Postcards from an urban *otherwhere*:

Glimpses of life in Johannesburg 2014

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Abstract

This thesis explores how gentrification projects in Braamfontein, Johannesburg contribute to the de-racialisation of South African society. Decades of institutionalised state racism or *apartheid* created a society in which racial categorisations determined every aspect of life. Despite apartheid's demise some twenty years ago the urban and social landscape is still indelibly marked with its imprint, particularly reflected in the continued existence of extreme socioeconomic inequalities. In response to local calls for research that both complements and complicates the dominant developmentalist paradigm, this thesis examines the social praxis of middle-class whites in Johannesburg, examining the physical and perceptual consequences of the fortification of middle class suburbs. The thesis explores how heightened fear of crime has encouraged most middle class whites to secure their homes against strangers using physical and electronic barriers of control and surveillance. This withdrawal from public spaces has reduced opportunities for racial interaction and increased white fear of strangers. It is in this context that certain gentrification projects provide opportunities for city inhabitants' engagement with urban spaces and racial others, potentially contributing to the evolution of a non-racial, democratised society.

Note

The terms Black African, African and black/s have been used somewhat interchangeably in this text. I have been guided by common local usage in South Africa.

Statement of authorship

This is to certify that the following thesis is all my own work, except where acknowledgement has been made to the work or ideas of others. It has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: …………………………….

Robyn Lynn Gillot

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I. The beginning

I drive past the front of Museum Africa. Its impressive façade glows in the caress of its lighting. Palm trees front the building like a row of soldiers at attention and the wide plaza indicates its readiness to host large groups of visitors.

I turn the corner and the night darkens. The street lighting is murky. I drive down an avenue of the abandoned city-centre. A building looms into view. Three metre high rolls of razor wire swathe its base, its windows and doors empty frames. Its decorative front has been ripped off, leaving gaping scars in the stucco. A sign warns against entry. A plastic shopping bag eddies in the light breeze then tumbles on down the road. I drive on through streets lined with commercial buildings, although the original tenants have long since fled to the safety of Sandton. The new occupiers, the black urban poor, live here as best they can, although few venture onto the streets at night. The buildings are dark and brooding, uneasily quiet. Beneath an overpass, the shadows slide and reveal the makeshift accommodation of the homeless. Shouts echo down the city corridors, and go quiet.

Another corner and a security guard materialises out of the darkness. He peers into the car, assessing my status. I am allowed passage. Music and the sounds of laughter and conversation roll towards me. Restaurants are open, and people fill the sidewalk tables, talking, smoking, laughing, eating and drinking. The rest of the city is a ghost town. Where have all these people come from? Why are they here? … Welcome to Johannesburg.

I was in Johannesburg, South Africa, for eleven weeks from January to April 2014. I planned to research gentrification projects in the inner city in an effort to understand whether such projects contribute to the de-racialisation of South African society – a sort of social democratisation. A few weeks post arrival one of my friends asked me how my research was progressing. I described the places I had visited and the people I had met. Her response surprised me:

> You know you make me feel ashamed to be a Joburger. In a few weeks you have seen more of Joburg than me although I've lived here for more than twenty years. I've never been to Soweto. I haven't been in to the city for years yet I used to live in Braamfontein. I've never tried out any of the new bus services the City has provided. I never let my son walk home from school, yet you've walked all over the city and had no issues. It's really made me think about how small I've allowed my world to become. (Sandra)

Did Sandra demand an apology from me for my boldness in exploring her city, as if my actions somehow implied critique of her lifestyle? This was not her intention. She explained that being in contact with me, and following my activity as I went about my fieldwork had caused her to reflect on her own habits, movements and the way in which she limited her own journeying's around and access to her city. All of these are a legacy of apartheid.

But my friend's words made me reflect on my optimism regarding the potential democratising impulse of my proposed project. For if the majority of middle class whites in Johannesburg live bounded lives as my friend does, content to inhabit the hyper-secure middle class suburbs of the city, then how many of them engage with gentrification projects intended to generate new multi-racial spaces? De-racialisation can never take place if one group declines to participate in the process.

In the context of the recent political history of South Africa, the place of white South Africans in the urban conglomerations there is both problematic and uneasy. Promoted to the middle and upper classes by virtue of their skin colour, white South Africans enjoyed a life of privilege and opportunity in apartheid South Africa. Legal protection of race-based privilege finally ended when the country held its first democratic elections in 1994 and adopted its new constitution in 1996 (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2014). As fundamental as the legal changes were, the historical, social and economic legacies of apartheid have proven tenacious, and far more difficult to reform.

As a group white South Africans have lost political power and although they have conceded some ground to aspirational black professionals and corporates they continue to exercise significant economic control. Many have chosen to utilise their entrenched economic advantage to retreat from the country's unsettled social order caused by continuing economic inequity, high levels of formal unemployment, and rampant crime and violence. In Johannesburg many whites now live their domestic, social, educational, and professional lives in the geographic space of the northern suburbs, whose boundaries are monitored and zealously maintained by a burgeoning private security industry.

Whilst I did not wish to jettison the social processes of the gentrification projects as a focus of study, Sandra's words forced me to consider the curious position that whites in Johannesburg find themselves twenty years after the end of apartheid. Although the process of urban isolation may have been undertaken consciously and with consent, self-imposed geographic limitation has had numerous unintended consequences.

A revised research topic emerged, one that delved into how white South Africans view their role in contemporary South African society and the ways in which they explain and justify

their way of life and daily actions to themselves. My decision to focus more specifically on whites also responds to direct challenges issued by certain social science academics in South Africa, who note that white urban social practices have been understudied in comparison to the lives and suffering of black shanty town and slum dwellers (Nuttall & Mbembe 2008; Nyamnjoh 2012; Pieterse 2009; Visser 2013).

In the thesis I refer to Johannesburg as an urban *otherwhere* in response to the adoption of this terminology by architects and geographers. For them the term 'other' is multivocal. It intends to destabilise accepted paradigms and pay attention to other ways of knowing and doing that recognises the ideological power vested via the practice of architecture in its product, the built environment. It visualises other ways of creating habitable spaces that focus on community desires and needs rather than hegemonic state or capitalist impositions (International Union of Architects 2014). The 'where' of 'otherwhere' refers to the spaces of the global North and its juxtaposition with 'other' implies a critique of the hegemonic imposition of discourses of modernity, urbanism, architecture and developmental processes oriented to and deriving from the global North (Mbembe 2008; Simone 2008).

Limitations imposed by time, access and word count combined with the complexity that any city thrusts on a neophyte research student render any universal generalisations or grand narratives unattainable or highly suspect. My choice in this thesis is therefore to offer the reader a number of small stories or 'postcards' that offer glimpses, or small insights, into the lives and motivations of my informants, and of my own observations and impressions of the cityscape.

The postcard analogy echoes Benjamin's use of the 'snapshot' as metaphor for the fleeting, transient moment captured in an image that reveals the encounter between past and present,

(Gilloch 1996). Simmel too urged attention to the importance of capturing 'momentary images' or snapshots (Frisby 1985:6). I have adopted this approach with the hope that in the 'fragments of social reality' presented in this thesis we may 'glimpse the meaning of the whole' (following Gole 2000:94).

Accordingly, I have dispensed with a standard thesis format of introduction, chapters and conclusion in favour of a number of shorter, individual pieces of writing. In section II I justify my decision to consciously accept a race-based bias to my research and follow this with a discussion of the theoretical approach I have adopted (section IV). In sections V to VIII I present the historical context of contemporary Johannesburg by describing the relentless march of racially discriminatory legislation that moulded the physical and mental landscape of its inhabitants.

In sections IX to XII I move on to an examination of the built environment of contemporary Johannesburg and the profound effect the combination of high levels of crime and the machinations of the private security industry have wrought in the urban and suburban landscape. In sections XIII to XVIII I turn my attention to Braamfontein, an inner city suburb of Johannesburg, and site of a number of ambitious and politically ambiguous gentrification projects. This broad approach is complemented by a focus on a number of exemplary individuals and the ways in which they construct meaning in their everyday urban experiences (sections XIX to XXI).

Postcards mailed home by a traveller journeying through an unknown territory are in the main self-contained. Read together they contribute different facets of information and insight into the journey itself. Similarly, each section of this work may be read individually but my intention is that they also work together to present a sense of the complexities and

opportunities, and the potentialities for becoming that Johannesburg in 2014 offers its residents.

II. Whitewashing?

According to a number of academics, study of the white urban middle class in South Africa has always been insufficient in African anthropology. The reasons are not too difficult to discern. According to Francis Nyamnjoh, current Head of Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, white elites still dominate South African academia (2012:63), despite twenty years of democracy in a supposed post-colony. Similarly white middle-aged males in anthropology and other social science departments continue to control research agendas, with the primary focus of current research projects on poor and marginalised groups, mainly black (Nyamnjoh 2012:70).

Despite the apparent utilitarian benefits accrued to poor communities through their exposure to the developmentalist gaze, for Nyamnjoh this practice continues to protect whites in society from critical scrutiny. Nyamnjoh is unequivocal in his criticism of the lack of ethnographic research on white South Africans and, quoting Laura Nader (1972), calls for anthropologists to actively engage in 'studying up'.

Nuttall and Mbembe (2008), Pieterse (2009) and Visser (2013) separately suggest that the urgency of addressing the socio-economic legacies of apartheid through a focus on issues such as poverty alleviation, service and infrastructure provision has led to the predominance of a developmentalist discourse approach. They acknowledge the importance of such studies but, as Visser (2013:75) explains, there is a 'theoretical and empirical obligation' to investigate the rich, as well as 'beyond' the poor. They are, after all, terms testifying to a

relationship. Social fragmentation in South Africa remains an enduring issue and can never be addressed if academic attention is paid to only one constituency of South African society.

Pieterse comments that this narrow focus allows the actions of wealthier classes to fall outside the 'analytical attention of scholars'. When they do attract attention it is generally within a neoliberal capitalist framework that simplistically represents them as 'rational market actors or exploitative class agents' (2009:5). Nuttall and Mbembe (2008:10,12) call for a new intellectual approach that pays attention to the creativity of individuals and groups in forging new forms of social organisation and new ways of engaging with an unsettled and fluid urban experience.

Spatial manifestations of capital accumulation and exploitation are visible and therefore more accessible to investigation (Nuttall and Mbembe 2008). Nevertheless political economy approaches are less successful at helping us understand the thoughts and feelings of ordinary South Africans within and across socio-economic divides (Visser 2013:76). The 'ordinary affect' (Stewart 2007) of social and political life is elusive and difficult to theorise because of its apparent intangibility, even as it possesses a social potency that demands attention.

This thesis modestly aims to accept Nyamnjoh's challenge to focus on white middle class South Africans and provide a glimpse of their engagements with urban spaces in a way that acknowledges but goes beyond its neoliberal framing. I hope to unsettle the too-common image of Johannesburg as a dystopian city of racially underpinned disorder and violence by providing a glimpse of the ways in which contemporary city dwellers consume urban spaces like Braamfontein as a way of making their mark upon the city's identity, even as they rework understandings of race and self-identity (Nuttall and Mbembe 2008:25).

III. Fieldwork

I undertook fieldwork in the city of Johannesburg for eleven weeks from January 2014 to April 2014. Although Braamfontein, a suburb located on the northern edge of the inner city, was one primary field site I did not restrict myself to its borders but travelled widely across the city using public transport, private motor vehicle and on foot. As to be expected in an anthropological research project, my methodology was participant observation. The research methods of this study received ethics approval through the Macquarie University Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee (reference number 5201300720).

As I moved around and spent time in Braamfontein and other parts of the city, both solo and in the company of its residents, I experienced its 'scenes', taking note of the construction, appearance and securitisation of the built environment. Observing carefully the ways people acted in and interacted with the spaces of the city and with other users, I participated in these interactions through acts of socialising and consumption. It soon became apparent that the freedom I gave myself in moving around the city (whilst taking care to heed the dire warnings received from concerned others) exceeded that of most other white residents, and I noted their varied reactions to my behaviour.

Although I did conduct a small number of open-ended interviews, I abandoned plans to interview significant numbers of city residents. Once people discovered that I was undertaking research on the city I was inundated with information they thought I should know. I am certain of their sincerity but soon realised that observation and mundane conversation that tracked their actual everyday practices was far more revelatory.

Urban anthropology has long realised that in any complex, densely populated, geographically expansive environment one must identify a defined area of focus and a small number of regular informants. It recognises too that this affects the data collected and I acknowledge the partial nature of any knowledge gained as a result of my fieldwork. Accordingly my aim is to provide a 'sense' of what it is like to live as a middle class white in Johannesburg in 2014 and I will be satisfied if this paper conveys that.

Time restrictions and researcher inexperience emerged as the major limitations of this project. Although I speak two of the country's eleven official languages, and most South Africans have relatively good command of English, knowledge of a third or even fourth language would have extended my informant network and enriched my data. The ethnographic data would have also been enhanced by greater time spent in the company of black informants – those who live and work in formerly white areas and those who do not. Minimally this would have provided some perspective on how the everyday practices of white residents are understood, responded to or rejected by black city dwellers.

IV. Scaffolding

In a striking recent description of research on the city, Nuttall and Mbembe identify a 'loathing of Johannesburg in the social sciences', deriving from an anti-urban ideology that constructs the city as a 'cesspool of vice' (2008:11). For them little attempt has been made to understand the city's modernity via focus on its urban forms and city life, and commentaries on modernity as it relates to the city have instead been dominated by work that seeks to address the socioeconomic aspects of South African capitalism (2008:11). Post-apartheid this body of work has adopted a developmental approach and produces writing that foregrounds class difference, division, inequality and marginality (2008:12).

Nuttall and Mbembe lament the neglect of issues such as 'cultural expression or urban identity' and consideration of the city as 'aesthetic project' (2008:12,13). The developmental lens creates an image of Johannesburg as a problem requiring solution. At the same time this approach closes down the scope for consideration of its inhabitants' agency and precludes an appraisal of the city as a site for 'fantasy, desire, and imagination' (2008:12). They point out the unhelpful nature of oppositions such as urban/rural, formal/informal and here/there that label and immobilise actors even as those terms turn our attention away from the multiple fluidity and movement that characterises urban activity (Thrift & Amin 2002).

Through my own fieldwork I too felt constrained by the limitations imposed by the current corpus of writing on Johannesburg. Bourgois (2002) and Wacquant (2005) have demonstrated the ways in which the systematic violence of neoliberalism disproportionately benefits the powerful while depoliticising the problems of the urban poor. Adey (2013) provides an

example of this by showing how a desire (of wealthy residents) for clean air is constructed as an environmental concern and used to control poor urban residents' income-generating practices. Wyly, Newman, Schafran and Lee (2010) emphasise the displacement aspect of gentrification and the manner in which the victims of gentrification projects are 'disappeared' while Peck (2010) criticises the 'creative neoliberalism' of gentrification (regeneration projects as creative schemes).

Ellin (2001) draws our attention to the defensive urbanism that is often implicit in gentrification projects while Amin and Thrift (2002) comment on the systematic violence that is a feature of cities, and of which gentrification is but one instantiation. Atkinson and Bridge (2005) identify gentrification as a form of neo-colonialism and Robinson (2006, 2013) calls for urban studies to move beyond the lens of modernity to a postcolonial agenda. Lees (2012) argues for a comparative approach to urban studies that focuses on the global south.

Many of the commentaries on South Africa highlight the government's readiness to adopt a neoliberal market-related approach (Bond 1999; Parnell & Crankshaw 2013; Pieterse 2009; Saff 1994; Smith 2008) although many also acknowledge lack of capacity, and therefore of policy alternatives, as a reason for this approach (Boraine et al. 2006; Foster 2009; Makhulu 2010). Greenberg (2012), Klug, Rubin and Todes (2013) and Winkler (2009, 2012) attend to the exclusionary aspects of development and re-development projects. Foster (2009) and Kruger (2013) debate the erosion of public space while Beningfield (2006), Huchzermeyer (2014), Makhulu (2010) and Walsh (2013) express concerns over the right to the city. Stern and Marsh (1997) examine the government's ability to manage and control urban development.

A common theme in these writings is the tension that exists between economic efficiency and social justice, where economic success is posited as central to any long-term goal to address extreme historical social inequity. Many writers (Freund 2007; Nuttall & Mbembe 2008; Pieterse 2009; Visser 2013) believe that current government policy leans too heavily in favour of economic efficiency at the expense of social justice and this may explain the developmentalist focus of much contemporary writing.

By contrast my interactions with ordinary residents and my own observations of urban encounters as I moved through various places of the city revealed an aspect of city life and a sensibility among its residents that most critiques of neoliberal capitalism fail to capture. Indeed they pay little or no attention to such small nuances or insinuations. How was I to go about finding a theory to underpin my glimpses into urban life in 21st century Johannesburg?

One illuminating insight was revealed in Mbembe's (2008:64) call to pay attention to the 'blurring of distinction' and to the 'unconscious of the city' that traditional urban theory, in its attempt to create theoretical order, turns attention away from. Similarly in their 2002 book *Cities: Reimagining the Urban,* Amin and Thrift propose the significance of exploring 'other modes of subjectivity than consciousness', and of taking account of the notion that 'feelings, howsoever defined, are regarded as crucial to apprehension' (2002:27) in their argument for a new everyday urbanism. Although their focus is primarily on Northern cities, there is much in their approach that I found helpful in making sense of my data.

Amin and Thrift begin by acknowledging that cities are spatial formations distinguished by their density as heterogeneous 'concentrations of people, things, institutions, and architectural forms' (2002:2). The combination of density and myriad instantiations of difference results in intense social relations that, following Massey (1999) and Pile (1999), they recognise as being

inherently generative. Although the city will always provide a site for powerful forces to exercise control via 'totalizing projects', Amin and Thrift argue that control is never absolute, and that 'practices of imagination and fantasy' offer a degree of escape, and an opportunity for creating alternate imaginings of the city (2002:106).

Rather than attempt to extract overarching generalisations or to achieve a comprehensive oversight, Amin and Thrift find it more useful to pay attention to the patterns and networks that arise from the density of concentration and interaction of city life (here they include humans as one among many urban species), the practice of biopolitics, and the senses (2002:28). They conceive the city as a process rather than a cause. City trajectories are not prescribed by the realities of the present because the movement and flow implied by process facilitates unexpected improvisation and thus always opens up the potentiality of the future (2002:4).

Difficulties with this approach lie in a paucity of relevant vocabulary and a contestation over epistemology (or what counts as knowledge) (2002:5). Amin and Thrift utilise key metaphors of transitivity, rhythm and footprint that provide scope for 'variety and vitality' while still recognising commonalities across cities as places of mobility, flow, and recurrent everyday practices (2002:5). This approach does not aim for consensus or for the smoothing of difference, but actively acknowledges the formative, productive attributes of the agonistic encounter (2002:30).

Transitivity allows us to focus on the spatial and temporal openness of the city and thus recognise its capacity for improvisation, formation and reformation (2002:9). This is not a naïve view but one tempered by acknowledgement of the limitations imposed on the freedom of flow by bureaucracy, capital and other forms of systematic violence such as racism or

gender. Reflexive walking, in the tradition of Benjamin's flâneur, is helpful as it meshes knowledge with practice and encourages 'sensory, emotional and perceptual immersion' in city streets (2002:10). The value of Benjamin's approach is that it pays attention to the small subtleties of everyday practice that others disregard (Caygill1998:152).

Tracking the **rhythms** of the city reveals the framework by which urban life is ordered. Myriad, overlapping rhythms exist including those that originate from institutional regulations that control and direct flow. The flow of rhythms explode any illusion of cities as bounded and static, and the multiplicity of rhythms also call us to question whether prime importance should be focused on the nodes of connectivity or on the connections itself (Amin and Thrift 2002:27, 29). Rhythms have both spatial and temporal aspects that connect urban flows and practices to history and memory, and reveal the extension of networks across and beyond the city.

By acknowledging these **footprints** we undermine a view of the city as entirely orderly and are forced to recognise the 'mixity' of the city (Amin and Frith 2002:23; Massey 1999). This approach to the city facilitates attention to the multi-dimensionality of everyday practices of daily life that includes an existential 'everydayness' (Amin and Frith 2002:9). This 'overflowing of the common' (de Certeau 1992:5) or 'excess' (Seigworth 2000:240) arises out of everyday processes but its 'immanent life force' (Amin and Thrift 2002:9) is often disregarded, perhaps because of its apparent un-remarkability.

Amin and Thrift warn against the temptation to romanticise urbanites while arguing for the importance of tracking the ways that people use the streets and spaces of the built environment, paying attention to subversive practices and to their undermining of stereotypes. They argue that this will enable urban researchers to gain a 'sensory intimation' that cannot

be comprehensively encapsulated and known through theory and cognition alone (2002:9). Their approach is a 'politics of hope' that, without being foolishly optimistic, seeks to recognise the potentiality for change and becoming that inheres in the ordinary practices of urban life (2002:4).

Amin and Thrift provide an alternate approach to understanding my fieldwork sites of Braamfontein and Johannesburg beyond confining visions of them as 'nothing but the spatial embodiment of unequal economic relations and coercive and segregationist policies' (Nuttall and Mbembe 2008:10). Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) are concerned to explore how individuals negotiate and invent self-identities through their engagement with the city.

The fundamental ethical shift attached to the abandonment of apartheid ideology, the removal of restrictions on individual physical mobility and domestic habitation, and the prevalence of violent crime that is a feature of contemporary South African society have converged in the urban environment of Johannesburg. These changes act as agitations to the status quo but also provide opportunities for improvisation and invention (Amin and Thrift 2002:157). Indeed, Nuttall and Mbembe believe that Johannesburg provides the environment in which an original African modernity may be articulated (2008:9).

Mbembe (2008) wishes us to pay close attention to the aesthetics of the city through which we can recognise the aspirations and fantasies of residents. Following Vidler (2000), Amin and Thrift also call for attention to contemporary architecture and performance art that shock and impel residents to consider expanded or alternate ways of inhabiting urban space (2002:50). Aside from the consciousness of the performance (of architecture or art) as social critique, the everyday interaction with, exposure to, and re-appropriation by residents and visitors also operates on them in a less obviously mindful way. It manages to penetrate and

generate a 'kind of spatial unconsciousness' anchored by the 'embodied spatial stories' of the performance (2002:48)

Provocateurs

Kathleen Stewart's 2007 book *Ordinary Affects* is helpful in attempting to articulate concepts such as potential and immanence, especially in the way she draws attention to where we might discover and recognise ordinary affect or emotions. Stewart echoes Mbembe's charge that commentaries that focus on the socioeconomic effects of capitalism and the characteristics that such systems confer on individuals fail to adequately account for the 'situation we find ourselves in' (2007:1). Even given the significance of the tangible and measurable outcomes of the myriad circuits of political-economic connection ('of relations, scenes, contingencies') and the continuous motion of the flows across, between and around them, this still does not describe completely *all* that we experience (2007:2).

For Stewart it is also the capacity to affect and be affected by this surging flow that gives meaning and is an 'animate circuit' that has potential and force, despite the difficulties of its clear conceptualisation and articulation (2007:2). Stewart explains that ordinary affect is unremarkable, nuanced, banal and mundane and these attributes render it liable to misrecognition or neglect. Its outcome is not assured, and it 'can take off in flights of fancy or go limp, tired, done for now' (2007:12).

Stewart highlights the emergent, unpredictable and creative nature of ordinary affect, and its operation as a perception not completely controlled by conscious processes (2007:21, 63, 128). I aim to utilise Stewart's notion of ordinary affect to help uncover and name the immanent life force that Amin and Thrift argue can be discovered through attention to and analysis of everyday practice.

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Pierre Bourdieu is a second theorist whose early work illuminates certain core dimensions of urban life in Johannesburg. In his 1977 book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu describes the *habitus* as a generative aspect of social practice that functions as a set of socialised norms informing and shaping individual behaviour (1977:73). Because the structures that comprise the *habitus* operate somewhat outside inhabitants' conscious awareness they are frequently un- or mis-recognised. This attribute accords *habitus* its power, as it is difficult to resist or change the structures that underpin social behaviours and values if you are unaware of their existence.

Temporality is incorporated into the model as Bourdieu explains that social stability is ensured through repeated cycles of past production informing present practice, even as present practice affirms past production (1977:73). Powerful groups work to control the 'structuring structures' in a way that remains imperceptible to social members. In this manner powerful groups are able to dominate whilst simultaneously naturalising the conditions of domination (1977:168). Continuity is easier to maintain than change, and for Bourdieu, only crisis can instigate change.

The end of apartheid must surely count as a major rupture in the *habitus* of all South Africans. Ongoing negotiations around the possibility of transition to a post-apartheid democracy took place in utmost secrecy and the world, and South Africans were stunned when President FW De Klerk simultaneously announced the release of Nelson Mandela and South Africa's official renouncement of apartheid on 2 February 1990 (The Independent UK 2010). Bourdieu's understanding of social dynamics are useful in understanding the state of contemporary South African society which, twenty years post-apartheid, shows vital variations of stasis, disruption and change.

V. Constructing apartheid

No city offers its residents' unrestricted access to all of its parts. Wealth, social class, education, connections, and sometimes racial prejudices operate to determine individuals' degree of freedom to move around in and consume the city. This is nothing unique. It is to be expected that in an examination of contemporary Johannesburg, South Africa, we would find evidence of this pattern of unevenness. In South Africa, however, the ideology of apartheid made a substantial and significant contribution to both the spatial development and growth of cities, and to inhabitants' access to the opportunities that its different parts held.

In order to provide historical context for my ethnographic research in Johannesburg, South Africa I begin by sketching out a timeline of apartheid legislation. This cluster of legislation provided the framework within which society and the urban environment developed in the 20th century. Discrimination based on race was a feature of South African society from the time of European colonisation. Its application and implementation was patchy prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, when the Afrikaner Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State insisted that race-based protection be incorporated into the new Union's constitution (Ross 2008:88).

Over the course of the 20th century discrimination was enacted through legislation that incrementally reduced Black Africans' right and freedom. From 1948 the newly elected National Party (NP) government programmatically implemented its apartheid ideology through legislation. While much of the legislation aimed specifically to control Black African

political and socio-economic opportunities, the consequence of these laws was increasing governmental social control over South Africans of all races.

The Black (or Natives) Land Act No. 27 of 1913 and the Native (Black) Urban Areas Act No. 21 of 1923 defined urban and rural areas. The acts prohibited blacks from owning or renting land outside designated reserves and from living or staying in urban areas, except under stringent conditions. Thus movement of black workers (particularly men) was strictly regulated, and cities were transformed into 'white' spaces, laying the foundation of urban apartheid (Maylam 2001:159, 177). Areas set aside for black ownership and habitation comprised 7% of the land compared with 1910 census records that show Black Africans comprised approximately 75% of the total population (Christopher 2011). Both acts demonstrated government determination to control black citizens and to legalise profound inequality.

The Representation of Natives Act No. 12 of 1936 effectively removed the qualified black franchise that had, until this point, existed in the Cape Province (Maylam 2001:151). Black Africans were removed from the common voters' roll and prohibited from running for office. Their interests were henceforth to be represented in the senate by four whites, elected through a process of block voting (Maylam 2001:151-2). This act also provided for the establishment of a separate Native Representative Council that had both elected and nominated members (Maylam 2001:151-2).

Apartheid ideology was not only a political and economic project but sought also to exercise control over society and individual bodies. It enacted legislation that prescribed facts of identity, limited freedom of movement, and imposed a race-based morality on personal relationships. In 1949 the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act No. 55 forbade marriage

between men and women of different race groups. In 1950 it was augmented by the Immorality Act that prohibited all sexual relationships between whites and persons of colour (Maylam 2001:183).

These acts aimed to maintain white racial purity and avoid racial contamination. The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 assisted the government's project of population control by classifying individuals into defined racial groups from birth (white, coloured, bantu, other) (Maylam 2001:184). Despite the problematic ambiguity regarding identification of distinct and unique race-based criteria, the government devoted substantial resources to ensure the act's implementation (Maylam 2001:190). The existence of a small but substantial population of mixed-race or 'coloured' people frustrated government efforts and complicated its ideology of a programme of comprehensive racial separation.

The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 designated urban residential areas for the use of particular race groups, an action designed to effect physical separation of the population, based solely on race (Maylam 2001:182). It provided an opportunity for government to reclaim prime urban land occupied by non-whites and relocate Africans, Indians and coloureds to the cities' boundaries, out of sight but available to meet the economic labour needs of the white economy. It also provided the opportunity to break up 'mixed' or cosmopolitan communities that already existed in some cities and represented a threat to the government's goal of white racial purity.

Blacks (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act No. 67 of 1952 standardised and extended control over the movement of blacks. It required all Black Africans over the age of sixteen years to carry an identity document (known as a 'reference book') and produce it on request. The incorporation of employment details into the reference book

enabled police and other government officers to check the holder's right of access to any particular area at any time and forcibly exclude Black Africans from the city and any other area designated as 'white space'.

These acts represent the major legal pillars upon which the apartheid state was built. But apartheid was always more than just a legal system and can be equally well understood by surveying its actualisation in the urban environment and examining its effect on the cognitions and perceptions of residents.

Vl. The Changing Face of Urbanism in Johannesburg

Johannesburg is a quintessential 20th century city. It arose from the bare veld of the Witwatersrand when large deposits of gold were discovered in 1886 (Maylam 2001:120). Foreigners and black and white locals flocked to the area seeking opportunity and adventure. Within ten years the population of the unruly settlement numbered 100 000 and was already stratifying into socioeconomic classes along racial lines. The profile and character of Johannesburg altered substantially over the course of the 20th century. It has reflected an economy based on gold mining, the political project of the governments of the time, local government urban planning and administration, the social conscience and concerns of civil society, and the resistance of those who refused to submit to apartheid's control and limitations.

In the early years of the settlement mine owners (mostly British) brought their families to live in Johannesburg and began to establish sedate wealthy suburbs to the north of the city. Black workers were discouraged from bringing their families to the city by being compelled to move into the mine-provided compounds, set up as single quarters to accommodate men only (Ross 2008:64). This strategy ensured a regular supply of labour and facilitated the exercise of control over black individuals.

Blacks were however able to purchase freehold land from some vendors and began to purchase land in Sophiatown, west of the city-centre (Lodge 1981:109). Alexandra, to the northeast of the city, was proclaimed an African residential area in 1912 (Nauright 1998:67) after whites proved reluctant to buy there due to its distance from the city. Although, over

time, most blacks were housed on the city's periphery in townships built and managed by the Department of Native Affairs, Alexandra and Sophiatown continued to attract new black urban residents. Proximity to transport, employment and services and limited official surveillance were key attractors. The suburbs' continued existence was tolerated until the passing of the Group Areas Act in 1950.

This marked a new phase in government vigilance of urban space. The NP viewed black urban settlements as spaces from which Black Africans could access the benefits of the city, organise resistance and potentially challenge white dominance (Lodge 1981:130). The government was concerned that black suburbs' proximity to the city-centre and white suburbs provided undesirable opportunities for inter-racial mixing and for the generation of a black urban community. Forced removals commenced in 1954 to relocate blacks on the city's periphery. The government deliberately erased memories of black urban life via acts such as the construction of a white suburb named Triomf[1] (Beningfield 2006:223) over the ruins of a bulldozed Sophiatown.

By the middle of the 1970s Johannesburg was ostensibly a white city. White business and white individuals enjoyed free access to the commercial, retail and public spaces of the city and to all its amenities. Reliance on the economic labour of blacks forced a reluctant accommodation of black domestic life near to, but never of, white urban spaces.

During the 1980s however, things started to shift. The government came under increasing internal pressure from black activism and external pressure from the international community (via economic sanctions) and its firm control on society began to weaken. Increasing numbers

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[1] Afrikaans – Triumph.

of Africans migrated from rural areas to the cities in search of work. Many moved into white inner city suburbs in Johannesburg, as insufficient housing was available in the inadequate and under-resourced black townships (Morris 1999:672). After a Supreme Court ruling blocked evictions unless suitable alternate accommodation was made available to evictees (Morris 1999:673) the government appeared to give up this fight. Inner city suburbs became increasingly racially desegregated.

After the renouncement of apartheid in 1990, black urban migration to Johannesburg continued throughout the decade, including large numbers of extremely poor people. Concurrent de-industrialisation resulted in high unemployment and increased deprivation for many (Crankshaw 2008:1697). In the city centre poverty-induced crime escalated, real estate prices began to fall, and white residents and businesses responded by fleeing for safer areas (Jurgens & Gnad 2002:339). Corporates relocated to new, purpose-built office parks in the elite northern suburbs, a previously whites-only part of the city (Crankshaw 2008:1692).

The newly re-formed non-racial Johannesburg Metro Council (JMC) struggled to manage a volatile urban environment. Limited funds and expertise forced it to endorse mainly white communities taking responsibility for their own policing and safety (Jurgens & Gnad 2002:339). This created an opportunity for private policing to enter the urban scene and the sector continues to capitalise on fear to drive its business success. Private security ensures the continuation and extension of 'systems of exclusion' (Benit-Gbaffou 2008:97) and the (mainly) white middle class use pricing strategies to limit access to suburban environments and guard against erosion of entrenched economic privilege.

Although some former white areas may be (very) slowly moving towards desegregation, former black areas remain 'ghettos of exclusion' and racial inequality is being replaced by spatial inequality (Crankshaw 2008:1693, 1697). The JMC, now known as the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), has not yet managed to regain full control of the city centre, which

remains occupied by some 30 000 squatters in unsanitary and insecure former commercial and residential buildings.

The CoJ faces continuing challenges to implement a fair and equitable distribution of resources across the uneven economic and social terrain of the city's landscape (Bollens 1998:204). In Johannesburg the strategy of the City Improvement District (CID) is promoted as a means of effecting urban renewal (Didier, Peyroux & Morange 2012:915). Current arrangements offer private capital wide scope and freedom to shape the urban environment. Once again the entrenched economic privilege of white South Africans provides them with extensive opportunity to influence and control the future development of public and private urban space (Didier, Peyroux & Morange 2012:915).

VII. The 'look' of Apartheid

> The only black person I knew growing up was our maid. I never saw where black people lived, nor where their children went to school. I never thought about where they shopped, what they ate and what clothes they liked to wear. Occasionally our maid's children would come to our house and we'd play with them. But then they'd go back home, to the farm, and we wouldn't see them again for ages. It sounds terrible to say it now, but I never thought about blacks much at all.

Linda's words reveal apartheid's success in separating the lives of black and white South Africans. Apartheid ideology incorporated a strict geographic and spatial profile. In order to create separate, racially defined states, the government sought to divide the land of South Africa into a patchwork with ten black reserves (Tatz 1962:8). All the rest of the land was reserved for white occupation. Black reserves lacked cities, commercial centres, infrastructure and connectivity. To further reduce the legitimacy of Black African claims to white land, cities and assets the government attempted to set up independent local black economies by financing private industrial development in the reserves.

The government intended to relieve itself of financial and political responsibility for the reserves and for the residents registered as living in them by granting the homelands independence at some future date (Halbach 1988:509). Over its many years of implementation the homelands scheme drained government resources and ultimately failed.

Despite official government rhetoric that identified the reserves (homelands) as the natural and therefore desirable home for Black Africans, residential areas set aside for Black African habitation could be found in every city. Numbers of African urban dwellers were large; for example, by the mid-1980s the population of Soweto, in Johannesburg, numbered

approximately 800 000. However, although physically present in the city landscape, official denial of African urbanism could be recognised by the stark physical differences between black and white suburbs.

White South Africa's reliance on black economic labour always presented a problem for the NP and apartheid ideology. Its mining industry demanded a large labour force and insufficient numbers of available white labourers led to the increasing formalisation of black employment. The on-going need for black labour complicated the ideology of separateness and rendered the project of apartheid always incomplete. The NP managed to separate people's living, educational and social spheres but remained unable to achieve the same separation in the workplace.

White business may have been willing to enjoy the benefits that apartheid offered, such as lower wages for blacks and the denial of collective bargaining rights, but it never allowed government interference to detrimentally affect its profit margins. White demand for black female domestic labour also sustained a certain level of inter-racial contact and communication, although at a fairly superficial level, as Linda's comments indicate.

Over time the landscape and built environment assumed a racial nature. White areas were developed, prosperous, well cared-for and located in the city while black areas were undeveloped, neglected, uniform and rural or on the urban edges. The suburbs of coloured and Indian populations fell somewhere in-between these two extremes. The city was the locus of white commercial and corporate activity and catered for the needs and desires of the white population. Commercial buildings mirrored the two-tiered nature of apartheid society and, until the mid 1970s, had separate entrances and counters for whites and non-whites. The position of each entrance and the grandeur of its design indicated the social status of its users.

White suburbs were well supplied with essential services and physical amenities. Public spaces were immaculately maintained, and roads provided good connectivity, essential as the motorcar was the main source of mobility for white residents. By contrast black areas were located on the peripheries with limited connection to the rest of the city. They frequently lacked connection to essential utilities, and amenities were rare or absent. The design and layout of black areas was informed by the need for surveillance and control, rather than domestic comfort. The physical appearance of black and white areas functioned as unspoken metaphors for the relative value the government placed on each racial group.

VIII. The 'feel' of Apartheid

Apartheid attempted to erase black bodies from the landscape by rendering them unseen and unheard. Kevin reflected on growing up in South Africa:

> Blacks lived somewhere else. Our newspapers reported news about whites. White people served us in shops and businesses. At the beach or movies you saw only white people. You went to a white school. We lived in an all-white society.

Kevin's comments indicate the degree of success the government achieved in creating a white life-world that barely recognised the existence of black humanity. Maintaining this fiction demanded constant hyper-vigilance. The government expended considerable energy and resources in order to exercise control of physical and social borders, information via media censorship, black populations via bureaucracy and policing, and white populations via tactics of fear and authoritarianism. Although apartheid was ostensibly aimed at control of blacks, in practice white lives, although far more materially comfortable, were just as proscribed.

When I asked Linda what life had been like in South Africa at this time she told me:

> It was perfect. I never really thought about it much. We had a nice house, a nice car. I went to a good school. I never wanted for anything or worried about anything. I'm actually ashamed to admit that I had no idea that life was so different for blacks. It was only when I went to university that, for the first time, I heard discussions about things like discrimination, unfairness, economic deprivation and political freedom. I was embarrassed by my lack of knowledge about the situation and asked my parents why they had never talked about such things at home. Their response shocked me. They told me they had made a conscious decision never to talk about politics in front of their children. They hoped in this way to avoid questions that might be awkward or morally challenging to answer. It was like "don't ask, don't tell".

Linda's comments about her parents' decisions are revealing. Government authoritarianism discouraged whites from questioning the status quo. Blanket censorship of news about black activity meant that white South Africans knew little of ordinary black lives nor did they become aware of black protest and activism until it spilled over into white urban areas. Protests were fairly sporadic and contained until the 1976 Soweto riots when black school children resisted discriminatory changes to education. This set in chain rolling mass action that continued until apartheid's demise in 1990.

The NP government had always engaged Cold War propaganda to create the notion of danger and threat of invasion from communists/socialists/black nationalists. It sought to instil a sense of fear into the white population from a faceless external communist threat and an internal Black Nationalist threat and utilised rhetoric of '*swart gevaar*'[2] to justify the disciplining of black populations. As protest action continued throughout the 1980s despite increasingly frantic and desperate measures by the government to shut it down, white un-ease began to grow. Most whites' understanding of political debate was simplistic and under-developed as the government had always discouraged political reflection, debate and discussion.

During this time the government's deliberate encouragement of fear and mistrust in a society whose members were already estranged or alienated from one another created a generalised atmosphere of paranoia. Vincent Crapanzano's 1985 book *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa* captures the sense of fear, lack of direction and impotence that many whites felt at this time. Crapanzano's Jack Freeling observes that 'people hadn't thought deeply about the future', or 'realized we were on the brink' even though they could sense 'it's the dread black cloud hanging over us in the future' (1985:248).

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[2] Afrikaans – literally 'black danger'

Crapanzano explains that most of his informants did not blame all blacks for the unrest. '*They know no better*' he was told (1985:249, emphasis in original). Violence and protest was often attributed to certain defined elements within the black population – a strategy that allowed whites to sidestep important political and moral debate. And, as Nuttall and Mbembe (2008:24) reflect, apartheid in South Africa was 'built on the fear of the black man with a gun'. As the level and degree of political unrest intensified, white fear of the black man with a gun appeared to becoming a reality. For many people, skin colour was the marker that denoted danger or safety.

Many whites did not know how to react to the mass action and protest that marked black political demands except to retreat. "People here all went into their houses, especially after the chap was killed. You didn't see a white person on the streets." (Crapanzano 1985:248). Nearly thirty years later although apartheid is no longer a legal reality in contemporary South Africa, for white South Africans at least, fear of strangers, based on skin colour, is still common and you *still* do not see white people on the streets.

By contrast black South Africans have always had better knowledge and understanding of their white counterparts. This situation is an unintended consequence of white reliance on black labour. Although officially subject to strict government control, black people had more access to white areas than the reverse. Domestic workers in particular had on-going access to the mundane everyday lives of their white employers, which provided them with knowledge of and familiarity with white society and social norms. Command of English or Afrikaans assisted black workers in gaining employment in white-run businesses, and both languages were taught in all black schools.

As a result most Black Africans were multi-lingual, unlike their white counterparts who, for the most part, had limited knowledge of any black languages. This language-competence provided Africans a key to unlock and access white society. White incompetence, disinterest or arrogance rendered African society unknowable. As a social project apartheid policy succeeded in erasing any notion of a common society to which all South Africans could belong.

IX Carceral landscape

You can't catch public transport – it's not safe.

Why on earth would you want to go to Braamfontein? Everything you need you can get here (the Northern suburbs), and it's so much nicer, and safer.

I've lived in Joburg for four years and I've never been into the city. I have no intention of going there either. Why would I?

We live in Alan Manor – it's in the city's south. None of the northern suburbs 'larnies'[3] will ever come here to visit us.

I'll take you for a drive through the centre of Joburg. I bet that nobody else will make you that sort of offer; most people are too scared to go in to the city.

You're so brave…. I would never be as adventurous as you.

The comments were made to me over the course of the three months that I lived in Johannesburg. Although some of the individuals I met expressed interest in my plan to locate my fieldwork in their city, and to use public transport to move around it, many seemed to think it was a foolhardy venture.

Over and over again I was offered similar views emphasising the need to be constantly vigilant for personal safety's sake, proffering the notion that not all parts of the city were equally desirable, declaiming that private transport was always to be preferred over public and that even if private transport was available, one's decision to travel to a particular destination around the city should include consideration of the safety of both route and destination.

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[3] South African slang term for upper middle-class or 'posh' people.

Although I received many warnings from acquaintances and strangers to be careful for my own personal safety, and advice on how to avoid falling victim to crime, people seldom spoke directly about the degree to which concern for their own personal safety altered the way in which they moved around, used and engaged with urban space. The constant surveillance and fortress-like appearance of middle class and wealthy suburbs appeared unexceptional to its inhabitants.

In this section I examine the strange hyper-secure normality of contemporary middle class suburbs in Johannesburg. Taking as my example Lawrence and Low (1990:455), I describe the ways in which this built environment has been physically altered over the past 20 years, and examine whether there has been a concomitant shift in residents' habits of daily life and views on social issues. I enquire about the meaning that the fortified profiles of Johannesburg's contemporary middle class suburbs hold for inhabitants and outsiders and how it relates to individuals' feelings about their own society.

By doing so I aim to give readers a sense of the landscape and the built environment of middle class Johannesburg. I also aim to show how the landscape is understood as a response to what residents consider to be the major problem of contemporary urban life – crime and violence – even as it reproduces and reinforces one of the core practices of apartheid ideology - the physical separation, based on arbitrary categorisation/classification, of bodies. Thirdly, via an examination of the routine and unexceptional ways in which people conduct themselves in everyday activity, I also show how in the anticipation of danger an environment of barriers and borders, of surveillance and control has become normalised and embedded in residents' lives

Residents do not usually acknowledge the unremitting vigilance required of them to maintain the integrity of the borders of the built environment, and secure it (and themselves) against attacks from criminal others. Nor do they appear to recognise that the built environment and the landscape they inhabit operates in a way to reinforce their feelings of insecurity, even though its purpose is said to create the opposite effect. Physical environment and lived experience interact seamlessly to produce the *habitus* of middle class (mainly white) residents of 21st Century Johannesburg (Bourdieu 1977:80).

X. Modern laagers[4]

I had rented a room in Marelize's home for the duration of my fieldwork in Braamfontein. The house was situated in Auckland Park, a mixed suburb with freestanding houses, apartment blocks, some commercial properties, and a number of tertiary education campuses. It is approximately four kilometres from Braamfontein. It was a 15-minute walk to the nearest bus station and, when I did not have a hire car, it was a walk I made twice daily.

On my walk every house I passed was separated from the footpath by high concrete and metal walls. Every gate that gave access to the properties was solid and imposing, with remote electronic access only. Every property carried signboards advertising the name of the private security company retained to provide 'armed response'. Razor wire and surveillance cameras frequently supplemented these measures, designed to ensure that nobody accessed the properties without inhabitants' knowledge and consent.

The footpaths of Auckland Park were busy, with pedestrians and a small number of informal traders, but in the two months I lived there, I was nearly always the only white person walking on the streets. I soon learned a basic rule for being white in Johannesburg – do not walk, do not regularly use the public space represented by footpaths and bus stops, and do not rely on public transport. Drive, everywhere.

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[4] Fortification made from wagons. Protective strategy adopted by Boers (Afrikaners) against attack from native tribes dating from the time of the Great Trek in the mid 1800s.

Johannesburg is a city of barriers. It is an endless vista of spiked and palisaded metal and concrete walls, electronic gates, razor wire and electric fencing. Surveillance cameras glint and wink in the glare of the sun, the silently working electronic assistants of security guards who monitor entrances to all commercial buildings and housing complexes. Boom gates, identity cards, fingerprint scanning, bag searches and handheld metal detectors provide additional physical and technological access-control.

Over the course of the 1990s businesses moved out of the Johannesburg city centre (Crankshaw 2008:1692), and the suburbs now incorporate freestanding houses, business premises, residential complexes, gated communities, expansive shopping malls, office- and light industrial parks. There is much housing construction underway, mostly multi-unit residential projects, new office parks and shopping centres. Johannesburg has always had a reputation for flaunting its wealth (Mbembe 2008:41) and contemporary building projects appear to embrace this ethos. Modern building design in this city is also informed by the requirements of vigilance, protection, deterrence and control.

During apartheid, the law legitimised urban space as 'white' space, and white South Africans demonstrated their mastery of that space through its occupation. They lived in the houses and apartment blocks, worked in and owned the businesses, used the public and communal areas for leisure purposes and moved around the city on foot, public and private transport. The surety of white privilege was first threatened during the 1980s when black political activism against the apartheid regime intensified.

Violent political protests spread from the townships into urban spaces and blacks began to challenge the restrictions that apartheid's racially defined boundaries placed on their mobility. This period of social upheaval coincided with a sharp increase in crime rates, a feature

common in societies with significant economic inequality. As apartheid unravelled the protection that the regime had afforded to its white citizens and their lifestyle began to disintegrate.

Walls and gates appeared as an early response to the threat of crime. An informant commented to me 'I don't like all the security, but what can you do?' Another remarked that 'if my house is the only one on the street without security, of course it's going to be the one that will be broken into'. Over the past twenty years crime deterrence has become both increasingly intrusive and technologically sophisticated. It has also become so ubiquitous that it is accepted as the norm. Those properties that present an open and unguarded aspect to the street are perceived to be the ones that are aberrant, and therefore strange and suspect.

The original rationale in constructing impenetrable barriers around houses and commercial properties is to keep potential intruders out. However, across the city, strangers continue to obtain access to suburban streets on foot and in motor vehicles, and theft from homes continues to represent a substantial proportion of crime incidents (11.6% in 2013 according to CrimeStatsSA 2013). Now it is residents who have retreated behind the walls they built. Chance encounters with strangers are viewed by many as always having the potential for conflict and confrontation even as opportunities for simple and non-threatening social interaction with unknown others have substantially diminished.

Over the past twenty years residents of the middle class, mainly white, northern suburbs have acceded to surveillance by, and the intrusion of, the security industry into their everyday life. Although one or two individuals commented on the substantial physical alteration it has caused to the appearance of the built environment, this is generally accepted as a necessary

and reasonable response to the threat of crime. Barricaded suburbs have become the new norm.

None of my informants pondered over or articulated the potential consequences of this new normal for social interaction and civil society generally. It was as if their *habitus* and the 'structuring structures' that organised and informed it, operated entirely outside of larger questions about urban life, justice and social relations in South African cities (Bourdieu 1977:72).

XI Always watching, always guarding

An alarm is wailing as I walk down the street. It's not easy to tell whether the noise is coming from a house, an office, or one of the many motor vehicles parked on the street. As I survey the street scene it becomes obvious that I am the only person taking any notice of the alarm. Other pedestrians have not interrupted their stride, or their conversations, street traders continue taking money and handing over goods, even the security guards manning entrances to commercial buildings appear oblivious to the blare of the alarm. Suddenly it stops.

I never find out why that alarm sounded, whether it was triggered by mistake, a false alarm, or whether it was a genuine call for assistance. But over time I come to realise that this is the accepted response to such calls for assistance – they should be ignored. Acknowledging an alarm and responding to it might be hazardous, as thieves in South Africa are assumed to be armed and dangerous.

However I also learn that alarms, particularly household alarms, do trigger a hidden response; most have a back-to-base link that generates a phone call, and the possibility of armed response, from a private security company to the home to check whether residents are safe.

The private security industry is the largest single industry in South Africa, with 9 000 security firms employing more than 400 000 private security guards (Eastwood 2013). This number exceeds the combined personnel of both police force and army (Eastwood 2013). The size of its workforce gives some indication of the enormous influence that the industry wields in the

country. It is therefore no surprise that the private security business permeates almost every aspect of middle class existence in Johannesburg. In addition to providing home alarm systems with armed response back up, private security companies have also secured the right to patrol and police a number of suburban areas.

During the 1990s the private security industry vigorously promoted the formalisation of neighbourhood watch groups into legally constituted neighbourhood security committees (Benit-Gbaffou, Didier & Morange 2008:4). The industry divided the territory of middle class suburbs amongst its member companies, and residents were persuaded by their security committees to enter into contracts for the provision of 'dedicated and defined service[s]' with designated operators (ADT Security 2009). Although at the time some residents protested the action as a form of legalised vigilantism (Benit-Gbaffou, Didier & Morange 2008:4), the practice is now firmly established and accepted.

Private security personnel maintain a visible and intrusive presence in nearly all middle class suburbs. Marked vehicles, cars and larger more aggressive looking para-military vehicles, manned by armed and uniformed guards, patrol the streets. Residents have become accustomed to guards in every commercial and many residential settings. They provide a sense of reassurance and protection and most residents believe that their presence makes the place safer.

Private security companies claim their primary function is deterrence, and that this is achieved through hyper-presence and hyper-vigilance. However, an issue that remains unexamined (or at least, none of the people I spoke to mentioned it) is that the industry relies on the maintenance of high crime rates for its long-term economic survival. It is in the industry's

interest to undermine residents' feelings of safety, to hype up concerns about security, and to ensure that everyday life is perceived as volatile, unpredictable, dangerous and violent.

1. Advertising material from Tactical Reaction Services website. Image used with permission TRS.

2. Image from Tactical Reaction Services website demonstrating security service patrol. Image used with permission TRS.

The industry has been extremely successful in embedding itself in everyday life. Residents appear not to notice the omnipresence of security personnel in shops, shopping malls, office blocks, parking garages, hospitals, banks, streets and train stations. The constant exposure to guards, uniforms and visible weaponry normalises the militarisation of daily life while subtly altering common understandings of public space. People appear to accept the notion that private security guards have a right to control and regulate who is entitled to access public spaces.

They also appear to accept that surveillance is constant. People are always being watched. They are watchful in turn. They observe the approach of others, seeking to ascertain whether the movement is innocent or malevolent. Judgement is not a simple process. Is there a physical characteristic that denotes hostility? People tend to fall back on identifiers of dangerous difference such as colour (race) and class (judged by dress and overall appearance). Yet this is not a foolproof method and many resort to a baseline judgement – if you do not know someone then they are suspect. The lack of trust and hostility towards strangers undermines even the non-threatening ignoring of others in shared space (Simmel 2002), while encouraging the continuation of social apartheid based on difference.

XII. Perceptions of safety

It took much persuasion to convince my landlady, Marelize, to have dinner with me in Braamfontein to celebrate the end of my fieldwork in Johannesburg. She had never been there and had no desire to visit. I had to reassure her it would be safe to drive into the city (at least as safe as it is to drive anywhere in Johannesburg), that we would be able to park close by, and that the restaurant and the environment generally would be one where she'd feel at ease.

We arrived without incident. Once we had parked, we were approached by a 'car guard'[5] who promised to keep our car safe. Marelize was relieved to see that The Smokehouse Grill and its patrons looked much like any other Johannesburg suburban steakhouse. Over the course of the evening Marelize gradually relaxed. She repeatedly expressed her surprise at the 'normality' of the place, and said that she might come again, bringing friends for dinner, or to visit the Neighbourgoods Market.

It was late by the time we finished and the streets, although still well lit, were empty and quiet. Marelize's mood had instantly changed, and she was jumpy. 'Why did I think this was a good idea', she shivered. Suddenly a tramp loomed out of the shadows and lurched towards us. Marelize bolted. She ran for the car, shouting at me to hurry and unlock it so she could jump in. Spooked by the intensity of her reaction, I complied.

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[5] Usually unemployed local who watches your car in return for a small monetary payment.

We never discovered the tramp's intentions. He was poorly clothed, unwashed and unkempt, and was probably hoping for money. But we didn't stop to find out. Adrenalin racing, I started the car, engaged the central locking, and we careered off down the road. Marelize's attitude to Braamfontein was instantly changed. Even though nothing had really happened, she was convinced that we had narrowly avoided being robbed or assaulted.

This incident only lasted thirty seconds, but it undermined the positive experience of the rest of the evening. Marelize told me she would never go there (Braamfontein) again. Her initial reluctance to venture into Braamfontein was vindicated by the unexpected appearance of the tramp, which confirmed her expectations regarding the safety of this part of the city. It reinforced her view of Johannesburg as a city partitioned into safe and unsafe areas.

Residents' engagement with the city is informed by concerns of safety and fear. I was regularly warned about areas to which I should not go, behaviours I should not engage in (such as walking alone on the streets), and general information on how to avoid falling victim to crime. People deal with the practical matters of ensuring their personal and domestic safety but their anxieties also seem to operate at another, more embodied, level. Most strikingly, it can be noted in the way that they move and orient their attention in space, always aware of others around them.

They check for entry and exit points, in case a quick escape is required. 'Don't walk alone down an alleyway. Ever.' 'Be careful of approaching groups, they can surround and rob you in an instant.' 'Don't turn into your driveway if there are unknown individuals or cars loitering in the vicinity.' Although the list of pre-emptive actions required to remain safe is sufficient to make one feel permanently alarmed and unsafe, local residents, when walking in

public, carry themselves with a an alert and guarded but confident demeanour that belies the way they feel.

Although it is of course possible for individuals to consciously make these movements or gestures, the frequency and consistency with which I observed them, combined with individuals' own accounts of their perceptions of the city, indicates that they have also become habitual actions of everyday existence. The possibility of experiencing crime and strategies to avoid it have become so accepted and embedded in the everyday lives of middle class Johannesburg residents that they form part of the *habitus* and are thus rendered unremarkable (Bourdieu 1977:76).

The power of fear was demonstrated to me when Marelize was disturbed from a deep sleep by an unfamiliar noise. She immediately assumed that it was 'someone attempting to open her bedroom door' (an external door), a would-be intruder. Within a few seconds she had leapt out of bed, pressed the panic button for the security alarm, come to my room to wake me and answered the telephone call from the security company checking whether it was her who had triggered the alarm. She requested that they immediately attend to patrol and secure the house. No stranger or any evidence of entry and exit was discovered. One might assume that Marelize's reaction is to be expected but another incident reveals how fear can extend beyond the physical boundaries of its original *habitus.*

A friend, visiting Australia from South Africa, reported that she could not sleep well in my house. I assumed jet lag, her bed or some other aspect of the accommodation was causing the problem and was astounded when she said the house 'made too many noises'. As it cooled in the evening the wooden staircase and floors would creak but the friend imagined it was a

stranger creeping upstairs to attack her. Even though she knew she was in a safe place she could not halt her somatic reaction to the sounds.

There is an aspect or dimension to individuals' reactions to notions of fear, safety and suspicion of strangers that does not yield easily to our analysis. In both the incidents described no real threat existed. Sounds were heard and perceived in specific ways that led Marelize and my friend to think there were reasons to be fearful. Here Kathleen Stewart can be helpful. She describes the way that over time repetitions of actions, thoughts, interpretations, responses - although individually small and apparently inconsequential - can 'pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas' (2007:3).

For many residents of the northern suburbs their bodies are constantly attuned to the presence and position of strangers and they anticipate fear multiple times in every day. As Stewart explains, the act of holding oneself always physically ready and alert to the potential dangers of encounter begins to shape one's behaviour, reactions, receptivity and perceptions. Outside of conscious control, it begins to mould the way in which individuals, and groups of individuals, understand normal social interactions, particularly those with strangers. The 'power of this way of being' lies in its very mundane-ness that means that it frequently does not attract our attention. It affects, or becomes, part of our subjectivity, but we remain unaware of its potency and potential (Stewart 2007:1-5).

For many inhabitants of the northern suburbs the idea of normal social interaction is one that is punctuated by the surveillance and intervention of private policing. Thus all unmediated human encounters become threatening. Fear, and the fear of fear, has altered definitions of normal sociality. Fear may be acknowledged by this society, but the fear of fear, generally unrecognised, has gained power as 'ordinary affect' (Stewart 2007:3) to alter perceptions

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about others, strangers and normality. Things that we are aware of can be acknowledged (and changed or resisted). But ordinary affect remains unrecognised and unarticulated and is thus more difficult to identify or resist.

Whites still comprise the large majority of middle class society in Johannesburg. For many of these individuals, fear and the suspicion of strangers suffuse every aspect of their daily lives. When acknowledged it is attributed to the presence of high levels of crime and violence in the society. But comments such as 'violence is part of their nature' and 'you can't tell anymore, even the well-dressed ones may be robbers' indicate that there is an easy assumption that criminality and race (colour) go hand in hand. It appears there may be a continuation of discriminatory attitudes towards others encouraged by centuries of colonialism and apartheid that is fostered by the ordinary affect of contemporary northern suburbs life. Because this link remains unacknowledged, it also facilitates ongoing justification of race-based discrimination.

High levels of crime have enabled most middle class whites to continue their lives largely unchanged from the days of apartheid, because ideas of '*swart gevaar*' (danger from blacks) have been un-problematically transformed into danger from crime. Whites have not been forced to confront their stereotypes and engage with the concept of a socially democratic or non-racial society. Crime has provided an excuse to protect whites from being forced to accept change. And this complacency is encouraged and entrenched by the zealous ministrations of the private security industry. Private capital has stepped in to perform the task that used to be the province of the apartheid government.

But fear is not the only driver of individual and group behaviour for residents in the middle class suburbs of Johannesburg. Informants regularly demonstrated a multitude of other ways in which they experienced and negotiated their daily lives. Focus on fear alone ignores the

complicated and irreducible mixture of banality, adrenalin, fear, engagement, variation, hostility and hesitancy that many experience everyday as they venture beyond the confines of the northern suburbs.

XIII. Why Braamfontein?

> We need to be careful about space. There are many different kinds of space, not just one, and the smallest spatialities can also have the largest social consequences' (Amin and Thrift 2002:40).

There is no doubt that Braamfontein in 2014 offers distinct opportunities for capitalist interests. In the main, gentrification is a capitalist project. It capitalises on cycles of urban degeneration and regeneration as a means of wealth creation, and typically some individuals and groups are better placed to take advantage of these opportunities than others. It is also a likely consequence that some individuals and groups are excluded as a result of the actions of capitalist interests.

Rather than another expose of neoliberal gentrification (as in Herzfeld 2010), in this chapter I choose to focus on the experience of being in Braamfontein. Apart from the fact that its clever marketing attracts visitors and prospective residents, what else draws people to Braamfontein in increasing numbers? Why do they choose to come here? What do they expect to experience here, and how does it differ from experiences to be had elsewhere in the city? Will this ability to lure visitors change Braamfontein? Will the experience of being in Braamfontein change its visitors?

Like many things in South Africa, for most middle class whites Braamfontein is both known and unknown. Until the mid 1980s it was a popular inner city residential destination for students and young working adults. Insurance companies and finance houses operated out of

the area, providing employment for many, and restaurants and nightclubs drew local and suburban clientele. But perceptions of increased lawlessness, and the disruption of order that accompanied the final years of apartheid rule, drove most residents and some businesses to flee to the suburbs.

In the unstable and somewhat chaotic post-apartheid milieu, blacks exercised their newfound right to occupy the city. The racially constructed social chasm created by apartheid left whites without strategies, models or knowledge of how to live in multi-racial communities. Sharp increases in crime spurred further retreat into 'safe' suburban enclaves (suburbs formerly zoned for white occupation, and able to resist black invasion through socio-economic means). This altered incarnation of Braamfontein rendered it unknowable to many whites.

XIV. The self-styled saviour of Braamfontein

> Let me tell you this, Adam has a vision of himself as singlehandedly saving this city. What he's doing in Braamfontein he sees as a model that can be implemented all over Johannesburg. If he has an ultimate ambition, it is to be the mayor of Johannesburg and to say to the world – look at Johannesburg, I created it, my vision is responsible for it. (Mike, Braamfontein business owner and one of Adam Levy's tenants)

National and local governments lack resource capacity to extend their programmes beyond service provision and poverty alleviation in the most deprived areas of Johannesburg, which forces them to engage with the private sector for less critical development. The plethora of somewhat degraded suburbs in and around the city centre provides an abundance of opportunity for private capital and development. This nexus creates the space in which Levy operates.

Adam Levy was the first of the current batch of developers operating in Braamfontein. Although one assumes that recognition of Braamfontein as a site for potential profit and wealth generation formed part of Levy's decision to invest in the area, it does not appear to be the only reason. If financial motivation was the sole consideration, less risky opportunities in the northern suburbs were readily available to developers (Peyroux 2012:185).

But Levy chose Braamfontein. Although media and official publications celebrate the financial and social success of Braamfontein (Anderson 2012), in reality it remains an uncertain environment in which to do business. For example, Kayla owns and operates a café in Juta Street and is one of Levy's tenants via his company Play Braamfontein. The café commenced trading in January 2014 and after a very slow start has finally begun to establish a

small but regular clientele. Kayla told me that by June 2014 she was still unable to pay rent but that Levy was prepared to grant her a rent-holiday in order to assist the business to continue to operate.

This aspect of doing business in Braamfontein is never publicised but it may indicate that Levy's commitment to the area extends beyond pure financial motivation. Levy's desire to attract and support creative commercial tenants point to his belief in the potential of creative individuals as agents of social change. His corporate website advises that his aim is to create a 'culturally relevant and open node' within the city (Play Braamfontein 2014) that provides a place from which to engage with the city and its residents.

Levy's willingness to support unproven businesses without any guarantee of future success and financial redemption demonstrates a desire to place his vision ahead of a short-term profit motivation. It problematises easy dismissal of his business operations as conforming to standard capitalist principles that sees individuals as consumers, and Braamfontein as simply another venue in which privileged white South Africans can practice consumption marketed as democracy and non-racialism.

It provides some validation to Levy's self-description as a 'cultural architect' and his belief in the power of the built environment to effect social change. It also gestures to his desire for instrumental involvement in the cultural change that South Africa needs to undergo to achieve social democracy.

XV. Imagining the possibilities of Braamfontein

The results of development activity have a tangible aspect. It may physically alter the buildings and landscape of the environment, and usher in new commercial, retail and entertainment offerings. The effect of these transformations can be measured in changes to the patterns, volume and frequency of visitor, resident and consumer activity. And because measurable, development activity may also be fairly easily critiqued. However for Casey statistics and 'contingent overlap' do not adequately describe all that is going on in a space and 'fails to capture what is shared by members of a class' (Casey 1996:30).

We can choose to focus on the empirical commonalities, and using this measure, critique the neoliberal aspects of regeneration. But Casey warns us of the limitations of adopting this perspective – we risk missing the shared commonalities among those who use the space. Accordingly, it is the intangible aspects of development activity in Braamfontein that interest me. I believe this approach is more sympathetic to Levy's own vision of Braamfontein's potential, and goes beyond the mere physical alteration of the built environment. In Braamfontein gentrification opens up physical spaces that provide a place in which ordinary citizens can simply be together without being required to relinquish the anonymity that urban encounters offer (Simmel 2002(1903):15).

While this may appear an insignificant and somewhat trivial opportunity for social interaction, its importance in a South African social context should not be underestimated. It is impossible to establish members of a class who all share some 'genuinely generic trait' (Casey 1996:30) (a society based on commonality, not on race) without a place for agents to

engage in ordinary, banal human interactions. Braamfontein offers a singular place in Johannesburg for the opportunity to experience ordinary, unremarkable, across-racial social interaction.

In a place that is not immediately and implacably marked as being black or white, ordinary individuals can get used to being in the presence of one another and through observation and engagement recognise similarity rather than difference. At an individual level this process must take place in order to break down race-based prejudices inculcated in the past. And the accumulation of an infinitesimal number of small insignificant social acts has the potential to exercise subtle influence on the larger social consciousness.

I may appear to place undue emphasis on these small unremarkable social exchanges but I believe that their triviality may lead us to overlook them and undervalue their consequence. As Amin and Thrift (2002:9) suggest, new everyday urbanisms must be formed of 'significant banalities', while Stewart (2007:27) affirms a 'world of shared banalities can be a basis of sociality, or an exhausting undertow, or just something to do'. Authority cannot create this 'basis of sociality' – it will always be the task of ordinary human beings.

Levy and others such as Thomas (section XX) appear to recognise the opportunity that Braamfontein represents, not only for commercial gain but as a testing ground, a place in which ordinary citizens can experiment with new ways of enacting their citizenship. Banal or otherwise, it is an experimenting with modes of belonging to a new (non-racial) South African society.

XVI. The importance of perceptions

The perception of Braamfontein as a safe place to visit is the result of commercial initiative, targeted marketing and geographical location. A Business Improvement District was incorporated in 2002 (Peyroux 2012) to combat perceptions of physical and infrastructural degradation in the area. Local businesses pay the private company (Braamfontein Management District (BMD)) to provide visible security and cleaning services.

The distinctive uniforms of the security officers (also known as 'public ambassadors' (BMD 2012)) and cleaners render them visible as functionaries of law and order. Their presence on the streets and public spaces of Braamfontein operates as a means of surveilling visitors and users of the space. Whilst remaining always aware of the exclusionary potential of the BMD (Peyroux 2012:182 and Didier, Peyroux & Morange 2012), it is acknowledged that the presence of publicly recognised symbols of protection (uniformed security officers) combined with physical improvements of the streetscape (litter removal) creates an environment of safety that has lured people back to the city.

As Peyroux (2012:185) points out, 'in the minds of many' the Johannesburg central city is seen as the 'critical point of integration between black and white, rich and poor' (Tomlinson 1999:1655). But it is also viewed as a crucible of social disorder (Peyroux 2012:185). Such perceptions continue to function to frighten whites and middle class individuals of all races from accessing the city centre. And if the centre remains a no-go area for most whites and the rich, possibilities for social proximity and interaction also remains distant and unattainable.

As ideologically flawed as it may be as a vehicle of social change, the BMD has succeeded in persuading people to venture back into a city area. Braamfontein's physical location on the northern edge of the inner city renders it easily accessible to visitors travelling from the northern suburbs. Sustained marketing, a distinct lack of alternate, accessible (safe) city destinations, and the establishment of a number of entertainment and consumption sites have coalesced to raise the profile of Braamfontein as a desirable weekend destination.

Although private enterprise may view Braamfontein as a site of potential economic benefit for itself, and as a marketplace for individuals to consume the products and spaces of the city, there are other consequences to the creation of this activity. The large resident student population of Braamfontein is mainly young, black, and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. They do not retreat from the swarm of middle class whites who flock to the Neighbourgoods Market on Saturdays.

From the safety of the Neighbourgoods rooftop eating area, visitors survey the surrounding buildings and discover other bars, cafes, restaurants and shops in the area. To access these venues, they must walk along the streets, a simple task that should not rate a mention - until you realise that whites in Johannesburg have not walked on public streets for the past two decades. In order to get to a chosen venue, they must walk among and through the pedestrian traffic, initially a frightening activity for many visitors.

At the market itself, crowds are dense and noisy. Throngs of people swirl around, tasting and buying the food on display, shouting to be heard over the noise of others. Sweet and savoury food aromas hang overhead, layering the air. The sensuousness of smell is slashed by gleaming metal – theatrical machetes to chop the tops off coconuts and sharpened blades to

slice *biltong*[6]. Aisles between the food stalls are narrow, as is the staircase to the open eating area, so visitors jostle each other. They bump shoulders and elbows, apologise for unintentional jabs or stomps, and hang back or surge forward to get upstairs.

The open eating area is relatively small. The experience of close human contact with strangers continues regardless of whether seated at the counters and bar stools, long tables and benches, or standing nursing a plate of food or a drink. This type of venue and experience are rare in Johannesburg, and without precedent because, prior to the end of apartheid, such urban activities would have had a distinctly pale complexion.

The banality of such actions means they would pass unnoticed in most urban environments around the globe. Indeed no one I spoke to at the market made any comment in this regard. However these actions of close contact with racial others, sharing of eating spaces, and observation of conventional social niceties may slowly operate to complicate historical embedded notions and ideas about racial others. When individuals observe others engaging in simple social acts and recognise similarities to their own patterns of behaviour, this works to deconstruct learned prejudice based on difference in a subtle and almost unnoticeable way.

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[6] Dried meat/jerky – popular South African snack food.

XVII. Walking as an act of urban re-familiarisation

White pedestrians have become a rare sighting in the city or the suburbs and walking in public spaces is, for many, a forgotten pastime/habit. For most residents of Johannesburg fear of the disorder of the post-apartheid inner city has generated alienation not only from the current residents (mostly black) but also from the city itself. The act of walking in Braamfontein's streets – while pausing to acknowledge and engage with the public artworks, watch the break dancers busting moves on the corner of Juta and Melle Streets, or drink coffee at a sidewalk café – provides opportunities for re-engagement with the physical environment that makes up the city.

Re-engagement with Braamfontein through the act of visiting, walking, observing, and consuming can begin to shift individuals' perceptions of the city: from nostalgia for what it once represented that was lost (the apartheid city controlled and inhabited by whites only) and from fear for what it currently represents (disorder, chaos). Estrangement from the city led to distancing and the reinforcement of markers of difference between black and white city residents that the unexceptional social interaction and pedestrian exploration offered by a place like Braamfontein begins to undermine.

The process of re-familiarisation with the city revitalises individual historical memories and attachments. Mike, the owner of The Smokehouse Grill, told me that he had lived in Braamfontein in the 1980s. He reminisced that in those days it was an exciting place to be, a hub that attracted local workers, residents and visitors to eat at the restaurants or visit the bars, music venues and night clubs. He showed me the block of flats he had lived in, and remarked

how easy it was to enjoy a great night out and only have to walk a single block back home afterwards. 'All that is gone now', he said, 'and it can never return.'

I asked him what sort of future he could envisage for Braamfontein. 'It will be different. What's gone cannot return, but if we get a critical mass of residents and business back to Braamfontein, it can be great once again. Not the same, but you wouldn't want that would you?' The steakhouse Mike has opened in Braamfontein has reconnected him to the area commercially and through his memories of it as a site of pleasure and desire.

The continued physical presence of buildings whose use spans both apartheid and post-apartheid eras provides a concrete link from past to present and is a silent harbinger to the commensurability of both history and future in this place. Without prejudice or favour, the built environment, the *place* of Braamfontein, reflects this diversity. Casey (1996:24) reminds us that 'places gather: they gather things (animate and inanimate entities) but also histories, languages, thoughts'. This is the power of places, and in Braamfontein we may glimpse the infant gathering of a new form of South African socialisation.

XVIII. The rhythm of Braamfontein

Although buildings remain the same, the character of Braamfontein changes day by day. Monday brings workers, students, business owners. Construction work is taking place in a number of venues, and varies in scale and complexity. Some is cosmetic work, new windows, new facades, new floors, new interiors, new paint, while other jobs are on a much grander scale. Some buildings are swathed in scaffolding and fenced off from public view, although because this is Africa, no alternate footpaths are provided, and pedestrians must battle the traffic to navigate around construction sites.

Here and there striped plastic bunting loops around open manholes or broken piping, warning pedestrians to take care. At one spot on Jorissen Street the footpath drops at least fifty centimetres before rising again a metre or two later. It catches unsuspecting pedestrians, but not as many as one might expect because few people talk or text on their mobile phones while out in public, and most stage a quick recovery. In some places the obstacles to walking are many, but I never heard complaints.

The thumping of jackhammers, clashing of steel, drumming of engines, and the loud exchanges of construction workers underpin the rhythm of street/human activity. The streets are busy with people who throng, collect, walk, talk, and conduct their business. Although there are always some loiterers, most people have an air of purpose. Some seem somewhat self-conscious, like the middle-aged white women conspicuously dressed in flowing African-style clothing, whereas others melt into the crowds, ordinary and unremarkable. At Kayla's

café the clientele is mixed – there are the regulars who come back again and again because the food is so good, and the passers-by who are tempted by the colourful and quirky décor.

It does not take long before I am recognised by the security officers and some local business owners. Despite the number of people who pass through its streets, the Braamfontein-regulars are a small community. And being known brings benefits. I am no longer required to pay for my street parking upfront. If the city's traffic police should arrive to check parking tickets, the security officer who patrols Juta Street will find me in time to obtain the necessary ticket. And, if I don't visit the area for a couple of days in a row, people notice my absence, and ask where I've been.

At night, the corner of Juta and De Beer Streets is loud and pumping. Music bursts out of Napiers Bar causing local buildings to vibrate. Student patrons spill noisily out into De Beer Street. Across the road the Smokehouse Grill attracts a slightly more genteel crowd, although some groups do get rowdy as the evening wears on. Outside of this intersection though, the streets are quiet and dark, and do not encourage lingering. Even the students do not venture down the streets alone, and many choose to catch taxis[7] right outside Napiers' front door.

The night, the dark, the streets, the city … people are still fearful despite Braamfontein's fairly benign daytime character.

Come Saturday and Braamfontein wakes early. Stallholders at the Neighbourgoods Market are up at dawn to gather their wares and set up their stands in the converted second storey car

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[7] Ubiquitous privately-owned and run minibus services that provide mass public transportation. Primary means of transportation for many black city residents.

park. It is the major trading day for other boutique retailers in the area and many make an effort to attract the Saturday visitors into their stores. This is the day for the local tourists as middle class residents from across the city, hipsters and others who like to be seen, and younger people in search of something entertaining and different to do descend on Braamfontein.

It is easy to see the appeal of these markets - the opportunity to wander down the streets, sit at a café table with the sun on your face, and feel the freshness of the breeze as you eat breakfast or lunch. It seems almost absurd to remark on these activities until you compare them with the light, heat and humidity-controlled cocoon of the mega shopping mall that comprises the alternative weekend entertainment venue for most Johannesburg residents, with its predictable stores, bland *muzak*, generic food courts and entertainments.

Over time such ordinary street-based activities have been lost as residents retreated behind barricades and barriers. Barriers erected to provide security and peace of mind have created prisoners of the people they were intended to protect. First time visitors are conspicuous by the hesitance and uncertainty of their behaviour, and even among the Saturday morning regulars there are those whose behaviour is self-conscious. But the crowds provide some sense of security and this encourages new visitors to explore beyond the locale of the market.

Down an alleyway colourful umbrellas float overhead, echoing installations at the Borough market in south London and Agueda in Portugal. Small shops seem carved into the alleyway's walls and present themselves unexpectedly. The *I Was Shot in Joburg* brand operates from one of these spaces, peddling postcards, wallets, buttons, phone and laptop cases and cushions that present an alternate view of Johannesburg. *I Was Shot's* images reveal snapshots of

Johannesburg where decay, poverty, hardship, life, colour and hope crosscut to expose the humanity of its ordinary residents.

These postcards are not standard tourist scenes that use golden lighting and imaginative angles to elide the challenging reality of Johannesburg urbanity. There is no Photoshop removing human images that might confront observers. Even the name of the brand pays grimly comical homage to the pervasive presence of crime in the city. And although the business might be criticised for commodifying images of the poor and their circumstances of poverty, the images it portrays are bold and defiant, and demand recognition and acknowledgement from those who look at and purchase (consume) them.

As the sun moves overhead the crowd dynamics change and by late afternoon the families have departed. The market stalls are quiet, although the cocktail bar upstairs gets progressively noisier and busier. The retail stores have closed for the day, but the bars are just warming up. The demographic is younger, cool and more at ease, and there is a feeling of unexceptional sociality. The demographic of the crowd changes week by week but for once it doesn't seem to matter. People are just there to have a good time.

Sunday slips in silently. No shops or cafes open, and even the residents seem hushed. 'Nothing happens in Braamfontein on a Sunday' I was told. Sunday trade, recreation, sport and religious activities take place all over Johannesburg but not, it seems, in Braamfontein. I never discovered a specific reason why this is so… perhaps retailers fear it might dilute the Saturday trade and atmosphere? But I prefer to think that it is just one more way in which Braamfontein is different from the rest of the city.

XIX. Born Free

Elise and I both rented flats at the same property in Auckland Park in January 2014. She had finished school at the end of the previous year and had just moved to Johannesburg to commence her tertiary studies. She was eighteen, had lived her entire life in a mining town in Mpumalanga Province, and this was the first time she had spent any time away from her parents. At orientation week she was shocked to realise that she was the only white female student in an overwhelmingly black and male-dominated cohort of approximately 130.

Her first week at college was difficult as she felt lonely and out of her comfort zone on both gender and race fronts. But a female student made overtures of friendship and soon Elise became part of a tight-knit group of four, two boys and two girls. The female student, Bontle, lived close by and she and Elise began to spend most of their free time together. A few weeks later, on a Tuesday afternoon, Elise and I happened to arrive home at the same time. I asked her how her weekend had been.

> Elise: Oh my god, it was crazy. Bontle asked me to go shopping in the city on Sunday.
> Me: Did you go? What was it like?
> Elise: Ja, I went. I knew there wouldn't be many whites in the city, but I didn't think I'd be the only white face. Also, I knew that a lot of the regular shops had moved out of the city, but I didn't realise there were *none* left. All the shopping is from street traders. But they have good stuff, and it's so cheap. Even though it's mad with so many people pushing around you, and you have to be careful of being robbed. At the end of the day we asked a guy for directions to the taxi rank so we could get a taxi home. He scared me. He said 'you're lucky you haven't already been robbed. If you go to the rank you'll get raped or murdered.' Because. I'm. White. (emphasising each word). He said it makes me a target. And he was black, and he's telling me this (voice rising in pitch)! He said the safest thing was to go straight to the police station. That made me freak out (voice rising again).
> Me: So did you go to the police station?
> Elise: No, we didn't know where it was (laughs).
> Me: How did you get home?

Elise: In the taxi. We went to the first taxi rank, but it was scary so we walked on. Then we found a smaller rank and we just jumped in the first taxi we saw.

Me: What do you think of the whole experience?

Elise: I felt very conspicuous. People were jostling me and talking about me the whole day. Out loud and in front of me. And the guys, lots of them were calling out 'hey whitey', or 'hey beauty, you want to marry me' or 'so sexy, girl'. I think black guys must like bigger girls, because I have never had so much attention from white guys before (laughs). But after the guy told me I shouldn't be in the city because I am white, that made me really scared. Plus we heard some gunshots in the street while we were having lunch. That also freaked me out a lot. It was pretty intense.

Me: Would you ever go back to the city centre?

Elise: No. (pause) Actually Bontle and I were talking about it at college and Jeso (one of Elise's male friends) told me I was mad. He said even he isn't brave enough to go into the city himself, and he is a guy and black. He thought we were both idiots for going. I won't tell my parents I went, they'd freak out for sure. But even though it was scary, and way out of my comfort zone, it was a different experience from anything I've done before. And nothing actually happened. I got home in one piece, and I got some amazing bargains too. So I think I might go again, maybe in a few weeks' time…

Elise is what is known in South Africa as a 'born free', a term used to denote all individuals born after the first democratic elections in 1994. The born frees are just entering adulthood, and there is great interest in how growing up in a legally non-discriminatory but socially and economically divided society is influencing their approach to society and to social others. Elise told me that most of her high school friends were white and that 'they would be shocked' to know that her friendship group in Johannesburg is exclusively black.

Approximately 10% of school children in Gauteng attend independent (private) schools (Department of Basic Education 2012). The high cost of school fees continues to act as an economic barrier to ensure that the majority of students at independent schools are white. Friendship networks established in school therefore still exhibit racial and economic characteristics and these networks frequently persist into the tertiary education environment and beyond.

Elise differs from white teenagers who grew up in Johannesburg. Because she had just arrived in the city she did not have an established friendship network from her school days. Although initially somewhat overwhelmed by the otherness of her fellow students (black and male) she responded to overtures from Bontle, and this provided an entrée into a friendship group that happens to be black.

The life changes that Elise has recently experienced can be analysed to reveal the reasons for her apparent openness to the new and her embrace of difference. But this approach seems somewhat unsubtle and inept. Although her decision to come to Johannesburg to study was a deliberate choice, it was influenced by the lack of availability of similar courses closer to home. Her status as a student newly independent of parental influence is apparent, but her desire to explore the limits of her new freedom is not necessarily consciously acknowledged.

The decision to rent the flat she is living in owes more to the fact that its owner hails from the same town as Elise, which gave her mother some comfort, than it does to the suitability or otherwise of its location. And Elise's choice of new friends is based as much on her immediate need for company and the potential friends readily available, than it is on deliberate choice of those particular people. In other words none of these individual factors are sufficient to alter Elise's behaviour or mindset, and neither has she deliberately marshalled them together to orchestrate an opportunity for significant change. Rather the 'potential' in these 'ordinary things' has aligned at this particular spatial and temporal conjuncture to serendipitously deliver her an opportunity to experience another way of being social in South Africa (Stewart 2007:21). Potentiality may exist in every thought and situation but it is as equally possible for it to be taken up as it is for it to 'drift by untapped' (Stewart 2007:93).

Perhaps because she did not grow up in Johannesburg Elise seems to have fewer preconceptions about how she should approach or navigate the city. Although she does not consciously seek to place herself in situations of danger, she has less fixed ideas as to what this might encompass. This is evident in her friend Jeso's reaction to the news of her trip to the city – as a local he made the judgement that her actions were foolish. The stranger the girls approached for directions confirmed a commonly held view that the city is not safe for white people, especially white females.

Although Elise considered the negative reactions she received from others, she was not prepared to automatically self-impose spatial limitations on her activities. She also discovered that her actual experience did not match the dire predictions of others (Jeso and the stranger in the city). Having experienced similar reactions to my own exploration of the city, I realise that people warn you against engaging in certain types of behaviour and visiting certain areas without ever having attempted such activities themselves. Their warnings are often not based on personal experiences but on fear of what *might* occur. Although at an intentional level Elise may acknowledge these warnings, it appears that she is not prepared to allow them to dictate to her the way in which she will navigate and inhabit the city.

XX. The Anarchytect

Maria passed me a slip of paper with a name and phone number on it. 'You should call Thomas. He owns a business in Braamfontein, he's an architect in private practice, and he lectures at UJ (University of Johannesburg). He will be interesting to talk to.' Thomas agreed to meet me at a café on Juta Street, Braamfontein, an area he claims to be his natural *habitus*, despite the fact that he does not live here.

Thomas has a lot to say. He wanted to talk, and radiated an almost revolutionary enthusiasm and zeal, explaining to me that 'I can't change the world, but I have the ability to do something. And I must do what I can do.' He was eager to explain his vision in which Braamfontein features as a space for individuals/citizens to encounter/experience ordinary non-racial social interaction. He is committed to the realisation of meaningful democratic society in South Africa in his professional (as architect and entrepreneur) and personal (as citizen) capacities.

From a personal perspective, his privileged position as the recipient of good quality education and comfortable economic circumstances, juxtaposed against the vast socio-economic inequalities present in South African society, combine to create an almost unavoidable personal moral responsibility to take action:

> We have to find a way to create change. As a society we have no precedent for how to live together. People have this view of Johannesburg as previously a white city, and now a black city. Braamfontein offers a space for people to experience and learn how to be together in the same space, to move away from racial classifications of space.

It appeared strange to me that in a city the size of Johannesburg only one place appears to offer the opportunity for this type of interaction. Thomas explained that in many areas the legacy of apartheid cast too long a shadow and operated to exclude certain groups. Fear and alienation keeps most whites away from formerly black only townships, and wealthy, formerly white areas remain unfriendly or closed to economically disadvantaged groups, mainly black. He leans across the table, his eyes shining with sincerity:

> This is a model for city living, of what Johannesburg can become, with people in the streets, using the public spaces. Because the streets here are busy and populated they are safer. People from the suburbs who come here to visit the markets notice this. They can "practice" being in public and engaging with the community because most have forgotten how to do it. I believe it may slowly break down their fear of the rest of the population, of the city and of public, open spaces.

For Thomas, part of Braamfontein's attraction lies in its 'authenticity.' It is 'the real Johannesburg', he says, unlike other built environments such as Montecasino, an opulent shopping and leisure complex, styled as a faux Tuscan village, located in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg (Braude 2007). Johannesburg is well known for its architecture of fantasy. Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) and others (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012; Braude 2007; Hall & Bombardella 2005; Murray 2011) have argued that this can be read as a desire to escape the reality of the city, rather than a response to engage with it.

Recent gentrification projects such as Maboneng are also problematic for Thomas. Although physically located in the city, in buildings that already existed, they required the permanent removal of existing residents. New residents were 'parachuted' into the repurposed trendy environment, and the integrity of the new community is secured via high entry-level economic barriers (Walsh 2013). Thus although geographically embedded in the city, Maboneng exhibits similar desires for escape and fantasy (Walsh 2013).

By contrast, Braamfontein offers an opportunity to engage with the city in its messy, unsettled and undeniably Africanising incarnation. Braamfontein is embedded in an inner city currently considered to be 'black' (Foster 2009; Parnell & Mabin 1995; Winkler 2009). Although the suburb suffered some degradation over the last twenty years as a result of white flight, not all of its businesses relocated. It offers a heterogeneous mix of established/new, upmarket/downmarket, Eurocentric/Afrocentric, students/business people that few locations in Johannesburg can match.

The overlap and interweaving of black and white creates a muddy, ambiguous space that defies simplistic racial classification. For Thomas, Braamfontein's potential arises out of its ambiguity and its defiance of classification. In addition, no single developer of the number of gentrification projects currently underway enjoys hegemonic control. One outcome is that, setting aside economic benefit, developers bring a variety of social and ethical visions for the future of Johannesburg to projects in Braamfontein. This opens up the suburb as a space for the possible evolution of new non-racial democratic practices of everyday life.

His background and training as an architect enable Thomas to conceptualise the possibilities of Braamfontein. He is sympathetic to the vision of Adam Levy, the first developer to invest in Braamfontein ten years ago. Levy, who calls himself a *cultural architect*, desires the creation of a city as a place to work, live and play (Play Braamfontein 2014). He envisages Braamfontein as hub of a creative network, tapping into the innovative, experimental and progressive impulses of an avant-garde creative community to provide energy towards social reformation.

Thomas told me that the concept of *spatial agency* underpins his own approach to the built environment. Spatial agency as project seeks alternative ways of 'doing architecture' by moving away from the 'figure of the architect as individual hero' to a collaborative, democratic approach that empowers agents (inhabitants, users of the space) (Spatial Agency 2014). The notion of engaging people as drivers of social transformation meshes well with Levy's ethos while also directly challenging local historical understandings that recognise this power as belonging to the state.

Through his connection with Levy, Thomas is able to leverage his self-acknowledged social responsibility by using his race-based economic and educational advantage to create economic opportunity for previously excluded individuals. He told me that about four years ago Levy was looking for tenants for a redeveloped building, and was willing to negotiate low rentals in exchange for the 'right type of business' (one that would contribute to the creative network). Thomas and his architectural practice partner decided to open a café.

They chose to employ local youths who might otherwise struggle to gain employment due to lack of business and food services skills and experience. They prioritised up-skilling in order to enable employees to take on increasing responsibility for the business. Employees with ability and commitment were offered shares and now operate the café independently. Thomas declares that he and his partner no longer receive any income from the café and remain involved as caretakers only.

Thomas hopes that in time some employees will take the business model and use it to establish similar enterprises in other locations. He is committed to providing professional and financial support to these start-ups and sees it as a concrete way for him to contribute to his community.

Thomas operates his architectural practice out of Braamfontein, meets clients for coffee or lunch in its cafes, and takes his inspiration for life from its streets. He loves its energy, and the way that people venture into the public spaces of the suburb in a way so differently from the sterile and secure environments found in most middle and upper class areas. He admits slightly shamefacedly that although he spends most of his days in Braamfontein he does not actually live here. He explains the area is not yet family friendly as it lacks basic services such as child-care and schools.

Despite this, Braamfontein is the physical location where Thomas can pursue his desire to be a committed South African citizen. As an architect he recognises the opportunities offered in the current brace of regeneration projects for design sensitive to and encouraging the creation of a less discriminatory urban environment. He actively contributes to the process by tendering for design and building opportunities. And as an individual, he participates in the creation of a new social order through the mundane activities and habits of his everyday life.

XXI. Marelize and Caroline

Marelize and Caroline are white upper middle class women. Neither was born or raised in Johannesburg and both moved to the city with their partners some years ago. Marelize is now divorced, and works in the world of corporate finance while Caroline is a happily married full-time mother with teenage daughters. Marelize lives alone in a large detached home about six kilometres from the Johannesburg city centre, although the property has two garden flats that she rents out. Caroline lives with her family in a gated community approximately thirty kilometres north of the city centre.

Caroline takes issue with the description 'gated community' that she says is inaccurate. She wants me to understand that the area her family lives in is an ordinary suburb that happens to have a wall surrounding it. It also has a single entrance manned by uniformed guards and technological surveillance, while each entrance and exit into the suburb are observed and visitors recorded. Visitors cannot arrive unannounced, and a complex system of vehicle registration numbers, pre-arrangement, photo identity and SMS authorisation codes exists to control any additional traffic flow.

I was travelling with Caroline in her car along the outer perimeter of the suburb's wall when she noticed a break in the metal fencing. She pulled off the road to examine the breach, although she did not get out of her vehicle to do so, and when we returned home later that day she reported the incident to security. This was the only time she directly mentioned the need for vigilance or security, indeed it was something she said she 'need pay little attention to'.

By contrast Marelize regularly regaled me with stories of her experiences of crime. She and her partner had recently been held up at gun- and knife- point whilst walking the 300 metres from her office to a restaurant. She had attempted to bargain with the thieves, offering them her phone, wallet, jewellery and sunglasses if they allowed her to keep her handbag. She had only recently purchased the expensive Louis Vuitton handbag overseas and was very attached to it.

A month later her car window was smashed and her phone stolen out of her hand as she sat in rush hour traffic on the freeway near her home. While still traumatised by the brazenness of the attack she nevertheless managed to tell the story in a humorous way. She was astounded that her attacker obviously felt the surrounding drivers posed no threat, as evidenced by her vehicle's position in the centre lane, and she recounted how the person she was on the phone to could hear her shrieking followed by the pounding footsteps and heavy breathing of her attacker as he ran away.

Despite these incidents, it was only after we had a suspected intruder at Marelize's house that I discovered she was not in the habit of regularly setting the house alarm. A series of power failures deactivated the electric fence and the automatic garage doors, forcing her to leave the garage doors unlocked for a day or two. Marelize responded to the threats against her person and home by arming herself with a lethal looking paintball gun loaded with ceramic and tear-gas filled bullets. She posted pictures of herself on Facebook posing with the weapon, captioned with messages warning people not to 'mess with her'.

Both women live in and navigate their way around Johannesburg daily. The city is acknowledged to have high levels of violent and confrontational crime (Africa Check 2014; Lancaster 2013; Roane 2014) and they incorporate this knowledge into their everyday

existence. I suggest that although there may be an intentional aspect to this process, it also operates in another, more subtle (affective) way as they employ it to inform their patterns of behaviour.

For Caroline and her family, the decision to move to their current home included considerations of safety to reduce their vulnerability to crime. Most detached homes in middle class areas are guarded by an array of physical, electronic and human technologies. These include high walls, electronic gates and garage doors, electric fencing, intercom and closed circuit television surveillance, all intended to control access to the property. Burglar guards, security gates, panic buttons and home alarms provide further protection of the house itself and its inhabitants.

As a consequence, most suburban homes have come to resemble fortresses. The gated community (or suburb with perimeter wall) purports to offer residents an alternative. It promises to enhance the visual appeal of homes and render gardens, garages and driveways usable without compromising expectations of safety, and it achieves this by placing security infrastructure beyond sight. Most residents appear unaware that in exchange they accede to constant surveillance of their own lives (movements, activities, social circle).

The feeling of safety Caroline gains from living in an enclosed suburb is great. Although their house is still surrounded by a high wall and electronic gate, inside the property doors and windows are left unlocked and open, and the house and inhabitants have a sense of 'ease of living'. But it appears that the ease gained from living in this environment operates in a subtle way to discourage Caroline from venturing into other urban spaces that do not afford similar levels of (perceived) security.

Caroline expressed on-going interest in my research; indeed it was her partner who originally alerted me to the regeneration projects underway in Johannesburg. She told me how proud she was of the city - its efforts to revive the degraded urban centre and to merge former black townships and white areas into a unified urban metropolis. She spoke of new initiatives such as the hop-on hop-off tourist bus, tours to Soweto to visit memorial sites linked to the struggle for democracy, and food and drink markets in Braamfontein and Maboneng, and how they worked to make the city more discoverable.

Aimed primarily at tourists, I observed that locals have embraced these services as ways to start venturing beyond old racially defined boundaries and begin to gain some knowledge of the 'greater' city. I invited Caroline to accompany me on some of these expeditions and she accepted with alacrity. However, as time progressed, I found it impossible to make firm arrangements with her for any of them. While she continued to meet with me for coffee or lunch dates in malls in the northern suburbs there was always a more pressing commitment that prevented her from accompanying me on one of the tourist outings.

I stopped mentioning the proposed outings in order to be sensitive to her possible dis-interest but she continued to bring the subject up each time we met. She would restate her desire and interest in going, list the specific event that had arisen to prevent her making a firm arrangement in the short term, and set a new tentative date. After eleven weeks in the city I left, without once enjoying Caroline's company on my adventures of exploration.

The calm and safety of Caroline's home environment enables her to talk about Johannesburg in positive and approving ways. She appears to support CoJ discourse that creates an image of the city as moving towards harmony and integration, and acknowledging and making progress in the reduction of inequality particularly for extremely poor urban dwellers. Nevertheless,

when compared with her actual behaviour, some discrepancies arose between discourse and practice.

Caroline never ventures beyond a small geographical area around her home, and always remains within the bounds of the northern suburbs. Perhaps she is afraid that venturing into inner city areas such as Braamfontein might result in situations she is not familiar with, and unable to control. These potential acts might challenge her understanding of herself as committed to a democratic, integrated, racially-blind Johannesburg. The northern suburbs cocoon her by creating a 'safe' environment (or the sense of safety) but the very creation of a place of safety renders territory outside its borders as unsafe/dangerous. It acts to discourage her from venturing out – so it makes her more timid.

By contrast Marelize's negotiation of the city is much bolder. Marelize shrugs off the concerns of others regarding her vulnerability as a single woman living alone in a large detached house, in a suburb undergoing rapid shifts in the socio-economic and racial profile of its residents. Although she claims that everything she needs is available in the northern suburbs and she has no need, or desire, to venture beyond that area, in practice she regularly drove through, and visited, parts of Johannesburg that many others avoid, in daytime and at night.

She engaged in conversation with people wherever we went, without discriminating on age, gender or race lines. Once she turned to me and reflected 'I wonder what he thought of us', after she had spent five minutes laughing and chatting with the young, black, male assistant at the local fish and chip shop. She continued, saying 'so many whites are so arrogant and rude towards blacks'. I had observed that the young man had been somewhat reserved when she first started talking with him, but that his reserve dropped as the banter continued.

Marelize thought I was 'mad' to undertake research in Johannesburg because the city 'is too dangerous'. She claimed that nothing would induce her to venture into the city but, when I persisted, she agreed to have dinner with me in Braamfontein on my last evening in Johannesburg. Although she was spooked by an incident at the end of the evening, I notice that she has since returned to Braamfontein a number of times to socialise with others.

Marelize frequently speaks about Johannesburg in unfavourable terms and can draw on a number of episodes where she has been a victim of crime to justify her position. Despite her negative discourse, she does not appear to unduly limit her own movement around the city nor her personal engagement with the individuals she may find there. Her willingness to attempt to negotiate even with the thief who held a gun at her head indicates the degree to which Marelize remains un-intimidated by, and open to engagement with, the city and all its inhabitants.

Just like Caroline, Marelize seems to exhibit dissonance between talk and action. Despite her negative discourse on the city, in the banality of Marelize's everyday actions there is a pulse of positivity and willingness that point to the future possibility of de-racialisation of social relations. As Stewart (2007) explains, the power of these feelings/actions/intentions lies in the way they intersect, flow and overlap in a way that compounds and builds potency. Seemingly vague, and hard to pin down, when they build momentum they can become 'more compelling than ideologies' (Stewart 2007:3). Here we see hope/potential for harmony and mutual recognition in urban South African society.

XXII. Departure

> If our urban world has been imagined and made then it can be reimagined and remade. (Harvey 2012:432)

This work set out to investigate the possibilities of inner city gentrification projects in Johannesburg acting as constructors of democratic (non-racial) society in post-apartheid South Africa. It was complicated by the realisation that the scale of white retreat from the city might render the investigation an empty and meaningless exercise. Arguments by Nuttall and Mbembe (2008), Pieterse (2009), Nyamnjoh (2012) and Visser (2013) urged attention to the white middle classes who have continued to escape analytical gaze, and an examination of the city that transcends the narrow framework defined by developmentalist discourse and critiques of neoliberal capitalism.

My research therefore shifted focus, to incorporate the fortified landscape that most middle class whites living in Johannesburg inhabit, and to attempt to understand how they make sense of, and ascribe meaning to, their everyday lives. It retained its focus on regeneration in the inner city via examination of the built environment of the gentrifying suburb of Braamfontein. It paid close attention to the ways in which this city space entices people to venture out of their fortified suburbs and to tentatively re-engage with the city itself.

As indicated in the introduction, grand theories and damning critiques found no *place* in this paper. Instead it had two far more modest aspirations. First it aimed to initiate conversation with and about a social group in South Africa that has so far evaded dialogue. Second it

sought to identify potentialities and possibilities that the urban-scape of Johannesburg offers to post-apartheid processes of social re-ordering.

The physical landscape of apartheid South Africa was constructed to ensure that, to the maximum degree possible, South Africans of different colour were kept apart. Over time this resulted in separate social groups who lacked familiarity or knowledge of the other, and whose key identifier of difference was the colour of one's skin. After the step away from apartheid and embrace of democracy in the early 1990s, it is not unreasonable to anticipate that over time, significant social change would take place resulting in a diminished importance of race as a key social signification.

And yet imaginings of race retain a tenacious hold over South African society. In middle class white suburbs of Johannesburg fear looms large in everyday life. As Nuttall and Mbembe (2008:23) observe, the spectre of crime hovers over society 'like a shadow' – its very shadowy-ness rendering it difficult to pin down and unpick. Apartheid's rulers skilfully invoked fear of the black majority as a means of justifying the machinations of the apartheid project and to legitimise its ideology.

Fear was part of the *habitus* of white South Africans and a structuring structure of apartheid society (fear of being swamped by the overwhelmingly greater size of black versus white populations) (Bourdieu 1977:72). The arbitrary nature of 'fear of blacks' as a constitutive 'mental structure' of society was concealed due to its naturalising by the established order, its incorporation into society's *doxa* (1977:164). My informants' recollections of life under apartheid as unproblematic, easy, and good demonstrate that there is still little reflection on or recognition of the proficiency of the social engineering project performed by the NP government. Thoughtful discussion, engagement with philosophical and ethical issues, and

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inquiry were actively discouraged by the country's rulers and the continued absence of sophisticated debate ensures that contemporary (white) society remains yoked to apartheid style thinking.

Fear is still a potent cause of social relations in contemporary white South African society. It is now a fear of susceptibility to violence and crime but there is limited acknowledgement among whites regarding the contributory role of extreme socioeconomic inequity and the protracted *unfairness* of the social system. Under apartheid blacks were the potential perpetrators who threatened to undermine safety and security and post-apartheid, in the minds of most whites, they remain the biggest threat to a safe and peaceful lifestyle.

The private security industry has capitalised on the opportunities offered by a hyper-fearful group and is responsible for much of the visible increase in fortification and militarisation of the northern suburbs. But a pacified and unquestioning white population do not appear to realise that this offers no long-term solution. The existence of private security is un-problematically taken for granted. There is little acknowledgement that it is in the economic interest of private security to prolong and enhance perceptions of fear or that the lack of sophisticated engagement with social issues closes down the possibility for alternate solutions to social ills.

Despite the somewhat bleak picture that contemplation of the fortified northern suburbs might provide, the affect of fear that it encourages does not completely shut down movement through and across the city. Following Amin and Thrift (2002) we can track the myriad movements of individuals as they travel from their homes to places of work, education and leisure. I noted that people venture out to engage with spaces like Braamfontein in a variety of different ways and in different degrees of intensity and commitment. The agglomeration of all

the individual tracks begins to create a network of connectivity that links the city to the suburbs, one suburb to another and individual to individual.

Focus on these networks allows us to recognise the transitivity and porosity of the city (Amin and Thrift 2002:5). Although fear may operate as a form of systematic violence that limits the freedom of flow, ultimately it is unable to block the flow completely. My data demonstrates that as individuals begin to visit spaces in the city such as Braamfontein they create opportunities for encounters with racial others. The repetition over time of numerous novel encounters and connections gains a rhythm and leaves imprints across the temporal space of the urban landscape.

My informants reveal a variety of ways of being-in, and engaging with the city. They show that first encounters, although sometimes intimidating due to shock, do not necessarily discourage informants from attempting repeat incidents of interaction and engagement. Braamfontein can function as a political 'microspace' of the city, 'brimful' of opportunities for 'improvisation and invention' (Amin and Thrift 2002:157, 158). In addition to the simple humanity enacted in instances of social interaction/engagement, over time the meaning implicated in these everyday actions can build to amass a generative force. The shock of encounter can also be a generative force, moulding a vision of social normality that does not focus on race as the key indicator of social difference.

I have tried to capture some sense of 'a world saturated by jumpy attunements' (Stewart 2007:7) in my descriptions of Braamfontein. Description of the way that individuals can be affected by that intimate connection of thought pressed to its objects is elusive, because of the fleeting nature of the encounter. But I concur with Stewart's reading of the potency of these encounters via their ability to amass and imperceptibly inform our awareness and actions. We

may struggle to find ways to theorise ordinary affect but our lack of classificatory sophistication should not allow us to disregard its contribution to epistemological knowledge.

I accept neoliberal capitalism as an existential condition of my field site and acknowledge the complication that this appends to the gentrification projects of Braamfontein. I also acknowledge that the absence of black voices in my ethnography renders any knowledge and insights contained in this work partial and subject to challenge. Despite these limitations, I believe there is merit in attending to other forces that also affect the ways in which people in Johannesburg live their lives and that influence their perceptions of, and receptivity to, other (new, emerging) formulations of social life.

If my postcards from Johannesburg 2014 do not simply 'render more precise what in any case was visible' but help 'reveal entirely new structural formations of the subject' (Benjamin, cited in Amin and Thrift 2002:33) I will be satisfied that I have contributed to a conversation on South African urbanity that pays attention to the creative, imaginative and hopeful desires of its ordinary citizens.

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Appendix

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY | **FACULTY OF ARTS**

Ethics Application Ref: (5201300720) - Final Approval

Dear Dr Houston,

Re: ('Community through construction? An exploration of the possibilitiesof urban regeneration projects functioning as 'architects' of new non-racial communities in post-apartheid Johannesburg: South Africa')

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval of the above application has been granted, effective (15/11/2013). This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr Chris Houston Ms Robyn Gillot

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 15th November 2014 Progress Report 2 Due: 15th November 2015 Progress Report 3 Due: 15th November 2016 Progress Report 4 Due: 15th November 2017 Final Report Due: 15th November 2018

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

_____

_____ _____

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http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at ArtsRO@mq.edu.au

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval. Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz   Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee
Level 7, W6A Building   Macquarie University   Balaclava Rd   NSW 2109
Australia   Mianna.Lotz@mq.edu.au