

**Shifting Territories:
Towards a methodology for a creative emancipatory approach to
place-making, the role of spaza shops in Cornubia, Blackburn, KZN**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Built Environment
in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment,
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Abstract

This research argues that the idea of a 'breaking new ground' initiative in urban planning demands the effort of unearthing existing alternative practices and attitudes in the pursuit of spatial justice (Soja 2010). The study is located in Cornubia, a large human settlement development on the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. Contextualised within the national landscape of state-housing provision, and the theoretical lens of place-making and spatial justice, it aims to offer both theoretical and practical insights into the gap between theory and practice in current participatory practices in planning and housing. It explores how creative methodologies may be useful mechanisms for participatory planning, especially in facilitating and translating how residents in housing developments make meaning out of the places they live in. It engages how these may differ, or not, from meaning-making done by state planners and officials.

To demonstrate the argument, the thesis uses the example of spaza shops both as a metaphor and a popular initiative. Following on, it suggests that spaza (as creative impulses) owners could take the form of interlocutors who can facilitate dialogue between official top-down planning and quotidian bottom-up operations within the context of the Cornubia development. In doing so, the potential for dialogue in a creative form that already exists 'informally' as the popular innovations/manifestations exemplified in the spaza shop, can be revealed.

It is in the interstitial space of misunderstanding, where communication often breaks down between the state and the street, that this research has positioned art/creative practice as a way of opening up dialogue within and between individuals, communities, and the state. In addition, arts-based/informed methods, including the use of drawing, Lego blocks, image theatre (drama), and Scrabble are employed as data-generating tools. Furthermore, workshops, focus groups, and face-to-face interviews are

conducted to reflect, articulate and reveal the experience of the participants living in a human settlement and their understanding of space and urban planning. The thesis also draws on a series of interviews with the built environment specialists involved both directly and administratively in the project. The objective is to explore the potential for the conceptualisation of powerful catalysts for transformative forms of politics and for providing new sets of resources for urban and spatial thinking

Theoretically, the dissertation argues that spazas should be read as popular culture since popular culture is both evasive and resistant (Fiske 1989) and is created “out of the resources, both discursive and material that are provided by the social system that disempowers [the people]” (Fiske 1989:2). Spazas are creative impulses in their own right, developed organically, as critical responses to an environment which has limited access and spaces for the working-class and poor to exercise their various freedoms whether they be economic, spatial, social or cultural.

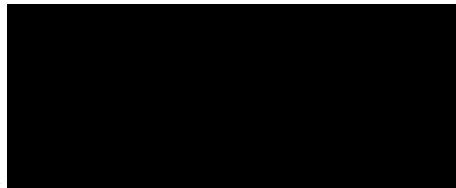
Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DPhil in the Built Environment,
in the Graduate Programme in Architecture,
Durban University of Technology,
South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was used and that my Supervisor was informed of their identity and details.

This work is being submitted to the Urban Futures Centre,
Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, DUT.

None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.



_____ Mohammed Farwa Noorani Sanaa geer

_____ 25.09.2023 _____

Date

For Louis
one of my guardian angels

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Chapter 1: Shifting Territories

people in space make place

Envoi

Imprisoned by four walls
(to the North, the crystal of non-knowledge
a landscape to be invented
to the South, reflective memory
to the East, the mirror
to the West, stone and the song of silence)
I wrote messages, but received no reply.

Octavio Paz
("Envoi" in Lefebvre, H., 1974. *The Production of Space*)

Learning to Listen: A Preface

I am an architect, I am not an architect. I studied architecture at the then University of Natal and graduated in 2000 after spending three years working and traveling across three continents. My experience of the profession has, over the last 23 years, led me to broaden my definition of architecture to focus on social change and spatial justice rather than the built form, thus shifting my focus from architecture to what I call 'architecture without walls'. This shift in philosophy, politics and practice has in a sense redefined me as an artist, although I would prefer to see it as broadening the concept of architecture.

During the course of the last twenty years, through the conceptualisation and implementation of the 'City Walk' initiative (Gurney 2015) I have observed and

engaged directly with, the flux and mutability of the city of Durban, the city in which I live. The 'City Walk' is a type of provocative performance that takes the form of a guided group-walk along the busiest pedestrian routes into the city centre, a path trodden by thousands of people who live in informal settlements and walk daily into the city centre for work. These observations and engagements have resulted in an oratory performance which is a conversation between myself, my audience and the people who live in the city, as much as it is a critique of the cityscape. The 'City Walk' performance now includes 17 major cities internationally.

For many years I have practiced and created multi-media artworks including live performance, film/video, sculpture, installation, and architecture. Most are linked to ideas of the urban and how we are (re)inventing what it means to be human in these spaces and include site-responsive architectural installations that engage the urban fabric in an often openly critical and sometimes provocative manner. Typically, my approach is to incite curiosity. In 2008 I co-founded '*dala*' a non-profit organisation (NPO) that engages art and architecture for social justice through alternative creative practices. *Dala's* work was about creating methods for interfacing the built environment and the people that occupy those spaces. It had at its heart an arts-based approach to creating a platform for democratic participation (McQuail 2005). The aim was to shift the lens through which we imagined place-making in (post-apartheid)South Africa.

It was through the work of one of the projects initiated by *dala* that I came to be researching and writing this doctoral study; form of thinking and doing I was not as comfortable or familiar with as my more practical artistic practice. I had started a new project called 'Shifting Territories' (explored further in Chapter 2) in the then-new housing project of Cornubia. Cornubia is a large private-public housing development that aimed to deliver title-deed housing units to unemployed and low-wage families (colloquially known as RDP housing after the Reconstruction and Development Plan drafted at the dawn of democracy in the country). Community-based research experts Shirley White and Sadanandan Nair (1999) call for a commitment at the entry-level stage of interfacing with the community to a lengthy investment of time. For *dala*, this commitment started first with everyday conversations followed by politicised conversation or dialogue (Freire 1970). Intrinsic to both of these is 'listening'. Through

this project, I had begun to explore and attempt to 're'-politicise the concept of listening: Active listening, listening for Action is listening in Action.

Being in Cornubia and working on a range of different art projects sparked my own conceptual curiosity. I wanted to explore whether creative methods could unlock some of the urgent issues around weak participatory planning and engagement by local government that was being revealed in the conversations I had with residents living in Cornubia. Could some of the participatory practices I had used to engage people in arts-based site-specific performances (Kwon 2004) be used in a more systematic research process to model how to engage as an interlocutor between official top-down planning, and everyday bottom-up experiences? Artistic processes can assist in working against dynamic systems of power, privilege, and oppression that operate in urban planning and decision-making. 'Working against' in this sense is a critique of a system that tends to engage in forms of technocratic planning where service delivery (a concept to be discussed later) is designed through top-down initiatives. Systemic creativity is more than a dialectical tool between the participants, in their capacity as residents and me, in my capacity as a researcher, it is an emerging practice that moves into a creolised medium (Glissant, 1981, Chamoiseau, 2018) enabling a better comprehension between the personal, cultural, and institutional.

I wanted to use an arts-based approach to explore how people living in Cornubia understood and imagined spatial planning. Particularly to compare whether the types of spaces and places they desire differ or align with the plans that eThekweni Metropolitan Council had in mind for Cornubia. As this thesis illustrates there are seldom binary answers to these complex questions. Within one housing development, desires on the ground can align closely with what local government is promising whilst, simultaneously, conflicting needs can also directly cause tension between the local state and residents, depending on what is being planned at the time.

This study is an experiment in a more anti-disciplinarian¹ discourse where the boundaries of disciplines blur into each other. It is hoped that this anti-disciplinary approach can inspire us to imagine something new within the built environment fields: possibly a new form of participation that would react against the usual top-down community consultation processes that have reproduced exclusions and forms of silencing for many communities across our city. It is my conviction that such an alternative process has the potential to create a catalyst for a space of protest and innovative dialogue which demands a more in-depth forward-thinking outlook on the existing local government participation mechanisms, shifting how they conceptualise community involvement in the process of development and decision-making in state-delivered housing projects, such as Cornubia, as explored in this study.

Perhaps it is time to listen to our artists.

Perhaps it is time to listen to our poets.

Perhaps it is time to listen with our hearts.

The aim of this thesis is not to advocate for artistically creative methodologies as frivolous interventions or some kind of panacea for participatory planning. Rather, I argue that creative methods such as the ones developed for this research study can act as a strategic starting point for richer engagements that offer participation and empowerment *within* formal planning processes. As this research bears out, such methods certainly have the potential to regain a sense of agency for participants so that further conversations, dialogues, relationships, trust, and actions are seen as possible. This is particularly useful in cases where there is deep mistrust and antagonism between communities on the ground and municipal or government officials.

This study argues that creative methods can foster meaningful dialogues which in turn establish relationships and trust that allow for the recognition and building (to some

¹ Anti-disciplinarity is an innovative approach to processes and research where the researcher operates in spaces that do not necessarily fit into one existing form, working in-between disciplines while negotiating a new framework, language, and methods for the research (Asadi, 2018).

extent) of social networks. The aim is to formulate an alternative language in planning, designed not just by the so-called built environment experts, but also by the people who live in and make homes out of state-delivered housing projects. While participation is a much-desired policy and theoretical aim, in South Africa there are few examples of how this participation should be implemented on the ground in housing developments. Through more participatory creative practices, we can experiment with an alternative 'language' through which to listen to each other's desires and needs in relation to the built form. It is in spaces like these that we are then able to recognise how and why people strategise to meet their own needs, and what kinds of new socio-spatial arrangements emerge as responsive strategies to address these. As this thesis argues, one such response is that of the spaza shops in Cornubia.

Spaza shops are informal business practices that often emerge from the selling of goods either in public spaces or from inside people's homes. These traditionally arose because of apartheid spatial planning in which people did not have access to social goods and amenities as was the case in well-integrated suburbs which were designed only for white people. What this research shows is that spaza shops are an integral place-making practice in the South African context. Spazas, whilst addressing a very real need of providing daily food and household goods to South Africa's working-class and poor, who often live long distances away from services and amenities, are also popular cultural forms. Spazas, when read as a 'language' of the built form that shows creativity and ground-up innovation, can be viewed as manifestations of social infrastructure that should be considered a serious resource to engage in participatory planning methods.

The following section outlines the focus of the chapters in this thesis to offer an overview for the reader as to what emerges from such a creative study, and to whet the appetite before diving into this somewhat untraditional piece of writing by myself, both an artist and an architect, who wanted to explore what I, and hopefully others, might learn from a scholarly approach to thinking through creative methods and participatory planning.

Structure of this thesis

Chapter two, entitled 'Setting the scene', engages the context and sets the scene for the research. It begins by describing the inception of Cornubia as a state housing project that gives title deeds to low-income families, and gives some details about its context. An important aspect of the Cornubia Housing Program is that its development is characterised by the innovative introduction of the 'Breaking New Ground' initiative. This concept had the vision to focus on a holistic approach of providing housing and putting in place a more liveable environment in what the National Government called a human settlement. The chapter goes on to describe some of the creative projects that I have undertaken in the housing development of Cornubia, namely *Community Dialogue*, *Ama Tuck Shop* and *What is Home?* The brief description of this past work is important for two reasons. Firstly, they provide a richer and more textured understanding of the built environment and the inhabitants of Cornubia so that the reader feels more embedded within the everyday life of a new housing development. Secondly, it is important to be transparent about my positionality within this doctoral research. I have a prior relationship with this space and some of the people who live in it. This of course shapes the research in important ways. While Chapter two sets the scene for the research it starts to show how creative methods can play a crucial part in designing a cognitive space for a better understanding of our relationship with space. The chapter appropriately articulates that an understanding of context is not only defined by geography but also by the narratives it holds.

Chapter three engages directly with the most important theoretical concepts which form the foundations upon which the arguments of this thesis emerge. Its theoretical focus is outlined below, but it should be noted that the following methodology section holds additional theoretical and praxis-based literature that has fundamentally shaped the creative methods. As this research is done across and outside of established disciplines, the theory is often woven into specific arguments as disentangling the theory from certain creative practices felt disingenuous to the conceptualisation and methods that took place over the study period. Accordingly, three conceptual threads emerging out of three categories of literature have been recognised. The first is entitled

Movement of the People. The second is *Rights to the People* and the third, *Power to the People*.

Movement of the People is concerned with the phenomenon of post-apartheid urbanisation and is interested in the Cornubia Human Settlement as case study. The settlement can be considered a post-apartheid response to the increasing influx of poor people in the city. It has become apparent that the government now needs to supply housing to the poor closer to the economic centre. As we know, migration is often the effect of people going in search of a better life, but the idea which this thesis is more interested in is how the city, or more importantly, how urban housing developments like Cornubia have been appropriated by the urban poor for their own purposes (Lefebvre, 1974; Pieterse, 2008; Bayat, 2013; Simone, 2008, De Certeau, 1984). Often, government response is through autocratic means which can or overlook certain essential needs of the people. This in turn opens a gap where struggle, improvisation, and popular innovation become necessary.

The second thread of Chapter three engages with *Rights to the People* which examines the theoretical possibilities around how the concept of appropriation can be useful if we want to meaningfully answer questions about urban planning and participation (Hamdi, 2004; Williams, 2006). If, as mentioned above, top-down approaches 'fall short', how can the process of a cooperative urban-planning ethos be reimagined to address these needs more successfully? Or can they? The ideas of democracy and spatial justice (Soja, 2010; 2009; Dikeç, 2001) become very relevant here and these are concepts that are at the political core of this work.

The spaza shops, as popular culture (Fiske, 1989; Barber, 1997) are in focus in the final section entitled *Power to the People*. This section considers how spaza owners are key characters who inhabit and subvert affective spaces for their own purposes. *Power to the People* also touches on, explores, and appropriates the theoretical concept of the *in-between* (Bhabha, 1994) to put forward the argument that the spaza shops in Cornubia and beyond can be seen as a metaphor that blurs the boundaries between house/home, informal/formal, private/public and community/state. The benefit of this metaphor is that it can offer a different reading of a vibrant world where

the ordinary (Perec, 1997), the everyday (De Certeau, 1984), constitutes itself and is agentic in the process of making new forms of urban life.

Chapter four is the Methodology. The chapter outlines the research questions, paradigms, and methodology of this thesis. The creative workshops, as well as other methods employed to collect the data, such as the interviews conducted with built environment experts, and the spaza shop owners, are described in detail. These methods present one form of art-based research methodology (Knowles and Cole, 2008) that can be used by both residents and built environment practitioners in participatory planning work. However, the chapter moves beyond a mere description of the methodologies and methods used to answer the research questions. It also presents the theoretical and emancipatory practices that underpin the development of the four workshops held with participants and begins to formulate an argument for creative practices and arts-based approaches as a much-needed method to build participatory planning. The chapter reveals how methodologically rooting methods in Participatory Action Research (Chilisa and Preece 2005), can enable skills transfer demonstrating a popular engagement with the geographic, socio-economic, and political landscape and the challenges it presents.

Chapter five is the first of two analysis chapters. Entitled *Possibilities of an Alternative Creative Practice* it analyses the narrative and visual data from the four workshops described in the methodology chapter. The analysis extends to the relational processes and subsequent dialogues that emerged during the workshops. Here, the research question about how creative methods can elicit dialogue is engaged. The chapter demonstrates how artistic initiatives and creative processes can unearth rich narrative data and meaningful engagement around how people in Cornubia understand spatial planning. The chapter explores how facilitating different kinds of conversations whilst paying attention to both form and method in creating spaces for conversation, enables dialogue that participants perceive as meaningful and honest. Importantly, participants also increasingly found a sense of agency and imagination for building solidarity with each other.

In chapter six I analyse the themes that emerged from the narrative data, both the discussions from the creative workshops and the interviews conducted with various

participants. Five dominant themes emerged from this study: they provide structures for thematic analysis, whilst at times serving desires, feelings, and forms of action for participants. The five themes analysed are *Back to the Future*, *Participation*, *Abandonment by the State*, *Solidarity*, and *Agency and Democracy*. It is important to reiterate that the workshops designed for this study demonstrated how creative methods allowed for the participants to have space to be open and relaxed, easing them into being able to reflect on their own narratives with the researcher. The participants are also simultaneously analysing their own dialogue and the reality of living in Cornubia, and its benefit and challenges. In this chapter, I show how these themes exposed a lack of participatory planning which is a challenge for the government when engaging in the settlement. Here, the participants make an urgent call for meaningful engagements to build trust between the residents and the municipality to prevent feelings of distrust and anger towards the state from being further entrenched.

Chapter 7 is entitled *Re-imagining the Spaza Shop* and analyses how spaza shops, an important component in the everyday lives of the residents of Cornubia, contribute to the *ideal image* of Cornubia as identified by the participants. The chapter will demonstrate how spaza shops are agents informally engaging with issues of development and socio-spatial needs that arise in the communities they serve. It also considers how spaza shops can be regarded as democratic actions which are already engaging in place-making. I argue that these informal economic activities should be reconceptualised as spaces of social and cultural invention. I also argue that they provide social infrastructure, infrastructure that should be supported rather than dismantled. Most evident and relevant to this study is the spaza shop emerged as a resilient popular symbol and strategy for survival.

The final chapter of the thesis unpacks the findings from the Methodology and three analysis chapters in direct relation to my research questions. It pulls together a concise argument for a more creative approach to the planning challenges and presents the argument for the spaza shop as the prevailing example of how social structures on the ground emerge to address needs. It is also argued that the effort of unearthing and creating alternative practices and attitudes for meaningful participatory democracy in the pursuit of spatial justice (Soja 2010) is necessary and timeous.

Chapter 2: Where the roads have no name

Setting the scene

Sugar cane (extract)

Black-and-white negatives from a picture
history of the sugar trade develop
in my dreams, a dozen able-bodied slaves
hacking forward through a field of cane.
Sweat trickles down from forehead into eye
as they sheave up stalks and cart them to the mill
where grinding iron rollers will express a thin
sucrose solution that, when not refined,
goes from blackstrap molasses on into rum,
a demon conveniently negotiable for slaves.
The master under the impression he owned
these useful properties naturally never thought
of offering them a piece of the wedding cake,
the big white house that bubbling brown sugar built
and paid for, unnaturally processed (...)

Alfred Corn²

² Alfred Corn, "Sugar Cane" from Present (Washington: Counterpoint Press, 1997). Copyright © 1997



Map 1: Cornubia Human Settlement Aerial View
(Original image from Google Earth 2017)

As Alfred Corn's poem emotively explores, sugar cane farming has historically been intimately tied up with the oppressive exploitation of its workers, whether they be the slaves in the poet's homeland of America or, in South Africa, black (and I include Indian) sugar estate workers. The big industry player who owned many of the sugar cane farms in South Africa, and used indentured laborers to work the land was Sir James Liege Hulett who arrived in the then Province of Natal from the United Kingdom in 1858. He formed the Hulett company in 1892. He owned extensive farmland and established the first mill in 1903. Today the company is known as Tongaat-Hulett and still controls much of the land. In the 1990s at the end of apartheid, some of the big landowners like Tongaat-Hulett started to negotiate with the new democratic government to both safeguard their business interests and to free up land for private-public partnerships aimed at addressing social and economic needs.

A name is not a road

A simple Wikipedia search revealed that Cornubia is the Latin name for Cornwall, a Ceremonial County and unitary authority area of England within the United Kingdom

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornubia>). It is also the name of a sugar cane farm owned by Sir Liege Hulett, who perhaps had some nostalgic ideas about childhood holidays on the southwest coast of England.

Twenty-five kilometres inland from Durban harbour, the Cornubia landholding is part of a private-public partnership development between the eThekweni municipality and Tongaat Hulett who sold 659 hectares of land to the city for various housing and business developments, even though the majority of the land remains predominantly in the ownership of Tongaat-Hulett. Cornubia was strategically branded as a 'catalytic project', forming part of four³ national projects, that the state signalled as a shift in the way the Department of Human Settlements views housing development. The Housing Development Agency described the project as "the province's largest sustainable integrated human settlement initiative". The Development Synopsis issued by the Housing Development Agency (HDA) on the project states:

A 1200ha multi-billion-rand project, Cornubia will be a mixed-use, mixed-income development, incorporating industrial, commercial, residential, and open space uses. The project will yield affordable and sustainable housing and tenure options for a range of income groups and has the potential to accommodate more than 50 000 dwelling units and house 200 000 people. The vision is to establish an integrated and sustainable settlement within the parameters of the national department of housing's breaking new ground initiative, and as a result, the development can make an important contribution to the realisation of the city's vision of being Africa's most liveable city. (http://www.thehda.co.za/uploads/Cornubia_fact_sheet.pdf)

³ The other projects are the Lephalale CRU project in Waterberg District, the Khutsong Housing Project in Merafong and the Cosmo City Housing Development Project in Gauteng.



Map 2: Cornubia Human Settlement; Phase 1A
Aerial View. (Original image from Google Earth 2017)

Cornubia is a brand-new city in the making⁴. Initially, as shown in Map 2, a pilot phase for 482 housing units was completed in 2014. These housing units are a form of state-delivered housing commonly called RDP homes (named after the post democracy Reconstruction and Development Programme). In effect, they are given to housing recipients as title-deed units. On the first of April 2014, then South African president Jacob Zuma handed over the second bunch of keys for these units to new residents. At this official ceremony, the development was meant to be renamed to a more fitting name that relates to this KwaZulu-Natal context in what would have been a strong symbolic gesture. However, ten years after the unveiling of this landmark development, the name Cornubia remains. In addition, when Cornubia was first built, the streets had no names (and this is still the case) and the landscape looked somewhat utopic. The development felt like a mirage of brand new closely built units in the vast fields of sugarcane plantation. This Cornubia 'illusion' is fostered and sustained by several things: the houses are all identical, and the inhabitants are not allowed to plant trees or have a pet, amongst other absurd rules. The housing development was built like a Cartesian nightmare and resembled the images which

⁴ Brand South Africa. Official online custodian of South Africa's nation brand. 24 March 2014.
<https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/investments-immigration/economynews/a-brand-new-city-is-being-built-outside-durban>

adorn meaningless brochures that one collects at streetlight intersections. However, as people slowly turned bricks and mortar into homes, I became increasingly aware of the layered presence of the contradictions of the utopian impulses emphasizing the aim to overcome spatial, social and economic exclusion in this housing project. The promise of an integrated human settlement with schools, clinics, recreational and shopping facilities has been slow to materialise: some of the developments such as the retail centre have more recently been built while others such as the community centre have also been slow to come off the ground.

However, whilst promised facilities and infrastructure have been slow inside the housing development, there has been a rapid private economic and industrial development around Cornubia; specifically large logistics and storage warehouses (outlined in yellow in Map 3 below), which provide limited employment opportunities. There have also been new mass transit routes that are part and parcel of the infrastructure improvements which were included in the design and provide easy access to work opportunities for the residents of Phase 1. In addition, a large shopping mall within 4 km from the housing units has also been built recently. This does provide access to goods and services. However, the residents of Cornubia are low-income earners and are unlikely to be able to afford the more upmarket retail shopping offered at the new 'Cornubia' mall (Erwin and Moodley, 2021), with its exclusive stores and entertainment outlets.



Map 3: Cornubia Human Settlement; Phase 1A and industrial development - Aerial View – outline by Author (Original image from Google Earth 2021)

However as mentioned above, a low-key retail centre has been built in the community. The centre, completed in 2018, brought to the fore key themes around the importance of community participation and how it interfaces with economic development and community uptake which are discussed extensively later in the thesis.

This research will illustrate how the development of built environment infrastructure for this housing development is much needed but remains a contentious issue. Many residents feel that the government does not consult with them sufficiently about their needs, leading to poorly planned buildings that do not suit the demands of residents on the ground. One of those inhabitants is Bantubonke Maluka, a born-free⁵ South African who lived in six different townships before moving in with his uncle in Cornubia. He matriculated at Overport Secondary School and subsequently began studying Legal Studies which he unfortunately had to abandon due to lack of funding. Bantu's frustration with his new 'location' is the absence of any social and recreational spaces. He has become increasingly outspoken about his loneliness in the community. Bantu is not alone in finding it difficult to build a new community with scant social facilities.

⁵ Children born in 1994, the year that marked the culmination of the four-year process that ended apartheid.

After 1994, in response to the former apartheid policy of racial segregation and urban exclusion, 'integration' (social, economic, administrative, and spatial) became the vision for South African cities. The Urban Development Framework of 1997 states in its vision for townships and informal settlements that:

Rebuilding the townships cannot occur in isolation from integrating strategies. The intention is to move actively away from the segregation of different parts of the city and to ensure equity across the urban landscape, thus offering all urban residents access to opportunities and facilities. Department of Housing (1997:13)

The past 27 years have seen the emergence of an extensive body of literature on 'the urban experience'(Pieterse 2008, Watson 2002, Todes 2012) which should have made the task of analysis and reconstruction meaningful. Instead, Bantu's experience of living in a 'breaking new ground' housing development is proving that the vision of the Urban Development Framework of 1997 is altogether more elusive than ever before. It seems that a heightened level of criticality needs to be directed toward South African urban planning policies. The origins of the policies need to be scrutinised together with their determining imperatives. Essentially we need to question if there have been meaningful changes made to the policies since the advent of democracy and if not, then why.

The Dead Heart

(extract)

We don't serve your country

Don't serve your king

Know your custom don't speak your tongue

White man came took everyone

White man listens to the songs we sing

White man came took everything

We carry in our hearts the true country

And that cannot be stolen

We follow in the steps of our ancestry

And that cannot be broken

We don't need protection
Don't need your land
Keep your promise on where we stand
We will listen we'll understand

Forty thousand years can make a difference to the state of things
The dead heart lives here

Peter Garrett⁶

Cornubia is an emerging epistemic community (Haas 1992) where a diachronic spatial analysis is relevant, necessary, and timeous. In the preface of the South African Cities Network publication entitled 'From Housing to Human Settlement – Evolving perspectives', Vawda, the then Deputy Director General in the Department of Economic Development stated:

...a human settlement environment, which is centred on the consensus of the social contract is contained in the South African Constitution. The primary objectives of the planned 'evolving perspectives' put forward were the redressing of the inherited spatial system, deconstructing the socio-spatial, and economic incoherence, and reframing for more socially just outcomes. (Joseph, S.-L. & Karuri-Sebina, G, 2014)

To achieve this, we need a firm understanding of the practical and philosophical construct of the segregated urban landscape, its origins, imperatives, and mechanisms. As a desired 'breaking new ground initiative', the housing project is the most appropriate space for that on the ground experimentation with the inhabitants. Conceptually and geographically, Cornubia is well positioned to unearth a shared vision of how a settlement engages a built environment. This would be a humanising (Freire 1970) imperative, invoked by subverting existing infantilising planning norms in order to generate and test new grassroots knowledges. This thesis holds the position that the current system focuses on an imagined future, a modernist's vision that makes assumptions about how people (in this case the marginalised) actually and

⁶ The Dead Heart, Midnight Oil, Track 6 on Diesel and Dust, Produced by Midnight Oil & Warne Livesey, 1986

should live their lives. Spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre expands on the importance of understanding historical contexts and suggests that

Space is nothing but the inscription of time in the world, spaces are the realizations, inscriptions in the simultaneity of the external world of a series of times, the rhythms of the city, the rhythms of urban population . . . the city will only be rethought and reconstructed on its current ruins when we have properly understood that the city is the deployment of time. (Lefebvre 1996:10)

It is at this point that it becomes important to get into Cornubia. It is necessary to set the scene to give an insight into Cornubia and how it has come to be. But it is equally crucial for me to illustrate how I have come to be in Cornubia, and that is through my artistic projects. The rest of this chapter will give the reader a sense of the work I have done in Cornubia outside of and prior to the research project. It is another way of setting the scene as such. The artistic projects have enabled me to clarify my positionality and define the kind of relationships I had with the residents before I undertook the PhD.

The community dialogue

To better understand the dynamics and to unearth critical diagnostics of what Cornubia is or can be, it seemed fit to mobilise for community dialogue through the engagement of the research process. The concept of the dialogue was 'change' and "this can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" Freire (1970:51). Since I was becoming integrated into the community through a participatory process, I could easily broaden the dialogue with the community. As a response to community concerns, I made a call for a formal dialogue session with the public. 17 persons who had already been instrumental in my research process emerged. The community members who attended the session were diverse and included nine spaza shop owners, a presentative of a religious group, a young adult, three unemployed adults, the school principal, a creche owner, a grandmother, and her grandchild. The dialogue was hosted by the Democracy Development Program (DDP) which is an organization that engages in processes that facilitate the practice of democracy in South Africa. DDP is situated in the city centre and I thought

it important that the dialogue be conducted in a safe space outside Cornubia so that it could hopefully give perspective to the participants. The dialogue aimed to capacitate the community to open spaces of conversation around issues that, once named, the community could begin to address. The issues of concern that were discussed came from the residents. They identified and analysed the problems and issues of mutual concern in Cornubia such as violence, infrastructure, and livelihood. This collective analysis allowed them to unearth a better understanding of the structural causes of their challenges (Merriam and Simpson, 1995). While the discussion was centred around the issues concerning the situation of Cornubia at that time the participants also addressed the possibilities for a better Cornubia in the future.



Figure 1: Jahangeer (2017), Community dialogue. Durban

Despite the fact that the conversation took place in a room and had a beginning it was situated in a broader method which was dialogic. In its true sense, my engagement with the community was both catalytical and responsive and along the way, we were all learning more about each other and Cornubia in a participatory manner. In their diversity, the members of the community engaged in conversations at multiple levels; socio-political and economic. After the dialogue, they started having conversations with each other and with other constituents in Cornubia. The DDP conversation

initiated an action which was demonstrated in the community's own response by conducting a sport event that three of the participants, from the dialogue session, organised a couple of weeks after our meeting in the city.



Figure 2: Jahangeer (2017), Community dialogue. Durban [diagram and photographs]

This was another example of PAR (participatory action research) which will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 4, where “collective action by the constituents aimed at long-term as well as short-term solutions to [their] problems” Couto (1987 in Merriam and Simpson, 1995:127). In this case, one such short-term solution was the sports day which created an opportunity for the broader community to come together to show support for the children of the township. It created a sense of excitement and it showed that things can happen in Cornubia and that it is possible to put Cornubia on the map. The event can give a sense of pride to the community. The organisers had a sense of accomplishment and were encouraged that they could organise it. This meant that there is skill, resources, and willingness in the community. It also indicated that the residents are committed to creating a community they want and to feel a sense of place that they can call home.



Figure 3 Jahangeer (2017), Sports day at Cornubia, Durban. [photograph]

I was merely invited to offer my photographic skills in documenting the event. My responsibility as an interlocutor is to also acknowledge and value my ability to access skills, expertise, and networks from outside and to bring them in. For example, as discussed above, I organised a professional facilitator to facilitate a dialogue between the participants. I was also able to assist in facilitating a partnership between the school in Cornubia and the Speech and Drama department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as described below. This collaboration resulted in the production of a play that was presented at an event that took place at the school. In addition, I connected a group of young dancers to a dance festival where they presented a dance piece. All of the above showed my continued demonstration of a serious level of engagement and commitment to assist the community with its challenges.

Ama Tuck shop

One of the main strategies I employed to become familiar with and understand the dynamics in Cornubia in a more intimate way was to design and implement creative moments/projects which engaged both the landscape and the residents. This method is explained in more detail in chapters 4 and 5. Over the years of being in Cornubia, I met Mxolisi, a curious, young, unemployed man always eager to participate in any initiative on the go. He drew up a map on which he recorded the number of spaza shops in the community.

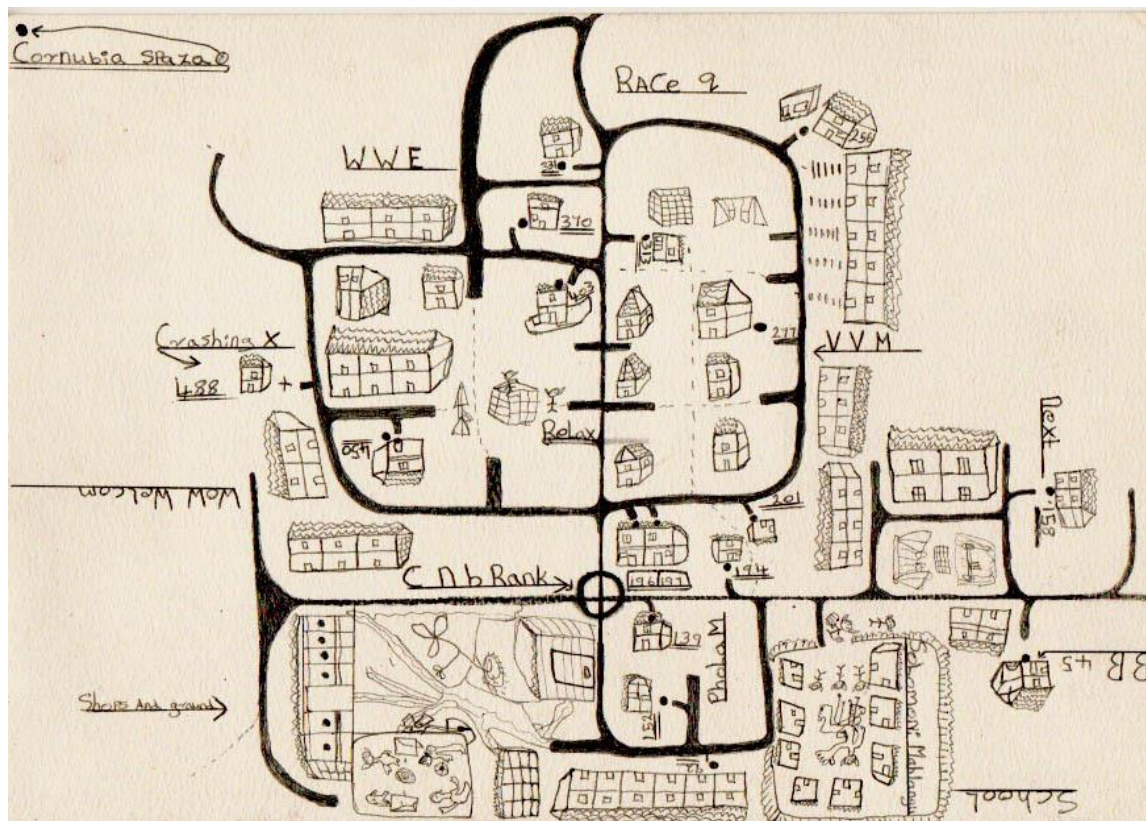


Figure 4: Mxolisi (2019), Mapping Cornubia, Durban. [drawing]

In many ways, his map inspired my research on the spaza shops. To bring the map to life Phili⁷, Mxolisi and myself workshopped three artistic interventions two of which were a collaboration between Phili and Mxolisi, and the other a performative installation

⁷ Phili is a Zimbabwean visual artist whom I invited in a residency in Cornubia. Mxolisi and Phili are both introduced in more detail in the methodology chapter.

executed by myself. The aim was to develop a set of tools and opportunities for Mxolisi and myself to extend our inquiry, reflect through creativity, and reimagine everyday life as dynamic spaces.

If arts-based researchers actively create a body of work that tells the stories of local groups and individuals, while it exposes injustices people have experienced as subjects to the tyranny of the majority, and in which diverse forms of art are used as a means to draw attention to citizens' articulations of oppression, arts-based research can retrace and expose the common threads of racism, sexism, and discrimination that form the social contract ... (Finlay, 2008: 78)

The body of work was entitled 'Ama Tuck Shop'⁸ meaning simply 'The Tuck shops' in isiZulu. The first intervention entailed the painting of a bright yellow line in front of the houses where the tuck shops or spazas were located. At first, I was concerned that the interventions were provocations that could expose the spaza owners since it is 'illegal' for residents to conduct business in their houses. But the owners were, on the contrary, quite eager to participate in the project.



Figure 5: Jahangeer (2019), Mxolisi and Phili Artistic intervention Cornubia, Durban [Photograph]

⁸ The spaza shop is also known as a tuck shop. These two terms are used interchangeably but generally, spaza shops appear to be the less formal of the two. Tuck shops seems to sell a wider range of items such as fruit and vegetables, milk, eggs, and staples such as oil, sugar, flour, and salt. However, they are both meeting places where one can chat to neighbours or friends and create relationships with the owner to the point where one can obtain goods on credit. Due to the relationships that develop, shop owners also sell late at night even if the shop is technically closed.

The *yellow line* in the first intervention represented the spaza shop as an initiative that is worthy of recognition. It was to some extent a conceptual extension of Mxolisi's previous mapping exercise. The second intervention grew out of the *yellow line* and took the form of colourful cornices which framed the windows through which the spaza owners conduct their business. This intervention aimed to draw attention to the window where the majority of clients are served from. Conceptually, the window of the spaza shop is an in-between space (Bhabha, 1994); a contested space where relationships are forged, networks are conceived, and where by-laws are put to the test. In relation to the research, the window signified a site where creativity was facilitating an

[...] inquiry [which] creates and inhabits contested, liminal spaces. It takes form in the hyphen between art and social science research. It creates a place where epistemological standpoints of artists and social science workers collide, coalesce, and restructure to originate something new and unique among research practices. (Finlay, 2008: 72)



Figure 6: Jahangeer (2020), Artistic intervention, window ornament Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]

I was becoming increasingly motivated by the dialogic qualities of the artistic process. It is important to note that the dialogues that emerged from the artistic probes were not always easy to handle. At times I felt like I was there just to listen. They were mainly around various social issues the residents were experiencing in Cornubia. For example, while we were installing the window frame one resident who came to purchase prepaid electricity protested that he was unemployed and that he was finding it very hard to afford it.



Figure 7: Jahangeer (2020), Artistic intervention Cornubia, Durban. [installation]

The art made available new forms of communication to the residents and created opportunities for self-expression. I was driven to push the boundaries of the interventions further and I decided to engage in a performative installation still at the window of a participating spaza shop. Informed by Mxolisi's mapping exercise I symbolically mapped the network and the movement pattern of the customers with steel tubes in a sculptural form, which I installed performatively. The artwork was

received with a lot of curiosity, confusion but also intrigue. The magic of performance here is that it created a moment for community dialogue where it became possible to “critique dominant cultural assumptions, to construct identity, and to attain political agency” to some extent. (Garoian, 1999: 2). I believe that this was achieved possibly because residents were invited to become audience members and look with fresh eyes at the everyday.



Figure 8: Mxolisi and Jahangeer (2020), Artistic intervention, Cornubia, Durban. [Installation]- Photograph Phili.

The reflections and responses to my observations of life in this human settlement were being expanded from a linguistic discourse to an artistic one. The artist's intention contained an aesthetic that aimed at celebrating the spaza shops. They were a testimony of solidarity with the struggle of the spaza owners. They were acts that rejected their formal status of 'illegal' while proposing that we possibly consider them as a legitimate form of infrastructure (Simone, 2008). Appropriately, the residents' interest sparked by these abstract manifestations further triggered politicised conversations, critical awareness (Freire 1970/1996), and insightful reflection about this practice. For example, a resident, Alexina⁹, who runs a creche from her home,

⁹ All names with permission

requested that I draw her portrait. I decided to make it collaborative so conducted a workshop with her and her son, then translating the drawing that emerged as a mural on her external wall. Macedo (1995, 18) highlights that,

dialogue must require an ever-present curiosity about the object of knowledge. Thus, dialogue is never an end in itself but a means to develop a better comprehension about the object of knowledge.



Figure 9 : Jahangeer (2019), Ma Alexina, portrait - Artistic intervention Cornubia, Durban. [Mural]

The mural was a way to reflect the community to itself. It was intended to be a form of validation, affirming a sense of place. Perhaps it can also be recognised as a strategy to build community, reinforce identity and create social cohesion. Certainly, this experience of working collaboratively and creatively with Alexina and her family strengthened my relationship with her and profiled my commitment to the community.

In the examples articulated above, creative actions became platforms where the community engaged me and vice versa in a dialogic manner. Creativity here was

becoming an interlocutor between myself and the residents which enabled us to establish relationships out of dialogues, and to some extent build community networks as well as understand how the community responds to their environment. Those interventions and relationships were eventually instrumental in enabling the doctoral research questions to gradually emerge.

What is 'home' – participatory theatre at school

It is worth mentioning that in the effort of getting to better know Cornubia, I was also running other projects in parallel with the research process. For example, I often visited the headmaster at the temporary school in Cornubia. He would ask his secretary to make us tea and we would spend time informally chatting about issues the community faces. Kevin is a good man and he has his pupils, staff, and the community at heart. He often expressed his frustration about the lack of support he received from the Department of Education. As a result, I felt I needed to put some energy into the school. With the movie nights, I had already introduced myself to many of the kids in the community. Therefore, part of my strategy was to continue the conversation with the kids and to be present in the community at as many different and multiple levels of the community as possible. This was important because it provided the research with a broad and layered range of responses on one hand and it was raising consciousness on the other. I came up with an artistic program for the students. It involved 7 drawing workshops (with grades 1-5), and 4 drama workshops (with grades 6-7) which were facilitated by 5 post-graduate Speech and Drama students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The topic of the drawing workshop was twofold. Learners were asked to first draw an impression of the spaza shops they frequented in Cornubia and secondly to capture their movement pattern between the spaza and their home. The workshop was designed to reflect on and give value to spaza shops as an important popular network that people can tap into.

The drawings were mostly abstract, and the participants did not attempt to depict their reality accurately. Instead, they used colours and gestural marks to interpret their surroundings. Meanwhile, the Grade 6 and 7 learners decided to create a play that depicted violence in their community which specifically spoke to the issue of alcoholism

and gender-based violence. This provided a further understanding of the daily struggles and challenges of the community. The process culminated in an event where the play was performed and the drawings were exhibited for the rest of the school and those parents who attended the performance.



Figure 10: Jahangeer (2017), Play by Grade 5 students Solomon Mahlangu Primary school Cornubia, Durban. [Performance]- Photograph



Figure 11: Jahangeer (2017), Drawing of Grade 5 students. Solomon Mahlangu Primary school Cornubia, Durban. [Installation] - Photograph

The school workshops around mobility and violence created further conversations with a group of young dancers between, the ages of 13-16, with whom I had also had contact in previous years. They engaged me with an interest in the play they were part of and expressed that they would like to integrate more drama into their dance pieces. I worked with them for two months preparing a piece for the Fringe Jomba International dance festival which is a yearly festival that takes place at the UKZN. I was able to draw from my network to connect them to a festival and facilitate their participation on the festival platform. The process and the performance were well documented and a short documentary was produced (see video link – <https://vimeo.com/213672336>). This video was then shown back to the community in the form of another outdoor projection. There was a lot of excitement and a clear sense of pride from both the dancers and the community.

Conclusion

To meaningfully recognise and appreciate the *genus loci* of a place it is not enough to have a superficial encounter with that place. For a deeper understanding it is imperative that we engage with, and if possible participate in, its social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions. Pieterse affirms that:

Nothing about cities in the twenty-first century is insignificant; the stakes are always high in pinning down what cities are, in thinking about what to do with cities, and in acting on/in/through the city, especially if one wants to bring to life more liberating and just futures. (Pieterse, 2008: 1)

Through my relationship with Cornubia and the residents, it has become evident to me that the inhabitants are organically intelligent and are already bringing life to some form of liberation, mainly through the practice of spaza shops. This chapter engages the context and sets the scene for the research. It starts by describing how Cornubia was conceptualised and provides some details about its inception. It is important to reiterate the innovative introduction of the 'Breaking New Ground' perspective that sought to concentrate more on the holistic approach of providing housing and establishing an improved quality of life in what the National Government called a

human settlement. One can argue that to some degree this policy has made a difference in the residents' life but conversations with some of the inhabitants have proven that it is yet to fully materialise. At the very beginning of the research process and with the work I did prior thereto, it was clear that the only way to get to know the township was through conversations, dialogues, and especially through listening. This chapter appropriately lays out the necessity to ground the research in a context that is not only defined by its geography but also by the narratives it holds. It presents the case of three creative interventions namely Community Dialogue, Ama Tuck Shop and What is Home? which were designed precisely to open up spaces for dialogues to better understand the location. Community Dialogue engaged 17 community members around the challenges faced by Cornubia and also the potential that the township holds. Ama Tuck Shop offered a more specific expression that revolved around spaza shops. The latter became a conductor for conversations around unemployment and accessibility of resources such as electricity, social amenities, and school among other subjects. What is Home? allowed conversations around the value that spaza shops bring to the community as an important popular network that people can tap into. It also showed that there is violence both in the community and in homes. While this chapter sets out the scene for the research it also demonstrates how creative methods can play a crucial part in creating a cognitive space for a better understanding of a place.

Chapter 3: Engaging the popular

Power, participation, and the people

we were taught into our unbecoming;
we learnt how to other.
but now, we unlearn to relearn.
we seek what we can be, to find what we are not.
visionary in our stance, we recognise and acknowledge the urgency of an
avant-gardist response to our inner and outer demons.
engaging in informed, grounded, and strategised thought provocations,
we experiment with the unknown. unearthing the philosophy of the everyday –
spiritual and practical
we commit, we commit to a praxis-based approach to humanizing ourselves.

Conventionally a PhD thesis provides both a literature review and a theory chapter to neatly frame the phenomenon (Vithal and Jansen, 2010). This is of course useful to understand the ideas from which the thesis emerges and builds upon. However, my approach in writing this thesis whilst drawing on academic theory also draws on my practice as an artist. This meant a writing process that is far more integrated – in terms of the literature that I have drawn on, the structure of the thesis, and the inclusion of multiple textual forms that speak to the concepts and aesthetics of ideas (Vital and Jansen, 2010), such as the poem that opens the chapter. This has been a conceptual decision that I believe echoes and supports the arguments that are developed in the thesis: Challenging the integrity of structure/s, celebrating multivocality, and emphasizing the need to profile creative expression. The voices of others in the discipline and related disciplines in the thesis, therefore, resound throughout the work. For example, much of the methodology contains what could be considered theory in the discussion of Paulo Freire (1970) and Augusto Boal (1979). The methodology chapter offers the conceptual rationale for how and why creative methods are useful for a critical exploration of urban planning and participatory processes. This chapter,

however, does try to engage in a more focused way with the most important theoretical concepts which form the foundations upon which the arguments of this thesis emerge, particularly although not limited to those found in urban theory. This necessarily involves delving into the work of those individuals who have built up the literature on the concepts in question.

This chapter explores three conceptual threads emerging out of three categories of literature. The first is entitled *Movement of the People*. This section takes the phenomenon of post-apartheid urbanisation as a starting point. The case study in question Cornubia Human Settlement is itself a post-apartheid response to the rise of urbanisation and the need to supply housing to the poor that is closer to the economic centre. While the search for a better life has led to migration, globally, I am more interested in how economic migration/ urbanisation has to an extent created a space where the urban poor (through necessity) have appropriated the city – or urban housing developments in this case - for their purpose (Lefebvre, 1974; Pieterse, 2008; Bayat, 2013; Simone, 2008, De Certeau, 1984). For while there may be (top-down) government responses to urbanisation and the influx of people to the cities, they always seem to fall short of meeting the needs of people. Improvisation and popular innovation then become necessary.

Rights to the People, the second section under discussion, investigates how the theory around the appropriation of the city is useful if we want to answer questions about urban planning and participation (Hamdi, 2004; Williams, 2006). If top-down approaches ‘fall short’ as I will argue, how can the process of urban planning be reimagined to address these needs more successfully? Or can they? This links importantly to ideas of democracy and spatial justice (Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2012, 2009; Dikeç, 2001) concepts which are at the political core of this work.

The final section, *Power to the People* considers how spaza shops, subvert the authority of the state through the appropriation and repurposing of material provided by it. It is therefore argued that spaza shops are legitimate examples of popular culture (Fiske, 1989; Barber, 1997). This section of the chapter also examines and is inspired by the aligned theoretical concept of the *in-between* (Bhabha, 1994). to build the argument that Spaza shops in Cornubia and beyond can be considered as symbols

that blur the boundary between house/home, informal/formal, private/public and community/state. This can be seen as the process enabling the making of new and innovative urbanism. The Spaza shop conceptually offers an alternative lens on the vibrant world and how the ordinary (Perec, 1997) and the everyday (De Certeau, 1984) are redefined.

Movement of the People

During the course of the last sixteen years, through the conceptualisation and implementation of the/my 'CityWalk' initiative (Gurney 2015) I have been able to directly engage and observe the flux and mutability of the city of Durban and specifically the development of what Henri Lefebvre (1974:38) terms a spatial practice revealed as he writes "through the deciphering of its space". In South African cities thousands of people walk daily from the periphery (former townships areas) to the city centre via suburbia, next to the highways in the footsteps of thousands of other walkers. These informal footpaths and reinvented transit routes offer a glimpse of how the utopian ideologies embedded in the European models of city-making are imposed on African cities through colonisation and modernity (Mignolo 2000:52). Where no formal spaces are made for the majority of people to move into the city, local communities inadvertently subvert routes by creating new paths in the daily practice of their freedom.

...A dislocated people makes a dysfunctional space

In South Africa, the initial part of land dispossession began with annexation and division of territory. Over time proclamations were made, and laws were enacted by both the Afrikaners and the British to dislodge African people from their land while consolidating areas of White Settlement. Thus, by the time the Land Act of 1913 was enacted, South Africa was already moving in the direction of spatial segregation through land dispossession. One of the critical pieces of legislation that laid down the foundation for a spatially divided South Africa was the Glen Grey Act passed in 1894. Mustafa Bayoumi (2000 : 24) reminds us that:

The European colonial city was also a kind of 'virgin' space for European planners and architects, who took advantage of the opportunity to produce an entirely new built environment to test novel forms of urban planning linked to modern flows of colonial capital and goods, along with the allure of tourism and colonial migration.

In contemporary South Africa sadly, the 'legacy of colonialism'¹⁰ continues through many unrepealed apartheid zoning policies and town planning by-laws. These regulations originally established by the European settlers had specific spatial ideals imposed on the cities they built. As a result, post-colonial cities are, at their core, defined by one way of spatial perception but used by citizens with different spatial sensibilities. This phenomenon engages the concept of 'Coloniality' as defined by Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007):

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.

... there was a long long walk to freedom

Traversed now by pathways and patterned by networks, natural space changes:
one might say that practical activity writes upon nature,
albeit in a scrawling hand,
and that this writing implies a particular representation of space.
(Lefebvre 1991:116-117)

¹⁰ It is paramount to introduce the concept of 'coloniality' here. This was introduced by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano and later developed by theorists and postcolonialists Walter. D. Mignolo and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. Mignolo argues for the recognition of the 'underlying logic' of the foundation and unfolding of Western civilization from the Renaissance to today.



Map 4: Paths-Settlement on the outskirts of Johannesburg - Aerial View (Original image from Google Earth 2021)

Urbanisation became an unprecedented phenomenon in South African cities after the fall of the apartheid regime in the 1990s and the consequent dissolution of its most powerful piece of legislation, the Group Areas Act (1966). For the first time in over forty years, people were now free to move. The mass influx of poor people into urban settings that followed should have brought in a spatial realisation – a shift in the psychology of the South African space and yet...

Michel de Certeau (1984) in his book on the practice of everyday life became an advocate of the stories told by pedestrians in the city. Not verbalised or written in text, those spatial narratives are told as people traverse the city in an uncontrolled, irregular fashion. Foucault argues that these narratives provide a counterfoil to the panopticon: 'the disciplined, rational use of space defined by planners, architects, engineers and owners of capital' (Foucault 1983:165) as a way to control the populace. Walking is seen as a way of re-writing the city, a counter-hegemonic act. However, with apartheid planning still structuring the way that space can be engaged, even in the present day (and speaking generally) poor black South African citizens use space merely as a means to an end. Essentially speaking the apartheid city should have been challenged by this intuitive assimilation of the oppressor's space

into an African one; however, while the practice has emerged organically it has not necessarily been strategic in deconstructing the ideology embedded in the grid.



Map 5: Paths – on the outskirts of Johannesburg – Aerial View (Original image from Google Earth 2021)

Drawing on Lefebvre's (1974) quotidian theories, the articulation of society's collective mind is through space-making. Thus, spatial understanding is a function of culture. Spatial ability is the competence to translate and organise spatial information. In a South African context, it would also mean developing spatial strategies to transcend Eurocentric models of spatial articulation to achieve a meaningful postcolonial form. But in reality, the notion of the urban nature of the African city is one difficult to grasp, particularly as explained above. It remains 'relational' to Western and colonial notions and is dominated by colonial modernity exemplified through the urban design city based on the Cartesian grid.

The use of the built form and urban planning to enact authority, oppression, and control was typified in the apartheid city. With the Group Areas Act (1966) (as mentioned above) spatial segregation of constructed race groups was built into the planning and architecture of the city. Mabin (1992: 407) states:

It could be argued that for the first time, the Group Areas Act at least potentially extended compulsory general segregation ... laid the basis for long-range, wide-scale land allocation planning; opened the way to greatly expanded (though of course strictly segregated) public housing provision, especially for the poorer sections of the urban population; provided for retroactive segregation; and massively interfered with concepts of property rights generally.

The burdened reality of the South African 'colonial modernity' (Mignolo 2000:52) presents a different scenario to de Certeau's Eurocentric understanding of traversing space in an uncontrolled fashion. In South Africa, under apartheid, most urban spaces for black people were tightly controlled, and the costs of breaking out of regulated spaces came at a heavy price. It is critical to understand how the built environment, and the underlying ideologies that shape its form, govern how and why the body moves as it does through the city.

Even in contemporary South Africa, the built form imposes norms and standards which do not respond to people's lived reality. For example, the RDP¹¹ rollout of houses is pivoted on the idea of a nuclear family yet the circumstances and housing needs of most beneficiaries of state housing are misaligned with this planning assumption. Charlton (2018: 18) notes that "state development interventions in cities of the global South have attracted criticism for imposing norms at odds with ordinary people's needs and practices". This has generated complex relations with state-provided infrastructure as demonstrated in people's interactions with South Africa's mass housing programme (Charlton, 2018:9). In the example of the state-funded mass housing programme, Cornubia, how inhabitants navigate the built environment is a direct challenge to it. As this and other research has shown (Charlton 2018; Pieterse 2008, Graham and McFarlane, 2015) recipients of these houses are not passive. They adapt, appropriate, and modify the houses according to their needs and practices. "For the ordinary person the house is not a thing or object that is detached but it is a process which bears the potential for action" (Graham and McFarlane, 2015). It represents possibilities beyond a place to live. For Charlton, (2018:98) writing about research conducted in Johannesburg:

...many of the housing interactions ... involve respondents' adaptations of the house or plot, or of the social organisation of the household. These adaptations animate the housing infrastructure, assisting it to function and perform and to better support lives.

¹¹ The Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) was an attempt by the government to improve the economy with measures such as tightening the fiscal spending, lower the tax rates and the allocation of socially minded services and infrastructure (Congress,2009).

My proposition is that this widespread adaptation and modification of government-issued housing can be considered a movement in its own right where “people’s actions are necessary to enable the housing’s relevance and utility – its ability to perform a practical, social or political function – not just for individual households but as a housing programme” (Charlton 2018:98).

Moving from planning to philosophy, I would like to invoke Bhabha’s (1994) notion of ‘unhomely’ to provide some breadth to the understanding of how and why humans interact with space /built environment in the way that they do¹². In the subsection of *Location of Culture* entitled ‘Unhomely lives’ Bhabha (1994) writes:

To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in the familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. (...) [Rather] “it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world [such that] the private and the public become part of each other forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorientating (1994: 9).

It is a postcolonial condition – an ‘in-between’ condition – and it is in this sense of ‘displacement’ that the inhabitants of such human settlements may engage dynamically with the space that they find themselves in. A space that they are meant to call ‘home’. This intervention is considered by Bhabha (1994) to be a cultural act “a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality” (1994:7).

This interconnection of space and (popular) culture is picked up in the last section and it allows us to make a bridge between the built form and the body, the originator of culture, the first home or as Bhabha (1994) more cynically calls it ‘the grotesque corporeal’. Franz Fanon (1963) draws a meaningful connection between the body and movement, which is the focus of this section:

Movements are not made out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of myself as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world – such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is rather, a definitive structuring of the self and

¹² Particularly subordinated peoples who have been relocated (and with a history of displacement) as is the case with Cornubia and other government housing historically.

of the world – definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and my world.
(Fanon 1963:91)



Figure 12: Jahangeer (2019) Paths, Durban. [Photograph and edit]

Here Fanon(1963) indicates that the way the body moves through space informs the way one perceives the world in oneself and oneself in the world. This argument suggests that spatial production be viewed as the result of interrelations activated through human interactions in the everyday. Space can only sufficiently be understood as a realm of possibility, acknowledging the existence of multiplicity and co-existence.

One such co-existence that has emerged from pedestrian commuters tracing new routes through the city are informal traders who operate along these route selling cigarettes, sweets, and chips among other consumables. The type of traders ranges from those who use a small cardboard box from which they sell loose cigarettes and sweets for small change, to others who use trolleys on wheels selling fruit and hot food such as roasted maize or dumplings.

Historically, traders with shops on wheels grew up around the mines in Johannesburg. They used to situate themselves along the route where miners would walk to work and were known as 'café-de-move-on' (Goldblatt, 1998; 6).



Figure 13: David Golblatt (2019), Spaza de Move On. Johannesburg. [Photograph]

Literally on the move, the encroachment (Bayat 2013) of these businesses on the city can also be considered as both a response to the movement of people or at least understanding this as a market but also as a *movement* collectively advancing their shared economic needs. The small mobile shops, described above, when seen in the same light as the tuck shops people run from inside their own (RDP) homes along busy routes, become part of the spaza shops in this study. It is my argument that spazas are equally a *movement* since they are inherently an organic intelligence, a popular phenomenon that goes beyond the fulfilment of economic needs for the spaza owners and for the consumption needs of the resident through the provision of social space (Lefebvre, 1974). They are a form of local economic and cultural infrastructure. A place where residents meet to share a cigarette, to play pool, and to discuss the politics of the day.

Urbanisation is a global phenomenon with widespread social, economic, and environmental implications and opportunities. It is a contested process; nevertheless, moving from the rural to the city is how many South Africans fight against the curse of poverty, the injustice of inequality, the spell of unemployment, the crisis of climate change, and other pressing global challenges.

The fall of apartheid and the event of capitalism in South Africa has seen an unprecedented influx of poor people into the urban centres (Housing Development Agency, 2012). A recent census has shown that KwaZulu Natal 'has 569 informal settlements in the city, which comprise about 250,000 households and are home to more than a quarter of the total population' (Sustainable Cities and Communities, 2020). This has had an economic, political, social, and cultural impact that has challenged the previous colonial and apartheid infrastructure, both public and social. The existing infrastructure was of course not designed to accommodate the 'unintended beneficiaries' of the city. The apartheid system created 'homelands' and the *dompas* to deliberately keep black South Africans out of the cities and possible economic freedom. But with the freedom to move and a rapid pace of urbanization in post-apartheid cities, this also meant that people who came to the city needed shelter. While the Department of Human Settlement has delivered over 200,000 houses to the poor since 1994, they acknowledge that this hasn't made an impact on the housing backlog. As a result, eThekweni has adopted an initiative that focuses more on the

delivery of basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, and electricity with the hope that residents are motivated to build their own houses gradually and take advantage of their access to public services. To date, the eThekweni has built over 1,500 ablution blocks with toilets, showers, and handwashing stations; provided electricity to 102,000 informal dwellings; and installed over 80,000 urine diversion toilets in rural households. (Metropolis, 2019) It is necessary to note that:

Such a change in priorities is a major innovation for cities tackling the challenge of informal settlements and one that runs counter to a traditional belief that government is responsible for housing informal dwellers. Instead, eThekweni has acknowledged that they cannot provide housing for all, but they can provide basic services to most. (Metropolis, 2019)

Before I continue however, it is important to understand who ‘the people’ are. While I believe that it may not be a definitive category ‘the people’, especially in an African context, allude to the ‘majority’. A majority who is excluded from wealth and the privilege that comes with it, from education, and from the ability to fully participate in the public sphere. Without the intention to generalise, the people in South Africa wait. They wait in queues; at the hospital, to take taxis, at the bank, at the Department of Home Affairs for their documentation, and at the post office for their grant. They queue to get a job, to get a house, and live a better life (Huchzermeyer, 2010). Nevertheless, my time spent in Cornubia has shown that the residents quietly appropriate their waiting to their advantage. In subversive manoeuvres, residents transform their state-given houses into spaza shops, shebeens (taverns), creches, traditional medicine consultation rooms, and mechanic garages. In addition, they build backyard rooms/shacks to accommodate their extended families or to rent out for some extra cash. These everyday encroachments (Bayat, 2013) are a phenomenon that may metaphorically be represented as a *movement*. So, while it might be real that the people wait in a seemingly vain state it is equally true that they are active agents who complexify the creation, experience, and modelling of space in an insurgent way to make life liveable and meaningful. For Pieterse (2008:116):

poor (...) communities pioneer and develop their own solution and demonstrate its practical viability – precedent setting – before engaging the state in an effort to transform official programmes. Of significance in this approach is not pitting the solution proposed by the poor against the state program, or lobbying directly for policy change, but rather the seeking of ‘shifts’ in the institutional arrangements which determine the way policy translates into action.

In this sense, approaching the city from eye level reveals that an alternative model of the city can be devised from the ordinary (De Certeau, 1984; Perce, 2008) through the perspective of the street. Pieterse (2008, 109) further suggests that this model is conceptual and that

this attempt at a conceptual inversion is used as a prelude to explore the city from the bottom up or rather through the eyes of the majority of poor denizens who appropriate the city for their own ends.

While echoing Pieterse's thinking, Bayat (2013) proclaims that 'even if the disenfranchised are able to make do, social goods remain out of bounds. It is true that the urban poor can take over a plot of land to build a shack, that electricity and water can be tapped into, [that they can open a spaza selling things in their house] but how can they access good education, health services, effective transport, and security'. Nevertheless, they persist in their informal endeavours and engage quietly in their everyday lives. The state turns a blind eye to their practice which makes it possible to avoid planning rules and procedures (Ballard, 2014). The spaza shop can be considered as a typical site of struggle in Cornubia where state-provided houses are appropriated for the spaza owner's own economic benefit. Bayat (1997) calls these types of struggles:

the quiet encroachment of the ordinary – a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives. They are marked by quite atomised and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action – an open fleeting struggle without clear leadership, ideology, or structured organization, one that produces significant gains for the actors, eventually placing them in the counterpoint to the state.

While Bayat's theory is predominantly concerned with the urban realities of the Middle East it nevertheless remains relevant for South African settings. In addition, the thinking of both Simone and Pieterse (2017) is important when it comes to understanding the insurgent city from the bottom up. They call 'for a brave commitment to experimentation, the courage to unlearn, the willingness to shed habits of thought, and always figuring another angle despite the odds'. Perhaps in opening ourselves up to the notion of encroachment, we could make the 'conceptual inversion' feasible knowing that the city is in constant movement and remaking according to new models and new possibilities, which can bring value.

Rights to the People

We all remember the moving aerial images of thousands of people waiting in long queues on the 27th of April 1994 in South Africa. This was the first time black South Africans were given their democratic right to vote. And while for South Africans democracy did finally come on that day, for many, twenty-nine years after that first election it would appear that the freedom and promises of democracy are still to arrive. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting exponentially wider (World population review, 2023) and the delivery of basic services has not met the promises of politicians for the urban poor and working-class (Gumede, 2021). This lack of satisfaction can be seen in the increasing number of protests demanding 'better service delivery' (Reddy 2016:1, Booysen 2012, Dassah 2012). It is my position that the delivery of basic services (water, electricity, refuse removal) is a constitutional issue relating to Equality and Human Dignity (1996 Chapter 2: Bill of Rights). As Reddy (2016:1) argues "[g]iven that the struggles for a democratic South Africa were fought at the grassroots level, this has to translate to an improved quality of life for local communities."

The widespread lack of service delivery has been attributed to some extent to the politicization of local bureaucracies. Local municipalities have been given significant power to self-govern, through Chapter 7 of the constitution (1996). This according to Reddy "sought to ensure that the executive leadership of municipalities shared the same political ideology and vision to facilitate local development" (2016:2). However, this has inevitably led to prioritising the maintenance of political authority/leadership ,through cadre deployment, (Chamisa & Shava, 2018). over the quality of governance. Nevertheless, the argument presented here is that, to work towards solving the challenges of such delivery, the government should be prepared to relinquish some power, allow communities to participate in the affairs of local government, and have a say in their own fate. This may or may not be at odds with the status quo. For Blaug and Schwarzmantel

The triumph of democracy is perhaps best represented in its widespread acceptance as a desirable political form, one that combines effectiveness with public participation and that reaps the benefits of collective input in decision-making. (2016: 384)

However, there tends to be less agreement as to how much popular participation democracy requires and this speaks to the discussion above. Participatory democracy depends on the citizens having a certain amount of knowledge of how political operations work locally and perhaps internationally. Currently, the popular response and the only visible indication of the people's involvement in decision-making is through protest. As Oscar Dassah (2012 in Reddy 2016:2) argues, South Africa is regarded in some circles as the protest capital of the world. This is a challenge in democratic South Africa particularly since these protests are increasingly violent and destructive and while the right to demonstrate is constitutionally protected (Chapter 2 1996), the right to do so violently is not. This violence does seem to indicate public participation is not being integrated into the management of civic matters. In fact, if violence must be resorted to, to be 'heard' or seriously listened to, it must be dangerously low.

Participation is an important concept in this thesis. It is both foundational to the methodological approach and part of the theoretical underpinning. As such, the concept of participation and what it means in terms of planning in the developing world context is discussed throughout the thesis.

It can be argued that participation, if conducted in a meaningful manner, enables citizens to exercise their right to exist in a fair and just way. In his critique of top-down processes in development, Hamdi (2004:13) states that participation [is often] a means to achieving pre-set goals, not an end in its own right. People follow the plans of planners; plans [do] not follow people. In addition, he acknowledges that participation is no easy task and argues that examples of real participation are hard to find. "Fixed attitudes, low capacity and limited budgets within local authorities often leave participation as an add-on luxury rather than as a basic right or legal obligation" (Hamdi 2004:16).

While Hamdi's reading of participation is relevant to the South African post-apartheid context, it is important to be mindful that participation has emerged as a significant concept in planning, public administration, architecture as well as policy-development (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2007). In South Africa, local government plays a critical role in connecting citizens to the provincial and national

government. According to the constitution, local government is responsible for providing certain services which are necessary for the well-being of the citizens (Reddy 2016). In the Municipality Act of 2000, the conduit through which people engage their local government is primarily seen as residing with the ward councillor and the ward committees they are meant to establish. Therefore, it is crucial that there is good communication between the citizens and the ward committees to achieve a more horizontal approach to development.

In practice however, there are very few local government initiatives that offer examples of participatory development and governance. The disjuncture between policy ideals and implementation raises questions about the willingness and ability of local authorities to mediate between government and urban residents in a participatory way. Often this role rests predominantly in the hands of the local councillor who is the most immediate link between residents and local government. He or she is generally on the frontline of public dissatisfaction which emerges from unmet expectations in terms of service delivery, for which councillors are not responsible, and ongoing inequality in South African cities. Claire Benit-Gbaffou argues that issues around a lack of participation are systemic in South Africa and she suggests that,

in spite of the participation and decentralisation rhetoric, there is no real power vested at the local level. Participation is in practice considered a nuisance, be it through local elected representatives (who are given no real power), through projects ad hoc participatory platforms (often not taken very seriously), or through more informal interaction with local communities – as if they could only bring contest and arguments, and were, in any case, a waste of time and money. This contempt for participation is not an accident: it is rooted in both the municipal structure and in the electoral and party systems. (Benit-Gbaffou 2008:31)

Despite this apparent contempt on behalf of the government, there has been rich literature on participatory planning in South Africa (Watson 2002, Todes and Turok 2018). Much hope has been articulated, particularly in the early days of democracy, that new practices in planning would be able to assist to reverse some of the segregating effects of apartheid. For Watson (2002:28), understanding the socio-political processes which shape the context is central to an ethical planning process, particularly as planners reflect on the impact that planning and planning processes can have on the psychology of a nation. With this in mind she asks, “given the particular

dynamics which currently appear to be shaping many cities in the subcontinent do normative theories of planning offer a resource on which planners can draw?" (2002:28). She calls attention here to the gap between the theory and the practical 'how to' which may be hampering participatory planning initiatives.

Participatory planning is taught in universities across South Africa but we need to understand that meaningful participation in planning is difficult to achieve even for the most well-intentioned municipal official or researcher, yet it is critical for collaborative endeavour. Watson (2014) further argues that

...planning theory can influence practice even if indirectly and unevenly. Where cases of co-production can illustrate innovative and potentially positive processes of state–society engagement under difficult conditions, then it is important to extract both the successes and pitfalls of these cases and feed them back into the realm of planning practice.

Certainly, an innovative emancipatory planning process is not easy and may be tiresome to city planners as Benit-Gbaffou (2008) notes, but it is possible. Todes (2012: 164) remarks on a successful case in Johannesburg where

the consolidation of policy and the position of planning have been made possible by a consistent and supportive local political regime, but this is relatively unusual internationally. It has required extensive engagement with actors within and outside of the municipality, which is demanding in terms of municipal capacity...Planning also has to deal with other departments, which have different agendas, and with a private property market which in several respects is moving in different directions. Hence, while the new form of spatial planning and the link to infrastructure is promising, it is a demanding approach which requires a very different form of planning than traditional master planning.

Furthermore, Skinner and Watson (2020) writing about the informal sector emphasise that

It is ... essential that any urban intervention aimed at supporting the informal economy (whether in public space or home-based) involves extensive negotiation and participatory planning processes, as well as professionals willing and able to consider new forms of infrastructure provision and new or adapted rules to manage their use and servicing.

Planners committed to this approach need to be willing to invest the time, energy, and capital to make it work but the consequences of not doing a participatory practice,

despite these challenges can lead to distrust and alienation from the state, as is argued through this thesis.

Spatial Justice

Space is not void. The way we perceive and think about it has drastically changed in recent years, especially over the past 29 years in a post-liberation South Africa. Coming from an unjust spatial racist system where space was organised to unfairly regulate the movement of black citizens arriving in a space that has been assimilated by the citizens, they move towards a new emphasis on a renewed human life. For Soja (2010: 54):

Thinking about space has changed significantly in recent years, from emphasizing flat cartographic notions of space as container or stage of human activity or merely the physical dimensions of fixed form, to an active force shaping human life. A new emphasis on specifically urban spatial causality has emerged to explore the generative effects of urban agglomerations not just on everyday behaviour but on such processes as technological innovation, artistic creativity, economic development, social change as well as environmental degradation, social polarization, widening income gaps, international politics, and, more specifically, the production of justice and injustice.

It is also important to recognise that the concept of spatial justice is broad:

From the geographical aspects of justice and injustice to a critical spatial perspective of justice, to latent processes which creates unjust spatialities, to discrimination based on locality, to the political nature of space arrangement, to the daily operation of an urban setting, to geographical unbalance developments we need to understand that every spatiality has a degree of injustice in it and that a just and perfect human right is realistically unattainable. (Soja 2009: 62)

The nature of this thesis lends itself to focus on the spatial (in)justice rooted in the daily operation of urban systems, especially on spaza shops. Soja also argues that:

The normal workings of an urban system, the everyday activities of urban functioning, is a primary source of inequality and injustice in that the accumulation of locational decisions in a capitalist economy tends to lead to the redistribution of real income in favour of the rich over the poor. This redistributive injustice is aggravated further by racism, patriarchy, heterosexual bias, and many other forms of spatial and locational discrimination. Note again that these processes can operate without rigid forms of spatial segregation. (Soja 2010: 67)

This is particularly true because of the injustice imposed by the apartheid system on the people and the space they occupy. Nevertheless, this unjust space had moments where it was challenged and subverted by the citizen. Rightfully the post-apartheid space is constantly being re-appropriated and in the process of transformation. One aspect through which this appropriation is taking place is by a 'quiet encroachment' as described by Byatt (2013) of disenfranchised people into the centre/city. He motivates that this influx can inspire a movement. A movement that clearly demands that they be recognised as rightful occupants of the city who should, in a democracy, be able to legitimately participate in decisions around how the space and the place are conceptualised (Hamdi, 2004; Williams, 2006). This speaks to issues around urban planning and participation as well as wider notions of democracy and spatial justice (Soja, 2010; Harvey, 2012, 2009; Dikeç,2001).

(Urban) space: planning as a process

Another important aspect of this thesis is the concept of space (Lefebvre 1974); how it is allocated and appropriated and how that affects the day-to-day experience of South Africans. This necessarily involves a discussion on urban planning and the realm of what Lefebvre (1974) rather cynically classifies as 'Representations of space':

Conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers... all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived...This is the dominant space in any society... Conceptions of space tend...towards a system of verbal...signs. (1991:39)

Urban planning has, in the past, indeed been an instrumental strategy in the oppression of millions of people's lives, in South Africa. Indisputably apartheid was an urban planning project at a national level that served to divide and forcibly control the non-white population. It is important to understand the root cause and where this injustice emerged.

For Soja the apartheid space is as follows:

This socially produced geography of institutionalised racial segregation that was apartheid pushed to an extraordinary level spatial strategies and processes that were commonly used in colonial situations as a means of population control and assuring disproportionate economic advantage for the colonisers versus the colonised. This was not only a matter of

divide and rule in an abstract and theoretical sense, it was a sophisticated strategy specifically designed to produce beneficial geographies for the hegemonic few while creating spatial structures of disadvantage for the rest. (Soja 2010: 40)

However, over the last 30 years we have seen the transformation in a theoretical sense and of the socio-economic landscape through other progressive urban planning projects that attempt to redress the injustices that apartheid implemented as policy. Soja (2010) argues that:

...a critical spatial perspective of some sort has become increasingly relevant to understanding the contemporary condition, whether we are pondering the increasing intervention of electronic media in our daily routines, trying to understand the multiplying geopolitical conflicts around the globe, or seeking ways to act politically to reduce poverty, racism, sexual discrimination, and environmental degradation...From local and urban contexts to the regional, national, and global scales, a new spatial consciousness is entering into public debates on such key issues as human rights, social inclusion-exclusion, citizenship, democracy, poverty, racism, economic growth, and environmental policy. (2010:14)

It is clear that there was and to some extent still is, the need for a 'radical transformation in critical spatial thinking' (Soja, 2010). After the end of apartheid, there was extensive policy development work that recognised how important it was to use planning and housing projects to reintegrate marginalised groups back into the city. For example, the Breaking New Ground policy objectives aim to show how the rollout of housing such as Cornubia uses housing to try and weave together the fractures of SA. The policy states that:

...residents should live in a safe and secure environment, and have adequate access to economic opportunities, a mix of safe and secure housing, and tenure types reliable and affordable basic services, educational, entertainment, and cultural activities, and health, welfare and police services. (Department of Human Settlement, 2004)

The term 'spatial justice' formally appeared in the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA) section (7)(a)(i) where it is unpacked to recommend that the 'spatial and other imbalances' of the past be redressed through a more just distribution of land. The Act also recommends innovative changes in policies and spatial development frameworks at governmental level to accommodate persons and areas which had previously been prejudiced against. Spatial justice became a required aspect in the majority of governmental documents and policies. Section 4 of

the Act stipulates that development spatial planning adheres to the principles of spatial justice.

Since 1994 community participation, social facilitation and inclusive decision-making have become popular in governance discourses (Nyalunga 2006). Ironically it remains consistently clear that the interpretations, tactics and desires of city dwellers remain absent while those of planners, policymakers, and owners of capital define the normative visions of the city. Yet, it is not only the practical application of community decision-making that is not simple and difficult to realise. The intention, nature of the 'conversation' and character of the engagement are determined by how the state 'listens' and engages its citizenry. Perhaps it has come a time when it is not enough to listen with our ears anymore but with our hearts. As this study shows, residents in Cornubia state that decision-makers (when they listen) are doing so to fulfil the requirements in legislation without meaningfully engaging in processes that deal with residents' opinions and demands. Listening without hearing.

While this is important both from a social and an institutional point of view, it is my experience that 'formalised' participatory processes often do not seek to understand people's actions, relationships, and their reading of the city. Friedman (2015: 19) writes that "rather than seeing participation as a process in which governments create forums to include citizens in decisions, we need to view it as one in which citizens, on their own terms, use their capacity to organise and mobilise to claim a say in how they are governed". Therefore, it is imperative that we turn urban inquiries on their heads and ask not how the state and its institutions regulate urban space, but how urban dwellers' actions regulate the city and themselves.

Power to the People

The fist of Nelson Mandela raised high in the air on the 11th of February 1990 became an iconic image that represents freedom for the South African nation as a whole. This was the beginning of a new era where 'the people' felt empowered and the slogan 'the people shall govern' became popular rhetoric. It could be argued that the era post-1994 became, at least in conception and conceptualization, an era of the people.

Democracy in South Africa has pivoted around the idea of rights for ‘the people’ who had been brutalised under apartheid. Access to education and opportunities for ‘the people’, an important impetus behind this dissertation, means exploring the disjuncture between the official narratives and the reality on the ground for ordinary South Africans – ‘the people’. My interest, which I have expressed, is focused on popular strategies for navigating the constraints of the (not so) new South Africa. However, the term ‘the people’ as well as the culture they produce often referred to as ‘the popular’ or ‘popular culture’ first needs to be excavated. To do this, I will employ theorists who engage African popular culture, such as Barber (1997) as well as those looking at popular culture in consumer capitalist societies, such as Fiske (1989). My argument going forward is to understand ‘the spaza’ as popular culture, however, we must first engage the terminologies.

Popular culture as the term suggests is culture made or generated by ‘the people’ but who are ‘the people’? While this has been touched on above it is important to consider that what makes more sense is to recognise the term ‘the people’ not as ‘all the people’ and not all the time. As Fiske (1989) argues, ‘the people’:

is not a stable sociological category; it cannot be identified and subjected to empirical study, for it does not exist in objective reality. The people, the popular, the popular forces, are a shifting set of allegiances that cross all social categories; various individuals belong to different popular formations at different times, often moving between them quite fluidly. By ‘the people’, then, I mean this shifting set of social allegiances, which are described better in terms of people's felt collectivity than in terms of external sociological factors such as class, gender, age, race, region, or what have you.

The idea of a ‘felt collectivity’ is important. Divisive agents (like political factionalism and tribalism) in the African context may attempt to disrupt this feeling of being in solidarity of experience, but if the space arises through creative initiatives, as in this case study, the ‘felt collectivity’ reappears quite overwhelmingly (this will be engaged in the final chapters).

A less positive reference to the people is ‘the masses’. This terminology is occasionally used by elites, press, and politicians (for their own benefit) to describe people who do not necessarily express their desires in a formal way. It is a way of describing a collective that negates any individual humanity. It is dehumanizing (Freire 1970). It

seems that when engaging the concept of 'the people' in an African context, there is a greater emphasis on the idea of survival strategies and less on gestures of subversion and resistance to the power bloc (Fiske 1989). According to Ranger (1975 in Barber 2018:3) getting to grips with 'the people' and 'popular culture' in Africa requires us "to look at the informal, the festive, the apparently escapist, in order to see evidence of real experience and real response; to see how far 'the people' have had to make use, even for this informal vocabulary, of the idioms of the masters; to see how far, on the other hand, creativity and spontaneity survive".

That is why it is imperative to understand who 'the people' are in the context of this study. The term 'the people' may not be a fixed category, but we do get the impression that in an African context at least, it defines the 'majority' and points to their experiences and attitudes, and their exclusion from (direct) power and privilege. In engaging with power in Africa, Bayat states:

It has been argued that no one in sub-Saharan Africa is absolutely cut off from the centre: instead, in the 'rhizome state', 'small men' are linked through a multiplicity of capillaries of patronage and influence to some 'big man' through whom they can get a share of the good things in life. (Bayat 1993: 218 in Barber 1997).

When engaging the concept of popular culture, theorists in that field (see Strinati 1995) do not entirely agree on the term. Ideas circulating in the first half of the 20th century in Europe tended to adopt a 'cultural pessimism' (Strinati 1995:17) when engaging ideas around popular culture. For these theorists like Dwight MacDonald (1957) and those in The Frankfurt School¹³ whose stance in the 1930s was strongly anti-capitalist and anti-communist, popular culture (or mass culture as critics prefer to call it) was a form of 'dominant culture'. It was their position that "the dominant ideas of any society are those which are formulated by the ruling class in order to secure its role" (Strinati 1995:130). In this frame, mass culture is seen as 'breaking down the wall' between what was viewed romantically as Folk Art (the true, uncontaminated and naïve expression of ordinary people) and High Culture (sophisticated and elite with high production values) "Thus becoming an instrument of political domination" (MacDonald

¹³ The Frankfurt school refers to a number of German intellectuals including Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer whose writings from the 1930s (post World War 1 and Russian revolution) developed a Critical Theoretical approach which was anti-capitalist, anti-communist, and anti-fascist. They wrote quite prolifically on the idea of 'mass culture' and the culture industry (1944/ 1973).

1957: 60). Mass culture was therefore seen as a way to secure leadership for the powerful and for the continuation of capitalism which benefitted them.

Certainly, there is something to be said about the way in which mass media (as cultural production), which now includes social media, willingly collude with, and prop up capitalism. However, the position I take in this dissertation is less pessimistic, for while mass culture may be part of the capitalist machinery, popular culture is not.

This distinction between 'popular culture' and 'mass culture' is important as it helps to avoid one of the key critiques of what has been termed quite disparagingly as 'Cultural populism' (McGuigan 1992) which includes the theories of John Fiske (1989) that I am applying in my dissertation. The critique of Fiske and others who see ordinary people as more agentic, is that it fails to account "for *both* [his italics] ordinary people's everyday culture [which can be subversive] and its material construction by powerful forces beyond the immediate comprehension and control of ordinary people" (McGuigan 1992: 172). Indeed, any engagement with concepts around 'the popular' and 'popular culture' demands that you straddle the contradictions of the phenomenon. As Fiske himself outlines (1989; 45): "Popular readings are always contradictory; they must encompass both that which is to be resisted and the immediate resistances to it. This is why popular culture is such an elusive concept". However, it is important that when engaging the idea of popular culture in the context of this thesis we also look specifically to the theory around African popular culture. As mentioned, this thesis is concerned with the phenomenon of the spaza shop as being both located as part of African 'popular culture' as described by Barber (1997) and popular culture in consumer capitalist societies as described by John Fiske (1989) since the spaza evolved as an African 'popular' response to the adoption of a capitalist consumer model in post-1994 South Africa.

Barber (1997) defines Popular culture in Africa as a:

...product of everyday life. It is the unofficial, the non-canonical. It is usually taken to mean the culture of 'ordinary people': not the educated elites, politicians, military top brass and rich businessmen; not the people in power, the people who have legal or illegal bank accounts in Switzerland and send their children to boarding schools overseas; but rather petty traders,

primary school teachers, taxi drivers, farmers, the unemployed, [and] street children.
(Barber, 1997: 1)

It is the argument here therefore that in engaging with spaza shop owners (the petty traders described above) in Cornubia one is fundamentally engaging the popular. The spaza phenomenon which is outlined below and also expanded on in chapter 6 comprises popular expressions in their formal presentation. However, investigating the spatial, social, and cultural in the manifestation of spaza shops demanded a look beyond the spaza as shop to spaza as cultural node.

The Spaza Phenomenon

Early evolution of the spaza shop from the 90s onwards in South Africa saw small makeshift shops emerging in townships and informal settlements to cater to the immediate needs of the poorer peripatetic or fixed communities. These became known in South Africa as 'spaza shops' or 'spazas'. Generally, spaza shops are micro enterprises that operate seven days a week and usually until around 10 in the evening. Although they exist in other countries – predominantly in the global South – the rise of the spaza in South Africa cannot be separated from the fall of apartheid and the consequent rise of urbanization as black South Africans were now free to move into and across spaces to make a living. This freedom of movement opened up opportunities to seek work or to venture into little businesses like the spaza shop to conduct a livelihood. According to a report done on micro-enterprises by the Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, (2012) in Cape Town “spaza shops are essentially micro-convenience stores which operate in township residential areas, selling groceries, bread, cool drinks, sweets and cigarettes.” They distinguish spaza shops from 'tuck shops' and 'house shops' due to their “business turnover, characteristic and distinctive branding, and business operation” (2012: 1). However, while it is easy to make a distinction, based on the above, for the customers who frequent them they are all, collectively known as 'spazas'. Further 'house shop' owners in my study refer to their businesses as spazas and in keeping with the concept of 'the popular' I will respect the term that they ascribe to their cultural form. I will therefore use the term 'spaza' to describe all informal convenience stores where the materials that form or house the business are appropriated and repurposed. I will describe the forms below.

Forms of Spaza

As noted above, spazas can take numerous forms and are predominantly found in three locales. The first involves the appropriation of public space: the pavement. Spazas of this kind usually locate themselves on well-used pedestrian routes into the city and in townships to maximise business; and on the peripheries of informal settlements where pavements exist as part of the city's infrastructure. These micro-stores usually take the form of either a crate placed upside down on the floor with all the goods beautifully installed on a makeshift tabletop or an appropriated shopping trolley full of chip packets strung over the edges in a festive display of colour. In keeping with the 'mini-store' concept, these spazas usually sell individually packaged sweets, loose cigarettes, small bags of chips, and occasionally single doses of antacid powders (Eno) or headache medication.

The second example is the spaza shops in the informal shacks or *mjondolo* erected by shack dwellers¹⁴. Here the single free-standing, one-room shack doubles as a shop selling basic necessities: This is a larger business than the 'pavement spaza'. Here you can find bread, eggs, oil, and pap – ingredients for a meal, as well as non-edibles like cell phone data. It is quite common for these spazas to also sell ready-made food such as amagwinya (fat cakes) with polony and cheese as well as other delights.

This thesis will focus on the third locale which also involves the appropriation and transformation of space, but primarily in terms of intended use. In this example, state-provided dwellings zoned as residential (private space) are repurposed for commercial use (public space). Here, the front rooms of the government-provided houses in formalised Urban settlements (such as Cornubia) are transformed into little shops displaying a cacophony of goods similar to what is offered in the second example.

¹⁴ In South African an estimated 2.9-3.6 million people live in informal settlements. A by-product of urbanization, these areas are often located on land that is unsafe for human settlement. In the recent floods in April 2022 in Durban, thousands of shacks were swept away and tens of thousands of people displaced. (Makhaye, 2022)

Bread, milk, porridge, rice, cooldrinks, and chips as well as prepaid electricity and hot food. Entering into one of these spazas from the often modest and dour exterior feels like you have arrived at Alibaba's Cave¹⁵! Transformation is right before your eyes.

Spaza Culture: A popular situation for the people

popular culture is the culture of the subordinate who resent their subordination. (Fiske 1989:7)

It is the position of this thesis that the spaza is an example of popular culture as described by John Fiske (1989) as well as Karen Barber (1997), who details popular culture in the African context specifically. In this section, I will attempt to apply the theory to the example in order to demonstrate my argument.

During my residency in Cornubia, I spent a lot of time at spaza shops and the more time I spent there the more I saw how interwoven these little shops had become into the fabric of the community. In the absence of any social amenities, the shops have become not only a place to buy a loaf of bread but a place to meet, chat, share stories, and have a loose cigarette. This speaks to the first aspect that defines popular culture: The issue of 'relevance' (Fiske 1989). Popular texts are not popular until they are accepted by people as meaningful. In other words, "they are only completed when taken up by the people and inserted into everyday culture" (1989: 6) and they will only be inserted into culture if they are relevant or applicable. In this respect we can agree that the spaza is popular, they are part of the daily experience of millions of South Africans. They directly meet the needs of their customers: accessible and reasonably priced, they sell what people need and want. During my practice of walking in the city, I began to notice that the distance separating pavement spazas was exactly the space covered in the time it took to smoke one cigarette while walking. And yet, spazas are illegal.

¹⁵ I here make a playful reference to the tale of Ali Baba and the forty thieves and drawing a parallel between the spaza and the cave where all the treasures are kept.

According to Section (3)(d)(iii) of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA), one is not permitted to conduct business in a residential zone. Section 3(d)9iii) in effect makes the proliferation of such home-based businesses illegal forms of trade. As Fiske states “There is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control that escapes or opposes the hegemonic forces” (1989:2) that would try to contain or control them. In fact, debates around the relevance (or racism) of colonial zoning practices in a contemporary African city almost become pointless when we look at the spread of this commercial enterprise around the country. Issues around enforcing the zoning only seem to re-emerge when tensions rise between local and foreign traders (Mafata 2022), and officials see an opportunity to solve two problems in one since only South Africans or those legally in the country would be able to apply for rezoning permits or licenses to trade.

Fiske (1989:28) argues that “all popular culture is a process of struggle... over the meanings of social experience, of one's personhood and its relations to the social order and of the texts and commodities of that order”. Popular culture then becomes the battleground for the destabilisation and redistribution of social power. Certainly, spazas are a challenge to the system. They directly flout the law and their numbers demonstrate the relative impotence of the state to enforce a rule of law that is not in the interests of ‘the people’.

This ‘battleground’ is located in the space between what Fiske calls ‘the power bloc’ and ‘the people’ (1989). Fiske is optimistic that in this hegemonic process, there are inevitably progressive political gains, which enlarge a space of action for the subordinate (Fiske 1989:11). Interestingly, Karin Barber locates African popular culture in “a vague, shapeless, undefined space” (1997: 1) that exists in many ways invisibly between traditional forms and elite forms. However, she clearly identifies that it is concerned with speaking back to the powerful in order to negotiate social change (1997).

The process through which this social change is achieved is described by Fiske (1989:2) as resistance and evasion. They are connected and both concern the interplay of pleasure and meaning: evasion (dodging the authorities) is more pleasurable than meaningful, and resistance (more overt defiance) produces meanings

before pleasure. The modes of operation of spazas are very strategic, particularly when you can quickly pack up and go to avoid being caught without a trading permit by the police. The spazas in this example, as stable (de)constructions demonstrate a more direct challenge to the state but are evasive in that their businesses are literally behind closed doors.

Another central aspect of popular culture is that it is “the art of making do...crafted out of the resources both discursive and material that is provided by the social system that disempowers them” (Fiske 1989: 2). This makes it both contradictory and conflictual.

In Cornubia, residents have converted their houses into shops. They use (without permission) the materials of the ‘power bloc’ (appropriated), in this case, the RDP houses, the discarded material, and the ‘acquired’ material (trolleys) salvaged in order to survive in a society that does not provide sufficiently for them. This action is engaged in the everyday life of the people where the laws imposed by the powerful few are constantly negotiated and challenged as described above. Renowned theorist of the practices of everyday life Michel De Certeau (1984) talks about ‘strategy and tactics, of guerrilla warfare, of poaching, of guileful ruses and tricks. Underlying all of them is the assumption that the powerful are cumbersome, unimaginative, and over-organised, whereas the oppressed are creative, nimble, and flexible. They use guerrilla tactics against the strategies of the powerful, make poaching raids upon their texts or structures, and play constant tricks upon the system (Fiske 1989). These terms are appropriately applied to the spaza owners in the way they ‘encroach’ onto the system represented by the houses which have been given to them by the government. This action also mentioned above is what Bayat (2013: 35) calls a ‘quiet encroachment’. He argues that

Quiet encroachment refers to non-collective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption or urban services, informal work, business opportunities and public space) in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion.

It is interesting to note that it would appear that the state by and large turns a blind eye to this practice (except when it is opportunistic not to do so as described above). Is it worth trying to understand why this is? Is it because the spaza is beyond their

control? Or is it because they are benevolent and sympathetic to the spaza phenomenon? I believe that as 'the people' are never one thing 'all the time', authorities/ law enforcers are also occasionally part of the grouping we call 'the people' when they attend a Chiefs soccer match or a funeral of a family member out of town. In these moments the spaza does not represent a challenge to authority, but perhaps a place to buy a drink. However, it is my contention that the primary reason spazas are 'left alone' is that the spaza culture being popular culture is difficult to control. It evades capture (Fiske 1989) and as a culture made by people who resent their subordination (1989:7), they are politically disinclined to play by the rules. It is where and how they speak back. Barber (1997: 3) contends that the concept of African popular culture "brings with it a history of conflicts, assumptions, and problems.

This research argues that spazas are a popular initiative that have inadvertently democratised space; an 'evasive manoeuvre' (Fiske 1989: 54) born out of necessity, their development did not wait, as mentioned above, for any 'go-ahead' from authorities. Or for the authorities to develop shops to resource them. In townships and new housing developments like Cornubia where there are scant social facilities, spazas often act as familiar places to congregate and meet up. Authorities should recognise the potential of the spaza to assist in the democratization of space and spatial justice. Spazas could potentially offer a platform where the relationship between people and space can be negotiated. This however would require an acknowledgment of their right to be, which may be too far a stretch for the authorities.

Spaces of in-between

Conceptually and theoretically, popular culture is located in 'the zone between' (Barber 1997:1). Further, John Fiske (1989) talks about popular culture being located 'between' forces of openness and closure as has been discussed above. I would therefore like to conclude in spending a little time engaging this concept that has always intrigued me and which is embraced in this research.

My *flânerie* through all the cities I have travelled to, has overwhelmingly drawn my attention to the growth in the fissures of the urban infrastructure. From the crack in the

asphalt of the road to where the road meets the curb; where the curb meets the pavement; where pavement meets the boundary wall. At all the meeting points, in these spaces of in-between, grass grows. The grass, in a perfectly organic manner, assimilates the urban form and in a deconstructive (Derrida 2001) way exposes the absurdity of the planning system. For some, the grass is an annoyance and a sign of corrupt and inefficient Municipalities but looking from another perspective we can presume that where human control fails, nature prevails. Like the grass in the crack, spaza owners appropriate the resources provided by the state for their own benefit (as argued above). Fiske (1989) describes that

The 'art of being in between' is the art of popular culture. Using their products for our purposes is the art of being in between production and consumption, speaking is the art of being in between their language system and our material experience. (Fiske 1989: 36)

My observation of this phenomenon has made me realise that in essence there is a conceptual parallel between the spaza shops in Cornubia and the revolutionary grass. Spaza shops can be seen as a metaphor that occupies an in-between space that blurs the boundaries between house/home, formal/informal, private/public, and state/community. For bell hooks (1990:145)

as a radical standpoint, perspective, position, "the politics of location" necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of re-vision.

This metaphor offers a different reading on the vibrant world and how the ordinary (Perec, 2008) and the everyday (De Certeau,1984) constitute themselves and are agentic in the process of the making of new forms of urban life. These 'in-between' spaces 'provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha, 1994: 2). The importance of the in-between space does not lie in the binaries that it evades but in a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994) which makes it possible for other moments to emerge. It is in these creative moments that the state can encounter the people and together struggle for agency, socio-economic, and even cultural signification.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The politics of process

It is very hard to 'explain' oneself - an interview, a dialogue, a conversation. Most of the time, when someone asks me a question, even one which relates to me, I see that, strictly, I don't have anything to say. Questions are invented, like any-thing else. If you aren't allowed to invent your questions, with elements from all over the place, from never mind where, if people 'pose' them to you, you haven't much to say. The art of constructing a problem is very important: you invent a problem, a problem-position, before finding a solution. None of this happens in an interview, a conversation, a discussion. Even reflection, whether it's alone, or between two or more, is not enough. (Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet 1977:1)

The following chapter engages with the methods and methodology of the research conducted in Cornubia from 2017 to 2019. The creative methods of engagement used in this research have emerged over the years in an organic and intuitive manner through a number of different projects. It is important therefore before I engage in a methodological discussion on the doctoral research that I situate myself within this practice as it fundamentally shapes the doctoral research design.

The methodology is revealed through the telling of the story. Cornubia stories. Interwoven into the narrative of this place and its people is my own story. Building on the knowledge generated through my artistic processes over the last few decades, this chapter is presented as a narrative journey, a *flânerie* (Debord, 1967) which uncovers a methodological practice grown out of an intuitive and creative participatory engagement with the residents of Cornubia, in their context. This narrative outlines a qualitative enquiry approach and explores methodological practices within their associated paradigms. The chapter offers an understanding of how my engagements in Cornubia prior to undertaking this doctoral research have both enabled me to conduct research of this kind, shaped the research methodology and established social relationships between participants and the researcher. Once the doctoral research

has been contextualised in this way, the chapter moves on to outline in detail the specific methods used in the study, namely a series of creative research workshops with participants, interviews and ethnographic fieldnotes from time spent in Cornubia.

For Creswell the researchers' interpretations cannot be separated from "their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (2007: 39). In my case this connectedness was relevant not only to my personal experiences but also to my involvements with the community. Over a period of 3 years prior to this doctoral research, trust and rapport between a number of residents and myself was established. This gave me a complex and detailed perspective on the lives and issues that concerned the residents I had met, and made introducing the idea of research to participants far easier than if I had arrived as a stranger wanting to undertake research in this community. I will briefly outline these previous project engagements; movie nights, drawing workshops, artistic installation and community newsletters. These engagements are also illustrated in the diagrams below (see Figures 14-16). It was through these engagements that I learnt how to become responsive, flexible, adaptive and a better listener. Open and in person communication, that included 'straight talk' and meaningful listening between myself and several residents over the years was central to generating trust, and fundamentally shaped my research questions and choice of methods. During these engagements in Cornubia I heard many residents' stories, and often these stories moved beyond narratives I expected to find or what I read in the media. It felt like I was unconsciously becoming a research instrument as they shared experiences of being on the socio-economic margins in a relatively new human settlement in the design of which they had had very little say. This trust opened a potential platform where credible inter-subjectivity (Babbie and Mouton, 2002) could be explored once the research formally started. The connections forged prior to the research allowed for an empathetic knowledge of the residents' in situ experiences of living in Cornubia (Gilham 2000; Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Creswell, 2007).

Figure 14: Jahangeer (2023), Timeline, Durban [Diagram]

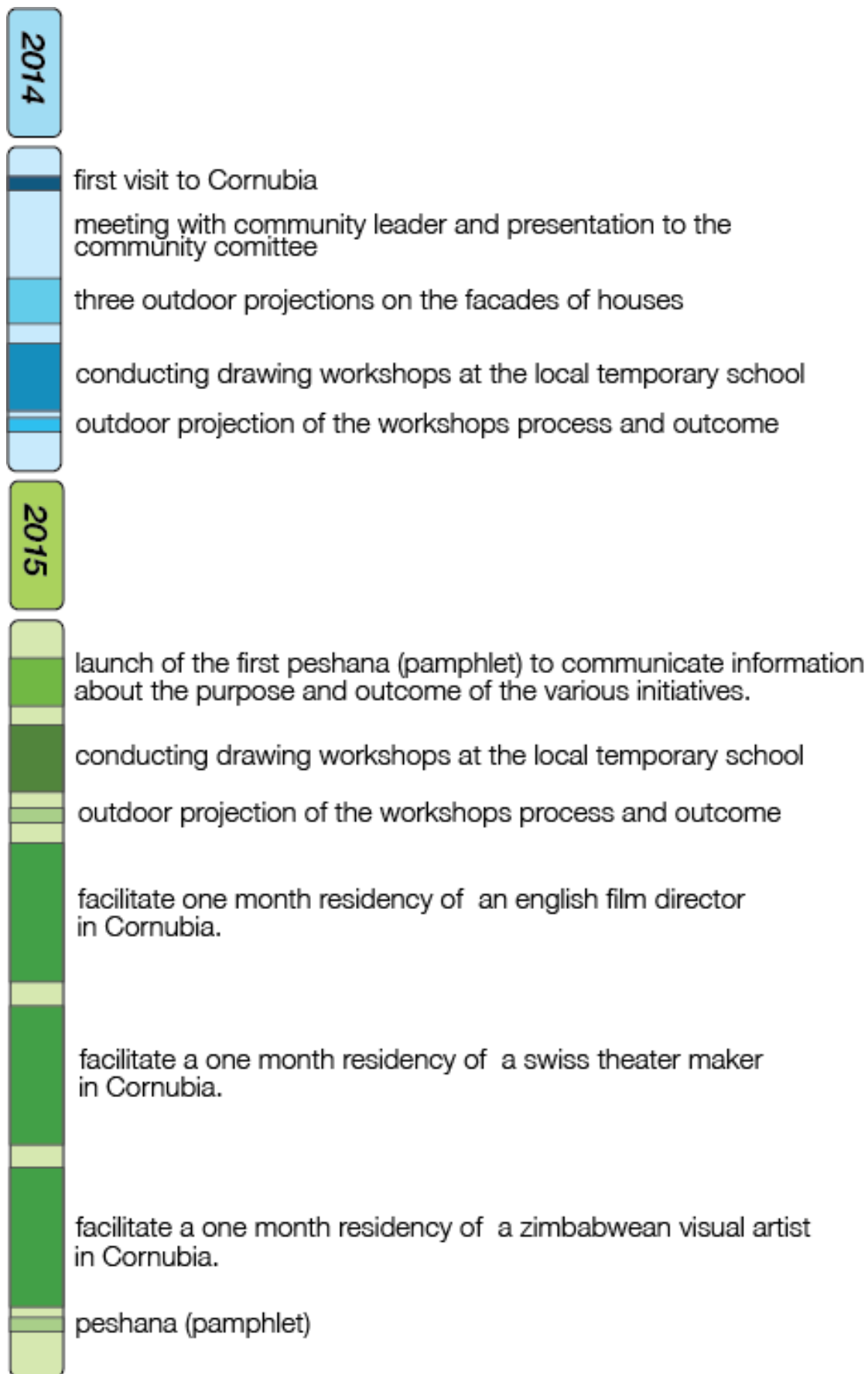


Figure 14: Jahangeer (2023), Timeline, Durban [Diagram]

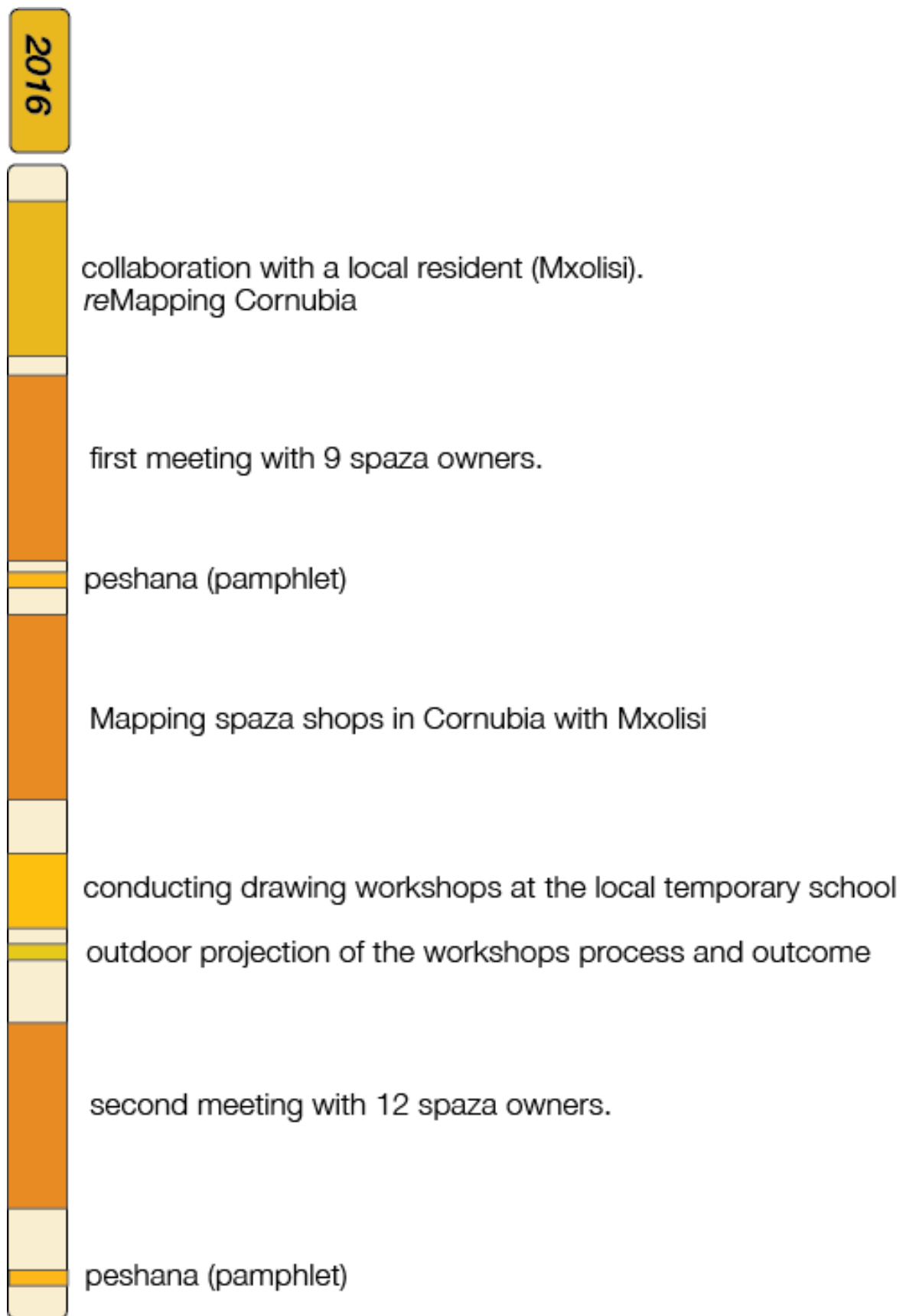


Figure 15: Jahangeer (2023), Timeline, Durban [Diagram]

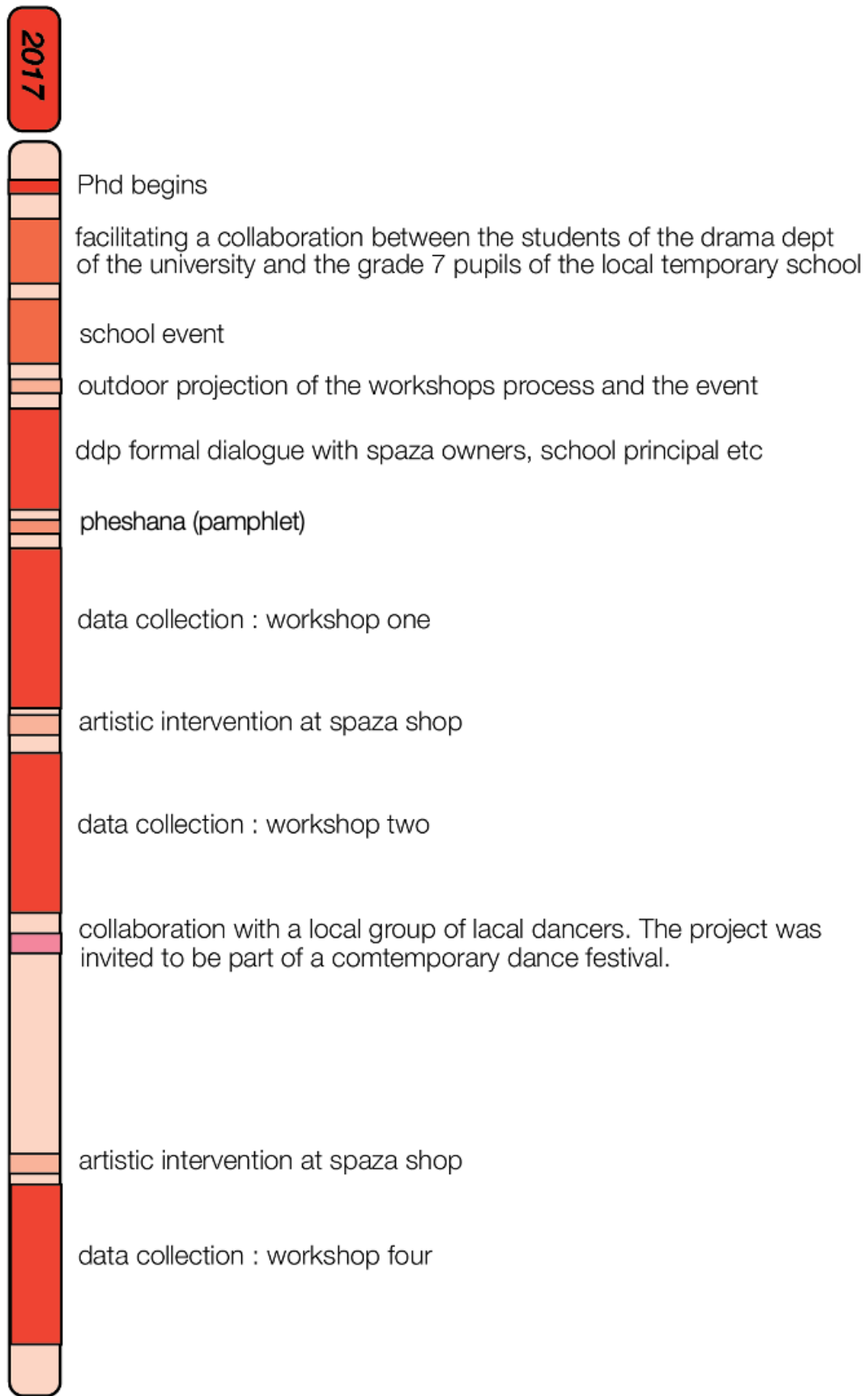


Figure 16: Jahangeer (2023), Timeline, Durban [Diagram]

Understanding their experience of 'living' here eventually became instrumental in facilitating the research. Building relationships over time enabled an intimacy with some residents which facilitated my understanding of the phenomenon of spaza shops and the role they played in this housing settlement. The existing relationships with residents allowed for a participatory approach to the research design and helped in the analysis of the data. This fits with the inductive logic used in PAR since my approach was from the ground up, rather than analysing narratives only from my own theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it is important to note that this research not only builds on relevant literature and policy documents but is also shaped by the prior creative processes and outputs from previous collaborations with some Cornubia residents.

The very manner in which the residents told me their stories gave me an indication as to what is meaningful for and in the research. Without the strong bond I had with the residents I would never have been able to design and conduct the workshops which were the primary data collection tools for the research. This was established by me 'being there' (Gray 2003). For Gray,

Whatever you do, your presence will have an effect on what you are seeking to observe. You are part of the world you are studying, in a broader 'macro' sense of being part of the culture, but also in the 'micro' sense within the geography of your chosen setting or site. Returning to our definitions of 'material', you, literally, embody your research. (Gray 2003 : 86)

In recognizing this it is important to give some contextual overview of this previous work in Cornubia to better understand how the primary data collected for this doctoral study has been shaped by these creative engagements with residents.

The project work that shaped the PhD

Louis, a resident with whom by then I had had several informal conversations, became my entry point into the community. He suggested that I meet, Rasta, a person he called the community leader. He facilitated this meeting with Rasta in 2014. Rasta never identified as Rastafarian and I gathered that his nickname comes from him

having dreadlocks. He was a very confident man with a strong and loud voice. I must admit that I was slightly intimidated by him. At the beginning he was reserved and suspicious but he eventually warmed up during the course of the meeting. Our conversation was constantly interrupted by residents coming to ask for advice, or for a letter of proof of residence which he could give on behalf of the councillor, or simply by customers coming to buy cigarettes, sweets, bread from the spaza shop he ran from his lounge, and which sustained his livelihood. I was very interested in the dynamics of the shop which he conducted from his lounge. Rasta and his spaza shop undoubtedly sparked the initial interest that inspired me when designing my PhD research questions. After a long intense conversation, he suggested that I should propose a project to the committee.

Invitation for conversation: a Curious methodology

Rasta's request came as a surprise to me. Since I had no funding to implement any project I decided to engage in a practice, within my own means, which could heighten curiosity in the community. In my mind, that would hopefully incite a broader conversation with the community. Through past creative interventions which took the forms of performances, installation, drawing, and video amongst others, I had learnt that rousing curiosity practically and conceptually, can be an effective tool in creating foundations for meaningful conversation, which enables relationship building.

In the past when I needed to create conversation, I would often engage myself in performative acts with the intention to create a 'curious moment'. I usually heighten the act into absurdity until the audience cannot resist asking "what are you doing man?". This, I consider as an invitation for conversation, where the performance acts as the beginning sentence for the conversation. The idea is not to come with answers but rather to create a space for dialogue. As Freire and Macedo (1995: 382) suggest:

Understanding dialogue as a process of learning and knowing establishes a previous requirement that always involves an epistemological curiosity about the very elements of the dialogue.

The opening action, at Rasta's provocation, took the form of movie projections on the remarkably big blank façades of some of the houses. The screenings punctuated the blank context like a 'question mark', and symbolically gave an added dimension to the walls while being a kind of collage in their own right. The simple outdoor projections of movies on the façade of selected houses, at street intersections and in front of spaza shops could be considered as a form of disruption. The screenings were significant for me as it was a commitment to initiate conversations, the courage to ask questions and the willingness to engage in intentional listening (Given, 2008). The screenings became very popular in the community with an average of 30 children and adults attending at any single time. They came with chairs and blankets, and I was very inspired to see that the screenings also drew the attention of some parents. The residents became curious about what was happening and who was responsible for these showings. Parents came to meet me while children applauded at the end of the movies.

I became known to the children as Mr. Popeye¹⁶. This was metaphorically significant because even in its simplicity, the event demonstrated that there was engagement where in my view the community held the space and were already demonstrating a kind of reciprocity. This was confirmed when a few youngsters approached me and requested that I screen *Sarafina* as the next movie. It would appear that roles were being interchanged and power dynamics reworked, now the residents could start to control what was screened. It was clear for me that if I wanted to develop any form of relationship with this community, I had to be reflexive (Palaganas, et al., 2017) in the way that I remained open to critical propositions and reconsiderations. *Sarafina* is a movie that depicts the youth uprising in Soweto on the 16th of June 1976, an event that marked a turning point in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. We decided to screen the movie on the 16th of June 2017 which is 'Youth Day' in South Africa; a day of commemoration of the Soweto uprising. As per the youngsters' request, I screened the movie which was received with laughter, cheers and a hard-hearted demonstration

¹⁶ Popeye the Sailor is a muscular American cartoon fictional character. This cartoon is clearly popular among the children of the community and their association of cartoons in general is with the character of Popeye the Sailor. So, since I was showing them cartoons, then it was logical to them that I was Mr. Popeye.

of solidarity with the actors in the film. Through the movie events, I had begun to engage the popular and the beginning of what I believe were years of authentic interaction and engagement with leaders, adults and children in the community. During these movie screenings many residents and I engaged in conversations around various social issues, including unemployment, housing, participation and the politics of the spaza shops in the community. Upon reflection I recognised the potential for collaboration and the possibilities for reciprocal exchange of ideas between myself and the community. I was being offered an opportunity to look at the world from a different perspective. My own point of view was being challenged and I believe that this is where participation has the potential to be democratic. This challenge helped me develop different points of views, to generate new ideas. In a democratic South Africa community participation is a much desired but often fraught process in research and in urban development. Many community-based organization and local authorities have indicated an immense frustration with what Hamdi (2004) describes as a pretence of inclusive community participation for the purpose of bureaucratic ticking a box.

Meaningful participation requires long-term engagements, which in unequal contexts can create specific dilemmas. Indeed, my time in Cornubia before the PhD process enabled me to become more familiar in navigating some of the ethical dilemmas of doing fieldwork in this context. For example, I had to think carefully when – after about a year of knowing him – Louis asked to borrow money. An amount that I suspected would be difficult for him to pay back. In a community where most people struggle financially, I did not want to be perceived as someone to go to for money, but clearly as much as I felt part of the community, I was read as someone with access to wealth. This was inevitable but I felt that lending or giving money would jeopardise my relationships with Louis and the other residents. Yet, I was mindful that he was in need and knew the risk he was taking by asking to borrow money. These are the ethical ‘outside-insider’ challenges that arise when doing research with and in communities. These are also moments for important reflection about the politics of subjectivity and opportunities for us to learn how to navigate through differences.

It taught me that I could not pretend that my class privilege in relation to residents in Cornubia did not exist. While I would not be read as holding the same privileges ascribed to people read as White in South Africa, which assumes both a racial and

class dimension, I am clearly read as someone who holds access to resources, as Louis's request indicates. This immediately introduces the potential for power relationships to develop that can be used to manipulate agendas. While it may not be possible to eradicate these power dynamics entirely given the gross inequalities in South Africa, this did start me thinking about what kind of social capital and networks I could open up for residents.

Over the years of practice as an artist I have made connections with a network of creative practitioners across Europe and in Africa. This network made possible artistic exchanges and residencies which were predominantly funded by various European cultural agencies such as ProHelvetia (Swiss), the Goethe Institute (German) and the French Institute (IFAS). These residencies and exchanges were central as they enabled me to take distance from the continent in order to get an objective - and an outsider - view on the realities at home. Although this experience has influenced me to 'read' myself critically in the space, I am an open and at times exuberant personality who quite easily can become 'embedded' as I easily connect with people. Balancing these parts of myself, and not blurring the boundaries between myself and the residents, has been an interesting challenge in the research process. This was in part my impulse when I decided to go beyond the national borders defining 'outside' and invited three artists, two European and one Zimbabwean to conceptualise and implement artistic projects that would hopefully provide me and the residents I had met with a momentary outsider view on life in Cornubia. The interventions were modes of inquiry rather than art for the sake of 'art'. They were conceived as a necessary infusion of creativity to create a common vocabulary that connects creative ideas with initiatives in civic engagement. McNiff (1998: 32) explains that

the arts help us improve the way we interact with others by learning how to let go of negative attitudes and excessive needs for control, learning how to foster more open and original ways of perceiving situations and problems, gaining new insights and sensitivities toward others, learning how the slipstream of group expression can carry us to places where we cannot go alone, learning how to create supportive environments that inspire creative thought, and realizing that nothing happens in creative expression unless we show up and start working on a project, even with little sense of where we might ultimately go with it.

And action...

With the approval of one of the community leaders, Rasta, I invited a Swiss-English award-winning cinematographer, Karim Patwa¹⁷ to spend three weeks in the community. Throughout his stay he interacted with the community in an informal manner and the initial aim of his residency was to conceptualise and initiate the production of a short documentary about the everyday life (Highmore, 2002) in Cornubia Phase 1A. Although, at the end, the project did not materialise due to funding challenges, he nevertheless managed to open up further avenues for conversation across space and location.

Tim Zulauf¹⁸ is a theatre producer from Switzerland and he was the second artist who participated in the program. He conducted a series of 10 interviews with 10 residents who were randomly chosen. The interviews were concerned with experiences of living in Cornubia. The discussions were transcribed and 10 significant sentences were chosen to be displayed to the community on a 12-meter LED screen. The outcome was revealing. The interviewees in their anonymity were openly critical about their community reflecting mainly on crime, unemployment and social life in Cornubia. The LED screen became a platform for conversation not only symbolically among the participants, but it also stimulated responses among the passers-by. The community was talking back to itself.

Importantly during the two projects above I became an interlocutor, mediating conversations between the artists and the residents. The feedback I received from the residents enabled a shift in the focus of Karim's and Tim's work. I was becoming open to a more organic approach, which consisted both of an intuitive element when engaging the residents and a responsiveness to how events and experiences develop. Moreover, my facilitation between the artists and the residents expanded my relationship with the later and they could see that I was committed to 'being there' (Gray, 2003).

¹⁷ <https://www.karimpatwa.com/news-bio-contact/biography/>

¹⁸ <https://zulauf.it/w/index.php/en/homebilde>

The third artist who came in residence at Cornubia was Phili Mthabisi¹⁹. Phili is a visual artist from Zimbabwe who specifically works with vulnerable communities engaging social issues through his artistic practice. As much as Tim and Karim's interventions provided important insight into the lives of some residents, it is also important to acknowledge that they nevertheless brought in a complex power dynamic to navigate. It is not unrealistic to imagine that western knowledge tends to be the dominant system. As a result, there is always the possibility that indigenous knowledge gets misinterpreted and appropriated by western artists/researchers since they operate in the context of their cultures, histories and experiences (Moletsane, 2015). It was therefore necessary to have an African perspective in this program. Phili's participation raised necessary questions about the nature of research and the best way to carry it out in the global south. Who participates in the production of new knowledge? Whose knowledge is legitimate? Moletsane argues that we need to

refocus attention on the long-debated issue of the politics of knowledge production and dissemination, and the power dynamics inherent in what counts as legitimate knowledge, who authors and what resources are available to them, and who decides. (2015: 35-47)

Phili's intervention which I discuss in more detail below, was empathic and reminded me to value the importance of locating myself within my research and to undertake research that values local knowledge and contexts. The way he interacted with the residents inspired me to systematically examine and pick apart any underlying assumptions that I might have about the world through research and to think critically about how to further engage and develop an art based/informed research methodology going forward (Knowles and Cole, 2008). I had already started to investigate alternative forms and processes.

From conversation to dialogue: a manner of speech

I engage in dialogue not necessarily because I like the other person.

I engage in dialogue because I recognise the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing.

¹⁹ <https://voicesincolour.Wordpress.com/>

In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing. (Freire and Macedo, 1995)

Phili and I decided to screen another movie in the community. It was the 16th of June 2018, youth day, the commemoration of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The movie was a re-screening of *Sarafina*, which was a request from Mxolisi, a young unemployed man who had shown a keen interest in my process from the beginning. It was a Saturday night and everyone was excited because the weekend was here and the movie was on. Mxolisi helped with the setting up of the projector and he also organised the young children to sit in an orderly fashion. After the movie we discussed the role that the youth play in the society and the struggle he personally faces in his life. Mxolisi, who eventually became an active participant in the doctoral research, conceptually represented a shift from my 'invitation for conversation' into 'dialogue'. We were not talking about the trivialities of everyday life anymore but started to engage each other at a deeper personal and political level. The main objective of the screenings which was to *incite curiosity to engage in dialogue* was becoming effective. The screenings also laid down the foundation for interfacing with the residents, where entry level conversations were made possible and which eventually provided the ability to study the community and its context (White and Nair, 1999). This sense of curiosity was particularly evident in Mxolisi, who later actively requested to participate and collaborate in another piece of work.

Call and response

Mxolisi was impressed with Phili. "I can draw too" he expressed proudly. He rushed to his house and brought us a couple of sketches of houses in Cornubia. The drawings were faint, somewhat naïve but the important thing was that they were his own perspective of his neighbourhood. Mxolisi had just opened up the potential to explore drawing as a tool for further engagement in Cornubia. Further, since Mxolisi's English is not very good, and as speech can potentially fix a narrative in linearity, I imagined drawing as a medium which could go beyond the rational and evoke an emotional and intuitive response to provide a release from the one-dimensional communication of speech into a more layered one. I argue that since we live in a complex world, we

need to engage with alternative tools in order to better collect, process, understand and disseminate this complexity. I therefore invited Mxolisi to draw a map of the settlement. He got excited and requested “paper and a nice pen”. He spent days walking the neighbourhood capturing his environment in detail. Evans and Jones (2011: 850) note that both walking and drawing are methods with the capacity to

access people's attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment [This] is seen as a major advantage. [He] consider[s] walking to be an intimate way to engage with landscape and an approach that can provide insights into both place and self, resulting in more place-specific data than ‘traditional’ interviews.

Drawing in public can also be a performative act, which as discussed incites curiosity. Mxolisi raised this curiosity among the residents which sparked conversations, stimulated discussion, and provided insights that might not have been possible with traditional methods of inquiry. It is also worth noting that within the Emancipatory paradigm and the methodology of PAR which sits within it, the transference of skills is a key aim.

Through his mapping, which was done publicly and performatively, Mxolisi was able to get closer to the ways in which people encounter their environment, thereby producing richer data. He would often tell me that he was learning a lot about his own neighbourhood and he felt that he was able to listen to their stories in a sensitive way. Like I had experienced through my own performances, he too was becoming a person that people spoke to. One such story which he was encountering often was one of electricity theft. The concern was not so much the theft of the electricity but the danger it poses to the community. Thieves leave live wires lying on the road. The residents are concerned because children play on the street in Cornubia and this presents a life-threatening problem²⁰.

²⁰ Interestingly when I facilitated an NRF Blue Skies project in Cornubia in 2018 with a young group of 5 dancers who call themselves MOB (Master of Bang), who will be discussed later, this issue came up as the dominant issue they wanted to portray in their performance of ‘home’.

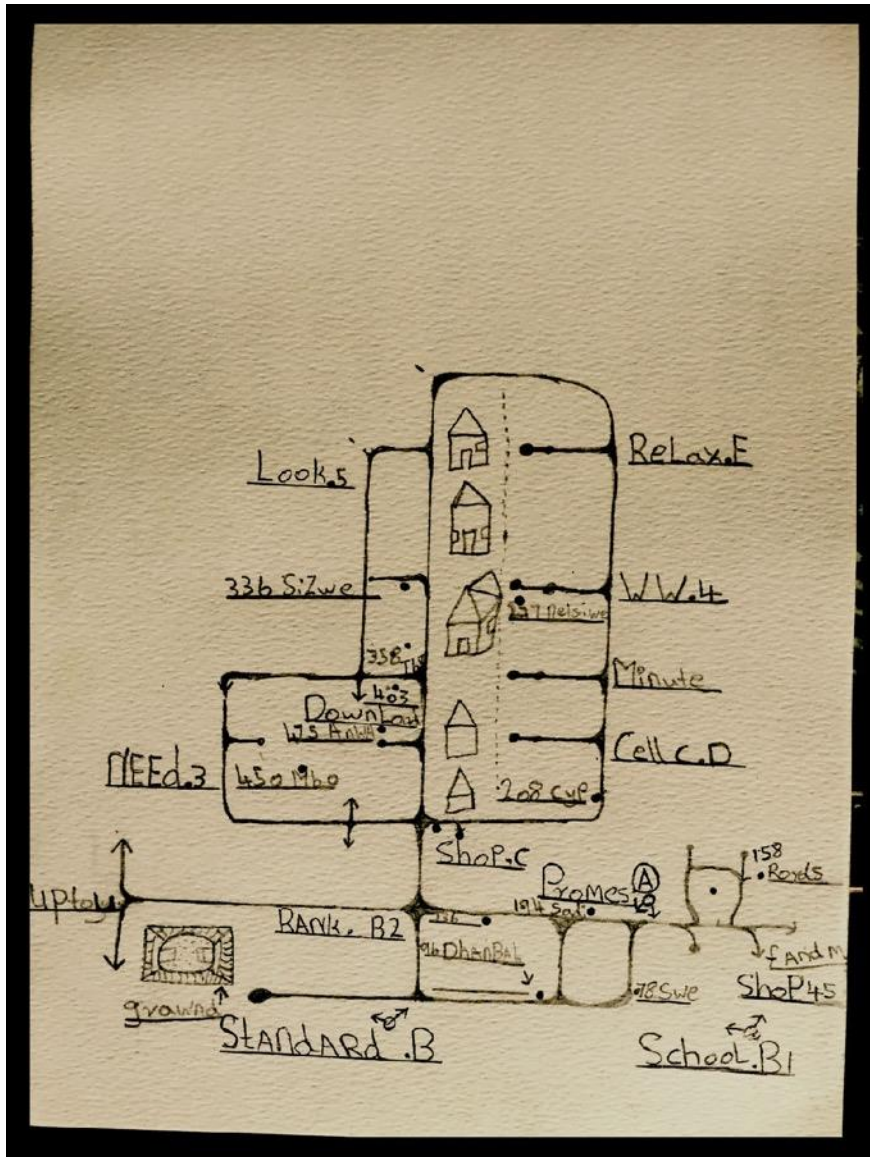


Figure 17: Mxolisi (2019), Mapping Cornubia. Durban [drawing]

One aspect of the everyday life in Cornubia that emerged strongly on his map were the spaza shops, a phenomenon, which was increasingly attracting my attention and which eventually became a crucial component in my doctoral study. This exercise also put him *in charge* of the dialogue. He seemed empowered by the research process which in some way addressed the power imbalance between me (artist) and him (community collaborator). For Foster (2012: 533)

The opportunity [that art-based approaches] offer [is] to address power relations in the research process, not least by reducing the focus on the written word and looking at other means of communication. Furthermore, they allow participants to engage their imaginations

and creativity; they facilitate empathy and challenge misconceptions by giving insight to their audience into aspects of their lives, revealing what their lives are like and the potential for how they could be.

Mapping his identity onto the landscape Mxolisi demonstrated his aspirations for Cornubia. This can be seen in his monastic effort of giving names to the unnamed streets²¹ such as 'up to u', 'Need 3' and 'promes'(promise). In my opinion it symbolises the need for a community spirit, to identify with the place they live in and the desire to belong both personally and as a community in a place called home. His map resembles a hopeful future, an imaginary landscape in which he has mapped his identity into the fabric of the landscape However, the question to reflect on is whether Cornubia, since its inception, and the city, to some extent, has contributed to human well-being. I draw a parallel here between Mxolisi's interpretation of Cornubia with Park's (1925 in Harvey 2009: 315) view of the city which, as he describes, is

man's most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself.

While I agree that 'man' has reinvented himself for survival's sake I do not necessarily think that it is accidental. I believe that there is a collective consciousness which we tap into that informs the choices we make and for example, the strokes we draw on a piece of paper when drawing the city. I think that this is also what made me inspired in Mxolisi's map. I believe that it is beautiful. It motivated me to further design and plan a conceptual outline for an artistic process which involved 8 spaza shops and their owners. Mxolisi's mapping was the inspiration for the AmaTuck Shop art installations that are outlined in Chapter 2 on the context of spazas in Cornubia. Zweifela and Van Wezemaela (2012: 5) emphasise that territorial mapping offers the possibility to

[draw] the actors, links, projects, relationships and problems in a planning case i[n] a process of observation, reflection and evaluation of one's own situation. In a complexity perspective, this means unbounding limitations from situations, considering the maximum complexity, and allowing as many actors, relationships and ideas to enter the map as possible.

²¹ The streets of Cornubia are still without name 7 years after its inhabitants moved in.

This mapping process also led to the *Pheshana* (Pamphlet) project. Months of engaging with spaza owners sparked the opportunity for me to organise a semi-formal meeting with the residents. Eleven residents who had been part of the process, 8 of whom were spaza owners, participated in the meeting which took place at a spaza shop. In the effort of engaging in dialogue, building capacity, reinforcing relationships and creating social networks we methodologically engaged in a participatory action research (PAR) which defined in simple terms “is the way groups of people can organise the conditions under which they can learn from their own experiences and make this experience accessible to others” (McTaggart, 1991). The outcome of the meeting and some general information on spaza culture was disseminated throughout the community in the form of a *Pheshana* which was distributed from various spaza shops. This was made possible by my extended involvement with the spaza owners which enabled the building of relationship and trust. The *Pheshana* was a collaborative effort between Bantu²², a young unemployed resident who helped with the translation and the facilitation of the meeting, and me. Here, it is important to evoke Freire’s (1970) emphasis on reflection as a crucial part in the process of transformation and how “from this reflection will come necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation” (Freire 1970: 48). While the *Pheshana* was a form of reflection it also aimed to raise consciousness around the validity of the spaza shop in the community and in the country in general. It was an expression of the call and response philosophy.

²² Name with permission.

psheshana

ISSUE NO. 1

the spaza affect

definition: spaza *noun* (South Africa) a small unofficial store in a township, often in a private house.
 ORIGIN township slang, literally 'camouflaged', of unknown origin.



South African **spaza, tuck shops** and **house shops** are practices that emerged from a long background of stoic survival in oppressive circumstances. These businesses have historically considered illegal and even today there are legal uncertainties on zoning and land use. Informal micro enterprises is an initiative easy to get into therefore enabling women and unemployed persons to open shops within their homes. With the advent of pilot housing programs like the Cornubia Housing Project in eThekweni and Cosmos City (north west of Johannesburg) where the majority of the residents have been relocated from surrounding townships, there is a distinct migration of the **spaza culture** into the new developments from the respective townships. It would appear that the spaza culture within the marginalised poor, over the years, has become a **cultural practice** within the townships of South Africa as much as an economic one.

Between 2010 and 2012 the Sustainable Livelihood's foundation's **Formalising Informal Micro Enterprises (FIME)** project conducted primary research in South Africa's informal economy. Over 6000 micro-enterprises in nine localities were surveyed covering an estimated population of 50,000 households. Over the many micro-enterprises they encountered during the extensive field work process, their findings showed that the most prominent business types is the grocery retailers. This includes **spaza shops, tuck shops** and **house shops**.

Spaza shops are essentially micro-convenience stores which operates in township residential areas, selling groceries, bread, cool drinks, sweets and cigarettes. Spaza shops can be distinguished from tuck shops and house shops from their business turnover, characteristic and distinctive branding and business operation. Spaza shops typically trade seven days a week and operate from early morning to until about 10pm. **Tuck shops** and **house shops** sell a significantly smaller range of goods, have no branding and tend to operate less frequently.

The FIME has shown that each business operates in a localised area, providing a service to residents in the immediate vicinity of the shop.



They are open long hours as the businesses serve residents throughout the day, both before and after hours. Trading occurs between the hours of 6 am and 10pm and key feature of the trade that allow these businesses to survive is the limited price competition between businesses. With shop-keepers agreeing, through informal rule making, to maintain prices at floor level sufficient to guarantee profitability for all stakeholders. Perhaps the time has come to pursue a deeper appreciation of cultural identities and dynamics that play out in the lived realities of daily life and identify symbolic socio-economic manifestations which could be nurtured in prerequisites for more appropriate urban transformations. It is important to value the importance and ability of grassroots projects as invaluable sites of experimentation with alternative ways of doing development where creativity, learning and innovation can play a big role.



picture above - the spaza-de-motion design winner of the design. Inaba search for innovative street trading solutions.

announcements

- The Drama & Performance Studies of the UKZN will be running a 4 weeks drama workshop with Grade 6 & 7 of the Solomon Mahlangu Primary School (Cornubia)
- dala NPC will be running art workshops with Grade 1-5 in parallel with the Drama workshops.
- Mthabisi Phil, an artist from Zimbabwe is coming to work with Spaza owners to raise awareness about the Spaza culture. Spaza and Tuck shops owners are encouraged to participate.
- Projection of Popeye movies on Friday the 23rd of October in front of F&M Spaza house 45
- if you want to place an announcement here please contact the Editor Bantu Malunga from or on 0747255 758.
- Should we have a Cornubia FaceBook page? Lets us know your thoughts!

"i am my spaza , it's not separate from me"

Cornubia tuck shop owner

next issue on 15th November

Psheshana people: Bantu malunga (editor), doug Anwar Jahangeer (text, design & layout), Paulo Menezes (Photography & editorial assistant), Spaza and Tuck Shop owners as distributors.

Figure 18: Pamphlet (2019), Cornubia. Durban [print]

Outside in / Inside out (getting under skin)

After a couple of months of being in Cornubia I started to get to know quite a lot of people in the community. I spent a substantial amount of time chatting to the residents on the street, I shared drinks with some of them on their porches and sometimes I got invited into people's homes for something to eat. I felt like I was beginning to become embedded in the community (Gillam 2000). This was confirmed when I was invited to speak at the funeral of a resident who had committed suicide. I knew her well and had spent a lot of time listening to her challenges. It was a sad moment which brought me closer to the family. This closeness was also true with many more residents which enabled a more intimate participation in their lives. From celebrating the birth of Roshila's grandson, a spaza owner in the neighbourhood, to participating in the organization of Louis' daughter's 21st birthday, I was becoming ethnographically committed to the community. Creswell (2007: 68) argues that ethnography is a process that "involves extended observations of the group, most often through *participant observation*, in which the researcher is *immersed* in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants". However, I remain cautious about the potential difficulty of drawing clear boundaries when taking into consideration the time I spent and the place I engaged. My presence in Cornubia, prior to, during and beyond the research, respects this commitment to the influence of space and time as well the impact this relationship between the researched and researcher might have on the research. For Creswell (2007: 40)

We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimise the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study...We conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. We cannot separate what people say from the context in which they say it - whether this context is their home, family, or work.

In addition, aligned with my embeddedness in the community, is Gilham's (2001:1) view on qualitative methods, and what it enables the researcher to do. He illustrates six central points which appropriately illustrate the process that emerged from my engagement with the community. These points indicate the appropriateness of the qualitative method as a methodological approach for this study. These points are:

- a) To carry out an investigation where other methods – such as experiments – are either not practical or not ethically justifiable.
- b) To investigate situations where little is known about what is there or what is going on.
- c) To explore complexities that are beyond the scope of more ‘controlled’ approaches.
- d) To ‘get under the skin’ of a group or organisation to find out what really happens –the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside.
- e) To view the case from the inside out to see it from the perspective of those involved.
- f) To carry out research onto the processes leading to results... rather than into the ‘significance’ of the results themselves.

Although all the points are relevant to the existing process and the research, it is important to emphasise the last three points. All together these points stress the importance of getting familiar with the community to be able to empathically try to understand how a politics of the daily practice is perceived and played out by the residents, specially spaza owners, of Cornubia. These spaza owners operate outside of the formal recognition and support of the state and have played a very important role in connecting me with the community. In my observations, their ‘informality’ has allowed them to create an organic network among the residents. It is in this ‘informal’ space that I was able to situate a creative/artistic initiative which was entirely process based. Moreover, an insider perspective facilitated by the residents provided me with an understanding on how this creative/artistic initiative has the potential to provoke some form of societal critique of power relations, or indeed in some cases shift them. For Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 34) “qualitative research is replete with enthusiasm, creativity, intellectual ferment, and action”. This definition is pertinent to the study and since creative process work with communities over a sustained period of time is unusual in South Africa, it is worthy of an in-depth study.

Entering into the Research Space

I initiated the formalisation of the research because I was acutely aware of the potential and the kind of imaginative, hopeful and popular strategies that people were already

initiating in Cornubia to make this new development a home. I felt a need to provide a platform both to express and perhaps to enhance some of these popular strategies through an arts-based research lens. It is my conviction that the power of performance can move the arts-based researcher “from interpretation and emotional evocation to praxis, empowerment, and social change” (Denzin, 2003: 133). McNiff (2008: 37) argues that

change and insight in the personal realm are increasingly being recognised as a key source of corresponding social change. Therefore, the way in which we treat the humble images of our art-based research may have a definite impact on how we engage the world.

Since arriving in Cornubia my intention was and still is to try to facilitate social dialogue, and I became increasingly interested in what arts-based methods may offer city planners and local government as participatory processes to engage with residents. Something that residents were frequently calling for. From what I had experienced is the previous project-based work of AmaTuck Shop and the *Pheshana* newsletters, spaza shops were particularly important forms of both built and social infrastructure in Cornubia. I was interested to know how spazas might be re-imagined as nodes for participation.

Given my history in Cornubia I realised that I was iteratively engaging with both art-based and art-informed research methods when interacting with the community (Kara, 2015). Arts-based research can be understood as a spectrum of practices ranging from “the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies” (McNiff 2008 :29). In addition, art-informed research

is a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts broadly conceived...The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry... (Knowles and Cole, 2008: 59).

While creativity in research might be an instinctive choice for me as an artist, I was wary that it might be challenging for me, also as an artist, when faced with the need to meet with the requirements of academic research conventions. The line between a

socially committed artist whose aim is to initiate a creative language in a community with the intention to discover (research), and a researcher in the traditional sense felt unclear in my case. The work that I do is intentional, and it is about discovery using a creative platform that has emerged out of a process of engagement in the community. Forster (2012) notes that while arts-based research is perceived to produce less tangible knowledge than the more traditional forms of social inquiry it opens a platform that better allows for the exploration of “the nuances of lived experiences and promoting dialogue than for providing direct answers to questions” (Forster 2012: 535).

Nevertheless, moving into a more academic enquiry using arts-based approaches requires reflection on research questions, paradigms, methodologies and methods. These were concepts I had to immerse myself in to better understand how my creative methods could move into a scholarly process.

Research Questions, Paradigms and Methodology

The key research questions explored in this study, and which emerged through the long-term engagement in Cornubia described above are:

1. How do people in Cornubia understand spatial planning – what types of spaces and places do they desire?
2. How is this similar and/or different to the planning that the eThekweni Metropolitan Council has in mind for Cornubia?
3. How are these contested imaginings played out in relation to spaza shops in Cornubia?
4. Can informal economic activities such as spaza shops be reconceptualised as spaces of cultural invention, as well as nodes of neighbourhood participation? Are spazas an integral part of place-making in the South African context?
5. How can creative methods assist in deconstructing these imaginations, and become an interlocutor between city (official top-down planning) and resident (everyday bottom-up planning)?

This study is rooted in an emancipatory/critical paradigm (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Creswell, 2007). The Emancipatory paradigm is a term adopted by Bagele Chilisa and Julia Preece (2005: 33) and “denote[s] a family of research designs influenced by various philosophies and theories with a common theme of emancipating and transforming communities through group action” (in Mertens 1998). Within this approach I draw on the interpretive paradigm where data is socially constructed through the subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants. This paradigm also creates a space for multiple perspectives to emerge in understanding the complexity and diverse agents in society (Carnaghan, 2013; Creswell, 2007).

These paradigms shaped the methodology developed to answer the key questions posed by this study; namely, participatory action research (PAR) (Merriam and Simpson, 1995 Freire, 1970). Broadly defined, PAR is research that “focuses upon the political empowerment of people through group participation in the search for and acquisition of knowledge” (Merriam and Simpson, 1995:125). It is concerned with reimaging research subjects as participants who are empowered through the research process to transform society (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). Couto (1987 in Merriam and Simpson, 1995 126-127) elaborates on four points where the particularity of participatory action research is described as a methodology:

- a) The problem under study and the decision to study it have origins in the community affected by the problem;
- b) The goal of the research is political or social change derived from the information gathered;
- c) Local people control the process of problem definition, information gathering and decisions about action following from the information; and
- d) Local people and professional researchers are equals in the research process. They are both researchers and learners.

My doctoral research is a good fit for these criteria. While all the above points are relevant to my study, I do not necessarily think that there can be a situation where the researchers and the researched can be equal in the research process. Rather my time in Cornubia had taught me that in the context of gross inequality in South Africa it is more productive to disclose and acknowledge differences in certain contexts, rather than imagine they can be erased. In some moments this enables a more open and trustworthy process to take place. What is more useful is to ensure constant reflection

on power relations and how you can mitigate any harm from these. Lewin (1946) one of the pioneer thinkers of PAR describes action research:

in terms of a cycle of steps of planning a change, putting the plan into action, observing what happened, and re-formulating the plan in the light of what had happened. (Kemmis, et al., 2014: 18)

Besides the findings that emerge from these questions, the objective of this study is to offer one creative methodology that can be used by both residents and built environment practitioners in participatory work. Offering them a way in which to create a new language in planning, designed not just by the so-called built environment experts but also by the people who live in and make homes out of the housing units.

Engaging in a process of experimentation with alternative creative methodologies for interfacing the built environment and the people that occupy those spaces, essentially opens a platform for democratic participation (McQuail 2005). The need for such platforms should not be underestimated for an emancipatory approach to place-making in (post)-colonial-apartheid-liberation South Africa.

Historically the arts have engaged society in a politicised way, and I wanted to explore the connection between art and research within my own practice and how this may, with residents, develop useful findings around participatory practices in Cornubia. Knowles and Cole emphasise that

bringing together the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies with the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts (Suderburg, 2000) acknowledges the power of art forms to reach diverse audiences and the importance of diverse languages for gaining insights into the complexities of the human condition. (Knowles and Cole, 2008: 59)

Creativity-infused projects, in my practice, are built on four pillars namely curiosity (conversation), dialogue, relationship and trust. Creative energy can be effective when applying civic skills and encouraging collective actions through community consciousness raising (Freire 1970). Since I believe (from an epistemological and ontological perspective) that 'reality' is constructed through social interactions (Lefebvre 1974), I felt that it was important to understand the 'realities' of the residents

in Cornubia from their subjective experience of the world. Further, since there is no single correct way or specific path to knowledge, the process which evolved out of my presence in the community was artistic in form, experimental in nature and empirical in principle. As Creswell (2007: 41) notes, a researcher who engages in qualitative research is willing to take part in a more fluid and flexible inquiry which is not fixed in firm guidelines and definite procedures. Entering into the PhD study, I remained mindful that my own potential engagement with the residents would not always be homogeneous, and that different individuals would play different roles and commit to or reject collaboration depending on a number of reasons. I was learning that I needed to regularly turn my practice upside down in order to continuously gain renewed perspective on power relations, and reshape objectives to meet residents' concerns and questions. This flexibility was necessary in order to maintain a creative and grounded process. The methods designed for this study had to allow for this flexibility.

Methods

According to Anne Gray:

Method refers to those different techniques of research which any researcher employs in order to construct data and interrogate its sources, while methodology describes the overall epistemological approach adopted by the study. (Gray 2003:4).

This section outlines the collection of methods that were used in this study. Under PAR, a multi-method approach can be useful (Merriam and Simpson, 1995 Freire, 1970). As a primary method of data collection, I designed four creative workshops with 11 participants. Sampling of participants to partake in the workshops was purposeful (Creswell 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Due to the length of time spent in the community I had established trust and relationships which facilitated the sampling of the participants for the study. In addition, purposive sampling was employed because it enabled me to choose a group of participants who were already interested in the subject of study or had an interest in the phenomenon being investigated (Silverman 2013:104). For example, six out of the eleven participants were spaza owners. These creative workshops are described in detail below.

To support these creative methods and to provide further triangulation to the narrative and image data that emerged from the workshops I used additional methods of data collection and analysis as depicted in the figure below:

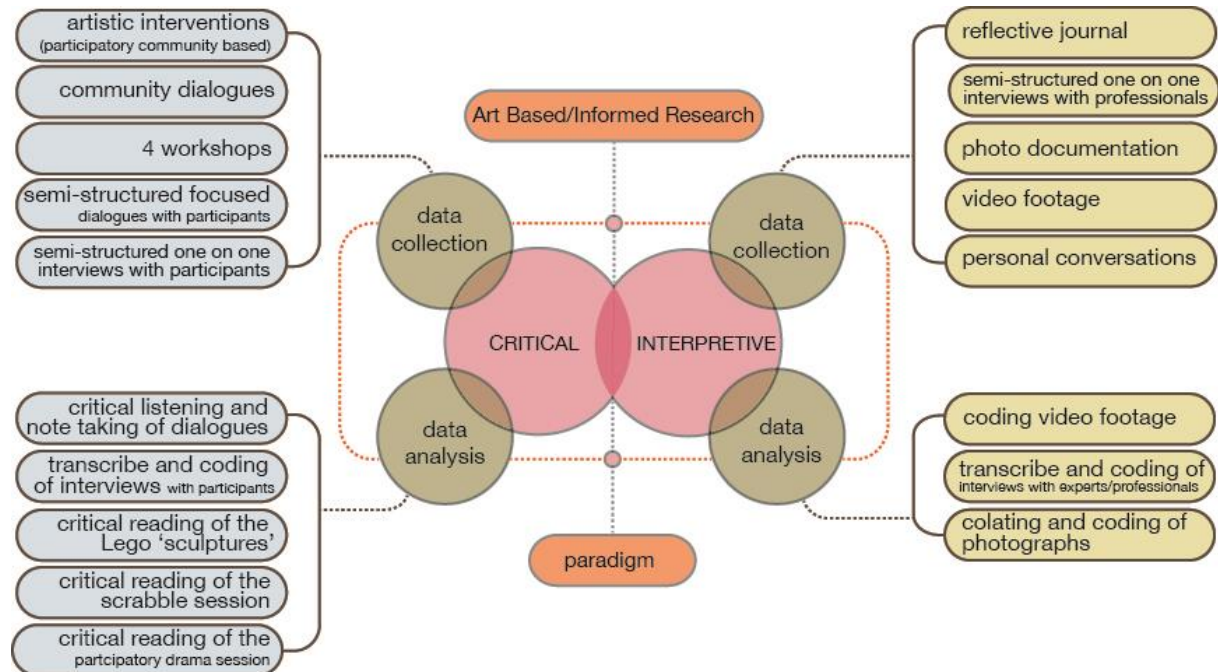


Figure 19: Jahangeer (2021), Mapping Methodology. Durban [diagram]

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews, as the name suggests, has characteristics of both structured and unstructured interviews which means it uses both open and closed questions (Gray, 2003). It therefore benefits from both methods of interview. I drafted a set of pre-planned core questions so that the interview topics were consistently covered with all participants. The pre-planned questions were however not fixed and as the interview developed the participant was given space to expand on ideas and provide relevant viewpoints if he/she chose to. Overall, 10 interviews were conducted, 5 of which were with experts in the field of architecture and urban planning and who had a working knowledge of Cornubia, and the other five, with residents living in Cornubia.

Interview with members of community:

- The community leader
- Four spaza owners

Interview with experts:

- The urban planner involved in the planning of Cornubia
- The architect responsible for the design of the schools and retail centre
- City official: Head of planning
- City official: Senior manager
- School principal at Solomon Mahlangu primary school at Cornubia

In most interviews, the open-ended questions were beneficial as they set the tone for a more relaxed and informal exchange which also contributed to the collection of rich narrative data.

Video footage

It has been very useful to this study to engage with audio visual material. All the workshops were video recorded with the permission of the participants. This provided useful audio and visual data for analysis, better than using an audio recording alone. In addition, since I was also the facilitator during the workshops, re-experiencing the process through the video footage helped to take a critical view on the workshops and to evaluate why they went the manner that they did, and why they were more successful in some instances than at others as opposed to other.

Other methods

In addition to the above methods I also engaged in photo documentation, kept a reflective journal and partook in extensive personal communication primarily with the participants and also with the residents in general.

Creative Workshops

*Oui, on ne fait pas de transformations fondamentales sans un minimum de folie. Dans ce cas, cela devient du non-conformisme, le courage de tourner le dos aux formules connues, celui d'inventer l'avenir. D'ailleurs, il a fallu des fous hier pour que nous nous comportions de manière extrêmement lucide aujourd'hui. Je veux être de ces fous-là. Oui. Il faut oser inventer l'avenir.*²³ Thomas Sankara (in Ziegler and Rapp, 1986:118)

The workshops were conceptualised around Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal's idea of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), specifically a form called 'Image theatre' (1979; 1992). This methodology is influenced by and has extended the concept of dialogue that Freire presents in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to a theatrical form. Since Boal is concerned with using theatre for transformation of oppression, his ideology falls within a critical paradigm and since this thesis is rooted in an emancipatory/critical paradigm (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Creswell, 2007) it seemed fit to consider his methodology, especially Image Theatre as a guideline for the structure of my workshops for data collection.

Boal's 'Tree of theatre of the oppressed' (2006) involves a number of different forms of theatre which include games and exercises focused on the transformation of oppression (1979). Boal felt that oppression was experienced in the body so that knowing and activating the body in space was key to moving towards a liberated state (1979). The 'tree' holds many different forms including his most famous, Forum Theatre (1979:139). However, for the design of the workshops I was inspired by Boal's Image theatre (1979:135) as stated above. Image theatre is defined as "a series of exercises and games designed to uncover essential truths about societies and cultures without resorting to spoken language" (Jackson in Boal,1992: xxii). Therefore, it became an effective tool to overcome barriers to dialogue when dealing with a group of people who speak different languages and have diverse cultural backgrounds. For Boal (2002), Image Theatre was a response to the ambiguity of verbal communication.

²³You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it becomes nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, to invent the future. In fact, it took the madmen of yesterday for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. I want to be such a madman. Yes. We must dare to invent the future. (My translation)

He argues that a word holds multiple meanings especially in a community where there is more than one language spoken. Because words are a medium that just carry meaning, emotions and ideas, they are not always understood as intended by everyone (Boal 2002:174).

In its original form, Image Theatre involves participants 'sculpting' still images with their bodies to form a 'tableau'. These images are a symbolic representation of their lived experiences, feelings and/or oppressions, and are also manifest as a medium through which the image of their challenges can be recreated and interrogated. Image theatre can be very useful methodological tools to catalyse dialogues with participants, and which, in research can also be used as a form of narrative data. To understand and transform a particular status quo there are three stages to Image Theatre (1979, 1992): The Actual image, the Ideal image and finally the Transitional image. Firstly, the Actual image depicts the reality that one faces in society; in this instance, the challenges that participants are facing in Cornubia. Secondly the Ideal image represents a perfect scenario; what participants want to see for Cornubia; a Cornubia of their dream. And lastly the Transitional image where participants explore ways to navigate from the real to the ideal image.

It is worth stressing that the workshops have been designed as an alternative form of participation forum to meaningfully listen to the community. The integral playfulness of the process provides a necessary platform for experiment where focused attention can be paid to social processes so that a more liberated and imaginative conversation takes place.

Before I begin formally with a detailed explanation of the workshops, I would like to take the time – as is the protocol during the workshops that were run in Cornubia – to go round the circle to introduce the 11 participants.

My people - Meet the participants

This group of participants was purposively selected because they collectively provide through age, gender, race, and occupation, a fair portrayal of the spectrum of residents

in the community and the society. In addition, it is a group who already know each other. They became part of a formal dialogue workshop organised by myself and hosted by DDP (Democracy Development Program) in 2017 after the third year of my involvement in the community. During those two years 17 people emerged as potential agents of change. All the participants were part of that team.

Louis is the 'joker' in the community. He spends his days walking around the settlement and everyone knows him as 'boy' - although he is well over 6 feet tall. His house is situated right at the entrance of the township. He prides himself as the gatekeeper of the community. If he is not patrolling around, you will find him having a cigarette on a bench at his front door ready to welcome you with a big toothless smile. "How are you my brother"? That's his standard opening greeting line. Under the previous racial categorization system which continues tacitly into contemporary South African life, Louis would be classified 'coloured'. His plight is about language. Despite his popularity, he insists that he feels excluded by his community because everything is expressed in isiZulu. "This diversity that was promised to us is an illusion" he gesticulates. (Fieldnotes: May 2017)

Louis originally comes from a township called Newland East and over the years of my interaction with him he has become increasingly resentful about Cornubia. He feels that the residents of Cornubia have been 'dumped' and abandoned in a settlement with little opportunity for employment and no social amenities. "I don't want this house. I want my mother's house back", he protested. (Fieldnotes: May 2017)

Jabulani and Lindo are father and son. Similarly with Shenaz and Sadia, they bring an aspect of family connections to the group: Father and son, mother and daughter. Jabulani is a 52-year-old community-minded man but he brags that he looks 35. A huge man with a gentle manner Jabu is a healer, assistant chairperson on the school board, a volunteer caretaker at the school and a single father of 7 children. Unemployed, he ran a container spaza shop to support his family for one and a half years. But he had to close down his shop due to lack of funding for stock. He subsequently depends solely on the social grants provided by the government and the odd consultations he conducts for people who come for healing.

His son Lindo is 19 years old. On the team he represents an inventive youth coming out of his teens. He is a serious young man with conviction and, at the time of the workshops was in Grade 11 at Blackburn school. In 2014 he started a dance group with his brothers called MOB (Masters of Bang). The MOB is the only dance group in Cornubia and has quickly grown into being a role model to a lot of youngsters in the community.

Mxolisi represented another category of youth. He is unemployed and he carries a deep sadness within him. With a high unemployment rate in the settlement, the state programme within the development that the states call breaking new ground to link jobs to residents by profiling and aligning supply and demand is a fallacy in the eyes of Mxolisi. The day before the first workshop I received a call from him and I identified a sense of urgency in his voice. “Eish, I’ve got bad news my brother”, he muttered. Selfishly I assumed that he was unable to attend the workshop. But I was wrong. “I am hungry”, he said.

Ma Ivy is a grandmother, strong and dignified. She operates a ‘spaza on the move’²⁴. Every lunchtime she wheels her trolley to the school where she sells cheap consumables to the kids. She brings to the group and the research the voice of the elderly. She is a grandmother who plays a pivotal role in raising and providing parental support to her grandchildren.

Lindiwe is five months pregnant. For her Cornubia is a blessing. She is well settled and she says that with the new baby things will be getting even better. There is no community centre in Cornubia where the residents can gather for group activities, social support and other purposes. This is where Lindiwe comes in. She runs a spaza shop with a pool table outside her house. Although Lindiwe’s initiative does not directly confront the authorities, I believe it nevertheless has elements of an invented social space (Miraftab 2004) where adults meet to discuss politics, and young people gather for a game or two after school and on the weekend. Miraftab argues that

²⁴ A spaza on the move is a mobile shop usually an appropriated shopping trolley which the trader wheel from place to place to sell chips, sweets, and other cheap consumables.

Invented spaces are... those occupied by the grassroots and claim their collective action...the grassroots activity of [the invented space] challenges the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations. (Miraftab 2004: 1)

As previously outlined, informal spaza shops, such as the one Lindiwe innovated in her home, can be regarded as an African form. In turning her house into a shop, she defines an agentic activism. Lindiwe's action can be considered as both creative and subversive, as she engages in an effective insurgent practice that challenges and talks back to the authorities' dominant views on formal business and their by-laws.

Alexina is full of joy. She is always laughing and has a passion for children. She opened the first crèche in the settlement and cares for approximately 15-20 young children while their parents go to work. She brought her 5-year-old boy with her and that added another dynamic to the group, a welcome one where the workshop took a more playful turn.

Mr Mac has run the Comrade marathon twice. He is a sportsman and has been organizing soccer tournaments in the community for the past four years. His aim is to develop a Cornubia soccer and netball team. He sees enormous value of youth development through sport and has committed himself as a volunteer for youth sport in Cornubia. It is worthwhile drawing a parenthesis here to note that both Mr Mac and Jabu demonstrate the importance of community volunteerism. He tells me that the stakes are high. With the existence of extreme pressing social challenges, Mr. Mac is aware of the difficulties when thinking about sport as development strategies and social interventions. He has also not been successful in obtaining funding from the government in order to set up sports and other social initiatives in Cornubia. Lacking the resources required for the administrative process required of funding application, he finds the process of looking for and securing funding a challenge.

Fiona is a bright, 27-year-old woman. With her mum and dad, she runs one of the largest spaza shops in Cornubia. It's a family business and they sell a wide variety of products, from prepaid electricity to groceries and cooked meals. Workers from nearby factories gather under the porch in front of her house while kids play around after buying sweets. Fiona's shop serves as another 'invented space', where outside workers and residents meet. Like Lindiwe's business, this spaza demands the

acknowledgment of the layered spaces within the informal terrain where citizenship is negotiated and practiced.

Shenaz is a middle-aged, religious Muslim woman with 3 young children, whom she supports by running a spaza shop from her house. For her the spaza shop is also a space where she provides moral and sometimes minor financial support to her customers by offering credit and occasionally lending money²⁵. She is always well dressed and is a dignified person. Shenaz is very outspoken and her critical views on development were pivotal to the overall conversation.

Sadia is Shenaz's daughter. She is a teenager and is very shy. During the whole of the workshops, she hardly spoke unless I spoke to her directly. That does not mean that she did not have some important insight. She represented her gender and age group which was an important voice to have in this project.

It must be noted that participants' first names are used in this study with their consent and at their request. Consent was obtained after adequate information about the research, the duration of the workshops and their involvement in the process was provided to them by a written consent form. They were given time to think about the research, as well as their willingness to participate in it and they had the chance to ask questions.

Workshop one

This was an introductory session for the participants. Although it is not part of Boal's (1979) three stages per se, its purpose was to establish a safe space; a metaphorical container and a creative environment where everyone felt relaxed in their bodies and at ease with each other. This was important because it allowed for an open, frank and trustworthy engagement. Each workshop was six hours long with two breaks. All the sessions started with warm up games and exercises. I decided to start workshop one

²⁵ When Lindo and his MOB dance group (mentioned above) needed to come to Durban for the JOMBA fringe that I had organised entry for, Shenaz lent them money for transport. The boys were known to Shenaz because she ran a spaza that they frequented. In this way, and through my role as 'trusted' interlocutor, social capital / networking for survival can be built in to fractured communities.

with a ball game followed by a drawing and lastly a Lego building exercise. In the warmup ball game, each participant took turns to throw the ball to each other. When the ball is caught, the participants are asked to share with the group one emotion that they had felt the day before.

The drawing exercise involved a charcoal drawing where participants were asked to get into pairs and to draw each other's portraits. This exercise was inspired by the word *Sawubona* which is the word in isiZulu used when we greet each other. The direct translation is *I see you*. The exercise required participants to carefully observe their partner. Further they were also asked to draw the portraits twice, one drawing layered on top of each other as a representation of the multiple identities we carry in ourselves. The drawings were a good way for the participants to introduce each other and fostered a feeling of a group identity. The exercise did not involve spoken language but the participants used gestural drawings to express themselves in a common way.



Figure 20: Participants portraits (2017), Cornubia. Durban [drawing]

The final step of workshop one involved the use of Lego blocks to 'sculpt' the emotions they came up at the beginning of the session. The purpose was to engage in both a sensory and physical way of communicating their emotions and feelings using 'sculptures'. Together we were setting up a convention which favour visual modes of communicating when presenting our feelings, perceptions and knowledges.



Figure 21: Jahangeer (2017), Expressions with Lego blocks Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]

Workshop two

Here it is worth reiterating that the design of the workshops was inspired by the creative process and artistic languages already established in the community. While workshop 3 and 4 were adaptations of Boal's (1979) Ideal and Transitional image stages, workshop 2 directly applied Boal's (1979) method of using the body to create a 'tableau' in order to represent the reality of life, in this case, living in Cornubia. Initially the participants found it difficult to grasp the task at hand. They hadn't done anything like that before and felt at a loss. It is only when my assistant and I gave them a demonstration that they got a better idea of the exercise. They formed two groups and engaged in a conversation in their respective groups to discuss the image they wanted to portray. Using theatrical imaging, the participants, one group at a time, got into a fixed pose that depicted a scenario of a reality in Cornubia. The other team then interpreted the image with a sense of solidarity with the issue portrayed. The exercise was then repeated by the second group. While Boal (1979) believes that the image allows participants to express themselves in a sensory manner and that theatrical imaging is the most essential way to communicate, the performances in this instance

were also catalysts for a focus group dialogue where the participants unpacked the embodied theatrical images and gave their views on themes of common interest like crime, lack of leadership and the absence of social amenities.

Workshop three

What is your ideal Cornubia? This was the question the participants were invited to explore in workshop three. In this session the participants were asked to use Lego blocks to express their ideas. The use of Lego blocks was an adaptation of Boal's (1979) concept of working with the body to create images. Instead, here the participants 'sculpted' a body of work which collectively represented a Cornubia of their dreams. The 'imaging' in this session was dialogical. The participants were collaboratively discussing, disagreeing and debating while 'sculpting' their ideal Cornubia.



Figure 22: Jahangeer (2017), Participants building Lego in progress Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]

While the Lego block facilitated an 'architectural' platform where the participants could engage the task in a spatial way, it also enabled an alternative means for creative expression which echoed the use of diverse artistic languages that was employed

when engaging the community. After the exercise we engaged in a focus group dialogue where their vision was unpacked in a critical manner.

Workshop four

How do we get there? In the fourth workshop I asked the participants to consider ways in which they could conceptually move from the reality to the ideal situation they portrayed in the Lego exercise. For Boal (1979: 112)

[...] a transitional image, show[s] how it would be possible to pass from one reality to the other. In other words, how to carry out the change, the transformation, the revolution, or whatever term one wishes to use [...], each one is asked to propose ways of changing it.

The briefing of the exercise was lively and the participants showed much excitement and motivation at the idea of considering how to bring change to Cornubia. Despite Boal's (2002) belief that words are a medium that just carry meaning, emotions and ideas, and that, as he further argues, it is not certain that they are understood in the same way by everyone, I nevertheless decided to engage with words but as a visual form. The medium employed to facilitate the process was scrabble pieces.

The participants were once again curious about the form but did not display any apprehension towards the exercise. I can only assume that they were now accustomed to the creative conventions we had establish during the process. Thereafter, the participants came up with their respective words, they gave a brief explanation of their words which was followed by a focus group dialogue.



Figure 23: Jahangeer (2017), Working with scrabble Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]



Figure 24: Jahangeer (2017), Working with scrabble Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]



Figure 25: Jahangeer (2017), Working with scrabble Cornubia. Durban [Photograph]

Semi-structured focus group dialogue

Within a qualitative research framework, focus group dialogue is often used as it concerns, firstly, the 'empowerment' of the participants. The dialogues can initially be part of the analysis process and in a second phase, they can help to obtain an in-depth understanding of the issues faced by society (Gray, 2003). Due to the length of the workshops, I was able to comfortably conduct the focus group without being pressured by limited time and I could draw on the rich discussion that took place between the participants and myself, and between the participants themselves. I conducted three semi-structured focus group dialogue sessions with participants, one after every workshop. An additional focus group discussion was held between the participants and the architect instrumental in the design of the social amenities in Cornubia. It must be noted that the focus group sessions which were conducted after a series of individual interviews allowed the participant to become familiar with the process.

Challenges in the research

When doing research in communities it is essential to build trust but difficult to maintain it (Christopher, et al., 2008) making this a frequent challenge. Distrust in part stems from previously one-sided and exploitative research practices where academics benefit at the expense of the research subjects. The critical research paradigm has developed in response to this and builds in methodologies of participation and skill transfer which foster a more equitable relationship between researcher and participants. The time I had spent in the community prior to the beginning of the research enabled me to start the research with a certain amount of trust already built in, which meant that it was very easy to organise and initiate the 4 workshops. But relationship building is an ongoing process, and despite being known to the participants there were some challenges.

Gatekeepers

Understanding Human Settlements as political terrain with political strongholds (Pieterse, 2008; Harvey, 2009) I knew that I needed to get the approval of community leaders and the councillor. Throughout my residency in Cornubia, I maintained a good relationship with the community leaders but at a later stage in the work the councillor did become obstructive when he thought he could use some of the creative projects as a platform for canvassing. When this was challenged, he stonewalled an initiative which was aimed at facilitating the integration of the retail centre with the community. This could have allowed the community to feel that they were somewhat part of this initiative towards which they were initially hostile. Although, in research, approaching the ward councillor in an area may be considered necessary protocol, ward councillors do not have the right to decide for people whether or not they will engage in a research process. In this case given the antagonist relationship many residents have with the ward councillor I did not approach him for permission.

Working participants

Although most participants did not work formally and full time, the informal nature of the economy meant that participants had to be prepared to take opportunities whenever they arose. I did organise the workshops for weekends, however some participants who had accepted were not able to come at the last minute due to work that had come up. 'Rasta' is a community leader whose participation in the workshop would have been beneficial to the research. Unfortunately, he could not come since he had been offered a part time job on Saturdays in a factory in the neighbouring industrial precinct.

Childcare

It came as a surprise to me when two women participants brought their daughters with them to the workshops. Initially I thought that this would be a problem as it interfered with my sample but I quickly realised that the two could bring a fresh perspective to the process. They were a teenager and a young adult whose contribution to the workshop ended up being meaningful.

Language

Most of the participants are isiZulu language speakers with the exception of Shenaz, Fiona, Sadia, Louis and me. It was important for the workshops to be understood by everyone and that participants feel at ease to express themselves freely. I therefore brought a translator who facilitated the communication between myself and the participants. English being very few of the people's first language, it is necessary to note how the alternative creative methods also played a part at enabling communication without these limitations.

Researcher dependency

Is there such a thing as too much trust? The relationship between the researcher and the research participants is an area well engaged in methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2007). How do you maintain the line when you are actively trying to deconstruct the binaries around knowledge and power (Foucault, 1982). Is it disingenuous to pretend that these binaries are non-existent or at least inconsequential? For although I built what I experienced as strong, meaningful and honest relationships, there were times when I felt that I needed to remove myself. I felt I was becoming too many things for some residents. For example, participants would (and still do) call me up for all manner of things: to find a building contractor, speak to the school principal, counsel a seriously depressed daughter, promote somebody's business, career counsel a grown son. At times I felt that they wanted to latch onto me as they had needs they felt I could fulfil. I was becoming mindful that the participants are agents in this research process and can also start to use the researcher as a resource due to the symbolic status I started to hold. (Erwin unpublished dissertation, 2011).

Conclusion

In this chapter I use the narrative of the story as a way to theorise my methodology and outline the methods I have employed to collect the data. It also tells the story of how creative interventions can be inserted in a community to initiate conversations. Conversations developed into dialogues which in turn established relationships and trust allowed for the recognition and building (to some extent) of social networks. They created a space for different voices to be heard around socio-political and economic issues affecting the lives of residents. The chapter also revealed how methodology rooted in PAR, can enable skills transfer, demonstrating a popular engagement with the geographic and socio-economic and political landscape and the challenges it presents. Most evident and relevant to this study is the 'spaza'/'tuck shop' which emerged as a resilient popular symbol and strategy for survival.

Chapter 5: Possibilities of an alternative creative practice

the workshops

Introduction

Mina Wena / I am You are

This section of the dissertation constitutes the analysis. It is comprised of two chapters; 'Possibilities of alternative creative processes', and 'Thematic findings'. This first analysis chapter examines relational processes, and subsequent dialogues that emerged during the four workshops detailed in the methodology. The second analysis chapter engages with the thematic findings that emerged out of, and across, the four workshops and the political and theoretical implications of these findings. Narrative data from the interviews and focus groups, as well as from participant observation and photographic imagery also form part of this analysis. Both chapters illustrate how creative methods can unearth rich narrative data and dialogue around how people in Cornubia understand spatial planning, and the kinds of spaces and places they desire. The analysis in both chapters also unpacks how these understandings and desires are similar or different to the form of planning the eThekweni Metropolitan Council has implemented in Cornubia.

This chapter directly relates to the research question about how creative methods can open up dialogue and it demonstrates how the playful design of the artistic workshops and the creative process enabled different conversations to emerge between participants. Conversations that participants described as meaningful and honest.

For Mouffe (2013) the creative process

... opens the way for novel forms of social relations in which art and work exist in new configurations. The objective of artistic practices should be to foster the development of

those new social relations that are made possible by the transformation of the work process. Their main task is the production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds. What is needed in the current situation is a widening of the field of artistic intervention, with artists working in a multiplicity of social spaces outside traditional institutions in order to oppose the program of the total social mobilization of capitalism. (2013: 87)

This study proposes that it is important to design alternative creative processes as ways to better listen to and speak with residents of Cornubia, and of any other community for that matter. The objective was to experiment with creative methods of participation to explore alternative platforms with which the state can engage to facilitate meaningful participatory processes. Aside from the narratives which arise in these workshops, the chapter is also concerned with the development of creative, arts-based methodologies when engaging issues of democratic popular participation and spatial justice.

The first introductory workshop focused on social networks and building trust among the participants in order to connect with the human in each of us. The second, third, and fourth workshops used Augusto Boal's (1979) theatre of the oppressed form of image theatre, as a methodological template, which was developed for the transformation of the oppressed. As outlined in the Methodology chapter, those three workshops asked participants to move through three representational stages: the world as it is, the world as it ideally could be, and finally the 'transitional' stage which involved engaging how we get to the ideal image. While all the workshops elicit discussions around democratic participation and how the residents live their lives in Cornubia, the 'transitional' stage is very important for analysing how people imagine change to take place within their local contexts.

Introductory workshop one: Sawubona-I see you

Building trust and togetherness

It's 8 a.m. on Saturday the 18th of October 2018 in Cornubia and the future was just about to be invented. The unnamed streets of Cornubia are already populated. Children are playing hopscotch. Men chatting in groups on street corner, others

making their way to the spaza shops to buy bread and milk. “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!” shouted a group of kids while running after my moving car. “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!” I answered back. IsiZulu for ‘a person is a person through others’; this is a saying that has its roots in humanist African philosophy (Shutte,1990). The majority of the kids from the temporary school – Solomon Mahlangu Primary – gave me this name after I ran a series of creative workshops around the issue of home and neighborhood with them. It stuck. I feel secretly proud of my given names in Cornubia²⁶.

My given name that morning was in tune with the intention of my visit. The purpose was to reconnect with some of the residents at a personal level. I was about to start the first of four workshops for the PhD. I was very nervous about whether all the participants would turn up. What if they did not come? What if I couldn’t properly communicate the objectives of the sessions to them? So many questions in my head. So much anxiety in my heart!

I stood at the gate of Solomon Mahlangu School in anticipation. This was where the workshops were taking place. In the distance, I saw Shenaz making her way toward me. She was not alone! She had brought her 15-year-old daughter, Sadia with her. They were dressed very smartly. “I brought my daughter with me”, she says apologetically. “You know it’s not safe to leave a young girl alone in the house in this place!” At the very beginning, I was faced with a challenge! Sadia (the daughter) was not part of the selected participants. Do I ask her to leave? Do I accommodate her in the group? I did! I did not feel that it would have been right to reject her. Besides I thought that she would bring her perspective and experiences to the process. Gradually all the participants arrived. Ma Ivy, Lindiwe, Mr.Mac, Jabulani, Lindo, Louis, Mxolisi, Alexina, and Fiona gathered in the staff room at the school.

“... we felt that it was perhaps best for us to focus on the development of humanity and to couple that with the development of dignity

²⁶ The other two names I have been given are Mr. Popeye, because of the ongoing projection of movies and cartoons I undertook in the community; and Mr. *Pheshana* (Mr. Pamphlet). In this case it is because of all the pamphlets I have distributed to the inhabitants through the spaza shops.

and self-confidence...through
the introduction in rural areas of community
development services in whatever form.”

(Biko,1979: 96)

Entitled *Mina Wena*, the purpose of the first workshop was introductory. Translated as “I am, you are” this saying conceptually framed the discussion with the idea of personalization, togetherness, and humanization (Freire 1970). Everybody settled in a circle. A ball placed in the centre of the ring triggered immediate curiosity. Giggles and grins erupted and the barren classroom was taken by surprise by an increasingly cheerful and energised group. After a couple of words of welcome and gratitude, we closed our eyes in silent prayer. Regardless of my own beliefs, in the time spent in Cornubia over the years, I have learned that it is quite common to start a gathering with prayer and something that residents almost expect as an opening. It is something I now do with pleasure to offer this space for people to connect in the way they feel best. With the chanting of women from the Apostolic church in service in the next-door classroom, the diverse faiths represented in the room came together in a peaceful way. The participants represented Christianity, Zionism, Islam, and Hinduism. It set the tone for a peaceful collaboration and a grounded process which creates a sense of togetherness.

In Cornubia, as in townships around the country, the presence of religion is noticeably on the rise (Garner, 2000). With a few make-shift churches holding services in school classrooms, I assumed that the community was praying for healing, hope, and salvation. But while chatting to Jabulani, who is also a pastor/prophet, I realised that prayer is more complicated than that. He explained to me that “we pray because we are desperate, not necessarily because we are faithful”. (Personal communication 2018). This is the first time I had considered prayer as a form of protest.

Fanon’s (1963) take on revolt is that revolution is not a cultural manifestation per se, but occurs as a result of historical, socio-economic, and political asphyxiation. This is certainly true of the South African context, where protest has been dramatically on the rise since the advent of democracy (Lancaster and Mulaudzi, 2020). The media often

portray images of protest as mostly men armed with knobkieries and bush knives, chanting, dancing, and marching the streets for a wide array of grievances, from unemployment, to the need for housing, service delivery and poverty. Here the body is applied as a dramatic and extreme tool for protest. On the other hand, in the classroom next door, women and men dressed in religious white, chant and dance for change. Are they not equally activists in their pursuit through non-violent protest? They embody a spiritual challenge to the political policies and according to Jabu, their prayers invoke a call for social and political change. These prayers are the silent protestors who blur the line between the private ascetic ritual of prayer and the public act of a politicised protest. The silent prayer at the beginning of the workshop felt meaningfully justified. From prayer into play, Louis picked up the ball and the game was on. While throwing the ball around, I suggested that we introduced ourselves to the group upon receiving the catalytic ball. The participants exchanged names, favourite food, favourite colour, the respective places they lived before they moved to Cornubia, and other personal trivia. A feeling of novelty and surprise quickly mounts in the classroom. Next, each participant was invited to choose a partner with whom they would exchange a more detailed description of their lives. They then introduced their respective partners to the group. Mr. Mac expressed his amazement about how little he knew about Lindiwe who is practically his neighbour.

This activity was about sharing and listening. The ability to listen meaningfully, what St. Anne describes as 'resonant listening', "greatly influences the outcome of group participation". For St. Anne 'resonant listening' is "integral to an accurate assessment of how others think and feel. And how others *feel* when they think, as well as *what* they think" (1999: 74). My experience working on the street for years, has taught me the value of listening as an instrumental tool when carving methods of engagement with a community. Shenaz reinforced my sentiments: "We have to stand together to change this place". The desire for change has very quickly become a mantra among the group. And the need for solidarity echoed like a beating drum.

It is the beat of the heart this pulsing of blood
That is a bubblin bass. . .
a bad bad beat
pushing against the wall

An in a whole heappa passion a gather
Like a frightful form
Like a righteous harm

LKJ Bass Culture (2002:14)

It all starts with the rhythm of the beating heart. The creative pulse that Linton Kwesi Johnson (2002) advocates for can provoke and defy oppressive systems and structures, through an imaginative and experimental collective praxis (Freire, 1970). I believe that there is a strong connection between life and art/artistic expression as a language common to all humanity. However, it is also true that language is often dominated by the lexicons of the powerful. To mitigate and push against language as domination a creolization of language in experimental collective praxis is useful.

Creolization (Glissant, 1981; Chamoiseau, 2018; Hall, 2015) is an exciting concept that invokes ideas of the spatial and cultural 'in-between' (Bhabha 1994), and the 'liminal' (Downey, et al., 2016). It slips through the cracks of constructed binaries onto the poetics of wisdom. Although the concept of creolization refers primarily to Glissant's idea of identity, cultural relationality, and the production of counter-discourse within a post-colonial context, it is nevertheless appropriated in this study to uncover practices which establish "strategic relationship of resistance and subversion to the dominant [form, which] is negotiated from inside" (Britton 1999:3). The use of Augusto Boal's (1979) Image theatre in the workshop process facilitated this objective by providing a structured method through which power dynamics could be reconfigured and negotiated in (creative) action.

'Sawubona', isiZulu for 'I see you', is a word used to greet a person at any time of the day. It is in this recognition of humanity that I situated the next step of the workshop. The participants were requested to choose a partner and to sit facing each other; they were to be sitting close to each other. On the table a plain piece of paper and a piece of charcoal – another invitation. Alexina was mystified especially by the charcoal stick. "And this? What is it for?" She chuckled. It needs to be noted that it was important for the forthcoming task to consider and value the concept of choice and curiosity.

For the inhabitants of Cornubia choice is limited. Louis insists that he lives like an outcast in his new house. In the complete absence of communication between the citizens and the state, he feels like he does not even know what his choices are. Therefore, I felt that it was important to symbolically integrate an element of choice into the activity. Choosing collaborators and length of play brought in a sense of being part of something bigger than oneself which can stimulate the feeling of empowerment, ownership, and basic motivation. For McTaggart (1991: 170) it is important that “people can organise the conditions under which they can learn from their own experiences and make this experience accessible to others”.

This does not mean that there are no external boundaries and formalities to the creative process. The workshop offers a form of structured openness (Melcher, 2016) which would frame the activities for the purpose of the research. For example, the A4 pieces of paper framed with masking tape, the use of charcoal sticks, and the objectives of the exercise, to draw portraits of each other, are boundaries set by myself. It is often perceived that aesthetic quality is compromised when it comes to art in communities. But in my experience placing value in participation and aesthetics can instil confidence and pride in processes with participants. This in turn strengthens relationships and connection to place²⁷. The task of drawing each other’s portrait was received with apprehension and the question around the use of the charcoal sticks surfaced again. Interestingly an animated discussion about the various media and ‘props’ I selected for the workshops namely drawing, ball games, acting, Lego, and wordplay significantly dissipated their fears. The excitement level in the room peaked and the participants were clearly engaged and fascinated. I was amazed at the extent to which the experience of curiosity, challenge, surprise, and novelty could trigger such wonder. They eagerly set to tasks. The first mark is never easy but soon enough, looking, observing, exploring, imagining, and seeing, bore fruit.

We all gathered around 10 beautiful drawings excited, satisfied, inspired, and proud. The artworks, mostly abstract somewhat resembled Picasso’s drawings of the 1930s.”I would have never guessed that we were artists,” said Lindo proudly. “What’s next?”

²⁷ See picture of mural of Alexina’s portrait on the wall of her house in chapter two.



Figure 26: Jahangeer (2017), Sawubona charcoal participants' portraits, Durban [drawing]

Lindo's anticipation of future playful experiences coupled with a noticeable enjoyment of the group indicates a sense of delight. This may seem like an unusual emotional precursor to a serious discussion around critical spatial practices. Yet I believe strongly we should not confuse taking place-making seriously with the removal of fun, joy, curiosity, and imagination. Research has shown that fun and play are not only beneficial to children's development but are also important in adult learning (Lucardie 2014). With the possibility of enabling creative and innovative potentials is it plausible that fun and play could be a kernel in facilitating discussions in the process of participatory planning beyond expectations?

The harnessing of curiosity in this first workshop can be defined as an 'invitation for conversations'. This invitation develops through the following workshops into the politicisation of the conversations (Freire 1970). Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) considers critical curiosity as an introduction and catalyst to critical consciousness, which he describes as the "way in which individuals come to understand and take action against systems of oppression" (Freire 1970). In this way, fostering the critical curiosity already displayed among the majority of the participants

(Freire 1970) facilitates the goal to engage a deeper understanding of the issues of social and spatial justice and inequality. It is, however, important to stress that such emancipatory efforts require equally well-engineered, sometime deconstructive (Derrida, 2001), processes that build toward clear visions, strategies, tactics, and actions.

The first session was coming to an end. I pulled the last trick out of my hat. A crate full of Lego blocks! I placed it on the table and everybody dived in. It was as if they already knew what to do. The idea was to join the circle of our experience and reconnect the end to the beginning. In a silent space of contemplation, while reflecting in action and on action, the participants started to build. Each participant had 20 blocks of a colour of their choice. The objective was to construct emotions and feelings experienced during the day. It was a reflective activity that demonstrated that form can bear emotions and that emotions can have form. The suggestion here is that the built environment can and is emotionally connected to the people who inhabit it and that it is an intelligence that is worth considering when engaging in urban development (Pile 2006). Lego is here employed as a tool within the systemic creative platform described above. Systems are instrumental in creative processes. In a report published by the Lego Learning Institute entitled *Defining Systematic Creativity*, David Gauntlett (2009:7) argues that Lego is one of a few systems capable of channelling both scientific and artistic creativity at the same time.

systems of science channel creativity into solving specific problems (as in maths, physics, and engineering). Systems of art channel creativity into unique expressions, giving form to imagination, feelings, and identities (as in painting, music, and sculpture).

This is true to what emerged from the activity which was mainly to end the day in a relaxing way and to build cohesion among the group. Ten sculptural metaphorical forms depicting emotions and identities encompassed “logic and reasoning alongside playfulness and imagination to generate ideas or artifacts that are new, surprising and valuable” (Ackerman, et al., 2009). The Lego exercise became an indication that a creative and optimistic mindset that is open to experimentation and exploration had been established and was possible. It was a joyful and fulfilled day. We were all tired but inspired. While cleaning up the classroom Mxolisi seemed agitated and interacted vociferously with the group in isiZulu. ‘We need a name!’ he exclaimed. The

participants were getting excited about naming the group. They did not want to be referred to as a group, a team, or participants. They wanted to be 'Xhuma'²⁸, which is isiZulu for connect.

Workshop two: A chance to speak/ the world as it is

Imaging reality towards new creative methodologies.

In keeping the form of the workshops consistent we started with a moment of silence and the ball game. All the participants were now familiar with the game and more importantly with each other. I had already noticed while waiting for everyone to arrive that there was more interaction among themselves than there was on the first day. It is also interesting to draw a parenthesis here to note that a moment of waiting can be co-opted into humanizing possibilities. It is equally important to stress that this familiarity existed amongst ourselves before, with the work we have been doing together since 2015. Despite this familiarity, the research process and methods had created a different psychological context for me, and possibly for the participants, which triggered a renewed level of uncertainty, hesitation, and carefulness among the group. I felt that it was necessary to re-clarify my position:

“I am not from Cornubia but I am becoming of Cornubia.

I am not here to solve any problem but,

I am prepared to listen.

I cannot solve any problem but,

I am willing to understand.

I don't want to teach you anything but,

I will share my knowledge.

I cannot change your reality but,

I believe that you already are.

²⁸ "...we also need t-shirts printed", he joked. The idea for the name Xhuma is rooted in fact that the 'group' wanted to collectively identify themselves as "one person is the group, the group is in one person" described Lindiwe. This was clearly a pre cursor (whether it was an indication of a form of collective consciousness or not), to the issues of solidarity, which emerged strongly in the first session discussed below. From this point on in this thesis I will refer to the participants or the group as Xhuma.

But...

Together we can find out how.

Together we can find ways of affirming that how.

Together we learn.

Together we unlearn.

Together we relearn.”

(fieldnotes 21st July 2018)

During my declaration, there was consensus demonstrated through constant nods of approval. Extending the concept of systemic creativity described above, I appropriately positioned myself in an approach such that the

focus is not simply placed on what researchers think of their subjects or what the subjects think of the researchers but also on what they each believe the other thinks of them. (Meyer, et al., 1997:13)

Throughout the day an increased level of intimacy emerged. In my view, this is important to fertilise the conversations started in the first workshop into dialogues. But how do we initiate meaningful dialogues between the participants themselves and the researcher? How might abstract concepts like power interrelationships, emotions, and struggle be efficiently explored? I thematically and conceptually located this workshop and the two successive ones in an adaptation of Augusto Boal's Image Theatre (1979) which is described in more detail previously in the Methodology chapter.

Workshop two: Reality? -The actual image

Workshop three: Imagined reality? -The ideal image

Workshop four: Reality - A process? - The transitional image

Solidarity Song

“. . . All the gangs of those who rule us
Hope our quarrels never stop
Helping them to split and fool us
So they can remain on top.

Forward, without forgetting
Where our strength can be seen now to be!
When starving or when eating
Forward, not forgetting
Our solidarity!"

Bertolt Brecht (circa 1931)

Ready, set...go!

We proceeded by standing in a circle holding hands to reflect on the previous workshop. Happiness, inspiration, Ubuntu, friendship, fun, excitement, and curiosity are some of the keywords that surfaced. Lindiwe told the group:

I think that today, even though we don't know what exactly is going to happen but we have an idea of where the workshop is heading.

I replied, "Today we are doing drama!". My announcement was received with mixed feelings. While the majority of the group was excited, Ma Ivy, Lindiwe, and Louis looked a little apprehensive. On the other hand, Alexina started clapping and announced that one of her aspirations is to act in 'Muvhamgo', her favourite soap opera. The discussion took a detour into the various soap operas that everyone watches, their favourite actors, and so on. Soap operas were more popular among the women than the men in the group and for them, especially Alexina, the idea of acting signified a fantasy of being famous. As a genre, soap opera is an incontestably popular media in South Africa (Chronis, 2013). Integrating imagery and dialogue, soap opera opens a platform where the difficulties of negotiating South African identities in a democratic South Africa are being engaged daily (Motsaathebe, 2009).

Another reading of this phenomenon could be that of a form of escapism (Boniface and Mac Ilroy, 1994), which connects with the acceptance of the possible absurdist reality they live in as previously discussed (Brown, 2011). Soap operas can also become another form of assimilation that allows the individual to fictionalise (Boniface and Mac

Ilroy, 1994) their narrative, even if it is for one moment. I would argue that this fictionalization is important as it offers a space where the individual finds time to identify him/herself with a character of the soap opera outside their reality. Here the relationship between narrative and identity demands the consideration of crucial concepts such as time, story, history and imagination. It is important to emphasise that narrative as a concept requires an understanding in broader terms which is

not primarily as a linguistic entity but, in a more general sense, as the ability 'to tell a story' ... The medium can be language as well as imagery, sound, spatial construction, or a combination thereof. (Brockmeier, 2001: 255)

We began with some warming exercises in preparation for the role-play. The participants were separated into two groups (group A and group B). Group A was instructed to individually make any shapes frozen in time with their bodies. These were then mirrored by their respective partners in group B. This exercise was followed by the composition of a series of collective still images of random scenarios. The idea of making a still image was very difficult to understand at first and it is worth doing some initial warm-up exercises to become more familiar with the process. Jabu playing a driver kept on turning the steering wheel while Alexina kept rubbing her stomach to demonstrate pain. It is only when I changed the word still image to 'photo' that the participants got a better understanding of the idea of an image frozen in time and space. The participants were beginning to get a sense of how narratives embodied in a still image could be effectuated by "a series of exercises and games designed to uncover essential truths about societies and cultures without resorting to spoken language" (Jackson in Boal, 1992: xix).

Although Boal conceptualised the images as being still, they are not fixed but are rather catalysts for further action. It was time to get to serious matters. Each group reconfigured themselves in two different corners of the classroom and was given twenty minutes each to collectively construct an image. The form involved the participants embodying images that portrayed stories of their lives, thoughts, and repressions that would depict their reality in Cornubia. Lindo was particularly animated. Since he participated in the "A Place Called Home" program when he was in Grade 7, he was confident in the task and at times assumed the role of facilitator with me. After

twenty minutes of intense brainstorming, the two teams presented their images to each other.

The first image portrayed a scene that primarily depicted the absence of leadership in the community and the lack of social, medical, and transport infrastructure. In the tableau, Louis is standing on the edge of the 'image' with his hand in front of his mouth. Alexina is lying on the floor with her hand holding her stomach and her facial expression showed that she was in some sort of pain. Lindo is sitting on the floor with a ball between his legs. Ma Ivy who is the oldest member of the group showed that she was walking purposefully while on the right side of the image almost walking away outside the frame is Lindiwe who portrayed the councillor. The participants physically depicted representations of their experiences and feelings in detailed and well-considered images.



Figure 27: Jahangeer (2017), Group A performing the real. Durban [performance]

The second image depicted two scenes of violence. The first one represented a minibus taxi portrayed by Shenaz, in the process of being hijacked by a perpetrator who was acted out by Jabu while on the other side of the image, Sadia and Mxolisi enacted an armed house robbery.



Figure 28: Jahangeer (2017), Group B performing the real. Durban [performance]

Each group was then asked to offer the interpretation of the others group.

Group B reading the image portrayed by group A:

“Okay, with everything that’s been said, so, here in Cornubia there is no leader; there is nowhere where we can address our issues. Every problem that we have, we keep it to ourselves, that’s all”. (Lindiwe, spaza owner workshop 11.08.18)

“Eyam bekuhukuthi, I was sick, with no hospital, no clinics, no police station, nobody to report to, no councillor, we got nobody to tell what is going on in Cornubia.” (Alexina creche owner workshop 11.08.18)

“What I was doing was, actually, I have nowhere to launch my complaints to, that’s why my mouth was closed. There is no one to listen to my complaints.” (Louis unemployed adult workshop 11.08.18)

Group A reading image portrayed by group B:

“I think what’s happening here, they’re trying to steal a car or something and then the lady, she’s standing inside the car wanting to drive it and this young man is coming to steal it while she’s inside. In the other picture, this guy is showing a gun to this young lady, which is this young lady is standing near the car and this young man here is trying to steal it.” (Lindo, young adult workshop 11.08.18)

Reading each other's images opened up a dialogue about their daily context. It would appear that the exercise created a 'container' in which they were free to become actively aware of their context. The images activated their thoughts and feelings in a critical way. It was important to note that there was a clear consensus among themselves about the various issues portrayed. Although issues around crime, safety, alcoholism, youth development, and violence emerged strongly and were debated by the participants while thinking about the 'reality' of Cornubia, social divisiveness and abandonment from the state became constant rhetoric throughout the workshop. This will be discussed more in detail at a later stage in the next chapter.

The day before the second workshop was Women's²⁹ Day and Shenaz appropriately raised the point that the ball also represented feminist values. She pointed out that women constituted the majority of the group in a male-dominated society. Gender-based violence is also an unfortunate reality in Cornubia which deepens the 'culture of silence' (Freire, 1970) of the community into the home where the oppression of women in most cases is passed onto the children. Government officials do recognise this as a pressing threat to democracy. Dr Zweli Mkhize then Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs stated publicly in 2017 that "patriarchy remains deeply entrenched within the fabric of our society to such an extent that most women consider it to be a normal way of life...Unless we take serious decisive action to combat the perpetuation of this most discriminatory practice, we risk the integrity of our democracy. This action must be more than political rhetoric; it must become a tangible reality". (Daily Maverick 18th September 2017). Yet this recognition appears to have done little to shift the lived realities of many women in South Africa (Gqola, 2007). The prevalence and acceptance of gendered violence mirror the acceptance of symbolic violence from the state through neglect and abandonment.

Shenaz's concern resonates with many past and present feminist theorists. For example, Helene Cixous maintains that

²⁹ An official day in South Africa that commemorate women. This comes in the form of awareness for gender inequality and various other programs that look at challenges faced by women in this patriarchal society we live in.

Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetoric, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, and get beyond the ultimate reverse discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word 'silence'...(Cixous 1976: 886)

In the context of this workshop, the use of theatrical 'photos' enabled the members of Xhuma to communally inscribe with their bodies the 'real image' into images, which spoke silently of who they are, where they have come from, and where they all want to go. In moments of a 'photographic dismemberment' of reality (Sontag 1973), I felt that their mute speech held unspeakable truths that Rancière (2007: 13) suggests is "the eloquence of the very thing that is silent, the capacity to exhibit signs written on a body, the marks directly imprinted by its history, which are more truthful than any discourse proffered by a mouth". The act of reading the images defined an understanding of reality as a kind of [re]writing. One that was being decoded not into what was a record of the past but into new ways of dealing with the present. Mr. Mac recounts the stories Shenaz shared with him;

"She made me understand that the past is something that one needs to forget and start afresh. So here in Cornubia, I've noticed that everyone has his or her past, and most of it's not nice. There's no one here in Cornubia that can say my past is beautiful, everyone their past is crappy, average, the past is rusty and bad. So, it made me realise what is in my mind, I realise I need to work hard to find a way to move forward, how do we, then make me understand that I really need to make this work, how do we move forward? So as a group, it would be a good start if we focus on how we move forward." (Mr. Mac, spaza owner workshop 11.08.18)

The session demonstrated that it was becoming increasingly clear to the residents that Cornubia did not represent the collective future that many were hoping for. The insights thus far were not only a reading between the lines of the past and the future but were a simultaneous writing of the 'in-betweenness' of space-time (Massey, 1993). This motivation opened a portal into the rest of the program, where we can begin to draft the power of this muteness into an exploration of the real and imagined worlds of a 'Thirdspace' (Soja, 1996).

Workshop three: Back to Reality/ the World as it could be:
Creative methodologies as a tool for dialogue

Writing

I draw these letters
as the day draws its images
and blows over them

and
does not return
(Octavio Paz, 1984)

Drawing on Boal's (1979) 'actual image' (reality) the theatrical 'photos' enacted in the previous workshop serve as a form of analytical marker. The images can be considered as counteractive metaphorical blueprints, which retained "liberating power" qualities that Rancière (2007: 34) relates to as speechless images. The reflections of the participants offered a critique of the present as a "critical phase" through which they could recognise that their lives were changing and they were adapting to the shifting of internal territorial forms. The emerging discourse motivated a process that is inclusive and integrated which represents both the collective past and the communal future where innovative ways of envisioning Africa's future cities can be embedded in practices of connection, collectivity, and humanization.

'Confronting Empire'

Our strategy should be not only to confront the empire, but
to lay siege to it.
To deprive it of oxygen.
To shame it.
To mock it.
With our art,
our music,
our literature,
our stubbornness,
our joy,
our brilliance,
our sheer relentlessness.

and our ability to tell our own stories.

Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe.
The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling.

Their ideas,
their version of history,
their wars,
their weapons,
their notion of inevitability.

Remember this: We be many and they be few.

They need us more than we need them.

Another world is not only possible,
she is on her way.

On a quiet day,
I can hear her breathing.

(Arundhati Roy, 2019)

[extract]

Xhuma was meeting in the third consecutive session. Everybody got organised and seated in a circle. The question for the day was: What is the Cornubia that you want to see? What is your ideal Cornubia? What is the 'ideal image'?

As usual, we began with the ball game. While throwing it to each other we began the session with one word of reflection on last week's session. But on that day Jabu *disrupted* the game. He suggested that we make space for the metaphorical ball to reflect on the process instead. Conceptually his proposal asked for the ball to be personified.

"In what we've done, the ball is making us be combined and do everything together as one."

(Jabu, Workshop 2 11.08.2018)

The ball was redefined. *She*³⁰ became the eleventh 'person' in the group and symbolically embodied the collective at the same time. The ball immediately assumed a complexified identity where the notion of object/subject became intertwined in an inseparable relationship. It is important to consider this differentiation between these two concepts because it opened up a window onto a specific approach to the understanding and reading of any polarised society. To validate Jabu's intuitive reaction to the ball, Adorno suggests in 'On Subject and Object' (2005), that the separation of object/subject, even though they are abstract concepts in themselves, is a contradictory exercise that is based on ideological rationality with an illusory distinction:

The separation of subject and object is both real and semblance. True, because in the realm of cognition it lends expression to the real separation, the rivenness of the human condition, the result of a coercive historical process; untrue, because the historical separation must not be hypostatized, not magically transformed into an invariant. This contradiction of the separation of subject and object is imparted to epistemology. (Adorno 2005: 246)

While it became crucial to understand that within the object/subject intertwinement lies the debate of what makes something meaningful and how it becomes meaningful, I recognised that as a collective we also needed to realise that as human beings, in body and mind, we are inseparable from history. In other words, our knowledge and existence (subjectivity) are unshakable from history (object).

The motivation of the third workshop was geared to give form to ideal images. While Boal's physical transformation of the 'actual image' into the 'ideal image' (Boal 2000: 135) is traditionally situated in a theatrical form, the application of Lego blocks, in this instance became an adaptation. The use of multiple artistic forms was a strategic decision that proved to be both conceptually appropriate and practically necessary as described in the previous chapter where the research design is discussed in detail. The aim of workshop 3 was to provide a *processpace*³¹ where the members of Xhuma

³⁰ The decision on the gender of the ball was based on the fact that it was women's day.

³¹ I deliberately merge the two words *process* and *space* as one to demonstrate a concept which points at the recognition of the intertwining of sociality, space, and time. The definition here is twofold. On the one hand it describes workshop 3 as an 'in-between' present space where the past and future were being interrogated. On a macro level it refers to the spaza phenomenon in Cornubia

could engage with their socio-economic and spatial realities and injustices within democratic principles of criticality and ethical responsibility. The word *processpace* is here referred to as both a practical dialogic space and as a metaphorical platform for courageous and expansive thinking about the socio-spatial. Getting back in action we reflected on the previous workshop (the real image) and keywords like unity, happiness, knowledge, ideas, solution, adventure, and feminism emerged. As usual, Shenaz kicked off the discussion and provided a meaningful entry point for the action to follow:

“Initially, when they brought us here, they did promise us that we were going to get proper schooling, with transportation and a high school. So that’s that! It’s been five years now and the government has gone absolutely hostile. There seems to be no goal unless we start *Toyi-toyi*³² for it. That’s a no goal... We really need to take a stand as a community.” (Shenaz, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

Pointing out the need for a peaceful and critical engagement, she made us think about the role that democracy should play in their struggles and what is required when aiming to fulfil its ideals of social justice and to work towards reparation.

Sequence for Mumia Abu-Jamal...

VI: Postscript

When the blight of stillness advances
when songs and speech are silenced
when a light of life and laughter are gone,
the spirit still speaks and endures

which, as this study aims to demonstrate, seems to be a space where the collective reimagining and invention of social spaces is an ongoing evolution.

³² *Toyi-toyi* is a manifestation of a war dance of black South Africans. Historically, *Toyi-toyi* was a form of uprising against English colonialists but during Apartheid and still to date, it remains integral in South Africa as the spirit in the face of impossible conditions and abject poverty. Encompassing a wide spectrum of collective expressions from protests to celebrations, this phenomenon ranges from the chants that capture both the spiritual and the corporeal expressions of oppression and hardship. Often referred to as South Africa’s 12th official language, *Toyi-toyi* is a poignant and powerful declaration by which the oppressed speak their complaints to the power bloc.

like sparks that flash from the silica
tough stardust, common dust of the world...
(Brutus, 2009)

Shenaz makes a critical point. Where are the forums or pathways to be heard by local government in contemporary South Africa? Whilst toyi-toying or spectacular pictures of burning things and protesting abound in the media, where do people like Shenaz get to voice their everyday concerns related to the built environment? Although I understand the relevance and importance of engaging with the extraordinary such as political scandals, climate change, hijackings, and corruption, I remain mostly critical of how the mainstream media always seem to speak to us through significant abnormal events. The shocking front page headlines, the voyeuristic narratives of street poles news banners, and the online global world (social media) seem to privilege the trauma of the 'other' over everyday ordinary struggles for dignity and livelihoods. In contrast, in an essay entitled 'Approaches to what' (Perec, 1997) Georges Perec shows concern for 'the rest'; the other perceived trivial and futile narratives that may perhaps hold truths that we have not been able to recognise as we are distracted by the meta-narratives of our existence. Perec calls for a brave and lucid engagement in extreme documentation of the ordinary in the quotidian – the 'infra-ordinary' or the 'endotic'. This demands a different method of study of one's immediate surroundings. An 'endotic anthropology' (Perec, 1997) that would prioritise the detailed unearthing of the trivial and the immaterial.

What's really going on, what we're experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?... How do we speak to these 'common things', how to track them down rather, flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them finally speak of what is, of what we are.
(Perec 1997: 210)

In principle, and specifically in the context of this study, I am equally interested in how the ordinary speaks to us. Critical to Shenaz's call to be heard is creating forms and forums where infra-ordinary (Perec, 2008) narratives could be developed into dialogues between the built environment practitioners in their participatory work, and

the people who live in and make homes out of their housing units. Against all odds, the inhabitants, through their daily spatial interaction are gradually metamorphosing space into a jointly experienced and meaningful place. Ai Weiwei and Perec's sanction for a creative articulation raises a few additional critical questions in my inquiry: Is it plausible that the invention of a new language is already in process at the street level? One which is possibly not being recognised by the state? Constitutionally everyone has the right to freedom of expression. But what does the freedom to express oneself mean if it is not being listened to? In a focus group discussion held at the temporary school at Cornubia between Xhuma and the eThekweni-municipality-appointed architect of the social amenities in Cornubia, Ma Katarina, a spaza owner in the community, avidly asks:

"Why does the municipality always come and tell us what is going to happen here? Why do they always tell us with force? Why don't they ever ask? Why don't they ever listen to us?"

Jay Naidoo, the founding general secretary of COSATU, cautioned the state in 2012 against turning a deaf ear to the chorus of the street:

My advice to those who control the levers of economic and political power and dominate even civil society: Listen, listen carefully, and be afraid of the drums of discontent as they gather in the restless anger that will one day drown the privilege you enjoy today at the expense of the majority. (Daily Maverick 3 December 2012)

Hereditary from the Apartheid and the Colonial Project³³, these tendencies collide with the capitalist structures in the form of a systemic condition, which continue to scorch the cries of betrayal. Fanon (1963) recognises the paradox outlined above, in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). While he acknowledges the intertwining of the tension between the 'self-organised' poor and the 'panoptic' beast³⁴, he advocates for a conception of freedom that releases the creative powers of the mind of the citizens if a meaningful national consciousness is to be achieved.

³³ Ben Turok, director of the Institute for African Alternatives and former ANC MP commented in an article in the Daily Maverick on the 13th of August 2018 that "South Africa does not fall into the conventional model of a colony established by an imperial power." He further states that it took him a long time and much reflection to conclude that "South Africa remains a colonial country despite appearances of modernity and advancement"

³⁴ The beast is conceptually referred to as the State here.

It is true that if care is taken to use only a language that is understood by graduates in law and economics, you can easily prove that the masses have to be managed from above. But if you speak the language of the everyday. . . then you will realise that the masses are quick to seize every shade of meaning. . . Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand. . . The more people understand the more watchful they become and the more they come to realise that everything depends on them. (Fanon,1963: 130-131)

Within a South African context, Fanon's (1963) proposition of a dialectical approach to consider a more equitable exchange between the state and the street is reinforced by Gibson (2001:142) in a reconciliatory motivation to the politicians and intellectuals. He states

that their active participation in building 'the reality of the nation' means discovering and encouraging a cacophony of 'universalising values' already existing in both the activities and the 'will of the people'.

This 'equitable exchange' should be considered in a holistic and humane manner. Pieterse (2008) argues for a more comprehensive review that puts in perspective the prevailing 'uneven' and often 'confusing' dynamics of urbanization. Pieterse's reasoning calls for a more realistic reading and a holistic interpretation of the zeitgeist before an engagement in such equitable exchange, promoted by Fanon (1963) above, can be considered and devised. Although this proposition is dated more than a decade ago, the thinking still finds resonance in contemporary urban implications.

The current wave of [urbanization] is taking place within a particular geopolitical and economic moment in history of humanity, which presents daunting pressures and decisions for urban citizens and especially activists, leaders, and managers as they figure out how to cope and flourish. (Pieterse 2008:2)

An official in the planning department, who holds a senior position in the eThekweni municipality, confirmed that the complexities for community engagement in governmental social projects are loaded with critical expectations on delivery. In her interview, she further elaborated that the municipality is constantly operating within 'challenging time frames, inter-departmental complications, political entanglements, power struggles and institutional frustrations' (interview 10.01.2019). It is well known that after the 1994 elections, the government intended to build more liveable, equitable, and sustainable cities. But despite extensive well-intended measures put in place, the

injustice of the apartheid space economy appears to have remained and we have seen a considerable increase in service delivery protests over the two decades. While it is understandable that the implementation of change is always met with the expected and unforeseen challenges pointed out above, one would assume that comprehensive mobilization and communication strategies should be developed to clarify the intentions of policies and to raise awareness of their implications. My conversation with this senior manager was frank and unguarded. She bravely divulged the weakness and resistance of the municipality when it comes to reaching out to the life on the street.

“Firstly, we don’t know how to engage with the marginalised, in a marginalised space. Secondly, we also think that the marginalised are not worthwhile engaging with. They need to be told what to be done. We need to manage it, control it. Actually, whether it is a marginalised community or not, I think there is a certain discourse that comes through as professionals, planners, architects, and environmental planners which says that we know best. It’s a power thing and we seem to think that if we engage with the people we lose our power. But I personally think it could be something more. It could be an extension of that power where we make our ideas richer. But we don’t think of it that way and we don’t really have the will for it”. (City official - Head of department interview 10.01.2019)

How does an ambivalent state envisage engaging in a dialogic developmental process where top-down projects and bottom-up initiatives meet remains a pressing concern? In the same focus group between the appointed architect (responsible for the design of the social amenities of the township), the participants of the workshops, and myself, he confirmed that there is little will from the municipality to engage with the community. He opened the conversation with a distinct frustration:

“I have been waiting for this moment for about seven years...I have long realised that we need to talk to the people that we are working for when we do social architecture. We are an independent firm of architects that works within the municipality... And here in Cornubia every time we said we needed to meet with the community the municipality said that there was no space for that and we feel that we have been excluded from this process.” (Architect in Focus group 01.09.2018)

Notwithstanding the irritation and despondence, I found myself motivated by the honest statements of both of the interviewees above as it indicates a degree of reflexivity

which may very well be in itself some kind of openness where new discourses can be explored. These sentiments cut across all the built environment experts I interviewed.

“I know that there has been some communication but probably not enough I think the city... are most well-intentioned people but the demand, the burden of this huge backlog as much as I suspect they would want to do more, their focus is mainly in housing. So, there is probably a gap in terms of communication, outreach and support that no one has been given that mandate. There is a gap in the city for social support in terms of; first infrastructure and secondly also on the softer side. I am not sure where this lies”. (Interview with Cornubia appointed urban planner 07. 02. 2019)

Is it possible that this ‘gap’ is where the language of the state is not being understood by the street and vice versa as stated above? Are we possibly trapped in an ambiguous space of miscomprehension? How do we then better listen to each other (our needs and our intentions)? These are questions that very quickly emerged during my participation in everyday life in Cornubia and here they have remarkably also been consistently pointed out as being critical by the municipal officials and experts³⁵ (built environment). Their considerations for a desired meaningful, sustainable, and just city are clear. In fact, Durban has been awarded the ‘Most Liveable City’ award in four consecutive years between 2015 – 2018. In a recent press release the mayor proclaimed that eThekweni Municipality “aims to be Africa’s most liveable and caring city by the year 2030 and at this rate, it looks like it might just be sooner than planned”. But how do these awards and well-meaning intentions seemingly imbued with existing desires, political discourses and policies translate to people’s lives of the people on the street? Jabu reinforced Shenaz’s earlier point about a contradictory state who on one hand sees itself as a living and caring city while on the other hand failing to sustain and follow through on the promises made to the citizens.

“What’s happening here in Cornubia the way it is, they made big promises for us here. [They promised that] we’re going to have everything since day one we came here into Cornubia, but at the moment, nothing has happened yet, the schools, they were supposed to be building a proper school, they never do it. They promise us they were going to give us the transport for the kids to go to school, to the high school but they never do it...we’re just in the bushes the way it is. We’re just got the houses; in the houses we’re in, its fine, its right, we have got the houses, but now the thing is that, everything [else] is not coming, is not going. We’re just

³⁵ The informal conversations and interviews conducted.

suffering; we're just sitting in the houses, no jobs, nothing, nothing, it's not just ..." (Jabu, Workshop 2 11.08.2018)

There is a contradiction in the officials' statements above which is being articulated in Jabu's frustration in a more practical manner. In addition, numerous informal conversations with many other residents of Cornubia over the years have echoed similar sentiments.

Reconnecting back to Ai Weiwei's notion that 'one voice can stand for something larger', we return to the workshop where Xhuma explored their 'ideal image' of Cornubia. Xhuma gathered in wonder around ten tables joined together and filled with LEGO bricks. The clattering sound of their hands plunging through the piles of bricks was amplified by the lavish laughter of Alexina. I introduced the use of LEGO to the team and stressed that the bricks acted as a conceptual representation of the people living in Cornubia Phase 1A. We then proceeded in a discussion about how this workshop would facilitate an alternative creative articulation of their complaints to themselves and symbolically to the municipality. The objective of this exercise was to recognise that consciousness around the 'politics of the subaltern' articulated in more creative ways, can accentuate protests into conscientised punctuations, which in turn could excavate further strategic possibilities for participatory actions to occur. This consciousness was already present in the group as clearly demonstrated in Shenaz's statement while debating about the absence of a permanent school in Cornubia. She complained that the government is apathetic to their demands and that the community feels that they do not always have to protest in order to get the attention of the state.



Figure 29: Jahangeer (2017), Exploring the ideal image with Lego. Durban [Photograph]

While engaging in this exercise they agreed that their aim would be to unleash their imagination in an effort to dream a different Cornubia. One where the existing positive aspects of the township would be nurtured as well as exploring the factors, they believe were preventing Cornubia from achieving this ideal. Xhuma considered the obstacles in an open critical way. They instantly identified the state as being the primary problem when it comes to the prevention of their well-being. The feeling of being abandoned by the state is tangible in Cornubia.



Figure 30: Jahangeer (2017), Exploring the ideal image with Lego. Durban [Photograph]

Ironically the intention of the Breaking New Ground policy represents the turn from the provision of housing to the delivery of human settlements with the objective of reinforcing the notion of spatial transformation and social integration (Joseph and Karuri-Sebina, 2014). It is also necessary to be reminded that within the mandate of this policy, the eThekweni municipality innovatively dubbed Phase 1A of Cornubia as a pilot phase. This is important because it illustrates that the Breaking New Ground policy aligns itself with the concept of ‘design thinking’ and portrays itself as experimental in nature. It also implicates a motivation to continuously improve on the implementation of the ‘human settlement’. Fiske (2011 in Pieterse and van Donk, 2014) further explains that,

‘design thinking’ is characterised by: (i) an obsession with the customer, or client, or citizen(s); (ii) ideas generated by multiple disciplines and perspectives in a team context; (iii) a willingness to learn through doing, i.e., through prototyping in order to test and continuously refine a co-produced idea; and (iv) translating design ideas or proposals into emotionally engaging narratives that steer clear of being gimmicky or exploitative.

Experimentality is key in developing new and alternative discourses whether it be housing, literature, or art for that matter. However, experimentation also demands accountability, they need to be monitored and engaged with critically in order that we ensure that learning is taking place. I am insistently interested in the concept of

experimentation because while it is a process or action for seeking new methods and ideas it is also related to the concept of in-between considered in this thesis. Experimental by nature, my practice has taught me that the in-between is a space;

where we find ourselves and our depths in a *Flânerie*;

where our individual masteries become porous and famished for new knowledges;

where we lose control over our self-image in order to better see with our hearts;

where time is continuously folded and refolded onto itself deploying a magical space for new and unorthodox physical and metaphysical origins.

Here my thoughts find resonance with Rabindranath Tagore (1951) and his poetic account of national consciousness.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the deep truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (Tagore 1951:27)

Based on the conversations during the third workshop it is clear that 'the country' is very much awake. The ideal image that Xhuma worked on in this session clearly demonstrated a construct where irrelevant policies were revised into more just design thinking which portrayed a positive impact physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, psychologically, and even spiritually.

Imagination was at the core of this workshop. What emerged from the extensive discussion was that there is a desperation for making Cornubia a liveable settlement. Xhuma started to build their ideal place. The focus was on social amenities. They identified their well-being with the provision of necessary infrastructures that would

enhance social inclusion, community safety, healthy living and a humanised environment.



Figure 31: Jahangeer (2017), My Cornubia my City with Lego. Durban [Photograph]

This was given perspective in their design of a conceptual model which consisted of an information centre, a school, a clinic, a community centre, a new housing typology, religious centres, a sports centre, spaza shops, a police station, and a recreation centre. These envisioned socio-economic amenities ridicule the municipalities' mandate in the overdue provision of an Integrated Human Settlement Project. While the majority of these amenities 'talk to' the system and its developmental intentions, they simultaneously 'talk back' at its inability to value "a deeper appreciation of cultural identities and dynamics that play out in the lived realities of daily life and symbolic manifestations [as] a prerequisite for more appropriate urban transformations" (Pieterse 2008:109). This is exemplified by Ma Ivy's strategic inclusion of the spaza 'construct' in the conceptual map. The spaza phenomenon is an urban transgression that embodies both a structure for residents to survive through the purchase of basic necessities and a node that starts to build social networks. Its inclusion with more expected built forms such as schools, clinics, and community halls recognises the importance of how social amenities can also be created from bottom-up approaches to meeting needs and not only built from amenities delivered by the state. Creative

methods allow for more flexible interpretations of what matters in a space to people. Methods that enable play and serious deliberation offer a more poetic response to envisage our ideals.

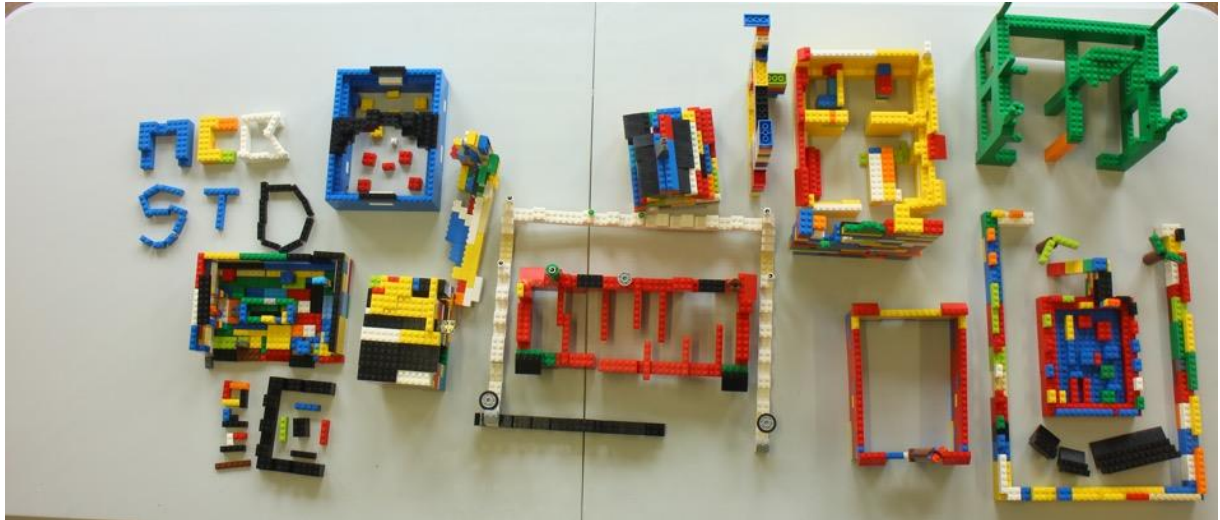


Figure 32: Jahangeer (2017), Exploring the ideal Cornubia with Lego. Durban [Photograph]

Workshop 4: Wordplay / the world in Transition

Spaza as text in the exploration of a new discourse

We entered the classroom to tackle our fourth and last workshop. There is a sense of joy among the members. I am uncertain about this dynamic and wondered whether it was because the work was coming to an end. Later that day Mxolisi confirmed that it was in contentment about the work we have achieved over the past months (informal conversation 01.09.2018). Having interrogated the real and the imagined image of and for Cornubia in the previous workshops through artistic tools (drawing, drama, and LEGO blocks), we were set for the day in probing how do we transit from the one to the other; the 'transitory image'. For bell hooks (1990),

spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice. (1990:152)

Rightfully, storytelling in the African paradigm (Kolmenger 1988) is a cultural form inherent in everyday practices and even in official governmental events. Extending on

hooks' (1990) argument, we also need to be mindful that our histories and stories are inscribed in space by people and vice versa. This notion is imperative when we exercise our imaginations for a more liberating and just future. It is my conviction that it is in the alignment between the body and space that our storylines emerge possibly as a 'text' which can be analogous to the city.

In Workshop Four the 'transitional image' was the final stage where the possibilities of "how to pass from one reality to the other" (Boal 2000:135) were explored. Aligned with the idea of rewriting 'text' the activity of this workshop conceptually engaged with Scrabble pieces as a creative tool. With hundreds of letters spread on the long table, the participants started to actively sieve through to find their desired letters. The idea was to activate words that would indicate the potential for change in Cornubia and what mechanism would be required to do so.



Figure 33: Jahangeer (2017), Exploring the transitional image with scrabble. Durban [Photograph]

There was a lot of commotion around the table and very quickly a lexicon was mapped. The key words to emerge were:

- Loyalty
- Communication intervention
- Unify
- Love
- Voice
- Liaison
- Committee

Representation
Respect
Self-respect
Grateful
Truth
Empowerment
Youth
Transportation
Education
Caring
Fight
Solidarity
Socialise
Members
Forum
Safety
People
Togetherness
Culture
Integration
Racism
Consultation
WhatsApp

Essentially, these categories collectively speak both to processes (forms of humanization, communication, and solidarity) and structures (strategies, infrastructure, and actions) through which a comprehensive engagement program between the local municipality and the disenfranchised residents might begin to reconfigure more participatory planning in this human settlement.

. . . to begin always anew,
to make contact,
to reconstruct,
and not to spoil,

to refuse to bureaucratise the mind,
to understand and to live life as a process,
to live to become. . .

Paulo Freire (1970 in hooks, 1994:1)



Figure 34: Jahangeer (2017), Emerging concepts. Durban [Photograph]



Figure 35: Jahangeer (2017), Love . Durban [Photograph]

The years of my practice of participatory research in Cornubia and specifically over the intensive exchanges which took place in the fourth workshops opened a rigorous space for self-reflection both on my part and the participants. This was primarily possible through the opening up of frank and transparent avenues of dialogue. It was not only good for me as the researcher but also contributed to a collectively meaningful experience. What has emerged throughout the workshops is how participatory processes can also build empowerment in people and build resources that can be drawn from in the future. Lindiwe, for example, explained the impact the program had on her.

“For the workshops, I think everything we did there was mind-blowing. I would say because *ekugcineni* (finally) we’ve learned how to stand up for ourselves, understanding the community because either then...we can say we understand Cornubia because we’re staying in it, but not really. But then since we got there [the workshop] we ended up understanding how Buthelezi is living, how Sazia is living, how Fiona is feeling, you know! We understand so many things about that and how is the relationship, you know? We understand so many things... we learned, the skills of art, you know, *ezinye izinto* (other things), we were expressing things without telling the people but learning from the essential that we were doing...so many things we've learned over there . . . and [we have learned] that we have one [common] feeling. We want things to go one way even if we do things differently. *Ngathi kuningi esikufundile, kuningi* (I said a lot we learnt, a lot)”. Lindiwe, spaza owner (workshop 01.09.2018)

Lindiwe’s statement made it clear that the overall process had enabled a space where they were given the opportunity to think/feel and freely talk truthfully with each other which resulted in self and mutual respect. This resonates with the Habermasian concept of the ‘Ideal Speech Situation’ mentioned above where the ability to make truth claims depends on a democratically structured platform. For Habermas frank talk creates “four validity claims: namely to comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness and sincerity, which he argues, imply both the logical justification of truth and the social context for their debate” (Baker 2000: 92).

The last workshop was crucial in interrogating the transitional image (Boal 1979) which opened up the question of how to bridge between the real and ideal image they have for Cornubia. The discussion was focused on possible strategies that could be developed in their pursuit of change, transformation, and revolution (Boal 1979). By

the end of the program, I already had the distinct feeling that the participants had employed the process as a tactic to create opportunities in thinking about ways to direct the understanding of their 'ordinariness' into a committed voice that was clearly conscientised and political. They called for more accountability from the municipality. They spoke out for the formation of an active association with membership in order to better represent themselves and their needs to the authorities. They convincingly motivated for a more integrated and socialised Cornubia. It became apparent that they realised that there is a potential platform where dialogue between the community and the state can be effected. This was primarily apparent after the dialogue with the architect. The final workshop was catalytic in the sense that it brought the realization that their resistance and practice (mainly by the spazas owners) are already strategic and tactical operations that bear the possibilities for a renewed understanding of identities, limitations, and prospects. This was clarified by Rasta when he talks about the role the spaza are playing in relation to the unemployment crisis in South Africa.

"All of us in South Africa can't have a business. It can't happen. So since in South Africa, we got a challenge of the job, so the spaza is part of the job opportunities. Because I am the owner of a spaza, I can employ one or two people. The one who can sell for me. That's part of the job opportunity. So, to me, I think the government has to understand that if you are unemployed, opening the spaza is also helping the government...so I think if the government helps the spaza owners that will also help the government." Rasta, spaza owner (interview 21.09.18)

The role of spazas as a form of agency and living tactic in strategic response to the absence of the state, and as an agent for change emerged strongly in these discussions.

An article in the online newspaper the 'Daily Maverick' (July 2019)³⁶, reported that "South Africa is held captive by factional battles and policy differences within the ruling party". Indicative too of the community of Cornubia, these internal conflicts seem to flood at street level in a divisive manner. It has been four years now since the councillor absconded from the community leaving a vacuum in the lives of the residents. This has led to the dissolution of the community committee which, in the past, mediated the

³⁶ See <https://www.daily-maverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-07-28-south-africa-is-in-a-mess-its-time-for-coalition-politics/>

needs and concerns of the resident to the state. Could this absence of political leadership be a way through which local communities can put in place their own development initiatives? Erwin and Marks (2016) note that “political interference can lead to co-production paralysis and entrench community apathy” and in addition, they maintain that

throughout South Africa, local political agents’ involvement in development initiatives has had the effect of derailing community development projects, rather than facilitating them. (Erwin and Marks, 2016: 2)

However, the participants were aware that this absence is a collapse of their ability to not only communicate internally but externally with the state and that this is problematic for them. Previously, Lindiwe had already firmly expressed that there was a communication breakdown between the community and the government. But thinking about a way forward Shenaz motivated for the reinstatement of a ‘committee as a liaison which will take the voice of the people to the government’ (workshop 4, 01.09.2018). In addition, Fiona’s word was ‘forum’ and she explained that forum will enable the community to bypass the councillor and empower the community to speak out in a united voice (workshop 4, 01.09.2018). The interview with the principal of the temporary school, Kevin Sevlall, in Cornubia, offered a useful example that resonates with the discussion on ‘having a voice’ that arose in Workshop 4. He explained how the new retail centre recently built in Cornubia to illustrate the point on poor communication in development, he stressed that the

“...the problem is that the retail centre that has been developed by a municipality that was not listening to the community. In fact, the people with whom [this development] was supposed to be negotiated with are the spaza shop owners who are living here in Cornubia. They should have been consulted. Those are the people who were moved to that retail centre it would have been a benefit to the society of Cornubia...but this is a failure on the part of the eThekweni Municipality. We are here to empower. The idea is to empower the community and if you empower the community give them a say”.

Sevlall’s argument is that empowerment is linked with the act of listening, communicating, consultation, and empowerment. It is however important to note that my reading of ‘consultation’ is that it should not be considered as a mere event in the process of development but as a part of a method that should aim to reach meaningful participation by the authorities in the lives of the denizens. My concern about

consultation echoed in the conversations I had with numerous experts in planning who revealed that while there is an ethos in policy to commit to social change in a sustainable way, there appear to be limited mechanisms put in place to engage with development in a responsive way.

“I still maintain that it’s about consultation and if you are committed to consult with people, it’s very different to have a new narrative of being responsive. If you are responsive you are going to listen to engage and you are going to do so because you are an equal partner and people know best. So right now, it’s [consultation] about compliance so I’d argue that the commitment is very superficial.” (Interview with municipal senior manager 13.12.2018)

He however recognised that there are certainly some projects that are responsive but, on the whole, the city official essentially stressed that there should be an urgency in the state “to question the adequacy of [its] concepts, policy frameworks and, of course, good intentions” (Pieterse 2008:111). In Cornubia where this communication link between the residents and the authority has been compromised and where the community is still relatively new, is it not possible to experiment with alternative platforms where innovative and effective systems of communication can be explored?

Jabu took quite a while before ‘writing’ his word. I wasn’t sure whether he understood the exercise correctly or if was he engaging in a deep critical thought process. I carried on going around the table to engage with the various other words and their authors when he exclaimed

“This is my word; Fight. What can I say! We need to fight for our right here...as a community we have to fight to make sure we can get all the things we need.” (Jabu, Workshop 4 01.09.2018)

He calls for active persistence, resilience, and hope going forward. Therefore, it is important to understand fight in that context. However, as pointed out in the previous workshops, the members of Xhuma have constantly voiced a sense of isolation in Cornubia with no channel of communication between the state and them. This isolation can also be associated with the manner in which Architecture and planning have historically, and arguably, still are being deployed to disempower people as they are located away from the centre and have little say in built environment design and planning. As the residents and their concerns are peripheralised, they become

marginalised which means that they have to shout even louder to be heard. Thus, it becomes crucial to re-examine the form this fight can take because the traditional way of taking to the street and protesting does not seem to be as effective as in the past. In 2016 for example, I witnessed a protest by a group of residents who were appointed to clean the streets of Phase 1A in Cornubia³⁷. They did the job but were not paid. Their frustration took them to the street and they blocked the entrance to the community with piles of rubbish to draw attention to their issue. The irony was that there was nobody from the municipality, the press, or the outside world to witness their action and listen to their concerns. To do justice to the community's concerns I feel the necessity to consistently reiterate their feeling of abandonment. This theme of abandonment is explored further in the following chapter.

Interestingly, in an earlier workshop, Shenaz mentioned that the community will not achieve its goals if they engage in the traditional way of protesting (toyi-toyi). While it is accustomed that the street can be considered as a public space where individuals rally to act collectively against any form of repression (Oliphant, 2013) perhaps, it is then worthwhile to reimagine what other strategies can actually be put in place to amplify the concerns of the residents. What are alternative forms of 'fighting' that can be explored? More importantly what forms of 'fighting' already exist and how can they be unearthed or validated into a legitimate movement? One strategy of both resistance and performing agency was the role of spaza shops as spaces of public discourse and community resources. The role of spaza is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (a person is a person through/because of (other) people)

Through artistic practice and the play of Scrabble (in this workshop), which come as a kind of critical pedagogic approach and the use of creativity, we collectively provided a space for me and the rest of the team to critically reflect on their own self-determination, activism and recognise their agency. With purposeful directed creative

³⁷ See <https://vimeo.com/144977870>

exercises, on the whole, the objective of the workshops was for the members of Xhuma and myself to become conscientised³⁸. This, which was clearly seen in their reflections on the spaza shops throughout the program, has brought into light their practice as a subversive *protest in action* as well as *protest as action*. Their reflections which were founded with the intention to change their lives and their community is a praxis (Freire, 1970/1996).

For Lefebvre,

“There is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body’s deployment in space and its occupation of space. Before producing effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before producing itself by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before producing itself by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has space; it produces itself in space and it also produces that space”. (Lefebvre, 1974:170)

While Lefebvre’s treatment of space is predominantly intellectual, I am cautious in considering the historical, social, and political lens, which I believe is necessary when articulating the individual, the collective, space, and power. If Lefebvre argues that there is a reciprocal existence between the body and space, then it is imperative to consider that within their past and present, their similarities and differences, and their politics, ‘people in space makes place’³⁹. In short places point at “an analytical space which simultaneously incorporates the body, social space, and language” (Pile 2006: 213). Therefore, is it not logical to assume that members of Xhuma represent not only the spaces they inhabit individually and collectively but they synchronously personify their context? They should ultimately play a decisive part in transiting their ‘here and now’ into a more humanised place and their houses into homes. This links to Massey’s (1993) interpretation of space-time as a “configuration of social relations within which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity” (Massey 1993:3). In the everyday scenario where Sandile makes his way back from Roshila’s spaza shop, where kids play soccer on the street while youngsters chill in the street corner; where adults gather at the pool table outside Lindiwe’s yard after

³⁸ Conscientisation, is a principal concept in Freire’s Problem-Posing Education. It illustrates an intensified state of political awareness.

³⁹ This is a concept coined by myself, emerged through my observations and conversations with people on the ground along the CityWalk . It is double faceted. On the one hand I recognise that ‘People in Space make Place’ on the other less romantic hand I also acknowledge that ‘a Dislocated People make a Dysfunctional Space’.

work and where Patrick mends his broken kettle in his front yard, the inhabitants are a living text which embodies [con]text. They live it without thinking as if it bears (looking from the outside at least) neither questions nor answers. But as we approach the 'infra ordinary' (Perec 1997), it quickly becomes apparent that there is a logic to their being. There is however a danger of misreading this organic manifestation into an incompressible spatiality. In some ways, it could be argued that the citizens are unlettered in the elementary form of experiencing the city. This, for example, is articulated by De Certeau(1984) while theorizing 'the everyday practices'. He explains:

Like bodies that flow through the thick and thin of an urban *text* [my italics] they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognised poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterised by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (De Certeau 1984: 93)

Though De Certeau's poetical reading of the everyday is from a Western framework of consumer culture (Fiske 1989), I do believe that elements of his concept resonate with the African context. As much as it is true that the urban syntax needs clarity, citizens are not necessarily 'blind' to their scripting. Yes, they might be 'illiterate' to the conceptual nuances of urban planning and 'othered' by the technocratic structures, but the inhabitants are conscientised (Freire 1996, 2005). In Cornubia, despite the murkiness of the relationship between the state and the civil society, the residents remain critically aware and vocal about the dominant power relations. Their 'manifold story' might not 'have author nor spectator' (De Certeau, 1984) but it is lived and consumed individually and collectively.

This chapter has predominantly shown that creative methods of engagement with communities are viable and can be alternative relevant approaches to participation. These are worthwhile in entangling the facilitator in more intimate, honest, and humanised forms of accountability which should be recognised by the municipality. It is conceivable that no matter how alien such creative methods might be to municipal and local government they can assist in deconstructing fixed and frightened

imaginations and become an interlocutor between official top-down planning and everyday bottom-up living. In the next chapter, I will engage with the thematic findings which emerged from the workshops.

Chapter 6: Thematic findings

the search for a humane way

“ . . . to begin always anew,
to make contact,
to reconstruct,
and not to spoil,
to refuse to bureaucratise the mind,
to understand and to live life as a process,
to live to become. . .”

Paulo Freire (1970 in hooks, 1994:1)

This chapter engages with the themes which emerged through the analysis of the data and across the discussions of the four workshops as well as in the research interviews. Five dominant themes emerged from this study, they are both structures for thematic analysis, as they are at times desires, feelings, and forms of action for participants. The five themes analysed below are Back to the Future, Participation, Abandonment of the State, Solidarity, and Agency and Democracy. Creative methods such as the workshops designed for this study, importantly enable participants the space to reflect on their own narratives with the researcher. As demonstrated in the narrative data extracts analysed, here participants are also simultaneously analysing their own dialogue and what it means for them to construct these narratives when living in Cornubia. As will be explored these themes create both a challenge for participatory planning, and an urgent call to ensure that it takes place within this human settlement before some of these feeling of distrust and anger towards the state are further entrenched.

Back to the future

Another aspect which is important to consider when engaging with societal change in a post-apartheid South Africa is the time-space divide (Massey, 1993). This was an instrumental element considered in preparation for the exercise in the enquiry of the 'ideal image'/ the imagined reality in Cornubia as it asked participants to really think about space, its organisation and how we engage it. In this conversation the inevitable question of the apartheid past and how it impacted on their lives and livelihood emerged. This topic had of course come up previously however, at this point in the process priority was given to the urgency for voicing out their feelings and the discussion was less critical. This time around the energy was calmer and we could focus on the issue, however uncomfortable. Certainly, the introduction of my thinking around the past generated some agitation and the conversation was simultaneously reflective and resistant.

...forget about the past, because the story that she [Shenaz] told me, if I can tell it to you, I would see tears pouring down your face. So, the past, we should just rub it off, let's forget about the past, because we won't be able to move forward if we're keeping it the past in our minds. Let's look into the future, how do we move forward as a unity? (Mr. Mac, Workshop 2 11.08.2018)

At some level I agree with how Mr. Mac and the rest felt about history, but I believe that it was important to approach the experiment of the day with an open mind. I knew that we had to be cognisant that the 'ideal image' was not to be confused for a utopia or as Boal says a magical solution (Boal, 1979/2000). So, I provoked further...

But don't you think that if you want to move forward, it is important that you need to know what is the person you are now and where you are coming from? (doug, Workshop 2, 11.08.2018).

Everybody nodded fiercely in agreement, while I carried on...

But at the same time don't you think that if you ask yourself who you are now, in a way you are turning your back to the society, culture and the world of which you are weaved in?

The nods, tamed, were accompanied with frowns...

I guess the question I am asking is that, isn't the past and the present working together to write the future? Am I wrong to suggest that the world and I are so interconnected that to ask who am I is the same as asking what is my experience of the past? (doug Workshop 2 11.08.2018)

I made myself partially understood but we did not reach full agreement. The consensus was in the necessity to move forward and to abandon the past. This sentiment felt like a conundrum where motivation and desperation blurred into each other. A priori this seems to reinforce the theory revealed in the first workshop, which considered reality as an illusion which serves as a coping mechanism to negotiate dehumanizing experiences of the atrocities of Colonialism and Apartheid. Understandably, I was becoming aware that my philosophical interpretations could never motivate for an alternative introspective into the pain of their past. Although I was sympathetic to Xhuma's dedication, I remained concerned about the risky support that this 'self-inflicted' silence could bring to the repression of memories of the past within a contemporary context. While Tzanelli (2007) argues that the reinforcement of historical violations through repression, silencing and denial is often accompanied by a sense of moral culpability, Adorno (1978) regards this complex relationship with the past as a form of internalised captivity, where:

[T]he individual is no less imprisoned in himself than in the universal, in society. Hence the interest of the reinterpretation of captivity as freedom. The categorical captivity of individual consciousness repeats the real captivity of every individual. (Adorno, 1978: 511)

On the flip side, perhaps the denying of history is a kind of suspension of disbelief that has become a conflation of the personal with the societal in a way which can possibly help the relationship between biography and history. Adorno (1978) argues that communities can sometimes find a desired unity in that denial. Therefore the 'rubbing off' of the past, as Mr. Mac recounts, could be read primarily as a form of strategy (Beek, 2001) which could possibly be of merit and appropriated as a tactic when engaging in the imagining of an 'ideal' Cornubia. There is substantial literature (Linden and Rutkowski, 2013) that explores this idea of traumatic memory around apartheid and it is plausible to think that the forgetting of the past can also be an effort to set aside the past as a condition to move forward into the future rather than being defined by the traumatic effects of the past. I reminded the participants of the work we have

done which focused on dreaming an ideal image for Cornubia in the future and how it opened up a space for critical reflection on the present (Erwin and Pillay, 2019)

Despite all the discussions about the complexities and challenges of contemporary urban living in the first two workshops; despite my theorizing and analysis, Xhuma has demonstrated an overwhelmingly focus on 'moving forward'. Grounded in a participatory research process, I was aware that I should maintain my attention to the desired trajectory the participants wanted to take and to resist my impulse to steer the process according to an agenda I felt important to interrogate. Nevertheless, over the years of engagement with the community I have learnt to understand that there is much productive value in analysing this desire for future orientated thinking from the residents. There is a vigorous and progressive sense of urgency in motion, which can be linked back to the concept of dynamization (Boal 1992). There are different methods of dynamization within image theatre and they all deal with "the bringing to life of the images and the discovery of whatever direction of intention is innate in them" (Jackson in Boal 1992: xix).

Participation

Public participation in local government is an essential aspect of the democratic process when engaging in service delivery. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), and numerous other legislations and policy documents mandate that municipalities should engage in an active involvement and participation with communities in the decision-making process of the government, particularly around planning. For example, the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act of 2013 states that

[any] preparation and amendment of spatial plans, policies, land use schemes as well as procedures for development applications should include transparent processes of public participation that afford all parties the opportunity to provide inputs on matters affecting them. (Presidency, 2013)

However, it appears that participation is not always a priority when it comes to social or urban development in Cornubia. This is apparent in the design and building of the

retail centre and the school which started construction six years after the residents moved into the settlement. Amongst all the issues discussed during the research workshops, the concept of participation was an underlying theme. For the members of Xhuma, participation was predominantly about citizenship rights more than a simple invitation to become beneficiaries in development. Over the duration of the month and in the interviews I held with them and other participants, they conceptualised participation as a process as opposed to an event that was detached from their lives. A process that should generate community building, resilience, listening, and amplifying the community's voice. In an interview with the principal of the temporary school in Cornubia, Mr Sevlall commented that participation is generally a misunderstood concept.

There is a misunderstanding because they [the state] only engage with people when there is certain thing that is going to happen. You [the state] need to engage with people, it's a new community, it's a new area, you [the state] need to engage people on a daily basis...that doesn't mean that you [the state] must come every day but you [the state] must create an environment where people themselves can engage the issues that are affecting them. (Mr Sevlall- school principal, interview 17.09.2018)

A conversation with the appointed architect revealed that both developments did not have a related consultation/participatory program for residents. This contravenes the statement made by Sydney Mufamadi, the minister of Provincial and Local Government, as long ago as the 29th of October 2002 :

Government does not only view community participation as an end in itself. Rather the purpose of participation is the very essence of a people-centred approach to development. In this context communities should not be viewed as passive participants but as active agents of change and development. Participation processes should develop people to become more resourceful themselves in as much as it should be aimed at ensuring that service and infrastructure delivery is enhanced through community participation. (Speech at a Community/Ward-Based Planning Workshop hosted by the Mangaung Local Municipality, Bloemfontein)

During the fourth and final workshop participants identified the spazas as a metaphorical micro 'public sphere'. Drawing on Habermas' concept of an 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas 1991) in which the public sphere constructs conversation based on equality in order to enable debate and argument on "competing truth-claims" (Baker 2000: 168), I organised for the appointed architect responsible for the design of the

social amenities and the school to join in a focus group with the participants and myself. It was important for the members to, at least, hear the views of the architect. This added perspective on the politics of the urban political and spatial practices in place in order to make an informed idea about their transitional image, which was the task for the day. In fact, my observations were that the process of engaging the 'transitional image' had already been in motion in both previous workshops which dealt with the real and the imagined reality of life in Cornubia. It seemed that the members were convinced about the way forward for Cornubia from the beginning of the workshops. Over the years of working in Cornubia in previous projects I have seen the impact on residents conscientisation around "possible strategic and tactical manoeuvres that can be deployed to remake political identities, boundaries and horizons" (Pieterse, E 2008).

As before we started with a round of introduction. It was interesting to notice how in the face of authority the dynamics of the Xhuma members changed. There seemed to be a paradoxical energy of submission in their body postures and fierceness in their gaze. Seated firmly in their chairs with an air of heightened commitment they seemed prepared for confrontation. They listened attentively to the architect's introduction of himself and his practice. Humble in his demeanour, he explained that he leads a private architectural practice and that they engage in mainly 'social' architecture. In Cornubia for example his firm was responsible for the construction of a retail centre and the design of the school as mentioned above. Working in partnership with the municipality, he is well placed to speak about the reality of participation from the state's perspective. He modestly admitted that 'participation' in urban planning and architecture has generally become synonymous with an anomaly too often described as a 'ticking of the box' exercise. It would appear that the lack of participation with the community is more than a 'miscomprehension' between the community and the state, as stated by the school principal in the previous chapter. According to the architect the lack of engagement could also be regarded as a control mechanism to suppress the citizen. In sympathy, he explained that he feels equally disillusioned with the municipality for not being willing to engage the community in the process of development.

I think that in the same way that you feel powerless in the face of the municipality, it's exactly what my feeling is as well, because everything that we speak about, everything that we

advise them to do, they ignore. They are not receptive and the only way that I can understand it in my own head is that their business is the business of government, to govern people, in other words they believe that their job is to keep everything down. I think they [the state] are very afraid that if they [the state] allow people to participate, that either it will create expectations in the future for other communities, that it will be more expensive and it will slow everything down. That's the perception in government about this kind of processes of community participations. Our constitution talks about that we must [do], you know, "for the people". But these are just words... Architect (interview 19.12.2018)

While it could be understandable that a backlogged system with restricted capacity and limited budgetary constraints within local authorities is a reality in urban development discourses and processes, it however remains clearly unacceptable that participation is left 'as an add-on luxury rather than a basic right of legal obligation' (Hamdi 2004:16). The fixed attitudes and phobias pointed out by the architect was also confirmed in an interview conducted with the Senior official in the municipality who confirmed that the municipality is ignorant when it comes to participation; arrogant in thinking that the community needs to be controlled; unwilling to engage communities and fearful of losing power (interview 12.12.2018). These dispositions are mainly translated and enforced through residual colonial regulations, apartheid and even contemporary by-laws which in essence say, 'you must not' (Crampton and Elden, 2007). In the case of Cornubia, power is still signified in the form of prohibitions and laws which says no. No to pets, no to planting your own trees, no to spaza shops, no to house extension, no to changing colour of their houses etc. (Informal conversation with a resident 15.03.2017).

However, in addition authors such as Moodley (2019) have explored the thick and difficult party politics that contemporary planners in eThekweni have to negotiate in their professional practice. Fractional party politics can cause a form of apathy which prevents in depth participation from happening, as city officials feel demotivated and lack a sense of agency within their work. It is important to understand these contextual restraints for participatory planning in South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal. This experience of exclusion on the ground however is felt as a continuation of the historic unjust systems of state abandonment. Therefore, it was not surprising that dialogue, participation and ownership were three main contestations raised by the Xhuma members with the architect. Pieterse (2008) explains that,

'symbolic contestations clear the ground to ask fundamental questions about given governmental discourses, such as: What are the underlying rationalities of this discourse? What conditions make it possible for this discourse to pass as given or valid? What are the goals of this discourse? How can the elements of the discourse be rearranged to turn the discourse on itself and make new meanings and imaginings possible which can be pursued through direct action or development practice or municipal policy? (Pieterse, E 2008:103)

These questions found resonance in Ma Katerina interjection.

"I hear what he [the architect] is saying, but we as community of Cornubia when they started building the tuck shops [the retail centre] we were not consulted for our opinions, we were just told? Secondly, we do not have a leader here, someone like a councillor who we can voice out our complaints to the government. On top of that regarding the tuck shops, we don't have the amount of money that they want us to pay for renting and also, we do not like the trading hours that they have set up for us because they are inconvenient. Thirdly, as we have been given these houses as the community of Cornubia, they are really not ours because we don't have the title deeds that belong to us. We are very sceptical of making any renovations around our yards because if the municipality disapproves, our houses may be taken away from us, so we kindly ask that we get issued our title deeds." Ma Katherina (workshop 01.09.2018)

Louis shared a similar concern when he reads how a lack of participation and being responsive to people's needs equates to forms of corruption:

They can't even come to fix the park so that they can move away the children from the indoor to there, because there is too many of them. They built the retail centre to try and block the people from [running] tuck shops, that's all, that's why they built it, to make money for themselves there. (Louis, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

For Shenaz, feeling robbed of voice starts further back than the newly proposed retail centre. For her the initial plans of how and where these houses were built created problems for families in terms of transport and education:

... so, what they have done, they have not done right in this aspect; they were just building houses. When you say you're building a house, you do it the right way! The president and his family would not come and live in this set up, why give us and leave us like that? We are not dogs. According to the constitution of the country, every person has a right to a house, to education, to hospital facilities. So, I don't know! Our rights have been violated and education is one of the violations. Our children travel, there are some children that leave

here by 5:30 am in winter, travelling to the outskirts, neighbouring towns to go to school.
(Shenaz, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

While Jabu, and for quite a few of the other members who protested against the quality of the houses given to them as inadequate, points to a disconnect between understanding the needs of the citizens and the design process. This disconnect can be seen as direct result of a lack of intended residents' participation in government planning. If architecturally the houses provided by the state become a hindrance in people's practice of everyday then how might it be possible for them to turn their houses into homes and space into place?

Because we also, we, what I can [say] is that, we also need to, tell our government to make sure if only is building houses for the people, they must make sure and check up on us because other families there is a lot of people in the house as I've been explaining that in the house, we are the family of... 17 people in my house... Which means now they have to check up if when they're building up the houses ... (Jabu, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

Besides the physical impracticalities of their living condition, Shenaz's analysis is valuable when trying to understand housing and planning from a wider perspective.

... although we are a small family, we have problem with space, we seriously have problem with space. So, it's like how they're built, it's just for newly married couple and then you can plan to have one child because that's how our lounge and kitchen is open planned. There is not enough space, and the yards some of them are tiny yards... For the children it's not really a place for them to grow where there's no facilities, there's no yard, it's an absolute no, whoever that was designing this place, did not know what they were doing really... So there a lot of issues here and the government is not taking a stand, to say that we are going to iron these issues and help the people, bottom line is as long as the government is collecting the taxpayer's money, they're building their mansions, that's about it, the poor man can stay where he is.

Her critique of the philosophy behind the design of the houses is insightful. In her statement, she clearly implies that the underlying principle of designing for a typical nuclear family do not apply to them and she implied that there is a psychological effect attached to it which needs to be taken into consideration by the planners. She calls for the government to be present in their lives and to take responsibility for ensuring their participation in the design and planning of the spaces they are to live in. Historically, the Group Areas Act of 1950 which forcibly removed and resettled

communities in townships and public housing estates gave form to the Western idea of the nuclear family in South Africa (Khan 2012). The foundation of the extended family systems was dislocated and no consideration was given to existing social networks and communal living. While the choice of neighborhood or neighbours was not an option during dislocation, families were forced into a nuclear family system in public housing flats and township houses where the design prevented any form of community reconstitution. The shift from the extended family system caused a high level of anxiety and tension. In an essay on Changing Family Forms specific to the 'Indian'⁴⁰ family during apartheid, Khan (2012: 141) points out that

the design features of public housing affected family life by introducing stress. The lack of formal room for entertaining guests and with bathrooms and toilets being combined together into a single room was a source of infra-family alienation and discord. Often a bedroom was converted into a guest room at the cost of overcrowding and the combinations of bathrooms and toilets severely reduced its usability and hindered effective family functioning during routine times.

The nuclear family system, which adheres to a Western social construct, is put into question by Shenaz, Jabu and Rasta. Although Cornubia does not necessarily adhere to the aspect of forced relocation, the present design of the housing program and the isolation of the residents seems to be adding further insult to injury and remains a reflection of the affective pattern of the Apartheid design of public housing estates. However, Cornubia is not alone in the mismatch between need on the ground and what planners imagine people want as housing. In Johannesburg for example, Cosmos city, built on a very similar design, ten years after already exhibit more radical adjustments like back yarding to reshape their restrictive designs (Onatu, 2010). Theoretically, this raises the historical debate around the relationship between the body and architecture. Both Jabu and Shenaz call for the recognition of this relationship as more than just a simple exercise in finding acceptable dimensions and settlements in accommodating people and their behaviours within an architectural space. Her rationale invokes the thinking of Lefebvre, who in the *Production of Space* (1974), argues that there is an immediate relationship between the body and space which is immediate and

⁴⁰ Although Khan was writing specifically about the experiences of the 'Indian' community, the impact of the imposition of the nuclear family system equally affected the other oppressed race groups.

unconditional. He articulates that each living body inhabit space while simultaneously producing it. In addition to Lefebvre's theory, it is important to acknowledge the historical, social and political within the body while recognizing that the latter is not abstract from space.

Abandonment of the state

Post-apartheid, the municipal councillor fulfilled the role of interfacing between the people vis a vis the state. But with the emergence of destructive dynamics of internal political fractioning within the governing political party, this interface seems to be dysfunctional in many municipalities in South Africa (Benit Gbaffou 2008). As previously mentioned, Cornubia has not had a ward councillor for two years. The councillor absconded from his post and effectively dissolved the community committee after tensions emerged between residents. With no formal local government liaison at the time of this study, there was an increasing feeling of abandonment from the state among the residents. They had no one from local government to voice their grievances to and as a result were getting understandably more frustrated. Ma Katerina confirms that the government has abandoned them and that the politicians only come to secure votes during election times. She also complains that the municipality never comes to consult with the residents but they only come to tell them what development is going to take place (workshop 4 01.09.2018). Part of the sense of abandonment by the state was a lack of communication and dialogue between residents and representatives of the state. Xhuma members firstly called for an effective communication system, expressed succinctly by Lindiwe:

“For me I would say there's a communication breakdown between the community and the governance. We don't know where to go in order to raise our voices or to send our complaint; if we got a problem [we] just seat at home, nothing else”. (Lindiwe, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

This concern around ineffective communication is a crucial one which is echoed not only among all the members but also with all the experts and the municipal officials I engaged with during my interviews with them. In response to this gap Fiona has constructed an information centre with the Lego blocks provided in workshop 3 as her ideal image.

I think first thing the thing that needs to be built first is the information centre, without information, nothing can be done, you just bottle up in your brain. If you have information centre, the people are aware about what happens in and around Cornubia, should they need to know or acknowledge something, there's a facility allocated for them, where they can just go in and just find out the information they want and get help, and from there they can just move forward. (Fiona Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

For residents like Louis who have had prior experience in social housing they also compare some of the apartheid created civic structures such as having dedicated supervisors and caretakers to today's neglect. He explains:

The only thing I see from where I come from, Newlands East, we had a caretaker there. That caretaker sits 24 hours in his office, whatever complaints, whatever if there is something [wrong] in the area, he goes and rectify and he notifies it. But here, you are like you're in prison, there is no one to turn to, that's why I appreciate this meeting we have here and we're trying to solve things trying to come up with ideas. (Louis, Workshop 3 18.08.2018)

Strangely enough, under the oppressive apartheid regime one thing people who live in state provided housing remember fondly, as described by Louis above, was having access to a supervisor who was a resident in the housing areas and who attended to all the built environment concerns. The nostalgia for a dedicated supervisor that social housing beneficiaries in Durban is a common issue such as in the privatised social housing block Flamingo court (Matsha, et al., 2019). Louis' desire for a resident interlocuter is plausible. He is touching on an issue that many low-income working-class or unemployed families in South Africa who have had experience of this particular model, are saying that they miss. The idea of a caretaker could possibly serve as a linkage where the ambiguous space of miscomprehension between the power bloc and the street can be re imagined and where urban semantics can be disentangled. The supervisor Louis appeals for is a person dedicated to Cornubia instead of a political party councillor to take care of their local needs.

Solidarity

The consistent call for solidarity throughout the program was crystalised during the last workshop and proven to be twofold. Firstly, there was a motivation for more unity within the community. For example, Lindiwe came up with the word solidarity as a necessary

and crucial concept when moving from a real to an ideal Cornubia. She called for internal unity in her statement below:

“I think since we have been crying about we don’t have a councillor it’s time for us to stand up for ourselves. We can do things for ourselves and forget about the councillor. I think we can start to stand up together as one and do things for ourselves now”. Lindiwe, spaza owner (workshop 01.09.18)

Secondly, the members unanimously stressed their desire and ability to participate with the state in the process of their own transformation. This was evident through their persisting call for a democratic participatory ethos to be instilled between the community and the state in the development of their personal lives and environment. They interestingly asked that the municipality act in solidarity with them. Paulo Freire explains that

Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is in solidarity; it is a radical posture. If what characterises the oppressed is their subordination to the consciousness of the master, affirms, as Hegel true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these “beings for another”. The oppressor is in solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labour — when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality in its praxis. To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce. (Freire, 1970;49)

I here draw a parallel between the state and the ‘oppressor’ based on my exchanges with the residents who perceive themselves as being oppressed by the state. In a conversation with Louis, he described how “the government has got its foot on our necks” (conversation 03.05.2018). Louis’ expression although in an extreme form, encompass to some degree how the majority the residents I have engaged with feel. Similarly, Lindiwe noted that

They [the municipality] don’t really care I would say, they don’t really care, the only thing they know they gave us the houses, we should treasure whatever they’ve given to us, they don’t ask us what our needs, you know!. . . if the municipality can come and survey on how we as the residents of Cornubia live on daily basis, that would be very helpful because ever

since we were built these houses for, there's never been a visit from the municipality.
Lindiwe, spaza owner (workshop 17.09.18)

Although there is much unhappiness towards the state, it is important to note that there is equally an openness for collaboration. As previously mentioned, community participation and inclusive decision making have become popular in governance discourses and remain as a vital principle which is widely accepted when engaging in development (CSIR, 2000). This opens a dialogic approach where human dignity can be explored. Appropriately, in a Freirean (1970) 'problem posing' manner, this methodology proposes an effective parting from the traditional provision of information as a *fait accompli* to a more cooperative, unified and humanised process. Ultimately, the departure from an autocratic system offers fertile ground for an effective transformative possibility for both the street (communities) and the state. Thus, Freire's concept of 'praxis' defined as "reflection and action upon the world in order to change it" (Freire, 1970: 33) is particularly relevant here. The Cornubia Phase 1A development, labelled as a pilot initiative, is fittingly positioned for 'learning', reflection and acting on new knowledges for the betterment of a sustainable human settlement. This certainly demands a logical solidarity from the state with the community where the hierarchical state/street binary is reimagined. This amounts to an attitude where development is "forged *with*, not *for* the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity" (Freire, 1970: 48). In the past it was evident that the ANC stood with the citizens in the fight for liberation. Therefore, it is not unthinkable that solidarity with the citizens is attainable. Perhaps it requires a meaningful political will and a vision where the concept of solidarity is reimagined. As for Bhaba's reading of Richard Rorty⁴¹

Solidarity has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting in the form of an ur-language which all of us recognise when we hear it. (Bhaba H, 2004:336)

As Lindiwe's statement above suggests it is not merely enough for the municipality to provide houses. She calls for an active participation which entails a reciprocal exchange of knowledges between the two protagonists. Lindiwe echoes Michel Foucault in an interview with Paul Rabinow that,

⁴¹ R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp 190-1

where liberty is effectively exercised is not owing to the order of objects but, once again, owing to the practice of liberty. Which is not to say that, after all, one may as well leave people in slums⁴², thinking that they can simply exercise their rights there. (Rainbow, P 1984:246)

In addition, commenting on the built form, he explains that architecture:

. . . can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architects (and all the experts involve in urban developments) coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom. (Rabinow 1984:246)

While I believe that the state can facilitate freedom in some ways, it is imperative to remain mindful that agency must always remain with the 'oppressed'. However, based on the interviews with the architect of the social amenities in Cornubia and the other experts, it consistently remains questionable whether the state has the willingness and ability to truly participate in the reality of the residents in Cornubia. There are ubiquitous occurrences of service delivery protests as South African democracy matures. The historic context of state oppression has left a considerable scale and scope for infrastructure delivery for the democratic government to address. For example, a significant backlog of housing delivery remains, and restricted capacity and limited budgets can make as adherence to the constitutional and legislative requirements for public participation difficult to achieve. Some like Saul have argued that participatory democracy is almost impossible given structural inequality inherited by apartheid, and exacerbated by current corruption and elitism (Saul, 2001). Certainly, the eThekweni municipality has been marred by corruption scandals, which have a significant negative impact on service delivery (News, 2022).

It is not acceptable however to simply dismiss participation in urban planning because of this context. Rather, smart and creative innovation around participation is needed. It appears easier for the state to be aligned with middle class communities. Could it be because their demands usually fall within the ideology and policy of the municipality? It would appear that to engage in solidarity with marginalised communities demands risk taking as their claims often fall outside the standards

⁴² It is important to note here that while the Cornubia development is not regarded as slum it still contains similar elements in the dynamics between the state and the project.

defined by the state, and are not aligned with the assumptions, agendas, mindsets and policies of the system. So, the pressing question then is whether it is a realistic expectation that true democratic participation is an attainable goal when thinking about urban and social development in Cornubia. The participants recognised that there is urgency for the community to act in common interest in order to achieve a more powerful position in negotiating for a legitimate and dignified reality. This is clear in Shenaz's statement:

...But now as a community we need to come together and fight and elect people that are living here: reliable, responsible people that are the working class. You need a councillor that is at home that can address the issues of the community.

These are the issues relating to everyday to all of us. So that is what we need to do, don't rely on the politician who is responsible for our ward. He is getting paid whether he works for us or he doesn't. Whereas Doung is trying his best to give credit to where it's due. He is doing his best to uplift this community. So let us use this platform. We're a small voice at the moment but if we bring our families, our neighbours, explain what these workshops are all about we can make a difference. We need one voice to take things forward; you know how gossip is, likewise we use gossip from one person to the other. From one person to ten people, we're going to make a difference. Shenaz, spaza owner (workshop 11.08.18)

Residents of Cornubia have the historical experience of apartheid and the contemporary experience of living in Cornubia to draw on to become not only a geographic community but a community of interest (Sutherland, et al., 2015); however, solidarity for the most part evades them. How do we begin to understand this lack of solidarity in Cornubia today? It seems that in the contemporary democratic South African space collective resilience is overshadowed by its own politics, conditions and nuances, which affects the ability of communities to unite for a common cause.

If we acknowledge that the solidarity of marginalised groups that formed the anti-apartheid movement has been a powerful reality in South African history and was instrumental in bringing about democracy in South Africa (Sapiro 2009: 271) what are some factors that may have caused this shift away from it? The modernist monolith that was apartheid was an easily identifiable enemy or 'oppressor' (Freire 1970). In a post-modern environment, however things are less clear: the liberators are not always the 'good guys', the enemy can be your friend. The grand narrative has fractured into multiple truths. As Baz Kershaw writes: "postmodernity signals an acute destabilisation

of the cultural climate throughout the world and end to all the human certainties of the modernist past. There is a marvellous sense of liberation in this – at last the individual is free to construct his or herself – as he or she desires, but also an acute anxiety. On what do we base our judgements?” (Kershaw 1999:6). Anxiety and uncertainty are certainly states of mind that can easily grow distrust and polarization and work against the ‘togetherness’ needed for solidarity. And then there is the idea of a common cause. Cynicism around the idea of Archbishop Tutu’s Rainbow nation nearly thirty years into democracy is well entrenched. Disillusionment has set in. The myth of democracy has been shattered and the cracks in this illusion perceived as ‘freedom’ have been exposed. The extent of the corruption exposed at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State better known as the Zondo commission, lifted the veil for even the most idealistic South African to the rot within the ANC – the liberation movement (Sibanda, 2023). Thus, while the advancements that South Africa has made as a country are profound, and stand as an example on the world stage for what is possible, much of this positive transformation has been eclipsed in recent years by the ANC’s failure to deliver on initial promises of jobs and housing, which of course has been exacerbated with a shrinking economy (SA, 2022) and corruption scandals noted above.

The Cornubia case-study however involves South African citizens who *did* receive housing and yet the disillusion remains. How do we understand this? Have we become a ‘not good enough’ culture as global media lures us in with glimpses into the lifestyles of the rich as a base standard? The answer in an emphatic no. In my summation, what this indicates is the human desire not simply to survive but to thrive – to have a life, to hope, to dream. A reasonable expectation. A roof may cover your head, but the promise of Cornubia was a ‘human settlement’. Implicit in this is the idea that housing should be a humanizing initiative and for this to happen planning must address issues of access to basic amenities and amenities which assist in the growth of a community. Chapter 2 has delved into this however it is worth repeating that the geographic isolation of Cornubia, the erratic service delivery and limited access to basic amenities did not feel like spatial justice for many. This is borne out by feedback from participants. As well as the fact that much of the development that was occurring, such as the retail centre, were perceived of as anti-poor since they cut off many

residents from their sole means of income through the spazas. Cornubia has been transforming, slowly, but one of the notable gaps is a lack of a community hall/centre, which after eleven years it still does not have. This lack of social space, which ironically was part of apartheid planning, impacts on building a sense of community (Moodley and Erwin, 2021). All community meetings or workshops must be done in the small, hot, prefabricated containers that are 'the school'.

Given the legacy of division and 'separateness' in South Africa, the lack of a social space and community centred initiatives to mitigate against 'the ideological proclivities' (Mda. 1993) of Cornubia's (multicultural) residents towards racism and distrust of others, is extremely problematic and short-sighted. South Africans have still not been given sufficient opportunity to know each other beyond our stereotypes of each other. Decades into democracy the larger mentality is by and large entrenched. This was something that troubled me in my engagement with the community, while in a face-to-face scenario people were friendly to each other, in private, broad racist generalisations were often the order of the day. People stuck to their own. I observed in the workshops run as part of this research a clear building of trust in participants of different race groups as they become human for each other. The racist legacy of apartheid can therefore be seen as impacting the ability for Cornubia residents to be 'in solidarity'.

Taking a step back we then see a group of people who are isolated geographically, isolated from each other (and they carry the distrust of the past into the future) and feel a sense of abandonment by the state. The more conspiratorial amongst us might believe in a deliberate ploy to entrench historical feelings of powerlessness in order to retain power over them. The divide and rule argument. Or perhaps the confusion of postmodernist relativism and capitalist consumer culture has derailed the project for social change through collective action?

Certainly, what is apparent is that we are trapped in an ambiguous space of miscomprehension where the language of the state is not being understood (or accepted?) by the street and vice versa. Given this, how do we better listen to each other (our needs and our intentions)? Noam Chomsky (2006) argues that public opinion – and listening to it – is vitally important for a healthy democratic society:

[Public opinion] is not a collection of isolated items but a community of people who interact in forming opinions and policies. In the world of politics, as in science or any other endeavour or for that matter in the everyday life, knowing what others think is an important factor in reaching one's own conclusion... Independently, such information's permits us to determine how well the political system succeeds in allowing the will of the public to enter into the formation of public policy, a defining property of democratic societies. (Chomsky 2006:228)

While political economic and social strategies are important considerations in the process of building public opinion, collective epistemology, as pointed out by the participants, is certainly a missing link in the triad between revolution, democracy and freedom. The words of Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) come to mind: "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (Freire, 1970: 47). I do not believe that Freire was referring to a conquest in its literal form where we pick up guns and spill blood yet again. I read a conquest that is conceptually attuned to 'knowledge-as-empowerment' which is in itself a form of solidarity (de Sousa Santos, 2014: 139). Similarly, Fanon (1963) incites us in the direction of a 'fighting phase', which he describes as the 'production of revolutionary literature directed to radical emancipation (Oliphant, 2013) while Biko invoked writing as primarily an exercise of freedom (Biko, 1979). There is a clear call for a more imaginative uprising that is rooted in new discourses and intelligence. Perhaps this is a form of insurgency that ferments the 'silent treatment' of the power bloc into a mute power of the mind (Rancière 2007). This urges for a cognitive dissidence that appropriates the fissures in a patriarchal society with a quiet⁴³ and feminist attitude.

I'm happy that we're moving forward and recognizing that with the small amount of people, even one person can make a very big difference, not just in this room but also in the houses of everyone and in Africa. Why not! But the sad part is that we know that we are not recognizing the person we are seating next to. So as humans we need to communicate more often, we need to meet up more often and have more gatherings like this where we can open up more spaces and we can hear people's thoughts and put those in motion where we could do something about it. Fiona, spaza owner (workshop 11.08.18)

⁴³ The word 'quiet' here refers to Asef Bayat's (1997) concept of quiet encroachment which I will elaborate on further in the chapter.

Agency and democracy?

I believe in democracy, but in real democracy,
not a phony democracy in which just powerful people can speak.

For me in a democracy everyone speaks.

Augusto Boal. (Enight, 1986)

I certainly agree with Boal's definition of democracy (Enight, 1986) as an ideal where everyone speaks. In practice however this ideal of democracy remains latent. Democracy is not an event, such as the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, rather it is a messy, vulnerable, and consistently negotiated process. Now 28 years after democratic elections the subaltern in South Africa are temporarily listened to only when they shout (Spivak, 1988). They are tired of waiting.

Waiting seems to be structural in the machinery of government. In the Department of Human Settlement for example, some residents such as Ma Ivy waited on a government list up to twelve years to get a house in Cornubia. But the waiting does not end there. They are now challenging government's promises of a 'better life' – a legitimate sense of belonging - through their demands for dignity and equality that come with the necessary spatial justice and basic social services. In other words, a clinic, school, proper transport system and other social amenities. This waiting game (Oldfield and Greyling, 2015) creates feelings of resentment amongst the community as they search for the meaning of a 'humanised place' in the incoherence of democracy and freedom in a post liberation South Africa. This calls for a more nuanced coupling of agency and strategies that is positioned somewhere between optimism and pessimism.

Over the extensive time spent in Cornubia I have noticed the emergence of coping mechanisms by residents to attempt to resolve this dilemma. Some of these coping mechanisms show kindness and innovation while others can have more harmful causes. In line with the work of 19th century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, these mechanisms can also, all too often be suicide, alcoholism, jealousy, religion and submission. Whilst Cornubia is a new settlement, suicide has found its way to the

township and is on the rise (Naidoo and Schlebusch, 2014). In addition, personal conversations revealed that just in the first two years in which I was working on projects in Cornubia 3 adults and 2 young adults committed suicide. I personally know a family where two young women (sisters) committed suicide within two years apart from each other. It was a tragic moment in the township which urgently brought the issue of suicide to the attention of the community as something to pay serious attention to.

We also have problems with the teenage suicide in Cornubia; we've lost a lot of young teenagers that are tomorrow's leaders, it's very sad, a lot of teenagers have committed suicide in Cornubia. It's one of sadness, astonishment to take a look at our community; we haven't reached where we need to be in terms of the society... (Fiona, interview 21. 09. 2018)

In addition, alcoholism and jealousy has been entrenched in the history of South Africa and from my observation is also on the rise in Cornubia (Woolf-King, et al., 2019). It appears that there is a degree of acceptance or submission to this absurdity. While this submission is problematic I would argue that it can also be considered as a form of appropriation that has the potential to allow the individual to create their own world where they achieve meaning for their own freedom. Religion, in addition, as argued before becomes a way of guidance into the belief of an abstract reality that transcends the absurd.

Conclusion

This chapter has predominantly engaged the thematic findings observed from the four workshops conducted. Five themes namely Back to the Future, Participation, Abandonment of the State, Solidarity and Agency and Democracy were analysed and one of the main issues which emerged strongly was the need for a more meaningful participatory process when development takes place in Cornubia. This was demonstrated by the despondence of the participants concerning what they perceived as abandonment by local government. They articulated the lack of avenues for voicing their concerns and called for local government and other stakeholders to engage them in a more meaningful manner. This sprouted further conversations about solidarity – or the lack thereof – among the participants/residents. Participants understood that it

is important to consider strategies that can facilitate change in a more humane way and one of them is to be in solidarity with each other. In the past, there was an undeniable solidarity among 'the people' against the power-bloc (Fiske 1989) of the apartheid government. However, it became apparent in this example that the participants were reluctant to evoke memories of 'the past' in strategizing for a better future. The apparent denying of history appeared to be a form of suspension of disbelief that may have become necessary for their socio-spiritual survival. A survival that is also identified in alternative initiatives such as the spaza shop through which a socio-economic reality is negotiated. It was argued that while the spaza shops and their owners can possibly provide a reading on an organic structure which holds lines of communication responsibility and movement they also represent a new creative urban form which can provide an additional meaningful perspective on the concept of infrastructure.

Chapter 7: Re-imagining the spaza Shop

Introduction

This research set out to explore how contested imaginings of spatial planning for the Cornubia housing development is played out in relation to the spaza shops that had quickly emerged in the settlement. This chapter analyses how the spaza shops, which are part of a changing Cornubia, contributes to the ideal image identified by the participants. It also considers how the spaza shops can be regarded as socio-spatial actions in their own right which already informally engage issues of development and social needs that arise in their own community. I argue that these informal economic activities should be reconceptualised as spaces of social and cultural invention. My observation is that spaza shops are indeed integral to place making in the South African context. Importantly they facilitate general conversations and sometimes dialogues around the built environment and its socio-political context. In this sense they can be read as nodes that possibly are critical for stitching together the urban fabric in this new human settlement development. Reimagining spazas as community resources also opens possibilities for participatory democracy where city officials and residents may come together to assess and plan with the residents of Cornubia. Spaza shops as this chapter will argue already provide social infrastructure, infrastructure that should be supported rather than dismantled.

What already exists

Change of course is woven from what is already in existence (Haraway, 2004). One community resource or practice that was identified as being a possible platform for change throughout the workshop four discussions were the spaza shops. Spazas were consistently positioned, by the spaza owners themselves, as meeting places where the community comes together and exchanges information, stories and learns from each other's cultures.

At the time of this study, there were 23 spaza shops in the community⁴⁴. Spaza shops⁴⁵ which are dotted in and around the community in a random manner encapsulate De Certeau's idea of everyday urban 'text' in a material form. If we had to observe the landscape of the community from an aerial view, it would become apparent that the *intertwining* of the *networks of movements* and the *intersecting writings* is clearly enabled by the spazas shops. Like letters spread over the context, the spaza owners *script* microbe-like operations that ferments intersecting micro spheres of invented spaces (Miraftab 2004) into a lived *lexicon*. It is important to stress that the spaza owners individually and the spaza shops collectively are not here referred to as 'text' in the conventional way as in a written form. But they are being considered as conceptual authors which blur the boundary between 'text' and life to the point that they become unrecognizable from each other. The spaza is their life where they find meaning in "social and intertextual relations" (Fiske, 1989:3). As a collective of insurgent and resistant spaces which radically assimilate the state provided houses into shops, the spaza phenomenon is a guerrilla 'movement' (even in its micro form) vital for social actions which, as Jess and Massey (1995:134) argue, holds the potential to turn space into place. Similarly, for Bertram (1995),

⁴⁴ The total number of spazas in the township fluctuates. Even for its owner a spaza shop is not a fixed form. Often, they will open shop while waiting for temporary jobs....

⁴⁵ South African spaza owners have risen from a long legacy of oppression where they were prohibited to conduct a livelihood and too often victimised for doing so. Their 'legality', based on zoning policies and land use, remain ambiguous today.

Radical politics should no longer be understood as a collective struggle against a dominant system, then, but as a series of disconnected but potentially linkable nodes of resistance, or intertextuality. (1995:82)

However, spaza owners operate in the opaque background of socio-economic activity of society. While in Cornubia and generally in the official and public imagination, spaza owners are seen as informal agents which has connotations of illegality. A more radical perspective shows they offer insight on how people short circuit a disciplinary and technocratic state in order to make ends meet. Pieterse's *Cities Futures; confronting the crisis of urban development* (2008) is one of an extensive body of literature (Coates 2003; Bayat 1997; Mariftab 2004), that sanction this insurgence. He calls for a rethink of our 'epistemic categories' towards the redefinition of the city dwellers and their practices with a specific appreciation. For Pieterse,

"...the complexity of human nature is expressed in the creation, experience and remaking of space as an incessant series of manoeuvres to make life worthwhile and meaningful, even if the desire that dominates is to find a job, or anything that will generate cash..." (Pieterse 2008:111)

The conception of a meaningful livelihood beyond economy is well illustrated by Shenaz who lives in and runs the first spaza in her house. We sat over a cup of tea and some samosas in her lounge/shop while she passionately explained that her spaza is more than just business. It's a platform where relationships and trusts are developed in the community. For Shenaz,

Besides, the spaza is a mini version that is doing a lot of social work around. Although I am not a professional, I have kids come in in the morning pleading with me; can you please, make us lunch because we do not have food at home. I do it. I am a parent, a grandparent. And then we get children coming and confiding with me about their issues at home; their parents get paid, they are alcoholic, they don't buy food. So, I try and I go communicate with the parents. I am like an advisor to them...my take is that if the person has come to you it's because they trust you ...this may seem small to other people but you've made a difference...It's above and beyond the spaza. The people have built a trust, a bond with the spaza owners...for me it's social development" Shenaz, spaza owner (interview 21.09.2018)

In addition to Shenaz's enlightening testimony, my own experience engaging with the spaza owners has confirmed that irrespective of their individualised practice, they alter space, re-produce place and connect hidden trajectories and networks in a locus where

the personal, social and economic relations are re-determined. Fiona from house 425 runs one of the biggest spaza in Cornubia Phase 1A. She serves approximately 50-75 customers daily (informal conversation 03. 09. 2018) and speaks succinctly on the socio-economic, cultural and political role that the spaza play.

[when] the customers come here they realised that the spazas have a very friendly atmosphere and it encourages them to want to shop at spazas. To want to come to a place where there is the sense of recognition, a sense of commitment, of respect and when they walk out from here you can see that the bond...the relationship pattern... that was form [here], that they would like to perform that bond outside with others in the community. It brings together a *livelihood*, a feeling that goes beyond certain age, group, certain race and generation. It says that we can still be friends, we can still communicate, we can still see the same respect that we are equal there is no one that can stop you. It [the spaza shop] wishes out a positive vibration, a positive attitude and you will find a lot of people are always gathering [at the spazas], they always have stuff to speak about. It's also a platform for them to have their own personal meetings, their own personal involvements, through the spaza...the customers are waiting, communicating with each other, making new friends and sometimes having disagreements. There are also people sometimes are waiting to make gang fights. [But mostly] the relationship and bond that we share they take the same feeling the same bond out there." Fiona, spaza owner (Interview 21.09.2018)

Fiona insightfully confirms that the spaza is a terrain where personal, socio-cultural values and conflicts are somewhat intertwined and negotiated in an elaboration of an organic consensus on citizenship. This finds resonance with Gabardi's conception of the 'agnostic democracy'. The latter translate into the consideration of a

"radical pluralistic public sphere of contestive identities, moralities and discourses. It endorses a politics of diverse social, cultural, and political movements organised around the values of cultural recognition, direct democracy and performative resistance" (Gabardi, 2001: 109)

Both Fiona's and Shenaz's account and Pieterse's thinking above are echoed in an introductory essay to Michel de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday* where in addition to Gabardi's (2001) more political perspective, De Certeau stresses the urgency for innovative theoretical explorations geared towards the articulation of the collective 'everyday practices':

Moreover, the question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. It concerns an

operational logic whose models may go as far as back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive, and which has in many cases being concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in the Western culture. The purpose of this work is to make explicit the system of operational combination (*les combinatoires d'opérations*) which also compose a 'culture' and bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by euphemistic term 'consumers'. Everyday life invented itself by *poaching* in countless ways are the property of others. (De Certeau, 2002: 64)

Therefore, if we are to engage in a renewed focus on the meanings and practices stimulated by spaza shops as sociocultural, political and economic nodes in housing developments and elsewhere, it becomes essential then that a particular problem which is entangled within the dynamics between top-down political practices and bottom-up societal processes be challenged. It is the current disjuncture in the democratic participatory (Gabardi 2001:109) ethos in developmental engagements between the state and the society that an opportunity exists for an alternative participatory method. If we identify that spazas occupy a zone *in-between* where they activate micro public spheres (Habermas, 1991) as argued above, we could then validate their ability to interface between the state and the citizens. As mentioned, this could open up the possibilities for piloting alternative mediations between the state and society in both pragmatic and conceptual manner. This conception is premised on the insight of Baker's reading of the Habermasian public sphere as

a space which mediates between the society and the state where the public organises itself and in which "public opinion" is formed. Within this sphere individuals are able to develop themselves and engage in debate about the direction of society" (Baker 2000: 168).

Invariably, over the course of the research program, the collective (Xhuma) engaged discursively and logically in debates that invoked public interests on various societal issues such as housing, employment, health, economy, youth and transportation. The workshops became incubators where twelve citizens (as sociocultural economic agents in the community) conceptually defined a transitory 'public sphere' which became a symbolic space where they were able to find solidarity, to voice up and rehearse for revolution (Boal 1979). Lindiwe's view is that

“if the municipality come down and look through the workshops, they can learn so much, they can be able to improve so much in Cornubia. Because we have so many ideas about Cornubia. We struggle for the same thing as community members. Even there were few of us [in the workshops], but I think whatever we were doing in the workshops is based on how Cornubia is and how we wish Cornubia can go forward. You know! (Lindiwe, spaza owner, interview 21. 09. 2018)

Revolution is not referred to here as physical protest where weapons are raised and blood is spilled in the name of freedom. I instead refer to the Fanonian idea of revolution which he describes as the writing of “revolutionary literature” and “new discourses” (Fanon, 1963) in the hope that a new culture can emerge for the betterment of an emancipated nation. It is here appropriate to further the analogy of the spaza as ‘text’. I reiterate that the spazas hold an intertextuality which has the potential to establish a new lexicon. They are a ‘vocabulary’ which do not necessarily find place in either the architectural language or policy agendas but permits a collection of ordinary expressions to disclose a natural ‘philosophical language’. In a Fanonian sense, the spazas are new ‘weapons’. They are a trope that can perhaps enable a way forward in reimagining the authorship of the state in the development of the urban text, it’s history and facilitate a renewed discourse around participation. Mindful of his marginality, Rasta (one of the community leaders) confirms that the spaza is well situated in the ‘middle’ where state can meet society. He passionately stipulates that

“the spaza is like a bridge. Sometimes to have the spaza here, as I said, the people here, most of them comes from the farm. So, when we got the spaza the people meet at the spaza, this can also remind us where we came from. This is where we can discuss about our culture and our past. You know that thing? So, when we are together we can speak about our cultures, how was the life before we came here. All of this we share it when we meet and here in Cornubia we meet at the spaza. This is where we discuss all those things about our cultures, about the situation here, compare our situation here and where we come from before. May be if they [the municipality] come close to us and ask us what really we want, maybe it will give them some views which they can use rather than them taking the decisions for us without us”. Rasta, community leader (interview 21.09.2018)

Over the years of being there, it has become increasingly clear to me that the community desire and actively call for holistic communication strategies between the state and themselves. The ‘bridge’ that Rasta refers to can be read as both temporal and spatial. Connecting the past to the present; the symbolic and the concrete

revolution and alliances, the spaza is where place making becomes an 'ordinary' process which can provide a lens on the future and provide a critique of the present and in so doing collapses future and present into the same timeframe excavating tomorrow's thoughts today. The community is acutely aware that their future depends on an ongoing critical consciousness of the division between their marginality and the centre. They consistently argue for the acknowledgement that they are a vital part of the whole. This outlook finds resonance with hook's (1990) own experience of 'living on the edge', where she argues that

"This sense of wholeness, impressed upon our consciousness by the structure of our daily lives, provided us with an oppositional worldview a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that sustained us, aided us in our struggle to transcend poverty and despair, strengthened our sense of self and our solidarity." (hooks,b 1990:149)

In the context of Cornubia however, despite the residents' understanding that they have a precise way of seeing their reality, from an inside out and outside in perspective, they still remain divided with a sense of isolation. Nevertheless, against all odds, they are able to focus on the centre and the margin simultaneously to make this way of seeing a reminder that a just world should be a reality which comprise of both margin and centre.

Spaza as Infrastructure

It appears that spaza shops conduct a matrix of movements and exchanges daily. While providing some kind of guerrilla economic and societal structure they invent a new creative form where innovative encounters and situations can also provide new perspective on infrastructural arrangements. The owners and their consumers are performers in an act of adaptation which has enabled them to engage complex activities and create life in the township. For Fiona:

"Having a spaza is not just about running a business on its own. If you can look at it closer, it's more like a platform where you would find all age groups, all types of people with different race, different gender, coming in and going out of spaza shops. With that relationships are formed. Be it friendships, be it social relationships or just someone that you greet. It's a form of *knowledge* (my italics) that spaza shops create among us people that we live with...And

we get to know and experience different cultures, different race groups, their attitudes and their livelihood. So, the spaza is a major *social platform*" (my italics). Fiona, spaza owner (interview 21.09.2018)

It is also important to note that Cornubia can be considered as a microcosm of the city. This means that the societal issues of the township are indicative of a wider context and can therefore offer a platform for the co-production of new knowledges around cityness. The link between township and town which hold the possibilities of knowledge sharing is best explained by Simone (2008):

"Even when actors do different things with one another in different places, each carries traces of past collaboration and an implicit willingness to interact with one another in ways that draw on multiple social positions." Simone (2008:69)

The conjunctions of both temporal and spatial positions facilitated by the spaza shops emerge as a result of the government's inability to provide equitable economic and social necessities or spaces for dialogue in which to negotiate this new neighborhood, the characters make do. Echoing Fiona's statement above, Simone (2008) refers to the importance of human infrastructure:

"a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city... an experience of regularity capable of anchoring the livelihoods of residents and their transactions with one another is consolidated precisely because the outcomes of residents' reciprocal efforts are radically open, flexible, and provisional. In other words, a specific economy of perception and collaborative practice is constituted through the capacity of individual actors to circulate across and become familiar with a broad range of spatial, residential, economic, and transactional positions". Simone (2008: 69)

While it is arguable that regarding 'people as infrastructure' (Simone 2008) is a concept that could be somewhat objectifying in its figurative stance, it remains an interesting challenge to the key players of the built environment. The concept calls for the recognition of the organic intelligence of the citizens and suggest the potential for a collaboration towards new urban imaginaries. Simone (2008) calls for a shift in the outlook on this intelligence. His provocation is

"how researchers, policymakers, and urban activists can practice ways of seeing and engaging urban spaces that are characterised simultaneously by regularity and provisionality". (Simone 2008: 69)

When I spoke to the appointed urban planner of the Cornubia settlement it became clear that the willingness of such holistic view on developmental processes exist.

“There is a statutory process which shapes cities in terms of zoning and bylaws etc. and the processes that goes with that. At the [other] end there is almost a reality of the structure of the city in its physical sense as enabler. I believe in the second one. It should be [considered] specially in our context; South African city or any developing city. Its [development] should be less about rules and regulation and more about enablement. Enablement is about creating the physical conditions that allow development on the ground occurring”. (Interview with Cornubia appointed urban planner 07.02.2019)

But of course, it is essential that communities and, in this case, the beneficiaries of government housing programs, should be mobilised to partner with the Department of Human Settlement in the implementation, management and future development of this new housing project into a sustainable and meaningful human settlement. It is certainly inspiring just to imagine the possibility of a heterogeneous planning process but we need to be mindful of the complexities in the structures of an overburden government which too often does not allow for the space, time and budget to reconfigure developmental process from a typically top-down nature to a more horizontal one. Regardless, Simone’s (2008) appeal remains valid and is echoed by Bhabha’s (1994) concept of ‘in-between’ which equally motivates for a hybridised space where the binaries of the *rational* and *irrational* are collapsed into a ‘borderline existence’. Bhabha (1994) explains that a

“borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates [a] discursive ‘image’ at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world.” (1994:19)

My reading of ‘literature’ in the context of this thesis is primarily as ‘text’. The conceptual layering of the spaza as temporal, spatial and textual discussed previously, in my view, provide a lens which magnifies their entropic practice as ‘discourse’. One which may suggest that the spaza shops collectively define a grammatical structure providing a reading that does not solely regards people as infrastructure but their practice and form (spaza) as well. With this extension of Simone’s theory, I therefore argue that the spaza shops and their owners, operating through the windows of their houses, collectively provide a symbolic bridge between house/home, informal/formal, private /public and community/state. This bridge offers an alternative vocabulary for

understanding how the dynamic world of the 'infra-ordinary'⁴⁶ is structured and hold agency which is intertwined and intersects with wider structural processes in the production of new forms of urban life.

Deconstructing the binary between house/home, social/economic, public/private the spaza owners seemed to have overcome the divide between agency/determination and thought/action. They mostly are aware that they are not just a shop and they reflect on their practice as a multi layered initiative. This echoes Freire's conception of praxis which he describes as "reflection and action upon the world to change it" (Freire 1970: 33). Although running a spaza shop is a silent act where the owners predominantly operate in response to the issue of unemployment and socio-economic challenges, they also engage as organic form of activism in providing a space for mobilization. Their practice can be considered as a 'tactical retreat' (Bayat, 2010) which is a strategy where the protagonist subverts the control of the powers by operating (in this case mostly the spaza owners) in their lounge away from the visibility of power. This became clear in an interview with Rasta when he claimed that the spaza is multifaceted.

The role of the spaza I think although it helps the owner of the spaza to get some money to get some food it also creates that thing of knowing each other as a community. I run a spaza for several years [and it] helps in terms of being together, [as a] community. It's not only to sell but also to making friends and to get to know each other because some of the people when they come and buy here they share something about what's happening in the community. What are the real problems and what can be done to solve these problems. Sometimes you find that we just form a meeting, an unorganised meeting just because we are together at the shop. There is a lot of things [issues] that is coming and are problems in our community. Sometimes we have to solve all those things so it's [the spaza] not only a shop but it's a place where we also solve some problems. (Rasta, Interview 21.09.2018)

Essentially, Rasta's consideration confirms that the spaza shop is a hybridised space where the boundaries between public/private, economic/social and cultural/political is blurred. While deconstructing these binaries, the spaza shops become creolised spaces which hold the possibility of defining an organic matrix where lives and

⁴⁶ Infra-ordinary is a term coined by Georges Perec. It means the ordinary of everydayness which requires excessive attention. It is a term used to describe an in-between state of an everyday which is neither ordinary nor extraordinary.

livelihoods are intertwined in a sense of elasticity which complexify the dystopic narrative of the urban poor. For Bayat (2010) the struggle of citizens can be best described as a

'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' – a silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better lives. They are marked by quiet, atomised and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action – an open and fleeting struggle without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization, one which makes significant gains for the actors, eventually placing them as a counter point vis-à-vis the state. (Bayat 1997: 57)

While Bayat recognises the urban poor as active agents instead of passive victims it is important to approach the issue in a realistic and integrated manner. In the spirit of the spaza's deconstructive practice, we must be mindful not to fall in the trap of putting the state and the citizens in binary opposition. We must rather read the ingenuity of the spaza through a double reading where their purpose is not to destroy or dislocate conventional reading of the system but to highlight the spazas as moments of self-contradiction within the system. It is certainly more productive to operate from within a dominant system, than from 'outside' it. Extending Bayat's concept of 'quiet encroachment' (Bayat A, 2013), these reciprocal 'encroachments' referred to by Rasta, create a liminal zone of dissidence where the spaza owners assimilates their state-owned houses to open a platform where new ideas, means of interactions and citizenship are being tried out quietly. While participating in this hybridised spaza domain, I have consistently observed and come to the realization that a new language of engagement with the authorities is attainable. My provocation is that the *spaza as discourse* can facilitate the writing of this language. One which is emancipatory in nature and is able to elevate the spaza as interlocutor between the speech of the state and the parley of the street. This concept motivates for the spaza culture to be recognised as an alternative quiet form of protest or imaginably as a 'fighting' mechanism which holds the possibility for a holistic approach to reconstitute urban public culture in novel and imaginative way. Asef Bayat explains that

"...the poor not only struggle for survival but strive in a lifelong process to improve their lot through often individualistic and quiet encroachment on the public goods and on the power and property of the elite groups...Quiet encroachment, therefore, is not a politics of collective

demand making, a politics of protest. Rather it is a mix of individual and collective direct action.” (Bayat 2013: 83)

However, in order for spaza owners to be effective in their activism and be able to facilitate change in their community, they need to reconceptualise their action⁴⁷. They need to redefine the society’s perception of them as illegal. I would like to draw a parallel here with Fanon’s (1963) conception of ‘The Fighting phase’. It is one of three stages through which Fanon (1963) describes the development of a national liberation culture grows. Even though his thinking is primarily located in the dichotomy between the colonial and the colonised, it is no less relevant when considering the power dynamics between the state and the street. In Fanon’s (1963) view phase one involves the “unqualified assimilation of colonial culture by the colonised” (Oliphant, 2013). Similarly, the spaza owners assimilate their state-owned houses into capitalist business ventures. Despite this practice contravening the by-laws the state ‘seldom question it but observe like a taboo, something which no one, while following, could ever admit’ (Bhabha: 1994).”The second phase involves a rediscovery of past mummified and stultifying traditions which are not able to respond fully to the revolutionary demands of the times” (Oliphant, 2013). While this phase relates more to the conscientisation process that has taken place throughout the program the ‘third phase’ provides a nuanced reading of both Jabu’s idea of fight and my interpretation of the spazas as text, discourse and language. For Fanon (1963) “the third phase is called the Fighting Phase and produces a revolutionary literature directed to radical emancipation” (Oliphant, 2013). Fanon (1963) similarly to Jabu does not call for arms but rather for an engagement in the development of new discourse (spazas) which, in this instance, can facilitate a more just relationship between the residents of Cornubia and the state.

Therefore, it is significant that the encroachers ‘develop legal, financial, organizational and even moral support’. For Bayat the challenge is ‘to encourage convergence of the mobilizational element of quiet encroachment, the institutional capacity of NGOs, and the consent of the authorities’ (Bayat 2013: 83).

⁴⁷ I here refer of the spaza itself as an action.

There is also something spatial about the spaza's organic positions in space around this housing development enables accessible and spontaneous spaces for communal socialising and reflection. The retail complex that the city proposes destroys the spatial aspects of the spaza as street level social resource, forcing engagement to be filtered through a more regulated and competitive space in which these organic debates and discussions enabled by the home environment of spazas are likely to be lost in the bid for competitive consumerism through a retail park.

Strategies for change

The members of Xhuma recognise that the residents of Cornubia must unite and come up with proper strategies that can effectively bring change in the township. For Fiona, self-respect is linked to empowerment of the community through the individual towards 'transformation' and 'emancipation'. She explained that change begins through personal interventions:

"I believe one can gain empowerment through self-respect and working together with these two main components one can also form a forum which need no councillor. But if one decides that he or she need to do something and has a focus mind frame then that one person can make a great difference". Fiona, spaza owner (workshop 01.09.2018)

Interestingly, Fiona argues that emancipation of the residents is not dependent on the state only but it seems that it occurs through multiple processes imbedded in the infra ordinary. Perhaps if we look closer and listen with more care we would recognise that one such process is being facilitated through the agency of the spaza owners. Through the interface of trade, they engage in a humanizing role which is characterised by gratitude, empathy and love. Ma Katerina, a dignified and well-respected member of the community powerfully points at the importance of a 'love ethic' in the service of others.

"When I got to open the shop here in Cornubia, I sort of created a role for myself as a parent to this community. I have enormous love for the people of this community and endless willingness to help wherever I possibly can. Ma Katerina, spaza owner (interview 17.09.2018)

Could this 'love ethic' (hooks, 1994) not be a symbol through which a discourse that acknowledges the needs of the spirit in parallel with the state's emphasis on material issues be potentially explored? In bell hook's chapter *Love as the practice for freedom* (1994: 289), she advocates for the consideration of Love as a means to liberation. She explains:

A love ethic emphasises the importance of service to others...Service strengthens our capacity to know compassion and deepens our insight. To serve another I cannot see them as object, I must see their subjecthood". (hooks, 1994: 296)

Furthermore, in a conversation with Shenaz, she mentioned that she operates her spaza with the 'goodness of her heart'. When I ask her if this was compatible with profit-making, she laughed and said that for her

"It was not about running a shop for money making only. I was not chasing after that. I see the needs of people who is really struggling to get by. I was doing nothing [in Cornubia] but I come from a home where we had a spaza in place. I thought that I let the spaza behind but it came with me...I've been told by many residents in Cornubia that I have a very soft heart and I have a lot of compassion. There are many people who come here, for example yesterday somebody came and although we sell potatoes she said that she has nothing to cook and she says if at least she has two potatoes she'll cook for her family. And I just smile and I gave it to her. She says Shazy your heart you know! ...it made me happy because I helped to feed a family for free. The municipality need to learn compassion. You can only pick the human being up if you let them live with dignity. Human dignity". Shenaz, spaza owner (interview 21.09.2018)

My conviction is that there is an inherent organic intelligence within the insurgence of the spaza culture in Cornubia (and in general perhaps) that goes beyond the fulfilment of economic needs for the spaza owners and for the consumption needs of the residents. Shenaz and all the other spaza owner's (without exception) I engaged with, formally and informally, has coherently demonstrated that a collective consciousness around a more humane approach to self and collective empowerment is possible and already in practice at some level. However, it is important to be mindful of portraying the spazas through a romantic lens. While they communally hold a radical truth, which emerge out of a priori a space of generosity, they are equally subject to interpersonal challenges like competition and jealousy which sometimes resorts into violence amongst themselves. Ma Ivy, one of the participants who is an elderly grandmother

living with her daughter, has been forced to move her spaza out of her house into a trolley which she wheel around every day. This was due to the neighbouring spaza threatening to harm her for 'stealing' her customers. It is arguable that this is why the retail centre where spaza owners are planned to be placed all together is not working. Spaza culture is based on relationships that the owner of the spaza has with their customers rather than a competitive nature. This has caused her great distress and she remains fearful of that harassment. It is also worth flagging that there has been an increasing anti-foreigner sentiment that has caused the foreign- owned spaza to become hotspots of violence (Charman and Piper, 2012). A primary reason for this is competition and xenophobia. The foreign spaza owners generally has more access to capital and can therefore purchase in bulk which enables them to charge more competitive prices. This creates tension which sometimes leads to violence. However, I believe that these ruptures in the collective consciousness are equally relevant in the process of the development of 'agents of wholesome change' (hooks 1994). In this sense the collective consciousness itself is disordered. Left unrecognised it remains ambiguous. But as discussed previously, where else better to begin than in an 'in-between' space. After all, clarity can only be born out of ambiguity. Therefore, it is also critical to consider consciousness through a spatial lens. For Lefebvre (1991)

"Conscious beings apprehend themselves in a mélange of violence, lack, desires, needs, knowledge properly (improperly) so called...consciousness misapprehend itself. Consciousness, itself the locus of knowing, thus permits the emergence of a knowledge characterised by misunderstanding: on the one hand, the illusion of a perfect or transparent knowledge (the Idea, divine knowledge, absolute Knowledge); on the other hand, notions of a mystery, of an unknowable realm, or of an unconscious". (Lefebvre 1991: 208)

In accepting these contradictions, their objectivity and subjectivity, we can perhaps identify other alternative emergences such as the spaza through which the individual and the collective could engage in a process of transforming the world and its history in a more humane way. It is to admit the possible; a humanised world. The principal of the temporary school at Cornubia expands on how in every township throughout South Africa the role of the spaza shops is a socio-economic reality of the country. Mr. Sevlall, the school principal, explains that

"If you talk about people's economics, then the spaza is a typical example of people's economics because the government cannot provide jobs for every individual of this country.

So, they [spaza owners] have to have informal economic activities and the spaza is an integral part of the whole South African society. We need to let it emerge as we have said: a place of meeting, a place of socialization where people of different cultures share culture...this is how we will make people love one another and to bring system of community activism amongst one another. And that is how you create a home". Mr. Sevlall, school principal (interview 17.09.2018)

This suggests that the emancipation of the community should not be expected to arrive only through the state planning strategies and encompassing systems. But instead, small, isolated actions like the spaza shops, creches, hair salons and the shebeens⁴⁸ can be perceived as a patchwork of *micro* operations which are being deployed as a generative resource. These resources actively "construct focused [conscientised] communities in difference and solidarity" (Pieterse 2008). This argument evokes Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city' which he explains is a way to

make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (*citadin*) and user of multiple services. It would affirm on one hand the right to make known of their on the space and time of their activities in the urban area... (Lefebvre 1995: 34)

Essentially for Lefebvre the right to the city is characterised by the practice of the citizen in the everyday life which is fundamentally linked with the urban. Understanding urban as more than the boundaries of the city, Lefebvre "includes its social system of reproduction. Hence the right of the city is a claim for the recognition of the urban as the (re)producer of social relations of power, and the right to participate in it". (Gilbert and Dikeç, 2008; 65) . The spaza owners for example could be strategically defined as 'new citizens' within the framework of their right to the city. This new citizenship assumes the role of a socio-economic activist and can be defined as

Each individual and for each social group, as a possibility (as a right) to recognise and master (individually and collectively) its own condition of existence (material and intellectual), and this simultaneously as a political actor, as a producer, as a citizen-user-consumer, in its place of residence, its city and its region, its professional and non-work-related activities, as well as in its nation and in the world. (Ajzenberg 1990. in Gilbert and Dikeç 2008: 72)

⁴⁸ Bars in the township.

However, within a South African context, Gibson (2011) reminds us of how historically it is predominantly social movements as opposed to unorganised citizens that played a key role in forcing the apartheid regime into negotiations. The counter argument raised above questions whether it is not equally possible to recognise the unintentional consequences of the daily enterprises of the urban grassroots, in this case the spaza shops, as a strategic form of silent mobilization against the regulatory state? While Gibson's (2011) description of 'movement' refers to formal civic organizations such as trade unions, it is vital to note that the Cornubia spaza community, in contradiction, is not yet organised to collectively represent their needs towards economic and social change. Indeed, perhaps it could be conceivable that the individual actors (spaza owners) remain marginalised without having a say in policy and decision making.

The city's actions of trying to force people to only trade in the new retail centre, in essence demanding the bylaw restrictions that sever home and work shows both an ignorance and a disregard for the important socio-cultural role that spazas play in human settlements. Particularly in weaving together the social fabric in new developments such as Cornubia. Refusing to rethink how micro livelihood strategies such as spazas are simultaneously important social and cultural spaces and resources in communities makes the municipality blind to how these resources could be deployed in building relationships for more participatory planning.

I would argue that the spaza shops are discursive spaces through which plausible conversations and negotiations between the state and the community can take place. Based on numerous testimonies of the participants, I have learnt that spaza shops create social networks and economic relations and, in my view, they bear the potential for a fertile agent for social change. What comes to mind here is Asef Bayat's concept of 'social nonmovements' as opposed to Gibson's notion of 'social movements'. Bayat explains that

"...nonmovements refers to the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations" (Bayat 2013: 15)

Although Bayat's (2013) discourse is mainly rooted in a Middle Eastern context, his thinking nevertheless clearly resonates and is relevant in the South African context when considering the urban grassroots (spaza owners). But the answer possibly lies in the middle of being a movement and a nonmovement. Perhaps Gibson's point on solidarity in the face of oppression, it is equally important for urban grassroots to consider collective and organised mobilization when engaging the state. If not, there might be a chance that they remain a divided community which could make it difficult to engage in formal dialogues with the city and effectuate change in their own lives and Cornubia. In fact, one idea that emerged in this workshop was for the spaza owners to create a WhatsApp group to concretise connections among themselves. Although social media has been criticized for providing a space for 'passive activism', I believe it can still be appropriated as a productive tool which can reinforce networks while defining existing organic movements.

Conclusion

The spaza shops in Cornubia, in my view, can be considered as a form of urban acupuncture which bears conduits that can create connections between the grassroots socio, spatial and cultural qualities and the urban developmental processes. In this chapter I have showed that the spaza shops goes beyond the fulfilment of economic needs for the spaza owners and the consumption needs of the residents. The recommendation is not to put the state and the spaza owners in binary opposition but to rather to regard the spaza as an interstitial space where both the system and the citizen can meet and collaborate. Both my conversations with the spaza owners and the experts I interviewed recognise that there is a space for dialogue and action. I am convinced that it is plausible that spaza shops could potentially act as a network of communication nodes and become representatives for the community and facilitate the establishment of lines of communication between the state and the street (residents). I am not advocating for some form of formalisation of Spaza shops because I am aware that the dangers of doing that could tend lead to the co-option of the Spaza. What I am arguing for is the recognition that they are already form of cultural infrastructure which could be more actively engaged not co-opted and used

Chapter 8: Healing from the ground up

in pursuit of spatial justice

Conclusion

African cities are often constructed as problematic spaces in which inequality, poverty, poor service delivery, and crime result in difficult living conditions for residents (Strauss 2019). While recognising that this analysis is not without merit, this discourse tends to invite interventions that are top-down as 'solutions' to solve this set of crises (imagined or not). In both planning and architecture, the dominant discourses understand cities through institutional frameworks, the agendas of states, international organisations, and NGOs. Meanwhile, the interpretations, strategies, and desires of city dwellers frequently remain absent as planners and policymakers define the normative visions of communities and inevitably of the city (Pieterse 2008). Paradoxically, in the last decade or so, community participation and inclusive decision-making have become popular in governance discourses, but the extent to which such discourse moves beyond rhetoric and into processes that focus on community needs and desires remains comparatively ambiguous.

Metaphorically speaking, it is my view that Cornubia is an intriguing allegory. It presents fertile grounds for the study of a 'post-liberation' apartheid spatiality and associated social relations. A 'third space' (Bhabha: 2004) wherein the inherited semantic, syntactic, and morphological spatial composition can be deciphered, investigated, and critiqued (Gnanasekaran 2015). There is a critical need for a more nuanced light to be shed on the unconscious life of the city. We could assume that Cornubia bears resemblance to a mythological city in the making. It emerges out of an amalgam between centuries of physical manipulation of the built form (architecture/body) and the psychological conditioning of the spatial (psychic

space/language). In a way, we could extrapolate that the site in question is an in-between space, beyond the ability of power to see, conceive and control (Pile 1996). This renders the modernist urban imaginary fundamentally redundant. Colonial spatial policies and by-laws desperately maintained in what Lebbeus Woods terms “fixed and frightened forms” (Noever 1993:91) are being challenged and supplanted by the imaginative invention of an alternative conceptual map and vocabulary. This cognitive dissidence is defining what alternative urbanism may feel, taste, sound, look and smell like (Coates 2003:17). This thesis has sought to demonstrate that through experimentation, this fresh and subversive affective imaginary is rising to challenge and model anew how locality, identity, economy, diversity and security can be addressed simultaneously (Pieterse 2008). For example, the spaza culture’s uncritical flouting of colonial by-laws and its disruption of the housing landscape has exposed the rigidity (perhaps inhumanity) of the existing system and has the potential to catalyse conversations at high levels around space and the informal economy. The proposal argued for in this thesis is to respond creatively and to call for engagement using the ‘language’ of the people. ‘Language’ in this dissertation has been located in popular cultural forms, both engaging with creativity and understanding the spaza shop as the prevailing example of how social structures on the ground emerge to address needs.

This dissertation has argued that the idea of a ‘breaking new ground’ initiative in urban planning demands more than new policy frameworks and financial instruments for state-delivered housing in South Africa. It equally requires the effort of unearthing and creating alternative practices and attitudes for meaningful participatory democracy in the pursuit of spatial justice (Soja 2010).

It is proposed that a formal acknowledgment of the urban resilience and consequent innovations of the citizenry could present the possibility for planners, architects, and the residents of Cornubia (in this example) to be liberated from an oppressive spatial planning system and become committed to a meaningful emancipatory approach to planning. It is imagined that the current system could be transformed into one that supports popular initiatives.

The research process undertaken revealed an organic intelligence (naturally evolving experiential knowledge) in the residents engaged. This was most significantly observed through the community of spaza owners that operated their business from their homes in the human settlement. They were able to clearly identify the gaps in the spatial, social, and economic infrastructure of Cornubia and the potential consequences and opportunities of this for the community. The research participants held a common vision for an 'ideal' Cornubia that was based on realistic expectations aligned with the right to live with dignity. This implied the right to earn a living, have access to basic services, and the right to exist as a community, which requires social/communal spaces.

A series of interviews with the built environment specialists involved both directly and administratively in the planning of Cornubia revealed that the types of spaces and places the community desired was actually not that different from the planning the state had in mind for Cornubia. However, the delays in fulfilling the intention of the state in the provision of these spaces and services – which were many and ongoing - were not properly communicated to the community. This experience increased levels of frustration, feelings of infantilisation, and ultimately powerlessness, which seemed at odds with the understanding that local government and planners appeared to have about the needs of the community. The lack of a participatory process in the development of Cornubia was also a major concern for the participants. A more participatory process could have gone a long way to circumvent community disillusion despite delays.

The community participants were highly critical of the poor performance of the state when it came to the provision of the social and educational amenities promised to them. Their plea was for fertile, critical, and honest discussions with the Municipality (as the local representative of the state) in order to transform Cornubia into a more dignified collective living space. The dissertation argued that for this to happen the 'experts' and decision-making politicians need to spend some time away from their drawing boards, smartphones and bureaucratic abstractions to experience the messy everyday practice of survival by ordinary citizens in the pursuit of spatial justice.

Further, what this research clearly shows is that the residents of Cornubia do have some understanding of spatial planning. They are clearly able to identify the types of spaces and places they desire. This research set out to explore how these desires are similar and/or different to the planning that the eThekweni municipality has in mind for Cornubia.

The reality is that these desires are both similar and different to the municipality's ideas. At times, such as with the provision of a school and social amenities, the demands of the residents are aligned with the plans of the municipality. However, there are other moments, for example the provision of the retail centre, where there was poor participatory planning when the desires of the community did not align with the municipality's vision. This caused discontent within the community which led to tensions and conflicts between community participants and planners/ architects (who were seen as representatives of the municipality on the ground). Nevertheless, I am convinced that it is only when the eThekweni Municipality realise that the planning it has in mind for Cornubia can positively overlap with the vision the residents of Cornubia have for themselves that there will be any possibility for a meaningful conversation where binaries (street vs state) can be deconstructed.

The majority of residents I encountered were not particularly critical of the houses and the way they had been planned and designed (although notably some of the participants in this study such as Shenaz and Jabu did have deep concerns about the lack of responsive design to suit families moving into Cornubia). The dominant issues were twofold: First, the delivery of the infrastructure as planned and promised to the residents. The second concern centred on the discontent with the process of making Cornubia a safe and liveable place, which they felt was an obligation of 'the state'. It seems apparent that the expectation was that the state has a commitment to the residents beyond the simple delivery of houses to the formation of a community (in other words a house does not necessarily translate into a home and intervention is required to facilitate this). The participants demonstrated a clear understanding that space is social (Lefebvre 1974). My observation is that while the residents of Cornubia might not be formally educated in the field of urban planning, they are nevertheless aware of the kind of spaces and places they desire in order to make the settlement into a liveable one. In the workshops and in the conversation with the official architect in a

focus group dialogue they firmly demanded a school, a clinic, social amenities and a community hall.

Serious consideration of these challenges to the state demands a people-centred approach to development (António: 2001) where dialogue and exchange between the council and active agents of the community are integrated in the process of development and transformation in an authentic way. Findings revealed a strong desire for a meaningful participatory process which participants felt would help their community become more resourceful and would also facilitate a sense of ownership and civic pride for the existing infrastructure. The deduction from the findings is that the contested imaginings between the state and the citizen could be facilitated through some of the existing social structures that emerge from the community itself, such as the spaza shop infrastructure. It seems that in these kinds of housing or infrastructure developments for the urban poor, the process is key. How the community members engage with the idea of 'added value' has less to do with a built / physical form and more to do with how it makes (or has the potential to make) them feel. It is a search for meaning (Fiske 1989).

Creativity has been central to this thesis both conceptually and methodologically. Finlay (2008:78), articulates best the way that creativity interfaces with the overall politics of the dissertation, which is a methodological issue:

[A]rts-based researchers actively create a body of work that tells the stories of local groups and individuals, while it exposes injustices people have experienced as subjects to the tyranny of the majority, and in which diverse forms of art are used as a means to draw attention to citizens' articulations of oppression. Arts-based research can retrace and expose the common threads of racism, sexism, and discrimination that form the social contract.

The dissertation presented a methodology, and in this sense, the thesis can be considered methodological. It focused on using popular artistic forms as an alternative language for exploring people's desires and investigating this as a way in which people can communicate with the power bloc (Fiske 1989). It has been argued that popular forms could be regarded as creative methods that can also assist in breaking down misunderstandings between the municipality and the residents. It is important to note that the research considers that an opportunity already exists 'informally' for the

potential of dialogue through the popular innovations/ manifestations exemplified in the spaza shop. It has been suggested that the spaza owners (as creative beacons themselves) could potentially become interlocutors facilitating dialogues between the municipality and the residents.

Theoretically, the dissertation argues that spazas should be read as popular culture since popular culture is both evasive and resistant and is created “out of the resources, both discursive and material that are provided by the social system that disempowers [the people]” (Fiske 1989:2). Spaza’s develop organically as creative responses to an environment which does not meet their basic needs. Where there are limited spaces for the working class and poor to exercise their various freedoms whether it is economic, spatial, social or cultural.

However, in the pursuit of dialogue and meaningful exchange with the state, the research recognises that in order for the spaza owners to be effective in their activism and facilitate change in their community, they need to reconceptualise their action as collective (Khambule and Gerwel-Proches, 2019). Interlocutors, similar to Freire’s (1970) idea of the liberator educator, have a role to play in this conscientisation / critical consciousness-raising, and creativity again, is the medium through which this can occur. The dissertation has modelled this process. Both with the creative work undertaken in the community prior to the research and the creative workshops conducted with the participants during the research period.

The question as to whether creative methods can assist in deconstructing the imaginings between the city (official top-down planning) and residents (everyday bottom-up planning), is answered by engaging in a process of experimentation with alternative creative methodologies for interfacing the built environment and the people that occupy those spaces. It essentially amounts to opening up a platform for democratic participation (McQuail 2005) towards an emancipatory approach to place-making in (post)-colonial/apartheid South Africa. Besides the theoretical implications of answering the questions asked in this thesis, the objective of this study was to provide and test out a creative methodology that could be used by built environment practitioners in participatory work, which offers a way in which to create a new

language in planning, designed not just by the so-called experts but also by the people who live in and make homes out of the housing units.

This thesis has also offered a perspective on the spaza shops as invented spaces (Miraftab, 2004) of intersections and interconnections where the contested imaginings between the state and the street could possibly be negotiated. What it revealed is that the spaza shops form a multi-layered network. They were found to have a positive effect on the community and their strong socio-economic (and popular cultural) ties with the residents could in turn give them agency to become interlocutors between the state and the community, as suggested. The debate in the thesis has clearly shown and emphasised that informal economic activities such as spaza shops should be reconceptualised as spaces of cultural invention, as well as nodes of neighborhood participation. The research has identified participation and inclusion as a community need that could contribute positively to the development of healthy communities, which surely must be a recognised goal in the urban planning of postcolonial spaces. The spaza owners are conscious that they provide a service beyond the sale of goods. What this thesis shows is that there should be a wider acknowledgment that the spazas are an integral part of place-making in the South African context.

Philosophically speaking, the inhabitants of Cornubia are an emerging organic intelligence. However, within their lived and struggled realities, the research participants have expressed the need to redefine their divided existence through the power of solidarity. We (the society), on the other hand, need to open ourselves up to the notion of informality and its lessons for creativity and resilience. This is not merely a cautionary tale, but it can become the context in which the extraordinary can happen (and is already happening). In Cornubia like in many other human settlements nationally and continentally, rules become a set of terms in constant negotiation, characters are interchangeable assets, and physical space becomes something modelled and redeployed in novel ways. The actors engage both in conflict and adventure. They are sheroes and heroes who beat the system at their own game. They are the unexpected survivors. They are agile adapters in a twisted ecosystem whose strength is intensified by shifting environmental conditions. They are a microcosm of our emerging world, where the artificial and natural are indistinguishable from one another. They fight without fighting. They are a popular movement that

represents a new creative urban form that can provide an additional meaningful perspective on the concept of infrastructure if those in power are prepared to listen and engage them in dialogue.

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