

BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1 – *TERRAIN*

With the three broad movements of *background*, *centre* and *foreground*, against which the research is conducted and documented, not only is a link established with the metaphor of architecture, but an implicit indication of a specific interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and accents of futures studies, is also already present. This specific design is closely aligned with the continual and circular movement of practice-theory-practice – as pointed out by Browning (1991:84) – which has been further developed, through a narratively informed method, into an ABDCE research model, *inter alia* (Müller 2001:64-70; Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:80). This method presupposes a specific dynamics that leaves room for so-called “open-ended” possibilities, through which the evolutionary nature of the research is accentuated. In contrast to a traditional design, there is thus no linear alignment in the documentation extending, for example, from problem-formulation and the setting of objectives to a proposed solution. Giving expression to Josselson’s (1999:xi) assertion that narrative research “is a process of inquiry that embraces paradox and cannot therefore be defined in linear terms”, the relevant dynamics and evolutionary character are also articulated in the documentation of the design. In terms of this stylistic approach, which is strongly informed by postmodernity, *inter alia*, the issue at hand is thus not primarily the presentation of a model or answer, but rather the facilitation of specific perspectives.

In the movement of *background* (against which chapter 1 of the research has been mapped out), the *terrain* of research is described. Indeed, Norberg-Schultz explains, in his book entitled *Architecture: Presence, language, place* (2000), that the first accent of the *gestalt* is, precisely, the *terrain* (or *territory*), and that – as he puts it – “territory is that which we frequent” (Norberg-Schultz 2000:144). In order to access the specific terrain that has been earmarked for the planned construction in chapter 1, I make use of the following markers: *arrival*, *encounter* and *construction*. Under each of the markers, a specific development, interwovenness and growth are postulated, in which dynamic semantic moments relating to the *background*, as well as the action domains in which the research is involved, are sketched (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:80-83). The first movement in which a proposed method can be accommodated in order to facilitate the envisaged interdisciplinary dialogue, is also found herein.

1.1 ARRIVAL

Under the accent of *arrival*, a method is postulated in terms of which the circular movement of practice-theory-practice is socially construed by voices that make a contribution to the creation of a text (or texts) or a plan (or plans) in a systemic interpretation of reality (Hermans 2002:xi). However, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that the introduction is preliminary in nature, and is mainly aimed at filling in the background, since the history and characteristics of the respective disciplines and participants will be presented in more detail during the course of the research, as the interdisciplinary dialogue is further articulated. The introduction will be made on the basis of perspectives gleaned from a literature study conducted within the respective domains of practical theology and futures studies, in an endeavour to make the study as representative as possible of the recent academic debate in which the interdisciplinary discourse is clearly audible. These perspectives are further reinforced by the personal accents of the researcher and co-researchers who are called upon to speak in accordance with a pragmatic qualitative approach. An attunement to a “dynamic form of contextualisation” in which “postmodernity cultivates a sensitivity for the complexity of a network of signs which cannot escape its link to temporality” (Van Wyk 1997:83) is thereby already expressed. Before these perspectives and voices are articulated, however, the space of the interdisciplinary dialogue will be mapped out.

1.1.i Interdisciplinary dialogue

It is a given fact that academic disciplines exercise a dominant influence on the way in which life and its associated realities are reflected on. Giri (2002:104) asserts that

[m]odern modes of inquiry into the human condition have been characterized by a disciplinary mode – we make sense of the world through particular, specialized and bounded disciplines.

As I will indicate (with due motivation) later on, this initial dominant reading is currently under pressure from a postmodern viewpoint. Precisely for this reason, Inayatullah (2002:482) points out that in order to arrive at an understanding – in view of the theory of complexity, *inter alia* –

we should not be lulled into a single variable approach (a theory of everything) but rather we must include many variables and – this is crucial – many ways of knowing.

Thus, to attempt to articulate the recent scientific dialogue solely in terms of a monodisciplinary idiom, and to exercise a choice in favour of either a deductive or an inductive method (Janse van Rensburg 2003:26-28), in my

opinion, would no longer constitute a valid approach to the development of a method aimed at effectuating a more integrated and holistic understanding (Van Wyk 1997:77; Van der Ven 1993:89-93; Van Huyssteen 2006:9). To my mind, however, the mere advocacy of a multidisciplinary dialogue (Van Wyk 1997:77), in which another science (or other sciences) make(s) a contribution to the dialogue, also does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with the capacity to articulate the complexity and magnitude of a real, integrated discourse. In a multidisciplinary dialogue, there is an implicit danger that the discipline from whence the research originates may dominate the research agenda and methodology in terms of a narcissistic epistemology (Van Huyssteen 2009:52). Often, this danger unconsciously manifests itself in the discourse that is documented in the specific design, not only on the level of its contents, but also at a stylistic level. For this very reason, I, as a practical theologian, am cognisant of the fact that the practical theological accents in the rubrics of the research design at hand, are brought up for discussion first. Although this is, indeed, the case, I will endeavour, by means of this articulated sensitivity – as well as in the evolutionary development of the methodology, for example – to meet this challenge.

Of greater necessity, therefore, is that the discourse of an interdisciplinary dialogue should be so accommodating that two or more disciplines can enter fully into a dialogical exchange with one another on an equal footing (Van Wyk 1997:78), so that

the borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science by another and the integration of these elements into the other science
(Van der Ven 1993:101)

can become possible. I therefore regard it as a given that in order to develop a complete and effective design, I need to feel at home in the spaces that are facilitated in the epistemological and methodological development of such a proposed broad and *interdisciplinary* scientific dialogue. In this dialogue, the meaning of the discourse arising from the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas plays an important role in the evolutionary and pragmatic development relating to this particular research design which will be presented later on. In the exploration of the terrain, it is only necessary, as a preliminary step, to take cognisance of what the discourse of an interdisciplinary dialogue entails.

According to Van Huyssteen (2006:9), the interdisciplinary dialogue is indicative of, *inter alia*, the endeavour

to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely different points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources

in which “the multiplicity, abundance, and completeness of human experience” can be mapped out. In order to give shape to the proposed method, and in keeping with the (auto)biographical emphasis in the research which evokes aspects of identity, *inter alia*, the following values for such a dialogue have been formulated by Giri (2002:109-112): Firstly, this dialogue between various scientific disciplines is mapped out on the basis of a *dialogical* character, which implies equality and reciprocity. Secondly, the interdisciplinary dialogue is conducted from the position of *authentic embeddedness*, in which the identity and value of the own discipline is cherished, thereby confirming that

[d]ialogue is not just an other-oriented activity; in fact, the willingness to listen to the other is facilitated by the discovery of the true self within (Giri 2002:108).

It is precisely in the confirmation of the value of the identity of an own discipline that the third value of *the courage to abandon* is pointed out.

The art of authentic embeddedness requires an act of distantiation and the courage to abandon one’s home discipline in the pilgrimage of one’s quest and search (Giri 2002:109).

In the research design, I will attempt to clearly demonstrate these three values in the construction of the spaces for the interdisciplinary dialogue, but also in the design of the agenda which must direct the dialogue. The integrity of this process is affirmed by the (auto)biographical style of the research design, which fosters a narrative and personal approach, and which is conducive to the dialogical character of the design, as well as to the unfolding of themes of identity.

In the exploration of the territory for the interdisciplinary dialogue in the context of the research, I will now proceed to discuss the so-called different disciplines, or “reasoning strategies”, and explain, by way of motivation, why these particular spaces of reflection have been chosen for the accommodation of the research design. In the course of the research, the exploration and consideration of the other perspectives, as explained by Van Huyssteen in the passage quoted earlier on, will be addressed. In the motivation of this relationship, however, it is necessary to clearly indicate, from the outset, that although the partners in the dialogue are introduced as practical theology and futures studies respectively, this dialogical space can indeed also accommodate other perspectives that are associated with this dialogue, such as, *inter alia*, insights from pastoral care and from the developing field of positive psychology.

In cognisance of the need to guard against forcing different disciplines into a coercive discussion, it would appear that it is definitely necessary to offer

a rationale as to why the divergent fields of practical theology and futures studies are being construed as dialogue partners in relation to each other. In this regard, I am mindful of the exhortation of Osmer (2006:343), who – rightfully, in my opinion – advocates the “[articulation] and [justification of] the principle of selection in a transversal model of interdisciplinarity”, in order to indicate “why specific persons or perspectives are engaged as interdisciplinary dialogue partners in a particular book or research project”.

In answering the question, and offering a motivation, as to why practical theology and futures studies, in particular, are being proposed as dialogue partners in the concerned interdisciplinary dialogue, with the “promising liminalities between the disciplines” (Van Huyssteen 2006:9) as the anticipated benefit, the following arguments are put forward in order to demarcate the relevant space: Firstly, as will be indicated in the course of the research, there is, in my opinion, a gap in the scope of the architecture of the interdisciplinary dialogue in which theology and, in particular, practical theology, are involved, and which currently leans heavily on dialogue partners from the so-called social or human sciences which have a particular interest in “the meaning question, the task of making sense of one’s experience” (Clayton 2006:90). Although the research space has already been enlarged, in the past, by the dialogue with dialogue partners from the natural sciences (Du Toit 2002; Buitendag 2004; De Lange 2007; Van den Berg 2008a), with the emphasis on, *inter alia*, the “technical concerns of the natural sciences” (Clayton 2006:90), the proposed dialogue between practical theology and futures studies will make a particular contribution towards the enlargement of the domain, with newer accents from the economic and management sciences. It is precisely in this factor that the accentual contribution of futures studies can be found, since the inclusion thereof poses a special challenge to the evaluation of the paradigm that is used. Indeed, Gelatt (1993:11) points out that paradigms “create the lenses through which we see our present realities and future possibilities.” Precisely through this awareness that is required and cultivated, the interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and – in particular – futures studies thus contributes to the investigation of existing functional paradigms, but also to the way in which these lenses can depict newly-conceptualised future scenarios.

Secondly – as subsequently indicated in the preliminary introduction of these two disciplines – both disciplines are characterised by a strong focus on a positive articulation of, and contribution to, the well-being of human beings and the world, understood in the broadest possible contextual terms. Practical theology, with particular emphasis on pastoral care, is aimed at the spiritual facilitation of joy and hope (Louw 1999a:2), while the aim of futures studies includes, *inter alia*, the development of holistic, optimal and sustainable future scenarios (Malloch 2003:4-5). This emphasis on development, characterised by a positive, evolving and sustainable orientation, naturally focuses not only

on the personal component, but also on the broad community in the most inclusive sense of the term.

The third motivational consideration relating to the construction of the dialogue between practical theology and futures studies is found in the pragmatic *and* strategic character of both of these disciplines, with a view to facilitating a movement away from abstraction towards praxis/contextuality, with the emphasis on concrete facts and effective action. Viau (1999:146) puts it as follows:

It does not renounce theory, but makes it play rather a different role: no longer an answer to the puzzle of the universe, but a tool in the search for truth; no longer interested in the first things (first principles, categories), but rather in the last things (results, consequences).

A fourth and final motivation for this especial interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and futures studies, however, also brings what is *most* personal into the domain. During my own professional training in theology, my fields of specialisation were practical theology and, in particular, pastoral care. As a result of further studies, I also received exposure to the developing field of futures studies, as conducted currently in South Africa and internationally. My personal involvement, in a facilitative capacity, in the proposed design with regard to the construction of the interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and futures studies thus comprises a spontaneous development. The method also ties up with the given factor, as expressed by Atkinson (1998:4), that

[t]he life story, then, is very much an interdisciplinary approach to understanding not only life across time but how individuals' lives interact with the whole.

1.1.ii Practical theology

Through a preliminary placement in the field of practical theology, a first contribution to the proposed interdisciplinary dialogue is mapped out. With regard to practical theology, I have purposefully made a choice in favour of a

type (publieke) praktische teologie, dat de nadruk legt op de geleefde religie in al haar verschijningsvormen ... met het oog op onderling verstaan en beter samenleven (Ganzevoort 2006:151).

This approach entails an innovative interpretation of practical theology, which developed from a discipline that was initially only concerned "with the task of the clergy or the life of congregations" (Osmer 2008:x) into a discipline

focusing on the “radical transformation of modern religion into postmodern spiritualities” (Graham 1996:38).

In the description of this “lived religion” (Ganzevoort 2006:151), and in the interpretation of practical theology in terms of Cilliers’s (2009a:634) definition thereof as “fides quaerens societatem” (faith in search of social embodiment), methodological boundaries are exceeded through new developments in which the emphasis falls on the discourse within an interdisciplinary domain of study (Immink 2005:266; Osmer 2008:163; Müller 2009:202), with the focus on “plausible forms of interdisciplinary dialogue” (Demasure & Müller 2006:418).

In the design, I initially make use of the meaningful concept of “lived religion” (2006; 2007; 2009a). Although Ganzevoort (2006:12) points out that “[r]eligie is dus een geladen taalveld”, he also stresses, with regard to the concept of “lived religion”, that the emphasis on the religious component is responsible for the identity of the disciplinary science (Ganzevoort 2009b:3). However, despite the fact that this concept appeals to my own way of thinking, and despite my usage of it, I have also remained sensitive, from the outset, to certain possible limitations which, in my opinion, are intrinsic to the concept. Although the accentuation of “lived” as an expression denoting an embodied and contextualised faith has particular value, I am concerned that the concept of “religion” in “a secular age” (Taylor 2007) displays too many traces of an institutionalised, declining religion, and that it may be too restrictive for the contours of understanding pertaining to an everyday faith, as described later on. In due course, my concern and criticism, and also my suggestion(s) for (an) alternative(s) (as reflected in the title of the research, *inter alia*), will be fully discussed and considered in the design.

Further to this emphasis on the public meaning of faith, Bass and Dykstra (2008:13) also draw attention to the fact that a multi-perspective development of the positive in the facilitation of well-being also presupposes that:

... practical theology requires stereoscopic attention to both the specific moves of personal and communal living and the all-encompassing horizon of faith. It is undertaken in hope for the well-being of persons, communities of faith, and all creation.

It is precisely within this stereoscopic view of reality that the focus falls, not only on what is most personal, but also on what is most general; not only on the pathological, but also on the positive accents in life. In this public space, a search is conducted for, *inter alia*, a possible practical theological embodiment of the notion of “[m]oving away from a disease and dysfunction model to a new look at the world”, resulting in “a focus on positive attributes of people and organizations,” which entails “looking at organizational behavior in a new light” (Nelson & Cooper 2007:3). Pivotal to this design, therefore, is

the possible meaning of the contents of a “lived religion”, with the emphasis on the development of a relevant spirituality as an expression of this positive orientation (Valiant 2008:7).

It is especially in the investigation and consideration of this given factor, and of how it could be realised in the future to the greatest possible advantage, that the voices that contribute to the study are further enhanced through the chosen field of futures studies. In this regard, an own unique encounter in the form of an interdisciplinary dialogue is facilitated, with practical theology and the developing field of futures studies as dialogue partners.

1.1.iii Futures studies

In Etienne van Heerden’s acclaimed novel, *30 Nagte in Amsterdam* [30 nights in Amsterdam], the main character, Henk de Melker, asks a question regarding the special ability of individuals who have the capacity to “open up the horizon” by looking at it in a certain way (Van Heerden 2009:190). This notion of “opening” the horizon by means of one’s gaze offers a character sketch of the scientific field of futures studies, owing to the fact that the “assumption behind forecasting is that with more information, particularly more timely information, decision-makers can make wiser decisions” (Inayatullah 2009:1).

Owing to the fact that the character of the future displays no regular patterns, and that its workings are always surprising in an unpredictable manner (Taleb 2007:xix), the appropriate metaphor to use in the authentication of the voyage on the “sea” of the future is that of “steering rather than planning” (Hayward 2009:18). In the same way as, in former times, the person manning the mast of a sailing ship had to give warning about the presence of dangerous rocks, and indicate possible navigable routes through uncharted waters, the purpose of futures research is

to systematically explore, create, and test both possible and desirable futures to improve decisions ... so too futurists with foresight systems for the world can point out problems and opportunities to leaders around the world (Glenn, Gordon & Florescu 2008:Foreword).

The scientific field of futures studies is traditionally and internationally located within the domain of the economic and management sciences. Currently, this specialist field of study, comprising the only Master’s-degree programme of its kind in Africa, is housed at the Postgraduate Management School of the University of Stellenbosch, where it is offered in close collaboration with the Institute of Futures Research (Spies 1999:5; M Phil in Futures Studies 2010:electronic source).

The recognition of the general human capacity to approach the future – which includes specific alternatives and choices and which is formed, *inter alia*, by structures, perceptions and forces – in a strategic and purposeful manner, falls within the domain of research and study (Slaughter 2001:2; Lombardo 2008:15-16). The objective hereof – and also of the broader field of futures studies – would thus naturally be

to contribute toward making the world a better place in which to live, benefiting people as well as plants, animals, and the life-sustaining capacities of the Earth (Bell 1997:3).

It is within the context of this perspective that I have taken cognisance, in the research, of – *inter alia* – the results *and* challenges of the Millennium Project of the UN, as documented by Glenn, Gordon and Florescu (2008:12-41) in the relevant publication commissioned by the UN, entitled *2008 – State of the future*, according to which “15 Global Challenges” comprise some of the most important questions for the following decade. Some of the questions for consideration, which will be further touched upon (amongst other issues) later on in this document, include the following:

- How can sustainable development be achieved for all while addressing global climate change?
- How can everyone have sufficient clean water without conflict?
- How can population growth and resources be brought into balance?
- How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?
- How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long-term perspectives?
- How can the capacity to decide be improved as the nature of work and institutions changes?

Within the space that is facilitated through the interdisciplinary discourse, a search for possible valid and meaningful perspectives on some of the questions arising from the respective fields of practical theology and futures studies, becomes a given. In my opinion, it is important to take cognisance of these questions, on the one hand, and to address them, on the other, since such action determines accents of relevance, sustainability and strategy. The significance hereof for the relevant research is naturally to be found in terms of awareness regarding the world of tomorrow, and how a relevant practical theology, informed by futures studies, could play a role therein. Hames (2007:228) points out that, if this method can be embodied in a meaningful way, then the

art of confidently and ethically finding viable paths into the future, negotiating unknown terrain and unprecedented complexity while retaining integrity and relevance,

will be realised. Whereas it has already been indicated that, in the domain of practical theology, particular attention will be focused on semantic moments pertaining to pastoral care, the focus in the case of futures studies is the endeavour to “increasingly find ways to integrate futures literacy with futures strategy” (Slaughter 2001:415). A strong strategic emphasis, therefore, is of importance to the research and the design, with a continual movement between practice and theory, in which the movement between the general and the personal is represented. However, where the mentioned questions contain a strong emphasis on the general, for example the question pertaining to the meaning of sustainability within a larger world, as well as the meaning of ethical decision-making, *inter alia*, the embodiment of the design also contains an emphasis on the personal, which will subsequently be articulated under the rubric of *encounter*.

1.2 ENCOUNTER

Before a research terrain of this nature can be entered, there is the “self”, or the “I”, together with other research partners, to be considered. I cannot do otherwise than to acknowledge my own life-text first of all, since it is also through *this* lens that other “living human documents” and *other* texts are read (Gerkin 1984:122). In making this acknowledgement, I as a researcher move away from the traditional and linear dichotomy between object and subject; and newer evolutionary developments in qualitative scientific methodology are mapped out. As Roberts (2002:13) points out:

More recently the emphasis has shifted to a recognition for the collaborative and reflexive role of the researcher ... To place the researcher fully within the research is to recognize that we all have stories and it seems a fundamental part of social interaction to ‘tell our tales’.

It is, precisely, the narration of stories that is documented in the design, in a variety of ways – ranging from fragments derived from an own life-text and those of co-researchers, to excerpts from novels – which are aimed at emphasising this biographical aspect *per se*; and it is also in the telling of stories that a contribution is made to a process of “life writing” (Babbie & Mouton 1998:502). It is within the dynamic process of the “biographisation” of life – “biografiseren van het leven” (Ganzevoort 2007:50) – that both an orientation and a re-orientation towards identity undergo construction, on a permanent basis, in a variety of roles and relationships. Against the background of a

self-introduction, as well as an introduction of co-researchers, the context in which the dialogue takes place is called upon to speak, under the broader movement of *encounter*. I will now briefly formulate two accents that will serve to introduce the researcher and co-researchers, as a preliminary step:

1.2.i (Auto)biography

In the narration of my story, the words of Karel Schoeman, from his novel, Die uur van die engel [The hour of the Angel], can be heard echoing – although admittedly from a different time in history – reflecting my personal and subjective experience on a variety of levels:

Was it really a source of joy to me, when every sermon that I completed comprised yet another defeat, a reconfirmation of my incapacity? The cool, dim vestry, the sound of the organ, the coughing and shuffling of the people in the pews, and the awareness of my failure as I paused, for a moment, with my hand on the doorknob. Seldom had I cast my gaze over the heads of my congregation without a realisation of failure; never had I stood behind that pulpit without a sense of inadequacy. Never had I stood there to deliver my sermon without being aware that my voice was inaudible, my words incomprehensible, my entangled thoughts inaccessible to those who were obliged to give me a hearing. Never had I stood there, poised to preach, without a feeling of desolation, a sense of sheer anguish. From the dark heavens overhead, from the bare white walls of the church, my words re-echoed, dead and dull (Schoeman 1995:247). [Own translation]

In this quotation, questions regarding my own personality, as well as my professional identity, inter alia, are articulated. The appraisal of my own ministry and of its impact on, and meaning for, other people and the world, is pivotal. The unaddressed and unfulfilled need(s) of the hearers – of which I often have only the faintest inkling – is (are) also mapped out therein, in the broadest terms.

Without allowing my own voice to carry too much weight during the *encounter* in the research terrain, it is nevertheless important to indicate that the practice and theory of the study are strongly influenced by accents from the (auto)biographical research, with a strong emphasis on the construction of the “real life” in which the researcher is also personally involved (Roberts 2002:77). In the design, execution and documentation of the research, the accents of my own voice were continually audible to me; and they were also visible in the form of written characters and symbols. Josellson (1999:x) rightly points out that what is at issue in this type of research is

a person's inner, subjective reality and, in particular, how a person makes meaning of some aspect of his or her experience.

The recognition of this factor comprises part of a hermeneutic process in which I, as the researcher, aim to acknowledge and consider – in an overt manner – my own subjectivity and its influence on the process of understanding, with the establishment of a subjective integrity as the envisaged outcome. The term “subjective integrity” is used, not only in order to emphasise that objectivity is a myth, but also to accentuate the fact that I acknowledge my own subjectivity. However, I do not merely open up my subjective horizon of understanding to the design accents of others, but also to the possibility that these accents may inform, and even modify, my own understanding and design (Gadamer 1975:397-447; Lester 1995:104; Müller 2005:86). Precisely for this reason, it is of great importance that not only should my own (auto)biographical accents be sounded, but that they should also be further enriched and enlarged by the biographical narrations of co-participants. The (auto)biographical emphasis on the researcher as an “engaged participant” is thereby also indicated and enhanced (Dreyer 1998:18).

1.2.ii Co-researchers

Given that – in keeping with the architectonic attunement of the research – “my work depends absolutely on my clients and users” (Day 2004:143), the character sketches of the co-researchers will now be briefly mapped out. The construction of this *encounter and* involvement is further consolidated by the multilingualism of the various participants. On the basis of the developing spiral of the research, these voices of the co-researchers will be continually heard throughout the development of the study. Approximately thirty voices from various backgrounds and sectors will form part of the dialogue, with the aim of facilitating a “method of inquiry that can enrich researchers’ insight into the social life” (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin 2007:182). In the mapping of this dialogue, I endorse Müller’s (1996:25) perspective, namely, that the relationship that is embodied herein does not merely describe a fleeting encounter, but that it indeed calls for an involvement with one another; and the persons taking part in the research are thus referred to as “research participants; co-researchers” (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:76).

By focusing on the linking of people’s lives with those of others in helpful ways, and in creating avenues by which insider-knowledges can be shared (Morgan 2000:119),

a design text that is characterised by a richness of description and a variety of levels, is constructed.

I have endeavoured to portray this involvement, and the inherent narrative character thereof, through the architecture and construction of the word (*auto*) *biography*. Through the primary placement of *auto* placed within brackets but connected to *biography*, I acknowledge that my own story is in presence elusive yet pervasive and thus inseparable from, and pivotal to the reading of every biographical text. However, by linking *auto* to *biography* by means of brackets, I'm indicating that the biographies of the co-researchers are, indeed, equally significant and also play a central role in the description of the *terrain* of the research. Indeed, so important is this perspective that it is incorporated into the title of the design.

These participants will continually be called upon to speak in greater depth during the course of the design. On the basis of the methodology that is followed, I am primarily responsible for the documentation of the participants' perspectives. However, although distinct biographical accents are conveyed in the narrative idiom, it is I myself who construe the letters, words and sentences in order to give utterance to the experience of the participants, as communicated to me. In acknowledgement of my own subjective integrity, as pointed out above, accents of a personal experience are periodically articulated on the basis of the construed perspectives of the co-researchers, in a regular *reflection* rubric in which the (auto)biographical accent in the research is further highlighted. This methodological approach to the design will later be explained more fully, within the postulated context of "open-ended" research that was already mapped out during the first steps into the terrain. This approach offers an opportunity, *inter alia* – in view of the developing nature of the research – to make room for any further perspectives, other than those of the initially identified participants, should such perspectives indeed be required during the development of the research.

In this method, concrete shape is given to the explanation offered by the main character, Henk de Melker, in *30 Nagte in Amsterdam*, in answer to the question as to just *who* those persons are who can actually open up the horizon by means of their gaze:

It is the people who are able to let go, those who can open up and make way ... who know that history never repeats itself, but is really the most resourceful thing on earth. The past indeed has no genetics, no built-in regularities or patterns (cf. Van Heerden 2009:97).

In order to determine the measurements for the design of the proposed dialogue(s), in which the unpredictable character of the future – together with its meaning in the quest for the social embodiment of practical theology – is taken into account, the following accents are mapped out:

1.3 CONSTRUCTION

The term *construction* refers to the structure that offers space and content to the design. Naturally, the *construction* of the design takes place against the background of the proposed interdisciplinary dialogue. In the motion-moments of *construction*, accents are encountered which revolve around the formulation of questions, as well as methodological aspects in the answering of the stated need(s) that are identified in the questions, with – finally – a few theoretical perspectives for possible further consideration.

1.3.i The right question?

A Nobel prize-winner in physics was once asked to name the person to whom he attributed his success. Without any hesitation, he replied that his mother was that person. His answer was surprising, since his parents were East European immigrants without any formal education, who had not been able to teach him very much. However, he proceeded to explain that during his school years, his mother had often asked him, on his return home, whether he had asked a good question at school that day (Sher 2009:70). The significance of this story is highly relevant, in my opinion, and confirms the given factor that the content of questions, and the way in which they are asked as a part of the research, are important (Astley 2002:101). In this regard, however, it is also assumed that a question is indeed representative of the discourse “behind or beneath the question” (Keel 2007:229).

Provisionally, up until this point, it has been indicated that within the domain of the interdisciplinary dialogue, a need exists for (a) new, effective design(s). The design of the envisaged construction is only possible if the right question(s) is (are) asked, in order to address real needs. Although I am cognisant – from a narrative framework of interpretation, which is aimed precisely at making room for a variety of perspectives – of the possible one-sidedness, from a semantic point of view, of the accentuation of “right” in the term, “the *right* question”, as if there were only *one* answer, I have nevertheless made a choice in favour of this accentuation, in order to effectuate a contrast in the envisaged relevant design between what is functional, on the one hand, and what is useless or outmoded, on the other. This ideal of asking the right question also articulates well with the strategic nature of both practical theology and futures studies when meaningful alternatives are being sought.

Specific challenges must be met in the pursuit of this ideal. Mitroff, in his coinage of the so-called “*Mitroff E3 problem*”, has already pointed out that the wrong problem is often addressed, elaborately and at great length, by means of the right solution. “E3 is the error of ‘solving’ the ‘wrong’ problem precisely when one should have solved the ‘right’ problem” (Mitroff 1998:16).

In this regard, I am certainly not contending that the respective scientific fields of practical theology and/or futures studies have addressed the wrong problems in precisely the right manner up to this point in time. On the contrary, numerous documented research results have confirmed that a wide variety of problematic areas have already been addressed in a meaningful way. However, it is within the *terrain* that a particular search is being carried out, in this design, for accentuations of the facilitation of development, welfare and sustainability within a specific context. What is of importance, therefore, is to ensure that the most effective design is found in order to meet the specific challenge:

In my reflections in this regard, from the standpoint of the proposed paradigm of practical theology as social embodiment, I have asked myself the question, in particular, as to whether I did not tend to solve the wrong problems in precisely the right manner during large portions of my ministry, and whether I have not perhaps subsequently done so in the context of my academic work – and whether I still have a tendency to do so at times. For example, in the quest for the social embodiment of a relevant practical theology, I ask myself the critical question: What degree of sensitivity and involvement am I displaying in respect of the ‘15 Global Challenges’ referred to earlier on during the dialogue with futures studies? To what degree am I myself involved in the construction of relevant practical theological perspectives in order to further facilitate sustainable development?

From a postmodern framework that embraces complexity, *inter alia*, this discourse of “asking just the right question” is naturally also open to criticism. Precisely in this regard, for example, research within the scientific field of futures studies requires the recognition and consideration of complexity. As Spies (1999:12) points out:

The future is complex – its evolution is governed by the rules of complexity – which requires of futures researchers great humility in practice and a tolerance for ambiguity.

Precisely for this reason, the renowned futures scholar, Richard Hames, warns that although the identification of the right question is important, most organisations do not have the ability to formulate the right questions, since “[w]e know of no simple formula, no prescriptive made-to-measure consultant’s package able automatically to pinpoint the right questions to be asking at all times” (Hames 2007:302).

Further to the above, this challenge is of relevance to the concerned research design, since – as Clive-Simmonds (1977:14) acknowledges – the formulation of a futures problem is indeed complex, as a result of the following rationale:

A typical futures problem is almost exactly the inverse or opposite of normal science. The problem cannot usually be aptly-defined, nor precisely-structured; the probabilities of success and failure do not add to unity or any basis; the measurements may or [may] not be accepted; and since there is not normally general agreement on the basic assumptions, communication requires the establishment of a basis and agreed language between the researcher and the client.

In terms of the understanding that specific challenges are posed by the contours of “a lived religion” and the act of entering into such a lived religion through a relevant practical theology, in the context of a dialogue with the perspectives arising from futures studies, these assumptions are of importance. In order to go about the construction of the contours of the domain in which the right question(s) must be formulated, it seems that a specific process must be followed, in which perspectives from the interdisciplinary dialogue must be accommodated within a shared space of understanding.

In the mapping out of the research space, with the emphasis on the meaning of “lived religion”, a practical theological enquiry is deemed to be comprised of “questions about present practices, the symbols and legitimations of these practices, and challenges to these practices” (Browning 1991:223). Arising from, and accentuated in terms of the meaning of the scientific field of futures studies, the possibility of enquiry is further refined “in the light of fresh questions which emerge from particular situations” (Swinton & Mowat 2006:26). As an illustration of fresh questions that arise from related situations in the respective fields of practical theology and futures studies, a proposed construction terrain is designed.

In this “construction zone”, where the building work is far from complete, and which often looks rather messy as a result of building rubble that is strewn about (Cilliers 2009a:626), the character of practical theology is portrayed as “an empirically descriptive and critically constructive theory of religious practice” (Browning, Fowler, Schweitzer & Van der Ven 1999:xvi). It is within this construction zone that a search is conducted, *inter alia*, for reconstructions with a view to “a new encoding of message” (Taylor 2008:205), with relevant significance for the future. It is then in this quest for the development of a relevant practical theological construction for the future workplace that “praxis” is construed, suggesting that one “reflects about what one is doing while one is doing it” (cf. Pieterse 2001:13).

In visiting and evaluating this praxis *terrain*, it is important, from the start, to point out that, in addressing the questions, I aim to break away from the traditional dichotomy between object and subject that is inherent to the linear movement between theory and practice, and that I wish to ensure that the research questions that are asked really reflect the need that is currently calling

out to be addressed within the mandate of the design. Ruurd Ganzevoort writes meaningfully about the nature of the act of entering into and interpreting this praxis *terrain* by pointing out:

dat het niet alleen gaat om het beschrijven van een praktijk die daarna theologisch moet worden geïnterpreteerd, maar dat de praxis zelf wordt beschouwd als geladen met theologische materiaal (Ganzevoort 2006:155).

The *background* to, and also the profile of the unanswered questions and surmises, will subsequently be discussed in the study. I will do so, firstly, by presenting certain perspectives from the specific contextual living space of the workplace, after which the focus will shift to certain methodological assumptions, followed by – thirdly – a description of the implications hereof for the concerned research design.

1.3.ii “Soul at work”

For the purpose of this design, work is understood to mean

a set of task elements grouped together under one job title and designated to be performed by a single individual (Singh 2008:88),

although – with the emphasis on the future workplace – cognisance is also taken of the given fact that “job boundaries are becoming blurred, as inter-job activities become the norm” (Singh 2008:88).

Work occupies a central place in human existence. As a matter of fact, each person on Planet Earth is involved in work, in one way or another (Watson 2004:1). In their book, *Good work – When excellence and ethics meet* (2001), Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and Damon point out that in every historical period, there has been an emphasis on the performance of good work.

Volf (1991:3), amongst others, pointed out that, as a result of the totalitarian power and influence of capitalism, supported by a protestant work ethic, “[w]ork has come to pervade and rule the lives of men and women”.

As each person would be able to confirm, from the context of his or her working space, the centrality of work is thus not only a given factor in human existence; it also often threatens to define a total existence, with little or no place for any other life accents. It is therefore understandable that work is, and remains, an important medium, through which a human being gives expression to a meaningful existence.

The extensive influence of work on individuals, families and communities is therefore also an important field of investigation, with challenging aspects

such as, *inter alia*, the possible search for a balance between work and family life (Edwards & Wajcman 2005:44).

It is against the background of this intensified focus on work that – owing to the contextual nature of a practical theology in search of social embodiment, and on the basis of the interdisciplinary dialogue with futures studies – this work environment, and particularly a possible future domain of work (Ransome 1999), is of importance for the purposes of an orientation. These characteristics of the changing world of work, perceptible even in a developing country such as South Africa, but also embedded in a globalised world, are accentuated because

we are living in a post-industrial, information, or knowledge economy, with manufacturing and factory production being displaced by information- and knowledge-based work (Edwards & Wajcman 2005:27).

In this description of the individual – whose historical course of existence spans a period extending from the days when papyrus was used for writing, to the present day, which is characterised by the world-wide use of the Internet (Jordaan 2008:1) – it is pointed out that this age of information is facilitating a new epoch of human experience in which future work scenarios predict, *inter alia*, a movement away from routine activities towards more creative, problem-solving and people-centred occupations (Edwards & Wajcman 2005:27). In terms of a systemic interpretation, however, the meaning of this changing world of work can only be understood in terms of the extent and significance of globalisation (Reader 2008:102-103), and as “an economy of above, i.e. an economy determined by big companies and the web of telecommunication systems” (Louw 2000:38).

In the further delineation of this context, and with a view to the embodiment of the research design, a *terrain* is mapped out within which the *right* problem(s) and question(s) for further consideration and research can be drafted. A further demarcation contributing to the development of the design can be made, on the basis of existing indications in the literature, in view of the fact that theological science and, in particular, so-called public theology – often, and with good reason(s) – enter into this economic dialogue by focusing on questions that are problematically driven; for example, the question as to how the global market economies could address the plight of billions of people who are trapped in poverty (Newlands 2006:415), or that of how an alternative to the consumer culture could be created (Conradie 2009).

I wish to emphasise, once again, that although these ways of taking up a position in the dialogue with economic science and so-called macro-theories do have value, they do not, in my opinion, accommodate all the possibilities that arise from, *inter alia*, the interdisciplinary dialogue between practical

theology and futures studies. One such possibility with potential significance might be found in a positive negotiated discourse in respect of globalisation and creative aspects of the business world. In my opinion, it is indeed possible that an important alternative understanding could be reached on the basis of such a negotiated discourse (Miller 2007:99).

Within the proposed development of this alternative space, and in the exploration of possible new spaces within the research design, however, there is a particular focus on the dialogue between the personal and the general, and between the individual and the systemic, as exemplified, *inter alia*, in the interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and, in particular, pastoral care and futures studies. It is precisely in this regard that the emphasis on the so-called “soul at work” is encountered. In contrast to previous approaches which envisaged the development of, *inter alia*, kerygmatic ministries to “industrialised humanity” (De Klerk 1979:160-183), for example, through so-called “bedrijfpastores” (Verkuyl 1979:224), in which a particular endeavour was traditionally made to reach people outside of the church (Reader 2008:101), what is at issue in this case is the exploration of the future workplace, on the one hand, and the possible mapping of informative perspectives from the proposed interdisciplinary dialogue, on the other. Proceeding from the assumption that “deep and continuing Christian involvement with issues of work and employment both pastorally and in terms of social justice” (Reader 2008:101) will always be important, the focus in the research design does not fall primarily on the development of a so-called “labour-ministry model”, so much as on the mapping out of innovative and – hopefully – meaningful perspectives from the interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and futures studies for the future workplace. In particular, a quest will be undertaken in search of a contribution that is not only informed by the futures study, but which also displays a distinctly pastoral character.

1.3.iii The right space?

Eight possible paradigms in terms of which practical theology has traditionally been interpreted, namely faith in search of understanding, expression, action, hope, ideation, visualisation, embodiment and social manifestation (or social embodiment), are identified (Cilliers 2009a:626). For the purposes of the research, I will adhere to the foregoing classification, reflecting Cilliers’s choice of paradigms, with special reference to practical theology as social embodiment. Cilliers (2009a:629) points out that:

The paradigm of society (*societas*) could serve as an integration of the other mentioned practical theological paradigms ... and the objective would then be, precisely, to propose a practical theological paradigm

that is directed towards the outside, that is, towards society – without sacrificing the other paradigms. [Own translation]

This accent, which points away from a paradigm directed towards the inside, has the development of a practical theological paradigm in view, pointing to "[t]heologies of reconstruction (which) are geared toward restructuring the social structures that determine the well-being of people" (Louw 2008:29). In this accent pertaining to the significance of the creation of "theologies of reconstruction", there are clear similarities in relation to the positive *and* strategic value and meaning that the scientific field of futures studies aims to offer. In this regard, a relevant emphasis is also placed on the meaning of context in the formulation of a "lived religion".

In the quest for the formulation of a practical theology of social embodiment, and for the purposes of the focus of this research and the envisaged construction, the outcome of this observation is actualised in Miller's (2007:79-81) critique regarding the absence of the church in the economic sphere. Miller points out that, as a result of this absence,

there is a gaping chasm between what is heard on Sunday in one's place of worship and what is experienced on Monday in one's place of work.

This Sunday-Monday gap is discernible, *inter alia*, in the different profiles of preachers and businesspersons, as well as the differences between congregational life and business life, and between worship and work; and has indeed already been scientifically documented (Miller 2007:79-81).

In the above critique, my intuitive perception, to which I referred earlier in this chapter, confirms that there is a gap between the concrete embodiments of faith within specific contexts. Therefore, an important focus or emphasis – or an important question that is being posed to the research design – is indicated in the above quotation. In accordance herewith, the domain within which the research question is contextualised, is designated as that of the present-day *and* the future workplace; and the way in which faith and spirituality are embodied therein, as an expression of "lived religion", is also indicated. In the "tracks" left behind (Ganzevoort 2009b:1) by this question, the three domains within which the field of study of practical theology currently functions, namely, firstly the transformation of society, secondly the church and its officials, and thirdly, the domain of empirical and methodological investigation (Ganzevoort 2007:24), are embodied. In the contextualisation and concretisation of perspectives from the research, these three domains of inquiry are also constantly represented in the design.

1.3.iv In search of an answer

In the embodiment of a planned methodology for the evolutionary design of the proposed interdisciplinary dialogue, I will attempt to work in accordance with qualitative research methods from the field of futures studies, in a manner that is consistent with the hermeneutic tradition of practical theology, with the emphasis on the meaning of the narrative and metaphor, *inter alia*. In this regard, an interdisciplinary dialogue is already postulated, in which an effort is made

to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely different points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources (Van Huyssteen 2009:51).

In this assimilation of accents from different research methods, in a process of so-called “fitting together” (Van Huyssteen 2006:9), challenges are posed to the use and meaning of language, in particular (Giri 2002:106; Van Huyssteen 2009:50).

The particular language that is put forward in the design articulates narrative and metaphorical meaning. Müller, Human and Van Deventer (2001:76-96) have already meaningfully indicated how the formulation of questions with reference to specific paradigmatic points of departure, and as part of narrative research aimed at the expression of a specific epistemological choice for the purposes of social constructionism, displays a character that encourages and enhances the narration of stories, and in which “as a hermeneutic mode of inquiry ... the process of inquiry flows from the question” (Josselson 1999:x). Indeed, the words of Freedman and Combs (1996:113), advocating a narratively informed method, are meaningful in this regard:

The biggest difference is that we ask questions to generate experience rather than to gather information. When they generate experience of preferred realities, questions can be therapeutic in and of themselves.

In order to embody these theoretical perspectives – with the emphasis on the social constructionist nature of knowledge (Gergen 1994:62-63) – in a specific research design in which the right questions are posed, on the one hand, and in which perspectives are formulated on the basis of the answers to these questions, on the other, specific methodological accents are important. In the quest for the embodiment of these theoretical perspectives, the fundamental principles of the so-called Delphi method are used. This method is commonly followed within the domain of the economic and management sciences as an indicator of the future (Gordon & Pease 2006:321; Wilson & Keating 2007:17-18). In the use of the concerned instrument, which is derived from another scientific orientation, accents from the interdisciplinary dialogue

are already embodied. The Delphi method was developed by the Rand Corporation during the period between the 1940s and the 1970s, and derives its name “from Greek mythology, from the ancient story of the oracle of Delphi” (Du Plessis & Human 2007:14). My choice of the Delphi method is motivated by the observation that this method is particularly suitable “when tackling significant decision-making that will set future directions for organizations” (Loo 2002:762).

With a view to the further enhancement and development of the pragmatic model in which “[q]ualitative researchers are creative about method” (Josselson 1999:x), I have made use of accents from a narratively informed research methodology, such as participatory action research and evaluative research, in the process of formulating questions, as well as in the administration thereof. Participatory action research comprises the style of writing through which the dialogue of different, interwoven voices, as heard in the research, is given utterance in the best possible manner. In this research, the focus falls on the involvement and participation of all the role-players in the concerned research project (Strydom 2002:419). The advantages of opting in favour of principles that are fundamental to participatory action are, firstly, that the participating voices immediately assume practical value; secondly, that these principles promote the dialogical character of the research; and thirdly, that accents in different narratives are thereby articulated, in a respectful manner, as new perspectives (Uzzell 1995:311). In terms of the accent of an appreciative inquiry, it is assumed that questions

must evoke a real personal experience and narrative story that help the participants to identify and draw on their best learning from the past,

and that “the question allows the interviewer to go beyond the past to envision the best possibilities of the future” (Reed 2007:35-36). From the construed methodology, an experimental and unique design is postulated, on the one hand, which aims to address the different dimensions of the problem by means of different perspectives from the interdisciplinary dialogue, on the other. In accordance herewith, it can be argued that the instrument can thus render an important contribution as an indicator of the future in the construction zone for practical theological perspectives relating to “lived religion” in the workplace, *inter alia*.

1.3.v The right question, correctly asked?

In the determination of the most suitable method with a view to solving the right problem in the most effective way, Mitroff points out that critical thinking is indeed important, since

critical thinkers first attempt to ensure that they are working on the right problem before they attempt to solve it in detail (Mitroff 1998:18).

The critical thinking that is being pursued ties in well with the character of practical theology which, as a critical science, aims to further promote the complexity of situations in the description thereof (Swinton & Mowat 2006:13). It is assumed, *inter alia*, that in the designing process, a quest will be undertaken for a widening of the boundaries of the terrain embodying the proposed area of investigation.

With this assumption as a point of departure, and in order to enter the challenging and rapidly-developing terrain of the workplace as a “dynamic and ever-changing liquid landscape” (Keel 2007:251), approximately ten qualified professional persons with a strong theological grounding, on the one hand (all of the participants have postgraduate qualifications in theology), and who currently occupy senior positions in various business sectors (ranging from directors at business schools to directors of multinational companies), on the other hand, were identified on a countrywide basis (referred to herein as “Group 1”). At the same time, a number of Christian businesspersons serving in executive posts in a wide variety of industries, but who had no formal theological qualifications, were also identified (referred to here as “Group 2”). In this construing of the two groups, expression is given to a specific contextual sensitivity, which, however, also includes an openness at street level and in the context of the broader human existence “that others have called the church outside the church” (Astley 2002:161).

I must point out that I am aware of the implicit shortcoming in the naming of the two groups as “Group 1” and “Group 2” respectively. Naturally, these designations only provide a means of differentiation, and are not meant to indicate a qualification or reflection of any nature whatsoever. This way of designating the respective groups is also not aimed at bringing about or postulating any specific empirical scientific connotations relating to the functioning of control groups, *inter alia*.

The formulation of the questions is the outcome of various personal discussions that I held beforehand with some of the participants in the process. Today, looking back and reflecting on these dialogues that were initially conducted without an active research agenda, I am sure that the perspectives of believers who are seeking for the relevance of faith in the workplace comprised the initial stimuli for the later research. It is precisely such observations that represent the praxis, and which call for involvement. Thus, for example, it appeared, on the basis of the discussions, that a concept such as “spirituality” has a specific meaning for those who are versed in theology, but that believers who were generally involved in the workplace experienced specific problems with the definition of this concept. Consequently, in view of

the pragmatic nature of the research, I firstly decided, for the purposes of the overall question pertaining to the realisation of “lived religion” in the workplace, to alternate the use of the concepts of *spirituality* and *faith* in the formulation of the questions to the two respective groups (as is henceforth also constantly indicated in this design). Secondly, it should also be noted that the same questions were not sent to both of the groups. The different nuances in the questions, as well as differences pertaining to the number of questions that were sent to the participants in the two groups, are thus a direct outcome of the prior discussions that I held with members of the respective groups. In the formulation of the questions, as well as in the sending out of these questions, I also offered the participants an opportunity, on two occasions, to add improvements to the questions, and/or to add other, more relevant questions.

In the administration of the *modus operandi* that is fundamental to the Delphi research method, the recognised procedure was followed, entailing the involvement of a panel of experts in the research process. The process was administered to the participants by means of electronic mail, with an assurance of anonymity. A covering letter was sent to all the participants, along with an attachment comprising a number of questions, to which they were asked to respond before an indicated deadline (Landeta 2006:477). As soon as the participants’ responses had been received, and without revealing the identity of any participant, the responses were processed by the researcher into a central answer under each question, through the use of the participants’ own words. Thereafter, the answers were once again forwarded to all the respondents, with a view to reaching general consensus amongst the participants.

For the sake of convenient arrangement pertaining to the process, an example of a covering letter is included here, followed by an example of the questions that were sent to the respective groups:

Covering letter:

Dear Colleague

I trust that you are keeping well?

I am currently engaged in an exploratory investigation into the possible significance of spirituality in the workplace. I have identified ten professional persons who have a formal qualification in theology, on the one hand, and who currently occupy senior posts in various business sectors, on the other. Could I please approach you, as one of the concerned specialists, for your opinions in this regard?

Attached, you will find a number of questions for your attention. I would like to request you to answer these questions as soon as possible, and also as briefly as possible. (If I could have them back by this coming Friday, 5 February 2010, I would appreciate it very much!) Afterwards, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the so-called Delphi research method (which is more frequently used in the Economic Sciences as an indicator of the future), I will take all the responses to these questions, as provided by specialists such as yourself, and, without revealing the identity of participants, I will then process them into a central answer pertaining to each question. After this, I will resend the questions and answers to all the participants with a view to arriving at a general consensus.

Thank you very much in anticipation for your willingness to assist me in this regard. I sincerely appreciate it!

I hope that, in facilitating this dialogue, I will possibly be able to make a contribution relating to this important issue.

All the best with regard to your work!

Kind regards

Questions – Group 1:

- 1. Is there a place for spirituality and/or religion in the South African workplace and, if so, what examples can you mention on the basis of your own situation?*
- 2. In your opinion, and on the basis of your own experience, are there any specific domains in the workplace (for example, in the establishment of well-founded ethical decision-making processes; the establishment of resilience; the facilitation of meaning) in which faith/spirituality could play an important role?*
- 3. Should spirituality merely be acknowledged as a given in the workplace, or would you say that it should be actively managed, for example as part of a personnel wellness programme?*
- 4. If you are of the opinion that the spiritual dimension should be actively managed, for example as a component of a Company's wellness programme, what would you consider to be the best vehicle in order to achieve this? For example, should such active management be individually facilitated at various levels of the company (for example, by making use of so-called executive business coaches at senior management level), or should it rather be facilitated in a group context in terms of voluntary*

association and participation; or should both approaches possibly be used?

5. *Does the Church (understood in the broadest sense of the term, and including its Academic arm, as represented by, inter alia, Theological Faculties) have a contribution to make in the facilitation of spirituality in the workplace and, if so, in what way?*
6. *What place does the Christian faith have, alongside of other religions, in the South African workplace of the 21st century?*
7. *In your opinion, what future does spirituality and/or religion have in the workplace?*
8. *Do the above comprise the relevant questions that need to be asked in an investigation of the point of intersection between spirituality and/or religion, and the workplace? Are there any other questions you would like to include, or any additional remarks that you would like to make in this regard?*

Questions – Group 2:

1. *Is there a place for religious faith in the South African workplace and, if so, what examples from your own situation can you mention?*
2. *In your opinion, and on the basis of your own experience, are there any specific areas in the workplace (for example, in the establishment of well-founded ethical decision-making processes; the establishment of resilience; the facilitation of meaning) in which religious faith could play an important role?*
3. *Should religious faith merely be acknowledged as a given in the workplace, or would you say that it should be actively managed, for example as part of a personnel wellness programme?*
4. *What particular current (and future) needs (if any) require attention, in your opinion, in terms of religious faith in the workplace?*
5. *Do the above comprise the relevant questions that need to be asked in an investigation of the point of intersection between spirituality and/or religion, and the workplace? Are there any other questions you would like to include, or any additional remarks that you would like to make in this regard?*

The participants offered the following perspectives with regard to the relevance of the questions that were set. All of the participants indicated that the questions offered relevant accents as an expression of the meaning of

spirituality/faith within the workplace, as an exemplification of so-called “lived religion”. In the reporting on the perspectives of the participants, it is important to note, at this point, that the questions and answers will not necessarily be documented in the same sequence as the one in which they have initially been presented here. The questions, and the answers of co-researchers, will be incorporated in the documentation of the research proposal in an *ad hoc* manner, as part of the narrative character of the research. The reason for this can be found – from the vantage point of a postmodern methodology – in the influence of an (auto)biographical approach, in terms of which the format in which the research is presented is derived from various genres, and which is strongly informed by a narrative style of writing.

I will first present the perspectives obtained from Group 1, followed by those of Group 2, by means of a brief written *reflection*, or *reflection* rubric, which is – naturally – informed by personal perspectives. In each of the *reflection* rubrics that will be presented in the course of the design, elements of social constructionism will be embodied, in view of the fact that the perspectives of participants, as well as my own perspectives, will be represented therein. I will indicate the accents of participants in bold, italic script, in order to give expression to this process:

- **Group 1: Do the above comprise the relevant questions that currently need to be asked in an investigation of the point of intersection between spirituality *and/or* religion, and the workplace? Are there any other questions you would like to include, or any additional remarks that you would like to make in this regard?**

In the opinion of the participants, the questions and research are relevant, measured in terms of the following criteria: 1) the discourse regarding a sustainable society; 2) the impact of globalisation on the management of diversity (including religious diversity); 3) the possibility that religious conflict could once again become one of the main historical drivers in the future; 4) the crisis relating to values in our own society, particularly under the current potentates of business and politics. For further research, it is recommended: 1) that a thorough conceptualisation should be undertaken; 2) that the role of different personality types and spirituality, and the significance thereof for the workplace, should be investigated; 3) that, together with spirituality, the relationship with “ethos” could also be reconsidered; 4) that it should be acknowledged that the most fundamental question relates to the nature of religious faith and (as a second-order question) the nature of theology/religion. It is in this area that the core decisions, which have an impact on the practice, are taken; 5) that the dialogue and perspectives could be enhanced by entering into discussions with managers and

workers. The formulation of questions also warrants further attention; and caution should be exercised regarding the inclusion of more than one concept per question, while the formulation of leading questions should be avoided. Three participants also pointed out that the urgency accorded to the accommodation of spirituality/ religious faith at the workplace should not be the result of the “drawing power” of employees/ companies, but rather of the dynamics and momentum of the church and its members, with a view to ensuring that the members’ faith is always visible everywhere, and that they are always willing to serve.

- **Group 2: Do the above comprise the relevant questions that currently need to be asked in an investigation of the point of intersection between faith and the workplace? Are there any other questions you would like to see included, or any additional comments that you would like to make in this regard?**

Participants agreed that the above-mentioned questions are the relevant ones that currently call for answers. Several participants pointed out that the quest for the accommodation of faith in the workplace is now more important than ever, and that it should be made as accessible as possible to everyone – from senior management level right down to the employee working at the most basic level. Some of the participants wondered about the meaning and role of faith in combating corruption, amongst other aspects. The suggestions made by some of the participants included the proposal that it might possibly be of value to identify employees in order to make enquiries as to what they expect of the management of an enterprise in order to enable them to actively live out their faith within the workplace, and also to consolidate it amongst the other employees. The management of diversity in cases where not all employees are adherents of the same faith should also be further investigated, according to the participants.

- **Reflection**

*Participants confirmed that the theme of the investigation is indeed relevant and topical. I must concede, at this point, that so many perspectives arose from the Reflection relating to the so-called professional group, that they could not be accommodated within the scope of a single design. Thus, in order to adhere to the basic approach to the design, I will summarise the perspectives thematically. Accordingly, the relevance of current issues at this juncture calls for the focusing of attention on aspects such as, inter alia, **sustainability, globalisation, the crisis of values** that is currently being experienced, and the possibility that **religious conflicts could become one of***

***the main driving forces for future conflicts.** These accents indeed overlap, in some significant ways, with the so-called “15 Global Challenges” that were mentioned earlier on, and also with an immediate awareness of the relevance, as well as the urgency of the research. What is noteworthy and significant is that both of the discussion groups emphatically agreed that the dialogue should indeed be continued, with the inclusion of **all employers and employees.** The integrity of the research is further emphasised by the fact that participants in Group 1 expressed a specific concern with regard to **conceptualisation and methods of inquiry,** inter alia. This reflection on the views of participants, together with possible further themes of development, will be addressed once again at the end of the design in chapter 4, where possible future research perspectives are construed.*

1.3.vi Limitations of this construction

The integrity of any design is increased if critical reflection on the proposed design is conducted from a perspective proceeding from *within*. Bearing in mind that the design – as already indicated earlier on – does not have the capacity to accommodate all of the available perspectives, owing to the fact that the terrain extends over so many professional fields, I will identify the following possible limitations that are inherent in the proposed construction.

Firstly, a certain amount of academic depth is lost, owing to the fact that conceptualisation is not the sole focus point. In a methodology that is primarily pragmatically oriented, pre-eminence is accorded to an eclectic model within which principles that are fundamental to a variety of qualitative research methods are accommodated. Thus, a certain amount of academic integrity may naturally be sacrificed; but I am nevertheless convinced that, on the other hand, the construction is, in fact, successful in terms of its potential to be more useful within the workplace, measured against the theme and scope of a “lived religion”.

Secondly, the participants in the research could undoubtedly have been even more representative in respect of language, ethnicity and religious affiliation. Although the participants in the groups were representative of diversity in terms of demography, gender, age and qualifications, the participation of co-researchers from different ethnic groupings, linguistic groupings and religious orientations would have further enhanced the scope of the research. However, the practical aspects of such participation, for instance in terms of the administration of the Delphi research method, *inter alia*, would have made particular technical demands on the research, which would not have been practically feasible. A decision was also made to adhere to the original research design, in order to meaningfully express the complexity of

experiences that are linked to spirituality, in a single language. This limitation could possibly be addressed in further research.

A third possible shortcoming can be pointed out with regard to the methodology, in terms of which I myself was responsible for the compilation of answers. A possible point of criticism that could be raised against this method is that it indeed results in the articulation of an excessively subjective perspective – which, moreover, is then followed by a reflection by the author of the research. In mitigation of this potential criticism, it can be argued that before my compilation of the answers was incorporated into the text of the final design, it was first sent to all the participants to enable them to make any necessary changes or additions relating to the contents, as well as editorial amendments. From the viewpoint of a modernistic scientific ideal, the possible criticism relating to the absence of objectively valid indicators is naturally justified; but from the chosen postmodern framework, in which prominence is accorded to a position of subjective integrity, an (auto)biographical perspective that is scientifically justifiable has indeed been articulated by means of the chosen method.

1.3.vii Step 1

The perspectives that have been articulated in the foregoing chapter presuppose a dynamic, interdisciplinary dialogue between practical theology and futures studies, which gives rise to an (auto)biographical reading of texts. Denzin (1989:26) associates the process with the writing of a biography:

When a writer writes a biography, he or she writes him- or herself into the life of the subject written about. When the reader reads a biographical text, that text is read through the life of the reader. Hence, writers and readers conspire to create the lives they write and read about. Along the way, the produced text is cluttered by the traces of the life of the 'real' person being written about.

The first chapter of this biography is concluded with the construction of a step. A step in an architectonic design presupposes and facilitates differences relating to levels. I would like to regard the step as an indication – within the broader model of the interdisciplinary dialogue, as suggested in this chapter by means of the metaphor of architecture – of a guided movement towards a higher level. It thus indicates that the research design of the concerned chapter in which the terrain has been charted, now displays a circular motion towards the movement of *path*, as articulated in chapter 2. By the time he or she reaches the end of the documentation of the design, on the basis of the four movements, as described in the chapters, the reader should thus have encountered four developing *steps* that represent the winding motion of a spiral staircase leading through the research.

The *terrain* and existing constructions play an important role in any design. Relief, contours, topography and existing structures influence any design and should therefore be taken into account. In the following movement, which resorts under the *centre* of the research, in chapters 2 and 3, accents are placed on, *inter alia*, the manner in which the question(s)/need(s) that must direct the design, are formulated, according to the methodology relating to the facilitation of multidisciplinary participation in the design.