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## Diversity and Small Town Spaces: Twenty Years into Post-Apartheid South African Democracy

Guest Editors: Richard Ballard and Melissa Steyn

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# Diversity and Small Town Spaces in Post-Apartheid South Africa: An Introduction

By MELISSA STEYN (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa) and  
RICHARD BALLARD (University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa)

‘We may now use the term “spatiality” to capture the ways in which the social and the spatial are inextricably realised one in the other’ (Keith and Pile, 1993, p. 6).

South Africa represents an international site of interest on issues of reconciliation and transformation within a historical context of ethnic hostility, racial segregation and dire mismanagement of diversity. Since 1994, the old apartheid political structures including national government, provincial government and local government have been reformed and numerous laws have been enacted to redress past injustices and to facilitate greater economic and social equity. With the 20 years of democracy being celebrated in 2014, this special edition of *Diversities* is pertinent to the many questions that will be raised in taking stock of how far South Africa has come in changing the dynamics of segregation, exclusion and oppression that characterised the old dispensation. In particular, the articles collected in this volume speak to spatiality in small town life as a specific dimension of sociality.

There is a rich body of literature that examines the spatiality of human life, and the ways in which space is an active part of how our social identities come to be constructed. As Foster (2005, p. 498) puts it: ‘Space is highly significant for human interaction. [...] Places have specific meanings for people; they resonate with symbolic and emotional significance. We all carry with us senses of “place identity”’. Indeed, identity and space are not only intimately linked but actively constitute each other.

In its operations of shaping social orders, the spatiality of life is not “innocent”. It is deeply inscribed within relations of power, permeated

by politics and ideology, and implicated in both articulating and hiding this imbrication (Keith and Pile, 1993). This was certainly true of apartheid South Africa, which sought to establish “group areas” and “homeland” arrangements that were presented as aspirational processes of “separate development”. One of the ways in which such ideological manoeuvres become bedded down is through the formation of a moral order. Mbembe (2004) has argued that apartheid in South Africa tried to establish a particular moral order through spatial arrangements, the physical distance between races being largely understood to sanctify moral distances.

The spatial manifestations of what is considered right and wrong are evident in the arrangements of neighbourhoods. It is when the social order is disrupted that this moral order, and the cultural assumptions upon which it is based, becomes discernible (Stokoe and Wallwork, 2003). Thus Ballard (2004) shows in his research the discomfort of suburban white people to emerging informal communities in Durban. The “threat” these residents feel resides in increased proximity to those that were previously excluded from suburban spaces, a closeness experienced as destabilising the established social and moral order.

Given South Africa’s history, its enforced geographies of separation and subsequent programmes aimed at reversing this legacy, it provides a particularly rich site for social enquiry within the framework of spatiality. In South Africa as elsewhere, much of the emerging literature on space, identity and the social order points to a deeply ethnicised and racialised organisation of space. In those places where actual physical

proximity has developed between racial groupings since the inception of democracy in South Africa in 1994, it has not necessarily resulted in social proximity. Although this lack of social integration is cloaked in numerous guises such as property price, crime, disease, culture and spoiling of the natural environment (Saff, 1996a, 2001b; Steyn, 2004; Steyn and Foster 2008) the single most important underlying theme identified in the literature is race. In his work on squatter communities in Cape Town, Saff (2001, p. 87) explores how “race neutral” objections to squatter communities serve to “camouflage racial prejudice”. In their work on perceptions of informal street traders in relation to white middle suburban communities in Durban, Popke and Ballard (2004) also explore the way in which racist meaning is disguised in metaphor. The result of these discursive strains is the entrenchment and persistence of racially organized residential patterns. Dixon and Durrheim (2003), revealing the racialised flows of people on beaches in Kwa Zulu-Natal, yet again emphasise how these racially segregationist dynamics are informed by a moral foundation that justifies the place of different racial groups in relation to each other.

Nevertheless, much has changed in South Africa, and this surely does also apply to attitudes towards difference and otherness. Current attitudes to social difference are not simply reducible to apartheid-like racism (Nuttall 2009, Durrheim et al 2010). With democracy, the country opened up to the international world and the influences and pressures of globalisation once sanctions and international isolation were lifted. There have been flows of people from, to, and within the country. Class relations have changed to the extent that there is now a burgeoning black middle class. A good deal of the work tracking changes in relation to space and identity in a changing South Africa is being done in relation to South African cities. In 2004 Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe edited a volume of *Public Culture* on Johannesburg and the way in which identity is articulated through the space of the city. Recently, Murray et al. (2007) produced a collection of chapters exploring identity as expressed in and through memory and spaces in

Cape Town. This work reflects a mixed record in terms of the transformation of identities and the interaction of people and spaces. It is clear that the demise of formal measures of racial segregation previously enforced by apartheid has not resulted in an unproblematically integrated and egalitarian society. South Africa remains a deeply divided society, and even as the fault lines shift and reconfigure, some scholars argue that ‘the spatial distribution of housing and communities in cities and towns, remains relatively unchanged other than in limited areas’ (Foster, 2005, p. 494). Christopher (2005, p. 2305) observes that ‘the post-apartheid city continues to look remarkably like its predecessor, the apartheid city’.

Countering the trend which has seen research on transformation in South Africa mostly focussed on life in urban areas, the research programme that led the articles in this special edition<sup>1</sup> sought to investigate transformation, especially as it relates to spatiality, in rural towns in South Africa. With a few exceptions, such as Donaldson and Marais (2012), rural areas have not received the same attention as cities. Apart from the simple fact of the concentration of people and economic activity in the cities, a reason for the lack of research on transformation in towns may lie in the way in which rural areas are positioned within the imagined community of the nation. The spatial distance between the non-white population groups and the white minority population which characterised apartheid was premised upon an imagined nation comprised of a white body politic, in which the state apparatus aimed to protect whiteness and white privilege. Currently, within the post-apartheid period, one can see how the discursive construction of small towns as being somewhat stuck in the apartheid past promotes the idea that it is the non-rural areas which have been allegedly transformed into “Rainbow” spaces.

One of the studies conducted as part of the broader research programme (Goredema, 2009)

<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the funding received from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), and the South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD), which made the project possible.

analysed one hundred and fifty-six news reports on five South African small towns in national print media database. The study showed how the small town provides the South African imagination with a convenient “other” on which racism, the most undesirable characteristic associated with the post-apartheid country, can be projected. The analysis revealed that small towns are positioned as the “internal other” (who is easily contained and controlled) as a way of coping with the threat posed by racism to the new national identity. This allows for the imagination of a new South Africa that is tied to new values, whilst the old values are relegated to – but kept under close lock and key – the basement of the South African small town.

Small towns offer an interesting site for the analysis of spatiality and identity because people are “thrown together” more intimately, and there is less room for “escape” from “others” than in bigger towns or cities. In these environments one can expect the difference between formal institutional changes and lived reality to be more visible and tangible than in urban areas, where life is lived more anonymously. Our research programme set out to examine how diversity within these towns may or may not reflect political changes, and may or may not reveal dynamics that are different from or more accentuated than those present in their more studied city counterparts. Collectively, the case studies revealed some of the informal mechanisms through which diversity is being organized in these towns.

Four of the case studies conducted in the programme are brought together in this special edition. Reflecting geographic, class, linguistic and ethnic diversity, each study shows a community within a town responding to a different sense of internal threat created by changes within their original context. Our original study had been hopeful of finding instructive ways in which the characteristics of small towns lent themselves to ‘being different together’ (Steyn, 2010). These four studies, however, rather echo Falah’s (1996) observations about how people living in close proximity and sharing the same social space manage to maintain intergroup boundaries

even in the absence of legal policies of segregation, ‘living together apart’. We show the continuing underlying racial dynamics within some communities of (relative) racial privilege. Despite being very differently positioned as communities, in all these milieus social operations function to retain or reconfigure relative racial entitlement, racially inflected self-positionings of respectability, or the (now perceived to be flouted) racial wage.

The ability of people to sustain and reproduce themselves is fundamental to the production of social identities. Smaller towns often develop on the basis of a limited range of economic sectors whose fortune determines the very viability of life in the town. As the article in this special edition by Peens and Dubbeld shows, the evaporation of gainful employment in Newcastle in the KwaZulu-Natal province has changed the way in which working class whiteness is reproduced. Poor whites have, within the 20th century South African social experiment, been understood as failed whites of questionable moral status. Through hard work they could redeem themselves, something that was possible during periods of economic growth which benefited white employees. In this town the restructuring in the steel industry and deindustrialization resulted in enormous job losses. Church-based welfare organisations provide support to poor whites left stranded by these economic forces. But rather than recognise the role of changing economic structures, the deterioration in their fortunes is attributed to moral deficiency and the state’s perceived prioritisation of black people within post-apartheid systems of employment equity.

The concern for economic decline plays itself out differently in the picturesque small “hamlet” of Prince Albert, situated in the Karoo area of Western Cape province. In contrast to the apparent reversal of racial locations recounted by the poor white people of Newcastle, Prince Albert is seen as a haven for a “creative class” of mostly retired, middle-class, white, English speaking residents who have relocated to the country from urban areas. McEwen sees this as a variety of “semigration”, in which people migrate within South Africa to escape some aspects of life, par-



ticularly those in urban settings. The incomers position the quaint heritage of the town, which they preserve, and the heritage tourism, which they drive, as the industries that can retain economic viability for the town -- also to the benefit of the historically poor 'coloured' population who inhabit the economically deprived neighbourhood of Prince Albert. McEwen argues that her study shows how, on the contrary, these apparently romantic industries can also be used to perpetuate the social stratification created during the eras of colonialism and apartheid.

Besharati and Foster deal with a different migration pattern affecting a small town, the broadly 'Afrikaans' town of Mokopane (formerly Potgietersrus) in the northern province of South Africa, Limpopo. Indian identified people have long dominated trade in this town, though the 1950s Group Areas Act (the segregationist legislation of apartheid) ensured that they lived in the segregated suburb of Akasia. This delimited belonging, attached to racially specific zoning, largely continues today. Residents argue that despite the superficial politeness they experience, they are ultimately unwelcome in the town and prefer to keep to themselves in Akasia. In the post-apartheid period, there has been an injection of Pakistani migrants and many have taken up residence in Akasia. However, established Indian people have not identified easily with new arrivals. The result is a minority's minority: as Indian minorities have to manage a relationship to their dominant Afrikaans hosts, so they in turn assume a dominant position towards Pakistani immigrants. The group whose attachment

to the town is marginal is itself questioning the belonging of incoming populations.

Pillay and Durrheim show how small towns, themselves, have place identities in as much as residents or outsiders ascribe characters to them. Swartruggens, a town in the North West province, gained notoriety as a site of untransformed, residual apartheid conservatism following the shooting of residents of a shack settlement, Skierlik, by a white man shouting racist abuse. Pillay and Durrheim point out that 'the ensuing public discourse assumed that it was a clear expression of racism' and their interest is therefore in unpacking the secondary identity work in the "person/place knot" following the shooting. In their narratives, white residents of the town manage the stigma attached to belonging to the town through claiming not to recognise themselves and their community in the disgraceful event. As they attempt to deflect the shameful association of racism with their town, they present their community as decent, safe and tight knit. In this way, the identity of the town is redeemed, and restored to an apparently pre-Skierlik respectability.

The full set of studies in the research programme, nine in total, reveals a fascinating, layered picture of post-apartheid rural small town life. This sample illustrates how alterations in the flows of people and fortunes, and events occasioned by political, economic and social shifts, reveal both continuities and disruptions with the old, racialised patterns of the society. Studied in this way, the towns also provided a useful lens on social dynamics of diversity operating in the larger national arena.

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# Troubled Transformation: Whites, Welfare, and 'Reverse-Racism' in Contemporary Newcastle\*

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## Abstract

This paper is based on a study of four white families living in the town of Newcastle, South Africa, and focuses on the institutional apparatuses of welfare in the town almost two decades after apartheid. Beginning with a reading of the production of the category of the 'poor white' during the first half of the twentieth century, we then discuss the particular rise and fall of Newcastle as an industrial town. We focus on contemporary welfare in the town and the interaction between whites receiving welfare and welfare officials. In the midst of moral evaluations of character, it becomes clear to officials that models of individual reformation and transformation are inadequate to realise substantially improved lives. In these conditions, officials join white recipients in invoking 'reverse racism' to explain the continued reliance of these white families on welfare and their inability to improve their conditions, regardless of 'improvements in character'. Such a claim, we argue, portrays whites as threatened and even attempts to re-claim the pathological figure of the poor white in a bid to remain exceptional, and thus to be recognised as being poor in a manner that would distinguish them from Africans.

**Keywords:** welfare, whites, racism, 'reverse-racism', post-apartheid, Newcastle, post-industrial towns, South Africa

## Introduction

In this paper, we consider white families on welfare in the post-apartheid town of Newcastle, emphasizing the recent history of the town, the interaction of these families with welfare officials, and their reading of the transformation in the town. Central to our analysis is the contemporary fate of the 'poor white', a foundational figure of South African politics in the first half of the twentieth century. The poor white was a

figure around whom ideologies were crafted and institutions designed, a figure who was not only poor but immoral, and a figure to be empowered by being led through — or rescued by — a range of government institutions that took them from welfare to work and reformed them, lest their poverty be a sign that they were not part of God's chosen (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Du Toit 2006; Teppo 2004). The reform of the poor white, through a protected employment and state investment in social services, remained at issue when the town of Newcastle attracted significant settlement of whites in the early 1970s as part of a state sponsored venture at industrialisation by iron and steel.

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Today, under changed political and economic conditions, this figure has attracted attention again, in media and literary circles (Du Plessis 2004: 892). In an analysis based in Johannesburg, Hyslop (2003) has suggested that in the wake of both changes to the labour market and declining government support for whites, the reoccurrence of poor whites sociologically has not, like in the first half of the twentieth century, become a common white concern. Rather he argues that a shared Afrikaner nationalism among whites was on the wane since the 1960s and that a collective notion of white society fragmented in the 1980s and early 1990s, riven by class distinctions and without certainty of place in a new political arrangement. Given these social and institutional changes, here we are concerned with how the figure of the poor white appears in contemporary Newcastle and what this appearance might reveal about the sentiments of whites living there after apartheid.

We draw attention to the interaction in Newcastle between whites receiving welfare aid and officials within welfare organisations offering this aid. Reading this against a longer history of the growth of Newcastle during the 1970s as a late apartheid project of investment in so-called 'border industries' away from metropolises, we reflect on the nature of identification of the white poor in a small town after apartheid. In particular, we examine how three welfare organisations channel resources and moral messages to the four families that were central to our fieldwork. We discuss an example of the welfare organisations' attempt to 'discipline' two sisters in a manner that points to the limits, rather than affirms, what might be understood as 'disciplinary power'. We then show how discourses arising from this failure – provided by both officials and welfare recipients — attribute the difficulties of the present to post-apartheid state policy and its 'reverse-racism'. Finally, we analyse how this perceived reverse functions as a kind of mourning of the loss of the figure of the poor white, a melancholia that seeks to retain and inhabit the category as a final attempt to resist becoming part of the unexceptionally poor in post-apartheid South Africa.

Conceptually, this paper focuses upon welfare institutions and on white racism, considering these at a specific historical moment and therefore not taking their functionings and meanings as the same across time. We are especially interested in how 'disciplinary power' (Foucault 1975) exercised within and without welfare institutions produced a set of definitions, identities and boundaries (Bourdieu 1990: 120) around the figure of the 'poor white,' in South Africa and we consequently engage relevant historical literature. We do not, however, take for granted that such institutions are untransformed by the wider social and political changes that have happened in South Africa. Indeed, central to our investigation is precisely the way that these larger social changes have confronted the moralising discourses of welfare institutions in Newcastle, leading to what we regard as a troubled transformation for both white welfare officials and recipients.

We are similarly concerned with the specific expressions of white racism in post-apartheid South Africa, something we share with scholars such as Ballard (2004), Steyn (2005) and Goga (2010). We examine how, in the particular circumstances of the town of Newcastle, 'reverse-racism' became a discourse shared by both white welfare recipients and the officials working in welfare organisations. Hence, in this paper we seek to account for the conditions of possibility for a particular kind of racism among a particular class of whites in a small town in post-apartheid South Africa.

### **Approach and Data**

The research for this paper is based on accounts gathered over almost a year between 2009 and 2010 from four families and the people with whom they had contact. Data was collected both through observation and open-ended interviews. The research was initially conceived of as an extended attempt to engage both 'culture' and social structure, endeavouring to follow the lives of five families, following Oscar Lewis' famous account (1959), while engaging more recent attempts to think about how everyday practices and beliefs may be shaped by, and in turn

reshape, economic inequalities (cf. Small, Harding, Lamont 2010; Wilson 2010).

From the beginning racism was a concern of the research. Michelle had grown up in Newcastle and was aware of how the transition to democracy and the downsizing of ISCOR were conflated, shaping sentiments among whites in the town that they had been denied good lives for political reasons. One broad question that occurred throughout the research was whether this racism that accompanied whites' bitterness about the last twenty-five years was a repetition of an extremely familiar white supremacy, or if something was specific to the kinds of spatial circumstances and historical configuration of contemporary Newcastle.

While racism and how it might be approached was a consideration in designing the research, we did not initially propose welfare as an object. The welfare organisations were initially only approached as a means to establish contact with families, only later realising how important their constructions of the poor were for the families, as the relations between welfare organisations and the four families<sup>1</sup> that ended up being the main informants became key sources of data. These organisations, even though they cannot achieve the kind of economic rewards for moral behaviour they promise, are extremely important in defining behaviour in relation to what constitutes poverty. This is not to say, however, and we make this point in the paper below, that these organisations' definitions of poverty and corrective social behaviour have the same purchase as they might have had during apartheid.

Beyond revealing the particular position of institutions, we should also note that the research process surprised us insofar as we collected overwhelmingly women's voices, across generation. While discussions of women-headed households and welfare among African-American communities in the United States are well-known (Brewer 1988) and may also be a feature of many predominately African villages and

towns in South Africa (Dubbeld 2013), perhaps because of the duration of apartheid and its attendant moral language of the white family — which entrenches marriage as central to the proper subject — we did not expect that the vast majority of our informants would be women in households where men were largely absent. The absence of men may be a limitation of the research, but it is perhaps also revealing of the extent to which the white poor has become unexceptional. In addition, it also offered us a window from which to observe the moralising language meted out unequally to women and to which we would not have had the same access had we spoken mostly to men.

### **Whiteness and Welfare: a historical background**

For much of the twentieth century in South Africa to be white meant to enjoy pervasive privilege. While nineteenth century colonial wars, land dis-possession and the beginnings of a racially differentiated labour system gave significant numbers of white people extensive material and political advantages over other people in the country, in the early twentieth century there were also substantial numbers of whites with few material resources. Over several decades in the first part of the century, the figure of the poor white became cast as a problem to be researched, documented, photographed, and uplifted through welfare (Du Toit 2006). Such a figure was the target of intervention precisely because the existence of poor whites who mixed with those from other races challenged the possibility of presenting a racially bounded society. Cohabiting with other races in the slums of Johannesburg or in farming districts like Middelburg, white authorities worried about 'the destruction of the white race' and the main opposition party — and forerunner of the party that would promulgate apartheid — campaigned to prevent 'the white man becoming the white nigger [sic]' (cited in Morrell 1992: 16, 18; also see Parnell 1992). It was not only from 'above' that such calls came. Du Toit (2003: 161) shows how members of the Afrikaans Women's Christian Society (ACVV) moved poorer whites who were 'living in the location amongst the

<sup>1</sup> One family of the initial five who agreed to participate withdrew from the research explicitly because of the fear that certain people within welfare organisations would take away their children.

coloureds to more appropriate lodgings' as early as 1907. By the 1920s this organisation's explicit goal was to improve the position of the poor white to counter the possibility of them forgetting their racial identity and assimilating (Du Toit 2003: 171).

Such a focus on poor whites did not merely reflect 'reality' but also helped to give particular form to the figure of the poor white, cast as a figure that linked poverty and moral depravity and implying that a racial and economic hierarchy were naturally linked, such that poor whites were poor due to some unnatural moral failing. Such assumptions became increasingly pervasive with more concerted attention from government and civil society organisations to uplift poor whites in the 1920s and the 1930s (especially after the 1924 election of the Pact government). Many white men received preferential positions from the government, with 25000 poor whites absorbed into state jobs in Johannesburg alone by 1931 (Freund 1992: xx; Parnell 1992: 121). The state discourse of the time was that 'not a single white person should be allowed to go under', justifying not only state positions (i.e. especially in railways) but also interventions in industry to protect white workers (Seekings 2007: 382). Together with the publication of the Carnegie Commission on poor whites, extensive measures to deal with poor white-ism were implemented, in education and through the reorganisation of city housing – in Johannesburg, Parnell (1992: 129-130) shows how the construction of council housing for whites coupled with slum clearance sought to eliminate racial mixing in the city. Du Plessis (2004: 882) notes that while the numbers of poor whites had declined significantly, the stratum that remained was 'an object of the gaze of the apartheid state'.

Alongside job reservation in workplaces, education and government housing, a critical element in the upliftment of poor whites was welfare. Church groups and women's organisations such as the ACVV organised welfare in the first decades of the century and were followed in the late 1920s and 1930s by public welfare, initially through pensions and later through child maintenance grants (Seekings 2007). In the late 1950s

the apartheid state extended the white welfare system, and until the mid-1970s spending on welfare for whites outstripped that of other groups in the country, despite people classified in other racial groupings comprising well over eighty percent of the country's population.

Such 'empowerment' for whites improved their economic position, as much as, Du Plessis (2004: 883) suggests, it attempted to 'reform' whites as productive members of society. The 'poor white' was continuously portrayed as an aberration, described in the language of disease and contamination (Teppo 2004). Willoughby-Herard (2007: 485) notes how the welfare system was an attempt to solve the problem of the poor white by 'inculcating shame, guilt and self-denigration in the white mind through practices of highly scripted body modification and surveillance of the body'. Welfare institutions became sites of disciplinary power, instilling norms 'acting on the depth of the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations' of whites' (Foucault 1975: 16). As we have been suggesting, such welfare did therefore not only aid the poor, but naturalised whites as superior subjects and cast doubts on the morality of poor whites, as if to be white and poor was a sign of suspect character.

The condition of the connection between economy and morality lies in the Protestant ethic, where 'inner and outer transformation go together' and hard work and rational calculation is the currency of the elect (Weber 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 227). Indeed, Morrell (1992: 15) notes in Middelburg that in the early decades of the twentieth century prosperous white farmers would accuse poor whites of 'lazy sickness', and hard work, decency and respectability became virtues to be instilled in the white population. Early welfare measures developed alongside work rather than as a means to deal with able bodied people who might not ever find work (Seekings 2007). We can recognise a parallel with Roediger's (2007) analysis of the formation of white working class identity in the United States around ideals of respectable work and small-scale independent production set against both the casual poor and master-servant relations. In South Africa to be white meant inhabiting places

and working in professions from which Africans were prohibited, and this was accompanied by a moral judgment that naturalised white privilege. This morality, as it were, made the poor white a pathological figure, an aberration that welfare institutions and schools sought to combat.

### **Newcastle and the late apartheid project**

One major aim of the apartheid government was to control and improve the position of poor whites in more elaborate form than had been attempted in the 1920s and 1930s, and this was largely achieved by the 1960s, through job reservation, welfare, housing and social grants (Du Plessis 2004: 883). As the material conditions of poor whites improved, however, Du Plessis suggests that the cross-class alliance of white people in general and Afrikaners in particular gradually began to dissolve, with a project of racial identification giving way among upper and middle-class whites to an investment in 'consumption' and an interest in global connections. It is at this very moment, in the late 1960s, that the town of Newcastle gains the government's attention and rapidly grows.

Newcastle was the site for the third integrated steelworks of the South African Iron and Steel Industrial Corporation (ISCOR). Construction of these steelworks started in 1971 with production commencing in 1976 (South African Steel Institute 2010). Todes (2001: 73) argues that with ISCOR's arrival in the town, Newcastle changed from being predominantly English speaking to Afrikaans speaking as well as shifted politically to the right, that is, more explicitly in favour of the National Party's apartheid administration. Newcastle's population was counted as 17 554 in 1960 compared to 350 000 in 1991 and ISCOR, at the height of production, employed around thirteen thousand workers with more than half of these classified as white (South African Department of Statistics 1970 [Census]; Todes 2001:72). From 1970 to 1980, the population of the municipality of Newcastle more than doubled and the Madadeni district tripled.

This investment in Newcastle aligned with apartheid policies of the early 1970s that sought to develop industries far from major cities and

adjacent to areas designated as African (following forced urban removals). These so-called 'border industries' would allow white owned and managed industries to thrive on cheap African labour without having to accommodate Africans in cities. The principal justification for choosing Newcastle as the preferred site of ISCOR's development was the proximity of labour supply from the nearby Bantustans. Also, because land around Newcastle was considered cheap and more available to aid in the expansion and growth of the town envisioned with the development of ISCOR. In addition, ISCOR's investment in Newcastle facilitated the company's economic strategy of buying out Amcor (The African Metals Corporation), eliminating it as a competitor (Trapido 1971). Hart (2002: 140) suggests that Newcastle won the bid for ISCOR over the town of Ladysmith based on local government connections.

Newcastle's informal settlements of Madadeni and Osizweni offered some of the 'earliest and most complete examples of restructuring' along apartheid lines (Todes 2001:70). White men made up a significant proportion of the town's labour force in the town and received incentives to live in designated areas of Newcastle. These were channelled through ISCOR and their housing scheme 'Yskor Landgoed'. During the 1970's, ISCOR thus not only provided employment for whites and shaped the subsequent growth of Newcastle, but was also responsible for planning and building entire neighbourhoods through their housing department and housing scheme. In this sense, Newcastle exemplifies a late apartheid attempt to fuse elaborate racial segregation through increasing private investment outside the major metropolises of South Africa (away from the concentration of steel production in the Vaaldriehoek area). In fact, Todes calls ISCOR's development at Newcastle illustrative of the intersection of national, provincial and local politics with a modernist technocratic agenda.

Yet ISCOR's growth—and that of Newcastle's white population – was short lived. As early as 1977, several planned developments associated with the plant were put on hold. The Newcastle Municipal area, after a period of rapid growth and expansion affected by ISCOR's promise, expe-



**NEWCASTLE**

**FAST  
DEVELOPING  
GROWTH POINT**

Centre of the third ISCOR steel-works which is a powerful stimulus to industrial development.

Favourably situated: 360 kilometres from Durban and 290 kilometres from Johannesburg.

Electricity, water and labour in abundance.

A further industrial township proclaimed in November 1976, with majority of stands rail served.

Adequate educational facilities with four High Schools, eight Primary Schools and a Technical Institute.

Excellent sports and recreational facilities, i.e. rugby, soccer, cricket, tennis, golf, two public swimming pools, water ski on Chelmsford dam and a new indoor recreation centre.

Population: Whites 24 200  
Asiatics 6 800. Coloureds 1 150  
Bantu 140 000 (in Madadeni and Ozisweni townships in KwaZulu)

**ENQUIRIES:**  
The Town Clerk, Mr. L. De Wet,  
P.O. Box 21  
NEWCASTLE 2940  
Telephone 21141

**Figure 1: 1977 Financial Mail advertisement for Newcastle**

Source: Financial Mail newspaper (June 17, 1977)  
"The Natal Survey: A Supplement," p. 12.

perienced a decline in population (Harrison 1990; Todes 2001). During the 1980s, ISCOR Newcastle was rationalised. It struggled in local markets and with the appropriation of technological advances in search of profit, restructuring occurred in Newcastle. Todes notes that 'the promised boom... was neither as great as expected nor was it sustained' (Todes 2001:73). All plants associated with ISCOR sustained job losses through several rounds of restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s and ISCOR Newcastle went from employing thirteen thousand to only three thousand. ISCOR privatised in 1989 and unbundled its subsidiary operations, one of the most salient of which had offered housing at reduced rentals to attract white workers. While the inhabitants of the houses received preferential options to purchase the housing, many could not afford the houses or had been retrenched leading to many houses becoming empty: houses that had once represented a dream of secure place for white workers now testify to the hollowing out of this dream (Peens 2012).

Hart (2002: 146-9) suggests that at least six hundred houses were abandoned during ISCOR's rationalisation. She examines the growth of Taiwanese investment in the town from the mid-1980s, noting the role of local government and even the use of these empty houses as a means to attract this investment. While her analysis of this investment suggests a complex account of global forces and a range of local actors and political currents, what is important for the purposes of this paper is that the security that ISCOR offered to white workers, linking work to home through a set of state institutions aiming to produce and protect privilege, began to crumble even before the formal end of white rule in 1994.

### **Post-apartheid social grants and the family**

While welfare policy in post-apartheid South Africa largely followed policies of previous administrations (racially exclusive welfare was largely abandoned by white government in the 1980s), one decisive reform of welfare policy was the introduction of the Child Support Grant, following recommendations by the Lund Commission in 1997. The Child Support Grant replaced the State Maintenance Grant, the latter having been designed to help white families unable to work and offering a fairly large amount of aid to its limited numbers of recipients. The Child Support Grant, by contrast, offered a smaller sum but has reached many more South Africans, with more than eleven million recipients in 2012.

Growing unemployment, particularly among those without advanced qualifications, has amplified the effect of the grant. Marais (2011: 178, 205-6) has recently shown how, with unemployment in the country standing at almost 35%, government social grants have *de facto* become the major poverty alleviating tool in the country. Seekings (2008) has argued that the difficulty with the current grant policy lies in its retention of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, categorising those physically constrained in their capacities to find work differently from those who are 'merely' unemployed. Rather than providing the latter with welfare, the government has offered them a public works programme and training schemes 'supposed to



provide the poor with the dignity of work' (Seekings 2008: 33).

Despite this, it is important from our perspective to emphasize that the Child Support Grant has not only extended the reach of government aid to many more people than previously received the State Maintenance Grant, but it has also implied a less prescriptive, heteronormative, western and/or patriarchal notion of family as it offers support to the carers of children, regardless of the parents' relationship or the kinds of kinship networks in which any child finds herself. Although there is no clear causal connection, research among poorer African households and communities has found that marriage rates have declined markedly in comparison with White and African middle-class counterparts over the last two decades (Posel, Rudwick and Casale 2011). Certainly, ethnographic work has shown that popular sentiments do make such causal connections between the grant and declining incidence of marriage (Bank 2011: 186; Dubbeld 2013). Claims about government paying women or women being married to the state also become part of a broader popular discourse about the post-apartheid government having empowered women at the expense of men (Hunter 2010).

It is less clear to us what has happened for white South Africans as a result of these changes in welfare policy. Certainly the history of white welfare in the country was deeply committed to a particular moral order centred on an idea of the family in which men were breadwinners and women homemakers. As we've suggested by drawing on the scholarship of Du Toit and others above, welfare for white South Africans was also not confined only to the state, but a number of extra-governmental organisations, and especially Church based organisations, were deeply committed to white welfare and to addressing the figure of the poor white. Based on our research, it is less clear to us that whites receiving welfare and other grants are willing to question the family: indeed, as our informants allude to below, a goal for women seems to be to find a husband who has respectable work, or failing that, to find respectable work for themselves. That is to say, the elements of welfare reform in post-apartheid

South Africa that could be considered progressive insofar as they accommodate different kinds of familial relations and are not prescriptive, seem in the case of whites in Newcastle not to facilitate local challenges to a moral order that is taken for granted: in the town, such welfare policy runs into entrenched welfare institutions, which we now turn to examine.

### **The poor white and welfare organisations in Newcastle**

We investigated three welfare organisations in Newcastle, namely the Christelike Maatskaplike Diens (Christian Social Services), Môrester (Morning Star) Children's Home, and Rapha, which the latter's pastor suggests functions as a kind of halfway house. All three institutions follow the tradition of church and volunteer organisations that operate alongside government, with the three institutions linked, directly or indirectly, depending on particular families or individuals. The involvement of religious organisations is not remarkable, since churches across the continent have often been responsible for distributing welfare (Ferguson 2012: 501).

The *Christelike Maatskaplike Diens* (CMD) functions as a social services office and operates along similar lines as state welfare but does not receive any government funding. One of their social workers facilitated initial contact with the four families. This social worker talked about their food parcel system and how their recipients struggled. It was, indeed, at the offices of CMD where we first met Mrs R, Mrs E and Mrs X. They were seated on green plastic chairs at tables covered with cheerful tablecloths in the general meeting room, waiting for their food parcels.

This organisation — which works across the country — was founded more than fifty years ago and assisted only members of the Dutch Reformed Church, predominately white Afrikaners. Currently they claim to assist anyone in the community in which they are located (Christian Social Services 2008). The social workers they employ reflect, according to them 'the changes in the racial and language composition of their client base': while once they were staffed by white women who were part of the congregation,

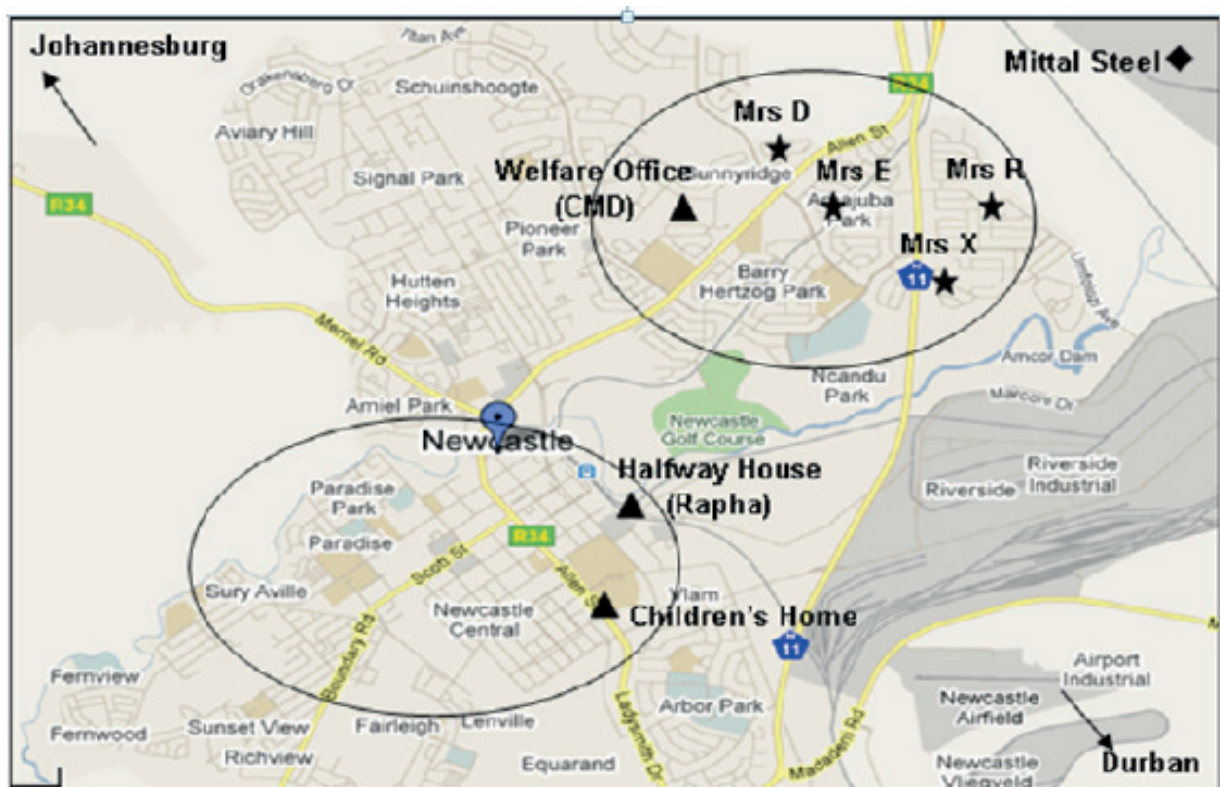


Figure 2: Google maps image showing location of individuals and institutions in Newcastle

now men and women of all races work at the CMD. Yet with white social workers operating in white neighbourhoods and so forth, and it is only on Friday mornings, when food is handed out on the church grounds that such 'diversity' appears, as white and black people wait for their parcels.

The CMD is often referred to by the white families and by the social workers alike as 'the welfare'. This is based on their association with other welfare institutions, including functioning as a channel to assist people in applying for and receiving government grants. Despite this name, the majority of their funding does not come from the government but from the Dutch Reformed Church (national and local), outside sources (such as the National Lottery) and from private donations, a significant percentage of their income. These donations are from both businesses involved with the Dutch Reformed Church and from individuals who, in addition to money, donate clothing and food. According to the official website of the Dutch Reformed church, the CMD is a welfare service affiliated to the church that delivers material, social and spiritual services to all individuals in crisis, no mat-

ter the race, gender or religion (Dutch Reformed Church 2010). Because of their association with the church, some individuals the organisation helps are identified as in need by the congregation. The main services they claim to deliver are 'prevention, care and aftercare' (Christian Social Services 2008). The social worker suggested that they might identify an individual with a substance or alcohol abuse problem and, while continuing to assist the individual, will also refer them to the South African National Council for Alcoholism.

*Môrester Children's Home* is presented on their website as an institution that cares for children in need (Môrester Children's Home 2010). The children are placed in their care by the Commissioner of Child Care, an indication of the greater role government plays in this institution. Children are removed from their carers for reasons including negligence, situations of failed foster care, being orphaned, 'uncontrollable behaviour', living in unfit circumstances that include lack of food or clothes, parents being unemployed, physical or sexual abuse and problems related to alcohol and drug abuse. The children's home ren-

ders services ranging from individualised therapy to simply serving healthy meals to live up to their mission statement: 'To care for our children in a safe environment so that they can reach their full potential and live as well adjusted adults in society, in honour of God' (Môrester Children's Home 2010). Their focus on the emotional, spiritual and social needs of the children is captured by their official vision 'A home for today and a dream for tomorrow'.

Môrester is closely affiliated with the CMD, and is a regional association. Another branch exists in Ladysmith, one hundred kilometres away. Currently the children's home in Newcastle caters for children in high school while the children's home in Ladysmith caters for younger children. However, in contrast to the CMD, a percentage of the children's home's income is subsidised by government. For the rest, they are reliant on donations from businesses, different church congregations and individuals. They also organise fundraising events. One such event is a celebrity makeover show that visited Newcastle to raise money for the children's home. The catering and venue were donated by the business associated with the specific services and individuals donated their time to work at the function so that all the proceeds from the tickets sales could go to the children's home.

The last institution involved in the lives of the four families is *Rapha*, which functions both as a church with its own congregation and as a centre that provides shelter and food. The halfway house is located in the centre of town behind the town's cemetery in what used to be the old commando barracks. According to the pastor's wife, *Rapha* literally means 'new beginnings' or 'making whole'. For her, this reiterates the role of the halfway house as not a homeless shelter but rather as filling the interim of space and time between where people were and where they are going. The individuals that end up at the centre are usually homeless and tend to stay for periods ranging from a few months to a few years.

The grounds are neat and the buildings seem freshly painted, but there are patches of dirt, rather than grass in the yard. Maintenance of the

buildings and the grounds is the responsibility of the men staying there, while cleaning and communal cooking is the responsibility of the women residents. These chores and others are expected in return for the room and board. Adherence to strict rules is also expected, such as a curfew for the children on the grounds and having to sign in and out. This strict discipline and organisation are attributed to the experience of the pastor and his wife, who both spent time in the police services. As well as contributing and obeying the rules, inhabitants that stay on for long periods have to make a monetary contribution. For many of the inhabitants this is deducted from a government grant they receive due to age, disability, or having young children.

The halfway house receives no subsidies from the government. The pastor's wife explained that their residents are overwhelmingly white and Afrikaans, believing that to receive state support will mean having to follow government directions about racial inclusion. While she claimed not to have a problem helping other races, she argued that she wanted to avoid neglecting their current residents and suggested that their location in the town centre matched their demographic composition, since 'other races suffering from poverty lived in other areas'. She did note that there were plans to build a similar centre in Madadeni, which would help predominately poor Africans.

At several levels, these three institutions work together in Newcastle. People the CMD have identified as being destitute are taken in by *Rapha*, but the former continues to support families where children have been removed and placed in the children's home. Donations are also shared between them. For instance, if the CMD receives a surplus of children's clothes, they distribute this among their beneficiaries and the children's home. If the halfway house receives more Christmas donations than they need, they distribute the gifts to the children's home and other institutions in town. The institutions all have a good sense of how the other institutions operate and their resources. In terms of employees, one social worker at the children's home previously worked for the CMD and many of her

old clients are still involved there or have lived in the halfway house. By the same token, the parents of some in the children's home have lived or are living in the halfway house.

#### **Victoria and Martilda: on the limits of welfare**

The families in the study are all connected to this assemblage of welfare institutions. Before Mrs R and her son moved in with her daughter and son in law, she lived with her then-husband after he lost his job at Rapha. Their household remains dependent on CMD for food parcels and access to medical services for Mrs R's sickly grandson. Mrs X and her family also rely on the food parcels from CMD, who were also involved in a custody battle for Mrs X's granddaughter (who she now seldom sees). Mrs X and Mrs R often talked about home visits by the social workers and the anxiety the visits induced. Mrs D and her two children moved into the halfway house after she divorced her husband. She previously lived with her father, but unpaid bills and his drinking meant that she felt it better to move into Rapha. Mrs D and her children later moved out of the halfway house, but continued to rely on food parcels. Even now that she has managed to find a full time position, CMD social workers still visit the house and counsel her son when he has difficulties with his father. Mrs D was often anxious in our conversations about losing her children to the children's home.

The relationships between each family and the various institutions are complex, but seem to show a familiar picture of the disciplinary character of the welfare apparatus, as if little had changed since the height of apartheid other than private institutions fulfilling functions of government, a role private institutions and the church played for much of the twentieth century anyway. Yet a more extended discussion of Mrs E's two daughters, Victoria and Martilda illustrates a variation on this familiar story, a significant difference about the character of these organisations dedicated to white welfare in post-apartheid South Africa, ultimately a tale that tells of the troubled transformations that both the organisations and the white people in Newcastle are experiencing.

Both Victoria and Martilda were placed in the children's home from a very young age. Victoria is now seventeen and her younger sister Martilda is sixteen. Victoria had to leave school and the children's home when she became pregnant at fifteen. During her pregnancy and after their daughter Lilly was born, Victoria moved in with Lilly's father who lived with his parents. After drunken brawls, during which Victoria claimed to have been attacked, hit and strangled by her boyfriend and his parents, Victoria moved back to her parent's house. Lilly stayed with her paternal grandparents, who have full custody of her as the CMD deemed Mrs E's house inadequate for her own daughters, and thus also for her granddaughter.

Early on in the fieldwork, Victoria was living at home with Mrs E and working in a factory store selling socks. She was soon demoted after the boss caught her smoking outside, leaving the store unattended. Rather than take the pay cut from R900 to R500 per month (2009/2010 US\$1:ZAR 7.5) – a cut in hours she would suffer as punishment – she found new employment managing a biltong shop in town. Mrs E lamented Victoria's attitude to work: recounting how she had visited her at the new shop and found her outside smoking and chatting to the car guards in the parking lot, leaving this shop unattended. For Mrs E, almost all the money Victoria earns she spends on herself, buying clothes and other 'luxury' items and spends but a little on her baby.

Mrs E often commented on Victoria's love life. When Michelle first met her, Victoria was romantically involved with a much older man who lived in the Pretoria area. He expected her to visit him on weekends, but the biltong shop owner expected her to work weekends. Mrs E also suggested that the Pretoria love interest had to compete with the on-off relationship Victoria still had with her daughter's biological father. Mrs E often compared these two love interests, saying the Pretoria love interest had a steady job and a place to live and was willing to look after Victoria and Lilly. In comparison, according to Mrs E, her granddaughter's father was unemployed, still living at home and violent. Over the course of fieldwork, the love interest from Pretoria waned,



and Mrs E became increasingly worried about Victoria moving back in with her granddaughter's father. However, during one of our last conversations, Mrs E shared about a new love interest in Victoria's life and claimed that he was the reason she was spending hardly any time at home anymore.

Mrs E: It doesn't seem to worry her because at once stage she told me, said to me she feels like signing away [her daughter] and making another baby... I said to her, no... You cannot even look after your child... She thinks it is that easy to have another child... It freaks me out a bit. [She becomes teary.] She works and she has a child to look after ... who she only sees when it suits her. Then when she has seen the child, then it is goodbye, now I am going to party [or] go drink with friends. Then I think, shit, what if the welfare catches you? And then? There is going to be trouble.

Mrs E characterises her daughter Victoria as the typical 'bad girl', somebody who needs to learn discipline, a work ethic and morality in order to become respectable and spend her money accordingly. Lacking these values, and without a permanent partner with respectable work, Mrs E. believes that her daughter Victoria faces an uncertain future and fears she might lose all rights to raise her daughter Lily.

In contrast to Victoria is Martilda, the youngest daughter of Mrs E. She is now in grade 11 in a high school for children with learning disabilities. As with Victoria, she has lived in the children's home throughout her school career. Martilda's mother, the social workers at CMD and the social worker at the children's home are all proud of the progress she has made in terms of the leadership roles she fulfils, both at the school and at the children's home. Indeed, Martilda seems likely to complete a 'normal' matric certificate. Mrs E says that she and Martilda have a relationship resembling a friendship more than that of a mother-daughter relationship. In conversations about Martilda, Mrs E accentuates the 'r' in her name affectionately.

Mrs E: The difference I have seen between Martilda and Victoria ... Martilda is more sensible. Victoria does not really know how to manage money. She will not come to me and say, 'Mom, see, here's some money, go and buy bread.' Martilda, when

she gets her pocket money from the children's home, she saves it, she knows it is for mother and it is needed. Then when she gets home some Fridays, then she says, 'Mom, come with me'. Then she puts out her hand and says 'here make sure there is food in the house'.

Mrs E believes that Martilda can achieve her dream of working with computers after she has finished school. During our discussions, Mrs E called Martilda 'her pride and joy' and, according to her, destined for greater things than she herself has achieved. The disciplinary apparatuses of the school and the children's home appear to have worked, morally moulding Martilda's character into a 'good girl'.

Curious about her potential future, Michelle asked the social worker about Martilda's potential employment opportunities after she completes school:

SW (children's home): [S]he is not doing that well. We received their report cards this morning... She is one of my children that I worry about this vicious cycle continuing with [...] Already, [her sister] is one-step ahead of her because she got pregnant while she was here. So she [Victoria] is already there, but Martilda will not really be able to get a job, other than at the place where her sister is working. She is a reliable little child, but she does not have the intellectual abilities to go further. That is a shame. It is hard for me... she will have to be a packer or something similar... What she does, she does diligently. [But] the reality is... [s]he will unfortunately, have to move back [home].

This was echoed by another social worker from the CMD though she was not aware of Martilda's school results.

SW (CMD): Mrs E's youngest daughter does so well at school, that she can apparently complete a normal matric – even if she is in a special school. Where things fall flat is afterwards, the moment that they are out of the welfare system. Then there are not always the resources, or the resources of a poor family who does not have resources anyway. And then the problems of welfare come up again – that we do not have the manpower or the resources to help a family [...] afterwards. Things fall flat because now that child is caught in the cycle of – 'I did well in the children's home... I have a matric now, but I cannot find work. I do not have a parent who can put me into a job ... or who can give me

money to study. So now I sit, I sit at home. There is nothing. So the best thing is I'll get a man, I'll have a child. I'll try to find someone who can look after me.' – And then they do not necessarily make the right choices. They fall into the same system of – 'now I have a child and I cannot care for him, I have a husband who cannot attend to his responsibilities.' – That vicious cycle just continues.

For the social worker at the children's home, the 'good girl' Martilda is intellectually challenged and cannot hope to get a good job. For the social worker from CMD, the fact that jobs are scarce and poor families have little or no money or networks means that acting "responsibly" achieves little. Both emphasize a vicious cycle that ensnares these children of the poor. Victoria and Martilda, seeming opposites on the 'inside' – in terms of their character – seem destined to share the same future. Although Mrs E retains hopes for a different future based on their different conduct, it is increasingly clear to the social workers who propagate these prescriptions of institutionally guided self-reformation is unlikely in most cases to lead to significant material improvements of people's lives. The incapacity of Martilda's differences in conduct to make a difference to her life not only tells about the constraints on her agency, but on the agency of the institutions in which both sisters have been raised.

Despite mentioning the problems with finding work and the difficulties of living without the 'social capital' that wealthier parents might provide, the social worker of the CMD does not connect the fate of somebody like Martilda to that of many South Africans, across race. Rather her focus is on the white population:

SW (CMD): The majority of people that end up with us are those that do not have resources anymore. There are, for example, no family or friends left that can or want to help. You know, the political situation in our country has a big impact... Because if a person now looks back to 1994, and now there is a system in place of... black empowerment – black people first have to obtain posts, then whites can be considered. There was a long period when white people in certain positions were asked to train the black person under him and as soon as the person reached a certain level of training, then the white person was put out of the job, re-

trenched or whatever. So [we] also have to look at the age situation of our white population ... Where white people are still advantaged by the old state system... are necessarily people who are fifty plus. So they still have some finances... built up because of the advantage they had, but now there is a new generation... That fifty-sixty category is getting smaller. So now this twenty/thirty/forty-year-old category does not find work simply because there is no work for whites or does not find work quick enough. So he depletes the older category's funds, and he does not have any funds when his fifteen/sixteen-year-old child is in trouble and gets pregnant and does not work and all those type of things.

White people under the 'fifty-sixty' age bracket are, this social worker goes on to tell us, victims of a government that, for her, 'distinguishes according to race, specifically rejecting whites'. Rather than conceive of the limits in the welfare system as principally to do with the changed employment opportunities, the political transformation and the post-apartheid state is read as racist. Instead of seeing the growing difficulties poor whites might have with accessing their grandparents accumulated resources as pointing to situation where the white poor become increasingly indistinguishable from the African poor, the government is accused of racism and of preventing the most qualified person from being hired. And rather than accept their own weakness as the weakness welfare organisations face globally in neoliberal conditions, these organisations increasingly present themselves as championing the interests of 'oppressed' whites, those victims of a conspiracy crafted by government that has white people training their replacements at work.

### **'Reverse-racism': the nature of the threat to whiteness**

Social workers in welfare organisations serving overwhelmingly white families in Newcastle attempt to demarcate when, for white people, apartheid privilege 'ends' justifying their support of whites 'falling through the cracks' and 'caught in vicious cycles' who they believe suffer from the post-apartheid attempts at redress in workplaces. Members of the families in this study repeated a similar argument, without its socio-



logical pretences. Mrs D, for example, sees herself as a white woman threatened by discrimination in hiring practices:

Mrs D: If I did not have an education, maybe it would be a different situation, but I have an education behind my name. I have nursing and computers. I do not want to nurse again, since nursing took it out of me; I almost lost my life nursing.... even though at the hospital they are trying to push me back into nursing. I just put my foot down. That is why I am working as a porter. [...] The thing is, I have to keep my mouth shut again and just carry on, and that makes me so angry – because when can we open our mouths for once? You know? And that is what makes me angry about this country. The blacks, and I am not racist, but the blacks are prone to speak of oppression. They should... see who is really being oppressed today, because it is definitely not them ... It is the whites, especially the white women with children, who are oppressed. Women with qualifications behind their names. But since their damn skins are white they cannot get the work they are supposed to get. ... I experience it every time. Because most places have equity policies. If not for the equity policy, I would have the admin position I wanted a long time ago ...

While blaming the new government and understanding whites as victims, Mrs D. constantly reaffirmed to us that what 'really' makes a difference is religious faith and individual determination. Several times she leapt from saying 'it's about the individual, not race' to saying that Africans are given opportunities ahead of whites, and hence that employment equity has undermined racial equality in hiring practices, as if individual merit as the grounds for employment was more characteristic of the past than the present. What seemed to annoy her most was her perception that 'qualifications' and 'know-how' are not respected and that things were not going to 'balance out because the whites in this country have not yet learned how to stand together.'

Such sentiments of standing together are clearly nostalgic for the beginnings of apartheid, long mythologised as a moment when white Afrikaners were able to stand together and claim the majority in government. It is a sentiment where curiously whites have become the victims of the transition, despite large amounts of capital remaining in white hands at the point of transi-

tion. Such statements participate in the kind of discursive repertoire Steyn (2005: 131) has delineated as 'white talk'.

Yet, there is something specific to this particular mode of white talk, insofar as the specific character of their discourse is not one whose function is to veil racism. Their racism is explicit. Rather, casting themselves as victims is a mechanism for these white people to claim and inhabit the figure of the poor white, when the institutional, state and legal support for this figure has disappeared.<sup>2</sup> Claiming oneself as poor whites in turn allows them to distinguish themselves from others who are poor, thereby constructing themselves as exceptional. Unlike well-off whites who possess considerable amounts of economic and social capital sustaining their privileged access to employment and domains of cultural privilege, the specificity of this claiming of victimhood and of their anti-black racism is thus that their white skins are no longer adequate to protect them from poverty, regardless of how they conduct themselves.

### Coda

It is when the social world loses its character as a natural phenomenon that the natural or conventional character of social facts can be raised. (Bourdieu 1977: 169)

The rules of social life that these poor whites living in Newcastle learned was one that took white privilege for granted. It was a perception produced within a set of government apparatuses that cast being white and economically secure as a natural phenomenon and being white and poor as abnormal. Its foundation, materially,

<sup>2</sup> Hyslop (2003: 230) has written of the tension between less affluent whites and white officialdom during apartheid, with the former referring to social workers as 'the welfare'. While recognizing such hostilities remain, welfare officials and whites receiving aid in Newcastle find common cause in a discourse of reverse racism that regards the political transition as enriching black south Africans and refuses to take account of either the continued relative economic privilege of white South Africans or a broader political economy which has seen, at least in Europe and North America, the declining capacity of welfare and a far less secure labour market (Ehrenreich 2001).

lay in the possibility that those whites who had been 'reformed' by institutions, who had learned the correct virtues of labour and life, could find permanent positions at work that would guarantee their privileged social position. We have argued that for white people in the town of Newcastle, political and economic change has called the naturalness of racial privilege into question. Welfare institutions in the town still preach that self-discipline will lead to successful and morally superior beneficiaries but, for our white informants — even if they are compliant—there is no passage to economic security based on conduct.

There is a broad sense among informants that there are troubles everywhere, claims that crime is on the increase, moral decay is rife, and how neighbourhoods are 'going down'. In one example, white people now call the neighbourhood Arbour Park 'Arbordeni' to describe the fact of a number of African people moving into the area. For these families, there was an uncanny sense of transformation, of things at once familiar and unfamiliar, of the world they knew looking almost the same but having changed so that they could no longer feel safe (cf. Ballard 2004:

68). This applies to places they had known for a long time which now felt unsafe, but also to the morality preached by the welfare organisations to be good people — that was becoming patently ineffective in producing transformed conditions — and to respectable work, where qualifications and diligence no longer seemed enough.

During apartheid, it is probable that for white South Africans the path from good moral conduct to empowerment was seldom as smooth as ideology suggested. In post-apartheid South Africa, however, it is increasingly clear for white welfare officials and for whites on welfare that there is little chance of finding permanent employment. Both blame the post-apartheid administration and 'reverse-racism', steadfastly refusing to recognise that both Africans and whites receiving the contemporary version of welfare, the social grant, share a common plight of being unlikely to secure permanent employment. Ultimately, it is a kind of mourning for the fact that being poor white is no longer a condition to be studied, or made remarkable: a melancholic retention of a state of exceptionality in the hope of being noticed and somehow helped, perhaps by other more privileged whites.

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# Deserting Transformation: Heritage, Tourism, and Hegemonic Spatiality in Prince Albert

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## Abstract

While tourism is often pitched as a panacea for economic growth in developing countries, it has also been shown to reproduce colonial dynamics of unequal power relations between the West and former colonies and between the historically privileged and the oppressed within post-colonial nations. Through critical discourse analysis of data, this article considers how the mobilization of 'heritage' and 'tourism' by 'semigrant power-elites' in Prince Albert, a rural South African town, reproduces historically inscribed relations of power which remain shaped by the apartheid era's use of space in the construction and enforcement of a racial hierarchy. Analysis aims to intervene in presumptions that tourism development is necessarily a path towards economic empowerment for historically oppressed populations. Interrogation of discourses promoting heritage and tourism development in the town uncovers the ways in which structures of inequality established through colonialism and apartheid can accumulate through tourism development.

**Keywords:** tourism, heritage, post-apartheid, race, space, semigration

## Introduction

Heritage and tourism have become internationally accepted as common sense strategies to promote the neoliberal imperatives of economic growth and development. While apartheid South Africa was not a popular tourism destination, the birth of the democratic Rainbow Nation and the end of international sanctions gave rise to an explosion in Mandela-inspired international tourism (Visser and Rogerson 2004: 202). As South Africa opened its borders at the end of apartheid to immigration, trade, and tourism, it entered the post-Cold War world in which liberal democracy had achieved global dominance. The post-apartheid surge in tourism development, as a means of attracting international investment and foreign income, was (and remains) shaped by the neoliberal economic framework which presumes that economic empowerment can be achieved

through growth and development (Peet 2002: 55). By 2004, tourism had become regarded as South Africa's 'new gold' when, for the first time, tourism revenue surpassed gold revenue by three billion US Dollars (Ivanovic 2008: 71) – an ominous comparison given the violence that has historically structured the gold mining industry across the African continent. Regarded as an effective means for underdeveloped countries to join the global economy, neoliberal ideology and policy (such as that carried by tourism development) 'retains an ideological zeal...after the collapse of the Soviet Union' (Peet 2002:63). While the African National Congress has made great achievements in terms of providing access to resources, infrastructure, and services for millions of historically excluded people in South Africa, compliance with the international neoliberal eco-



conomic system has curtailed large scale redistribution of resources to populations oppressed by colonial and apartheid rule (Peet 2002).

While tourism is often pitched as a panacea for economic growth in developing countries, it arguably reproduces colonial dynamics of unequal power relations between the West and former colonies and between the historically privileged and the oppressed *within* postcolonial nations as this article illustrates. After all, the majority of the world's population does not engage in the industry as tourists and consumers but rather as the toured and consumed (Robinson 2001). Despite the supposed economic gains to be made through tourism, critics have argued that tourism impedes economic sovereignty and post-colonial redress in that developing countries become dependent on the industry. Furthermore, as Brett argues, tourism-based development is inherently tenuous – 'in creating low, rather than high-skilled employment, the tourist industry may actually disable the local population and reproduce a form of servant class' (Brett 1996: 127).

The legacy of colonialism in Africa, characterized by European appropriation of resources and ascription of particular meanings to settler landscapes, reverberates in the contemporary tourism industry (see Foster 2008). As Samasuwo (2004: 11) argues, tourism sustains the colonial legacy through the continuation of foreign land ownership, 'tending to bring foreign currency into the pockets of landowners themselves' rather than a local and poor population. Cultural tourism, in particular, has become a key growth area in South Africa and across the developing world (Ivanovic 2008: xvii). As Ivanovic instructs, the transformation of cultural heritage assets into tourism products requires that culture be 'remoulded to facilitate both tourism as well as tourist use' (Ivanovic 2008: 168). This 'remoulding' of culture serves the purpose of 'maximiz[ing] profit by facilitating easy consumption' and 'requires releasing the value of culture...which in turn facilitates and enhances consumption of cultural experiences' (168). The production of 'easy' consumption involves the promotion and marketing of heritage assets

through what Wildman (2005: 5) describes as 'overcommunicated' and 'mythologized' representations of destinations directed at potential tourists. Because not every cultural 'object' has the potential to be a heritage attraction for tourists, attractions are selected based on their potential commercial value. Consequently, many postcolonial developing nations have turned to heritage preservation as a form of income generation, manufacturing 'destinations' and 'unique cultural experiences' for tourist consumption.

Concerned with heritage conservation, Fontein (2000: 21) writes that it is through labeling something as 'heritage' that spaces and objects are appropriated and 'distanced' from people's daily lives. While the world heritage 'system' attempts to de-politicize itself through a discourse of 'universal value' (claiming that certain objects, people, and places must be preserved for 'humanity') Fontein argues that it must also be recognized as an 'anti-politics machine' which attempts to avoid scrutiny through its claims to objectivity (13). Fontein points to the power relations implicated in 'heritage' within the postcolonial context, explaining that archaeological and historical knowledges of heritage are deployed in order to reinforce Eurocentric and racialised stereotypes though the presumption of Western advancement and superiority<sup>1</sup>.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the imperative to develop the tourism industry and protect heritage often buttresses support for foreign land ownership which, in turn, further disenfranchises the historically excluded majority from land and resources through the establishment of exclusive tourism spaces (Samasuwo 2004: 5). While urban tourism has become a focus within South African geographical and social research, small towns have also become sites in second-home (Hoogendoorn and Visser 2004) and festival (Hoogendoorn, Mellet, and Visser 2007, Visser 2007) tourism research, as well as research exploring the potential of tourism

<sup>1</sup> For further critique of tourism development and heritage conservation see Hall and Tucker, 2004; Phillips and Steiner, 1999; Harrison and Hitchcock, 2005; Saldanha 2002.



development (Ferreira 2007). However, there has yet to be sustained analysis of how tourism, and especially heritage tourism, relate to dynamics of race, space, and power in post-apartheid South Africa.

### Prince Albert of the Great Karoo

The dominant narrative of Prince Albert's history begins with the establishment of a loan farm, *Kweekvalleij* ("the valley of cultivation and plenty") in 1762. Soon, it is told, *Kweekvalleij* attracted other farmers and a community began to develop, with the town adopting the name Prince Albert (after Queen Victoria's husband) in 1845 (Prince Albert Local Municipality [PALM] Integrated Development Plan [IDP] 2007-2011: 9). Omitted from this narrative, but essential in the story of the town's development, are the colonial forces of land appropriation that made the establishment of *Kweekvalleij* possible in the first place. The farmers attracted to *Kweekvalleij* for its plentiful water supply, as mentioned above, were amongst the larger movement of white settlers who began trekking northeast through the country in the 1700s, away from British liberalism in the Cape. As Kruger (2013: 25) writes, 'By the late 1740s the relentless spread of the trekboers in search of grazing and other resources, such as water, brought them to the region of the Swartberg', which is the mountain range surrounding Prince Albert. The 'loan farm' system remained the preferred system of colonial land possession throughout the eighteenth century and had important implications through its creation of private and commodified land (28). By the end of the 1700s, European settlement across the Karoo had decimated indigenous populations through displacement, war, and disease (24; also see Penn 2005).

Racial segregation was formally entrenched in Prince Albert, like the rest of South Africa, with the Group Areas Act (1950) and Population Registration Act (1950) and the horrors of forced removals and further land appropriation. In Prince Albert, the 'coloured' area of North End was erected approximately two kilometers outside of the town centre which became 'whites

only'<sup>2</sup>. The people forcibly relocated to North End are amongst the millions of people who were pushed into semi-desert regions, the vast majority of who remain in these areas (Peet 2002: 76). Still to this day in Prince Albert, the socio-geography of the town consists of 'a centralized "Dorp" with the main business area and predominantly white residential area' and 'North End, Prince Albert's predominantly coloured residential area' which struggles with a litany of accumulating social ills (PALM IDP 2007-2011: 10).

This paper examines how tourism development and heritage conservation in post-apartheid Prince Albert reproduces and exacerbates the historical legacies of racialised inequality in the town. In doing so "semigration", as a trend amongst white South Africans who 'attempt to find spaces within which control can be adequately maintained' (Ballard 2004a: 59), emerges as an important point of reference. "Semigration", as a post-apartheid phenomena involving the flight of white South Africans from urban areas due to the perception that they "lack control" in such spaces, can be read as the privatization of apartheid state projects that were driven by fears of 'racial mixing' (59).

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<sup>2</sup> The use of racial categories in this article serves to illuminate the historical positionalities experienced by residents of the town. While the author acknowledges that 'race' is an ideological construct and therefore not biological, fixed, or essential truth, this article employs these categories critically as social constructions which have implications for one's social positioning and life opportunities. Also, as numerous scholars have discussed, the construction of these segregated racial communities engendered the construction of deeply entrenched racialised inequalities that remain largely in place today. Therefore, it is necessary to use racial categorisations in order to most accurately reflect the ways in which historically inscribed racial inequalities shape social relations and everyday life in post-apartheid South Africa. In this paper, the term 'coloured' refers to those who would have been classified as 'coloured' during apartheid which constructed this label for "a person who is not a white person or a native" and which included indigenous, Malay, and mixed race peoples; 'White' refers to those who received the benefits and privileges of whiteness during apartheid upon being classified as 'a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person' (South African *Population Registration Act*: 1950).

For Prince Albert's semigrants, tourism development and the town's 'heritage value' offer ways of sustaining and increasing the value of recently acquired historical properties. As this paper argues, the construction of the town's identity as a heritage site (Prince Albert Cultural Foundation) also seeks to protect the identities and privileges of the propertied white residents, as well as their positions of authority in the town. As the value of the properties in the town have increased with tourism development and gentrification, the already severe economic gap between the affluent town 'centre' and the previous group area, North End, has widened. This problem is not unique to Prince Albert, South Africa, or many parts of the developing world that have experienced tourism development and/or gentrification. However, the prolific nature of these dynamics does not mean that they should be neglected. Rather, they must be critically interrogated and used to problematize neoliberal presumptions that tourism offers a path towards economic empowerment for historically marginalized communities and nations. And, while some may consider Prince Albert's small size to indicate its inability to provide insights into broader socio-economic dynamics and relations in South Africa, the town is just one of the many rural areas into which over half of the nation's population resides' (Peet 2002:76).

The 'predominantly white' Southern side of Prince Albert has charmed the imagination and interest of journalists and travel writers who paint the town as an "old-world" oasis where lush greenery and water furrow system line the streets. According to *The Olive Branch*, official newsletter of the Prince Albert Tourism Association, tourists can:

Stroll round the village with its beautifully preserved Cape Dutch, Karoo and Victorian buildings ...Try our local delicacies...Enjoy traditional Karoo hospitality...Wander to the dairy, visit our Saturday market...Go on a guided historical walk...visit the Swartberg Pass and the Fransie Pienaar Museum. You can visit a cheese-maker, go hiking, bird-watching or star-gazing

For decades, the popular press has been entranced by the 'magic' and 'charm' of the iso-

lated desert town. "Flanked by rugged mountains and endless desolate plains, the picturesque hamlet of Prince Albert has retained its old world beauty", writes Alex Cremer in a 1986 issue of *South African Garden and Home*. Ten years later, Marianne Alexander penned "Prince Charming of the Karoo: Time spent discovering the delights of a small town can be rewarding" in *South African Country Life*. These select articles stand within a larger canon of popular press which has promoted the charm and beauty of Prince Albert. Such romantic descriptions are common within the broader tourism promotion genre in which nostalgia for "simpler" times is strategically evoked for a privileged class of Western readers (Holland and Huggan 2004).

These representations of Prince Albert have proliferated in tandem with the town's changing demographic with the arrival of middle-class white South Africans and Europeans who have purchased and renovated numerous residential and commercial properties. Some of the white Afrikaans speaking residents whose families had been in the town for decades expressed resentment for the English speaking "incomers" who they perceived to be destroying the small town character of Prince Albert. The antique shops, caf  s, art galleries, and restaurants lining both sides of the main road signal the processes of gentrification that have ensued in the town<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the end of apartheid and formal termination of the Group Areas Act and its proximity to the affluent town centre, North End remains an under-resourced area marked by poverty. The water furrow system, for instance, which features so prominently in representations of the town as a 'charming oasis', still diverts to the east and west as one travels from the south end of town to North End, marking a boundary between the green and affluent side of Prince Albert and the barren Karoo landscape onto which North End was violently flung in the 1950s. Situated on dry and rocky terrain, North end does not share in the privilege of the water running through their community, a legacy left by colonial rule that

<sup>3</sup> See Donaldson 2009 for a study of tourism and gentrification in Greyton, South Africa

systematically denied water to the majority of people in South Africa (Kruger 2013).

According to government sources, everyday life is precarious for the historically marginalized coloured farm working community residing in North End who are the majority demographic in the town (PALM IDP 2007-2011:16). Low education levels, poor health services, a large housing backlog, and high unemployment are cited as the primary reasons why the Provincial Treasury Social Economic Profile 2006 ranked Prince Albert seventeenth on the Provincial Index of Multiple Deprivation. Prince Albert was the only Municipality in the Central Karoo that appeared on this list of the fifty most deprived Municipalities in the country (PALM IDP 2007-2011: 13). The high levels of human need in this region are further detailed by Van der Merwe, et. al (2004) who describe the Karoo as having the worst quality of life and the lowest growth potential in the Western Cape (Van der Merwe 2004: ix, Donaldson 2012). Emphasis on the expectation of tourism to facilitate development is reflected in decisions made around the expenditure of regional funding in the Central Karoo District Municipality (CKDM) in which Prince Albert is situated. Review of the CKDM Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2007-2011 reveals the gravitas of tourism within local budget allocation and prioritization. For the 2007/2008 year, “tourism development” was allocated a total of R5,248,903 – a figure nearly double the funding allocated to “social”, “health”, and “environment” related areas *combined* (R2,845,000).

### Method

In preparing for fieldwork, I began an initial desktop study of Prince Albert through electronic and library resources. I was able to obtain two published works about Prince Albert; *There's something in the air in Prince Albert* (Janssen 2007) and *Prince Albert in the Anglo-Boer war: 1899-1902* (Marincowitz 1999). Given that the former is a collection of photographs of Prince Albert and the latter is a pamphlet documenting events in the town during a particular historical moment, these sources did not further my understanding of post-apartheid transformation in the town.

More recently, however, Toerien (2012) and Kruger (2013) have made important contributions to knowledge of post-apartheid Prince Albert. Therefore, initial desktop research relied heavily on sources available electronically such as government reports and websites. The primary method of data collection involved twenty-five in-depth interviews conducted during one month of fieldwork in the town. A translator was present for interviewees who preferred to communicate in Afrikaans. A basic interview schedule was set by the larger Rural Transformation project steering committee, and sought to uncover the ways in which changes in the town were identified, constructed, and evaluated by residents. Having identified the centrality of heritage and tourism through desktop research and pilot study involving fieldwork at the town's annual Olive Festival, I developed an additional set of questions that I implemented with participants who discussed having involvement with tourism and heritage in the town. Significantly, not a single resident from North End mentioned their involvement in tourism, or the idea that they could benefit from it in any way. Tourism thus emerged as a white semi-grant concern (McEwen and Steyn 2013).

In analyzing interview data, I was interested in identifying the signifiers employed as residents spoke about and evaluated change in the town, as well as the possibilities that were opened up or closed down through these articulations. Furthermore, how these discourses were historicized, in terms of articulating continuity or rupture with the past in order to shape the present and future in particular ways, was an important aspect of how residents made sense of change in the town since the end of apartheid (Fairclough 2010). Critical discourse analysis was employed in the analysis of the data collected through document sources and in-depth interviews with residents. As articulated by Fairclough (1989), critical discourse analysis involves the convergence between linguistics and social research and is interested in the ways in which different kinds of texts reproduce power and inequalities in society. Analysis therefore explores the intersecting meanings of heritage and tourism with a view to understand power relations and interests at

stake in these constructions. The town's tourism information websites<sup>4</sup> and the Prince Albert Cultural Foundation's proposal for the establishment of Prince Albert as a Provincial Heritage site were critically interrogated in analysis of how power relations are operationalised through discourses of tourism and heritage. While some may view these sources as being purely bureaucratic and/or commercial and therefore lacking in significant meaning, critical discourse analysts view all texts as socially relevant, in that they carry power relations invested in ideology and carried by language.

Critical discourse analysis is used as the method of data analysis because of its usefulness in 'advancing the study of prejudice and social inequality in modern multicultural societies' (Riggins 1997: 1), particularly in contexts of social change (Fairclough 2010). Critical discourse analysis focuses on the relationship between language, power, and privilege (Riggins 1997: 3), assuming all objects, actions and social realities to be meaningful and historically contextual (Howarth, Stravakakis 2000: 2). In this case, the meaning of the town itself is constructed through the use of signifiers that are contextualized by the colonial and apartheid past, as well as the current period of transformation. Within this framework of analysis, identities are acknowledged as socially, politically, spatially, and historically contextual, and thus never static, fixed, or essential.

The signifiers of heritage and tourism were deployed regularly amongst semigrants to the extent that they emerged as 'themes' in analysis. It was through these themes that residents spoke to the ways in which the town is "better" or "worse" than it was during apartheid, typically pointing to heritage as a positive development that has increased tourism to the town. The ways in which residents evaluated these changes provides insight into the interests at stake as residents spoke about heritage and tourism. Rather than treating these as "essential" or "self-explanatory" features of life in Prince Albert today, analysis was interested in uncovering the ways in

which "heritage" and "tourism" were framed to serve certain interests at stake in power relations operating in the town.

My positionality as a white, American-born, middle-class, and English speaking person undeniably shaped my perception and interpretation of Prince Albert, as well as the questions I was able to ask of it. Having participated in tourism as a tourist elsewhere, and having conducted critical research on the industry in the past, I am aware of the prolific nature of tourism, and how it aims to attract potential visitors. While I was not expecting to focus on tourism and heritage in my research, analysis revealed that they could not be ignored in the study of post-apartheid dynamics of race and space in the town. Furthermore, as a white outsider, my relation to white interviewees was also mediated by their perception of me and assumptions of my ignorance of South African society and history. As I have experienced in other research, my outsider status often prompted the white residents I interviewed to "explain" the current status quo, providing me with useful insights into post-apartheid white discourses and the power relations they are invested in.

### Conceptualising spaces and identities

Post-structural theorization positions spaces as signifiers within socially constructed individual and group identities. This approach enables the interrogation of processes through which hegemonic cultural practices attempt to essentialize, or "fix" spaces with corresponding (and also 'fixed') identities. Thus, discursive attempts to equate "one place" with "one identity" warrant critical analysis within this framework (Natter and Jones 1997: 150). For Natter and Jones, a nonessentialist view of social spaces and identities takes cognizance of "hegemonic spatiality", which they define as 'the categorically ordered possibilities for, and the construction of, meanings about any space' (Natter and Jones 1997: 151). As the authors explain, this approach has direct implications for the status of concepts such as "centres" and "peripheries" which have been used as organizing principles in the structuring of social spaces. Modernist geographic

<sup>4</sup> [www.patourism.co.za](http://www.patourism.co.za), [www.princealbert.org.za](http://www.princealbert.org.za)



and anthropological traditions, for instance, have mapped “peoples” regionally and culturally, ultimately policing the meanings and practices associated with particular spaces and identities. This structuring has operated to stamp identities and spaces with a fixed correlation: ‘every identity has its place’ (Natter and Jones 1997: 152).

Apartheid South Africa provided a graphic illustration of the interests served by the establishment of fixed correlations between identities and spaces. In the years of formal apartheid, the protection of white ‘purity’ from a ‘dangerous’ and ‘contaminating’ blackness was written into legislation premised on racist segregationist ideology. This involved the formalization and expansion of colonial beliefs, policies, and practices into a system of structural racism that ensured the subjugation of those not classified as ‘white’ under the Population Registration act which came into effect two years after the Nationalist Party took power. At the end of apartheid, the replacement of these policies with those mandating redress seemed to promise that South Africa was ‘set for a shining future of racial equality and integration; the promise of a “rainbow nation” beckoned’ (Durrheim and Dixon 2005: 3). However, patterns of flight from newly integrated neighborhoods increased dramatically as white South Africans began to remove themselves from these areas, mainly through segregation and migration within the country and immigration overseas (Ballard 2004a).

In Prince Albert, a dominating discourse of ‘heritage value’ -mobilized by middle-class English speaking white South Africans who have recently moved to the town - aims to stamp the town with an identity as a tourism destination. While, at first glance, this may seem like a benign attempt by some newer residents to spur development and job creation, deeper investigation reveals relations of power that function to protect minority-elite interests in the town. As analysis will reveal, this construction operates to maintain the identities and material interests of ‘semigrants’ who have invested time and resources in the town since their arrival after the end of apartheid. The de-politicized discourses of heritage and tourism in Prince Albert enables the

ignore-ance of the town’s historically inscribed racial and spatial inequalities, while re-constituting the apartheid-era status quo through the maintenance of the social, political and spatial marginalization of North End from the affluent and predominantly white town ‘centre’.

### **“Semigration” in Post-apartheid South Africa**

As Ballard indicates, ‘semigration’ is one way in which segregation has adapted to the post-apartheid deregulation of space as many remaining white South Africans have sought “peace of mind” by establishing privatized enclaves such as gated communities and access controlled communities (Ballard 2004a: 63). In this paper, residents of Prince Albert who have arrived in the town after deserting city and suburban spaces for a rural town perceived as less threatening, are regarded as “semigrants”. While crime has often been cited as the primary reason for white flight from cities (Caldeira 1996), it is not the only motivation for retreat into such fortified spaces (Ballard 2004b). Rather, these systems of security also create segregated spaces in which exclusionary practices are carefully and rigorously exercised – through the privatization of space, residents are able to exclude those seen as criminally threatening and undesirable (Ballard 2004b, Caldeira 1996).

“Semigration” initially referred to the migration of whites from Johannesburg to Cape Town in the 1990s, and to high perimeter walls erected around private properties, enclosed neighborhoods, and gated communities. Ballard expands the understanding of the term, explaining that semigration can also refer to a “hybrid of emigration and segregation” which occurs as whites flee racially integrated urban areas and create new residential forms which they can control and regulate (Ballard 2004a: 61). The Karoo in particular has become a region of interest amongst semigrating white South Africans who have gained interest ‘in embracing the less materialistic values implied by a country lifestyle’ (Ingle 2010: 420). Ingle refers to a white “creative class” which has left urban areas in pursuit of rural living, and argues that this development has ‘infused many small towns with a new sense of entrepreneurial

optimism and vigour which is beginning to act as a catalyst for economic endeavour amongst the previously disadvantaged sectors of these towns' (420). As this article will reveal, Ingle's argument represents precisely the view that semigrants in Prince Albert would like residents and tourists alike to subscribe to, but which is undermined by the reality of increasing inequalities generated through the industries of heritage and tourism.

As members of dominant groups and organizations who have 'a special role in planning, decision-making and control over the relations and processes of the enactment of power', these semigrants can also be characterized as 'power elites' (van Dijk's 2001: 303). 'Power elites' are of particular interest in the study of social inequality in that they have 'special access to discourse: they are literally the ones who have the most to say' (303). In the post-apartheid era, constructions of heritage that is considered valuable in the new Rainbow Nation have largely revolved around anti-apartheid struggle history and through the memorialization of sites such as Robben Island, the homes of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, the site of the June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976 student uprising and massacre in Soweto, and many others. In Prince Albert, however, semigrant "power elites" construct the 'heritage value' of the town around aesthetic symbols of the colonial, pre-apartheid period. While I am not arguing that affinity for a particular architectural style translates automatically into an affinity for, or agreement with, a particular political or historical context, I am arguing that historical and political context cannot simply be divorced from the architectural styles they produced and which symbolize them. The selection and promotion of 'heritage assets' from the colonial and apartheid era must be examined in light of the history that generated this "heritage" and the meanings it evokes.

While discussion of semigration facilitates understanding of the significance of "safe" spaces in relation to white identity construction, Steyn's (2001) analysis of post-apartheid "white talk" provides insight into the ways in which semigrant discourses perform whiteness

and serve the interests of white privilege. Like whiteness in other contexts, Steyn argues that South African whiteness assumes white entitlement, evading acknowledgment of racialization and privilege (Steyn 2001:162). These ways of knowing, or ignoring (Steyn 2012), are asserted through "white talk", which has an ideological power "demonstrated by the fact that it has helped white people to maintain a dominant position in the organization of global relations and to keep much of the world hegemonically in its grip to this day" (ibid), an argument which resonates with Mill's (1997) Racial Contract theory. Analysis of interviews with Prince Albert's "semigrants" reveals that discourses of the town's heritage value and tourism potential preserve and legitimate white identities and interests in the town. Driven by a social justice imperative, this study finds that processes of heritage conservation and tourism development can actually reify and exacerbate raced and spaced inequalities in "developing" contexts such as Prince Albert.

### **Heritage conservation and the maintenance of identities**

Those involved in the conservation, preservation and mummification of the landscape create normative landscapes, as though there was only one way of telling or experiencing. They attempt to 'freeze' the landscape as a palimpsest of past activity...itself a way of reappropriating the land (Bender 1998: 26)

At the time of fieldwork, a number of newer home owning residents were in the processes of applying to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to establish Prince Albert as a provincial heritage site in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act<sup>5</sup>. According to the proposal, 'Prince Albert: Unique Karoo town at the foot of the Swartberg World Heritage Site: Proposal for protected status as a provincial heritage site', which was written collaboratively amongst residents concerned with the protection of the town's heritage, Prince Albert should be protected as a heritage site because it is:

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<sup>5</sup> No. 19 of 1998



embedded in a multi-layered cultural landscape... the natural setting in which Prince Albert is embedded is an integral part of the heritage value of the town as it provides building-free vistas out onto the engulfing Karoo landscape and contextualizes the town structure in a very potent manner: the landscape which defines the town and the resources of the natural environment have directed the cultural activities that have marked the last 250 years, making it a truly symbiotic cultural landscape (3)

As part of the “natural setting” of Prince Albert, the authors point to the elements of original agricultural activity which remain in the ‘Vibrant 150 year old Farming Town’ (Prince Albert Cultural Foundation: 17). The architecture of the town is also cited as being of ‘high heritage value and authenticity’ in that it ‘has evolved from the natural landscape and its Karoo setting’ and ‘strongly reflect[s] the historical cultural life of the town and presents a uniqueness not found in other towns’ (17). The positionality of the document’s authors is made evident when one considers that only the town’s most affluent residents, who are all white, enjoy ‘building free vistas’ and have the privilege of small scale residential farming. The community of North End is, of course, situated on the low-lying rocky terrain that gives the Karoo its name (Kruger 2013: 25). As the authors go on, it becomes apparent that ‘heritage value’ in the town is largely constructed around colonial history and aesthetics:

In the building types, which range from simple Karoo cottages to complex Victorian, the mass and volume of buildings is distinctive and remarkably consistent (17).

Here one can see that the authors of the proposal are concerned with preserving historical objects that symbolize colonialism and apartheid. For the semigrant power elites of Prince Albert today, material signifiers of this era are those to be protected and packaged as ‘heritage assets’. To claim remnants of the colonial history as the most ‘valuable’ historical era is an attempt to legitimize claims to the ‘heritage value’ of the town through the foreclosure of alternative processes, actions, and understandings of the town’s history, such as those which could commemorate the lost indigenous populations, forced

removals, and anti-apartheid struggle history in the town (Fontein 2000: 9). As they locate the town’s value in symbols of its colonial past, these residents also legitimate and normalize the continued denial of the severe socio-economic and spatial disadvantages faced by the community of North End.

The centering of white identities through discourses promoting the protection of Prince Albert’s heritage value emerge when listening to newer residents discuss their motivations for relocating to the isolated Karoo town. In describing what attracted them and others, “semi-grants” firmly embed their identities and aspirations within material aspects of Prince Albert. Meredith\*, who had recently moved to Prince Albert with her husband from Johannesburg, and who was the owner of a local café at the time of research, romantically describes the town’s ‘intangible’ elements which attract people like herself:

I think that people are attracted to something intangible in this area, you know, they are touched by it, they come and they are renewed, revitalized... if you were to write a book on how people came to live here, you will find a common thread, and that is that they were spontaneous about making the decision that they wanted to live here.

When considering that seventy-nine per cent of the town’s residents earn less than R2000 (approximately US \$200) per month and continue to struggle with housing and basic service delivery (Prince Albert Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2007-2011: 13), the silences and elisions in this extract become audible. Here, the white middle-class experience of Prince Albert becomes centered through the discursive construction of the town as ‘revitalizing’, constructions also employed in representations of the town catering to potential tourists and home buyers. At a time when unregulated racial integration in city spaces is increasingly seen as unpleasant by many white South Africans (Ballard 2004a: 62), it becomes evident that for the above resident, the ‘revitalizing’ character of Prince Albert provides relief and comfort to her sense of self. As one of the local estate agents describes of the town on their property

website, 'this is clearly a place to slow down, forget the hectic pace of urban life and rediscover the bare essentials such as sunsets & thunderstorms over the plains'<sup>6</sup>. And, on another property website, one is assured that investing in Prince Albert is a wise decision because 'An excellent infrastructure and crime free environment preserves its history and natural beauty'<sup>7</sup>. In constructing Prince Albert as a place where the complexities of city living can be abandoned, these participants illustrate an attempt to find comfort zones where their identities remain relatively insulated from the national imperative of transformation.

Such evasion of racialization and privilege are themes that run through the discourses of the town's newer residents as they describe why they moved to Prince Albert. The following resident constructs the town as a place where her dreams can come true. Speaking about people, like herself, who moved to the town, Judy\*, who recently moved to a town farm in Prince Albert with her husband after they both retired from their careers in Pretoria, explains:

I don't think that they were conscious of what was influencing them, it was maybe the river, the water, the trees, but I think it is more than that... because I think Prince Albert has a very good energy and... people who come here all have dreams of an idyllic life...It's almost as if it is good for your soul...there is just something about it that gives you scope for doing what you want to do, or finding out who you are and what you want to be

Referring to "good energy", and "dreams of an idyllic life", this resident explains that there is "something" in Prince Albert which creates the possibility for reaching one's full potential and actualizing self-identity. In describing the town as a comfort zone, she fixes Prince Albert with meanings which will hold white identities in place, congruent with Ballard's contention that 'the post-apartheid phenomenon of semigration represents some white people's attempts to re-

establish safe spaces that reflect their self-conceptions' (Ballard 2004a: 64).

### The conservation of exclusion

The privileged subtexts of "heritage value" and "tourism" become apparent when considering that concerns for the protection of the 'historical' and 'natural' elements of the town were voiced by white middle-class semigrants. According to Linda\*, who is a member of the Friends of the Museum, the Prince Albert Cultural Foundation, and the Building and Heritage Advisory Committee:

...it's a known fact, worldwide, that tourism creates jobs, and I think something like, every 30 tourists that visit your town creates one job, that's the international standard

For the above resident, tourism as a means of creating employment opportunities is a "fact" known around the world. Linda further explains that development must be managed so as to preserve remnants of the town's past that can be promoted for tourist consumption:

we do have some control over the development of Prince Albert, and this whole conservation thing is not to stop development, it's just to manage it to the best advantage of everybody, to conserve this beautiful character that we have in town which attracts the tourists, and brings money to the town

Making explicit the connection between the conservation of the town's "beautiful character" and money brought in by tourists, Linda reveals the inextricability of heritage and tourism development in the town. From her perspective, without heritage, there would be no tourism. Moreover, it becomes evident that in order to promote the heritage and tourism industries, it is important that she and others have control over development. While these residents claim that the development of the tourism industry and the protection of Prince Albert's heritage value will address problems such as unemployment, analysis of interview data reveals the contrary; 'heritage' and tourism operate as everyday mechanisms of exclusion which function to reproduce unequal relations of power between the white minority and non-white majority.

\* Indicates that a pseudonym has been used

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dennehof.co.za/>  
[Accessed 18 June 2014].

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.onserus.co.za/princealbert.htm>  
[Accessed 18 June 2014].

In Prince Albert, possibilities for North End to benefit from the town's heritage and tourism development are foreclosed by the historical power relations which have alienated the majority of the town's population from land and business ownership. Michael\*, who owns a Bed and Breakfast in the town and was a member of the Prince Albert Tourism Association at the time of research, offers some insight:

Why don't we have more involvement of people in tourism? Maybe there is attempts to do it, but the fact of the matter is that the members of the tourism association pay their dues, are the people who are in businesses, and those aren't people in North End... If you look at it from an ownership point of view, and being part of owning businesses.

Here, the power inequalities accumulate through tourism development: Lower income residents who do not own businesses and properties cannot afford to be a member of the tourism association, and are therefore excluded from tourism-related planning and decision making. Thus, colonial era subjectivities between whites (as landed, property and business owners) and coloureds (as workers, servants and erstwhile slaves) remain in place, and continue to deepen. Linda makes this dynamic further evident as she argues that tourism creates employment:

... it creates a lot of jobs, I mean, we have about 56 guest houses, they are not all big grand guest houses, some of them are just one or two rooms in a house that people let, but it creates a job for a coloured woman to come and do the cleaning

Here, not only does she normalize the positionality of coloured people in the town as a servant class, but she uses this normalization to promote racialised inequality. In summoning the colonial past as a commodifiable aspect of present day Prince Albert (and equipped with the discursive and material resources to do so) this group of residents is able to profoundly influence the shape and speed of transformation in the town.

## Conclusion

The relationships between racial groups in South Africa have been shaped by the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Prince Albert is no exception,

and certain racial identities continue to be associated with certain geographical areas, as well as asymmetrical degrees of social power. While the apartheid era racial regulations of space may have been formally dismantled, informal mechanisms of segregation continue to entrench such associations, and social relationships remain shaped by apartheid dynamics of race, space, identity, and power.

In Prince Albert, dynamics of race and space have been influenced by the post-apartheid arrival of retired, middle-class, white, English-speaking South Africans who can be read as 'semigrants' and 'power elites'. As scholars of race and space in post-apartheid South Africa have shown, informal mechanisms perpetuating segregation operate discursively (Ballard 2004a, Ballard 2004b, Durrheim and Dixon 2005). Current attempts to construct Prince Albert as a tourism destination through its 'heritage value' demonstrates one way in which hegemonic spatiality takes shape through discourse. Heritage and tourism, as two seemingly non-racial, apolitical, and 'common sense' discourses, are deployed to legitimize control over development in the town in ways which reproduce historical inequalities within the contemporary neoliberal economic context. Emphasizing the 'heritage value' of symbols of the town's colonial past, a white privileged minority evades acknowledgment of the everyday struggles experienced by low income coloured residents in the town effectively closing down alternative processes and representations which could serve the interests of the historically disadvantaged group. While the establishment of heritage sites in post-apartheid South Africa has been centered largely on attempts to preserve national memory of the anti-apartheid struggle, the case of Prince Albert reveals that heritage can also be used for purposes and in ways that contradict and impair processes of transformation.

The unequal gains to be made through heritage and tourism, in this case, indicate the need for further exploration of how these discourses can be mobilized for both the promotion, and disablement, of the project of social justice, especially in the postcolonial, 'developing'

world. As this article has revealed, concepts of heritage and tourism conceal potential discriminatory effects through appeals to the hegemonic neoliberal imperative of economic development and 'growth'. Critical attention must therefore

be paid to dynamics of ownership and servitude within discourses promoting heritage conservation and tourism development in order to understand the deeper political implications and power relations obscured from the tourist gaze.

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# Understanding Informal Segregation: Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane

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## Abstract

Although South Africa's history has brought a great deal of research attention to racial dynamics in the post apartheid period, much of this research has been on the largest demographic groups in urban centres. This study focuses on the spatial arrangement of minority identities, through continued informal segregation, among the Indian minority of Mokopane. Drawing on 28 open-ended interviews, segregation is explored in everyday interactions and spaces. Working within a spatial-discursive framework, observational, critical discourse and rhetorical analysis is employed. Participants' discursive constructions overwhelmingly demonstrate patterns of informal segregation among the Indian minority community, within the micro-ecology of contact. It is argued that informal segregation acts as a regulator of hostile and hidden racism. In mapping the dialogue of the Indian minority, a story of the evolution of segregation emerges, which replicates internal divisions between the established 'South African Indians' and recent 'immigrant Indians'. This study ultimately demonstrates the need for a spatial-discursive orientation and a more "embodied" turn in our understanding of segregation.

**Keywords:** minority groups, micro-ecology of contact, segregation, race relations, spatial identity

## Rethinking Social Boundaries: Micro-Ecology of Racial Division

More than a decade after the demise of apartheid, the promise of transformation and reconciliation still lingers. Racial isolation persists to invade wider, but especially more private spaces. Although much research is emerging from South Africa aiming to engage the challenges of integration, more emphasis has been placed on macro-processes of institutional change. More intimate, micro-ecological considerations have not received the same amount of attention (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005). At the same time, Black-White dimensions of segregation<sup>1</sup> and prejudice

have also dominated traditional research. Minorities, such as the South African Indian community, have been neglected (Radhakrishnan 2005; for review see Hansen 2012).

Gordon Allport's (1954) *contact hypothesis* set the premise for future studies on the consequences of the inevitability of interracial contact. In short, the contact hypothesis maintains that continued isolation of groups enhances the development of negative attitudes and stereotypes, while increased contact reduces prejudice. A range of research emanating from the contact hypothesis has produced inconsistent results and a host of limitations (Dixon 2001). Although the theory cannot be entirely discredited, revision is necessary. In a synthesis of past research, Pettigrew (1998) argues that the optimal conditions required are insufficient, since inter-group

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<sup>1</sup> Segregation is understood in terms of Goldberg's (1998) definition as "an ideology narrating the presumptuous degrees of racial separation" (p. 21).

contact should rather be viewed as a slowly-evolving process and possibly unsuitable for real-world situations. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis, combining the results of 515 studies, concluded that contact typically *does* reduce inter-group prejudice. It is suggested that while optimal conditions are not essential, their absence can enhance the reduction of prejudice.

Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005), although supporting the basic assumptions of the contact hypothesis, maintain that it is in need of a 'reality check'. Past empirical studies have mostly been conducted under ideal or unrealistic conditions, specifically in laboratory or experimental work. Inter-racial contact in reality is much more complex and traditional experimental studies do not unlock these complexities. To access the validity of the contact hypothesis in South Africa, the authors suggest that experimental focus move to explore the reality of everyday prejudice and contact in real-life settings. While recognising the presentation of racial division at various scales of society, most researchers have neglected to explore segregation in everyday interactions and spaces. In South Africa, more emphasis has recently been placed on exploring the underlying mechanisms behind prejudice and specifically focusing on informal segregation. The pioneering beach studies of Durrheim and Dixon (2005) established informal segregation as a dominant pattern in South Africa's changing segregation dynamic. Real interracial contact between groups was in fact scarce. Informal segregation persisted and manifested itself in more discreet, 'bodily' divisions, again embodying a process of preferred segregation.

It has been proposed that inter-racial contact in the new South Africa may be occurring on the surface, but contact is still avoided in more intimate spaces. It is argued that racialised boundaries are maintained by continued racial categorisation and racial attitudes, regulating the intimacy of intergroup contact (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005). One may conclude that the micro-ecology of segregation has remained a neglected dimension of research and that the greatest shortcoming of the contact hypothesis is its disregard of spatial dimensions. There remains a need to

explore the lived experience of segregation in terms of bodily 'positioning', as Foster (2005: 498) explains: 'Various kinds of spaces either enable or constrain particular action. Places have specific meanings for people; they resonate with symbolic and emotional significance. We all carry with us various senses of 'place identity' '. Discourse is not the only means to uncover meanings behind continued segregation. Integrating bodies, discourse and space into a combined analytical framework will result in a more holistic understanding (Foster 2000).

### **Rethinking Psychological Focus: South African Indians as Minorities**

It is suggested that Black-White dimensions of prejudice have dominated most research. The South African Indian population remains marginal. The Indian minority is a numerical minority, having a population of only 1,115,467 compared to the total population of South Africa, 44,819,778. The most basic definition of a minority is based on a numerical assessment. When a group constitutes less than half the population they are regarded as a minority (Banton 1972). Furthermore, differentiation between ethnic and racial identity is a complex and contested distinction (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). For the purpose of this study, no distinction will be made between ethnic and racial minorities.

During the nineteenth century, the development of the sugar industry in KwaZulu-Natal placed demands for cheap labour. When the African labour was not willing to work under poor working conditions, additional labour power was then imported from India (Kuppusami 1983). The majority of the Indians in South Africa are Hindu, although some converted to Christianity. 1860 to 1905 marked the peak of Indian immigration, by 1911 there was a large decline (Freund 1995). There was a secondary group of Indian Muslim immigrants who voluntarily came to South Africa, to escape religious persecution. These Muslim Indians predominantly established themselves in the trade industry (Kuppusami 1983). The Indian settlers in Mokopane fell within the second category. More recently there has been an increase in the number of first generation immigrants

from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, immigrating to South Africa for work, family or under refugee status (Statistics South Africa 2011).

Radhakrishnan's (2005) study is one of the few that has begun to comment on the shifting meanings of Indianness in South African society. The new South African climate, it is argued, still neglects the value of the minority community, facing the well-known notion of "not being white enough" and now "not black enough". Meanings of 'Indianness' appeared to constantly shift in order to accommodate for a changing political and social climate (Vahed and Desai 2010). This study will adopt a case-study approach and use the Indian population of the small town of Mokopane as the site for research. Assuming a spatial-discursive psychological framework and within the micro-ecology of contact, continued and adapted forms of segregation within the town of Mokopane, and the Indian minority in particular, is questioned.

### Design and Methodology

This study aims to explore how everyday processes and interactions maintain and regulate new racialised boundaries within the Indian minority, working under the general hypothesis of a continued pattern of informal segregation. Explorations into the subjective experience of Indians in Mokopane will attempt to unlock an understanding of shifting racial and spatial identities, working within the framework of a micro-ecology of contact. The integration of 'race' and gender as a means of social division, although highly pertinent, moved beyond the scope of this present investigation. Therefore, the main research question framing this study is: how does continued informal segregation manifest itself within the Indian minority of Mokopane, and how have racial and spatial identities changed within this minority group? This paper will address these questions by investigating and analysing spatial considerations, and how people talk about space.

Based on a 2008 pilot study, the South African Indian minority of Mokopane was identified as the primary focus of the research in question. The analysis presented here is based on inter-

views conducted with multiple residents of the Indian community of Mokopane, Akasia, over a three week period, from the 29<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2009. The primary source of data collection was open-ended interviews, with an interview schedule used as a rough guide. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Informed consent was secured and pseudonyms used. Although spatial patterns were discussed within the context of the interview itself, contextual data (i.e. maps of the town) were additionally collected. A total of 28 people participated in the study. The overall sample represented a mixture of age, gender and social-economic groups, specifically male (n=15) and female (n=12).

A discursive psychological approach was employed, which included a critical discourse analysis. However, here one should also observe that this methodological approach does not offer a fixed strategy, but rather a general set of guidelines for textual analysis (Parker 1992). A combination of two approaches to discourse analysis was used. These included Potter and Wetherell's (1994) discursive strategy, emphasising the variability and function of discourse, as well as a Parkerian approach directed towards a critical orientation, which facilitated an examination of power, ideology and institutional influence. Furthermore, underlining the significance of argumentation in social life, this analysis will integrate Billig's (1987, 1991) rhetorical approach to social psychology. Although no formal analytic approach was utilised, spatial segregation patterns were further examined by mapping changes in the physical layout of the town. Analysis of the interplay between spatial and linguistic dynamics of racialised isolation expands the framework in which we understand ongoing segregation patterns (Christopher 2001). The article uses the proposed socio-spatial framework to help uncover mechanisms of informal segregation, specifically exploring the positioning of the Indian minority.

### Context of Segregation: Indians in Akasia, Mokopane

Mokopane falls within the Mogalakwena municipality district, incorporating many neighbour-

ing villages. An estimate of 19,394 people reside in the town of Mokopane, excluding the neighbouring 'townships' of Mahwelereng and Sekegakapeng. Of the four racial categories constructed under apartheid, three of these 'race' groups hold a presence in Mokopane: Black, White and Indian. The designated Indian township assigned during apartheid was named Akasia. There are approximately: 9,111 Black African, 9,419 White, 771 Indian and 93 Coloured persons in Mokopane (Mogalakwane Municipality 2009; Statistics South Africa 2003, 2011). Agriculture has historically been the town's main industry, however currently the mining industry has taken precedence. For example, Mogalakwena Platinum Mine (MPM), located very near to Mokopane within the Mogalakwena municipality, has contributed significantly to economic growth in the district (Mogalakwane Municipality 2009). As one of the oldest towns in the old Northern Transvaal, Mokopane, formerly known as *Potgietersrus*, was founded on a series of conflicts between the local communities and the Voortrekkers [Boer settlers who had left the Cape in the 1830s] (Du Plooy 1995). The town of Potgietersrus was officially named after the Voortrekker leader, Piet Potgieter. In 2002 the town of Potgietersrus was renamed Mokopane. 'Mgombane' was the chief of the Kekana's 'tribe', responsible for Potgieter's death. As in other parts of South Africa, renaming is a tool used to assert a new place identity which transcends colonial and apartheid white supremacy.

The history of the Indian community can be dated to a few pioneer families who settled in Mokopane in 1888, engaged in the trade industry in the town. Most of the Indians in Akasia come from the province of Gujarat and follow the Muslim religion; although a few are Gujarati-speaking Hindus (Hassan, Catchalia and Mohamed 2004). More Indians slowly moved into the area from Natal, adding to the population of Akasia. Akasia remains primarily Indian. However, in recent years, a few African families have moved around the boundaries of the area (Mogalakwane municipality 2009). Officially there are 771 Indians living in Mokopane (Statistics South Africa 2011).

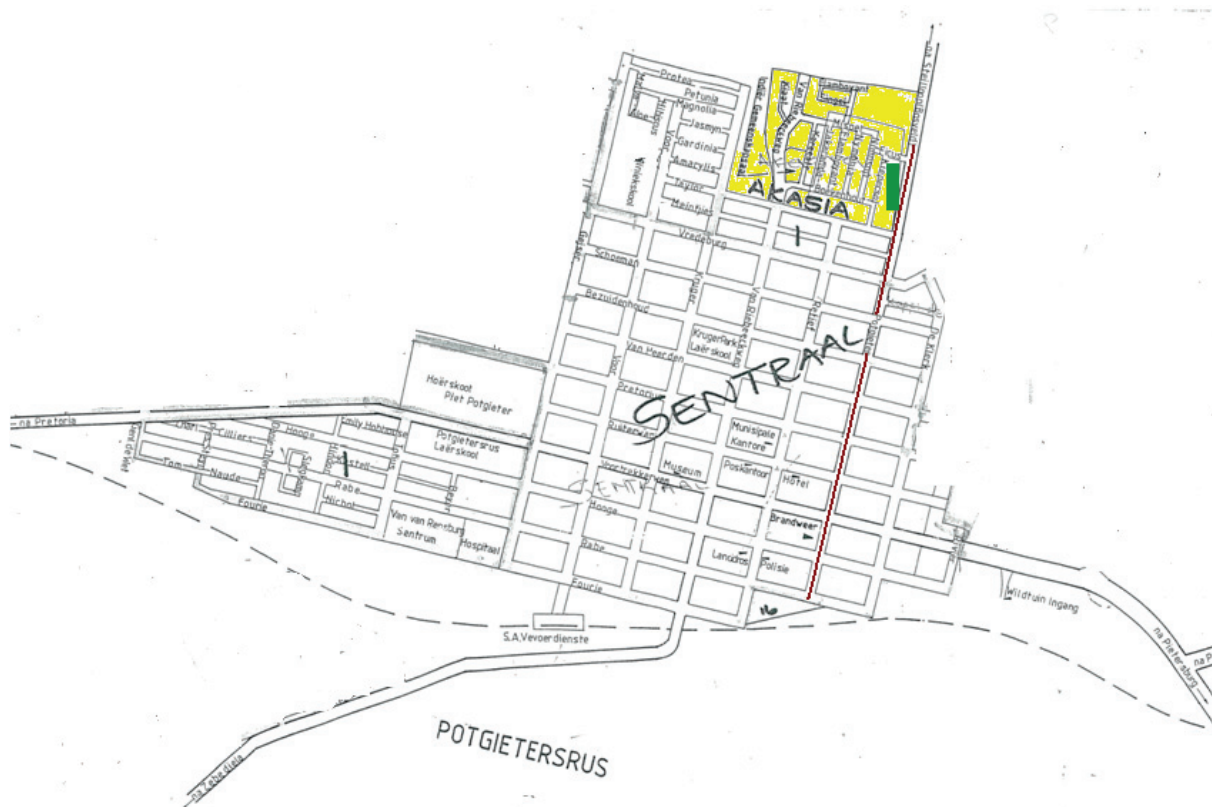
### Spatial Illustration of Continued Informal Segregation

A. J. Christopher's (2001) *Atlas of a Changing South Africa* presents a visual account of the separation enforced upon South Africa. The deconstruction of apartheid's spatial divisions, both in wider institutional separations and the more 'personal' apartheid, is an on-going process. The structural architecture of apartheid not only affected the larger segregation patterns in urban centers, but invaded private spaces. Christopher's studies have shown the effectiveness of using visual representations, like maps, to track changes in segregation patterns. With the abolition of the Group Areas Act, investigating the 'remapping of the Apartheid City' may provide further insight into new patterns of segregation (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005).

The Map in Figure 1 is a simplified presentation of the topographical layout of what was previously known as Potgietersrus. The area marked as 'Sentraal' represents both the residential and business center. Before the imposition of the Group Areas Act the White and Indian populations resided in the central area, with the Black community living on the outskirts, mostly in surrounding villages. This mixed living was mediated by the Indians providing trade services. The main businesses in town were clustered in Potgieter Street, renamed Nelson Mandela Street in the post-apartheid period, and marked in red on the map. However, with the imposition of the Group Areas act in 1950, Potgietersrus was tailored to fit the architectural design of the new 'apartheid city'. To promote the 'separate development' policy of the new apartheid government, Potgietersrus was declared a "White" area in 1963, and in 1969 the Akasia Township was established as a designated "Indian" area (Hassan, Cachalia and Mohamed 2004). Interestingly, Potgieter Street runs directly to Akasia and the Mosque specifically, therefore limiting the movement of the Indian community to a very small section of the town, even somewhat detached from the more central White areas of Potgietersrus.

The larger township of Segsegapang was also established further north of Akasia. Maharaj (1995) comments on how Indian townships such





**Figure 1: Map of Potgietersrus/Mokopane pre-1999**

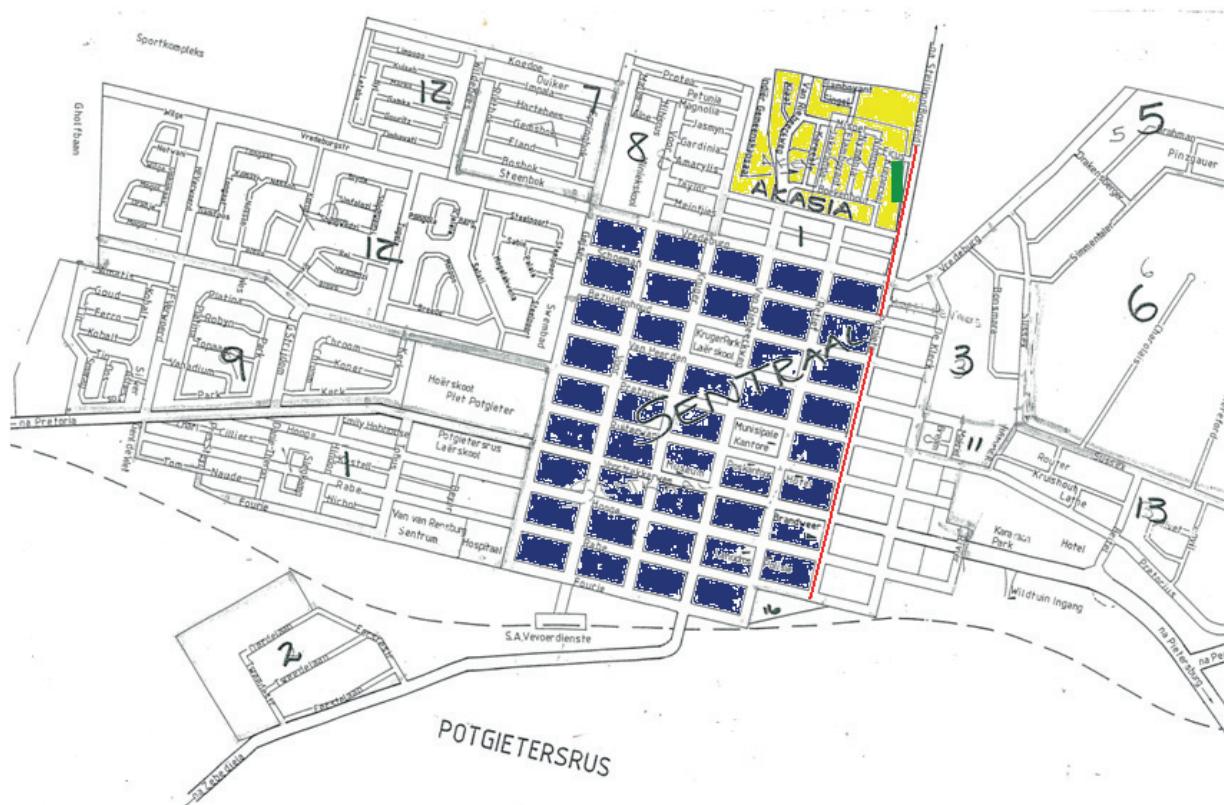
The map shown is a simplified topographical layout of the town of Mokopane, when it was previously known as Potgietersrus before 1999. The map shows the different 'areas' of the town, namely: the 'sentraal' area which was both a residential and business area for the White population, and the 'Akasia' area (highlighted in yellow), which was the designated area for the Indian community after the imposition of the Group Areas Act. The main street running through the town, Potgieter Street, is highlighted in red, and it is where the main businesses of the town cluster.

Source: Mogalakwane Municipality. 2009. Integrated Development Planning review. Unpublished Manuscript.

as Akasia seemed to act as a buffer between "White" and "Black" areas physically and perhaps symbolically. The Akasia area appears to serve the same purpose, being placed directly in between the "White" and "Black" districts of Potgietersrus, and also unusually close to the trade centres (Xaba 2001). This positioning of the Indian locality also serves as a spatial representation of the hierarchical categorisation of the apartheid system, with Indians having marginally more privileges than Africans. The implementation of the Group Areas Act used buffer zones or natural barriers to limit interracial mingling. Many Indians in Mokopane were involved in the trade industry, currently holding a strong economic presence in the town. The Akasia neighbourhood interestingly is almost attached and runs directly to Potgieter Street, the business

hub of Mokopane. The Indian "township" is relatively removed from the White neighbourhoods, but near enough to the business district to facilitate the needed trade services.

The current map of Mokopane (see Figure 2) does show significant growth. However, the 'Sentraal' and Akasia residential areas have remained primarily White and Indian. Sections marked seven and eight are mostly occupied by Black residents, while section nine and twelve are the newest neighborhoods and have a mixture of both White and Black residents, and a sprinkling of Indian people. Areas to the right of the city centre are mostly industrial. The representation of the town, as demonstrated in the above maps, runs in close comparison with that of Goldberg's (1998) portrayal of the 'new segregation', a society with no legal constraints to interaction, yet



**Figure 2: Map of Mokopane at Present**

The map shown is a simplified topographical layout of the town of Mokopane at present. The current map shows significant growth in the town. The area marked in blue is the 'sentral' area, which has remained mostly inhabited by the White population, while the 'Akasia' area, highlighted in yellow, has remained primarily an Indian residential area. The sections labelled as seven and eight are occupied mostly by Black residents, while area nine and twelve are the newest and more affluent areas that have a mixture of both White and Black residents. The areas to the right of the city centre are mostly industrial.

Source: Mogalakwane Municipality. 2009. Integrated Development Planning review. Unpublished Manuscript.

persistent in its tendency towards racial isolation. Through interviews and informal conversations, it became apparent that only a handful of Indian families have chosen to live outside Akasia; from my interactions, five very affluent families have moved out of the neighborhood.

Despite the removal of legal segregation enforced by the Group Areas Act, divisions of the 'old Apartheid City' remain relatively intact. Askasia has remained primarily an "Indian" area, with a few Africans moving in. The notion of *place identity* therefore resonates with this illustration. Similar to Durrheim's (2005) description of the historical importance of spatiality, Dixon (1997) maintains that racial identity is imprinted within physical locations. Although Akasia was initially established as an institutional demand of the apartheid government, the area now holds

a more symbolic meaning. It was *their* space, an *Indian* space, and therefore not a mere physical location but rather a promise of acceptance and comfort.

### **Discursive Depictions of Continued Informal Segregation**

Despite evident restructuring of the town, residents, particularly Indians, still assume a physical separation. The basic observational analysis of the above spatial patterns in the layout of Mokopane, and the arrangement of Akasia itself, demonstrates continued racial isolation. Participants' discursive constructions of change and racial integration in Mokopane overwhelmingly demonstrate a pattern of continued informal segregation. Twenty-five of the participants, across gender divides, constructed a picture of

regulated contact. As one respondent, Abraham, remarked, 'By in large, apartheid served its purpose, it has kept people apart'. Despite structural changes, it appears that 'the character of the town has stayed the same', as described by Grace: 'I often say to people that you stay in Mokopane in the Limpopo province, but you are still living in the Northern Transvaal [laugh]. Nothing has changed! I refuse to call it Mokopane, because I feel that it is still Potties.'

That is not to say that there has been no amendment to the previous social structure. As with the physical name change from Potgietersrus to Mokopane, there has been structural and social transformation in the town, as in Masoor's description, 'today things are different, you could not imagine that we were treated as animals'. Although there is evidence of transformation, the intimacy of such contact is once again questioned. Racial contact in the town may be routine and frequented in different daily activities (see Durrheim and Dixon's 2005 for similar example), however genuine social contact is lacking. One respondent, Salim, explains:

We have pretty much stayed apart, geographically, but as well as socially... I really don't think they give a damn. They are living their own life. *They* don't mix with the Indians, and we don't have other friends.

In the narrative Salim directly expresses the apathetic attitude of the town towards real social integration. His statement not only objectifies and depersonalises other 'race' groups by using *they* to identify them, but demonstrates a lack of any desire to instigate or cultivate a friendship with anyone other than Indians. This is reiterated by Mona who expresses her frustrations with living in the town:

It sometimes becomes very frustrating, because we don't have those opportunities, that open mindedness... It is not just the Indian community, but the entire town, hmm, they just don't see things futuristically... People deal with each other because of business or work, but it is pretty superficial... I come home, she comes home, our cultures are very different, that sort of thing... There is an open door to allow you to talk about business, but were not going to come over every Saturday for a braai [barbeque] or sit on your couch.

Much emphasis has been placed in traditional social psychological literature on the importance of contact in finding a 'resolution' to prejudice' (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux 2005). However, the transformation attempts in Mokopane demonstrate how change in a social organisation does not necessarily result in a change of attitudes. Fatimah's statement, for example, illustrates this apparent lack of shift in attitudes and practice; "Ya, you won't change the attitude too much, but we all live where we want to live... some people are just stuck in their ways". Even with regards to the local High school<sup>2</sup>, racial divisions tend to persist spatially. Iraj explains: "We are just separate, we just stay out of each other's way. I know that the Indians have a certain section of the school". In this example the intersection between a space and ideology again surfaces. It is not just a school, a neutral geographic location; it is interlocked with historical and personal significance. Racialised categories in the town appear to 'know their place', as an unwritten rule or as a result of social conditioning. Without institutional or legal demands, groups demonstrate a natural tendency to migrate towards 'their own kind'; therefore keeping to previously defined spatial locations.

Spatial positioning in the town and even the school may not be inadvertent, but echoes the analysis of *White Spatial dominance* (see Schreiff et al. 2005). Potties is referred to as "their town", the "farming town", as Sujata expressed, "Ya this actually is an Afrikaans town... You feel you are a small part of a big White Afrikaans town, you do anything to survive in this town because you are Indian". Although Afrikaners are in the minority, White supremacy appears to still linger. Similarly, in the local high school, the notion of spatial

<sup>2</sup> The local high school in question was previously an Afrikaans medium high school. The associated primary school had a very contested and violent integration process, when forced to desegregate the school and change the language medium. The high school was permitted to become a dual-medium school and avoided a similar experience, but still the school remains primarily Afrikaans, and so White, with a handful of English (Black and Indian) students. Language appeared to be used as an excuse to maintain a degree of racial separation.



entitlement re-emerges. Echoing Dolby's (2001) case-study on an Indian student at Fernwood School, Indian students at the local high school similarly experience a subordinate position. As Iraj again explains, "The school is doing us a big favour by accommodating us." Previous graduates describe their experience as "racist, actually not so good" or as Jatin describes:

"It was a White school and being Indian [pause] that was difficult. It was like, he is Indian, we look down on him, yeah...In a farming town, the White race still dominates".

It appears that a racial hierarchy still dictates 'race' relations in the town. Textual constructions of space, across most interviews, primarily converge on the representation of the town as a 'farming community' and 'Afrikaans town'. The collective identity of the Afrikaner *volk* is intrinsic to the idea of the *boer* or the farmer (see Dubow 1992), interlocked within the spatial significance of the bush *veld*. Therefore, a description of the town as a farming community or 'Afrikaner stronghold', provides greater insight to the Indians' perception of white spatial identity and dominance in the town.

'Potties', the abbreviated term for Potgietersrus, is not just a town, but a space that resonates with reminders of past oppression. As Parvin put it: "In this town, how we suffered with all those Whites. How they used to boycott our shops... at one stage the government was ready to deport all the Indians". Parvin's narrative contains the negative undertone latent with the community's depiction of Mokopane, and paralleled in Navid's words: "I don't want to stay in the middle of a boera [farmer] place". Goli similarly explains how she prefers to just stay away from the 'White dominant areas', and how it is still difficult for her to be reminded of past injustices. In contrast, Akasia embodies a place of comfort, 'home'. Akasia was no longer a space imposed by the apartheid government, but rather a refuge away from Afrikaner dominance. Here the ideological becomes physical. Finchilescu's (2005) notion of meta-stereotypes may also explain why the Indian community prefers to stay away from "White" identified areas. Avoidance of these con-

tact situations may thus be a result of intergroup anxiety, causing the Indians to withdraw into their comfort zones.

It appears that reconciliation has taken limited hold within the community, possibly as a result of enduring resentment of the apartheid past. The majority of participants reported stronger feelings of solidarity with the Black community, explaining that "during apartheid, we were seen as Black". Drawing on this shared oppression during the struggle, Abraham articulates a sense of community with his 'African neighbours', explaining how it is "easier to relate to African people, there is no difference, I always considered ourselves as the oppressed group, the ANC talks about the Black oppressed, that includes Indians and Coloureds." In contrast, there is still much resentment directed towards the White community, particularly the Afrikaners, most admitting to a kind of "boer [farmer] hate".

### Experiences of Exclusion

Contrary to previous research, racial isolation in Mokopane moves beyond informal segregation to what can be described as hidden or covert racism. Several discourses reaffirmed this idea of masked racism, as in Yusuf's description: "most of it is just swept underneath the carpet." Yusuf and Abraham continue to describe how townspeople perform opposing public and private roles (see Goffman's 1971): 'So there are those people that can be nice because of business, but we are not home friends... behind closed doors, you are still a coolie<sup>3</sup>', 'Ya there might be a degree of superiority among the white folks over other groups... but that open racism is not there, but you feel it at times, the majority [White people] keep to themselves'. Despite the structural changes in the town, participants describe that 'the character of the town has stayed the same'. As Jasmine narrates:

I think it is not easily forgotten. For me it serves as a barrier. That memory is still so deep that you often look at people and wonder, you have enjoyed everything for all your life and you still stand there and look at me as if you are superior.

<sup>3</sup> 'Coolie' is historically a derogatory name used to refer to Indians in South Africa.

It appears that apartheid's previous ideologies have not yet dissolved, but still linger. More covert mechanisms, such as informal segregation or hidden racism, seem to arise and re-establish the status quo. Interestingly, when speaking to both White and Black residents, the Indian community emerged as misunderstood and isolated, as "quite another ball game altogether." As a minority in the town, Indians possibly assume the identity of the 'other'. As one Afrikaans resident described: "But the Indian community, you know, have their own religion, we cannot be intimate friends, because you cannot have a very good relationship if you don't have the same religion".

In the absence of the 'optimal conditions' of racial contact (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), racial interaction is sometimes characterised by hostility, even violence. Descriptions used by Iraj and Mohammad illustrate the nature of racial conflict and reveal the volatile nature of inter-racial relations in Mokopane:

And when people don't discuss issues and hide it under the mattress, it sometimes burns up and explodes... you still have racism among the Whites, in certain places you cannot go, they will start fights. So to avoid that we just keep away.

Dolby's (2001) overall impression of the Fernwood School is similarly described. She explains that desegregation in the school, like the town, is conflict-ridden, with hostilities erupting with increased racial contact. Re-segregation thus 'diffuses' racial tension, adopting a peace-keeping function. Therefore it can be argued that informal segregation acts as a regulator of hostile and hidden racism, "So you get conflict, but they just won't fight they just abstain from one another".

### **Rhetorical Constructions of 'Race'**

Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that discourses are not purely ideological, but also adopt a rhetorical function. In this way, "race talk" can be considered as rhetorically constructed to create a particular reality, seemingly factual and stable, by using various discursive devices. Drawing from ancient Greek rhetorical tradition, Billig (1987) maintains that language

is a method of persuasion, actively constructed against an "other". In all interviews, some form of argumentative dialectic emerged. In navigating their story of "Indianness" in Mokopane, discursive constructions regarding racial interactions in the town commonly took shape in the form of argumentative practices. Two dominant rhetorical strategies can be located, labelled as "normal", which moves into a defensive justification.

### *Normalise and Justify*

This is a process in which a phenomenon is described as normal and natural, functioning to close off the argument. Billig (1991) argues that customs and practices emerge as uncontroversial and undisputed when identified as natural or normal. In most interviews, but in particular among Indian men, the interview was eventually concluded by racial divisions being described as natural or normal. The conception that racial "groupings" are an innate or unchangeable tendency was duplicated in multiple discourses; participants describe how "naturally you socialise with people that are the same as you" or "how it is a natural thing for a person to like his own community or group", creating a normalised representation of segregation.

Across interviews, rhetorical constructions were orientated towards the regulation of the status quo. Rhetorical practices commonly function to legitimise or normalise racial division (Durrheim and Dixon 2005). As in Wetherell and Potter's (1992) conclusions in *Mapping the Language of Racism*, where White New Zealanders used the "culture" of the Maori people to legitimise segregation, the Indian community similarly used the "culture" argument to defend their own "cultural" exclusivity. Persons seemed moved to validate their reasons for limited interactions with other "race" groupings in the town, using Indian "culture" as a motivation. Standard rhetorical arguments of self-distancing and victimisation (Billig 1991) can thus be identified as core rhetorical techniques used. Individuals seemed to deflect self-blame or avoid a racist label by using the "culture" defense, as replicated in Misag's statement:



You see they have a different culture... I think as a rule we like to stay among ourselves. But it is our culture, it is a natural thing.

The normalisation strategy then moves into a “comfort” rhetoric: it is not only normal, but more comfortable to prefer “culturally” similar company. In Shanta’s case she explains that before meeting her Indian colleague she had friends at the office, but now has “someone she can relate to”. Iraj honestly conveys this impression of in-group solidarity by explaining that “An Indian just feels for another Indian”.

However, the presentation of racial segregation as a natural human experience can be understood beyond rhetorical workings, in the context of what Barker (1981) refers to as the “new racism”. This theory proposes that, for better or for worse, *it is* a human condition to be bound to one’s “community”, aware of “outside” differences, maintaining that it is human instinct to preserve one’s culture and defend one’s territory. Focusing on British attitudes towards immigration, Barker further identifies an emotional connection with the nation as not just a place, but a national home. It is further explained that the “new racism” can also be considered as a “cultural racism”. To appear more neutral and appropriate in justifications for continued racial division, assumed racial differences are explained as cultural variations or dismissed as inherent lifestyles and habits. As Vahid illustrates:

You look for company you are comfortable with... it is a natural thing for a person to like his own community or group, there is nothing wrong with it. I can relate easier to people that are not white. I have White friends, but it is not an easy relationship. I have no feeling of comfort with White Folk.

### Foreign Invasion and a New and Pattern of Indian Segregation

Up to now this study has documented changes in segregation patterns, comparing Indian integration with other racialised groupings in Mokopane. However, interviews and observational analysis revealed internal divisions and hostility within the Indian minority. Again drawing on Billig’s (1987, 1991) notion of an internalised dialogue, the Akasia community is engaged within

their own internal segregation struggle. With the community remaining small in its numbers and with few families moving in, group solidarity during the apartheid period was described as strong. The Indian population in South Africa was very stable for almost a century, with no new infusions of people. Since the end of apartheid, many new immigrants from the sub-continent have arrived, coming mostly from India and Pakistan, and have moved into cities and towns such as Mokopane. These people are simultaneously slotting into “perceived” apartheid categories and disrupting those groupings, especially for those who were historically labeled by them. The exact number of recent immigrants in Mokopane is unclear, partially due to the fact that many are residing in South Africa illegally. As a result, the dynamics of the Indian minority in Akasia appear to be shifting, with the community forced to mediate their own internal divisions. Brown (1995) describes social categorisation as necessary for any form of prejudice. Without distinguishable groups, it is almost impossible to discriminate or segregate. Classification implies a label or given name, if we are not labelled as “other” there is limited difference on which to act. Apartheid classifications labelled and grouped a large cluster of people into one category of Indian. However conceptions of Indianness lie on a broad spectrum. In this case, two separate categories of “Indian” surface: South African Indian and immigrant Indian. Abrahams describes there being ‘a lot of Indians from the Indian sub-continent, so it is that sort of Indianness that draws them here... There is a marked difference, in attitudes, manners and approach’.

Drawing on an Us-Them/We-They distinction, two South African Indians describe the large increase in recent Indian and Pakistani immigrants and the apparent ‘differences’ between them: “they are definitely becoming the majority” (Nava), while Yashpal asserts a more marked difference; “they are from there [India], we are not”. Participants’ discursive constructions acted to create a separate category, referring to “them” as aliens or foreigners. As a religious leader in the community, Vahid attributes this difference to westernisation. We are reminded

of Hutnik's (1991) conclusions that minority values constantly come under pressure by the majority, resulting in minorities often conforming with majority values (i.e. western values). A clear example of this is the adoption of English as the primary language medium; only some of the elderly community speaks any local Indian dialect. English, for the South African Indians has now become the language of choice. As Vahid, a South African Indian respondent, explains:

Our ways have changed, we have developed, if I can call it westernised, eating habits, ways of dressing, everything has changed. But *those* people still have that culture... for a long time we have been exposed to western education system and learning White history and I think their ways are different and the people are different.

Following the apparent classification of the "other", a sense of fear also surfaces with the influx of the immigrants (for a different example of invasion narratives see Durrheim and Dixon's 2004). The "local" Indian community complains about the influx of Indian and Pakistani immigrants, "coming in large numbers". Parvin's description highlights their frustration and concern of invasion or taking over:

Oh yes! Oh, I can't live with them, I don't know, I don't mix with them. We are flocked with Indians and Pakistanis. You don't really talk to them... people are not too happy with it. There is an issue of overcrowding. It is escalating, it has not stopped escalating.

Some of the South African Indian participants even go as far as describing it as a "new apartheid" or xenophobia. Salim attributes the difference to "habits, like personal hygiene", while acknowledging the discrimination as "almost like apartheid in our own culture" and recognizes that "it is a bad thing". Akbar describes their relationship by explaining that "we have friendships but we know our limits". An underlying hostility may also still linger. A sense of "tension" is described, accredited to the degree of contact. According to some respondents, the conflict is exacerbated by living together. The consequences of such attitudes should not be underestimated in light of new xenophobic tensions that could arise between groups (for review see

Harris 2002). Vahid, for example, has a particular vantage point, since he is a religious leader. His assessment is that:

People keep things in their hearts, they hide their feelings, but sometimes derogatory names are used. Like in previous times the Whites had names for people. So it also crops up from South African Indians and those coming from India, someone will make a comment. People don't discuss it, but the problem can erupt, because the tension is building up and then there are outbursts.

Unlike apartheid's enforced racial segregation, the internal segregation described is not due to legislative or institutional demands. Jithoo (1985, July) describes how the caste system in India was carried over into the South African Indian community, proving that internal segregations and classification are not a novelty within this minority group. A further motivation driving inter-group segregation is class: the immigrant population is less affluent than the South African Indians, acting as an obstacle to integration. Practically, segregation is a result of housing affordability which then reinforces social segregation. Here it becomes apparent that segregation is not always caused by prejudice, but rather that prejudice is a result of segregation (see Saldanha 2007). In fact outsidership can be mobilised to define social cleavages (see Ballard 2004). As Essed (1991) argues, it is difficult to separate the micro and macro aspects of segregation, since in many ways they are codependent entities. With this in mind, institutional ideologies may have easily filtered down into the everyday experiences of the Indian minority. Prejudice and tendencies towards categorisation, whether arising from traditional Indian conventions or apartheid dogmas, now are seemingly integrated into the daily experiences of the Indians in Akasia.

### **Towards Reconciliation**

It is easy to pinpoint small towns as being highly racist or conservative in their views. The real question asked is: how we can progress in our reconciliation efforts? Obviously there is no easy solution to prejudice and social divisions, however studies such as this can lead to social action or at least help communities engage in a

dialogue of transformation. This account of the Akasia minority may appear to be labelling and characterising integration patterns as unpromising. However, there were many clear markers of a move towards reconciliation.

Although not the focus of this study, isolated cases of reconciliation were readily identified. Racial integration at schools in South Africa has mostly not resulted in genuine racial integration. Although formal legislation on segregation in schools has long been disbanded, genuine inter-racial integration has proved to be problematic (Dolby 2001; Holtman et al. 2005). Integration challenges at schools in Mokopane are not an exception. Inter-racial tension at the local high school is in fact a continued problem for the Indian community in particular. Some interviews even raised concerns relating to the establishment of a private primary school in the Indian area, causing both racial and economic divisions in the community<sup>4</sup>. However, observations concluded that in both the government and private primary school there is an almost even ratio between Black and Indian students, with few White learners attending either school. Interviews and observations revealed that integration between Black and Indian students has had very positive results. Ashwine, the principle of *Akasia Primary School* – the government school – describes the relationship between the Black and Indian children as encouraging. Ashwine explains how Black and Indian children “run to him and

hug him... truly seeing what mixing has done”. In both schools teachers describe, and observations concur, that Indian and Black learners interact in class-rooms and the playground without any apparent racialised animosity or social distance. Referring to Black-Indian interactions in the private school, one of the mothers recalls her child referring to a Black friend as “the chocolate covered boy”. This description suggests that the boy is seemingly oblivious to racialised classification, describing his friend with a childlike innocence.

Moreover, it appears that group cohesiveness can be achieved with the mediation of one commonality. Brown (1995) argues that social classification is a prerequisite for prejudice, and therefore that breaking down social categories may minimise bigoted tendencies. He proposes a hypothesis of *cross-cutting categories* as a commonly found phenomenon. Brown describes cross-cutting categories as two categories that literally ‘cut’ the other, creating a common factor between different groups. For example, the Black and Indian groupings are two racialised categories that can be ‘cut’ or ‘crossed’ by religion, language, gender or the liberation struggle, facilitating what is called *cross-cutting kinship*. Many seemingly different groups are in fact interdependent. This may, for example, explain how the combined effort of the Black and Indian population in the liberation struggle may have helped harbour better relations between the two groups. A further example of *cross-cutting kinship* may be represented by Kayvan, a Black Muslim, living in Akasia and working for the Mosque. Kayvan, a middle-aged family-man, proved to be a noteworthy case-example of the possibilities that exist for group integration. As a Black male, originally from the townships, Kayvan narrates how Akasia has now become his home. After converting to Islam and pursuing Islamic studies, Kayvan now works for the mosque and lives with his family in Akasia. Although his account does comment on the ‘cultural’ differences and consequent difficulties in integration, his Muslim identity appears to overshadow other differences, including ‘race’.

In this respect, it is interesting to consider the impact of these commonalities and cross-cutting aspects. Nationality, camaraderie during the

<sup>4</sup> A local public primary school has long been the only ‘Indian’ primary school in the area, previously designated as an ‘Indian only’ school during apartheid. In recent years, the school has integrated with many Black and few White students. Five years ago, a new private primary school was established by a few affluent members of the Indian community. Certain interviews revealed a concern among some of the parents regarding the low standard of the public school resulting in the founding of the private school. Other participants however, questioned the true intentions of the founding of the new school, claiming the true concern was concerning the influx of too many Black students to the school. However, observations concluded that the private school itself has more Black students than Indian; both primary schools appeared to have a good ratio of Black-to-Indian students, with few White learners attending.

apartheid struggle, to a lesser extent education and most strikingly religion can be examples of such commonalities or cross-cutting categories. It also appears that the less pervasive racial categorisation is, the lower the tendency for racial segregation. In line with Pettigrew's (1998) conclusions, the emotional qualities that characterise such interracial friendships must also be investigated. Exploring the reasons behind such changes in behaviour or integration patterns can enlighten our understanding of how to cultivate inter-racial friendships. In many respects the reconciliation processes in South Africa can be considered as top-down or institutional transformation. Bottom-up or grassroots attempts at reconciliation with communities may prove to be more successful in instigating genuine change and integration.

### Conclusion

Although this study was limited to a small, case-specific investigation, it serves as another important addition in the analysis of the micro-ecology of segregation. Using the Akasia community in the small town of Mokopane as a micro-ecological setting, this study has attempted to engage in a dialogue of transformation and raise the voice of the South African Indian minority. It has been argued that 'race' relation research is in need of both a perspective and methodological shift, moving research into more natural, real-life settings. This paper explored the lasting consequences of segregation and classification by analysing the spatial dimensions (e.g. physical layout of the town) using observational methods, and

discursive constructions by analysing how people talk about space.

A continued pattern of informal segregation was easily identified in Mokopane among the Indian minority community. Informal segregation is not only a reinforced everyday practice, but acts as a regulator of hidden and hostile racism. The struggle to dismantle the physical and ideological legacy of apartheid is thus ongoing. Informal segregation can be attributed as an enduring consequence of the Group Areas Act, with segregation effecting public and private spaces. A new pattern of internal segregation was further identified between the '*South African Indians*' and '*immigrant Indians*'. The assigned colonial/apartheid racial category (Indian) continues to have enormous material and discursive importance in the post-apartheid era, which continues to operate as a social cleavage in the town. Added to this, there is now a new immigrant population group that somehow is incorporated into the received category of 'Indian', even though they were never part of the story of apartheid. This apparent 'slotting in' is, however, not seamless within the generalised category, since the established 'South African Indian' group does not identify with them. Future research should invest attention to mapping progress in cases of reconciliation in particular. This study has demonstrated that a commonality can be the biggest influence in group integration, whether it's 'culture', family, nationality or religion. More direct focus on successful accounts of integration can offer more insight into the key components needed for future reconciliation.

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# A Disgraced Whiteness: Tactics Used to Deny Racism, Reduce Stigma, and Elicit Sympathy

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## Abstract

The stigma of being white in post-apartheid South Africa is a complex challenge. In 2008 the town of Swartruggens was discredited in the media following a shooting of black shack dwellers by a white Afrikaans boy, igniting racial tensions and creating a media narrative of 'victimised blacks' and 'violent whites'. This paper discusses part of a broader study investigating social relations in the town almost a year after the shooting. This paper focuses on qualitative, open-ended interviews with white residents of the town, arguing that managing a stigmatised white identity involves producing a positive construction of one's place of residence, since identity and place are interwoven. The discursive production of place-identity in dialogue and interaction tries to accomplish the tasks of reducing stigma, denying racism, and even eliciting sympathy. This paper also calls for a foregrounding of geographical location in work on identity construction.

**Keywords:** discursive psychology, discourse analysis, place-identity, post-apartheid, racism, race-relations, sympathy, Swartruggens, Skierlik, stigma, white identity

## Introduction

Despite growing up in "the rainbow nation" of Nelson Mandela's post-apartheid state, 18 year old Johan Nel's actions reflected a prejudicial and anti-integrationist view of social relations based on black inferiority and white supremacy. The result was tragic: a shooting spree that left four people dead, eight injured, and dozens traumatised (Mail and Guardian 2008).

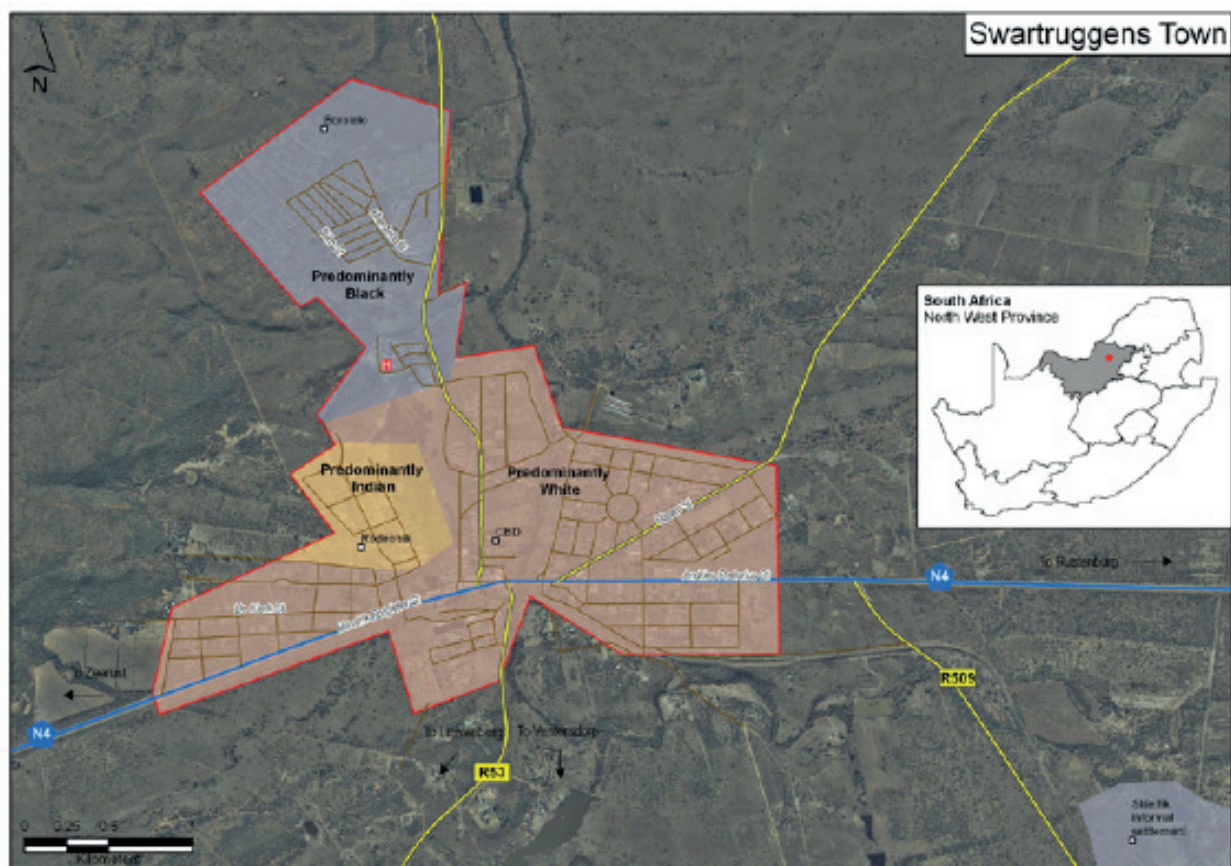
In January 2008, Nel drove to Skierlik, a nearby informal settlement (a 'slum' or 'squatter camp' that is a widespread phenomenon across South Africa due to the historically inequitable distribution of land and proper housing) and began randomly shooting the black residents, allegedly while shouting "kaffir, kaffir, kaffir", a derogatory reference to black South Africans (Mail Online 2008). He was arrested and sentenced a year later to four life sentences by the Mmabatho

High Court. Psychological assessments of Nel suggested long-standing beliefs that white people were under attack from black people, and the judge commented that racism cannot be tolerated (BBC 2008). However, the social repercussions of Nel's actions dominated headlines for months. Fuel was thrown into an already tense national dialogue on 'race'-relations and post-1994 social transformation. The media dialogue was shaped by a discourse of pity and blame. Pity was directed at the black residents of Skierlik, whom the media portrayed as innocent victims of a racist killing. Blame was directed at the white residents of nearby Swartruggens, who were portrayed as violently resisting reconciliation and nation-building. Nel was made the exemplar of violent white racism; Swartruggens was made the exemplar of an untransformed, racially divided small town (The Times 2008).

Individual acts of extreme, unprovoked violence are not uncommon in contemporary societies. Casella and Potterton (2006) note that violence is part of the fabric of South African society, and examine accidental shootings that occur in otherwise peaceful schools, when learners get access to guns and show them to friends. This paper wants to avoid the notion that the Skierlik incident automatically fits into the repertoire of 'racist incidents'. In the same way that the 2011 Norway shooting by Anders Breivik is not an uncomplicated expression of right-wing conservatism, these ideological concerns exist alongside other factors, such as psychopathology and contextual enablers, which can result in the acting out of prejudices in extreme forms. However, despite these alternate explanations, the ensuing public discourse after the Skierlik shootings assumed that it was a clear expression of racism. Therefore, this paper is not about the shooting per se, but about the secondary identity work following the shooting.

The research question that this paper attempts to address revolves around the relationship between identity, race, location, and social relations. The small town of Swartuggens, in the North West province, was chosen as the site of research because these events catapulted it into national media and a flurry of journalistic analyses. Social commentators inferred that Swartuggens was typical of untransformed places still thriving in South Africa (see Figure 1 for the map of Swartuggens Town). Media discourse extended the implicit assumption that all small towns were racist enclaves of mainly white Afrikaans-speaking people who were resistant to post-1994 change (SAPA 2008; Sunday Times 2008; The Witness 2008).

Group processes in South Africa are frequently racially tinted. However, "location" is often quietly reduced to a mere backdrop to action. The interplay of race and place rarely features in socio-political or psychological analyses of intergroup relations and identity. Despite



**Figure 1: Aerial view of Swartuggens and nearby Skierlik**

Source: Maps created by Michela du Sart, EduAction.

this, our historical points of reference, such as the Sharpeville massacres of 1960, the Soweto uprising of 1976, Mandela's release from Robben Island in 1990, the xenophobic attacks of 2008, and even the Skierlik murders, cry out for a proper foregrounding of geography in social processes.

This study, part of a larger research collaboration called the Rural Transformation Project, attempted to bridge the gap by looking at how questions of identity are wrapped around questions of location. 'Place-identity' will be explored as 'a collective construction, produced and modified through human dialogue that allows people to make sense of their locatedness', acting also as a resource for 'rhetorical and ideological action' (Dixon and Durrheim 2000: 40). This conceptualisation challenges mainstream notions of place-identity as a cognitive-affective construct that is mentally and individualistically located (e.g. Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). Instead, shared collective constructions are seen as imbued with the person/place knot, revealing the mutual nature of identity and location, and providing an interesting construct with which to think about stigma management. Other aspects of this study focusing on how black and Indian residents racialise place-identity construction can be found elsewhere (Pillay 2010; Pillay and Durrheim 2012).

### Managing white identity

The media discourse around Swartruggens (e.g. SAPA 2008) rearticulated the idea that small towns are mini-citadels of apartheid (Centre for Development and Enterprise 1996). This stereotype sits uncomfortably with the grand discourse of a reconciling, nation-building, politically stable South Africa.

Although assignment of a 'white' 'racial category' certainly does not imply membership to a homogenous group, post-1994, various research efforts have investigated white identity management, given that being white means grappling with the complex adaptive challenges of a stigmatising history (Brown 2008; Gqola 2001; MacDonald 2006, Steyn 2001, 2004; Verwey 2008). Modiri (2011), Mangcu (2008) and

Ndebele (2000) all suggest that political change has occasioned a radical shift in identity construction among whites whose comfortable social supremacy has been discredited as racism. Goffman (1963) describe the ensuing stigma as 'the plight of the discredited' (p.14). Steyn (2004) has investigated the discursive strategies used by white people to signify resistance to transformation in the country, labelling it "white talk". She argues that ethnic anxieties are pervasive, and explores the dual purpose of white talk: 'to restore the Afrikaner mythology that secured a special place for the Afrikaner in the political, economic, and social life of the country, so that the ground gained through the apartheid era of systematic Afrikaner advancement is not lost in the new social order, while presenting Afrikanerdom as compatible with the New South Africa' (p.143). Similarly, Steyn and Foster (2007) assert that the central challenge for white people today is the question of how to maintain privilege despite black political rule. Jansen (2008, 2009) also grapples with these questions, commenting on the collective trauma of losing historical privileges, and the process of remembering and enacting the past.

One way that whites have attempted to resist transformation is through strategic place construction. For example, Ballard (2010) shows how resistance to cattle slaughter in suburban areas is a way for some white residents to preserve the identity and character of historically white neighbourhoods. Constructions of place have also been used by white South Africans to argue against the presence of black residents in historically white urban areas (Dixon et al. 1994) and beaches (Durrheim and Dixon 2005), and to defend new practices of segregation such as retreating to exclusive gated communities (Ballard and Jones 2011).

This article aims to bring these two literatures together to show how place constructions can be used, not only to resist change, but also to manage a stigmatized identity. Contested dialogues were anticipated to emerge during interviews with white residents in Swartruggens. After public humiliation, how would white residents construct identity and deal with stigma?



### Words as social reality

Although events such as the shooting appear to epitomize poor intergroup relations, the lived reality of these relations occur within the seemingly banal, everyday conversations. In the supermarket; in the bank queue; around the *braai* [barbeque]; in living rooms; while chopping wood for the fire; or while chatting to a researcher who is offering an opportunity to participate in a study. Discursive psychology suggests that words, as they are used in daily conversation or highly technical arguments, are the stuff from which social reality is made (Edwards 1991). An analysis of these words can expose the taken-for-granted choices that individuals make when constructing a sentence, or a joke, or a defensive social manoeuvre. Critical discourse analysis suggests that discourse is a worthy site of investigation for it provides empirical access to the construction of social reality (Edwards and Potter 1992; Billig 1987).

This analysis is a discursive one, taking the premise that living in this town requires participants – residents of the town – to discursively construct a particular version of the town and their collective identity which is inextricably linked. Descriptions of one self and life in the town are treated as a temporary version that serves a function for that specific interaction, to deal with the dilemma of having their town (and by extension, themselves) stigmatized. This analytic view holds that all discursive actions are part of 'activity sequences' involving such things as blame and responsibility (Edwards and Potter 1992: 155). A conversation is an activity in which intergroup issues are linguistically (re)produced as individual versions of reality. Such discursive tasks are the 'primary stuff of lived human life' (Ibid: 156). The following extracts draw attention to the 'dilemma of... interest' (Ibid: 158) that white participants find themselves in while constructing versions of themselves. No conversation is treated as a disinterested 'factual' account – they are all *constructed as* factual using certain discursive techniques that this analysis exposes.

What strategies do people use to maintain a satisfying sense of self, if the place they live in has been publicly stigmatised? Specifically, what

types of discourse do white residents of Swartruggens draw on to construct their place-identity in the face of the Skierlik shootings, which has arguably threatened the post-apartheid credibility of both the town and its white citizens? The following analysis attempts to address these questions.

### Post-apartheid dilemmas

This section analyses the discursive construction of place-identity that is primarily concerned with stigma management. White residents attempt to reconstruct themselves as victims of stigmatization and not villains. A mix of convenient- and snowball sampling was used as myself and two interviewers walked around the central business district and asked residents for a few minutes of their time and for names of people they thought might be keen to be interviewed. Efforts were made to sample for diversity and ensure representativeness in the overall sample. The following five extracts show how different speakers are all trying to achieve the similar objective of denying any racial tension in the town. An extract from an interview with an Indian businessman contextualises the kinds of narratives that the white participants are arguing against.

#### Extract 1: Indian businessman, 40s<sup>1</sup>

- 1 P: In all the /the (1) these little (1) what u call (1) little *dorpies*<sup>2</sup> you know (1) uh:: (2)
- 2 There's still very conservative whites here you know (1) You take Swartruggens (.) you take
- 3 Koster (.) I mean Ventersdorp (.) you must have heard of Ventersdorp? (R: Ja) That's where
- 4 Eugene Terre'Blanche comes from<sup>3</sup> (1) Ja so (.) the Boere he still (2) I suppose they grew up

<sup>1</sup> These transcription conventions are loosely based on the Jefferson method, used frequently in studies employing discourse analysis, e.g. Dixon and Durrheim (2001).

<sup>2</sup> Afrikaans word for *small towns*, generally used in an affectionate sense.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Eugene Terre'Blanche, leader of the Afrikaner *Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB) (the Afrikaner Resistance Movement) was later killed in early 2010.

- 5 that way and– (R: Ja) I suppose maybe not  
this (.) but the next generation (.) will come  
out
- 6 with them ja (1) you find they still using the  
K-word you know (R: Ok) I / maybe / not that
- 7 we won't use it (.) we use it for fun you  
know (R:Ok) We won't go around using it on  
people

The discourse of small town racism is introduced as a known feature of such places, but one that exists because of racist whites (lines 1-2). Blaming 'conservative whites' from 'little dorpies' absolves this Indian resident from any role in maintaining this known culture of racism, which he is well aware of but implies non-participation. This distance is constructed in three ways. Firstly, there is an 'othering' process that takes place by referring to 'conservative whites' (line 2), 'the Boere' (line 4), 'they' (lines 4 and 6), 'them' (line 6), and making Eugene Terre'Blanche the exemplar of white (racist) conservatism. Secondly, there is the construction of innocent (Indian) bystanders who observe these racist whites "using the K-word". Despite a frank admission that he also uses the K-word, the intentions are constructed as different, 'we use it for fun you know' (line 7) and 'won't go around using it on people' (line 7). There is the creation of two separate categories of people who use 'the K-word', i.e. racist conservative whites like Eugene Terre'Blanche, and Indians ("we") who merely use it in jest and never direct it at a black person. His dissociation from the first category (whites), and his non-alignment with the "people" whom the K-word is used to describe (blacks), creates an identity that is distinctly separate from both groups in the town. A unique place-identity is delicately discursively constructed: one that is not the object of victimisation by white racism, nor a perpetrator of racism directed at blacks.

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The white supremacist leader was murdered by two black men on his farm in Ventersdorp, reigniting racial tensions in the North West area and reopening up major debate in the public sphere on race-relations in post-apartheid South Africa (Mail and Guardian Online, 9 April 2010).

The third space of critical detachment that has no part in the black/white racial tensions of the town bolsters place-identity that is manageable to live with, because white residents are made to be the real villains.

The next speaker makes no explicit reference to the media or to the Skierlik event. Instead, it is an unspoken premise upon which her entire constructions of the 'tight-knit small town' are built. Although the media's grand narrative of a racist town is never articulated by either the researcher or participant, it remains ever-present – the discursive elephant in the conversation.

Extract 2<sup>4</sup>: White female, 50s (interviewed jointly by Indian and black male researchers)

- 1 R: So tell me about the people in  
Swartruggens?
- 2 P: I say (.) you know what (.) when they  
come through my door they always  
3 laughing always smiling (1) 'hello Ma!' (.)  
always (.) they haven't one  
4 woman in the truck and they never drink  
because I don't drink (.) so I smell  
5 the alcohol first (1) Never (R: mmh)
- 6 P: Never never:: (2) so you know what (1) I  
haven't got even (.) uh uh:: um  
7 safety things around my shop
- 8 R: Ok
- 9 P: Nothing
- 10 R: Ja ja
- 11 P: The people (.) I handle everyone who  
comes to me with respect
- 12 R: And they respect you back? (P: Ja) Ja
- 13 P: So sir if you want me to say negative  
things I haven't got anything to say

There is an attempt to build a positive image of the town, which by the end of this extract is seen to be based on the premise that I, the interviewer, am expecting something negative to emerge. The question "So tell me about the

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<sup>4</sup> R refers to the researcher; P refers to the participant.

people in Swartruggens” is heard and interpreted as a subtle accusation against the (white) residents of Swartruggens. “So sir if you want me to say negative things I haven’t got anything to say” suggests that a competing discourse exists, is being argued against, but will not be explicitly acknowledged. That she hears the initial question as an opportunity to argue against negative constructions of the town alludes to a stigmatised place. She works hard, throughout the interview, to construct a version of Swartruggens and herself – as both this place and her identity are mutually implicated – in a positive light. As a white woman in a town publicly branded as the home of white racists, her race constructs her as an individual ‘who is disqualified from full social acceptance’ (Goffman 1963: 19). She is aware of prevailing attitudes expressed in extract 1.

She quickly attends to several negative issues in this small town: promiscuity of truck drivers who pass through (line 3); alcohol abuse (line 5); crime and safety (lines 6-7); and disrespect (line 11). Each of these issues is potentially stigmatising, especially crime and disrespect. It is crime, after all, that catapulted Swartruggens into the media; and underlying this construction crime is attention to the notion of respect. Lines 11-12 argue that respect involves a mutual give-and-take, attending to the nature of interpersonal relations in the town, and the foundations upon which they ought to be built. It suggests that there is a common understanding amongst people and amongst groups, that mutual respect is a given. The lack of safety fences around her shop is provided as further proof that crime is not a norm, because people respect each other enough not to commit crime. Lines 2-4 create the image of happy people who are more than just passing truckers or customers of her shop; “hello Ma!” suggests familiarity and care. She constructs herself as a mother-figure – they greet her as ‘Ma’ and she maternally ensures that they neither drive drunk nor pick up women to have sex with. An image of family is drawn on here to build this rhetoric of care, support and – most importantly if not subtly – intergroup stability. If she is the mother, then the others are like her children. And mothers care for their children,

and children respect their mother. The family image works as a metaphor for the town, a town that cares and respects its family-members/ residents. The use of ‘never’ three times emphasises the point that any sort of disrespect is both not expected and will not be tolerated. Her response hinges on a ‘scripted story of what *generally* happens’ (Edwards 2003: 38). As a discursive tactic, the formulation of this script works by constructing a regularity in the way events happen in the community, making them ‘factually robust and also somewhat knowable in advance without having to wait and see for any specific instance’ (Ibid: 38).

The Skierlik shooting, consequently, emerges as a breakdown in this resident’s construction of Swartruggens as a mutually respectful and safe small town. If the town had a disposition to be respectful, descriptions of the town as racist or violent do not fit with this disposition and must therefore be untrue or a rare exception. This reduces stigma and blame. The shootings are not mentioned at all during the entire interview; yet, her construction of the town actively counters media portrayals, which although unspoken in the interview, are present via their counter-constructions. She expects me, after all, to be waiting for ‘negative things’ to be said (line 13). The mark of stigma in this town is being a white resident. She also constructs an alternative version of whiteness to the one she assumes I have read about in the papers. She is what Goffman (1963) calls a ‘discredited’ person, whose potentially stigmatising quality (in this case skin-colour) is publicly visible and mutually known.

The following extract is less subtle, but tries to achieve similar goals with the talk.

Extract 3<sup>5</sup>: White female, 50s (interviewed by white female)

- 1 R: Would you say the community is close?
- 2 P: We are very small, therefore everybody cares for each other. *We don’t have the*

<sup>5</sup> The extracts that were translated from Afrikaans do not contain the usual transcription conventions.

- 3     *stories here that you have seen and*  
       *heard on the news.* We don't know that  
       things
- 4     the news is talking about. It doesn't  
       matter if the people are black or white or  
       any
- 5     colour, people support each other.

Like the previous extract, the researcher does not offer the participant a direct invitation to speak about racism, opting instead to ask about the closeness of the community. Race relations, however, becomes the salient point around which 'closeness' is constructed, and an alternative version to media reports of racism becomes the key point of reference around which a stigmatised place-identity is developed.

She assumes I am well aware of what the media have said about the town – “we don't have the stories here *that you have seen and heard on the news*” – and pleads ignorance and denial as her defences – “we don't know that things the news is talking about”. This denial, however, does not permit space for at least acknowledging the objective fact that a shooting spree did happen, in a black settlement, by a white shooter. One tenuous possibility is that a *potentially* racist incident (such as a shooting) is less stigmatising than the long-standing effects of *generalised racism* in the town. Generalising that a town is racist, which the media has done, requires proof of many other episodes of strained race-relations, which upsets the peaceful historical grand narrative that she (as a white resident) is constructing. She is being strategically vague (Edwards and Potter 1992) in her reference to “stories” in the news, attempting to reduce the validity of “stories” that the media has created. Place-specific racism and racist white residents are constructed as foreign and unknown, something which is anomalous in a town where “everybody cares for each other”. Intergroup friendliness is normalised. Like extract 2, a certain ‘character of the town’ is being constructed. By assigning a certain disposition to place, this disposition is

also assigned to the identities of residents that occupy this place. A caring place, then, must consist of caring people. A discourse of care (and respect in extract 2) is pitted up against a discourse of violent disrespect in an interactional effort to reduce a stigmatised place-identity and save face. This defence of place is a defence of whiteness too.

Similar to Yiftachel and Tzfadia's (2004) findings amongst Mizrahi residents (Jewish immigrants from Arab countries) who lived marginally in Israel's development towns, there is a concerted effort here to portray solidarity and positive community sentiment, due to years of reproduced discourses of ‘local pride’. The speaker in this extract makes clear her resistance to this ‘new’ label of racism, which has been thrust upon residents by the media. Her preferred identity is one congruent with a version of Swartruggens before its public discrediting in 2008. She tries to undermine this discourse of racism by creating a discourse of unfair stigmatisation. Using the popular notion of tight-knit small towns, she argues that “We are very small, *therefore* everybody cares for each other”. The use of ‘therefore’ implies that everybody cares for each other *because of* the geophysical fact that this is town is small. The construction of place and identity and their mutual link is made clear in the statement: people are caring because they come from a small place, or put the other way, small places create caring people. There is no space for racism or socio-political instability in her construction of this small town. The forceful construction of an alternative (and by implication more legitimate) version of the town is needed to dismiss the master narrative that predominates in the media. In just four sentences, she works hard to undermine this narrative and reduce the associated stigma.

The next extract neither omits mention of Skierlik (as in extract 2), nor forcefully argues against strained relations in the town (as in extract 3). Instead, the case for a rational conservatism is being made that subtly helps reduce the stigma of irrational and violent small-town white people.

Extract 4<sup>6</sup>: White male, 50s (interviewed by white female)

- 1 R: Are you feeling in certain places less comfortable or more comfortable?
- 2 P: ummm... the fact is there is a mutual underlying fear and incidents like the
- 3 Skierlik incident and a few months/about a year ago where there was a farmer
- 4 murdered and two weeks ago there was a farm attack just outside the town
- 5 R: Ja ok
- 6 P: (....) ummm this church complex has an electric fence, alarm systems and safety gates, for good reasons (R: ok) ummm
- 7 there was years ago burglary in our hall and during church services car theft. It
- 8 was simply a necessity to do this, even if you don't want to. This situation you will
- 9 see everywhere. We just- to protect ourselves because/ because here/ because crime is a reality in the town. I think at
- 11 the end I will feel safe to go to places during the day, but during the nights you
- 12 are a bit more careful to go to certain places. You would maybe pass there, but
- 13 you would not get out of your car there. We recently had a conversation with
- 14 people who are staying in Borolelo where/ where they/ where they have
- 15 especially middle aged women who doesn't go out at night because they are
- 16 scared. There are elements in the street.

This speaker constructs place-identity differently, but again, it is serving the same rhetorical ends: to make a case for unfair stigmatisation. The "Skierlik incident" is mentioned in light of other incidents of violent crime. All the farms are owned by white people in Swartruggens and its surrounds. The use of farm attacks in the context

of crime attends to the fact that white people are also victims of violence, by black people, because just as blacks are afraid of whites after "the Skierlik incident", "there is a mutual underlying fear", hinting that whites are also afraid of blacks. The use of "mutual" does the job of lessening the burden of stigma that only white people are violent and therefore only black people have reason to live in fear. The idea of Skierlik being a special case of racial violence is dismissed by putting it in the category of other criminal events like farm attacks. The use of "underlying" suggests that this fear may not be evident on the surface – we see this clearly in the preceding extracts, where fear of any sort is outright denied. This fear is "underlying", not visible to an outside visitor; perhaps not even visible to each other.

The discourse of friendly tight-knit small town, where one does not even need fences around their shop (as in extract 2), is acknowledged but carefully managed: "It was simply a necessity to do this, *even if you don't want to*" hints at a resistance to put up safety features, drawing on known discourses of a safe small town. Despite this, his three-part list of "an electric fence, alarm systems and safety gates" is put up "for good reasons". But it is ultimately in the phrase "This situation you will see everywhere" that the work of stigma reduction is done most forcefully, because this normalises crime and the precautions one must take against crime. By seeing this situation "everywhere" the issues of crime (as introduced by the "Skierlik incident") is made into a pervasive feature of life, regardless of the place one comes from, even a church. White criminals, then, like Johan Nel, should not be made exemplars of any sort of special violence. Farred (2002) makes this point by drawing on themes from J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, to explore the ways in which the post-apartheid nation, the 'disgraced' state of Coetzee's novel, 'makes violence a mundanacity: an ordinary, everyday, ubiquitous, and commonplace occurrence...' (p. 352). Despite the historical and moral cost, South Africans accommodate violence and its divisive effect on racial reconciliation (Farred 2002).

The racialised description of crime is managed carefully at the end of this extract in lines 12-15:

<sup>6</sup> Translated from Afrikaans to English. Indian and black male researchers were present during interview.



"You would maybe pass there, but you would not get out of your car there. We recently had a conversation with people who are staying in Borolelo where/ where they/ where they have especially middle aged women who doesn't go out at night because they are scared". He says that "during the nights you are a bit more careful to go to certain places" but does not mention these places immediately. When he finally cites Borolelo, it is only because *others* have provided evidence that Borolelo is unsafe. He is able to give an account of 'black criminals' without explicitly mentioning black people. His "conversation with people" that are from Borolelo serve as 'insider evidence' and corroborates his argument that certain places are unsafe. That these places happen to be black townships is a fact offered to him by others, not his own concoction. A sense of imminent danger that lurks at night is concretised in his statement "There are elements in the street". That these elements prey on "middle-aged women" who come from Borolelo simply reproduces (implicitly) a discourse of 'dangerous black men'. This latter discourse is prevalent in the media as well, and drawing on this discourse as an alternative discourse to the post-Skierlik one of 'dangerous whites', situates his construction in the broader narrative of the *swart gevaar* (Black Danger) that has been historically dominant in South Africa. While media sensationalism may have unfairly stereotyped white people as racist and violent in Swartruggens, he manages to undermine this by reminding the researcher of other dominant discourses in the media that serve as alternative foci of attention.

Verwey (2008) found similar rhetorical strategies being used by white Afrikaners in his study of post-apartheid identity. There was an attempt by participants to separate the Afrikaner identity from a broader African identity, essentially 'othering' black Africans and perpetuating a racist ideology that evaluates black people negatively. As one of Verwey's (2008) participants remarks: "um they kill each other and murder and drink and fight, you know. Drinking and fighting with each other and... I know there are many white people who also do that, but I feel that with them it's a lot more" (p.57). The 'us' and 'them'

motif is clear. Similarly, in extract 4, despite attempts to remain politically correct, the process of othering is seen in his racialised constructions of dangerous "elements in the street". The situated action that his talk performs is the job of stigma-reduction, which removes whites as the sole members of the category 'violent criminals' which laced media discourses following the Nel incident.

We further contend that, thematically, these discursive tactics revolve around the elicitation of sympathy. Extract 5, below, represents a more explicit call for sympathy. The speaker argues forcefully that unfair stigmatisation is upsetting.

Extract 5<sup>7</sup>: White female, 40s (interviewed by white female)

- 1 R: How would you describe the people with each other? Is there any racism?
- 2 P: No! You have probably recently seen the news about the shooting that happened
- 3 here and the news going around that we are racists, that is not true! Well... I want
- 4 to say it very clearly that it is big lies, all lies! The people here are very caring
- 5 towards one another, we are united in Swartruggens.
- 6 R: Okay I see.
- 7 P: It upsets us when people are telling such lies. I want to say again, it is all lies!

Extract 5 explicitly blames the media ("the news going around") as being unfair ("big lies, all lies!"). The use of location in line 4, "The people *here*" helps tie together place and identity. By describing "the people here" as "caring" and "united" a sense of community is constructed to emphasise that an insult to the town is an insult to all its people, because the "lies" in the media "upsets us" (line 7). The use of "us" supports the analytic point that stigma is experienced as a group (of white residents). Sympathy is elicited by forcefully discrediting media reports, thus conveying

<sup>7</sup> This extract was translated from Afrikaans to English and does not contain the usual conventions.

the emotional distress of being stigmatised, and explicitly stating that “it upsets us”. Since sympathy must be elicited in an interactional context, the interview context creates a space for this kind of discursive work.

Any methodology is implicated in its findings; in this case, it is probably a threatening experience to tell one’s story to a researcher who is perceived to come from a big city and who is aware of stereotypes in the news. In fact, my own viewpoints were rarely made explicit; participants never asked me what prior knowledge I had about the town, or what my impression of the town was thus far. All participants’ *assumed* I thought the residents were racist.

The elicitation of sympathy as part of the argumentative work they were doing with their talk, gave their discursive constructions of place-identity credibility. Mangcu (2008) argues that this is a frequent quality of white discourse in South Africa, naming it a ‘racialised mobilisation of sympathy’ (p.103). He says this rallying cry of solidarity, to forgive or to understand, can be seen in other events of white transgression such as former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje being caught for match-fixing. Cronje was initially vilified in the media, but later rehabilitated as a repentant hero of national sport, especially after his unexpected death. However, Mangcu argues that the same media leniency is rarely offered by white citizens when the ‘perpetrator’ is black, but that this is consistent with the punitive, long held stereotypes of black incompetence and the need to punish black people. He comments:

Too often executioners are able to mobilize public sympathy by hogging media conferences, and calling an amazing array of sophisticated diversions and metaphors... before we know it, a reversal of roles has taken place... the original perpetrator has become the victim (Ibid: 104).

This was perhaps best seen in the early post-apartheid years during publicly broadcasted Truth and Reconciliation Commission. White ‘perpetrators’ of apartheid atrocities became victims of their time, or victims of a cruel system where good people had to do bad things. How-

ever, though their confessional narratives concretised the ‘black victim’ in the national psyche, public discourse could certainly not ignore the ‘white victim’ that had also emerged from the TRC. These discourses continue to be reproduced in contexts such as Skierlik. For example, white interests and identity is preserved by claiming victimhood. Given an awful historical baggage, for whites, the maintenance of victim status absolves them from any collective blame for the actions of Johan Nel (who is a stark, albeit extreme, reminder of the political ideology which afforded them the privileges they still enjoy, such as secure jobs, land, economic resources, and higher education). They, too, can claim to be victims of the Skierlik incident, by being unjustly targeted by the media and stereotyped as racists. Taking any other position other than victim would not be in their interests. Mangcu (2008) argues that the conservative nationalism of white opposition politics worked by invoking the shared fears of white South Africans who were struggling to form a new post-apartheid identity. The ‘discursive hardening’ was done through election campaigns that failed to help his ‘mainly white constituency transcend the fears of an unresolved past’ (Ibid: 109). Nation-building took a backseat in the political struggle for parliamentary seats. As Barber (1998: 14, in Mangcu 2008: 107) quips: ‘Liberals, ever wary, still preach: “Defend yourselves! The enemy is everywhere!” These kinds of ideologies translate into the common sense of everyday racism.

### Conclusion

Goffman (1963: 14) asks: ‘Does the stigmatised individual assume his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot, or does he assume it neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them?’ The above extracts have been used to show that ‘whiteness’ in Swartruggens had become a publicly knowable mark of stigma, because it was extensively attended to in the talk of participants. White participants assumed their “differentness” was evident on the spot, i.e. they were *those* white people from *that* place that had been publicly labelled as racist. The extracts

lend support to those fears. These conversational interactions, then, were examples of ‘the plight of the discredited’ (Goffman 1963: 14), who were trying to reconstruct their publicly shamed identities to fit historical narratives of what it used to mean to be white and live in this town.

The relevance to present day South Africa is seen in events that have captured further media attention, reverberating through the political discourses that dominate public debates on race, reconciliation and nation-building. The town of Ventersdorp, in the vicinity of Swaruggens, made headlines following the allegedly racist murder of Eugene Terre’Blanche. The gruesome murder of this infamous white supremacist in early 2010 led Afrikaner political party the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) and Afrikaner civil rights group AfriForum to claim that then ANC Youth League president Julius Malema inflamed racial tension by singing an apartheid defiance song with the words *dubul’ibhunu* (shoot the Boer) prior to this killing. In an ironic twist, the ANC planned to take AfriForum and the FF+ to the Equality Court for making such claims, accusing them of running “a campaign of hatred” that racially polarises South Africa (Mail and Guardian Online, 9 April, 2010). ANC lawyer Siyabonga Mahlangu remarked: “Their (i.e. white Afrikaners) campaign is polarising our society. They’re saying Malema’s songs are causing the death of Afrikaner farmers, when the facts speak to the contrary. They’re claiming sole victimhood from the struggle that our country experienced” (Mail and Guardian Online, 9 April, 2010). Similar efforts to deny racism and reduce stigma are seen. And while the battle for victim status

underlies many of the extracts shown, including the interviews with black and Indian residents (Pillay 2010; Pillay and Durrheim 2012), the subtext of Mahlangu’s statement implies a need for public sympathy to be shared, like a post-apartheid prize that no one race group must lay claim to. The benefits of such a prize may be the preservation of a sense of place, a sense of self, and sense of history.

Racism and reconciliation continue to be competing discourses. It is little wonder that white residents, when accused of the former, would begin a frantic endeavour to (re)construct identities in a way that provides stability amidst a changing environment. By reinforcing narratives that remind themselves of a town that is safe, friendly, hospitable, and respectable; or by normalising problems as part of life anywhere, the special attention to geography helps in the work of identity (re)construction. Place-identity remains discursively intact and accusations of racism can be downplayed, argued against, or used to elicit sympathy.

Johnstone (2000) remarks that discourse analysis is always partial, provisional, and incomplete. How far outward from the text one needs to go depends entirely on the goals of the analysis. This study has drawn sufficient instances of talk-in-interaction from the interview material to illustrate its main analytic points around the racialised constructions of place-identity and the discursive repertoires used to deny racism, reduce stigma and elicit sympathy. Many discursive stones have been left unturned, such as the impact of class or gender in racialised identity constructions, and these can become the topic of future studies and analyses.

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# Multiculturalism or Hybridisation? Cultural Mixing and Politics\*

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the recent debate on the end of multiculturalism. It has become a commonplace to say that multiculturalism has failed because of its presumed differentialism, i.e. its tendency to conceive different cultures as cognitive islands. The competing model is characterised by an intercultural approach. The article firstly intends to demonstrate that this is a false alternative within limits. Contrary to popular caricature, one version of multiculturalism is in fact attuned to the emphasis on cultural exchanges and connections. The problem is that the differentialist version has become the standard version of multiculturalism. That is why the article further argues for the importance of the concept of hybridisation as a way of moving beyond the controversy over multiculturalism's supposed failures. Hybridisation suggests one aspect which can be considered relevant: Cultures are originally and intrinsically intertwined. Finally, the article investigates the political implication of this concept of culture and tries to justify the request that cultural mixing processes should be channelled within the political framework of democracy, especially at the level of civil society.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, hybridisation, cultural mixing, civil society

## Introduction

What is the political implication of cultural hybridisations? Is it possible (and politically justifiable) to implement democracy by following a 'mestizo logic'? In order to address this question, I shall start, in section one, by tackling the issue of the so-called backlash against multiculturalism and the competing model of interculturalism. With respect to this opposition, the first step of my argument is to justify hybridisation as a third approach to cultural diversity. In my opinion, the result of the discussion between opponents and proponents of multiculturalism seems to have

come to a dead end due to the fact that 'both opponents and proponents of multiculturalism' – as Benhabib suggests –, 'despite disclaimers to the contrary, continue to defend a faulty understanding of cultures as unified, holistic, and self-consistent wholes' (Benhabib 2002: 86). Hence, section two sketches the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation and advocates for an idea of culture as a fabric of narrative processes. This leads to the second step of my argument: If culture, as hybridity suggests, 'is made *through* change' (Modood 2007: 86), I believe it is important to examine the specific contexts and conditions in which cultural changes occur. In particular, my theoretical concern is with two basic conditions of democracy: a) civil society, and b) 'good governance'.

a) In section three, I discuss the key role for the associational sphere of 'civility', where 'new forms of sociability and solidarity' (UNESCO

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2009: 237) can generate cultural hybridisations through dialogue and cooperation.

b) In section four, I further argue that this human-rights-based dimension of hybridity in the sphere of civil society needs to be complemented by an institutional framework: That is why emphasis is also placed on 'good governance', i.e. the standards of democratic legitimacy, especially openness, participation and accountability. The idea is that civil society must itself satisfy this set of standards. This democratic consistency should ensure that hybridity can play a role in building a unitary political community through diversity.

### 1. 'Requiem' for multiculturalism?

'Multiculturalism is dead': thus announced the *Daily Mail* in July 2006. Rather than giving cause for mourning, this state of affairs is a case for relief, even if mixed with a touch of resentment at this far too late demise of the concept of multiculturalism, not to mention at the introduction of the concept in the first place.<sup>1</sup> This global refusal would remain inexplicable without the securitisation caused by the fear of terrorism, as argued by Aggestam and Hill (2008: 106). Fragmented pluralism, considered a necessary outcome of multiculturalism, threatens social and political cohesion. And diversity without unity seems the breeding ground for communities and groups whose loyalty to a transnational religion might lead them into acts of violence against their own fellow citizens.

The test of this generalised backlash (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010) is that even some of the supporters of multicultural policies are now convinced they made the wrong choice. Noteworthy, from this point of view, is Taylor's recent

stance: With reference to the position he held in *The Politics of Recognition* (1994), and specifically in regard to the case of Québec, Taylor has declared 'a rejection of Canadian multiculturalism and a call for interaction and integration' (Bouchard and Taylor 2008: 19). That is to say that, owing to the recognition of minority rights, the diversity between groups has become an obstacle to cultural exchanges and then a serious claim against the originally advocated societal integration.

The domain of political correctness is now occupied by another discourse, with the intention to pay more attention to the relation between persons from different cultures, without obviously denying their dissimilarity. As a consequence, it is trendy (at least in Europe) to speak the language of interculturality, a concept somehow naïvely contrasted with the old multicultural refrain, as happens – for instance – in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. As to the shareable goal to build an inclusive society based on the value of communication, the White Paper states that the intercultural dialogue 'is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 10).

There is no doubt that 'open and respectful exchange of views' and 'mutual understanding and respect' are essential building blocks of democratic society. In particular, it is impossible for dialogue to take place in the absence of respect for freedom of opinion and expression. However, it may possibly be considered naïve to think, as it seems in certain parts of the document, that equal respect is a sufficient condition 'to ensure that dialogue is governed by the force of argument rather than the argument of force' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 19). 'Freedom – as clearly stated by UNESCO (2009: 198) – is meaningless so long as the necessary conditions for its effective exercise have not been ensured.' From this practical point of view, I think that Arendt's view is correct: 'not the loss of specific rights, but the loss of a community

<sup>1</sup> It can be useful to suggest a shared definition of multiculturalism and some key features regarding the state of the art. As clearly stated by Song, 'multiculturalism is a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Mere toleration of group differences is said to fall short of treating members of minority groups as equal citizens; recognition and positive accommodation of group differences are required through group-differentiated rights, a term coined by Will Kymlicka' (Song 2010).

willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever' (Arendt 1973: 297) is the fundamental deprivation of human rights. The deprivation of 'a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective', continues Arendt, turns freedom of opinion into a fool's freedom, for nothing 'the others' think matters anyhow. That is why I believe that the crucial point of the White Paper is rather when it identifies the 'key role for the associational sphere of civic society where, premised on reciprocal recognition, intercultural dialogue can resolve the problems of daily life in a way that governments alone cannot' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 20). As I will try to demonstrate in the conclusion, 'civil society' can function exactly as the place advocated by Arendt, where we ('us' with 'the others') can collaborate in building a common understanding and realise practices of coexistence.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore I consider 'civil society' a stronger starting point than a generic call to intercultural dialogue when it comes to finding a tool to foster 'a sense of common purpose' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 17). That call, although necessary, is at risk of remaining abstract, purely theoretical. Consequently, it is not sufficient, in my opinion, for replying to an anti-Kantian objection like that of Iris Young, who invites to discuss (that is, 'dispose of') the oppressive (western) chimera of 'a mythical common good' (Young 1990: 119): If indeed the common good is rejected as a sign of white/bourgeois domination over the world, then 'a sense of common purpose' is not enough. But we cannot content ourselves, as Young would, with a mere show of differences, even if only because the so-called neglected minorities can become just as oppressive as the hateful West (Barry 2001). Secondly, promoting difference at any cost, as if cultures were museum pieces, cognitive islands to be left alone, has actually exacerbated some already difficult relations between ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> The *White Paper* rightly argues that 'diversity without any overarching common humanity and solidarity would make mutual recognition and social inclusion impossible' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 14).

It is therefore undeniable the weight of a certain multicultural ideology which is typically 'differentialist' (Ritzer 2010: 245); and it is true that this ideology has contributed to causing serious impasses in managing cultural differences. Yet again, the alternative to differentialism is more complex than a (nevertheless important) call to 'the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others' (Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2008: 17).

It must be remembered, however, that multiculturalism cannot be *tout court* identified with differentialist ideology. This is what Kymlicka states in response to his critics, though the argument whereby multiculturalism is bound to spark disruptive phenomena is not new (Sandel 1997). On the contrary, – writes Kymlicka – 'multiculturalism-as-citizenization is a deeply (and intentionally) transformative project, both for minorities and majorities' (Kymlicka 2010: 39).<sup>3</sup>

This approach does not intend to turn multiculturalism into a fetish to be dogmatically preserved, excluding a priori the possibility to explore alternative solutions to the dilemmas of a plural society. It can therefore be admitted that, seen from this viewpoint, Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism does not seem that different from the intercultural model, as it shares the latter's political goal of achieving a form of integration based on the respect for differences, within the framework fixed by the human rights revolution.

In conclusion, if we admit that multiculturalism tries, as Alexander would say, to build 'a shared understanding' (Alexander 2003: 114) within civil life, on which alone to build a sense of 'we-ness' (Alexander 2006: 43), it seems that this model, at least in Kymlicka's liberal version, still enjoys good health. But why then rejoice in its death? How is it that everyone, except for Kymlicka and very few others, has failed to understand that multiculturalism is the best hope for building just and inclusive societies around the world?

<sup>3</sup> Some other arguments in defense of multiculturalism are presented, for example, by Parekh (2000) as well as Laden and Owen (2007).

The question, as stated above, is actually more complex than the multiculturalism/interculturalism controversy: Opposition to multiculturalism may emanate from different sources. Three possible scenarios can be sketched.

1) Opposition can firstly be motivated by an oblique (or not so oblique) xenophobia, as noticed by Grillo (2010: 31). Many so-called 'new right' movements, a significant factor in local and national politics across Europe, have charged multiculturalism with a dangerous 'excess of alterity', which aims to counter national cohesion. This paranoid vision is obviously unjustifiable, not to say dangerous, considering that mainstream politicians sometimes echo such populist voices.

2) But there is another possible explanation, linked to the fact that multicultural theory does not exactly match multicultural policy. Assuming this non-coincidence, one can plausibly think that the mentioned backlash is a polemic reaction against the shortcomings of certain so-called 'multiculturalist' agendas: Many migration policies have been based on a highly simplified or occasionally somewhat distorted version of multiculturalism. That being the case, I would here endorse Taylor in saying that the European attack on multiculturalism often seems a classic case of false consciousness, blaming phenomena of the ghettoisation of immigrants, instead of recognising the home-grown failures in promoting integration and combating discrimination (Taylor 2012: 414).

3) Finally, there is a third possible source of criticism, which I consider reasonable. Aside from the difficulties in translating multicultural theory into practice, I believe that the dominant political bias towards the differentialist ideology is not only a caricature. I argue that multicultural theory involves a specific anthropological assumption concerning how human beings are seen. From this point of view, Sen's analysis seems to me correct: Multiculturalism tends to classify individuals and groups by a singular (ethnic, above all) identity. Interestingly, we can detect the same 'solitarist illusion' (Sen 2006: 82) in certain parts of the White Paper: e.g., where interculturalism is defined as an 'exchange of

views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds'. This essentialism, i.e. understanding of cultures and identities as self-consistent entities (or mosaic of entities), may be criticised on the basis of new forms of immigration. Think, for example, about the growth of multilingualism in the UK: Compared to this growing linguistic complexity, the essentialist representation of cultures provides – as Vertovec noticed – 'a misleading, one-dimensional appreciation of contemporary diversity' (Vertovec 2010: 66).

It is then this call to take more sufficient account of the reality of migration that explains, in my opinion, a justifiable opposition to multiculturalism (and also to some version of the interculturalist model). It also explains why even Amselle, who shares with Kymlicka a rejection of earlier models of the unitary, homogeneous nation-state, does not side with the supporters of interculturalism. The proposal he puts forward, 'an originary syncretism or lack of distinctness' (Amselle 1998: 1), is definitely more radical and cannot be interpreted as assimilationism in disguise. It involves an effort to challenge the supposed 'natural' frontiers between the ethnic groups as a political solution against racialisation.

This famous endorsement of 'mestizaje', i.e. 'a kind of Spanish-American conceptualisation of hybridity' (Stockhammer 2012: 16), needs to be discussed. As argued in the next paragraph, an alternative understanding of culture is required. What seems clear, for the moment, is that the 'mestizo logic' – as Canclini accentuates – represents a 'detonating' idea, which 'has altered the manner of speaking about identity, culture, difference, inequality, (and) multiculturalism' (Canclini 2005: 23). In this light, it becomes even more interesting to notice the 'refined, sophisticated, self-critical and moderate multiculturalism' proposed by Modood (2007: 98, 112): 'we have to be flexible' – writes Modood – 'to the form that this takes. Hence, multiculturalism can take a hybridic, multicultural, urban melange form'.

But how can the practice of cultural hybridisation constitute a real alternative to essentialist models of multiculturalism whilst avoiding the



naïve rethoric of certain representations of intercultural dialogue?

## 2. From 'travelling cultures' to 'mestizo democracy'

As a process of encounter and fusion of different cultures, *mestizaje* has always accompanied human history. In spite of all paranoid delusions of purity, the fact of hybridisation demonstrates that persons and cultures are originally and intrinsically mixed. This is a fundamental lesson from cultural anthropology: Despite past complicity with the colonial régimes, it is up to the ethno-anthropological sciences to help deconstruct the so-called 'Myth of the Framework', by discovering that cultures are not self-referential monoliths. This is a myth, according to Bernstein, that compromises dialogue (Bernstein 2010: 390). On the contrary, cultures are never-ending processes of self-understanding and interchange. By right, as Amselle points out, we should not even speak of a culture in itself, because cultural identities arise from a structured field of relations.

So we have to go with the flow, or – as Clifford says – with 'travelling cultures' (Clifford 1997). Of course, as they travel, people and cultures meet and may, in fact, mix. That means that understanding the hybridisation processes is possible on the basis of a new conceptualisation of culture. Outside the travel metaphor, I follow here the narrative account claimed by Seyla Benhabib. Cultures, according to Benhabib (2002: 5), are 'complex human practices of signification and representation, of organization and attribution, which are internally riven by conflicting narratives. Cultures are formed through complex dialogues with other cultures.' What is important to stress in the present definition is that dialogue is a constitutive element of every culture, not an extrinsic duty to act 'interculturally'. Interculturality is then, first of all, a question of life, because daily social life, as clearly phrased by UNESCO (2013: 32), is a 'fabric' of relationships, made of 'lasting cross-cultural personal bonds'. The argument that justifies this narrative definition of culture is simple: We are born into and live in webs of interlocution, then our culture is

generated and structured through ongoing processes of communicative negotiation, both internal and external. That is why cultural identities, as suggested in the image of travelling cultures, are fragile achievements in weaving together different and occasionally conflicting narratives into a unique (and always hybrid) life history. That is why 'cultural humility' (UNESCO 2013: 24) is, in my opinion, a necessary skill to practice and manage the hybridisation processes within democratic frameworks.

Naturally, the travel metaphor may also become ideological: In opposition to the objectification of cultures, one could be invited to wander around the world in a 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994) way, taking a bit of everything. Besides, it is well known that Kroeber (1963: 68), one of the founding fathers of cultural anthropology, argued that 'cultures can blend to almost any degree'. As a result, cultural identities are often considered less important than they used to be; what counts is only the possibility of altering the individual, i.e., the possibility of being deeply non-identical and fitting into any situation.

As far as I can see, it is undisputable that cultures are 'miscible'. But things are less obvious than an indiscriminate fusion of differences. This 'tourist hybridism' is based on the perfect continuity between cultures, which seems to me an unverifiable datum. Therefore, I consider more convincing the conclusions drawn by Lévi-Strauss (1977: 331) at his famous seminar on identity: 'Between two cultures, between two living species as close as imaginable, there is always a differential gap and [...] this differential gap cannot be bridged.'

'Differential gap' means that cultures have their specific identity, with different narratives, intersecting and possibly mixing with each other. Consequently, hybridisation requires both the vector of similarity and continuity and the vector of difference and rupture. The first vector is the condition of contact and potential mixing; the second vector is the condition of identity. On this account, it seems reasonable to doubt the simplistic view that cultures are fluxes without breaks in continuity: conceptually, because this 'essentialist anti-essentialism' – in Kompridis'

terms – impedes the realisation that ‘the lack of any identification with our culture renders us indifferent to its fate, indifferent to its future possibilities as much as to its past injustices’ (Kompridis 2005: 340); politically, because it is untrue that anything can so happily mix with anything. Conflict, as stated in the famous Memorandum for the study of acculturation (Redfield, Linton and Herskowitz 1936: 152), can occur as a possible outcome of contact between different narratives. Besides, how can it be claimed that hybridisation is always and always and ever enriching for persons and cultures? The reality is that ‘the borrowings or hybrid forms to which cultural diversity gives rise can take the form of reductive syntheses that are little more than stereotypes’ (UNESCO 2009: 164).

However, an uncritical advocacy of hybridisation tends to overemphasise cultural mixing phenomena as a quasi-magical solution to the problems of negotiating difference in democratic societies. It follows that this debate between supporters and opponents of hybridisation is liable to a fruitless clash:

- (a) differentialism (identity without flux, i.e., closed, fixed identities); and
- (b) indiscriminate hybridism (flux without identity).

I would try to avoid this dead end. From this point of view, it can be interesting to evaluate a political suggestion based on Burke’s Mestizo Democracy (Burke 2002). Surely, there is an exaggerated nonchalance in using the phenomenon of hybridity to qualify a political order. Here it is worth remembering Clifford’s caution, in saying that blending processes are unpredictable, for ‘the politics of hybridity is conjunctural and cannot be deduced from theoretical principles’ (Clifford 1997: 10).

That said, Burke’s proposal seems at least an attempt to avoid both ideological extremes (differentialism/hybridism). His intention is precisely to go ‘beyond Eurocentric castings of multiculturalism’, i.e., differentialism: ‘Rather than rendering cultures in terms of ‘us v. them’ – a politics of possessive identity – a mestizo democracy accents how cultures dynamically interpenetrate and transform each other.’ Now, this transfor-

mative interpenetration is not indiscriminate hybridism because Burke bridle its process within a working logic that – for him – is specific to *métissage*: ‘a hermeneutical unity-in-diversity’. In doing so, he can simultaneously avoid falling back into an assimilationist position, as unity-in-diversity is also a logic ‘beyond the *unum-pluribus divide*’<sup>4</sup> (Burke 2002: 20, 156, 10).

*Let us now test his model.*

First of all, I need to confirm my original perplexity: There is no guarantee that hybridisation processes evolve as Burke would like, i.e., in compliance with a mutually enriching exchange. In addition, this exchange, which could happen anywhere in varying degrees, is not guaranteed to be beneficial even to democratic cohabitation. The hybridisation process – it is worth repeating – can entail the very type of conflict charged to the differentialist version of multiculturalism.

In Burke’s proposal, however, there is a philosophically crucial point that needs stressing. To explain the mestizo logic of unity-in-diversity, Burke refers to Gadamer (Pantham 1992: 132). The argument, in short, is that ‘unity-in-diversity urges a sense of community through heterogeneity, each culture contributing both to the community and to one another without any one culture necessarily becoming hegemonic’ (Burke 2002: 50).

‘Community through heterogeneity’ is an interesting way to refer to the universal by avoiding two extremes:

- (a) the abstract and hegemonic placement of the universal, which assimilates differences;
- (b) the renunciation of the universal, which eliminates even the political space (Laclau 2000: 305).

According to Burke, we have to think of a common good, if we do not intend to renounce the political project of living together; but we can think of it dynamically, as hybridisation processes suggest:

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<sup>4</sup> ‘One-many divide’. The idea is, in a nutshell, that mestizo democracy guarantees a space in which cultures encounter each other as equals, without privileging one culture over others.

In a unity-in-diversity the substantive common good is not static but, rather, persistently contested and reconfigured through democratic engagement among diverse persons and cultures in public life (Burke 2002: 169).

This conception of a dynamic common good is the 'natural' outcome of a democratic process of dialogue between different groups; or, to be more precise, a dynamic (not hegemonic) common good supposes a political engagement structured through what Benhabib terms 'democratic iterations', that is, 'complex processes of public argument, deliberation, and exchange through which universalist rights, claims and principles are contested and contextualized, invoked and revoked, posited and positioned, throughout legal and political institutions, as well as in the associations of civil society' (Benhabib 2004: 179).

Yet, if we follow this line of reasoning, Burke's proposal needs a further articulation. We agree that, if the intention is to avoid a totalitarian drift, unity needs to be conceived within diversity, that is, as an outcome, temporary and revisable, of cultural interactions. Nevertheless, even diversity can be thought of in a despotic way, typically when a particular is assumed as the totality. This is why diversity also needs to be conceived, in turn, within the horizon of unity. To put it in Burke's terms: Unity is not only contested and reconfigured by diversity contests and refigures; unity is also what enables diversity to be contested and reconfigured, urging it in the direction of the common good.

As a consequence, the political problem is no longer to conjecture a mestizo quality of democracy. It is, rather, a case for examining under which conditions a democracy is able to work on the basis of the double logic of 'unity-in-diversity' and 'diversity-in-unity'.

In more practical terms, we could try to test a political model as follows: Unity-in-diversity could exemplify the logic of civil society, where the common good is common precisely because it is the outcome of (more or less conflictual) interactions between the different social actors involved; whereas diversity-in-unity could inform the logic of the political dimension through

directing the civil movements within democratic institutions. Diversity-in-unity is critical, because it is at this political level, as Carr suggests, that we should try to answer the following question: 'How might the members of disparate groups sustain their independent group identities and still come to regard one another as fellow citizens in a common polity? This is the problem of *e pluri-bus unum*'<sup>5</sup> (Carr 2010: 14).

It is only by ensuring these two conditions that a society can consider including a certain degree of hybridisation. Generally speaking, cultural contact depends on different combinations or a disentanglement of narrative traits. The degree of the composition/decomposition can be measured on a four-level scale, according to John Berry's well-known model (Sam and Berry 2010): 1) integration; 2) assimilation; 3) separation; and 4) marginalisation.

A broad evaluation of these levels is beyond the reach of this paper. But it is clear, as Ang argued, that we have to examine the specific contexts and conditions in which hybridity occurs: A rethorical call for harmonious amalgamation risks to be 'neglectful of the specific power relations and historical conditions configuring the interactions and encounters which induce forced and unforced processes of hybridisation' (Ang 2001: 197). The degree of hybridisation I have in mind is then ranked at level 1, because only integration, which I interpret according to Modood's account (Modood 2007: 46-51), involves a two-way process of mutual adjustment (and hence unforced combination) between different narratives. That is why the key question, in my opinion, is to consider whether hybridity occurs within the framework of the double logic of 'unity-in-diversity' and 'diversity-in-unity'. This framework, as I try to demonstrate in the following discussion, works on the basis of human rights standards. Accordingly, it should allow us to identify those processes of hybridisation which are consistent with democracy; at the same time, these hybrid identities could

<sup>5</sup> 'Out of many, one'. This is the first motto impressed on the great seal of the United States. It affirms an original plurality and suggests that unity comes out of diversities.

function as detection of masked forms of racial stereotyping.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Civil society as a place of (possible) cultural hybridisations

The reference to civil society is crucial for a political theory intending to pay attention to hybridisation processes. Michel de Certeau was aware of this: At the beginning of the 1980s, he said that the presence of immigrants requires 'to open to them a free space of speech and demonstration in which their own culture can be displayed or offered for the knowledge of others' (Certeau 1997: 134). A free space of speech should be exactly the structure of civil society, where culturally different people meet each other and try to communicate, in order to establish shared conditions for living together. This is why Certeau assumed that civil society could play host to cultural changes and mixing. We can thus argue that civil society works on the basis of unity-in-diversity. In fact, as Carr suggests, assuming pluralism,

unity clearly requires that the groups coming together to constitute a common unit actually share something in common and recognise that they share something in common. At its most basic level, this means that these groups must share a common understanding about why civil association matters, why it is a good idea, and why it deserves their allegiance (Carr 2010: 87).

Besides, a civil society is not 'civil' merely because it displays cultural differences (this is, instead, the ideologic imagination supported by differentialist multiculturalism); the mere fact of flux between travelling cultures is rather a source of instability and potential conflict. Hence, 'the

great end of civil association' – continues Carr – 'is the domestication of the ongoing intergroup conflict arising within the context of the fact of flux' (Carr 2010: 92).

Consequently, a civil society is 'civil' insofar as it is able to promote – within the the fact of flux – what Habermas terms 'the unity of a social life-world through values and norms' (Habermas 1979: 144): not the mere sum of single life-worlds, but the (temporary) shared result of common deliberation, aiming to avoid any form of reification and, positively, to fight for social relationships based on the recognition of our common humanity. At the same time, it must also be taken into account – as Fraser demonstrates – that there cannot be recognition of human value without setting a just redistribution order (Fraser 2003).

It appears that, at a civil society level, fostering the 'capture of speech' processes in view of a shared social understanding can defuse sclerotic interpretations such as 'us' vs. 'them'; then it is possible to move towards a non-particularistic sense of unity through diversity. In fact, the unity of a social life-world invites an understanding of civil society as suggested by Alexander: 'It is the we-ness of a national community, the feeling of connectedness to one another that transcends particular commitments, narrow loyalties, and sectional interests' (Alexander 2006: 43).

It is crucial to emphasise that this 'feeling of connectedness' is not purely emotional; rather, it is the outcome of a reasoning process of deliberation which presupposes what Seligman clearly calls 'the mutual recognition of each individual's innate human dignity' (Seligman 1992: 172). Civility, I believe, has this human-rights-based dimension that requires to be recognised. But this agreement cannot remain at the purely theoretical level: 'Rights and freedoms – as stated by UNESCO (2009: 221) – are not exercised in a vacuum. All rights and freedoms have a cultural dimension that contributes to their effective exercise. It is precisely this dimension that forms the link between the individual, the community and the group, which grounds universal values within a particular society. Civility, I argue, has to be imagined and practiced exactly as this ground-

<sup>6</sup> As suggested by Servaes and Verschooten (2008: 47), a good example of how hybridisation really works in this sense is the way Islamic law and Western discourses have met in recent years: 'In Afghanistan, women defend their right to education and health care by drawing on Western discourses about human rights. At the same time, however, many of them insist on being faithful to Muslim traditions at home. Elsewhere, many young Islamic women insist on wearing veils because it makes them less vulnerable to reproaches of Westernization and allows them to go out for work or study. They are not necessarily on their way to a complete assimilation of Western ideas.'

ing, where 'the management of cultural diversity can turn a societal challenge into a democratic strength' (UNESCO 2009: 221).

Consequently, solidarity is not a rhetorical call to stir up positive emotions towards others but the awareness of this core value of civility (Shils 1997); in other terms, our humanity depends on the common good of we-ness, based on the respect for a unique, irreplaceable, 'capture of speech'. Because its practical framework remains the diversity between cultures, in order to function as a basis for democratic order this we-ness does not require a full (utopian) consensus on everything. What is needed is rather a fundamental agreement on civility, i.e., on the fact that 'we-ness' is better (morally and politically) than free-riding.

Therefore, this agreement is not an institutional product, an artificial, Hobbes-style, contract supposedly guaranteeing an otherwise impossible civil life; the we-ness is a possible outcome of what Adam Smith terms 'the natural inclination every one has to persuade' (Smith 1982: 352), i.e., our constitutive competence in generating trust and building bonds of communication. The crucial evidence of this fundamental virtue is the multiform phenomenon of associations, more specifically, 'horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation' (Putnam 1993: 88) called 'intermediate bodies' (as originally suggested by Montesquieu), on which depends the production of a category of goods that are not consumer goods, but sources of 'social capital' (Edwards 2011).<sup>7</sup>

All this leads us towards the idea that the intermediate bodies of civil society work as a 'pre-political source' – as Habermas argues (Habermas 2008: 105) – that can ensure public forums between people of different cultures and, therefore, a hospitable democracy for possible hybridisations. Obviously, we must avoid the naïvety of believing that civil society is a

self-sufficient source of democracy. As recently demonstrated, 'most civil society actors suffer from severe democratic deficits, including non-existent, poor or unequal participation and weak accountability mechanisms' (Archibugi, Koenig-Archibugi and Marchetti 2012: 227).

That problem is precisely what urges Habermas not to look on civil society 'as a focal point where the lines of societal self-organization as a whole would converge.' Besides, we cannot consider 'civil' any form of societal self-organisation: civil is only the form that passes 'through the filters of the institutionalized procedures of democratic opinion and will-formation and enters through parliamentary debates into legitimate lawmaking' (Habermas 1996: 371).

It becomes clearer that hybridisations cannot be valued as normatively compulsory. Inter-cultural mixing cannot be scheduled or imposed; it is always relative and contingent. Consequently, democracy can be compatible with hybridity only under the historical conditions of civility. Otherwise we should argue the absurd idea that civility work under the abstract category of hybridity; an idea which would be also politically unmanageable, because it would fail to discriminate between the concrete modalities of hybridity. That is why, as already noticed, we have to detect the conditions in which hybridity occurs.

What are, then, the actual circumstances the immigrant finds him/herself in? It is a paradoxical, sometimes dramatic, criss-cross situation: at the intersection between two different (and sometimes conflicting) narratives. The case of French youths of North African descent (also called Beurs in French street slang), is illustrative of the difficulty of negotiating creative solutions for hybrid forms of identity and belonging (Berry et al. 2006).

What are then the possible choices? Normally we are inclined to think there is no option beside freezing traditional affiliations and becoming totally alienated. Actually, an alternative exists. Civility, as I have hinted, can accommodate a different choice: that of participating in collaborative practices, based on reciprocal recognition. It is therefore plausible that cooperation, conviviality, solidarity, together with the percep-

<sup>7</sup> Rawls is not far from this relational idea when he defines it as 'social union of social unions', adding that this is 'the idea of the good of such a society' (Rawls 2001: 142). It is worth noting that this notion of society as 'union of unions' is already present in *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1999: 462).



tion of sharing overarching values, lead different narratives to bring about the crucial work of 'translation and mediation' (Certeau 1997: 120). This mutual commitment to a common understanding can eventually assume a mestizo form, but certainly moves towards a reshaping of citizenship. I obviously do not think it is possible to eclipse the juridical institution of national citizenship as is the case, for example, in certain forms of extreme cosmopolitanism. The idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, are (or can and should be) citizens of the world is in conflict with the fact that the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have adopted several resolutions on statelessness and the arbitrary deprivation of nationality, reaffirming that the right to a nationality is a human right (Kesby 2009); not to mention that the results of the Immigrant Citizens Survey (2012) showed that around three out of four immigrants are or want to become citizens.<sup>8</sup> That being said, I acknowledge that the definition of citizenship as civic laboratory of we-ness provides a context for a moderate cosmopolitan claim. For example, I would endorse Joppke's account of EU citizenship as 'civic citizenship for immigrants, attributed by virtue of residence rather than nationality' (2010: 27). This cosmopolitan definition illustrates what exactly is at stake in cultural mixing within civil society: The experience of hybridisation, as in the case of Beurs, suggests an ethical membership which challenges the static binarism of 'us' and 'them'. 'We have obligations to others,' – writes Appiah – 'obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind' (Appiah 2006: 15).

Are we then bound to an anarchic fusion of differences, an infinite patchwork of identities? There is an unpassable limit, for passing it would mean ruling ourselves out of a 'civil' place, pushed towards the non-place of chaos. This limit, this fundamental measure for social

and political cohabitation, can be termed – by another Habermasian term – 'co-membership' (Habermas 1998: 441).

Habermas uses this word to define the specific relationality of the civil sphere. The idea, in a nutshell, is the following: A democratic state of right cannot exist without its citizens' shared commitment to the primary good of being-together as subjects reciprocally recognising each other. Obviously, Habermas supposes an intersubjective approach, whereby relationality is, anthropologically, the fundamental structure of the human subject. Consequently, this structure is not only a fact discovered through social interaction but also a principle orienting the whole social and political life.

Now, this social capital (which has its political correlate in popular participation) must be institutionally promoted and granted. It is here that the passage to the political sphere takes place, i.e., the necessary filtering of civility through the logic of diversity-in-unity. In fact, co-membership should be promoted if and only if its value, generated and shared at the pluralistic level of civil society, is able to forge a unitary political community of citizens. Actually, only thus can the multiple processes of intercultural translation and mediation within a civil framework be assessed on their real propensity to enrich democratic life. If not, co-membership degenerates into 'fraternity vs. fraternity', showing 'the dark side of social capital' (Putnam 2000: 350, 362).

#### 4. Inventing 'good governance'

It is worth restating that co-membership, conceived as we-ness, or solidarity-fostering civility, is not an institutional artefact. With Rawls, we could say that there is a 'morality of association' (Rawls 1999: 409) to be considered the basis of the political community.

It does not mean, obviously, that we become friends to everyone: 'While every citizen is a friend to some citizens' – writes Rawls –, 'no citizen is a friend to all.' It means, instead, a focus on the political capacity to found a 'common allegiance to justice' providing 'a unified perspective from which they can adjudicate their differences'

<sup>8</sup> The Immigrant Citizens Survey (ICS), piloted by the King Baudouin Foundation and the Migration Policy Group, captured the insights of over 7,000 people in 15 cities in seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain).

(Rawls 1999: 415). Interestingly, this 'allegiance to justice' is founded on the human propensity towards friendship, i.e., a 'morality of association' that every human being learns to exercise from childhood, provided that he lives within a family whose love is identified by its 'caring for his good' (Rawls 1999: 429).

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this 'natural meaning of fraternity', as Rawls continues: Human beings are actually able to agree with 'the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off' (Rawls 1999: 90).

Such a 'fraternity', based on cultural diversity, is pivotal to nurturing 'a culture of human rights, which has been one of the international community's main goals for over 60 years' (UNESCO 2009: 242). That is why this fraternity is all the more important because of its irreplaceable dimension, nowadays at great risk of being 'colonised' by a bureaucratic logic or a profit logic. This double logic, Touraine (2011: 397) argues, is the very threat of a pluralistic democracy, because it 'transforms nations and cultures into markets, especially for mass consumption, mass communication and mass media.'

It should by now be clear that the only way to avoid this negative transformation is to foster 'a responsibility of civility on part of the citizenry' (Carr 2010: 97). But it would be a serious mistake to think of civility as self-sufficient: This pre-political source of social unity might change into non-political, or even anti-political, which, would obviously mean anarchy. Then, any possible cultural hybridisations would soon become chaotic as, without a policy (and an economy) in charge of protecting and promoting the sense of co-membership, civil society would fragment in the clash of particularistic interest groups.

Hence, civil society needs what Aristotle termed 'good governance': a political class supporting its more valuable trends (towards a unitary sense of citizenship), and an economy<sup>9</sup> capable of enhancing its potential for respectful coexistence. For this aim, three main standards of democratic legitimacy underpin good

governance: openness, accountability and participation. Openness equates to clarity and transparency in the way in which institutions and political actors operate. Accountability has at its core the obligation to explain and justify conduct. Participation follows the basic principle that 'democracy depends on people being able to take part in public debate.' This means that 'the linear model of dispensing policies from above must be replaced by a virtuous circle, based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels' (Commission of the European Communities 2001: 11).

Obviously, civil society must itself follow the standards of good governance. From now on, the open question is about an institutional architecture that may channel civility through a participatory process – a question which, nevertheless, cannot be fully addressed here.

One final observation. It seems clear that without a civil life, that is, without the logic of unity-in-diversity as a means of freely cooperating towards a 'shared social understanding', no good governance would exist, only totalitarian or individualistic degenerations; vice-versa, without good governance, that is, without any institutional guarantees to promote certain fundamental goods (civility first and foremost), no democratic life would exist, only anarchy. Now, these pathologies (totalitarianism, anarchy, individualism) lead, sooner or later, to violence. Certainly, no one can eliminate this possibility: Democratic life, in fact, is never a definitive acquisition. On the contrary, democracy is always a prospective task, as Dewey argued.

Consequently, today more than ever before, the task of democracy cannot be subjected to the illusion that it has finally discovered the secret of a transparent dialogue between people from different cultures. This task is, instead, a work in progress, an experiment resembling, in Bauman's words, 'the twisted road to shared humanity' (Bauman 1997: 30).

In the meantime, and without our permission, hybridisations keep occurring, sometimes causing us to stray from that 'twisted road', sometimes just making it more tortuous – but occasionally

<sup>9</sup> The reference is, for instance, to Dasgupta (2000).

making it easier, if just by highlighting the common human dignity we embody in our diverse cultural ways. It is an open challenge, provided we do not cease to move in this direction.

### Conclusion

It may be possible that the major models of management of cultural diversity are in crisis. Multiculturalism, with few exceptions, tends to conceive different cultures as cognitive islands; consequently, it proves itself unable to understand what is really at stake within plural societies. Interculturalism rightly emphasises cultural connections, but it may be sometimes considered naïve in believing that a completely harmonious dialogue can ever come into existence.

Nevertheless, this double crisis does not lead us to the conclusion that social fragmentation is unavoidable. Against the temptation to slide into essentialism, and beyond a naïve view of dialogue as magical shortcut to reciprocal recognition, I have argued that the experience of hybridisations occurring within civil society is highly instructive: It encourages us 'to invent ways of living together' (UNESCO 2013: 18). I consider this joint creativity as a key feature of democratic societies, very close to the Socratic idea of 'mutual search' among peers for a common understanding (Phaedo 78ab). Creativity makes us partners, because it requires the cultural humility to learn from the other, through a patient innovation of the public sphere.

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# How Does the Construction of New Families Impact Remittances?\*

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## Abstract

Remittances are a multibillion-dollar industry. Due to the global financial crisis, remittances are an increasingly important issue. Historically, most scholars have considered remittances as an economic phenomenon, exploring the financial impact on individuals, families, communities and the state. These scholars provided insightful models on remittance motivations but assumed that remittance decisions were static. The “social remittances” literature complemented this work and considered remittances beyond their financial utility. Building our analysis from interview and survey data with migrant workers in Israel, we engage this idea of remittances as more than an economic event and explore the meaning of remittances to senders. We contend remittance practices are dynamic, and that people choose to remit or cease remitting at different times for different reasons. We introduce the idea of the ‘new family contract’ to explain why over time people change remittance practices, including ceasing remitting, a concept substantially less discussed in the literature.

**Keywords:** remittances, Israel, labor migration, family status

## Introduction

Economic well-being is considered the one of the most significant reasons people emigrate and become migrant workers.<sup>1</sup> For many poor coun-

tries, human labor is as much an export as any good and expected remittances serve as a critical source of income for families, communities and the state. There are villages comprised entirely of young children and grandparents, since the working age people have sought work abroad. For example, in the Republic of Moldova, considered one of the poorest countries in Europe, amazingly, of 4.3 million Moldovan citizens, perhaps as many as 1 million work abroad,<sup>2</sup> many illegally (IMF 2008; Pantiru, Black and Sabates-Wheeler 2007). In some Moldovan villages, so many adults have left to seek employment abroad that only old people and children remain (Stemmer 2011; Pantiru, Black and Sabates-Wheeler 2007). Similar, less extreme cases are reported in places as diverse as Albania (Korovilas 1999; Dalakoglou

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<sup>1</sup> In some instances we use the term, “foreign worker,” despite its charged nature as it expresses the specific Israeli context. Lacking value neutral options, we use ‘migrant worker’, ‘migrant’, ‘contract worker’, ‘foreign worker’ and ‘temporary labor migrant’ interchangeably. We exclude refugees or asylumseekers,

from this project as their rationales for migration, residency and return are different.

<sup>2</sup> Official Moldovan government statistics estimate the number is closer to 600,000. IOM, [http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working\\_papers/WP-C10.pdf](http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers/WP-C10.pdf)

2010), Congo (Kankonde 2010) and Korea (Rigg 2006).

In many cases, migrants are expected to remit to support families left behind. A plethora of literature examines remittances as a mechanism for transferring wealth to families and communities (Lucas and Stark 1985; Cox 1987; Jones 1998; Smith 2005; Kankonde 2010; Mata-Codesal, King and Vullnetari 2011; Vullnetari and King 2012). This body of work has resulted in the construction of classifications of rationales for remittance. Current constructions include: altruistic, self-interest motive, implicit family contract – loan re-payment, implicit family contract II – co-insurance and community investment, gendered remittances. Much work has been done on the financial value and impact of the money transfer to the recipients and the costs to the remitter. However, much less work has examined the *meaning* of the remittances, that is, beyond the associated dollar value, what does the process of sending those funds mean to the sender? To be clear, meaning is not motivation. Motivation is what moves people to act. Meaning is the value it has for them. Although economists convincingly designed a number of explanations over the last few decades for the impetus to remit funds, it was not until more recently that the value and meaning beyond the dollar value of the funds was explored. More recently, discussions of the purpose and meaning of remittances for the sender – and, to a lesser extent, for the recipient – have become a significant part of the literature (Cliggett 2005; Mazzucato 2009; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Mata-Codesal, King and Vullnetari 2011; Brown and Jimenez 2011). Across very different environments, some limited examinations include a dynamic aspect, exploring how contact, time and life experience do indeed affect remittance practices. Werbner (1990) studying Pakistani migrants in Great Britain, Schiller & Fouron (2001) examining Haitians in the United States and Liebelt (2011) focusing on Filipino/as in Israel all reveal how remittances practices change over time. They show that remittances affect identity development. Remittances also financially and emotionally bind those left behind with those who left.

Using analysis of interview and survey data performed with labor migrants in Israel we build on previous work about remittance practices: namely, why people's remittance practices change and the meaning of remittances to the senders. We contend that available models present a static image of what is really a dynamic behavioral experience. Extant models reflect assumptions that there is a unique reason why people remit. These models ignore changes in migrants' lives and preferences over time. Moreover, they do not account for the migration process itself: the individual who left the home country changes over time in the receiving state and those 'left-behind-home-country-members' have also changed because of the absence of the emigrant. As such, we assert that remittance practices and the rationale(s) for those practices are dynamic and sensitive to time, life experiences and the life cycle. People may remit for one reason at one time but remit for completely different reasons at later times (Mata-Codesal, King and Vullnetari 2011). Further, they may remit for some period of time and then stop or remit intermittently or for special purposes (Grieco 2004). This dynamic perspective helps to explain what drives remittances as well as what makes a once stalwart remitter cease or only intermittently remit.

### Remittance Typologies

Remittances remain an important field of study across academic disciplines. Much research focuses on the recipient side: examining what remittances do for recipient families, communities and states. Economists (Hoddinott 1994; Solimano 2003), geographers (Odimuko and Riddell 1979; Jones 1998) examine remittance impacts on local economies, recipients and receiving states. Others explore amounts remitted (Faini 2007; Mansoor and Quillin 2007), the way the money is spent (Gamburd 2004), and the impact of social capital over the remittance decision-making process (Massey and Basem 1992; Maggard 2004). This research is principally interested in how remittances are sent and whether remittances are an effective form of development.

Remittances are a core topic in immigration studies. However, most studies have examined the effects of the remittances rather than the impetus for them. The groundbreaking work of Stark (1980), Stark and Levhari (1982), Lucas and Stark (1985) and Stark, Taylor and Yitzhaki (1986) made significant attempts to isolate determinants of remittances. Other scholars have explored the impact of different factors on remittances, including gender (Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2005; Orozco, Lowell and Schneider 2006; King, Dalipaj and Mai 2006; King, Castaldo and Vullnetari 2011), class (Vora 2008), social norms (Gamburd 2004), feelings of altruism (Lucas and Stark 1985; Cox 1987), social capital and community membership (Massey and Basem 1992; Maggard 2004), age and education (Hoddinott 1994), education (Eloundou-Enyegue and Calves 2006), the role of the state in designing remittance regimes (Magalit-Rodriguez 2010) and future investment and insurance (De la Brière et al. 1997). Other studies have considered how families, marriage, and children impact remittances (Holst and Schrooten 2006; Soltero 2009; Carrasco 2010; Akeson 2009; Blue 2004; Grieco 2004; Luke 2010; Perez-Lopez and Diaz-Briquets 1998). Still others examined how remittances affected families in the sending state or accompanying the migrant to the receiving state and families that were reunified in the receiving country (King, Dalipaj and Mai 2006). Remittance impact on recipients remains an important issue of study (Taylor 1999; Kabki, Mazzucato and Appiah 2004; Smith 2005; Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2008). Although many studies examine the impact of remittances on the family, the focus has largely been on the family in the sending country. There is little work examining how forming families in the receiving state affects remittance practices and how those practices change over time.

### Static Models and Dynamic Models

The research cited here provides a rich and varied examination about remittance practices. However, these studies present a static view of remittance motivations. If migrants intend to remit funds, the terms of the "contract" remain fixed regardless of changes in migrants' lives,

their families' lives or any external political, economic, social or physical (e.g. climate, natural disaster, etc.) conditions. Lueth and Ruiz-Arranz (2006) show that not even exceptional events -- like natural disasters -- alter the expected remittance flows. Contrary to what would be expected Brown (1998: 137), concludes that *in aggregate* time has no significant effect on remittance behavior. He writes:

"...once all other variables are controlled for, the passage of time itself does not have a significant effect on migrants' remittance behavior. In other words, if there is no change in the size or composition of the migrant community, there is no reason to believe that the aggregate level of remittances will fall. Provided net migration does not become negative, the size of the migrant community will not fall."

Newer research reflects some attention to dynamic and different kinds of remittance behavior on an aggregate basis. Orozco, Lowell and Schneider (2006: 20), found in their study of migrants in 18 countries that '[migrants] ...remit more the longer they have been sending remittances (with decay function), but women remit yet more than men over time.' Women's remittances are functionally different from men's in that some women do not have the capacity to remit, mainly due to educational differences (Eloundou-Enyegue and Calves 2006). Orozco, Lowell and Schneider (2006), argue that women's remittance patterns are different from men's. Women remit less than men but, women remit more than men over time. Further, women remit more than men to distant family members. Also, Holst and Schrooten (2006) suggest that naturalization (and potentially permanent legal status) might alter remittances, arguing that the desire for return migration would be lower than for someone on a limited visa. Finally, Sana (2008) argues that remittances flow is linked to the size of immigration cohort combined with the outreach of the home government and home country poor economic situation. However, all of these analyses are on the aggregate level. There is still limited examination on the individual level to provide insight into remittance practices.

**Table 1: Typologies of Remittance**

<i>Motive</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Rationale/Motivation</i>
<b><i>Altruistic</i></b>	Remittance as obligation to recipient(s)	Family, household, village	Affection, responsibility for family, community
<b><i>Self-interest motive</i></b>	Remittance as future investment	Self, Family, household, village	Economic and financial self interest; use financial gains in foreign country to invest in future or retirement
<b><i>Implicit family contract – loan re-payment</i></b>	Remittances as loan repayment for education, travel, work contract (seed money)	Family, household, village	Understanding that loan will be repaid through remittances; no time limit for repayment
<b><i>Implicit family contract II – co-insurance</i></b>	Remittances as insurance for return to home country.	Self, Family, household, village	Loan dual promise; family invests in immigrant as person most likely to succeed AND, member remits as a promise for return if/when conditions change in the receiving state
<b><i>Community investment</i></b>	Remittances as a way to give back to the community for infrastructure	Community	Predominantly male migrants make infrastructure investments as a reflection of their success

Source: Authors.

We argue that remittance practices are dynamic and responsive to changes in people's lives. Further, they are not just an economic issue but a social-familial issue as well. Knowing how, when and why people remit as well as what makes them change patterns or cease remitting might provide some clues to immigrant behavior. For example, we might learn why do immigrants remain in bad situations? Why do temporary labor migrants remain after their contracts have expired? Why would migrants work for years, knowing they might return with nothing in their pockets? Etc. What would stop remittances?

Table 1 depicts remittance motivations for individuals. Each category assumes remittance decisions remain the same regardless of changes in life cycle and experience abroad. The remitter maintains one unique relationship of remittance to the family or the village or the community, rather than fluctuating between recipient targets. Remittances, in all of these cases, represent a solid connection between the remitter and the remittance recipient(s) and even home com-

munity. It assumes that all debts can be settled through monetary exchange and that new debts never accumulate to service old debts. Under the altruistic arrangement, the labor migrant's purpose is to provide support for basic family sustenance (food, clothing, shelter, education fees, etc.) Labor migrants often experience extreme self-deprivation while they continue to send funds and/or goods home. In contrast, the self-interest motive explains remittances as investments for building a home or starting a business with the expectation that the migrant will return to reap the benefits of her/his investments. Alternatively, in the implicit family contract – loan re-payment returns funds advanced to the labor migrant to pursue some end, i.e., get education, get a visa or paid work contract, etc. Conversely, for the implicit family contract II – loan dual promise, home country members invest in the labor migrant as the person either most likely to succeed abroad or least likely to succeed at home country with the understanding remittances will repay the loan. Return migra-

tion is expected if economic or social conditions change in the home country. Finally, the community investment approach reflects labor migrants' investment in infrastructure in the home country with hometown organizations or other groups. These injections of capital may continue over years and are remittances to communities rather than families.

Recent work on remittance practices focuses on family relationships. Mata-Codesal, King and Vullnetari (2011) present remittance dyads reflecting different motivations for remittances. Luke (2010), found in her work on Kenya that individuals can trade across relationships (parents, wife and children, sex partners away from home) to renegotiate the way they distribute their remittances. However, Luke (2010: 1471) argues that: "(sums given to)....serious sexual partners significantly decrease remittances to the family, by more than 10 percent on average." These economic models capture the financial relationships but much less the social ones. Recent research on social remittances offers that nonmonetary remittances (care for family members, property, businesses; food; pictures, etc.) may actually flow to the migrant laborer, allowing the migrant to be away from home and make money (Mazzucato 2009). However, these studies do not capture the reality that migrants may have formed multiple families, including old one(s) in the home country and newer one(s) in the sending country. Building on this rich extant literature, using our research with labor migrants in Israel, we offer insight examining how the formation of new families (unlikely according to Luke (2010) and others) affects remittance practices; specifically: what causes migrants to cease remitting?

### **The New Family Contract: Changing Family Structures**

Most remittance research has engaged aggregate level data and concentrated on average levels of remittance (Mansoor and Quillin 2007). We use an individual level of analysis to build theory about why remittance patterns change. We focus on *time* and (multiple) *family status* and their impact on remittances. Our findings

emerge from analysis of interview data complemented by survey data. We argue that "family" is a significant determinant of remittances; however, here we refer not just to family of origin, the most common unit of analysis in remittance literature, but also to the newly formed families in the receiving state.

### **Changing the Contract**

We propose that labor migrants who remain abroad for a substantial time period will remit funds, if that was part of the initial "deal." Some might find new (love, life, sex and/or parenting) partners and as a result re-negotiate their remittance arrangements but the decline would be moderate (Luke, 2010). Assume a migrant arrived without dependents (either as a single person or left behind a spouse/partner and children). If that migrant then establishes a new core family in the host country, the migrant would then start thinking about the needs of the new family before those of the home country origin family. As a result, remittances to the home country origin family would decline substantially, potentially ceasing, while more savings and investment for the "new family" would be expected to accrue. We name this idea the "*new family contract*" (see Table 2).

We contend that remittance patterns are not static but are related to time abroad, composition of family and whether a new family is formed. Migrants who spend long periods of time in the receiving country are more likely to reduce or curtail their remittances than those staying for a shorter time. Migrants who arrive with the nuclear family from the host country are unlikely to change remittance patterns and continue to remit for the reasons provided in Table 1 (see Lucas and Stark 1985; Mata-Codesal, King and Vullnetari 2011). This is infrequently an issue of concern since temporary labor migrants often may not bring accompanying family members to the receiving country. (This limitation may even be policy intended to entice migrant workers to leave the host country.) Second, migrants who do not acquire additional families or love partner relationships are also unlikely to change their remittance patterns. We posit that because



**Table 2: New Addition to Typologies of Remittance**

Motive	Explanation	Recipient	Rationale/Motivation
<b><i>New Family Contract</i></b>	Remittances only for intermittent or emergency events	Family, household, village	Dynamic expression: After founding own nuclear family, the needs of nuclear family prevail OR ability to influence funds in home country decline OR fear of impoverishment leads to personal savings instead of remittances

Source: Authors.

there is no new family contract or obligations established, the original deal remains intact. (Obviously, other issues affect the cessation of remittances and should be investigated. Here, we concentrate on the *new family contract*.) Finally, as time passes – and for those who do not fall under the *altruistic* typology even less time – some migrants may begin to perceive themselves as “*permanent residents*” of the host state. This may happen whether or not they have gained any legal status or continue to imagine return migration. As a result, the “permanent resident” migrants will start saving for themselves and their ‘new’ family for life in the host state.

Therefore, under the *new family contract* migrants remit based on one of the motivational explanations (see Table 2). However, those who do not fall under the *altruistic* rationale (and in some cases, even those who remit for altruistic reasons), and start a new family, will in time *decrease* their remittances, motivated by both self-interest and the need for some insurance. That is, they have two main motivations to decrease the remittances: first, financial self-interest, i.e. taking care of their new, host country-based, nuclear family; and second, insurance or saving for their own and their new family’s future in the receiving state. The migrant is no longer exclusively thinking about return, but hedging bets for life in the receiving state or potentially planning for return but a future for their children in the receiving state. A “myth of return” or believing that the migrant will return to the home country even as he continues to live in the receiving country is not precluded here; it

is subverted to a rational calculation that real life in the receiving state takes precedence over the imagined life to come in the home country. Even when the migrant himself plans return, he often recognizes that his children – born and raised in the host country – may not wish to immigrate to the parents’ homeland or are unable to accompany him due to citizenship/immigration issues. Therefore, investments are split between the necessity to support return for the migrant (and spouse) and permanence for the children in the host country. As a result, remittances during the migrant’s tenure may decline to nothing.

### **The Israeli Case**

#### *Temporary Labor Migrants in Israel*

Following the closure of the borders between Israel proper and the Occupied Territories as a result of the Palestinian civil uprising (the Intifada), in the late 1980s, Israel began importing foreign labor to replace the Palestinian workers who were denied entry to Israel. Israeli employers clamored for construction and agricultural workers. Rather than modernize conditions or make jobs more appealing to Israelis, firms pressured the government for migrant workers, once realizing the contract workers’ profitability. Over time, employers demanded expansion of the number of migrants to perform low-paid, low-prestige jobs, including performing childcare, eldercare and household assistance (Bartram 2010). Some also argue that Israel imported workers to weaken the Palestinian hand in negotiations (Raijman and Kemp 2007). Table 3 reflects figures of legal migrant workers. There are now

anywhere between 250,000 and 350,000 foreign workers – approximately two thirds of whom have fallen out of legal status. (An additional 60,000 refugees/asylumseekers fleeing civil war and extreme poverty in Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea are also resident in Israel.) Migrant workers comprise about 5 percent of total population and about 10 percent of the labor force in Israel (Nathan 2013). Most foreign workers come predominantly from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and South America. Gender distribution varies largely by country of origin and type of work performed in Israel. For example, those from the Philippines are largely caregivers and are predominantly female. In contrast, those from China are almost exclusively male and engaged in construction. Their statuses in Israel vary and include legally-present contract workers, visa overstayers, illegally-present border crossers, people with various statuses working without permits and refugees/asylum seekers.

Even for those present in Israel under contract, the situation is not simple. Israel issues permits to specific firms for a given number of migrants per year who indenture workers in, agriculture, construction, hospitality, ethnic cookery/catering, nursing/caregiving, welding and industrial professions. In all but caregiving, there are fixed annual quotas. To a limited extent, Israeli law has tried to protect the workers by mandating rest time, and religious practice time, setting wage and labor standards, establishing grievance procedures and publishing a multilingual guide of foreign workers' rights (Harper and Zubida 2010a). However, labor standards are complicated for the workers, as employers are simultaneously responsible for offering work and for responding to workers' complaints about that work. If workers complain about work conditions, they risk contract rescission and loss of contract fees. Since legal status is tied to employment, workers also lose legal residency. As a result, workers often refrain from complaining – except to some nonprofit organizations – and, not infrequently, suffer abuse (Harper and Zubida 2010).

Since Israeli policy is designed for voluntary, temporary, contract workers, when contracts

**Table 3: Legal Labor Migrants in Israel (2010)**

Origin Country	Numbers (in thousands)
Total	118.5
Asia Total	92.1
India	5.8
Turkey	2.7
Nepal	8.4
China	11.1
Sri Lanka	3.1
Philippines	30.9
Thailand	28.4
Other	1.7
Africa Total	0.4
Europe Total	24.7
Bulgaria	1.7
FSU	10.9
Germany	0.2
United Kingdom	0.1
Romania	10.8
Other	1.0
America Oceania Total	1.1
USA	0.4
Others	0.7
Unknown	0.2

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

expire or are cancelled or migrants fall out of status, Israel largely uses financial incentives and deportation to repatriate. However, many migrants still try to remain illegally and work without proper authorization. Ironically, and in contrast to the experience for labor migrants elsewhere, workers without employment contracts have more freedom than their legal coun-

terparts as they may live where they can find housing, charge the price they wish for their labor, and take or leave jobs, at will. However, clearly, they trade employment freedom for more precarious residency status (Willen 2007; Kemp 2007; Hanna Zohar interview 2011).

Despite these conditions, migrants remain in Israel and remit funds. The World Bank reports (see: Ratha, Mohapatra and Silwal 2011) that remittances flows from Israel are ranked among the world's top remitting countries, similar to the United Kingdom, Denmark and Australia. Israel ranks in remittances among such foreign labor migrant-intensive states as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain (Ratha, Mohapatra & Silwal 2011).

Although some migrants have made Israel their home, they remain on the margins of Israeli society. Some have formed families in Israel or have brought their children to Israel. There are about 1200 children of labor migrants in Israel. (There are an estimated additional 2000 children of asylumseekers/refugees from Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea.) The children attend Israeli schools and participate in daily life in Israel. Many know no other language but Hebrew. As a result, many of these children of migrants self-identify as Israelis and, are being socialized as Israelis through the school system. (Their experiences were documented in the Academy Award winning documentary "Strangers No More" Directors Kirk Simon and Karen Goodman. [www.strangersnomore.com](http://www.strangersnomore.com)). Their future remains unclear as Israel imposes intermittent periods of acceptance and rejection. During progressive times, Israel talks of its obligation to the weakest members of the polity (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Other times, it orders mass deportations and random seizures and threatens to deport children from school. (See the webpage of the struggle against the children deportation here: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Israeli-Children/139798801913>). Still, the number of workers increases, as does the percentage of those working illegally as a percentage of total workers. Although Israel imagined in the 1980s rotating temporary labor migrants, these migrants are becoming *de facto* permanent residents.

## Methodology

### *Interviews and Surveys*

To understand migrants' inclusion in and exclusion from Israeli society, in 2010 we conducted a multiple methods research design. In the course of performing analysis, we discovered that remittances do not always continue unabated and we began to question remittance practices. Our findings here emerge from that research. We interviewed 26 temporary workers from 11 countries about their thoughts, experiences, and opinions about life in Israel for foreign workers and opportunities for inclusion in and exclusion from the Israeli polity as well as transnational experiences. We discussed when, why, how and how much they transferred. We inquired about initial and subsequent agreements about remittances and their expectations for when (or if) they returned to the home country. We discussed decision-making and disbursement practices. Finally, we inquired how remittances affected dynamics of their relationships with their families and communities of origin. We questioned how remittances affected their new families (if any), expectations for future families, communities in Israel and any other people in their social circle beyond the home country or Israel (as many had relatives working or studying in third countries).

To provide a biographical sketch of our interview partners, our participants were predominantly female (3:1 ratio), with a mean age of 32. Their range of tenure in Israel was between 4 and 23 years, with a mean of 8.5 years. They emanated mostly from Asia (60 percent), then Africa (30 percent) and finally Latin America (10 percent). Half were caregivers; about a quarter were cleaners and the remainder was construction workers and gardeners.

Initial contact was made through postings and outreach through partners at NGO's and snowballing. Interview partners were informed of their rights as research participants and gave consent before the interviews. Participants chose the language (English, Hebrew, French or Spanish) used for the interview. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded according to standard grounded theory practices (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

**Table 4: Survey Sample Characteristics**

Gender (in %)		Race (in %)		National Origin (in %)	
Male	14	Asian	60	Philippines	64
Female	61	Black/African	11	Nepal	2
Missing	25	Indian Subcontinent	1	Ghana	10
		Missing	28	Ethiopia	1
				Nigeria	1
				Missing	22
Total	100	Total	100	Total	100

Source: Authors.

Drawing on the findings from the interviews, we conducted a short survey to supplement the interview data. We relied on available subjects technique as the lack of sampling prevented a probability sample (see: Babbie 2007). We surveyed people at worship places and at the new central bus station in Tel Aviv-Yaffo, a common place for migrant workers. We sampled one hundred foreign workers. Their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 4. It should be noted that 78 of 100 survey participants chose to disclose their ethnicity, 82 percent of whom are Filipinos. Hence, the findings from the survey may be disproportionately representative of Filipino/as. Further, as most Filipino/as in Israel are caregivers, that category is also oversampled. More work would need to be done to see if the findings remain significant across national groups, gender and employment categories.

### Findings

#### *Family Construction and Remittances*

Despite status and income insecurity, migrants continue to come and remain in Israel, even placing themselves in increasingly precarious situations, such as having children who have no status in Israel and risking deportation (Harper and Zubida 2010). Regardless of the living standards insecurity in Israel, they report remitting motivations consistent with the literature (see Table 1).

Some expressed their remittance practices as in line with known altruistic, self-interested, participating in an implicit family contract (for loan repayment or for insurance) or providing community investment models. However, the data show that changes in family construction (i.e., *new family contract*) had a significant impact on the decision to reduce or discontinue remittances. The shift to the new family contract is complex. Over time, the migrants became increasingly estranged from their home country, families and communities. This should not be surprising: like temporary workers the world over, they emigrated imagining short sojourns abroad and ended up staying longer. In our survey, 65 percent of the foreign workers intended to stay no more than 5 years but remained much longer than intended. Both in survey and interview data, migrants stayed not just a few years longer than intended, but 5, 10, 15 or 20 years longer. Over 70 percent reported that “earning money for remittances” was their primary reason for migration. However, over time, the money gained more meaning than simply providing for those who stayed back home. It represented a behavior that was not presented as part of the remittance behaviors in the extant literature (in Table 1). It meant a tethered connection to the family. Often, the migrants cannot leave Israel (for financial or migration status reasons). Sending money becomes the unique sig-

nificant contact point between the migrant and the left-behind family. That is, over years, people do not see one another or share daily life experiences or life cycle experiences. The remittances relationships are the only significant contemporary act that links people together. Further, the elevated position that the migrant experiences early in his tenure abroad as the “money sender,” over time, declines as knowledge of local conditions is limited to memory, storytelling and media representations. Over time, the majority of spending decisions are made by remittance recipients. Should there be only intermittent or no physical contact, the exchange relationship may actually weaken relations with the home country and distort already contorted relationships. A long time (20 plus years) foreign worker from Ghana observes how complicated parenting from abroad actually is:

You have a kid, you call on the telephone and he tells you “I don’t know you.” And how would you feel? Yet, you can’t get up and leave and go because you think economically then the future, it would not be good for him. So what do they do? They end up most of the time trying to buy the love and affection of their children, by giving money and that kind of thing...Because it’s like they have a World Bank there: anything at all they thought they need, they have to ask and you are also here, you are compelled whether you have or you don’t have, because if you don’t do it because they say they don’t like you. They say “For ten years I’ve never seen you. I don’t even know how you look like and when I need this one (thing) and also you don’t want to give me.” ... You do it so they remember you are the parent.

### Family Status and Remittances

Familial status plays a significant role in remittance motivations. Individuals may marry, have children, send some or all children to the home country, divorce, bring children or other family members to the receiving state. As familial status changes, so do motivations for remittances. Migrants may remit because of one motivation (as reflected in Table 1), but as their familial status changes, migrants remit for different reasons. Through the formation of the new family contract, the migrant becomes less as an extension

of the needs of the home country family/community, and more an independent actor with agency. Remittance motivations and practices become more complicated when husbands and wives have different origin countries. A caregiver explains that her family status change had a profound effect on her regular remittance sending:

(My family is) understanding that I have my own family here. I need to give them a future...sometimes, (they ask me to send things) but not all the time. If they really, really need, money, not like before when I have a visa, when I am, I am, single. I don’t have family... (When I was single, I sent money). Every month. But when I get married, not every month. I try to give. But...

### Changing Location, Changing Remittances

Family members may also join the migrant in the new state and now become new remitters and/or responsible for their own families, as explained by a longtime resident Filipina:

I took care of my entire family. I have 4 sisters. All of them are married today but they were not back then. Three of them are here in Israel, working and married. So now I do not need to keep on sending money to my family. When I first arrived here I felt I can work and only then, after I *histadarti* (made it), I invited my sisters to come here to work.

Sometimes, migrants and native Israelis marry. Some relationships are borne of love and others of convenience. As a result of these unions, attachments to the home country can become strained or even discontinued. A Filipino explained that his mother came to Israel as a caregiver to support the whole family financially. After a few years abroad, his mother divorced his handicapped father and married her Israeli employer. She remitted even after the divorce for the whole family for years. Once his father died, her remittances to the extended family ceased completely.

My mother sent money for years, even after, after she divorced my father...She married (an Israeli), but that was to be sure she had some money. I know she sent money to my father until he died... but then no more. I came here...and she doesn’t send anything now...



### Changing relationships

After being the financial caregiver for perhaps decades and often having lost meaningful contacts in the sending country (including tragically and ironically, potentially even the children and relatives whose care was the initial impetus for emigration), migrants make an assessment that they must develop a retirement plan, as they need to provide for the *new family*, and for (multiple) children from different mothers/fathers in different locations.

Hence, for all of these reasons – new spouse, marriage and children – i.e. founding a *new family* (in aggregate, singularly or in combination), migrants may alter their remittance practices. These changes may be in amount, duration, frequency, purpose or method of transmission. A Ghanaian cleaner married to a Filipina caregiver explains that remittances are complicated. He has four children from different mothers in Ghana and he and his current Filipina wife have children together in Israel as well.

We all do the same. Now we have new expenses, we cannot send home like before. But we don't care whose child is whose. If they need money, they call and we just send them money ...When I first came here, not only my children were asking for money but my brothers, my sisters, everyone and you know what to do. You just send money because you know they don't have it...I do what I can to help but I can't do what I did before...I pay the school fees if they need it and then if they want something else I tell them they have to do it on their own or else they'll just sit around and wait for you. My son just finished school so I tell him you have to do it on your own... For my wife it's the same because she also has a child in the Philippines. Now we send less. The Filipinos they are better with money than we are. Filipino women know how to handle money...We send it back every one two months and for school fees... and if they ask for it...for emergencies.

Here, the new relationship dictated not whether money would be sent but how it would be sent. Although both spouses were responsive to home country requests and obligations to children left behind, the “new” wife was responsible for deciding how the family money would be spent and managed. A new family contract was estab-

lished and the terms of relations as represented by remittances to the home country are negotiated not just between the migrant and the family of origin but also between the migrant and his or her spouse.

### Conclusion

In this paper we argued that the rationale for remittances is a dynamic, and is based on experience reflecting changes over time, in family status and personal changes in the host country. We can think about remittance practices on a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, we see individuals engaging in self-abnegating behavior for all of the reasons contained in the literature, aiding the family and/or community in the homeland while leaving only the bare essentials for sustenance. At the opposite end, is a person virtually unknown in the literature coming to the receiving state of his own volition with (virtually) no ties to the home country. The link between those in the sending country and those in receiving state is often found in the form of remittances. We argue that there is no binary scale, but that between the extreme points on the spectrum, one finds an array of remittance practices. Expectations for remittances may be established at arrival but are renegotiated over time. These renegotiations may yield an end to regular remittances. By examining aggregate flows these changes in remittance behaviors might be overlooked. There is an inherent assumption that remittances never cease; our data, which uses an individual level of analysis, presents a different picture.

Furthermore, like the social remittances literature (Werbner 1990; Schiller and Fouron 2001; Cliggett 2005; Mazzucato 2009; Luke 2010; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) we find that relationships between family members are a key element in remittance practices. We argue that in generating a *new family contract*, migrants come to terms with their new life circumstances in both practical and emotional terms. Our research reveals when individuals gain new relationships in the receiving state, they decrease regular remittances. They sometimes even *halt* regular remittances completely, even if they are willing

to continue sporadic or rare “emergency” infusions. The obvious reason appears that people simply have less money to send as they try to foster relationships or care for their own children in the host country. However, it is not just an economic calculation but a rational decision about locus of life. In constructing a family in the receiving state and thus transforming their social role from migrant abroad to someone’s husband or wife, mother or father, the locus of life shifts to the receiving state. As such, any non-economic need to send money and connect with the sending country is reduced. This is true even if the need to receive and the ability to send remittances have not changed (Harper and Zubida 2010(b)). Even when migrants could not afford to remit, they denied themselves to abject suffering so that money could be sent. This self-abnegation was not practiced once migrants generated a new family contract. The new familial relationship took precedence.

Furthermore, family members ceased pressuring or expecting remittances as new families were established in the receiving state. They accepted the rupture with the origin family. Children left behind continued to receive funds but if migrants could not control the use of the funds,

relationships strained and remittance patterns also sometimes changed. Future research should examine what happens when new families or relationships are formed without the knowledge of the origin family and how remittance decisions are negotiated within couples and for couples of differing ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. Further research could also examine how national origin, coming from states with state-designed labor migration programs, ability to adjust immigration status and deportation of spouses or children affects remittance practices. Lack of control seemed to encourage the formation of an insurance plan in the receiving state, as imaginations of a future in the sending country appeared more remote. If migrants had concrete evidence that their remittances were not spent according to intended purposes, it decreased desire to continue remittances and increased thoughts of insurance plans in the receiving state. In short, we find that as new family contracts are established, the ability and interest in regular remittances declines significantly. Additional research should be conducted to test and determine if actual flows, amounts and durations do change and to examine the issue from the perspective of the remittance recipients.

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