into a kind of language consisting of many little things, that might at first glance seem strange and unimportant, but that actually form a powerful method to communicate the commonness of the field. In table 3.1 I have listed some of them that I came across in the field. This list is no less and no more than a framework, a source of inspiration to maneuver through for artists and audience in the field of hip hop.

	<b>Authentic (us)</b>	<b>Inauthentic (them)</b>
<b>Poor</b>	Big beer bottles	Small beer bottles
	Second hand clothes	New branded clothes
	Poloni, Vienna,	Restaurants
	Living in shacks	Living in villa
	Township schools	Model C schools
<b>Fighter</b>	Hardknock life	Easy life
	(ex) criminal	Never experienced crime
	Guns	
	Pitbulls	
	Hustler	Have a fulltime job
	Tough	Sissy
	Independent artist	Signed with record company
<b>Street, local</b>	Sotho, Zulu, Tsotsitaal	English
	Spinning cars	
	Dirty shoes	Clean shoes
	Mohawks, Masai hairdo, Afro's	Straightened hair
	Traditional Sotho chants	
	African medicines	Western medicines

Table 3.1

To be a legitimate player in the field of hip hop is to prove the homology between ones class fraction and the expectations of the position. A legitimate position in the field of hip hop in Soweto is about being poor, fighter and street. Poor refers to the possession of few economic assets. Fighter means to be able to survive the hardships of live in a dangerous place and to be creative to make things happen, even without economic assets. Street refers to the live on the streets of Soweto, the dangerous aspect of the township. At the same time I mean to refer with the aspect street to locality. Besides the actual street, it can mean the locality of the township versus the city, Johannesburg versus Cape Town or Africa versus the West.

The language that is summarized in the table signifies a way to prove that homology and claim authenticity. As much as proving to be “us”, it is about opposing and distinction from “them”, the other, wealthy, sissy-like as described by the characteristics in the second column.

The list is under continuous construction and subject to continuous discussion, as the rules are continuously reset and revised by the participants in the field of hip hop: the artists and the audiences. In this symbolic field, the rules and codes are for ever changing and the field is an ongoing battle between the players over the authority to draw those rules. The authority is fought for by authenticity, proving that homology. To change the list above, one first needs to conform to it, that is to prove one is poor, street and fighter.

This list presents the ingredients to play and clay with to do exactly this. As Goffmann (1959) explained, the image one presents is a manipulative one drawn from the point what others think of them. Editor Fungayi from South African hip hop magazine said in striking words:

“.. who do we say is tight and who is watered down and what yard-stick do we use? There seems to be a misguided belief that to be perceived as real to the cause one has *to appear or literally be* impoverished, hate all white people and live like a beggar”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hype Magazine May 2005: 6.

In this respect, I argue that, even more than literally being poor, fighter and street, is to be perceived as such. It is the feeling for the game that one needs to be able to maneuver through the list.

Through a short video clip<sup>30</sup> and two photographs<sup>31</sup> that give a general feel and sight of the Sunday Sessions in Soweto I want to introduce you to the conformations of the audience and artists to this list

*Street:* The Sunday Sessions are held on the public spaces between streets. Slaghuis is practically held on the street, as shown on the picture and the video. Splash jam is held in the open space of a car wash on the public space next to a crossroad. One of the Sessions, Streetpop had the opportunity to hold their event indoors, but that attracted only a crowd of twenty to thirty people, instead of the regular 200-500. The Sessions belong on the streets. That public place is “friendly hijacked” for the Sunday, changed into a territory of the young hip hoppers, where they drink and smoke dagga (something that is normally not done in the streets because of the danger of being caught by police). Every area in Soweto has its own session as shown in the video (Graveside – Dobsonville, Dungeon Shack – Meadowlands, Slaghuis – Diepkloof, Splash Jam – Orlando, 1808 – Pimville, Backyard Sessions – White City), every Session is organized by a group of organizers representing that certain area in Soweto, who know and come from that area. The spinning cars, the BMX bikes complement the street element at the Sessions.

*Poor:* The style of clothing that generalizes the audience at the sessions is distinctive but simple: low hanging jeans, simple shirts. Most do not really show off in the sense of expensive accessories or a distinctive style. The clothing more communicates a commonness of simple-ness, sober-ness, hip hop-ness. The element of poor especially gets clear when one thinks of all the things that are not there at the Sunday Sessions compared to other street events: bags, attributes, cameras, camping chairs, sound systems, snacks, small beer bottles, Savannah and strong liquor. Mostly the only liquor that one finds at the sessions are the big beer bottles (relatively cheaper than small beer bottles) and the only food are the ganja cakes.

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<sup>30</sup> See video number 1, playlist chapter three.

<sup>31</sup> See pictures number 7-9.

*Fighter:* The name Slaghuis in itself conforms to the element of fighter, as it is explained by Enzo in the video as ‘a place where the beef [conflict] can be chopped’. The barbed wire and the glass splinters on the wall and on the ground portray Slaghuis as an aggressive, dangerous place. Most obvious symbols of the fighter that the video shows are the gun that the child is carrying and the aggressive dog, the pit-bull.

At first sight these sessions, these gathering might seem about nothing else than young guys ‘hanging’ around, drinking, smoking and rapping now and then. But the sessions serve as a stage that the youngsters do not disavow but show openly and proud that they are: street, poor and fighters.

### *3.2.2 The codes explained: revolution*

The Sunday Sessions are the stage where the common ground of being poor, fighter and street is communicated through the many little things in hip hop. The first Session that brought hip hop from the cities into the townships of Soweto was an artistic and political cultural movement known simply as ‘Black Sunday’ (Madondo, 2003: 135). Black Sunday brought into the frame of hip hop scene the ideological element of revolution: through books, paintings, raps inspired by black leading figures of different revolutions (Malcolm X, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Bob Marley, Talib Kweli, Shaka Zulu) and the start of the ‘Black Sunday Academy’ to ‘edutain<sup>32</sup>’ the youth not to forget about local histories (Madondo 2003). Through that ideological element the Sunday Sessions distinguished themselves from the scene in town and other fields and gave them a legitimate reason to exist: to edutain the youth about revolution.

The bigger mission of revolution also provides a way to interpret being poor, fighter and street. These common experiences were not perceived and interpreted as an individual failure, but as common burden of ongoing oppression, of un-freedom that demanded the pursuit of a collective revolution. Mandela might have finished his long walk to freedom just like the black elite, but for these many poor youngsters just as many people in South Africa it has not. Many are still poor and still walking. There is pride to be found in that, if the freed

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<sup>32</sup> “Edutain” refers to the combination of ‘educate’ and ‘entertain’.

people are opposed and the walking glorified, and if one fights, not for his own individual freedom, but to lead the many people to freedom: to be the leader of freedom fighters.

In order to be a legitimate leader in the fight for freedom one needs to have felt and experienced the hardships of un-free life (be poor), needs to be able to represent the many walking people on the streets (be street, be local) and one needs to be brave enough to take the lead on the frontline (be fighter). Being poor, street and fighter are thus turned from indicators of individual failure to indicators of an authentic freedom fighter. Instead of powerless victims in the time of freedom, the artists in the field of hip hop present themselves as freedom fighters in the time of war.

“Music, fashion and spoken words are our tools that give us spiritual freedom in a so called ‘free’ South Africa.” BCUC<sup>33</sup>

The music and everything around it, i.e. the lyrics, the sounds, the appearance and melodies communicate the revolution among the field of hip hop. Those are their weapons to mobilize their scene in knowing and understanding the fundamental belief: revolution. This revolutionary aspect is the element that gives the field a distinct character from other fields. They are not the after struggle generation as Kwaito symbolized, but they are a generation caught in the middle of the struggle. Distinguishing themselves from those who leave the struggle, from those who leave the masses walking and strive for individual freedom and individual wealth. In addition, those little things are the weapons for the artists to prove that they are the authentic, legitimate, freedom fighters. A battle over interpretation of the revolution, about the road to the promised land but above all over little things as music, style and looks.

### **3.3 The revolution performed**

In this paragraph I will describe and elaborate on the strategies of the three artists Salas, Cyrus and Jovi, to present themselves as freedom fighters. This I have summarized in table 2.1. I analyze the little things that communicate the revolution, being poor, street and fighter,

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<sup>33</sup> See myspace BCUC.



their interpretations of the revolutions and the connection between them. Bringing them together I argue that the field is a battlefield where they struggle not necessarily over interpretations of the revolutions, but over style.

	<b>Salas</b>	<b>Cyrus</b>	<b>Jovi</b>
<b><i>Revolution</i></b>	Respect the street, the new comrades	Self knowledge	Human consciousness
<b>Performing</b>	Group, hated, ciphers on the street	Alone, loved, everywhere	Band, only at certain occasions
<b>Audience</b>	Loud, aggressive	Silent, listening	Emotional, touched
<b>Musical sound</b>	Rap, raw, punch lines	Sing along, soft, repeating	Chants mixed with hip hop, soul, drum
<b>Lyrics</b>	Violence, bragging & boasting, Bantu languages	Simple, messias, God, religion, hip hop, English	Black consciousness, revolution, Bantu languages mixed with English
<b>Looks</b>	Amapantsula, invisible	Simple, open	Colors, muscular, brands, different
<b><i>Authority</i></b>	Mentor of the army Fear = respect	Messias The chosen one who can see	Warrior on front line Trendsetter

Table 2.1

### 3.3.1 Salas and Deep Soweto: the thugs of the street, the new street gang

‘The truth must be told. If not now, when? There is a lot happening in South Africa and it’s been hidden. They tell the people around the world that we are free, you know. Yet, we are not. They are free, because they are rich. Doing corruption. Zuma is raping and what not. Thabo Mbeki doesn’t want to talk. They killed Chris Hani and don’t want to talk. We know the truth. Chris Hani once came to that stadium. I touched him! I was a young boy. I loved Chris Hani more than Mandela. People love Chris Hani more than Mandela’.

Salas, Deep Soweto<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In an interview with SSLD. Watch the clip to get an introduction to Deep Soweto and their revolution: nr 2 in the playlist chapter three.

Deep Soweto. They present themselves in this video as the movement about the Truth. A truth that is hidden by leaders that instead of improving the community spend their energies on raping, on corruption and on keeping the people from seeing: that they are not yet free. In one of the interviews Salas explained to me (and to the members of Deep Soweto that were present) what the revolution is about.

“They [the economic and political leaders] from up there just bring us cheap booze. But what we need is free lectures to improve our computer skills. They feed us with cheap booze and free food. They try to keep us down. But what they should not forget is that we still rule the streets of Soweto. We will uplift our communities by changing the mindset of the youth. By making sure that they do not forget: we still rule here, better respect us”

Said Salas in an interview. The “they” is where Deep Soweto positions themselves against: the economic and political powerful. Deep Soweto positions themselves as the other end, the “us”, the opposite: economical and political less powerful: the people. But while “they” are trying to control and keep the position of domination, Salas explains that in the streets of Soweto economic and political capital do not matter, do not indicate success or dignity. Instead it are those views, with lots of social and cultural capital that are the success on the streets. The revolution of Deep Soweto is about creating respect for those streetwise youngsters, warning those to not drink nor eat the free food and free booze that would keep “them” on the position of domination. Deep Soweto wants to turn the world around. It is not about economics or politics, but about social and cultural capital.

Deep Soweto position themselves against the political leaders of Zuma, Mbeki, Mandela. Against the known economic and political powerful leaders. Instead the leader that they adore is Chris Hani. Chris Hani was as young men from a rural village the leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC and of the South African Communist Party. He was killed in 1993 by an affiliate of the apartheid regime. His assassination made the abolishment of the apartheid demanded. Why Chris Hani and not Mandela? Who killed Chris Hani, Salas pulls the question open: the economic political powerful? Chris Hani and

not Mandela, because Mandela now belongs to the economic and political powerful. Chris Hani does not. Before he could, he died. Now he can be glorified.

“We still rule” Salas mentioned. He refers to the comrades. The thugs, the street gangs that in the eighties played a role in fighting the revolution by rendering the townships ungovernable by the economic and political powerful. They created their own street politics and judgement systems. They were feared, respected as the freedom fighters. Deep Soweto aligns themselves with those street gangs. They claim to be the new thugs, the new comrades, the new freedom fighters from the streets. Salas portrays himself and Deep Soweto as the street gangs: thugs to be feared, but not criminals: they have the good intentions of improving the communities. In his opinion the power and ability that can and needs to change Soweto and South Africa lies not with the politicians up there, who lost their connection with the people, but on the streets. Their weapons in creating that recognition and respect as freedom fighters of the street they get through their clothes, their looks, lyrics and sound.

### *Looks*

“It is the first Sunday of the month. The session is happening in Diepkloof today, the township close to town and the session best known, called ‘Slaghuis’. It is around four, still early and still quiet. Until Deep Soweto arrives. Half by foot, half by car, but all together in a huge group of about twenty people. They arrive with noise. I can not see their faces yet and can not yet read the ‘Deep Soweto’ on their shirts, but just by the noise, their swagger and the size of the group, I know for sure: Deep Soweto has arrived. From now on, the session will be loud and happening, guaranteed.”<sup>35</sup>

Deep Soweto stands out in the way they look. They stand out by looking simple. No glamour, nothing fancy: thin young men in simple clothes, mostly a bit baggy jeans, not too colorful, nothing shiny, nothing gold, no brands – nothing really outstanding<sup>36</sup>. But their shoes. Mostly all stars, worn out. Not too clean, they look like they have been walking and walking and walking. Outstanding they look, by being so many of them. It is hard to catch one alone, they move in groups. Come to the Sessions together, hang around together and leave

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<sup>35</sup> My notes from my fieldwork.

<sup>36</sup> See picture 4

together. Most of the time by foot. It is easy to spot the Deep Soweto crew. It is obvious who belongs to Deep Soweto and who not. They communicate it actively towards the audience, towards me, towards always present photographers and cameramen, by their yells of 'yeah baby' and the sign 'middle finger to the ground' that they made into their trademarks. By their merchandising, their blank shirts with the name "Deep Soweto", by their attributes: a glass of juice that is shared among the members at the Sessions, and by the noise that always surrounds the crew. In their not outstanding outfits, they created a very strong distinct look with those things that make them look very outstanding.

The looks of Deep Soweto as described by the audiences at the Sessions was mainly described with words like "amapantsula", "tsotsi's" and "thugs". Names that were used for the street gangs in the 80s. But as the amapantsula and tsotsi's were known for their high standard dress codes and expensive clothing, that is not what Deep Soweto's clothes resemble. Instead their clothes look simple, inexpensive, the opposite of consumption. Their shoes look not always clean, but like they are worn out, walked a long way on the streets, resembling their image as street and economically poor. But I imagine they most resemble the street gangs in the way they walk, the group they move in, the chica's that are surrounding them

### *Performances and audience*

"As Cya Shezi and Sbegejuju, two artists from Deep Soweto make their way to stage, surrounded by many other Deep Soweto-ers, the crowd moves to the stage as well. It is getting so crowded and so loud at the stage. People fight over stones to stand on to see the performance. When Cya Shezi starts, arms go in the air, the audience 'wows' and yells at the punch lines. I am trying to see him, trying to catch his performance and at the same time, the reaction of the crowd and his rhymes, his sound, his flow. The beat is fast and simple, not so melodious, but it fits the raw rap and makes that the raps stand out. Punch lines – wows. His face looks angry, his movement on stage energetic, tight, aggressive. He raps in Sesotho, so I can not understand in the first place. 'Gangsta-rap', Jovi translates the whole track for me in one word. I feel the aggression on stage and off stage and it makes me tensed. Suddenly it is quiet: the sound breaks down, the mic's do not work anymore. "Sabotage!" screams someone from the audience. "Sabotage! Sabotage! Sabotage!", others in the audience follow the voice. The crowd moves and yells and the tension gets high, the aggression can

be felt and for a moment I think that it would end up in a fight here, if the sound does not switch on soon. And luckily after a few seconds it does. Cya Shezi goes on where the sound left him and the audience 'wows' again on his punch lines.”

Beyond any doubt, Deep Soweto’s artists on stage are the performers from all performers at the sessions who receive the most noisy, active and aggressive reactions of the audiences. The fact that the sound went off (coincidence or not – it does happen almost always at a Deep Soweto performance) only made the audience louder, more active and noisy. The reaction of the crowd shows recognition and appreciation. Their loudness, aggressiveness also fit and strengthen the image of fighter, thugs of Deep Soweto.

The Deep Soweto members are always present at the sessions, but create their own event within the session. They claim their own territory within the public space of the Session. They are not always performing on stage, but they always are in their own territory in ciphers<sup>37</sup>: they stick their heads together and rap over the beat that the beat boxer produces. This own little mysterious territory where one does not simply get in when not part of Deep Soweto functions as a distinction between them and the rest. To perform in a cipher, even more, is considered as the most honest, real way to perform. For it is said to be a freestyle, imagined on the spot, the mystification of the unique creator is there. The ciphers of Deep Soweto present the artists of the crew as pure creators from within, honest and authentic.

The Deep Soweto crew can not always perform, because they create conflicts with the organizers of most of the Sessions, by “dissing” (spoken bad about) them in their tracks. Although it might not seem very wise to do so, because for an artist it is important to perform and showcase your music and lyrics, it’s a conscious decision. A conscious decision to criticize others, make them look not afraid to fight thereby distinguishing themselves from the others.

They dissed the anchorman of Slaghuis but were still allowed on stage, because their fan base was too big to be neglected. The anchorman of Slaghuis took the decision to take Deep

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<sup>37</sup> For an example of a cipher watch again the video of Deep Soweto at the Sunday Sessions (playlist chapter three, number 1).

Soweto's diss and let them perform and therefore will be damaged in his fighter mentality, because not letting them perform would give him more damage in that his audience wanted Deep Soweto on stage. The ability to force themselves on stage by respect and demand from the audience gave Deep Soweto even more respect. It showed the authority they have to bend the rules.

### *Lyrics and sound*

“We are doing organized confusion.  
When Deep Soweto comes in, everybody gets afraid.  
We are doing organized confusion.  
Beware do not come to us without thinking: you will get kicked in your face.”<sup>38</sup>

This track of which this fragment is part of is from their first mix tape, released during my field work period. In this track the three elements poor, fighter and street, are obviously communicated through words. Poor, by affiliating themselves with “hardcore ghetto food” (we were eating polony, Vienna, magwenya and mangola) and opposing themselves against “you” with cars (your mothers car). Street, by using the codes of the street, the knowledge of the street that the Deep Soweto rappers claim to have (we have to show you that you are not the shit in the street). Fighter, through presenting themselves as the ‘real gangsters’, using the affiliation to the Damarras, a well known and feared street gang in the eighties<sup>39</sup>. They direct the track to other rappers at the Sessions (you rappers), warning them for a fight if they do not respect Deep Soweto (don't piss us off, you'll have blood running through your nose). They present themselves as the crew to be feared and that is feared by others in the field (you are afraid we are here to shine). “Organized confusion” is what the Deep Soweto rappers bring.

Sbegejuju and Chucka Donna, the rappers of the track are a rap duo within Deep Soweto. Deep Soweto has many artists, that together feature on the mix tape and together

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<sup>38</sup> See for the rest of the translation of the track appendix. Listen to the track: number 1 on CD.

<sup>39</sup> Bonner and Segal (1998)

perform at the Sunday Sessions. Their sound is almost the same, their beats are always raw, their raps are filled with punch lines and the language is more or less the same: always a mix of vernacular (mostly Zulu and Sesotho) mixed with 'tsotsitaal'. The use of tsotsitaal, which is another word for street slang symbolized symbolizes the street-ness of Deep Soweto. They know the codes of the streets.

### *Authority*

The image that Deep Soweto pursuits through their looks, performance, lyrics and sounds is one of the thug to be feared. The hugeness of the group, the aggressive atmosphere at the performances, the warning lyrics and the raw sound all fit to the image of thugs. In this role they consciously show many similarities with the street gangs in the 80s. They present themselves as thugs, but not the criminal kind: they are thugs in the name of revolution, just like the street gangs in the eighties. Doing "organized confusion" as the name of the track, just like the street gangs in the 80s, which created chaos on the streets, but organized chaos to keep control. Fear creates respect. That is what they got from the Slaghuis organizer, that is what they get from the audience. That is obvious from the wows at the Sessions.

### *3.3.2 Cyrus: the messiah*

"My message for the youth:

..keep a positive focus

..through knowledge of self we can conquer anything: that is the definition of hip hop.

..love God, love yourself, love consciousness, cause its what we strive for.

..read books

..and remember Steve Biko, remember Mandela, try to be like Mandela: visionary"<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See YouTube playlist chapter three, video 3.

Cyrus is a religious person, of many religions. He went from door to door, he explained, to look for freedom. But instead at every door, referring to different churches, he was told lies that kept him from being free<sup>41</sup>.

Cyrus was a Rasta for some time, inspired by the rejection of materialism and the Western society. Then he became inspired by the conscious rappers from America and their self esteem and self education. Cyrus explained how he realized that he did not need anything but to know himself, to value himself and to respect himself to get to God and to get to freedom. He realized that he got the life lessons not in churches, but through the hard life on the streets. And the lessons and codes that he learned there, he can use via hip hop to create the freedom to dominate.

Cyrus feels it as his duty to share what he found out with the youth: revolution through hip hop and self knowledge. That is what he preaches and in doing so he presents himself as the educator, the messiah, the one in spiritual trance, the open and social one that will lead his people to the promised land. His revolution is not one of violence or aggression, not one of fighting, not one of soldiers, not one of war and not fought by an army. His revolution is calm, silent, individual and spiritual: it's religious.

He is inspired by two well known leaders of history, so he says in the interview. Steve Biko and Mandela. Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement preached the non violent struggle, that was mostly fought by instilling knowledge into the minds of black people like Cyrus is aiming to do with his music. 'Try to be like Mandela, so we can all be visionaries, not just people', Cyrus said and he is trying to take the lead, like Mandela did, to be a freedom fighter like known and respected in Cyrus eyes.

### *Looks*

Cyrus looks hip hop: baggy jeans, sneakers and wide shirts. Not bling, not fancy, not gold, no brands and not too many colors. He looks not outstanding compared to most of the guys at the sessions. But at the same time he looks outstanding, wearing a shirt with 1852: the area code of Meadowlands. It shows where he comes from, his locality, shows the streets where he

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<sup>41</sup> See track 2. Lyrics in appendix.



comes from<sup>42</sup>. And sometimes he looks a little more outstanding, when he is dressed in the military outfits made by his girlfriend, a fashion designer. With the hood, the simple-ness, on the baggy jeans it still conforms to the style of most at the Sessions, but stands out and shows the military fighter (but it does not seem to match his interpretation of non violent revolution). It is a win-win situation: he pushes her designs, while her designs make his looks.

More of his looks are in the way he walks, the way he talks, the way he moves: it is calm, thoughtful and easy going. And easy going he is, moving around at the sessions talking to the audience a lot, unlike the Deep Soweto crew. It seems he knows everybody at the sessions and everybody knows Cyrus. He drops by for a small talk about the self knowledge, holding a few copies of his EP in his hand: his bible, his pamphlet in his mission. He comes across as the social one, the easy approachable one, the sweet, cute one, the open one.

His EP is low budget produced. That is visible in the sleeve, handcrafted by his brother, copied on a copy machine with too little ink. The disc self burned on a computer, written on it: Cyrus the Virus – the Real O Cyrus.

### *Performances and audience*

‘C to the Y to the R U S! One for your mind, body and soul!’<sup>43</sup>

There is no performance so different from Deep Soweto than Cyrus’ one. Aggression makes place for easiness, calmness. He speaks slow, articulates and repeats. Instead of loud, active aggressive movement on stage, his performance is calm. And instead of a loud aggressive audience, his audience joins gently in. No hands in the air, no ‘wows’ at punch lines, but waving with the arms, bouncing on the beat. He calmly walks the stage, connecting to different parts of the audience. After the performance of Deep Soweto, he brings the place in a silent mode, almost a trance. Cyrus’ performance after Deep Soweto feels like a calm wind coming through that softly blows away the aggression and tension. Opening the space up literally: I can move again, am not stuck in the crowd anymore.

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<sup>42</sup> See picture number 5

<sup>43</sup> See YouTube playlist chapter three number 6

On the contrary of Deep Soweto, he is always performing. There has not been a session where I did not see Cyrus perform. He is loved, simply loved or at least liked by all the organizers of all the sessions.

*Lyrics and sound*

“If you can see what I see you would not like the view  
But what is see can only be seen by the chosen few  
So absorb my words cause until you will see  
This MC wont seize,  
For as the modern Moses it is my tempt to split seas  
Stepping on the mic[rophone] telling stories  
And to those who listen it is knowledge I’m instilling  
...  
Mislead freedom cause we lack the wisdom  
We’re victims of the system  
Black souls in prison, surrounded by walls of lies  
Blinded eyes”<sup>44</sup>

Cyrus in his lyrics talks to “you”, like educating “you” (absorb my words until you will see) about the views that he has: the “we” that you and Cyrus belong to is not free. He claims in his lyrics that the black people are not free, but “surrounded by walls” that keep people from seeing (blinded eyes) the ugly reality (our streets are filthy, bothers in the ghetto are left stranded and jobless, infinite violence). It keeps them down, but Cyrus wants to open eyes through his lyrics. He claims he can, because he has seen the path to freedom as the “chosen one”. Only listen to his lyrics and get “healed” by the “knowledge he is instilling”. Only give him the authority to split the seas and lead the many people to the promised land.

Cyrus raps in English, which is on the right hand side, the wrong side of the list. When someone raps in English, there is always someone in the audience complaining. Most of Dungeon Shack rappers use English, contradicting the trend of most Sowetan rappers. English is associated with the schools outside of the township that teach in English and opened up to black youth after the abolishment of apartheid. Those schools were often

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<sup>44</sup> Track number 2 on CD, lyrics in appendix.

considered to give 'better' education, but were more expensive. Only the well off families were able to send their children to these schools. And so English is associated by many in the field of hip hop in Soweto as associated to the more wealthy and the city: not poor and street. My informants who rap in English were always very quick with defending oneself. Like they feel the need to explain, to put straight, to correct why they rap in English. Neon, one of the other Meadowland-rappers turns the association around, making English a more authentic language to use and at the same time explains how he makes sure it is not associated with not poor and not street:

'we rap in English, because that is how we learned hip hop, but you can hear the township in our accents'

### *Authority*

Cyrus is a fighter, but the opposite kind of fighter than Deep Soweto. Cyrus is not the feared, but the loved. Not the group, but the only one. The chosen one: some kind of messiah that is friends with almost everybody. The one to be respected, because he knows. The positive one, pure one, no nonsense one and the pure hip hop one. That is his strategy that he hopes gives him the power, trust and authority so that his people will follow his road in the journey to the promised land.

### *3.3.3 Jovi and BCUC: the crazy warriors on the frontline*

"Bantu Continua Uhuru Consciousness" means the people (Bantu) continuing the long walk towards freedom (uhuru) of consciousness. As BCUC explains, they feel they are liberated from white power, but freedom is not there yet. It needs more struggle, more revolution, more war. And that is for BCUC a "war of consciousness", collective consciousness (from black white to yellow) of respect and humanness towards each other. There revolution is one against slavery, inequality and discrimination<sup>45</sup> within and between all races.

For that revolution, BCUC explain in a documentary<sup>46</sup> it needs destruction, in order to construct and rebuild. Sometimes it needs "fire", for things to get better.

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<sup>45</sup> As described on their MySpace ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))

<sup>46</sup> See playlist chapter three number 5

“It is war, its on, no more peace ...

Cowards move, move to the back (translation)

Let us brave hearts take the lead (translation)

Ons baklei

War of the warriors”

Jovi explains why it needs destruction in the introduction on one of their performances. He explains how too little has really changed yet in South Africa. How his street lives on the same space of that one villa owned by the white man on the hills of Johannesburg. He explains the animals have more space than the people in the townships and are protected and taken care of. Too little has changed in BCUCs eyes. Needed is change from the ground up. Destruction and that for BCUC comes with war, warriors and brave hearts: BCUC.

They started a campaign:

“We resist the 46664 for the blacks by the whites to fake heroes”

They strongly oppose against the “fake leaders” that South Africa had in the past. They refer in the campaign to the anti HIV and Aids organization 46664 of Nelson Mandela. BCUC explains this organization as using the struggles of the people to earn money, by Nelson Mandela but mostly by the whites. Nelson Mandela and the Nelson Mandela’s in South Africa are the reason in BCUCs eyes that the freedom that their grandfathers fought for – equal opportunities for all – are not there yet. Nelson Mandela did not change the inequality in its very essence, is their view and was not brave enough to do what he had to do to give equality a change: land reformation (referring to the results of the negotiations between Nelson Mandela as leader of the ANC and the National Party during the reformation of the government after abolishment of the apartheid).

They resist the leaders, and instead claim to be representing the “ordinary non politically affiliated conscious South African families”, the many people that are walking. Left on their own by their “so called leaders”.

The leader that BCUC often refer to in their talks about revolution is Mugabe. While in the eyes of most of the western world and the western media, Mugabe is portrayed as the tiran, the dictator, ruining Zimbabwe and destroying its economy, BCUC takes a different stand. Jovi explains that ‘they might not do very well in economical sense, but at least they

retrieve their dignity and pride', because the essence of discrimination and inequality in Zimbabwe are changed: the land is back to the black people. BCUC believes that just like in Zimbabwe, a war is needed: a confrontation, destruction, radical change: a revolution. Jovi explains how it is BCUC's goal to be on the frontline of that war.

### *Looks*

"This time I am not at a Sunday hip hop session, but at a Saturday session called 'Backyard Session', at Ipelegeng, White City, Soweto. The sun went down long ago, it is late, around twelve almost. Scarce light and in this scarce light the appearances of the members of BCUC seems almost mysteriously dark but lightning. They are dressed very colorful and so eccentric: big boots, tight jeans, bow ties, shorts and crazy sunglasses. Mixed colors that do not seem to match and pieces of clothing that do not seem to match but at the same time you can see that the matching has been done precisely and consciously, carefully selected and combined. Just them coming on stage attracts the attention of the audience. While they were caught up in conversations, their faces are now aimed at the stage, like they are anxiously waiting for what will come."<sup>47</sup>

Jovi loves it to stand out with his looks. He often explained me how extremely important it is for him to look outstanding. Never too fancy, shiny, new or bling, but always extremely clean and precise and extremely extravert. He spends hours and days looking through the second hand stores in town for garments. Jovi's looks showed he does not have a lot of money, but he has got the skills (the connections to the shop owners to know when the new shipment is coming in, the cultural knowledge of knowing what looks 'cool') to still look extraordinary, amazing and neat. In other words: he is a 'hustler': someone who gets things done without economic capital, but because of higher valued social and cultural capital. A hustler is someone without money (poor), but with many connections on the streets and fights for getting what he wants<sup>48</sup>.

And he always looks different. At a very scarce Sunday Jovi performs at the session Graveside (not as BCUC, but as Jovi). Among a crowd of 500 baggy jeans, he was the only one in tight jeans. At the moment he took on the stage, the crowd became quiet. They did not

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<sup>47</sup> My notes from my fieldwork.

<sup>48</sup> See also their track about hustling in the documentary.

boo, but they did not clap either – they were quiet: a weird moment, tension in the air. And I believe it was a mixture of not rejecting, but not accepting immediately either. But it said something that Jovi could and did take the stage taking that risk of looking so different than the others. Just as at the Backyard session in their eccentric clothing: Jovi and BCUC have the authority to look different, crazy and to get away with that.

His body tells all about his image. His way of clothing says: trendsetter, the brave one. The tattoos on his body say not only literally ‘mr negro’, a lion, the skyline of Jozi, BCUC and a microphone, but they represent his toughness, proud to be black, proud of his roots-ness and the importance of music and BCUC. Together with his very muscular body he literally embodies strength, a fighter. He walks up straight, proud. His body speaks: a brave, proud, angry, warrior.

And his hair. At a certain moment during my fieldwork he changed his hair. He used to have long hair, braided. Now it is short, bold on the sides except to lines of hair in the middle that form a mohawk. It looks rebellious, different, dare. And African not to forget, he reminds me. ‘Don’t you know the Masai? The Masai have hairdo’s like this. They were my source of inspiration. Now I’m back to real African’.

### *Performing*

Back to that Backyard Session:

“The sound of voices, whispering in a rattle. BCUC calls the names of the grandfathers, grandmothers, the ancestors, they say it is for asking their support and attendance. It feels like trance. The audience does not move. Nobody. Nobody talks. It feels like the spirits are here and nobody dares to disturb the energy that is flowing. All ears and eyes attracted to the stage. The melody that the vocalists, the percussionist and the guitarist create is warm, soulful, flowing and positive. The voices chant the same melody over and over again. The chanting voices warm the audience up and create a vibe of meditation, more super naturalness. And then they start: howling voices, screams, unexpected twists in the songs, cries, revolution. These sounds, these words, these cries, seem to come from so deep down the soul of these six amazing looking people with beautiful voices and they are so full of emotion, so full of scars and so full of pain, as standing in the audience I can not explain, I can only say that I feel like I

feel the pain of their people. Communicated through their facial expressions, their soulful movements on stage: it is indeed way more than music.”<sup>49</sup>

Their performance breathes anger, mysteriousness, super-naturalness and proud of the African roots: the Djembe, the drum leading the music not the guitar as we know it in African music, the chants, the ancestors. BCUC’s performance touches the audience. BCUC’s performance reaches. While with Deep Soweto the audience went loud, and with Cyrus they stood still and listened, with BCUC they hold each other. From Deep Soweto to Cyrus to BCUC is from loud to silent to touched.

BCUC does not perform at the Sunday hip hop Sessions. They can not because they need more equipment than is available. The events where they do perform have a little bit a distinctive character than the Sunday Sessions. The audience in general is a little bit older and is dressed a little less hip hop (less baggy jeans) and a little more excentric. Nevertheless, the main ingredients of those events is hip hop too, but mixed with live instruments and other genres of music. At these events, BCUC shares the stage often with Cyrus, Deep Soweto and many other rappers.

### *Lyrics*

BCUC mixes live instruments with four vocalists. The instrument they use are the djembe, an electric guitar, many small whistles and instruments, often a harmonica and sometimes trumpets and saxophones. Their sound is quite distinctive from any other band or crew that I came across in Soweto (and the world).

The vocalists rap, sing, howl, cry and scream. Sotho and Zulu chants of traditional songs are combined with raps and singing about revolution, freedom and the African people. I started this thesis with the lyrics of the track ‘Men, woman and child’ from BCUC. In this track the bigger mission that BCUC aims at is clearly explained: the struggle is not over yet, because even after the liberation from white power, BCUC feels not free. There is a war ahead of them, that is about collective consciousness: not only of black people, but of people

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<sup>49</sup> My notes from my fieldwork.

world wide, to emancipate, to be equal. BCUC views it as a spiritual war, a mystical war, in which they take the lead as ‘warriors’, representing ‘the people’.

“This is for my people on the streets  
That for ever wanting to be free  
The black ones, *mdomyama* (translation: black person)  
Its about time you wake up  
And you smell the black coffee  
Its not that I’m racist  
But goddamn I am aware”<sup>50</sup>

Characteristic in their lyrics about the revolution is the claim to represent ‘the people’. In ‘Men, Woman and Child’, BCUC refers to a consciousness of people around the world. But here, Jovi refers to black consciousness. This difference is explainable, because ‘Men, Woman and Child’ was performed for a mostly white audience in Europe, while the performance shown on the documentary is in front of mainly black Sowetan. BCUC claims to represent not a specific ethnicity or racial group, but in general ‘the people’, not the leaders, but the economic and political dominated. BCUC’s slogan is: ‘Music for the people, by the people, with the people’<sup>51</sup>.

### *Authority*

Jovi’s strategy on the journey to freedom is to be led by his ancestors and be strengthened by the pain that he is feeling from the African people. He creates a vibe, an aura around him of mysteriousness, soul and pain that resemble the super natural. For him and for BCUC it is not their choice but a calling of a bigger power to fight for that authority and to lead his people to the promised land.

BCUC portrays themselves as the warriors on the frontline: the trendsetters, the brave ones, the not-afraid ones that will bring confrontation, destruction, radical change: a

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<sup>50</sup> Playlist chapter three, video 5

<sup>51</sup> See their MySpace ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))



revolution. More than in any of the other that is part of their lyrics and more than any other it is part of their looks.

From Jovi's looks and the looks of BCUC stems: they are proudly African, strong, trendsetters, distinctive and daring (to dress different than others) and the fact that they can wear whatever and get away with it, shows their authority to set the rules in the field.

### *3.3.4 The three revolutions summarized*

The artists claim to prolong the struggle that their grandfathers started. But ever since the abolishment of apartheid, the struggle has changed a little bit. Their guns are pointed at souls now instead of people, Jovi said. No longer is it a fight against the white regime or about physical freedom, that step has been reached. The fight that the artists are claiming to fight now is about the freedom of mind, spiritual freedom. They claim to be still oppressed, enslaved and discriminated and fighting for equality, opportunities and upliftment of the communities.

Their sounds, appearances, performances are the weapons through which they communicate who they oppose: globalization, economic and political powerful, leaders, sissies, leaders and who they represent: the people, street, poor and fighters.

The language through which they do that is drawn upon the framework of hip hop and histories. Soweto is the symbol of revolution and they use Soweto's rich revolutionary history as an alphabet of inspiration. In doing that, they select and combine creatively. Sometimes overlooking differences between ideologies of leaders they refer to (in the field of hip hop Steve Biko and Chris Hani are often referred to in one punch line, on one wall or in one rhyme) and the 'bad' things about history (for instance the glorifying of the street gangs by Deep Soweto is a bleak view of the extreme violence that the street gangs brought into Soweto).

### *Conclusion*

It would be too easy to regard the artists in the field of hip hop in Soweto as victims of the changes in South Africa, the developments that they are not part of. It would be too easy to regard the artists as unsuccessful in nowadays South Africa where they do not make it to the

opportunities that BEE, economic growth and globalization has brought. Easy, because poor, hang out on the streets and fight seem in first essence indicators of un-success.

Instead of being victims, instead of being un-successful and instead of accepting their position in society, the artists create through their music a way to turn the world around. Those three characteristics that seem to indicate un-success, they find through their music a way to turn around and make the indicators of the opposite: success. They create a small world, a field, where the specific rules valorize poor, fighter and street as positive. Where it is cool, good, authentic to be poor, fighter and street. Where they are not victimized and these elements are regarded as shameful, but where one finds dignity in being poor, fighter and street.

Revolution gave them the way to explain the need for the world to turn around. The artists claim to be not musicians, but freedom fighters. According to Bourdieus theories, they can only be recognized as such if it is collectively believed. The revolution serves as that belief and is communicated by the artists through a language of style: in sound, lyrics, performances and appearances.

Hip hop and histories give the artist a rich alphabet to form that language. The global sub-culture of hip hop is localized: interpret and recreated as it fits the use of the artists. In the same way common histories are re-interpret, re-written and re-invented by the likes of the artists.

In this way, revolution feeds the music and the style around it. The field of hip hop needs the revolution to legitimate its existence. Not only functions the music as a weapon to communicate and fight the revolution, the revolution is a weapon to exist as musician too.

The field of hip hop in Soweto is in no way one without struggles within. The artists fight and dispute about the language, the rules of the field. In the 80s differences in the ideologies of revolution made the cohesive resistance, the revolution in Soweto less affective. In this field of hip hop the struggle is not that much about the differences in ideologies, but about style. It is through style that they battle over appreciation and prestige. Fighting through showing to be the most authentic freedom fighter, fighting for the authority to set the rules of the field. All three have their victories in revolution: Jovi introduced the tight

jeans. Deep Soweto made the organizers look fools but still invite them and Cyrus introduced God into the scene.

## Chapter four.

### Economic positioning: need money for revolution.

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#### Introduction

“When I say “knock knock”, say “knock knock” back to me  
Knock knock,  
I’m just trying to get in, I’ve been doing this for a while but nobody opens  
Knock knock  
Don’t know where to begin, feels like I’m knocking on heavens door but have too many sins  
Knock knock  
It’s the same old thing, **as an independent artist** nobody listens  
Knock knock  
I’m sick and tired of waiting, I’m about to find a window for me to break in  
**It’ll like success is behind a big ass door and I’m trying to get in**  
It’s been my ultimate mission ever since I’ve started spitting  
**Trying to put in my hand but they wanted my arm too**  
**Try to stick in a foot but they stepped on my shoe**  
Now I’m going in head first but it’s wrecking my brain  
Try to figure who to bribe to get some radio airplay  
Perhaps I should try a gimmick like a new dance craze  
I’m tired of kissing ass of radio DJs  
**I do this for the love but not the first to say**  
**Doing it for love but it doesn’t look like it’s gonna pay**  
**Cause I sleep on the page, and I shock when I’m on stage**  
**But a round of applause has never put food on my plate**  
Just pardon me I know what’s changed rocking you as a part of me  
At times it feels I’ve been locked out could it be  
Maybe some wack MCs don’t like me  
Stupid enough to go and tell the organizers not to invite me  
Cause they know I came to wreck the mic and leave with no apology  
Don’t be surprised at the set if they sabotaged me  
Like knock knock..

Smurff<sup>52</sup>

He is not in it for the money. And all of Soweto’s artists will immediately agree. He is doing this for the love. He is doing this for the love and the round of applause. And he goes far being true to that: he shocks on stage and sleeps on the pavement. He shows the elements of poverty, street and being a fighter: the symbolic aspects that prove he is a legitimate artist in

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<sup>52</sup> See the video on YouTube playlist chapter four video1.

the field of hip hop. He is one of 'us' and distincts himself from 'them': The mainstream industry that is not about art but ultimate success (money) and gimmicks like 'dance crazes'.

But Smurff is faced with a dilemma. He does it for the love and loves the applause, but he cannot shock for very much longer. He needs food. His round of applause is not enough. He has taken the risky position for quite some time now but he cannot live on just symbolic capital anymore. He needs the economic revenue.

So he decided that he wants to break in, into the mainstream industry, to aim for the big success (money). The mainstream industry is trying to keep him out and at the same time, they want him in. But they want more from him than he wants to give them, it is an unfair deal.

What does he do? He is at the Session, surrounded by a crowd of peers, saying 'knock knock', giving his rhymes. Asking for return of the knock knock.

In chapter three I explained how the music and everything around it is an instrument for the artists towards a bigger mission: the revolution. I argued how artists need to show they are poor to be considered legitimate artists and how the aim for their music is the symbolic: revolution. In this chapter I show the dilemma that the field of hip hop and the artists are faced with. They also need money.

The sub-questions that I answer in this chapter are:

- **How is the supposedly antagonism between economic and symbolic capital explained by the artists in the field?**
- **How do the artists strive for a foothold in the market as newcomers against the established producers?**
- **Is and how is symbolic capital in the end transformed into economic capital?**

In the first paragraph I elaborate on how the artists in the field distinct themselves from the moneymakers. How do they relate to the mainstream industry? How this is rhymed with the revolution?

In the second paragraph I concentrate on the struggle between the established and the newcomers: the mainstream industry and the field of hip hop in Soweto. How do both defend themselves from each other? I elaborate on the creative solutions: the alternatives to the mainstream market that the artists in the field of hip hop create.

In the third paragraph I elaborate on the business side of the music careers of my three main informants. This will explain further on how the artist make money, how they can stay in economic risky positions and how symbolic capital that the revolution brings in the end is turned into economic capital. I finish describing how that is not always successful, but when it is it can lead to the upliftment of communities or upgrading their houses through building second floors.

#### **4.1 Poor versus moneymakers**

“Hip hop stars and idols  
80 percent of these are suicidal  
Their contracts are chains  
And the industry is shallow  
Oppression of souls  
This story had to be told  
About a man with a dream  
Who sold his soul for dough”

Cyrus

On the horizontal line of the spectrum, the artists in the field of hip hop position themselves on the left and kick to the right: against the moneymakers. They call themselves movements with an ideological aim, directly opposite of companies with a commercial aim. The music that the artists make is not a response to the external demands of the market so they claim, but the voice of pain from “deep down the soul of the people”<sup>53</sup>. Their music has more features of a gift than a commodity as Mauss (1954) described them: while a commodity is

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<sup>53</sup> See BCUC’s biography, on the MySpace ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))

characterized by distinction between the object and the person exchanging it (objects are sold and the ownership is fully transferred to the new owner), a gift however is inalienable from the person and forever loaded with the identity, an aura of the one who gave. As the commodity is exchanged in the sphere of the market, the gift is given supposedly without the expectancy of return. Exchanged not because of external demand, but because of the inner will of the person who gave.

The artists in the field of hip hop clearly kick against the mainstream industry, which is viewed as 'shallow', not honest about making art but about making money through 'dance crazes' and as the defenders of inequality offering unfair contracts. The industry is portrayed as the enemy of revolution, trying to capture the artists in 'chains', keeping them away from freedom. But more than kicking against the mainstream industry itself, the artists condemn and blame the others in the field who voluntarily carry the chains. More than opposing money, the artists oppose against others in the field that make the wrong choices because of money. Of "selling [their] souls to the devil" that does not help the revolution towards equality, but reinforces the un-freedom.

#### *4.1.1 Relation with the industry*

"Everybody has been screwed over for money by the industry", Enzo said in our interview. Many stories linger around about how 'the industry' exploits artists. It is not something that they heard of happening, but it actually has happened. They got signed, but did not really get anything<sup>54</sup>. Got signed but their album was never released. They got signed but had to change their repertoire<sup>55</sup>. They brought their demo to the radio station and someone stole their lyrics. Or they sold their lyrics for little money and it was turned into a national hit, of which

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<sup>54</sup> For example rapper Danger from White City, Soweto explained to me in an interview how he got signed to a record company. Recorded an album and toured through the United Kingdom, but eventually only received 500 Rand as 'thanks'.

<sup>55</sup> The rap group '985' existing of four guys and one girl from Diepkloof, Soweto were signed by record company Gallo. 985 had created a hype in the streets of Soweto around their independently released mix tape 'The Landline', of which they had sold over 500 copies in a short period of time. Gallo offered 985 a contract to distribute the album nationally, but only if they changed the lyrics of their most famous track 'Utlwa'.

they did not see anything back<sup>56</sup>. Everybody knows a story of someone close by. But still most artists are on the hunt for a record deal.

Who is 'the industry'? When I use the term industry, I refer to the overview of record companies and media: radio stations, television stations, magazines, and the retailers: shops, outlets.

The large media companies that the artists in Soweto view as most significant in the promotion of hip hop are the national radio stations YFM and Metro FM, the television program broadcasted on national television 'Shiznizz', the music program on 'Soweto TV' and the national distributed hip hop magazine 'Hype'. These media are mostly viewed as money making entities, controlled by the economic power of major record companies: in 'chains' themselves. Embodied in the person of Lee, hip hop DJ at YFM at the time of my fieldwork, who is regarded one of them; young and hip hop herself. She is open and accessible and most of the artists have her cell phone number and know her personally. She is often present at the Sunday Sessions as someone who is sincerely interested and does not want anything more than supporting the hip hop artists from Soweto. At the same time she is someone who is in chains too and is not able to get any of the artists on the play list to get played regularly at YFM.

Record companies are businesses entitled with the marketing of sound recordings: finding artists, record songs compiled into albums, package the recordings, distribute to the retailers and promote the product. The mainstream South African record industry consists of four internationally owned large record companies, so called 'majors'<sup>57</sup>. The locally owned major Gallo; a number of 'mini-majors' that are mostly owned by the majors and serve as talent spotters; and a growing number of small record companies, independent from ties to the majors. Gallo and the mini-major Native Rhythms are the record companies that most of the artists know.

They are mainly represented by one man Sipho who used to work for a major record company, is the former owner of a minor record company and he currently works for a media

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<sup>56</sup> Song writer Juvenile from Diepkloof, Soweto explained to me how he sold his lyrics to a track for a couple of Rands. The one who bought it turned it into a many Rands making hit, of which Juvenile did not see anything back.

<sup>57</sup> The five majors are: Sony/BMG, EMI, Universal and WEA (Shaw, 2007: 209)



channel. On the one hand he is viewed by many of the artist in the field of hip hop in Soweto as the embodiment of the 'devil' that many artists sold their soul to. As someone who is the opposite of who they are: not street and not poor, but part of the economic elite. I interviewed him and I understood the image that the artists have of him:

"It feels like I am totally somewhere else after two taxis from Soweto. It is spacious here and I am standing in front of a huge building with many many floors. It takes me twenty minutes from entrance to his office: first through security. Feels like the airport: my bag is scanned, me too and we both get a sticker: 'checked'. His assistant on high heels and in business suit takes me many floors up. There is his office: spacious, luxurious with couches and a superb view over the beautiful green hills of the suburbs of town. While I am waiting for Siphoh I get treated with fancy coffee, an extra cookie because I came from so far and books with pictures of the beautiful landscapes of South Africa. During the interview, which is a lot more formal because of the office, his suit and his older age than most informants, he shows me the pictures of his big and beautiful villa on the hills 8 hours from Johannesburg"<sup>58</sup>

The perspective I got from him was as someone high up there (far away from the street) and proud of being part of the black elite (showing his villa).

For some of the artists in the field of hip hop Siphoh is the embodiment of the commercial shallowness, eagerness and unfairness of the record industry. Proven by the fact that through him 985, Pro and F Eezy got signed to record contracts that are always seen as unfair, because of the low percentage of revenues. The standard of revenues that artists get from the sales of the albums in the record industry is around 14 percent (Shaw 2007: 20). Even though that is almost equal around the world, that is unacceptable for the artists, when you get 100 percent if you sell yourself.

More over, the embodiment of Siphoh as the money making industry was strengthened by the collaboration between him and the organizers of the Sessions through which he came to be known as the provider of the misleading 'free food'. S initiated a series of events: a contest of break dancers, beat boxers and rappers that would take place in Soweto and be broadcasted on national television. As the events were funded through the bank, the artists were sure that there was a lot of money involved in the project. Siphoh approached the Sunday

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<sup>58</sup> My notes from my fieldwork.

Session crew to organize and host the events. In return for a little bit of cash. There was no doubt among the artists that most of the work was done by the organizers of the Sunday Sessions, but that most of the funding went into Siphos pockets and Siphos initiated the project because of the money. The compensation, far too little in the eyes of the artists, was referred to by Deep Soweto as ‘free food’, misleading the hungry artists<sup>59</sup>.

At the same time, the mainstream industry gives and is regarded as giving opportunities. While there was no doubt that the divide of the funding was not equal, some artists articulated that at least Siphos brought ‘food’ and provided the Sunday Sessions with stage, light and sound equipment and a possibility for local Soweto rappers to be on national television. Siphos did give three of Slaghuis’ rappers (Pro, 985 and F Eezy<sup>60</sup>) the possibility to record, perform nationally and make at least some money.

None of the artists that I met does not want their albums to be distributed on the scale of Pro (985 and F Eezy are not that well promoted). The record industry is acknowledged to have almost indispensable resources that the artists could use like recording studios, access to play lists and retailers, and economic capital to invest in recording, promoting and touring. Summarized in table 4.1 are the advantages and disadvantages that the artists view in the recording industry.

+	-
Good quality studios	Creative freedom limited
Link to media	More money independently
National/international touring	Do it yourself: fight, hustle
Distribution channels	Fair: keep revolution
Economic capital to invest	Keep cohesion

Table 4.1

<sup>59</sup> Source: interview between Salas and SSLD for the documentary Sunday Sessions (2007).

<sup>60</sup> Pro is one of the best known South African hip hop artists, originally from Soweto. He got signed at Gallo after his independent released track ‘Soweto’ (listen to it at: <http://www.imeem.com>). At Gallo records he released two albums (Heads and Tales in 2005 and DNA in 2006) that are the best selling hip hop albums in South Africa. In 2007 he left Gallo to the independent record company TS. F Eezy is a young rapper, originally from just outside of Soweto. He is the nephew of Siphos. But according to both it was the hype that F Eezy created at Slaghuis and Graveside that convinced Siphos to approach F Eezy with a contract. In 2007 F Eezy released under Native Rhythms his first album (Gate Kahlela).

In short Sipho, and thus the industry, is on the one hand regarded as the one to distance and defend from, misleading the artists into contracts of ‘chains’ and unfair collaborations. Dodgy. But at the same time as the provider of opportunities. As a dangerous entity that one should not work around, but work with and be strong and smart enough not to get crushed. As the older man, hard to reach up there in his office, but always in for making money and having the power to do that, interesting to work with if you play well.

#### *4.1.2 Against each other*

Talking about the record deals that got signed, most of the time it is not the industry that is being blamed, but the 985ers, the Pros and the F Eezys. The ones who did collaborate with the dodgy industry:

“He [Pro] is making music, we are making art”, Jovi said as a reaction on Pro performing at the World Aids Day and making a track specifically for that event. “You want to meet F Eezy? Easy. Just look around for the worst dressed rap kid covered in ice creams and apes”, Enzo responded to my question if he could introduce me to him, making fun of F Eezy because of the clothing deal with Bathing Apes that came with the record deal. Cyrus track got played on national radio once, but only the verse in which he dissed 985 for changing their lyrics because their new boss – Gallo – had said that what they wrote, cannot be played on radio.

Pro, F Eezy and 985 were discussed and doubted in many interviews for their contracts with the record company<sup>61</sup>. That record deal opposes the three main elements: making money, loosing touch with the streets as going international and the easy road (record industry does promotion and distribution for you). They are blamed of loosing control – over what they can wear and over the repertoire of the music, for giving in on freedom. In almost every interview in magazines, on television and with me, Pro, F Eezy and 985 were defending themselves. In an article in Hype Magazine F Eezy made sure that he highlighted the three elements through standing in front of a shack – supposedly his house - claiming his record

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<sup>61</sup> For instance the move from Pro to independent record label TS (TownShip) Records.

deal did not come from being Sipho's nephew but through hard work and that he even had to "sleep on the streets" for it; that that he still performs at all the sessions and that certainly it "Ain't As Easy As It Seems"<sup>62</sup>. He maneuvers through the list, just like 985 and Pro, making up for the things on the right by highlighting things on the left. They are still listened to by many of the artists in Soweto, even though their moves are topic of discussion and subject to doubt.

With the 'free food' affaire, Deep Soweto did not only or mainly oppose Sipho and the industry, but mainly the crew Assylum Tribe: the organizers of Splash Jam<sup>63</sup>. Interpret by Salas as "those who do anything for free food" that would keep slavery existing, as well as the stratification of the economically dominated and dominators in society. Salas distanced Deep Soweto from Assylum Tribe as the revolutionary against the non revolutionary. But Assylum Tribe interpreted the situation the other way around. They saw the unfair deal too, but by collaborating and investing their own time they were creating opportunities and platforms for the young artists around. Being the bringers of upliftment of the community, the real revolutionary.

The artists in the field distance themselves from the moneymakers in the field by portraying and interpreting those as opposing the revolution, by giving in into unequal relations and thus reinforcing the pattern of domination and dominated. The revolution serves as instrument to distinct oneself in the field from others who make money.

At the same time money is not disavowed. They are not blamed for making money, but for making not enough. As the revolution serves as interpretation to distance oneself from those who are in it for the money rather than the revolution, at the same time it serves as explanation that making money should be part of what one is aiming for. "They are free, because they have money", Salas said in the documentary. That can be turned around as: We are not free because we do not have money. They all want money and are open and clear about it. It is part of the revolution to make money. To be able to uplift communities, one needs money.

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<sup>62</sup> Hype Magazine February March 2008: 22.

<sup>63</sup> Assylum Tribe is a crew that just like Deep Soweto consists of many members from Soweto. Besides making music, they organize the Sunday Session 'Splash Jam' in Orlando, Soweto.

Making money and not making money both being part of revolution, means that the artists find themselves often in doubted positions where they have to balance and make decisions. Knowing that whatever they choose can be rhymed with the revolution by themselves, but can be opposed by the revolution at the same time by the audience. Needed again is authenticity, and the authority to judge.

#### **4.2 Newcomers versus the established**

The artists would sign if there is an equal deal that gives both the advantages on the left of the list and leaves most of the right standing. In the meanwhile when those deals do not come, they do not sit still. The artists invent creative alternatives; alternatives around the record companies. Trying to get into the media and to the retailers. And if even that is closed, they invent even more creative alternatives, using their social and cultural capital and especially the revolution, dominating the field in symbolic capital.

The mainstream industry dominates the field of economic capital and defend that position against the alternatives that the artists in the field of hip hop are inventing. At the same time the industry is interested in what the artists bring to the field: the hype, the talent and the viable Sunday Session markets. Embodied in Siphon, who spotted artists for the recording industry and infiltrated the Sunday Sessions.

The field is a battlefield between the left, symbolic end (the artists): the newcomers, and the right, economic end (industry): the established. Both are competing over the same: the authority to make the rules, to make the money. The established try to keep the newcomers away from making money or use them to make money. The newcomers are trying to get into the mainstream, into their large scale market but without being dominated by them. The weapon of the established is their economic capital: the deals with media and retailers. The weapon of the newcomers is their symbolic capital: the revolution.

##### *4.3.1 Weapons of established: triangle deals*

Smurff and many other want to break in, but the music industry seems closed. Many try to get through to the radio stations. “Kissing ass of radio DJs” and leaving demos at the offices high up there. Many try to get their albums onto the shelves of the Musicas and Jet stores, the

main shops in Maponya Mall, Johannesburg and South Africa. But almost everybody gets refused. The reason for this is the triangle of deals between record companies, retailers and radio stations. Major record companies co-own the broadcasting channels and franchise retailers (Shaw 2007). Lee pointed out the mixed interests of persons at powerful positions within the radio stations, who are often connected to record companies. She explained how not she, but the programmer decides over what she can play. As that programmer has his own record company and stable of artists, it is easy for him to playlist his own instead of the hip hop artists from Soweto. The multi position of Siphho within the recording industry, the media and a so called non-profit organization that often needs artists from South Africa to come and perform in Holland, proves for many artists in Soweto his dodgy character as well as the dodgy character of the industry and the existence of this triangle. That triangle is the weapon of the established producers that try to maintain their position, keeping control over the market.

#### *4.3.2 Weapons of the newcomers: alternatives to the mainstream*

The capital that the newcomers have to fight that triangle and the economic domination of the mainstream industry is their social, symbolic, cultural capital: social capital in the forms of networks, group formation and support from families; cultural capital in the creativity of invention; and symbolic capital in the bigger mission of revolution and appreciation, prestige. Those resources make the artists in the field extremely powerful in sustaining, growing and creating solutions to the dilemma of making money and pushing revolution, and to the closed industry: the Do It Yourself-route.

The artists in the field of hip hop are inventive and creative in finding substitutions to the assets that advantage record companies: studios, connection to the media and distribution channels. And to work around the weapons that the mainstream industry uses to keep the artists out. They make use of their social and cultural capital to perform the activities that the record industry performs with economic capital: record and package, distribute and promote.

#### *Recording*

The technological revolution brought opportunities of recording at home instead of in high quality studios. It gave rise to many 'bedroom-studios': with only a simple computer, a simple software program and a microphone, many bedrooms in Soweto were turned into studios.

Using their own bedroom-studio or using their social networks, it became possible for many artists to record. Burned on CDs and packaged in a handicraft or black and white printed sleeve, it resulted in many mix tapes, EPs and albums from the artists in the field of hip hop.

To record a product that is of sufficient quality to be played on radio and that can be sold in the retail shops, is still a challenge for most artists just as producing EPs, mix tapes and albums on a larger scale. Most of the artists have to sell ten first to be able to print another twenty.

### *Distributing*

The Sessions offer viable markets with hundreds of potential buyers gathered at once. Mixtapes, albums, EPs accompanied by merchandising like printed shirts, hoodies and caps are sold from many car booths, backpacks, baskets and out of the own hands of the artists. More and more Sessions and events are established by the artists to offer a platform and a market to local creative talent.

The streets are another viable market. As the retail shops demand people to travel to Maponya mall, artists have the social and cultural capital to travel to the people: the network and the knowledge of where to go. Street teams of friends are formed to distribute on the streets. 985 explained that they sold many more copies of their album themselves on the streets (over 5000) than in the record stores, and instead of a narrow 8-15, here they earned 100 percent of the revenues.

Few of the artists have even opened up their own shop<sup>64</sup> where they sell the (low quality) mix tapes, EPs and albums from the independent Sowetan artists.

### *Promotion*

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<sup>64</sup> For instance Osmic's Ritual Store in Newtown, Johannesburg City and Thesis in Mofolo, Soweto.

Social capital is used to get into the mainstream media: get on YFM, Metro FM and get into Hype Magazine. However, to get play listed still is a major challenge. Besides the television program Shiznizz where Sowetan hip hop artists are interviewed regularly, the music video television channels are not (yet) significant to approach for most artist, because shooting a quality music video is not within the range of possibilities. Creative substitutes are found in handing out flyers, posters, campaigns like the anti-46664 campaign of BCUC, being noticeable in the streets and at every session, and even in starting own radio stations.

But it is a challenge for most artists to promote or distribute on a larger scale outside of Soweto, where their social network does not reach and where they are not present. The internet brings in enormous possibilities in bridging those distances and connecting to people outside of South Africa.

### **4.3 Creative solutions**

The rest of this paragraph I describe the strategies of Deep Soweto, Cyrus and BCUC in pushing their music, as well as their business decisions and views on revolution.

#### *4.3.1 Salas and the company Deep Soweto*

Deep Soweto calls itself a movement with many members, but is at the same time a company with many stakeholders. The one criteria to be a member of Deep Soweto is to invest capital that is needed to keep the business rotating: rap, photographic, beat-making or designing skills; access to a car or bedroom-studio; hands to sell sausages, mix tapes, merchandising or to clean out gutters at Jabulani Flats. The formation of a group where all talent and resources are needed to record, produce, distribute and promote, makes Deep Soweto able to sustain and grow as an independent business next to the mainstream industry.

Deep Soweto is a company without contracts and without regular salaries. The stakeholders invest their skills and resources without economic profits on the short run. The money that is coming in is little and is said to be reinvested into the growth of the company. Deep Soweto runs on the bases of loyalty, on reciprocity, on gifts. It is attractive for the members to join, for Deep Soweto gives: a job to do in a situation where unemployment rates are enormous, the connection to many creative talents (connects the photographer to the



rapper that needs to be photographed and to the web designer to put it online), a belonging to the gang, a frame for a proud identity and something packaged in old newspapers. Deep Soweto gives, but as a gift is never free, respects something in return: investment in the company and loyalty to Deep Soweto. Deep Soweto gave me their interviews, sister for life, they expect something in return.

Deep Soweto was approached by one of the major record companies. Or not exactly Deep Soweto, but two of their popular rappers. Salas explained they should not sign, because Deep Soweto is not about 'free food', but about revolution. It kept them from signing, which would have been a major loss of Deep Soweto. They would have not only lost two of their outstanding rap talents, but also their credibility of being able to do it themselves and supply for their members. The two rappers not signing was a manifestation of their loyalty to the company and the cohesion of Deep Soweto.

That loyalty and cohesion is the strength of the company and makes that the members gladly work for the company without economic profit in the short term. But money is made. Made by the collective effort of all members through selling the Deep Soweto merchandising and the mix tapes, through the jobs on the side: selling sausages at the Ozone, selling smokes and so the strong rumor is: through supplying the audience of the Sessions with weed.

That weed business is something on the side<sup>65</sup> for Deep Soweto, but does complete the explanation of loyalty of the Session organizers, the enormous fan base and the loyalty of Deep Soweto's members to Salas. The Session organizers were dissed, but never was Deep Soweto uninvited. They might have been simply needed for one of the important essentials and product of exchange at the Sessions. The enormous fan base is attracted to the music I argue in the first sense, secondly to the image but there might be a third complementary attraction. I often questioned myself where that loyalty to the un-debated leader of the movement comes from. What gives him the authority to take business decisions, to function as the example of many of these members? In the first place I argue it is his leader charisma,

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<sup>65</sup> That is why I did not want to bring it up earlier. I do not want that to be the image of Deep Soweto. It took me long to decide whether to put it in, because it would distract too much from what Deep Soweto mainly is: about music, music and revolution. I decided to do so though, to close holes.

secondly his view and knowledge about revolution and business, but thirdly that could be complemented with what he gives the members in return: the packaged old newspapers. As a gift is never free, even the members of Deep Soweto who are investing much time and many skills, are expecting something back. It could also explain why Salas is leading Deep Soweto. As much as he is giving to the whole movement, he needs something back.

Salas needs the loyalty of the many stakeholders to keep the business running. The trade in weed strengthens that loyalty and that same loyalty strengthens and hides the trade in weed. I believe it is a sub-activity of Deep Soweto. But it can give them that little bit of extra power in cohesion that is needed to be quite independent from the mainstream industry and to be able to grow into a bigger and bigger, eventually economic profitable, company.

#### *4.3.2. Cyrus and Dungeon Shack*

His Meadowlandership provides Cyrus with a social network that is of high importance to his capability to run his music-business. Friends from the Meadowlands/Dungeon Shack network provide him with beats, with a studio to record and street teams to distribute: it gave him the possibility to produce his EP without economic investment.

He sells the EP for 50 Rand. Selling ten means he can print another twenty, he explained. Financially his business is slow and not very profitable. Money never really seems to come in, Cyrus explained. But he is rewarded by appreciation from many artists at the sessions, taken often as example for pushing his business like nobody else at the Sessions. 'Cyrus-the-virus' the EP was even used by BCUC to describe independent successful selling in the streets.

Dungeon Shack is not a collective company like Deep Soweto. The main difference is that the artists of Dungeon Shack pursue solo careers. Dungeon Shack therefore does not have a collective economic flow. The collaborations between the individuals of Dungeon Shack are more based on a direct win-win situation: Cyrus collaborates with Devious D, because they can share studio costs, which is an advantage to both. It is based on reciprocity, just as Deep Soweto, but the ties between its members are less strong. Devious D collaborated in an exchange between South African and Dutch rappers, as Devious D, not as Dungeon Shack. Dungeon Shack is helpful for Cyrus in the connections to other rappers, studios and

performances, but he does not profit economically. Nor does it seem like he will in the future.

That prestige and appreciation nevertheless does not pay Cyrus; the rounds of applause have never put food on his plate. But he feels the pressure to bring in. He is finding new solutions outside of Dungeon Shack, by trying to give workshops to youngsters in schools in Soweto about freedom and music and by starting up his own record company with a close friend. He has big plans for the future, but is still finding his way to realize them.

#### *4.3.3. Jovi and BCUC on tour*

At the moment I was conducting my fieldwork in Soweto, BCUC was making very little money through their music. No EP, no album nor merchandising to sell, and no performances at paying festivals. I understood it had been this way for quite some time. But that did not mean that business was standing still for BCUC. Quite the contrary, as they were working hard on the economic prosperity of their careers. The focus on the investment of a lot of time into organizing events, developing musically, and strengthening the group and their image eventually paid off in an independently organized tour through Europe a year later.

Besides being BCUC, the four individuals form the company Eleventh Elements Productions (E.E.). E.E. organizes the Backyard Sessions in a community centre in Soweto. BCUC invests much time and work in E.E., without receiving any form of economic payment. The reason that the members of BCUC claim to organize the Backyard Sessions, is to give a platform to local artists to perform and to raise awareness about social issues – every Session is focused on educating the audience about a certain social theme<sup>66</sup>. While BCUC does not profit from the Backyard Sessions economically, they do receive appreciation from many artists in Soweto for hosting the session that is known and appreciated in Soweto for being one of the scarce sessions that has good stage equipment. It also gives BCUC the opportunity to perform and showcase their talent to the, often international, crowd at the sessions.

Living without income for a long time was possible because of the families of the members. Jovi explained how he could switch from his paid theater career to music when his

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<sup>66</sup> Themes like HIV/Aids and the importance of voting for elections.

sister could provide the household with regular income. While she was making money by touring through Europe, he could live without bringing in income. His family sustained him with food and a shelter. The support and reciprocity from their families gave BCUC the opportunity to spend time on their musical careers.

Yet it was not easy, for the members of BCUC truly felt the pressure of bringing in income. The struggle within the family to get by, to pay for transport to school for the younger kids and other expenses, certainly put a heavy concern on the shoulders of Jovi. The other members of BCUC had to deal with questions from their families: why were they working so hard on a career that does not bring in anything, why not look for a job? The demand of patience towards each other and towards their families was pressured to high extends. But the loyalty was great, I believe first of all because of the love, but secondly through keeping in mind the bigger mission: the revolution.

The many evenings I spend with BCUC, chatting and chanting, dancing and bonding I loved. Those nights felt amazingly special: the chants invited me to join and it generated a united energy that took us all to higher levels of spirituality. In those nights the BCUC members inspired each other musically, practiced their musical skills and develop their musical sound but also strengthened the unity within BCUC by being together and talk about the revolution. I felt this togetherness through the united energy that felt like greater power.

BCUC spent many days rehearsing. By taking much time behind the stove, preparing for hours on end, day and night, weeks and months in the kitchen, they would make sure that by the time that they were invited to present their meals on the table, they would know the perfect recipe, the perfect mix of ingredients. At the end of the day, the loyalty of remaining investing time and energy was great because of the collective's belief of a bright future for BCUC in terms of economic revenue and the growth of the company of E.E.

At the end of my fieldwork period, BCUC received an invitation to perform in Belgium. This was the result of the international connections, Jovi's social capital, partly obtained through his touring in Europe with his theater group, BCUC's image and standard of performance. It was the first time in a long time that they received payment for their music. In the year that followed, BCUC collaborated with Dutch and Belgium artists and independently organized a three months tour through Europe, performing at more than

twenty places<sup>67</sup> and stepping up in the fees paid for their shows. Their investment in social networks and development of their musical standard paid off. Without economic but with an extreme amount of social capital and cultural capital, they managed to organize a tour overseas without any major players or organizations involved. This rewarded them not only with economic profit, but with a lot of appreciation and prestige. And maybe with jealousy and an interpretation found to view it as anti revolutionary.

Not only BCUC, but also their families gained in the end through their investment in food, shelter and support to their children, brothers and sister. They were given accommodation and support before, and after the tour it is time to give back, of reciprocity. Now they are working on home improvements, on that second floor, but Jovi is still broke.

#### *4.3.4 The solutions summarized*

Summarized the experiences and strategies of Deep Soweto, Cyrus and BCUC, shows that the Do It Yourself route of creating alternatives alongside the mainstream industry is a route of hard work, of patience, of extreme loyalty, often little economic flows, of hustling and of stress, but at the same time of appreciation and recognition. Because it aligns with the three most important elements of an authentic freedom fighter: poor, street, fighter.

#### *Conclusion*

“They are free, because they have money” Deep Soweto said. Turned around: we are not free, because we do not have money. The need for the artists in the field of hip hop in Soweto to make money is not at all disavowed, as Bourdieus theories would forecast. The artists need money, want money and strive for money. The strive for economic capital is aligned with the strive for symbolic. The revolution explains how these supposedly antagonists can go hand in hand: to uplift the communities, money is needed.

The artists distance themselves from those who are making money. They do not blame them though for making money, but for not making enough. The revolution explains:

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<sup>67</sup> See MySpace BCUC ([myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://myspace.com/bantucontinua))

the deals they took were unfair and reinforce the relation of dominator and dominated, oppressor and oppressed.

The dominator in economic sense, the mainstream industry, tries to control the field of hip hop through approaching artists to sign and trying to reach the markets that the Sunday Sessions offer. But they have to watch out: if the industry sticks in its hand, the field of hip hop might want its arm too. To not lose that arm, the authority of control over the overall market, the industry defends their position of domination. To keep the world from turning, the industry uses its economical and political power to create triangle deals between record companies, media and the retail sector that makes it hard for artists to get access to the promotion and distribution channels.

The dominated, the artists in Soweto nevertheless are very creative in finding routes around the walls that the dominators put up: the Do It Yourself route. Through using inventively and advantageously the social and cultural resources they have at their possession, the artists are able to record promote and distribute and even to tour international. It is not an easy route, a route of hustling, no economic profit on the short term. Again the revolution explains: it resembles being street, poor, and fighter, it shows the authenticity of the freedom fighter.

The collective belief of revolution explains the field. As long as the logics of the field are based on mostly symbolic capital of appreciation and prestige, the collective belief of revolution needs to be very strong and solid. The concept of ubuntu, the reciprocity and loyalty, gifts on which the field is mostly based only function because of the belief in revolution. Like Bourdieus theories forecasted, only the ones who has the social capital to keep the economic risky position long enough, who can be street, poor, fighter: revolution, can reap the fruits in the end. But the revolution is often subject of multi interpretations and the decisions and actions of the artists are too. It is a very strong, but not completely solid belief that sometimes wobbles. Therefore it is task to the artists of the field, the Deep Soweto's, BCUC's and Cyrus's to brace the wobbly castle with economic profit.

## Conclusion

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My main question that I put central in this thesis is: **How do hip hop artists search for interpretations and solutions in the changing society of Soweto, South Africa, through their artistic production?**

In this last part of this long but inspiring journey, I conclude my answer.

The production of hip hop in the field of hip hop in Soweto, I found out, is not a product, but a social process. It does not only contain the production of music, but also of sounds, appearance and performances: one of style. This style is used by the artists in conflicting ways: on the one hand to reflect and reproduce their positions (poor, street and fighter) and simultaneously challenge to those (making money). The artists resist the black elite, but on the other one want to be part of it too. They want to be part of it not only or mainly individually, but collectively. The artists do not aim to get rich and get out of the township, but uplift their communities within.

The framework of hip hop and the histories of Soweto and South Africa are used, re-created and re-invented to form that style and to create a collective belief that fundamentals the field: revolution. The many dilemma's the artists face in the production of music (of money versus aesthetics, of the economic risky position) are interpret and found solutions to through this revolution. The revolution also serves as the interpretation of old and new insecurities that the crazy world around the young Sowetans confronts them with.

Even more, the revolution, hip hop and the production of music are tools for the artists in the field of hip hop to find and create inventive solutions to crack open the dominating position of the mainstream industry in the market of South African music. With few economic assets and abundant cultural and social capital the artists in the field of Soweto are finding ways to turn around their dominated position in the socio stratification of contemporary South Africa.

The site of the popular culture of hip hop is not fixed, instead ever changing and always contested and disputed. It is the battle field over social meanings, perspectives through the battle of style. It is a site of struggle within that threatens the cohesion and authority of

the field of hip hop. It is the site of difficulties and often of frustration that not yet brings a lot of food on the plate. The artists in the field of hip hop have not found all the solutions yet, but it is the site of a lot of potential.

Through the many sessions the artists in the field of hip hop reclaim Soweto as not the place of mainly the two towers (Mandela and the FNB) symbolizing hero-ized leaders and economic elites, but as the place of many young people of the streets. They claim their right for revolution, control over the streets and communal pleasure.

**Instead of victims in times of freedom, they are the new freedom fighters in a not free Soweto, South Africa.**



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## Websites

- Myspace BCUC: [www.myspace.com/bantucontinua](http://www.myspace.com/bantucontinua)
- About Soweto: [www.soweto.gov.za](http://www.soweto.gov.za)
- Jozimental clothing: [jozimental.ning.com](http://jozimental.ning.com)
- Pro track Soweto: <http://www.imeem.com>

## YouTube videos

### *Introduction*

1. Sunday Sessions (by SSLD 2007)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O1CggzvEJO>

### *Chapter three*

1. Sunday Sessions (by SSLD tv 2007)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O1CggzvEJ0>

2. Sunday Sessions Deep Soweto (by SSLD 2007)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZrqSZ5Rdo8>

3. Cyrus the Virus (by Ghetto Radio 2007)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68QaJk\\_n7Xs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68QaJk_n7Xs)

4. Black Sunday (by SSLD 2007):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCGxymyqcyw>

5. BCUC documentary (by BCUC 2007):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOv0TDaXPHo>

### *Chapter four*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-LbwsHLbu8>

Documentary “Sunday Sessions” by Dutch filmmakers SSLD 2007.

### **Magazines**

Hype Magazine February March 2008, issue 23.

Hype Magazine April May 2005, issue 6.

## Songs and lyrics

On the CD you find three tracks:

1. Deep Soweto – Staggish and Ruggish
2. Cyrus the Virus – title unknown
3. BCUC – Men, Women and Child

### 1. Deep Soweto (translation by Jovi)

Featuring: Chucka Donna & Sgebejuju

What are they saying, they've said it, Deep Soweto, you still gonna feel it. Chucka Donna and Sbegejuju. Android People. The *damarras* (gangsta). Lets do this quick. Middle finger to the ground. (Deep Soweto sign).

(Let me give them the shit)

We are doing organized confusion.

When Deep Soweto comes in everybody gets afraid.

We are doing organized confusion.

Beware don't come to us without thinking. You'll get kicked in your face.

You cats are still going to feel the heat until you can't take it no more.

Of course you should have a problem with us, because you don't have progress. We just leave you standing.

When we are on the mic even hard criminals get confused.

Fake idiots what are you taking me for.

My boy on the mic I'm harder than a potato (potato = men's biceps).

My style is hard to find just like a diamond.

No matter what disease you have, I heal them all.

Whether you are *phohlwani* (= a tasteless medicine), I'm bitter than *mhlonyane* (= a extremely bitter medicine).

Go save the prisoner, he's getting strangled by a tie.

*(land' unjivane mfanakithi ukhanywa intanjane)*

If you've got something to say, you can step up and we can have a fist fight.

Just because we're skill full on flows you are saying that we are bragging.

You're just jealous of us because your story doesn't connect.

Like a runaway train, nobody can stop us.

The crowd loves us like children rushing to get some snacks

We're sick of hearing mc's saying the same thing, we are not retards.

You find a person carrying the mic but he doesn't know where to start or where to end. Deep

Soweto is in this session, suddenly everything changes.

MCs hide behind the crowd, they're shaking as if it is winter.

When people say Deep Soweto is nice, you are having a problem dealing with that then you disagree.

CHORUS x2

You rappers are cruel because you copy our lyrics.

You don't scare us because you're full of rubbish like a garbage bin.

Get this *staggish and ruggish*, we feed you soft porridge and cabbage.

You've got a long tail, we're gonna cut it and leave you spinning like a lizard.

You're telling yourself that you're nice, but we really know the shame you are.

Looking at you gives sorrows like a prisoner getting his last dish.

Even on Easter holidays you will never get fish in your dish.

You're talking big as if you have been doing this (rap) for a long time.

Because now you are in a session you want to wear a bandana.

You always like to try too hard, you are a fool for real.

You're faking to be a gangster but when the *damarras* (real gangsters') come through, you put your tail between your legs.

MCs we hit you with punch lines until your face gets rearranged.

Now chill my boy and stop (*ukuthunda*) peeing.

I won't stand around and listen to your smelly verses.  
When you step up to my crew we break you in pieces.  
Your stomach is acting up, all of the sudden because you are afraid we are here to shine  
You're sitting on your left butt, wishing for something to go wrong with our set.  
Deep Soweto is on the mic, your German mouse (your gun) won't shoot.  
Even if your gun draws, lyrically *sjimile sfasile* (we're protected by special medicines against  
gun shots).  
We've seen how you act like you're the main man, when all you are is an amateur in a hurry  
for success.  
Hey Salas (Deep Soweto front man), can you see these Mofolo hustlers are angry now.  
And you know we don't have time to play hide and seek.  
I'm feeling hot now I can even rap while I'm doing the squad position (hurkzit).  
If I'm hip hop rappers are ancestors because they are dead.  
You say you are cursed and accuse God hating you.  
But there's nothing like that, it's just that you've got a negative attitude.  
Stop talking bullshit on the mic because we are watching you.  
You are on the line to dish up punch lines because ...

#### CHORUS x2

Beware, don't piss us off. You'll have blood running from your nose.  
These cats are dead, because fresh milk has turned to sour milk.  
Now that we're on the mic you suddenly forgot you were calling yourself the man.  
We can straighten you up with violence and beat your ass up.  
Because you are busy talking English but you don't have the knowledge.  
What you know is gossiping, you're just a woman, the only thing that you don't have is tits.  
Its middle finger to the ground, you can't hide even behind a big trench coat.  
You know the code of the street to be the man you got to beat the man.  
We have to show you that you really are not the shit in the street.  
Watch yourself because we'll get you high like dagga marihuana.

When Deep Soweto gang up on you, even if you were faking sleep, we'll beat you up until you are awake.

We grab the mic and clean your dirt and even clean the shit in your ass.

You're saying you are nice when all you're doing is playing make belief.

You know me; I give you headaches like a terrible hang over.

You're thinking that you're charming to all these session chicks.

The truth is they're impressed by your mothers' car.

Stop acting as if we are peers when the truth is I'm an uncle and you are just my nephew.

Get out of my face, you soft sissy. You're not a man you're drinking Savannah (alcoholic cider mostly drank by females).

You can say your crap somewhere else but to us we cut u to size and make u shrink

Play your act somewhere else real gangsters like me can see through the game that you play.

Don't forget in the streets we don't beg each other we just live along.

Do you remember the first time you saw us you took us for petty criminals.

Because we were eating polony, vienna, magwenya and mangola (hardcore ghetto take away food).

I'm the principal of rap all of you are just my school kids.

We know how to shake the crowd like nobodies business.

When I throw these rhymes make sure that you pick them all up and put them all in your pocket.

I make you freeze when I'm on the mic the robot is always red.

Don't try to scare us with your rhymes that you borrowed.

Your rhymes don't sting at all even Colgate (toothpaste) has got more effect than your rhymes.

There's so many wack MCs in all these sessions ...

### **Cyrus the Virus (title unknown)**

This is Cyrus, Dungeon Shack

Representing Landmynz

Underground  
Yo this that  
This is training  
Call it spiritual trance

CHORUS:

Look deep into my eyes and realize you have bled  
Through hunger and strike you became misled  
Than arose the effect that made you keeping to dead

No one is truly untouched though we all deny  
I see so many things I deserve a soul of iron  
Vision stuck to my brain  
Brothers soul  
So what you call freedom  
I greet with a sad smile  
Getting things of my chest  
Like bra's, now I'm top less  
Brothers in the ghetto  
They're left stranded and jobless  
Embrace the thought  
Giving direction like compass  
Our streets is filthy  
Everything is on the shrink  
Satan is amongst us  
Brought the kids from his mistress  
So we lay restless  
Victims of circumstance knowing knowledge by wisdom  
Being cured by sin  
Is a symptom



Let the wise and the dumb sparking wisdom  
So we can cover and protect it  
Like eggs  
Poisonous thoughts strike viscously  
Negativity  
We're stuck with infinite violence  
Meditate to my sound  
And your loss soul I guarantee will be found

#### CHORUS

If you can see what I see  
You would not like the view  
But what is see  
Can only be seen by the chosen view  
So absorb my words  
Cause until you will see  
This MC wont seize  
For as the modern Moses  
It is my tempt to split seas  
Stepping on the mic[rophone]  
Telling stories  
And to those who listen it is knowledge I'm instilling  
Hoping that I'm healing  
That mental disorder  
Life goes on before your eyes  
While you dissolve like melting ice  
to realize  
That your life is death in disguise  
Go on but keep it straight like....

...

..to be dropping like ...

As it is will stay

As it is my man

I mean the sequence of life we will never be transformed

The rich to the rich and the poor to the poor

The rich to the sky and the poor to the sour

I'm off with the poor

You don't belong in the gutter

I mean to sooth and teach with these words that I utter

I greet like a poet

Life flushes like a toilet

We should all strike to lock it down like a target

Life is a bitch

That's why its bringing disease

Or is life bringing about population decrease

If it's the first one, then life is now

If it is the second one, then life can kill.

A complex paradox can only be locked down by words

By the power in me

And some of the conscious heads

#### CHORUS

Seek to find the truth that lies behind the holiness tongues

The truth that brings life like Gods breath to human lungs

But the truth was ugly, had to approach with closed eyes

Blind to the side but yet it opened my eyes

I saw the beauty of life within the truth itself

It taught me knowledge of self

Descend to greatness cause the xx is lost  
If religion is the door to God, there are too many doors  
All of them the same colour so which one is yours  
Cause under the brain wash  
The truth will never be found  
With Babylon devices coming and going like sun  
With this falling nation  
Even the next generation might never find the key to spiritual emancipation  
The key that locks away negative vibration  
Hallways to hell is crowded by sceptic brains  
With xx to my eyes  
Resemble the chains  
Mislead freedom  
Cause we lack the wisdom  
We're victims of the system  
Black souls in prison  
Surrounded by walls of lies  
Blinded eyes  
Like horses pulling cartages  
The priest slowly dies  
When I pull the carriage  
For the coming of christ  
For the coming of christ

### **3. BCUC – Men Woman and Child**

My men, my woman and my child  
  
We want this uhuru, we want our freedom  
We were liberated from white power

But do not be misled: the struggle goes on  
A greater war is ahead of us  
The war of consciousness  
From black white to yellow  
A consciousness of the soul  
With dedication we will succeed  
Our spirits will sort to unlimited hight

My men, my woman and my child

But my words  
Some might misunderstand  
They think its only black consciousness  
But look deeper  
Than my skin color  
I am a conscious young woman  
Who wants uhuru (freedom)  
Me and my Bantu people  
We leading this revolution of emancipation  
We living the truth and never compromising

My men, my woman and my child.

Nala, Unathi, Banele, Nothando, Rabeswi, Lerato Lerato Malerato (*these are the names of the children of the members of BCUC*)

This is for my men and my woman and my child

We raising seeds with this song  
We building bridges with this song

My men do not ever think you are inferior  
Because women have got their own freedom now  
We support women rights we support independence of women  
We even support women in power it is important  
Cause even I as a man when the ships are down and life is not good for me anymore  
If I have got a weak women, who is gonna support me  
You need a woman with money so that when you are down and out she is gonna support you  
Take you out of the ..  
Make you a stronger men  
So that you and your women can have a foundation to raise beautiful children

This is for my woman and my child



Picture 1. Soweto from Oppenheimer Tower



Picture 2. Me and my position in the field



Picture 3. Map of Soweto



Picture 4. Deep Soweto



Picture 5. Cyrus the Virus





Picture 6. Jovi (on the left) and BCUC



Picture 7. Splash Jam



Picture 8. Slaghuis



Picture 9. Graveside



