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ABAGEREZI: Embodiment and separation at source studied through the lens of everyday informal street reclaiming in Johannesburg.

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Anthropology.

By

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September 23, 2019

DECLARATION

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

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ABSTRACT

This research report is an ethnographic study of the everyday work-life of informal street reclaimers from Bekezela in Newtown, Johannesburg. The focus is on seven black male reclaimers and one black female reclaimer who informally salvage recyclable materials from rubbish bins and sell them to buy-back centers (BBC) to earn a living. The Bekezela reclaimers start work at 3:30 am, walking far distances in the darkness to reach the wealthy suburbs that are the richest source of recyclables. While it is often assumed that reclaimers are fiercely independent, the research found that these reclaimers who live together in Belezela ended up reclaiming together. They also formed the Royals and Bekezela Plus (informal organisations studied in this report) to create social and economic security and stability. These organisations were developed over time to build trust, loyalty and accountability. By following the daily, embodied work of the eight Bekezela reclaimers, the report develops a nuanced understanding reclaimers as complex people who develop social relations and associations as they conduct complex work that entails multiple areas of specialization learned from each other in the streets. Without any attention to this rich social world, Johannesburg's Pikitup waste management utility implemented a separation at source (S@S) programme that pays private companies to do the same work as reclaimers. Having illuminated the rich social life of reclaimers, the report is then able to analyse the multiple ways that the city's S@S programme disrupts their social world. The report argues that the S@S programme undermines the ability of informal reclaimers to pursue their work and life projects without providing any credible alternatives. The report concludes by exploring how reclaimers in Bekezela, together with reclaimers from across the city who are members of the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO), are contesting S@S and mobilizing for an approach to S@S that recognizes, builds on and strengthens their life projects. At the same time, the report

identifies how the 8 reclaimers do not necessarily have interest or faith in this type of more formal organization.

Key words: Bekezela, City of Johannesburg, Separation at Source, informal, reclaimers.

ABBREVIATIONS

CoJ	City of Johannesburg
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
S@S	Separation at Source
PRASA	Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa
PET	Polyethylene Terephthalate
PP	Polypropylene
ARO	African Reclaimers Organization
BBC	Buy back center
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
COJ	City of Johannesburg
SAWPA	South African Waste pickers Association
WEIGO	Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

This study is about the struggles, hopes and dreams of informal reclaimers in Johannesburg, Newtown. It is a narrated ethnography infused with global and local evidence of what is happening in the urban-city environment when it comes to waste minimization and waste collection from both informal and formal sectors. Informal reclaimers, who have been continuously making a living out of the waste recyclables, now find themselves in the most precarious situation because of a state initiated programme called 'Separation at Source' that refers to households separating dry recyclable waste (plastic, paper, glass and cans) and household generated garden waste for selective collection to be used in recycling, composting or further processing of these materials (Pikitup, 2018). The programme have been introduced in the Northern areas of Johannesburg; 'Piloted by Pikitup in September 2009 at the Waterval Depot' (Pikitup, 2018). This programme has taken center stage and is prioritized by the authorities of the City of Johannesburg, with little thought about the effects the programme is having on the informal street reclaimers.

At the start of my fieldwork in early 6-7 June 2017, I met "Simon Mbata" a name I have given to protect the reclaimer's identity; he is a leading voice of the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA). This happened in a waste picker's guidelines national working group workshop that was facilitated by my supervisor Dr. Melanie Samson as part of the process of drafting national guideline that include the reclaimers and their life-stories and objectives. We met at a roundtable meeting held at the offices of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in Pretoria. Subsequently, during a stakeholder workshop on reclaimers in Johannesburg, Solomon explained to me that the new system pursued by City authorities

disproportionately favours contracting companies. According to him, these companies are the primary beneficiaries of the waste collection and recycling business.

> *"They get paid for collection and disposal, take this material to recycle, then again-double benefit. And the recycling industry is always dictating, not determining price… They do not engage reclaimers, we don't know when prices are going up or coming down. They are dictating!!!"*

Participants at this roundtable workshop included a newly elected committee of reclaimers, City and municipality officials and people from the paper industry as well as researchers from Witwatersrand University and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). All stakeholders are given the task of mapping where they think reclaimers undertake their activities within the city. Mbata came to represent SAWPA and in this capacity he is both a reclaimer and an activist championing the cause of reclaimers. When he took the floor, he fiercely articulated the challenges that reclaimers face in their everyday relationships with other actors in the industry.

Mbata complaints centered on the increasing difficulties that reclaimers had to negotiate in their everyday work. On the one hand, reclaimers had to deal with the excessive regulation from the municipal authorities who were devising and implementing different initiatives and programmes intended to formalize the small economy of waste-picking often referred to in this text as reclaiming. With particular reference to the City of Johannesburg's authorities, a most notable of form of this new regulatory push towards formalization is the programme described as Separation at Source (S@S). On the other hand, as Solomon puts it, reclaimers have to face the

power of the increasingly formalized recycling industry to “dictate” the prices for items that reclaimers salvage.

An article published on Mail and Guardian online newspaper reads:

> *‘People have started an economy from scratch, they started this recycling issue when no one paid too much attention to it, and now that it’s becoming established, all sorts of people are coming in with the support from many levels of government to get a slice of the pie’ But in doing so they are actually displacing the informal recyclers, who are really the backbone of the industry’s aids Kodisang from Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (Weigo)’ (Tswane, 2018).*

This research focuses on the socio-economic dynamics within the Separation at Source (S@S). This programme in particular has marginalized informal reclaimers, who are getting less and less waste recyclables from household residents, meaning that their income is also getting little by little. When the City of Johannesburg and other municipalities contract private companies and prioritize their services, then it comes to waste management reclaimers are the ones that suffer the most in terms of accessing material, and also in making an income out of the waste that they have recreated. These legitimatize kinds of arrangements prioritizes them over the informal reclaimers in the city that have been there long before the programme.

1.2. Problem Statement

For reclaimers in large urban centers in South Africa and elsewhere across the global south, the collection, sorting and sale of discarded but still valuable items contained in household waste has become a way of making a living (Gutberlet, 2018; Yoada, 2014; Zhang et al, 2010; Beall, 1997). As noted above, informal reclaimers in Johannesburg are the subject of increasing political efforts by municipal authorities who pursue the 'integration' of informal reclaimers and seek greater formalization the sector through policies and programmes such as Separation at Source (Samson, forthcoming; Sekhwela, 2017; Medina, 2008). As the City of Johannesburg acknowledges, 'The National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) prioritizes formalizing jobs in the recycling chain and requires the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) to develop guidelines on waste picker integration' (City of Johannesburg 2016: 1). This political situation also manifest in other South African cities and elsewhere around the world and, is attracting increasing growing scholarly interest (see Samson 2010a; Viljoen 2014; Hayamiet al. 2006; Chikarmane, 2012; Forment 2015; Forment 2017).

In the context of South Africa, although recent studies critically engage with these policies of formalization by interrogating the ideas and practices that give meaning to 'integration' and S@S (Samson forthcoming). It is evident that more attention should also be directed at understanding the very subjects of these new regulatory regimes, the informal reclaimers, and the contexts within which they work every day. Particularly in the context of Johannesburg, there are few studies that emphasize this aspect and employ appropriate ethnographic methods to describe and understand these informal reclaimers on their own terms (for exceptions see Charlton 2014a; 2014b). As Sarah Charlton's work demonstrates, reclaimers are largely invisible during the day and mostly visible at night, though having to navigate 'censure and harsh rebuke from law enforcement officers' (2014: 540).

Understanding informal reclaimers beyond the popular tropes that 'dismiss' them as 'unproductive vagabonds' therefore requires careful attention to informal reclaimers, their working conditions, and their experiences of 'the ambiguous world' they inhabit in Johannesburg (Charlton, 2014a: 540-542). This study seeks to contribute to this line of scholarship by drawing up on an ethnographic approach that focuses on the everyday work-life experiences of young reclaimers in the Bekezela area of Newtown, Johannesburg.

Map:

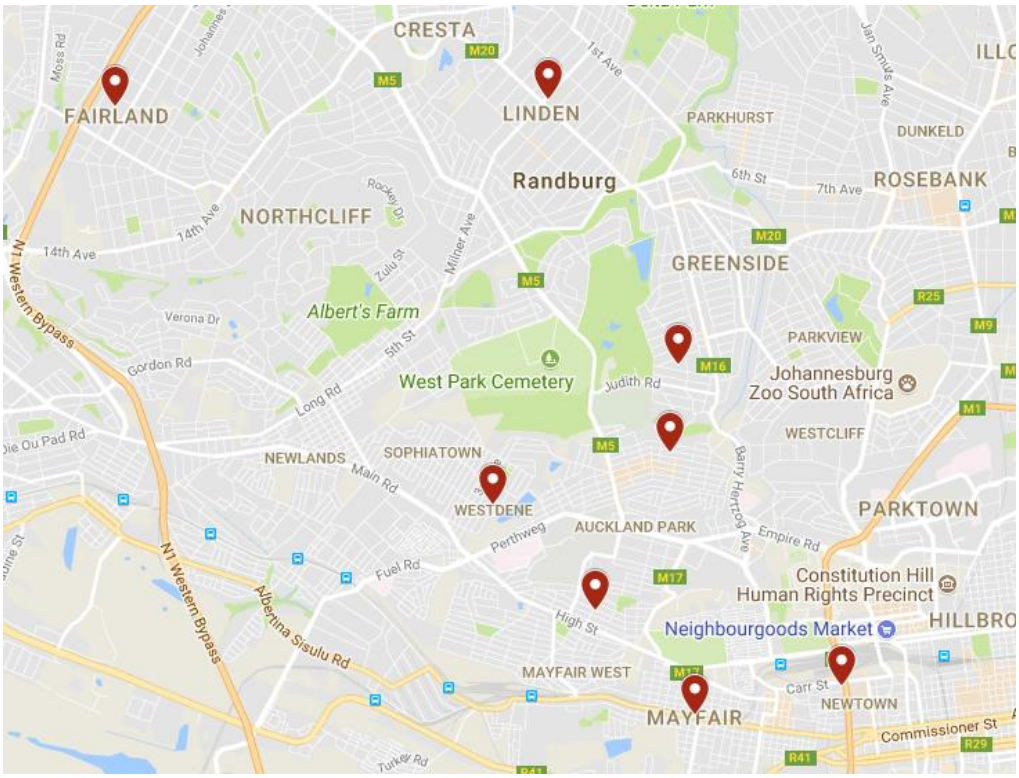


Figure 1: Showing study area and the extended places where fieldwork is conducted with the street informal reclaimers on the move. (Mokobane, 2017; My Google Maps)

The map shows the places that the reclaimers reclaim and also where interviews were conducted. Reclaimers would visit the each area marked on the map atleast once a week to collect recycables. This Depends on the day that the wheelie bins will be on the curbside for waste management services. The marked locations on the map are places where the reclaimers have been consistent, building strong networks in the area.

1.3. Research Questions

How does Pikitup's Separation at Source (S@S) programme affect the working lives of street reclaimers in Bekezela, Newtown Johannesburg?

1.3.1 Sub-questions:

Who are informal reclaimers staying at Bekezela?

What form does 'separation at source' take in the areas where street informal reclaimers collect materials?

How are the reclaimers perceived by the state/ municipality officials in formal and informal settings?

How have the informal reclaimers been affected by 'separation at source'?

How have reclaimers transformed their daily practice in response to separation at source?

1.4. Rationale

In the main cities in the global south, there are intense struggles over who collects recyclables and where they collect it from (Nkosi, 2016: 9; Wilson, 2011; Sentime 2011). Over the years, more and more people are seen in the streets of Johannesburg pulling or pushing carts/trolleys full of recyclables to make and sustain their livelihood. The reclaimers have little

support and no bylaws protecting their movements, which makes it difficult for them to carry on but they still do (Samson, 2009a).

As previously noted, Pikitup began piloting S@S in 2009. It is highly contested due to the ways in which it excludes and dispossesses reclaimers (Samson, forthcoming). The relevance of conducting an ethnographic study on the effects of Separation at Source is to get a different perspective compared to what an 'outsider' would. The purpose of this is to observe what is happening and listen to what is being said about how the programme 'separation at source' affects the street reclaimers. It is important to know whether or not the reclaimers have established relationships with the residents, so as to determine how they can be integrated in the future waste management plans. This information will also assist the reclaimers know what is needed to maintain these relationships where they collect recyclables. Informal reclaimers are innovative and adaptive people who sustain their livelihood by remaining resilient to the everyday changes in the environment. Their influence, as pointed out above is generally felt through their contribution in waste collection, re-use, recovery and recycling as well as selling their collected waste (Medina, 1997; Muzenda, 2014; Samson, 2008; Sentime, 2014) and more recently their unique or rather different physicality which has become popular in the media space.

1.5. Argument:

This study contends that understanding the everyday work-lives of informal reclaimers is a first and important step in addressing the contentious issues and contestations that have been generated by the City of Johannesburg's S@S among reclaimers. However well-meaning, state initiated programmes such as S@S do not understand the people that they seek to define and regulate (the informal reclaimers). This creates inconsistencies between

their intended outcomes by policy makers at City of Johannesburg and the actual outcomes on the ground (cf. Ferguson 1990 for a similar critique of development assistance programmes in Lesotho in the 1970s and 1980s). Given that informal reclaimers are reliant on recycling to make a living and pursue their own life projects, they experience programmes such as S@S as threatening their livelihoods.

1.6. Setting and Methods of Field Research

Ethnography is not simply 'data collection', it is rich in implicit theories of culture, society and the individual (Cook 2007; Agar 1980: 23; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).This approach describes the process of intensively studying a social group by immersing oneself in the day-to-day lives of people in the group (Pawluch et al, 2005: 231). Ethnography also entails writing about people or writing an account of the way of life of a particular people (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Thick description as interpreted by Clifford Geertz is doing deep analysis of the things that you have viewed at first glance and might have overlooked. It is when one is looking again for a deeper and true meaning into the objects, peoples or exchange and small gestures and large behaviours (Geertz, 1973: 312).

Ethnography looks through small, mundane things within human activities and interaction that are overlooked daily in society (Pawluch et al, 2005). In anthropology we use participant observation to gather data, acting as a yardstick, ensuring that information is not escaping the interviewer or observer (Argamannu, 2003; Fine and Weis, 2003; Crang and Cook, 1995). Although, 'cultural knowledge' 'detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction' or 'or holistic analysis of societies (Spradley 1980; Gumperz 1981) was acquired through learnt behavior depending on bodily senses, casual conversations, and spend time with the people that you are studying in the streets

Finding one's own position along the continuum between total emphasis on the participants' perspective and complete attention to the researcher's interpretation is one of the greatest challenges in qualitative research (Geertz, 1988; Pawluch et al, 2005).

1.7. Preview of dissertation organization/ structure

Chapter one: Introduction. This chapter: is an overview of the study area and where the reclaimers live in the city. It brings out the contestations that give reasons to why the reclaimers are studied through Separation at Source (S@S) programme. The chapter shows how the study contributes to both local and global debates and scholarship that seek to understand the effects of state programmes to the people on the ground. Chapter two: 'Literature review'. This chapter presents prevailing theories and hypotheses; what questions are being asked; and what methodologies are appropriate and useful (Hart, 2018). This literature review critically engages four bodies of literature relevant to researching how reclaimer's everyday working lives are affected by S@S and how they respond. These are: the conceptualization of reclaimers as complex human beings; different ways of theorizing who reclaimers; ways of conceptualizing the work that they do; and the focus on the everyday of reclaimers which is centered on a contested policy and service delivery, social inclusion and recognition within the city's waste management system. Chapter three: Is an explanation and a clarification of the methods used to conduct the anthropology study. Which is based on ethnographic inquiry and ethnographic analysis been paired with methods and tools such as participant observation, embodiment, and document sources analysis. The setting, informants, and field methods are explained with attention only to the core aspects of 1) descriptions of the setting and main informants (the Bekezela PLUS) and 2) the exact field

methods employed and ending the chapter with a small discussion of the limitations and ethics.

Chapter four: 'To Bekezela with hope' provides a rich ethnographic chapter into the lives of the reclaimers. The chapter aims at addressing questions of how the reclaimers at Bekezela became residents there in the informal settlement. The chapters show the reclaimers as three dimensional people, with real needs and wants and also as people with families, aspiration, dreams and desires of a future that is often thought of as precarious.

Chapter five: 'Complex work' portrays reclaimers as complex human being, doing many different tasks that require them to be social actors, investing in social networks and engaging in relations that are meaningful to them and their work and understood only by them, not people that are passing on the street.

Chapter six: 'pioneers of Separation at Source' (S@S), illuminates the problems encountered by reclaimers as a result of Separation at Source programmes that affects them and their work into consideration. The reclaimers at Bekezela are a unique society because even when they are reclaiming the streets to make a livelihood, they still make the efforts to make their dreams possible through small businesses and familiar networks within and also outside the reclaiming sector. Chapter seven: 'Conclusion'. The concluding chapter represents the data gathered and an analysis generated, and locates these within broader debates. It starts by reflecting on the consequences of studying informality in order to be part a greater dialogue that involves the recognition and rights of the reclaimers in the city. It then shows the agency through resistance that the reclaimers has, when it zooms into the kinds of individual and group choices the reclaimers make when faced with these changes happening on the ground. It also cautions the policy makers about the level of precariousness that might increase if the

reclaimers are not fully integrated into a system that they believe have earned their position in. The chapter ends with recommendation for both the municipal officials and also the household residents who are also affected daily by separation at source (S@S). The conclusion chapter ends with ideas of how the written report can be disseminated and future recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter critically engages three bodies of literature relevant to the research question. The first focuses on seeing the reclaimers as complex human beings, doing complex work and involved in complex arrangements. The second theme interrogates how reclaimers understand their work in relation to how other people work and, third theme is on state practices and policies carried out in the name of development.

2.2. The conceptualization of reclaimers as 'complex human being'

The literature on reclaimers as 'complex human beings' shows the different ways that reclaimers are perceived by society and also the different ways that they perceive themselves in relation to the work that they do. This section explores four ways reclaimers are conceptualized: as human waste, informal workers and migrants doing precarious labour, as well as collective actors with common interests.

2.2.1. Reclaimers as human as waste

The body of an informal reclaimer and 'sense of self' (identity) has been a main theme of scholarly interest in the literature both in the global north and south (Yigits, 2015: 22). Even though informal reclaimers are amongst the most visible participants in the informal waste economy, they are still ill-treated within the waste management system (Beall, 1997; Mitchell, 2008 and Samson 2009). Informal reclaimers have been framed as contributors to criminal behavior (Dias, 2012; Dias2009; Simatele and Dlamini, 2016). This criminalization is primarily because of their 'physical appearance and physical markers which cannot be

concealed' (Peres, 2016: Yigits, 2015: 13). A majority of informal reclaimers in South Africa do not have identity documents (Gregson, 2016 et al). This is used to explain administrative distrust of reclaimers as unreliable and 'undesirable, posing problems to society' (Sentime, 2011: 1).However, even when they are arrested not held in detention for long because they are deemed to be 'damage for state', (Yigits, 2015: 9). One might argue that the police have a perception that these people have no one who cares about them and they will be forgotten and end up dying inside. It is rather important to note that it is not everyone who is let go on this basis. It is usually reclaimers who are old or the ones who take a lot of drugs.

The above suggests that from the standpoint of both government officials and the general public, reclaimers are treated like the 'dirt' they collect and sort to sell. In *Purity and Danger*, anthropologist Mary Douglas (1984[1966]) writes that our ideas of dirt are intimately bound to desires for social order. According to Douglas, 'dirt offends against order' (Douglas, 1984[1966]: 2). The understanding and treatment of reclaimers as 'dirt' by government agencies and society-at-large across different settings and particularly in South Africa, is a disturbing and dehumanizing social gaze of this category of the working poor. It is stated that 'most people [in South Africa] prefer not to see the [waste collectors] and look down on them for doing such dirty work; many municipalities consider them to be a nuisance and are trying to get rid of them' (Samson 2008, 3). Terminology used to describe how reclaimers are treated includes words such as 'discarded', and 'wiped out' and 'swept out' to the periphery (Dias, 2012; 2).

Recent literature on reclaimers draws our attention to the reality that informal reclaimers are perceived largely through the very idea or metaphor of waste. The practical and political implications of this are significant. When the state programmes are approved without doing

research with the people on the ground. The plans do not match the practical reality and how the people experience the programmes, one might refer to this as the top-down approach. This creates precarious conditions for the people who are making a livelihood within the waste management sector outside regulated waged labour, such as the informal reclaimers (Samson 2015: 815; Dias, 2012; 2; Murray: 2008: 120). Yet, this broad view that reclaimers should be shunned or avoided as they are 'dirty' or defined by the dirt they sort through to salvage and collect, must be situated within what Douglas poses as the fundamental relation between a social desire for purity in the social order amidst the dangers of pollution that dirt implies. It is perhaps due to this association with dirt and disorder that reclaimers have become the ultimate symbols of urban poverty (Furedy, 2000:129; Beall, 1997, 74).

2.2.2 Reclaimers as informal workers and migrants

Throughout developing countries, informal recycling comes as a solution to many poor people who want to generate an income while living in the city (Ozgen, 2010: 41; Deniz 2010). The unsustainable livelihood of informal reclaimers is perpetuated by persistent inequalities and harassment (Rouse & Ali, 2001). Reclaimers experience 'persecution by the authorities and the police; confiscation of material; and criminalization of the activity' are some of the encounters they come across while doing work (Dias, 2009). Some literature says that the majority of informal reclaimers rely on the food and clothes and at times furniture from the dumps to sustain their lives and decorate their homes (Beall, 1997; Schenck at al 2012: 19).

Reclaimers do not wait on the state; they create opportunities in an economy that is it not easy to enter and participate, especially for people of lower class. They have done this without any assistance from the government and private companies (Thieme, 2015). This is one reason why they are understood as informal, casual, short term, seasonal workers (Gunsilius

et al, 2011; Millar, 2014). Reclaimers are collecting, sorting and selling recyclables at their own account (Gregson et al, 2016; Samson, 2010a ; Schenck, et al, 2012).

As a consequence of not having legal protection, informal reclaimers are the most vulnerable people in the recycling value chain and are susceptible to exploitation, manipulation and social exclusion (Kamsteeg, 2006; Samson, 2010; Schenck, at al, 2012). However it is very important to note that there is still heterogeneity and power relations within the collective group of reclaimers (Peres, 2016; Mumuni, 2016; Kutwayo, 2015; Merello, 2014; Turcotte, 2012; Tuori, 2012).

One of the dominating characterizations of informal reclaimers is that that they are frequently internal and external immigrants (Medina, 2000; Sentime, 2011; Scheinberg and Anschütz, 2005: 657; Yigits, 2015:3). Migrants from other countries arrive in the country and fail to find formal employment turn to reclaiming to generate an income and, in some case, remit money home (Yhdego, 1994; Holt and Littlewood, 2017). They are not covered by labour laws and benefits that accrue to formal workers (Schenck, 2011; Schenck et al, 2012: 20; Blaauw 2010 and Viljoen, 2012).

2.2.3 Reclaimers as collective actors

It is without a doubt that reclaimers are the kinds of professionals who are solving societal problems from within a system that is not welcoming to informality and irregularity and most importantly dirt (Medina, 2008, 3; Sentime, 2011:4). The work done by reclaimers transforms both their social realities and realities of the people they interact with daily .i.e. local residents or civil society (Millar, 2014). Since the reclaimers had been in the streets there has been a shift in the way that people look at themselves in relation to the reclaimers, and also a shift

in how they dispose their waste. The reclaimers are people from all backgrounds and statuses that recognize the need to engage in the creative knowledge of recycling in order take care of themselves and family (Samson, 2015: 814).

The ways in which reclaimers can organize themselves and the kinds of demands that they make is driven by 'relational autonomy' defined as 'a relative degree of control over work activities and time enables' (Millar, 2014: 349). Reclaimers are easily exploited because of the precarious status of their work. In most times they remain confused about prices at Buyback centers, and it seems the more they resist from being under a formalized system, the more intense control and surveillance is from the authorities. The middle man, who is the person who liaison between the reclaimer and the buyback centre; has forged a relationship permeated by deceit and mistrust; with no legal bonds between them and reclaimers, they hold on to the profit made from reclaiming (Dias, 2000). It becomes more difficult to exploit the informal reclaimers when they are working in an organized supportive network, rather than when they are relatively isolated on the dumps or in the streets (Ezech, et al, 2013). They forged solidarity at the first world conference for waste pickers in Bogota, Colombia, from March 1st to 4th, 2008 (Medina, 2008). And until today, reclaimers forge relations to maximize their profits.

Moore (2009) shows how garbage is used as a political tool for people demanding the 'right to the city' (Moore, 2009; Thieme, 2015: 395). This means creating spaces of solidarity rather than spaces of 'self-interest', by exploiting some of the many contradictions of modernity (Moore 2009: 427; Millar, 2018: 10).

2.3 The conceptualization of reclaiming as ‘complex work’

The literature includes four main different ways of conceptualizing reclaiming as ‘complex work’. Here ‘complex work’ refers to the reclaiming activities which have been intertwined and have subjective meanings or double meaning that can be interpreted in many ways demanding on the context of the study or interest. The four dimension of complex work is reclaiming as dirty, dangerous and demeaning work; reclaiming as a survival strategy and form of livelihood; reclaiming as an informal activity, and reclaiming as a social relation/kinship relation. This helps to provide knowledge and experiences of a reclaimer’s encounter with everyday work.

2.3.1 Reclaiming as dirty, dangerous and demeaning work

Reclaiming is an activity that is an “out of sight and out of mind” experience to the general public. The work is stigmatized and disrespected by people who do not understand it because they have not been paying attention to the practice (Matter, Dietschi and Zurbrugg, 2013; Mbeng, 483). The constant interaction with garbage material within a waste environment has resulted in reclaiming to be perceived as dirty work. The result of getting dirty after reclaiming has become a permanent, inerasable image in the minds of the locals that they met in the street. For once dirt is visible, honest and glorified by the people who are doing the reclaiming, because this is how they make an income. Reclaiming is also associated with unhygienic conditions; there are a lot of gems and chemicals that are in contaminated waste (Gutberlet 2016, 100).

It is an activity that is done in unsafe environments, while reclaimers are exposing themselves to risky and hazardous activities. Most reclaimers which I will talk about shortly surf in trolleys in the dark and have to try and avoids cars while doing that, because one might go under it and crush, it the car driver is not aware or do not seem them. When they are in the bins they come across used injections, razors and other sharp objects that can cut their finger or poison their hands.

The reclaimers do not usually have access to the best protective gear, so instead they use what they can to get to the recycables material. As a result severe and chronic occupational health problems are very common among the recycling workers (Dias, 2012; Matter, Dietschi and Zurbrugg, 2013). Reclaiming is also conceptualized as demeaning work because of the conditions of using minimum resources than what a formal occupation would require (Dias, 2000: 1). Reclaiming is considered smelly, selfless and 'animal-like' behavior because of searching through the bins. This stigma can has waste the lives of many people whose aim was to make honest living through reclaiming. One of the most extreme manifestations of such stigma occurs as 'social cleansing' in Colombia in 1980s where thousands reclaimers were killed by the state police who referred to them as 'disposables' (Ordonez, 1996). A similar case is noted in 1992, around the peak of this activity, eleven corpses of murdered waste collectors were discovered at a university in Barranquilla. Their organs had been sold for transplants and bodies sold to the medical school for dissection (Medina 2009, 155).

2.3.2 Reclaiming as a survival strategy and form of livelihood

Reclaiming has been conceptualized as a "refuge occupation" that informal reclaimers turn to as last resort, or as a stepping-stone to something better when they have no other

opportunities for earning income (Beall, 1997: 84; Samson 2009: 1). Millar (2014: 33) argues that reclaiming has become an act of 'continual returns' since collection of recyclable and reusable materials have become another way to be in control of their time and pursue their personal projects. It is not only about the collection and selling of recyclables, but is an active survival strategy to cope with highly precarious economic circumstances (Leonard 2000, Gutberlet and Hunter, 2008:6). Reclaiming is also seen as a 'tactic employed to help sustain a decent livelihood' (Yigit, 2015, 2-3). It is conceptualized as 'piece work, with nearly every other link in the chain of recuperative activities', separation, sorting and packing out by each reclaimer, who divides his or her time between these three activities (Birkbeck, 1978; 1178). It is also one of the most accessible ways of generating a decent income (Bisschop 2016:1; Velis and Wilson, 2012). An income that is regarded as highly intensive and that is not obtained in a legal way, since picking garbage is not considered stealing.

2.3.3 Reclaiming as an informal activity

Information from Statistics South Africa (SSA) does not identify reclaiming as a distinct category of work (Sentime 2011, Wilson 2009). The act of reclaiming is an informal occupation, which implies that the work of reclaimers is unregulated and unregistered; they have no contracts, no regular income, little recognition and high vulnerability, as well as simple equipment to work (Sekhwela, 2017). Partha Chatterjee says a 'good deal of social conflict across cities in the global south cannot be understood without recognizing that a considerable portion of the population live and work under conditions of informality and or illegality' (Chatterjee, 2004: 2). Due to the informal status of people working within the sector, reclaiming is conceptualized as an unskilled profession that affords unskilled labourers the opportunity to enter the labour market (Viljoen et al, 2015). However, Samson (2015)

demonstrates that reclaiming requires complex skills and epistemological labour. Reclaimers are not uniform, but are a diverse group of people, they include skilled and unskilled people, and immigrants as well as poor local citizens (Sentime, 2011; Medina 2000).

One of the reasons reclaiming is conceptualized as an informal activity is because it is an easy market, there are no barriers to enter and no qualifications, permit or permission is required (Viljoen et al, 2015: Hayami et al, 2006; Theron, 2010; Schenck, at al, 2012: 23).

2.3.4 Resistance to waged labour

Although reclaiming recyclables is not the job that most reclaimers dreamt of, the 'remuneration of a formal job is found insufficient compared to informal jobs' (Millar, 2014: 28). There are many who prefer working 'for themselves' under the more flexible and paradoxically lenient conditions (Birkbeck, 2012: 1176). It is in such instances where reclaiming can be a "form of resistance or refusal to minimum waged labour" (Bourgeois, 1995). Gill and Ganesh, 2006 say reclaiming is an autonomous act that contributes immensely to individual empowerment, it is entrepreneurial and a form of self –help.

2.4. Complex arrangements between the formal and the informal waste and recycling sector

The aim of this section of research is to highlight the different links, dynamics and dimensions that are present in the everyday arrangements and networks both in the formal and informal waste management and recycling sector. Factors that build up to failure of planned programmes that intensifies conflict between the people who are dealing with waste informally as well as formally.

2.4.1. Contested policy and service delivery

Velis, Wilson et.al, (2006) have identified three interfaces between informal reclaimers and the solid waste management system: the solid waste management interface; the material and value interface and the social interface. The interfaces mentioned above happen in both informal and formal sectors, were one the interfaces are dependent on each other. There is a lot of history involved through time-space which affects the lives of ordinary human beings. It also reveals the contestations of policy and service delivery in South Africa particularly focused on how the recycling and waste management. A moment in time where there are inequalities found on issues of service delivery and policy influenced by race difference and socio-economic status.

2.4.2 Social inclusion and recognition

Integration, seen as a way of redoing or replacing the reclaimers into their rightful positions and statuses after the separation at source programme has done dispossessed them. Integration of reclaimers in the waste management system means improving the efficiency of service delivery and maximizing value of waste within the waste value chain. It is argued that "there is not yet a coherent approach or a clear understanding of what reclaimers integration means in South Africa, let alone whether this same understanding of integration is shared by the reclaimers who are being integrated" (Sekhwela; 2017:8).

Integration of informal reclaimers requires consideration of the entire industry waste management plan, aimed at solid waste diversion from landfills and working towards landfill airspace (Godfrey et al, 2016).

For integration to happen and to be a success a 'holistic program that will integrate all the technical, economic, social, cultural and psychological factors that are often ignored in solid

waste programmes' needs to be in all-inclusive structures (Simatele and Kubanza, 2012). The integration model should consist of social inclusion to ensure that it protects the livelihoods. (Godfrey et al 2008; Kashyap and Visvanathan, 2014).Social inclusion means to recognize informal reclaimers as legitimate stakeholders in the waste management system by gaining legal recognition (Medina, 2008; Medina, 2002). It is also important to show the public that authorities recognize the role and the contribution that the informal sector plays in the waste management sector without being free-riders. The integration process requires that the state changes its perspective towards recycling as a social and environmental practice. Medina (2002) says negative attitudes such as repression; neglect or collusion needs to be dealt with accordingly.

2.4.3 Formalization of the informal reclaimers

One of the ways South Africa's authorities are attempting to integrate the informal reclaimers is by formalizing their status through 'a clock in and clock out system' that involves timesheets and addressing clients demands and targets. Formalization in this light includes getting the reclaimers standardized uniform and giving them branded tools and machines that are not in their name [they do not own]. This is one of the state's ideas to ensure that the informal reclaimers are recognized, and empowered within the waste sector and recycling economy (Gutberlet, 2008).

In some countries, reclaimers have mobilized to receive government endorsed identity documents as a way to increase public recognition for their work and normalize reclaiming as respectable work (Chikarmane and Narayan, 2000). Formalization, which does not always

means cooperatives, which is another state programme that was planned by the state to help organize and formalize reclaimers. As a result more informal reclaimers emerged, having less and less joining or forming cooperatives and more forming social groups. Cooperatives are suggested as an alternative to the social exclusion of informal reclaimers. This has left the reclaimers still interdependent on each other and the BBC and even more incorporated in the waste management. This formalization is done so that there is reinforcement in the quality and efficiency of the waste management systems.

2.5 The Anthropology of the everyday

The 'anthropology of the everyday' is concerned with social action and practice theory. It is situated within notions of symbolic and cultural interactions and interpretation (Geertz, 1993; Prus, 1997:142). Attention to the "everyday" in anthropology is about delineating the repetitive actions and practices in everyday life that define the sets of social relations as well as social structure within a given setting. According to Highmore (2001: 19) the work of conceptualizing from the 'aesthetics' perspective; is concerned with lived experience and the form it takes on the ground. Reciprocity and extraction become key points leading the conversations about access, negotiation, and regulation/restriction. These points are anchored back into the broader debates about agency/autonomy, resistance and power. Everyday life becomes problematic when it is treated as a different register to social life (Highmore 2001:19).

The everyday is a social fact to the extent that practices and institutions become routinized (repetition) in both ritualized and non-ritualized social habits. These repetitive actions denote continuities as well as practices of discontinuity (rupture) or resistance. As Michael Gardiner

(2000:10) has written about theorizations of the everyday, 'there is a general agreement that everyday life is not a fixed or eternal feature of social life, but that it has a discernable history'. To this point about continuities and discontinuities in the study of everyday life, both Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel De Certeau (1984) provide us with important insights that have served as points of departure for the study of everyday life. Firstly, Lefebvre (1991a: 57) suggests that the 'singularity of the everyday event reverberates with social and psychic desire as well as the structures of national and global exchange'. Next, de Certeau (1984: 135) points to 'archival practices' to show how the expansion of modernity has influenced how people in society act and how they write. De Certeau pays attention to work that fails to erase repressive structures or mechanisms through action or text. Therefore, for de Certeau, attending to the everyday will also mean attempting to rescue the traces, the remainders of the overflowing unmanageability of the everyday that erupt within representation, and mark the work of repression. Meaning the work-lives of the reclaimers will leave a huge impact, not only in solving global environmental problems through local actions but the way that they are represented will leave an everlasting mark in the lives of reclaimers now and the reclaimers to come, through social practices and identity that encourages and legitimizes reclaiming.

Benit-Gbaffou (2008) and Scott (1998) are scholars who have shown the relationship between the state and its people. It has also shown the patchwork that goes on when state plans and structure have collapsed. 'Micro-ordering', refers to when failed states tries and control the small movements and choices of the people that challenges how they govern. Scott (1998:4) says 'micro ordering' is used to understand how high-modernist ideologies are affecting people's lives in relation to spatial politics and access. This particularly focuses on highlighting 'state's intentions behind the 'huge, utopian changes in people's work habits, living patterns,

moral conduct, and worldview' in the name of 'progress' (Scott 1998:5). Some of immediate kinds of 'micro-ordering' come through privatization of public goods and public spaces.

In contrast, Ferguson (1990) shows the relevance of 'moral economy' by putting forward practical examples of state processes. Ferguson recognizes the autonomy, agency and power of people in the society by showing how they respond to and co-create in the stories of modernity as a master narrative, including those surrounding 'disorder' and its relationship to the politics of security, life, to capital investment, etc. (Ferguson 1990: 379). Signs of social critique, such as boredom, demonstrate how the concept of modernity disrupt the routinization of temporality and experience as socially constituted facts in society (Highmore, 2001). The quality of time is found in the different ways that people in society live and work. This is embedded in the frustration and disappointments of broken promises (Bénit- Benit-Gbaffou, 2008, 2001; Alexander and Reno, 2012; Highmore, 2001).

The ideas centered on the state have put the people at a distance, making it less subjective and filled with western ideals, procedures and experiences. For example state policy and service delivery influenced by western culture becomes problematic and difficult to interpret when implemented in the African context. This is because the difference in culture and motivation that people have towards participation is influenced by the economic and politics of the country. Never the less, a 'body of knowledge and set of technique used on behalf of, those who govern' has conceptualized time as linear and fixed which has hindered the state from being 'humanized' (Chatterjee, 2004: 4; Benit-Gbaffou, 2001:446, Ferguson, 1990).

For an example, western experience shows it is very expensive to establish new formal recovery systems once existing informal ones have been allowed to decline or disappear. It is with this recognition that 'developing economies face the challenge, but also the opportunity,

of building on, rather than replacing, their existing informal recycling systems' (Wilson et al, 2006; 801). Reclaimers should therefore, be treated with care to ensure that interest in their work grow (Nas and Jaffe, 2004).

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3. 1 Methods of data collection

I conducted an overall of twenty-eight interviews over six months that I was in Bekezela. These kinds of interviews are structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured/conversational interviews and focus groups. The nature of my research is exploratory; in that I am using embodiment as a central methodology which assists in guiding the route the interviews will. I conducted five structured interviews. Seven semi-structured interviews and fifteen unstructured / conversational interviews and alongside three focus groups. I used tea breaks and long lunches as opportunities to conduct interviews without being distractive and which motivated the reason why I was there. All the questions were connected and attempting to answer to how reclaimers are affected by separation at source in their everyday reclaiming activity.

3.2.1. Interviews with reclaimers

The interviews happened at Bekezela, Linden, and Northcliff hill, Brixton, Melville, Mayfair and Westdene. There were also interviews conducted in Braamfontein at Wits University as well as in Pretoria, at the Department of Environmental Affairs office, during in between the workshops organized and hosted by my supervisor Dr. Melanie Samson throughout the process of developing national guidelines for reclaimers in South Africa. Most interviews structured interviews I kept more or less to an hour so that the reclaimers do not feel like I am taking much of their time.

On the 15th of June 2017 I did two **structured interviews** with the Bekezela's reclaimer Lucky and Themba (whom I will introduce in the next chapter). One was in the morning with Lucky

between 3:30am and 4:45am and another one was in the afternoon with Themba at about 12pm to 1pm. These interviews were about the reclaimer's life-stories and how they ended up in Bekezela It was also about the nature of reclaiming and how is it unique to them. I asked both ten short and ten long questions, mixed, and I ensure that I translate or explain in Sesotho and even Isizulu words anything that was not clear to them. For Lucky and Themba, this was not their first interview so they knew actually how to respond to the questions, with going off topic. Lucky eve made the effort to move us to a less busy but public space within Bekezela. They avoided talking to their friend at that moment which made it effective and shorter time was spent it on the interview.

3.2.1. Semi-structured interviews:

Interviews started on the 15th June 2017, the day I started fieldwork and continued until 27 November of 2017, my last day of doing fieldwork. I conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews in overall, on and off the streets. For Dude and Themba, sometimes, it was mostly follow ups of things that I we had already discussed in the structured. Semi-structured interviews were also questions that were sparked by the things that I see before me or things that I was expecting to happen but it not experience. These interviews brought me a lot of clarity from what the reclaimers were saying or doing, especially because I was doing embodiment as a methodology which I will discuss later in this chapter.

I asked these so that I knew the intention of why and how we are doing the activity. I interviewed Tebogo, Beauty, Solomon, Tsiietsi, and Mandla; the interviews were less intense which made it easy understand. I mostly relied on the voice recorder and some small paper cards to write down terminology and concepts that were standing out for me. These

interviews had a lot of energy because it was not phrased in a formal way, so it allowed for the reclaimer to reinterpret it in much different way, while getting to answer the questions.

3.2.2. Structured and Semi-structured Interviews residents

I conducted two structured interviews with household residents of Northcliff hill on the 17th of August, 2017. One female resident who is an active recycler and has a good relationship with Tsiietsi, at the age of 70 years of age and a male resident who is around the ages of 78 years old, who is not an active recycler but who speaks passionately about the need for the community to recycle. The targeted the household residents were helpful with providing a history of Separation at Source (S@S) project through their perspective. They were very deliberate when stating the kind of relationship that they have with the city municipality officials and contrated employee. The structured interview consisted of ten prepared question. I did not have time or the space to change I did these interviews while I was working as a reclaimer at the same time. I was the one who encouraged the local residents to engage with the reclaimer through dialogue and speech, which was something that is usual to them.

However, things were slightly different when I was conducting semi-structured interviews with the residents. Then, I listened to the person and let the interviews lead to more information. I did semi-structured Interviews with five questions because I had to keep it short and simple. Although there was a connection, none of the residents wanted to have a follow up interview the next week, but they were happy to give me recycables on my hand. These interviews were usually done in isolation to the rest of the group members or reclaimer, when I was allocated my own street and I was waiting for more bins to come outside the house.

3.2.3. Conversational interviews with reclaimers

In conversational/unstructured interviews, I picked moments during the day when reclaimers were most relaxed or less concerned about their work. These were moments when they were either taking a long break from walking surfing, waiting for the bins to come out, or at the heart of Bekezela separating their recyclables. The reclaimers in the morning would walk slowly while they are waiting for their peers, and then their pace increase at any given moment. Firstly, I would go through my notes to see what I did or did not understand what was being said while on the road. And then, I would go to the person who said or did something interesting or out of the usual. In that way I was able to get to the finer details of the reclaiming processes without making the reclaimers feel the need explain everything to me at once.

Especially, when I could see that my participant is losing interest, or when they seem a little overwhelmed by their task or my presence in spaces. This gives the unstructured interview an advantage over the structured interview. In that it produces more reliable information and may enable the interview subject to bring forward experiences and knowledge that the interviewer had not previously considered. Each unstructured/conversational interview depends on the interviewer and interviewee creating knowledge together, and therefore the characteristics of the interview can vary from one conversation to another (Chilisa and Tsheko, 2014). I threw in question now and again without interrupting the nature of the conversation and the adding or subtraction of people in the conversation.

3.3. Focused working groups

I attended national working group meetings facilitated by Dr. Melanie Samson as part of the process to develop the Guideline on Waste Picker Integration for South Africa. I attended working group meetings at formal settings to record the kinds of dialogues that the reclaimers were having with state officials, sponsors, industry people and academic researchers. This platform allowed me to connect the dots between Separation at Source, the formal waste management sector and the reclaimers. I was doing participant-observation and less embodiment and interviewing.

3.4. Media representations and analysis

Newspaper and online articles offered extracted information; these offer insights into popular cultural representations of waste as cultural socioeconomic and political issue in Johannesburg over the years. The media made it earlier to know about the conversations that were taking place before going to the field of my research. Media representations made me cautions of the ethical stances that emphasize the value and agency of human beings and those that do not. The importance of these analyses also made me realize how the reclaimers that I am studying are critical thinkers and readers of the media. It also brought the understanding of the reclaimers through visual representation and controversial statements produced through quotes (Bubela and Caulfield, 2004; Creswell, 2007).This makes them overall critiques of their representation and also ours, in turn making me reflect deep in our point of view which have been measure depending on the standards that are already set by the media publications. I first looked for both print and digital newspapers or online articles that were either taking about Bekezela, the reclaimers, and reclaiming and Separation at Source. I did prioritize the articles that were discussing Johannesburg case studies, to accelerate my analysis. I looked for Photo essays that were visually appealing and gave me an

idea on how to prepare and what to ask from the reclaimers, such as bringing a peer of gloves or asking for a trolley. Some articles I used to underline themes being discussed during the piloting of Separation at Sources and what or who was being left out.

3.5. Tools in the field:

Electronic tools which are a digital voice recorder and a camera phone are used to make sure that all the information that I want to describe, interpret or analyzed later is stored in a safe and accessible way. The phone is used for both taking pictures and also for communication, this was important especially when I had to call a reclaimer to fetch me at the Total garage so that I can entire Bekezela in a safe way. The methods and tools required for ethnography ultimately guided my intuitiveness in making true, everlasting and honest relationship with the reclaimers in the city. Research findings are written up neatly and connections of the findings is made every night upon return from the field. In order to save on transcribing time, recordings were listened to with only key moments being identified, translated (if necessary) and transcribed. Whilst listening, I took down the time an interval at which key conversations was happening so that they can be referred to with ease later.

3.5. Digital voice recorder

I used a digital voice recorder to collect data for structured and semi-structured and focus groups/meetings. I would make the interviewees aware of the procedures that are involved before taking out the tape recorder. I asked them to sign a consent form and I would explain what is written in the form (see appendix). This was to make sure that both the literate and illiterate people are accommodated and they understand. I would then show them when to tell when the tape recorder is off and when it is on, in case they would like to share with me something off record.

3.6. Cell phone camera

I did not start taking pictures the first time I went to the field because I was aware of how the camera changes the people's expression and overall behavior. I already knew after some discussion that some reclaimers would like to remain anonymous in the research and to the public because of the work that they do.

I also took pictures during waiting intervals on curbsides and when they had discovered something extra ordinary in the bins, which happened very often than not. It was only after I had spent two months that I could take pictures. Then I could tell the true essence of the stories and even how and when to be subjective or objective, while capturing the moments (Musante and De Walt, 2010).Near the end of the research it was interesting to see informal street reclaimers taking pictures of me and each , and this made me think of the changing dynamics of representation, self-reflectivity and self-empowerment that comes with taking pictures (Csikzsentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; McCracken 1988a; Reme 1993; Walker & Moulton 1989). This was beneficial for both of the informal reclaimer and my research. After picture analysis were done, I realized that indeed there is more to what means the eye, the things that I overlooked as I was doing participant observation had a deeper meaning when they were in still pictures (Masolo, 2002). I carried my cell phone in the later stages of research in order to photograph moments of reclaimers and myself while we are in the field to be used as evidence and for further analysis. I would take pictures of streets signs with names so that I could track back the routes we took. This is so that pictures can help me further critique the moments and the way that I am collecting evidence. I was also intrigued by the reclaimers' visual appearances that were unique and bold. I took pictures of reclaimers surfing their on their trolleys; a handmade wooden board with wheels joint together by tennis

balls and a metal handle held together by wires. This is where the recycling bag is placed and attached by ropes to keep stable.

3.7. Methodology

Ethnography is qualitative research; it requires for the researcher to observe and participant with the people that they are studying while doing research. It looks through small, mundane things within human activities and interaction that are overlooked daily in society (Pawluch et al, 2005). 'Participant observation' is used to gather this data, acting as a yardstick, ensuring that information is not escaping the interviewer or observer (Argamannu, 2003; Fine and Weis, 2003; Crang and Cook, 1995). Both these methods are considered to be uniquely performed in anthropology through learnt behavior depending on bodily senses, casual conversations, and doing deep chilling in the streets. Embodiment: this paper takes its influence from Philippe Bourgeois text (1989) 'just *another night on Crack Street*' which provides a classic example of how the ethnographer switches between being an insider and an outsider, while as the same time recognizing the value of others as equal actors in the social dramas of society. This technique is merged with embodiement; which is an 'intensely sensuous way of knowing' (Conquergood, 1991: 180). I used the embodiement technique excessively in my research to draw upon more encounters and overlooked of the reclaimer's daily practices and experiences. It was my responsibility to wear the necessary gear such as Personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow my instincts while following my participants above. Physically, I was working in an environment where I found myself at risk of much infection and constant danger and harassment. Thus, I conducted most of my fieldwork outside in the streets and although it was cold most of the time, there was hardly rain, and this made my research much more doable because all the reclaimers were available on the

road. I usually took some time away from the field whenever the experience was becoming emotionally and psychologically draining for recreational purposes.

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"*What exactly is it that you want to know?? We have answered all your questions…I've once showed a group of students around the area where I was working in Park town, which is now closed. They never came back"* says a curious reclaimer who throws his trolley onto the ground, positioning it in a way that gives him a better perspective of what is going on inside my trolley. I had placed my bag with a notepad peeking from the side a bottle of water. He looks and then continues to say;*"They promised to come back with solutions but after they heard stories of how we struggle, they never came back… GONE FOREVER!!"*

At first I thought of an immediate response, to say that I am doing a different kind of research all together, with the hope that it will get him excited. However, I silently nodded and thought of the shared sentimental that we have coming from two schools of thought. He thought that all researchers are the same and most people who study or see reclaiming from an outsider's perspective thinks that all the reclaimers are the same. However in reality this is not the case.

I had to prove that am there for meaningful and lasting relations, so the methodological approach that I used considered the way that the reclaimers work. I adapted a method that enabled me to interview the reclaimers while they are going through their daily work routines. I had no intensions of removing the reclaimers off the streets and off reclaiming to talk to me but I instead joined them as they worked. This was so I could get closer and experience the world of reclaiming with them. I was in the field atleast twice a week, and sometimes once. I

strategically asked to follow them on Thursdays because it was the day my participants went to the study sites in Northcliff, where separation at source was fully operating between private companies and household residents. I also went on particular Wednesdays to meet female reclaimers, such as Beauty. Most female reclaimers stopped going to Northcliff after separation at source was implemented. It was getting harder for them to travel such long distances for little benefits leaving their kids and homes unattended because they would come back late from Northcliff. Towards the end of the research I added extra days, visiting the field on Fridays, because I wanted to know how they weigh their recyclables. This was also the only time the reclaiming group, Royals took their separated material the buyback centre. At first was weekly, and after a while they started weighing monthly.

I had decided that since my research participants were not getting any monetary gain from answering my questions and partaking in my research the least I could do was to give them all the recyclables that I had collected on each day. This was a token of my appreciation and to build healthier relationships with them. I used the collected waste material to pay off the rented trolley from Dude, who is a reclaimer who has his own business on the side. At the end of each day, I would hand a bag of recyclables worth around R75 to R90, to the person who was guiding me and then he would decide how to divide the percentages amongst the people in the group and also Dube. I also did not follow on how much went there because my positionality could not allow me. This was a success because the people that I was interviewing were a working group not a corporate or individuals. The outcome was going to be different, if there were all sorts of contracts and tax involved or if the people were working separately from each other.

Data gathering through embodiment as a method is a demonstration along the participants own intention and will, the processes of 'writing against culture' (Abu-Lughod, 1991). Prioritizing both lived experiences of the self and others in obtaining better description of how fluid, impulsive, complex, objective and subjective culture is in multiple contexts. It is also to reveal how ethnography might dissolve and/or disappear if followed through the 'read-then-do-then-write model' and not recorded as firsthand experience (Cook, 2008: 2).

Anonymity and pseudonyms

Most of the reclaimers asked to remain anonymous in this report because of the nature of their work, which has been degraded and devalued in society, and because I had explained how the research was part of a broader study to develop the Guideline on Waste Picker Integration in South Africa. As I had told the reclaimers that I would take the research report back to them, this added extra impetus to their desire to remain anonymous. I therefore gave everyone pseudonyms.

3.8. Limitations:

Limitations are the challenges that any researcher faces when in the field. Sometimes it is those shortcomings that I could prevent with the right amount of preparation. Sometimes it was factors that made the research almost impossible to continue. Some reclaimers wanted to answer question on the first interview but did not want to be contacted for further research. This was because they did not want to be seen spending a lot of time in the field with the researcher. I also had a problem with locating subjects and gaining their co-operation because the reclaimers are a diverse group of people who have different life-styles (Lee, 1993; Gelles, 1978). As this research report was part of a taught masters degree, limited time was

available for fieldwork. I did all I could to ensure that equal amount of work is done on both course assignments and spending time in the field.

As a female ethnographer entering in a male dominated space where women are usually perceived as physically weak compared to men. I took into consideration that not everyone has the same perspectives and objective on gender equality. As a result, male reclaimers explained that they have a choice of withdrawing from participating at anytime they feel threatened, offended or under pressure to answer questions. Therefore it was important to be aware of how jargon is used and by who, how to do an ice-breaker or phrase a question which in most cases made it easy for the participants to response and more attentive. At times it was hard to convince reclaimers that I was partaking in embodiment for research and not as another competitor, especially when it came to territorial spaces. It was hard for them to trust again, for those who were fully engaging.

3.9 Ethical Considerations:

Before starting with any interview, I firstly introduced myself and the purpose of the interview to the interviewee and to make the informant understand where and how the answers given will be used. If necessary, I produced my student card to show identification. I familiarized myself with the Anthropology Southern African ethical guidelines (2005). I waited until I had ethical clearance from the ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand before I could undergo any form of research with chosen participants. A consent form was provided for the participants to read and to be signed. This ensured that they understand that their identity is protected and they can withdraw from the research, whenever they want to do so.

I ensured that the people whom I asked to participate in my research fully understood my research question and the information gathered from interviews, observations, and survey. This was an essential step so that we have it document if any of us decides to go against what was agreed upon. It was also to make the reclaimers aware that their responses are part of a bigger contribution and might be read somewhere else in South Africa. It was necessary to explain to people that my research project will be read by my supervisor (s) marking the work. I also did indicate that because of agreement in the study the paper will be used to formulate policy guideline and also will be accessed by the public in the wits library system portal.

Once I was sure that people fully understand what my research project is about, the reason why I am conducting this research as well. The information that I gathered, I can asked for their verbal consent so that it can be recorded of the digital voice recorder.

I was aware of the risks and dangers that are encountered in the field ensured that research does not increase the prospect of harm

3.10. Reflectivity and Positionality

Suddenly in the moment as I was being 'called out' by Themba, my identity was exposed. I become 'outsider' in the reclaimer's clothes, registered student anthropologist with university access and certain privileges. The image of being an informal street reclaimer was not there anymore. It appeared to me as it appeared to them, that I was going back and forth, through these identity barriers to make meaning of their daily work-lives in Johannesburg. I noted Themba's behavior; the first few times I had to transition from a reclaimer interviewer. There were moments when I pulled out the pen and paper to record something that I found interesting, which I wanted to recall later. It was either him or his colleagues who would raise

their heads and listen attentively, waiting patiently to hear who will respond first and how they will respond. However, overtime it became something overlooked and almost invisible; as I spent more time reclaiming with them.

Fortunately, it was reclaimers who made it easy to accept and acknowledge my identity as an 'insider and outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009: 57). Only after this discussion and many others, I could see how being a member of the reclaimers can over cloud my analysis. So, I was constantly asking if I can continue to assist in the reclaiming after I was done with the interviews, which took between thirty to forty-five minutes each day, and I did two or three interviews.

Learning to unlearn has been a big part of this project myself and research participants (reclaimers and municipal officials) in the field. Over time the participants learned how to accommodate me in the field by getting used to the way I asked question and giving the responses that they see fit for what I am trying to answer. It seemed like each time I write most of our conversations I was becoming the 'problematic' and detached researcher that: I was trying so hard not be. I became both a 'halfie' and feminist anthropologists, with 'split selfhood and multiple audiences, traveling uneasily between 'speaking for' and 'speaking from' (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 467-469).It was in similar tensions where I had to participate, speak, observe and write from somewhere. My positionality became clearer as I spent more time doing fieldwork. Being a black anthropologist in the field was not enough. I had to consider the fact that I am a South African, female anthropologist, of a different class background and financial status, and a unique motivation to why I am reclaiming. The more I positioned myself in relations to the reclaimers; I became even more sensitive to the power relationships at play. All the other elements that I bring to the field, started to determine how

close I was going to be to the people that I have chosen to study and their designated locations state them. Taking up from Abu-Lughod words, it is these kinds of analysis that made me realize the importance of stating ethnographic representations as 'partial truths' and 'positioned truths' (1991: 469).

I could possibly live similar experiences through mind-body sensibility, with a lot of calculated risks involved and deep reflectivity. This is because I am only with them for a short period of time in a week; also considering the fact my study was not focused at following the reclaimers into their domestic spaces reclaiming hours.

3.11. Conclusion

However, the reclaimer's undertone of resistance has been continuous for generations. They have owned every piece of their reclaiming practices and made their work-lives worth following by researchers and other scholars. The reclaimers leave these ruptured, broken and slow settings within Bekezela, fast-pacing assertively to wheelie bins on the curbsides which have changed their life's rhythm completely. The way that the reclaimers work, play, dress and plan their life is different from the rest of the poor people who are not doing reclaiming. This is because the reclaimers have figured out how to live their lives through reclaiming. Reclaimers at Bekezela have broken stereotypes of what it means to be young, unemployed and poor in a space that is almost impossible to dream.

Chapter four: “From Bekezela with Hope”

Bekezela is located in Newtown, an area well-known as a hub for crime, with a large number of hijackings, smashes and grabs taking place on the M1 highway (Sejake, 2016). It is dominated by mostly male and a few female residents who do precarious work in the city including being car guards, casual DJs, past-time cooks and cleaners but most of them are informal reclaimers. Most importantly the third of the population is unemployed, ill or/ and disabled. They are living in a closed-off community of around two hundred adults who migrate

from the rural areas in Lesotho, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and townships such as Soweto and Katlehong in search for better assess and resources.

The homeless are found lying on the floor outside in the patio joined by those who sleep in rooms, who are mostly these are people with spouses, a strong kinship linage in the community and a good sense of history of the place. From a bird's eye view one could see cars passing above people's homes from the highway without the residents being bothered by it. It seems like Bekezela residents have embodied its name which means to 'endure' or to 'persevere' in Isizulu (Panchia and Bega, 2017). This is also a place in the city where service delivery does not reach because it being on the fringes of the city; at is only one tap in the entire yard and no toilets in the premises.

It is 04h15 on the 15th of June 2017 a cold Thursday winter morning in an old-abundant college that is designed like a compound with a patio situated in the middle of the yard. The area that some call a patio and others call at 'stoep' (a veranda in front of a house) is noisy as the residents of Bekezela and the homeless are chattering about the terrible experience the community had endured of being evicted by the Red Ants (private security company hired by private companies) a few weeks ago. Residents are discussing items that were lost when they were being removed from their homes, including identity documents; birth certificates, work permits, and even chronic medication (see also Panchia and Baga, 2017 for a report of similar hardship by Bekezela after relocations). "I don't even know where to start looking for work, because I came here prepared, with all my papers, now I have nothing", says one resident. Some residents are contemplating loudly the option of going back to where they lived before coming to Bekezela. The reasons for leaving are connected to the socio-economic issues that they are still facing in the city.

“We have no other place to go. When they say we must leave, where do they say we go?” says another male resident from under an old peeling pool table showing only half his body, close to the fire that is surrounded by only men. Just as I am becoming more attentive, he ends the conversation short, and jumps off the patio insisting that I go introduce myself to Dube. He suggests this before I drift aimlessly around in the space hoping for interviews without everyone knowing who I am and my connection to the space. “You must not forget that here (Bekezela) we are mix”, says Lucky, alluding to the fact that Bekezela has a diverse group of people. Some of the people have intensions of doing crime, drugs, fighting, while others are more interested in recycling, developing the youth and creating a safe for everyone. This comes as a cautious reminder to be careful of who I talk to and where I go within the premises.

As we start walking towards Dube’s place, Lucky says to me; “Make sure you call me before you make your way into Bekezela. Dube's wife does not like calls so early in the morning. And residents here respond differently when they do not know you. It might be dangerous to walk in alone. It is better if there is someone they know to walk you in”. We curved into passages leading to where Dube resides. I observed the entire place left in upheaval. Mattresses were leaning up against walls in front of the rooms outside. Lucky trips over a stainless steel pot that is on the ground, it is almost impossible to avoid stepping on people’s clothes scattered everywhere around the yard. This has thought be me that reclaimers respect their personal time and they are family orientated but not all of them.

Outside, away from the patio, is of a group of four nyoape (drug) smokers who stay waiting looking away, drowsily. Some are in their early twenties and others in their late teens, all have

their backs to Dube's tuck shop while seated flat on the ground. They raise and drop their heads to ask for money every time someone comes to buy from Dube's tuck shop.

4.1. How does informal reclaiming for Bekezelas look like

Bekezela Informal reclaiming engage in reclaiming to ensure that they money to buy food and other things that they need. Reclaiming for most people who live here consists of irregular hours, ranging from three to twelve hours day. Reclaimers there believe that rest is important so most reclaimers have a pattern of taking atleast one day off reclaiming so that they can sleep longer hours and also treat themselves to something fun and less connected to the work that they do.

Most reclaim share the sentiments of protecting their work through demarcating streets for themselves of where they reclaim and even going to an extent of maintaining these territories through street fights and group bullying. This all depends on where the recycables are and how it is accessed. Reclaimers who I have interviewed say that this is how they found reclaimers before them making sure that no one is not who is stealing from them. This means that after the reclaimers have created territorial streets based on where they stay, and they try by all means to 'keep the recycables' in their community of Bekezela.

The Bekezela reclaimers also share the sentiment of fair and equal reclaiming, which have become one of the 'unspoken rules' that the reclaimers obey. Fair and equal reclaiming for the reclaimers at Bekezela means that the people who have strong, healthy bodies must go reclaim far from Bekezela, because they are able travel long distances. The reclaimers who are disabled or the reclaimers, who are old, are then 'given' the streets that are closer to Bekezela in order to make ensure they are able run back to Bekezela whenever they feel unfit

to continue. Women are also given an exception because they have to take care of their households and children while engaging in reclaiming.

These are some of the informal ordering that the Bekezela reclaimers have done for themselves, so that they do not fight with their neighbors over reclaiming. If someone disobeys some of these rules that the reclaimers have had for generations, they are put on sanctions; which are given by the collective group of Bekezela reclaimers, whom the majority is old reclaimers. When a reclaimer is sanctioned they have to carry the trolley and the load of the person who they have offended for almost a month until the sanction committee says it is enough. A trolley, a self-made pulling cart that is made up of wood, and tennis balls and rubber wheels, it is used to place and carry the recycables around the city in a fast and efficient way without littering on the roads. Sanctions are one of the way that the reclaiming culture at Bekezela have been kept sustainable for years, and this is also why it is the most dominating work activity in Bekezela with more and more people joining the informal sector each year. It is deemed precarious because they do not have a sustainable income from the daily work, yet continue to do reclaiming and being considerate of each other's weakness and strengths. Now and again, a reclaimer's silhouette is spotted bouncing on the city buildings at night, as they make their way into the informal settlement, where they completely disappear.

4.2. Profiling the reclaimers at Bekezela

In this section I introduce each reclaimer and make visible the intentions that they have towards reclaiming. I will also provide the deliberate and subtle answers about reclaiming and separation at source (S@S)that the reclaimers had while I was in their space. I will also explain the dynamics of group formation and group orientation of the Bekezela plus which I have

already mentioned above and the Royals, which is a sub-group emerging from the Bekezela plus.

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4.2.1 Lucky:

"Dube was one of the first people to welcome me when I got here" Lucky responds to the question that I have asked him early of how he ended up becoming a resident of Bekezela. He holds on with both his hands to a rusted pole in front of the patio while easing into our conversation and getting closer to the bonfire. Lucky's personality is vibrant, full of energy and loud. He is in his early thirties, light skinned, a bit shorter than the average man outspoken and articulate. He is one of the first reclaimer from Bekezela whom I had spoken to upon arrival to Bekezela. It was almost month later, I went to Bekezela to do the research. Lucky was the one who encouraged me so much to take up the research there when I went to introduced myself to him, at a workshop that was convened by the City of Johannesburg and Pikitup. I was invited to the workshop by my supervisor, Dr. Melanie Samson who wanted me to learn about the issues and the ways the City is engaging with reclaimers and hopefully meet the reclaimer I wanted to interview. Indeed I did meet Lucky who was zealous and asking critical questions to the City officials with confidence.

The workshop happened on the 17th and 18th of May in 2017 on the 05th floor of Traduna House, 118 Jorissen Street Braamfontein. Landfill reclaimers and street reclaimers came in numbers to attend two day workshop with the City and Pikitup to hear what the city has for them. In the hall, some reclaimers have been in the reclaiming activities for more than ten years and also the ones who have just recently joined a few months ago. Reclaimers from the

Marie Louise landfill came wearing blue and white t-shirts which they have printed for themselves as a group, written 'Marie Louise- reclaiming the future'. "I have heard around the landfill as we work that they said that they want all the reclaimers off the landfills, so I want to know where they say we must go because there are already people working in the streets", says Sipho who is a landfill reclaimer in Dobsinville, Soweto.



Figure 2: The reclaimers were invited to a meeting that was organized by city of Johannesburg and Pikitup.

"You cannot just stand there and tell us what to do. We are not kids." Lucky, a reclaimer from Bekezela stands up the middle of the crowd to reprimand a Pikitup official who was talking

about how separation at source was going to be executed around Johannesburg. The meeting was an open dialogue between the city of Johannesburg, Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD), Pikitup and a large group of informal reclaimers in Johannesburg to map a way forward and to start a conversation around waste management in the presence of informal reclaimers and Separation at Source (S@S) was one of the heated topic that reclaimers were looking forward to. At first, it began as if the municipality was pitching to the informal reclaimers why they think they should form cooperatives and become formalized. *"It is undeniable that you are the ones who started to do recycling in the streets, but we own the streets",* says a representative from the City's Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD).

The atmosphere in the room had changed after the reclaimers heard what the officials were saying. Reclaimers were starting to feel the implications of the state's programmes that were being initiated without any concern for how reclaimers would be affect or what reclaimers want. They expressed it with a lot of noise, chatting amongst each other, when a state official was still speaking about 'Separation at Source'. Most reclaimers were voicing out how the S@S programme was perceived as a long term programme by the state through policy but for them it is similar to'Jozi@works (Motau, 2018) ',which was as an initiative of the former ANC mayor and was short-lived as it was canceled by the DA when it won the most recent local government elections.

The reclaimers expressed how unhappy they were with conditions on the ground. During the lunch hour, I observed Lucky collect all the cans of cold drink that the reclaimers were given during the lunch provided by the city. *"Since I cannot be out there doing work, I might as well reclaim here",* he said half-jokingly. This one I argue is another form of resistance that I have

observed from Lucky, who felt like the city was wasting his time discussing plans that they had already made decision on.

Then, at the workshop Lucky was his casual clothes, but when we met at Bekezela, he was wearing blue overalls with neon reflecting stripes, shining black working boots and a big red round rubber watch attached to his wrist which he frequently glances at now and again. Lucky tells me that he is looking for opportunities of obtaining permeant formal employment through the construction work that he has been doing through temporary tenders in the city. He says that he got this post after; he attended the meeting with the City. One of the officials called him to the side and asked how he can be assisted. It seems here that Lucky got helped because he was vocal about his pain, in a way that can be influential and radical on other reclaimers as well. So, because he appeared as a leader, he was help. What about the thousands of the other reclaimers who cannot stand up and talk back to authority because of lack of articulation?

The same morning on the 15th of June Lucky and I stand close to Dube's door while we wait for him to finish selling to his clients at the tuck shop. When I ask Lucky where home is, he answers me saying “Home for me is Naledi in Soweto. I try and go home at least every second week. I can’t go back every day because of other commitments around the city concerning the work that I do. Sometimes I knock off very late and sometimes I have to wake early, in the AM. At that time there isn’t transport that can get me this side. It is worse now that I have this tender job, at a construction site; they hardly see me at all” Lucky explains.

He lives with his family, his Mother and younger sister in the main house in Naledi and on top of that he has recently rented a room closer to accommodate his expecting fiancé. I ask him again, so “Are you going to be a father?” His face lit up when he told me the news, smiling

and nodding a little to the side, taking a stretch and then looks back to answer back to my questions. Lucky seems like his mind is scarred everywhere, so I am also not asking the entire hard question at one go.

> *"Even today I was supposed to go to Northcliff with all of you, but I have to return to the construction job for my day shift. I am only meeting you because I promised to do so, and I am on break at the moment. I am from my night shit which ended now at 2am as we speak and I am going in again at 7am…. Tomorrow I am off but again I won't have time to go reclaim, I will have to accompany Dube to your legal school at Wits, to discuss with the people there things relating to the Bekezela' case on [being] evicted".*

Lucky, says it has been almost three years, if not more, that they are attending various meetings to make arrangement with city authorities and PRASA railway who are responsible for the eviction. *"The good thing is that when I am here, I do not have to pay any rent. They know me here, so I am 'covered' (meaning it is all taken care of)".* I argue here that even the relationships that have been put together by reclaiming start to have other rewards that come with it such as rent and formal employment, for those whose intensions are to move out of the reclaiming sector into the other forms of employment. Although, in most cases the jobs that they want to not last and the reclaimers are seen returning back to reclaiming. I have also observed that even reclaimers who have received a job elsewhere try to keep the relationships that they have maintained until this far, so that they can be able have a 'second income' from where else or a backup plan in the instances they get disappointed or mis-used. What Lucky does when he is not reclaiming is to give someone that he knows and trust the spot that he has earned over the years to reclaim, once they are well integrated in the

informal reclaiming once they feel the urge to work independently without the feeling of owing anyone.

4.2.2. Dube

Lucky knocks on Dude's door; "Take it easy man; you will bring down my door!" exclaims Dube. Lucky bangs the door once more and then leans over his door to hear if he is coming. There are two other young men also lining up to buy loose cigarettes at Dube's tuck shop; which is functioning from his kitchen divided by a bedsheet to keep privacy from his own bedroom. He quickly dresses up and comes out, wearing yellow overalls with a slogan 'Jozi@works' at the back in white. Dube is in his mid-forties, two meters tall, with a deep round loud laugh. He readily comes out of his home carrying a bunch of keys in his hands. We walk to open the room from which he is running his a tuck shop, and go into the space here he rents and sells his trolley from.

Dube is one of the reclaimers who have been reclaiming for a long time.. "Bekezela is the only place that I know, I have no other place to go", says Dube. Dube's control over particular spaces at Bekezela and his identification as a sort of landlord show the central places of power from which social life spiral from. He says that his mom was one of the people who begged the owner of the college to give them Bekezela as a residential area after it was closed down, and he says he was there when residents of Bekezela fought the City officials who wanted to take the place from them the early 2000s.

He is thirty-five years and got involved into reclaiming because of his mother who is also a reclaimer an experienced male reclaimer who has been living in Bekezela for over ten years. He tells me this as he is busy handing out trolleys to people going *to reclaim, he explains:*

> *"My mother is also a reclaimer longer than I have been; she is the one that took care of me when I was young. Even now she is still reclaiming and is invited in prestigious events hosted by Pikitup and the City. She is also the one who was fighting for us to have access to Bekezela before moving to Thulamtwana in Orange Farm. She is now known in all municipal offices in the city, and she also gets invited to waste stakeholder meetings and gatherings". (Dube, 2017, June 15)*

As I follow Lucky and Dube around, noticing sweets and chips that I would normally come across being sold by the street vendors around town packaged in clear transparent plastics. A sack orange is dangling from his kitchen wall next to a recent printed calendar over a back drop of burnt wall from the eviction. Dube goes around opening a door of a room made of corrugated iron sheets (also known as a shack) extended to his personal room and the tuck shop. This is where he keeps all his trolley for people to rent. The trolleys were packed in streamlines, like cars waiting to be bought from a showroom, although these are all held to a thick rope and metal chain connected to them."This is how we live" Dube declares abruptly moving towards where he keeps his trolleys, and the reclaimers are met with more sounds of tin buckets emerging from the inside of the storage room; Tsiietsi, Themba, Njabulo, and Reitumetsi (Royals) are watching Dube fight his way in to reach the back of the room. He says that he tries to keep the trolleys at the back, away from the door because he does not want anyone to steal from him.

"Dube is now working for Pikitup temporarily and still reclaiming when he needs to", says Lucky encouraging Dube to speak. He says that he comes very far with the recycling issues in the city; at one point he was part of 'Jozi@works' which was a state initiated programme that tackles unemployment, poverty and inequality by empowering community cooperatives and enterprises lead by the Major then, who was Parks Tau (COJ, 2016).

Dube and some people who have been reclaiming for a long time were stopped from working in 2016 after the administration was taken over by the DA (Naki, 2018). Now he is once again doing temporary work with Pikitup which includes night-shifts not knowing when Pikitup might decide to end his contract. He further says that he relies on his wife to keep the cooperative (registered team of reclaimers) that he manages, going and it has been standing for two years now. "We do not want to add more people [the coop] because it gets complicated when there is money involved." Dube further says he does not go to Northcliff anymore because it is far for him and he has to come back early to attend his other businesses in the central business district of Johannesburg. As a result, he only collects in the inner city, around End and Pritachard Streets, as well as in nearby Parktown. The places where Dube reclaim, separation at source (S@S) has not been 'roll out'. However, I decided to follow Dube, because he is deemed an important figure in the community and is respected because of the contacts that he has made in and around Bekezela. The networks that he has makes him a power of authority, because people know that he can either find them or work, formal or informal or he can make the relations that you have established to disappear. He is also the one who had established a functioning tuck shop and a trolley service centre, in a place where most people are poor and pity themselves.

In the after before I could go home at around 4pm after the sorting I left the Bekezela plus and walked to Dube's home. Since I had to return the trolley and give him a small amount of money which I had made from reclaiming. Only to find Dube's wife, Dolly in a bright floral dress sitting near a table on 25 liter plastic bucket opposite the door, watching all his clients as they entire, buy something from the spaza shop and leave. She stretches her hand to give the customer some change of the cigarettes loose and told him that she would not give him any smokes on credit. She keeps her coins between two plastic side plates; now and again he throws it in and then reaches back for a change. Their son is also around sitting in between the kitchen and window on top of a washing machine; he is wearing a short black wig and bright yellow skinny pants and has a piercing near his mouth and the top of his nose. Both Dolly and Dube tell me that their son is studying, but Dube does not seem impressed with his choices, even though he has accepted his character. *"He prefers to sit here, in the house; he does not want to do anything related to reclaiming".* Dube adds in his presence. Then the son tries to avoid them and continues chattering away with his mother's friend, and they are all talking about people around Bekezela and what they do when they are drank. The radio is playing loudly in the background, In the middle of the kitchen; there is a brand new generator, which looks like it is almost gathering dust. "I will be trying out this generator this week since the electricity here has been going and coming back nowadays, since the evictions.

4.2.3. Dolly

That afternoon at about 3pm on the 15th of June 2017, I could see the presence of women which was an element that was missing in the morning at 4am. I spotted women sitting in front of the houses and also more people were seated in and around the high patio. I came across a woman by the name of Dolly who was wearing her dark pink blouse, silver lipstick, and blue eye shadow. She was laughing at the stories told by her friend who is busking in the sun seated on a bench next to her door. She was going in and out of her room to listen closely to what he friends are saying and while at the same time she was chopping onion from her hand and putting in the pot.

When I was approaching her door to talk to her she said that she will only talk with me tomorrow morning when she is reclaiming, which was going to be a Friday, 16th of June, 2017. It was a public holiday, known as Youth day in South Africa and still she was going out to reclaim in the early mornings. Dolly is in her late forties, he stays with her partner who she has introduced to reclaiming. His partner is not as keen as Dolly when it comes to reclaiming yet, he goes where beauty says they go because they have to make sure they have food on the table. Dolly has established long term relationships of three years with the residents of Mayfair. There are other reclaimers in the space and other than the Bekezela plus, reclaimers who go to Mayfair are individual reclaimers who are territorial. Please go anywhere where they want to go but there is a routine that most people follow because it involves how the reclaimers engage with the reclaimers. “Today I am cooking my darling, as she addresses me. My partner has to eat early and sorry I cannot talk to you when I am not on the job. Ya, tomorrow, sure thing”. She blows me a diva kiss and waves at me to move and so I continued next door where Dube stays.

On the day that I went with Dolly to reclaim, I realized that he does not have to work up early in the morning because Mayfair is the closes location to Newtown, we went there around 7-7:30am and when Dolly go there she knew which houses to go to collect her recycables. The bins where the last place that she looked because the residents there do not do separation at source. One of the house that Dolly said we must go collect was a house where the household resident is a shop owner, so she keeps all the boxes for her in the garage and when Dolly came to the door she could ring the bell freely and she was attended to. This is also because the area is not a high gated community. Dolly's partner, was new to reclaiming and hard to attend the bins but because Dolly's wanted the residents to get use to him, she took him along when she was collecting in specific designated houses.



Figure 3: Showing the boxes that were kept separate by the local resident for Dolly to collect, picture by Manape Shogole

As we can see in the picture below that even though Mayfair has not been introduced to separation @source, Beauty is already asking the residents to separate certain waste material for her to collect. It can then be argued then that the reclaimers are not only the collectors of waste recyclables but they are also catalyst of Separation at Source (S@S) especially in places where they have established good relationship with the residents based on accountability and respect. "Once you have started reclaiming, it is not easy to let go and forget," says Dolly (2017) who is a female reclaimer who has been reclaiming for over ten years.

4.2.3. Tsiietsi

On the 13th of July 2017, I slowly walk behind Tsiietsi, twenty-four years of age male reclaimer from Free-State. He has been for a little over six years and he has a younger brother, Reitumetsi who has also recently joined him in the city and in the reclaiming that he does. It seems like he was avoiding talking to me, but eventually, after a long day of spending time with them he eventually did open up. Pushing his trolley up the slope with his back so he could face me, as we move up; he says

> *"Ma Seister! (MY SISTER) I started reclaiming in 2011 and never stopped since. At first, I did not know much about it, but because I wanted to make a better livelihood for myself, I asked to follow the guys who were reclaiming at the time which happened to be Dube and Lucky, these are the people who I would see reclaiming and I saw that people actually do make an honest living (they do not criminal activities) they just collect trash. I also started reclaiming on a full-time base since 2011 around March. At first I would borrow a trolley from Dube and then pay him when I come back at the end of the day, depending on how much money I have made on that day…. Home is back*

in Lesotho, and I have not been there for a long time. I do talk to my family sometimes but not as often as I would like to. When I call, my sisters update me on what is happening. I want to get a job but my papers are not with me. My papers are at home and getting them this side is a long procedure.[but]I know my ID number by the head in case I get a formal job. The actual ID I would need to collect from home. This might take two or three months depending on what happens at the borderline".

The response provided by Tsiietsi here shows that there are some reclaimers who keep their options open, even though reclaiming is what they have been doing ever since they got to the city. Reclaiming informally allows them to avoid, a lot to confrontation that they would possibility have with the state officials if they had to go to their homelands. However, we see the confrontation is starting to happen somehow because of this engagement that the City has with waste through Separation at Source (S@S).

Then he moves to the other side of the road, and I follow; "You know I cannot be seen talking to you because the mother of my child would get so jealous. I used to reclaim with her, but now she is crazy…. "Things changed last year when she started using drugs and started fighting everyone. I have worked for everything that I have, and I do this for my daughter. However, now her mother (Tsiietsi's ex girlfriend) asks for money saying it is for the baby but it is for her drugs. All of this happened after she had the baby.

His face changes to sadness, when I ask if he thinks that things will ever go back to what they were. Tsiietsi had his face downwards and did not make any more eye contact after that. It was utter silence nothing but the sound of the trolley and buzzing cars and taxis surrounded

us. He ends the conversation by saying; “I guess this is my life now,” and surfs away knowing well that I will not keep up. It seems like Tsiietsie thinks even though going back to Lesotho would be a great idea, the poverty there is worse than when they are at Bekezela. The dispossession of the reclaimers is happening on the street, in Bekezela and as well as in their own personal lives. It would be better if atleast their work conditions can be improved. The most common pain that drives the reclaimers is sitting at home watching their family starve, while they have the ‘responsibility to provide for them.

The reclaimers have been criminalized because of how they look and their acts have been deemed strange and at times offensive to the public and police officers. “I have been arrested twice in the police station here in John Foster square but, after a week, they did not know what to do with me, and I was back to reclaiming within two week of being delayed and kept waiting. The first time that the police arrested me was, because of a fight between me and person who was living in Bekezela. We were both drunk and he decided to go lay a charger over a fist fight. The second time, it was a fault accusation case, in this instance I was mistaken for someone who stole from a household resident in Northcliff and I was called in for questioning and locked up for a few days and then said I can go home. No one bothered to explain what was going on with the case and I do not know what happened even now” (Tsiietsi, 2017, July 17th). In cases such as Tsiietsi’s reclaimers remain with these criminal records which keep them in the reclaiming sector for their whole life. They become less desirable to the employment sector as a consequence of the stigma of being criminalized in society.

> *“The mother of my child wants to take me to the police, because she is saying that I should not see my child and I fear for my life because the police will take her side and*

the criminal record will come up and I might be arrested again. It is worse because I do not even have papers to protect me; I came into the country by paying a bribe at the borderlines. She is filing for child support, and soon I will have to leave work and go to court weekly and face the police again". Says Tsiietsi

Tsiietsi is pointing out to the fact that his personal life does get in the way of his reclaiming business in that when he attends these personal demands, he misses out of income or the relationships that he was trying to build with the residents are compromised. His profit making is reduced and working relations are compromised. For an example if this case goes on for long enough, someone might take over his territory where he works. You will see her when we return if she is still there." He then surfs fast to the front of the line to catch up with everyone else.

Themba

Themba who is also from Free State is twenty three years has been reclaiming for two year, he started late 2015. He is usually stands out of the crowd because of his white rosary that he lets dangle over his t-shirt. He came to Johannesburg after her mother had passed away, at a tender age of seventeen years. He had to leave Free State because the conditions were not very pleasant anymore. Her aunts were fighting for the house ownership, and they were stingy with food and hide things from him because he has not been working for the longest of times.

"I came to the city looking for my father at Bekezela, late 2014, and only to find out that he stays with another woman in Thulamtwana. , Dube told him that his father moved a few weeks after hearing that he was in the city."

Themba admits that he was broken but decided to stay and eventually started reclaiming in 2015. He says that at first he was skeptical of the reclaiming as means of money making but when time went by he could see the benefits and changes that other reclaiming were getting from it. Themba says he saw how older reclaimers were treating reclaiming as *"going to work"* and carried that mental perspective in maintaining his passion for reclaiming.

Themba now stays alone in the one of the rooms that is managed by Dube in Bekezela. He still has desires of going back to school and even dreams of traveling the world, was referring to a newspaper article the previous day about a student from Walter Sisulu University who mistakenly received millions in her account from the NSFAS, the national student fund (Daniels, 2018), Dube told me: "If I was that kid whose bank account received millions from National Student Financial Aid Scheme (South Africa), I would leave reclaiming and go stay in another place away from South Africa."

4.2.4.Njabulo

A nineteen-year-old male reclaimer was born in the same homeland as Dube, in Sterkspruit, in Eastern Cape. However, unlike Dude, Njabulo seems detached from the eviction case that is in process. From the interviews conducted on the 10th of July, 2017, he seems more concerned about getting back in the street and collecting more, without thinking of the implication or the connection between reclaimers and Bekezela as a site of storage. As early morning discussions are unfolding, all he did was to wake up, take his trolley, and pass the rowdy patio and go straight southeast towards the gate. He did not say much to anyone, except to greet Dube and the three reclaimers, Themba, Tiiestsi and Reitumetsi; whose are members of the Royals. He is the youngest of the four that are reclaiming in Northcliff, and he is also very new in the work of reclaiming around the city. He says that he did not have any

place to stay when he got to the city. It was Dube who after interrogation, he could locate where he is from the homelands which is not the far from him. He then suggested that he stays with them for a while and he did, in 2012. After I had asked him what brought him in the city, he explained that finishing school was impossible at home because they were facing many hardships and financial constraints.

Thus, instead of being a *"burden",* he decided to leave home. Njabulo frequently speaks of his childhood as if it was yesterday. When here minisces his face beams as if he is reliving his moments in the Eastern Cape. He says, "Kids of today know nothing about indigenous games and how to be around people and in different spaces. Everything that they do is lived online. All they know is Facebook this, Facebook. Most people think that the reclaimers do not own cell phones because of their precarious work and lives, but Reitumetsi and other reclaimers who are part of the Bekezela plus explain that although traveling breaks communication, on Facebook they get to see information that they want about their lives on social media and they also get to keep an eye on what their relatives are doing in their homelands. Facebook also provides the window of how reclaimers connect in the everyday.

4.2.5.*Reitumetsi,*

Who is focused on Romance part of the Bekezela plus and is Tsiietsi's younger brother. He is seven teen years of age, and has only four months in the reclaiming sector. Tsiietsi says that he fights a lot with Reitumetsi like most siblings do, but when they are on the road he keeps a very closer eye on him. Reitumetsi does not want to be part of sub-group, the Royals, because he sees no connection between his life-style and reclaiming. "I am afraid for this one,

he is too very wild and impulsive on the road and he is still new in the reclaiming field" (Tsiietsi, 2017, August).

"He hears people giving me praise on my surfing skills and trolley connection and wants to outdo me and over perform, I do not know why. It is difficult to protect him and tell him what to do when he is too far from me and when he is with his friends". Reitumetsi listens attentively without responding as his brother, Tsiietsi talks. This is because he is hearing him for the first time, vocalizing his opinions about his behavior in the streets. As usual, Reitumetsi is working far from his brother's station amongst his friends, who are sorting and storing separately and away from Tsiietsi's group 'Royals'. Tsiietsi says that Reitumetsi is aware and using the privileges of having a brother in the streets when reclaiming. "When I am not working Reitumetsi wants to borrow my trolley and I give it to him."

4.2.6. Lebo

"There are a few people here on the streets who would want to work for 'uMlungu' (in a literal sense it means, a white person or figuratively the one who owns his own time.). Some reclaimers such as me prefer to work for their own money and that is how we make a living" (Lebo, 2017 July, from Bekezela).

Lebo is a Bekezela plus member who was out of the game for a while in order to get back on his feet in the reclaiming activities after a bus had crushed his trolley. However, it makes more sense to see the 'Royals' as a "working" or corporate group. However, what does "work" or working mean for these young men? What kinds of questions should we ask to try to understand how work defines their lives and relations with one another as well as with the broader context of reclaimers? As Lebo puts it above with the quote, generally, reclaimers

loathe the idea of working for someone other than themselves. However, some agree to a certain degree that reclaiming can be addictive, where reclaimers find themselves hooked to the ‘ daily rituals' and/ or the ‘social dramas’, define as a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type’ (Turner, 1976: 33).

4.3 An Ordinary Day in the Life of Bekezela

The first thing to pay attention to is how the reclaimer does her reclaiming; either it is organized or disorganized. An organized reclaimer usually has a functional trolley and good working shoes. She or he walks long distances to collect, reclaims in a logical way, consciously aware of the ‘unspoken rules’, these are rules made by the reclaimer and have become accustomed to through their behaviours and expectations. For an example ‘Tsiietsi was telling me the other day that, most reclaimers who are well, reclaim far from their homes in order to make sure that the people with disability, the old and woman reclaim closer to home. If a reclaimer is found taking reclaiming near the city, even when they are in a good condition physical, those reclaimers get fines and are not given any credit when it come to reclaiming. Why contrast, someone who is not sober usually picks around Bekezela and the Buyback centre where reclaimers sell their recyclables, has not trolley, just drags his sack around, and reclaims in any form of shoe that they are wearing, even slippers.

They are also engaging in the conversations around the eviction, even though they are more visibly drawn towards their primary concern, which is to share a smoke. It is unfortunate that throughout the years, reclaimers such as Lucky and Dube are still counted and treated in the same manner as nyoape smokers i.e. drug users who are doing reclaiming to feed their addiction. As an ethnographer I tasked myself to assist in showing that this not true; that there is a difference in character and demeanor that separates a nyoape smoker/drug addict

from focused working reclaimer who carries himself/herself as a business person. I suggest that appreciating the individual characters and distinct figures of the reclaimers within larger groups of poor, homeless and informal subjects brings the description of who a reclaimer is closer for the people in society who have stigmatized reclaiming because of lack of understanding of what it is to be a reclaimer.

Even the most focused and dedicated reclaimers are painted in the same light. As annoying, irrational and reckless and seemingly unclean, homeless and destitute which all of it is not true for everyone? This shows that a majority of the people mistreat reclaimers because of the above mentioned perceptions. It is without a doubt that they are affecting the way the reclaimers do their work. Forcing them to choose carefully where they can entire before it is too late for them to beat the Pikitup trucks.

The descriptions above illustrate the rather 'difficult' present and uncertain futures of Bekezela reclaimers from Newtown. These, I argue, are best gleaned in the short periods they spend talking to one another when they are not riding their trolleys, collecting in the neighborhoods, or sorting at various points of the day. Hence, catching them as I did in the very early hours of the morning, around 4am when they rise to start their day, or late in the evenings when they return to rest, is helpful in accessing their spaces and knowing what they are concerned about the most. In addition, travelling with them as they work during the day provides further insights into the different aspects of their concerns and hopes regarding living and working in and around Bekezela.

4.4. Living and Working from Bekezela

As I described above, firstly, it is evident that the Bekezela community is made up of a diverse group of individuals coming from different part of South Africa. Bekezela is a space that

people in the city that had nowhere to go turned into a settlement. These are people who are coming from the side of the pavement or people who just came to the City from either neighboring countries. Most are young and cannot afford proper housing due to their economic problems. For young men and a few women reclaiming that I have studied in Bekezela are drawn from distant places to this place because of economic reasons. Bekezela is not only a place where people come to seek refugee but it has become a place where people come together to collaborate on work, such as reclaiming in order to sustain themselves. It has also become a place where social relations are built and new opportunities are discovered. This means that when eviction happens, it is not a home that is wiped out but an entire society, and life-history which is necessary for survival.

In the streets, the reclaimers have learned to keep away from the general public, as a way of protecting themselves from being reminded bluntly that they are dirty and devalued because of what they do. This conventional view of reclaimers as dirt or pollution partly accounts for the mutual avoidance that the general public and reclaimers appear to display towards each other (Douglas 1986).For an example, when they enter into high gated societies in the North of Johannesburg and the security guards will stop them.

Many see their work as reclaimers to be very helpful in their efforts to rebuild their homes and lives after difficult trajectories. However, living in Bezekela is not without difficulties and troubles of its own. The most immediate of these challenges is the constant threat of displacement or eviction from the administrative and political authorities of the City of Johannesburg and PRASA railway company that owns the land, as well as other public and private corporate entities with vested interests in land use and ownership for capitalist gain. Reflecting on the 2017 eviction discussed above, Lucia Khumalo said: *'They do not view us as*

*people with families trying to make a living. They want us out. I think they feel as if our presence is devaluing their properties' (*Lujabe, 2017, July 03).

The reaction of reclaimers when an unknown comes into Bekezela is self-defense, accounted for by the physical bruises and the feeling of being uprooted and unsettled in their social arrangements and social organizations weeks before my research could resume (Desmond, 2014). An essence of who they are in this space is a lived experience contrast by the social lives of where they come from. After Lucky had warned me about the sensitivity of the space, I became aware of the instability and discontinuity that Bekezela encapsulates. It was as if life had been plugged out of the community from functioning as an organ, and individual lives are left bare filled with uncertainties about the future, making individuals to either retreat to their birthplace, or resist being displaced (Krakowski, 2017).

However, even long before the eviction, Bekezela has always been a social and territorial space, a place of personal security, social exclusivity and cultural separation, a community where shared norms are valued more than close ties and this has allowing the space to be breeding grounds for subgroup formation(Harvey, and Koubek, 2000; Mancini, Bowen and Martin, 2005; Murry, 2011). The reclaimers for an example choose who they go reclaiming with because of how focused or how dedicated that person is to their work. If there is someone who is a family member with a reclaimer but is not taking his work seriously, the reclaimer goes seeking collaboration elsewhere, since they are not bound by kinship ties, even though they give them the recognition.

Before reclaimers can be identified as informal collectors, it is important to note that they come from a cultural space that has become a site for character building and the kinds of characters that are made depend on who they are and how they make meaning of the space

they live in (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Life histories and their social lives contribute to the concerns that they have about their ambiguous futures which are filled with dreams, desires, and investments. The reclaimers know that at any time they can be removed from the space, yet they continue to reclaim, using the land as storage and until it becomes a ritual of that place and reflection of who they are through what they do.

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The vignette above shows the different people in the space and how they live life differently, according to their social status and social hierarchy. It does this by explicitly weaves into the already existing arguments and literature the life-stories of the people who do reclaiming. It brings the reader closer to the reclaimer's lives by painting a colourful detailed description of his dialy encounters. Showing the reclaimers the other side of reclaimer of reclaimers leading ordinary lives, which is a side that people do not get to see very often because of the clouded image of dirt that is on the reclaimers.

Homeless people and new migrants experience life differently at Bekezela, Newtown. Inequality and cultural differences are symbolically demonstrated by the access to accommodation; this is connected to who they are and how they get to become residents of Bekezela. For some people who have established permanent social relations, through some kind or work or through kinship in pursuit of their different 'life-projects', defined as personal goals that people tries by all mean to fulfils by aligning themselves to the kinds of work that they do (Millar, 2014).

The reclaimers mentioned above have more advantage, access to accommodation and they face fewer risks compared to those who have no one. International car manufacturers Ford

and BMW who are building new dealerships and service centers are expanding horizontally into Bekezela's gate. This has place even more uncertainty on the reclaimers because they do not know when these car dealers can buy the land that they rely so much on, for both social and economic sustenance. Reclaimers also have established a way of life through reclaiming and other things like selling sweets and peanuts and single cigarettes (Panther, 2017). Bekezela a space that people's life stories can be interpreted and narrated from which carry as 'double meaning' literary in a sense that practices repeated, within routines. It could mean that there are people who have work relations outside the space because they want to atleast make twice income from the outcome. The challenges the reclaimers faced in other birthplaces were always combated by the solutions of having socio-economic relations at Bekezela. As reclaimers are telling their stories, drawing back on the experiences that they have had growing up and who was constant in their development as self. It shows the primacy of useful knowledge of one's kinship network is honored.

A person builds relations based on inter-subjectivity, inter-objectivity, group identity, human body appearance (Spaargaren, 2013). Kinship relations in social relations inform the individual to generate and maintain the meaning of how they are motivated to do what they do in the community. It is important to note that a person builds relations to secure a future, based on economic needs and leverages. We see this example from the lives of Dube, Lucky, Tsiietsi, and Njabulo and others who have taken up more responsibility at Bekezela and at home.

Similarly, the stories of the reclaimers were never focused on one a singular narrative of how they became reclaimers or subjects at Bekezela. They always entail a connection to someone or something that is beyond the cultural space. Social identity theory argues that a person's self-esteem depends on the group that they belong to, and in order to grow the pride and

self-esteem, people enhance the image of the group they belong to (Tifel and Turner, 1979). This speaks of identity and the economics; Identities of persons are shaped by social work within which they play various roles and the suspect to change as some social worlds mutate through time and space. 'Playing roles within each of these segments of our social lives brings us into union with others we become a community' (Masolo, 2002:40). The people who chose to stay here live together, created a secure networks of kinship relations in order to be safe and for survival strategies.

Differences between communities were to be found in their organizational patterns driven by the dominant mode of production due to the respective differences in the economic dynamics that molded them (Alperson, 2002; Masolo, 2002). It appears here that in order to have all the basic needs covered for you at Bekezela; one has to get involved in income-generating practices. Economically, 'social relations in advanced capitalist economies were assumed predominantly to be driven by relations connecting participant individuals to groups based on the nature of their labor and levels of income' (Masolo, 2002:43). According to Masolo (2002:10), 'shifting horizons of social and cultural maps have revolutionized the traditional senses of a community into those in which neither the homogeneity of practice nor embodied genealogies necessarily constitute requirements'. Old, new and imagined communities are held by ritualistic performances in time and space and of memory contributing self-consciousness and awareness (Anderson, 1983).

4. 5 Working Together, Working for Ourselves: Bekezela groups of reclaimers

4.5.1. The Bekezela plus

There is a collective all male reclaimers with eight members from Bekezela; his group is called the Bekezela plus. These are a collective of reclaimers who stay inside Bekezela and travel to high-income areas, in order to acquire recycables that yield higher value from the BBC. I have given them the name Bekezela plus so that it is easier to write about them, however the fact that they do not have a name shows they are informal and casual about how they organize this group. It also shows that there is freedom of will and movement, which are all determined by the choices reclaimers make in social settings.

The Bekezela plus do not say whether a person should join them to high-income areas or not, but there is a certain standard that they with hold to ensure that not all people feel entailed to be part of the group. One of those being that the reclaimers in this group do not take drugs, they do not have any permanent work outside of reclaiming, they protect the streets and the relationship that they have build because for them reclaiming like this is their first priority. Lebo and Reitumetsi and about five of the other reclaimers whom I did not get their names. The Bekezela plus and royals have formed these social groups for security reason since they all leave Bekezela early in the morning when is still dark, as well as for social belonging and affirmation. They will be traveling alongside four other individual reclaimers, making up a larger group which I have named ‘Bekezela Plus’. The Bekezela plus have that critical outlook to reclaiming, that they can tell whether a nyoape smoker will or will not do the reclaiming work efficiently.

The reason why I have focused my attention on Bekezela plus way because, it is in these high-income areas situated in the north of Johannesburg where separation at source was already taking place and they are already affected by it. Although this group of reclaimers does their

reclaiming in that it is understood by them, they are still perceived as informal and unruly by the City and municipal officials who are involved in the waste management discussions and policy-making.

Some members of the reclaimer's collective have stationed their trolleys close to the patio while listening to and commenting on the conversations even as they are busy fixing their trolleys. They are about to take off for reclaiming activities in the North of Johannesburg. Beyond simple collection and neither selling nor sequence of social interactions such as little small talks at the robots; it involves humor, light-heartedness and delightful moments shared through common traits which at times are related to kinship and sometimes, are just pure satisfaction. It is early morning, and the he group slowly emerges as individuals make their way from for parts of Bekezela.

15th of June 2017,Bekezela plus travels 31.2 Kilometers they work a few locations past Linden, all the way across Northcliff hill, a few streets into Fairland to select, collect, sort, and store away recyclables into their trolleys and again later they will return to Newtown. Bekezela plus consists of reclaimers that are a diversity of people coming from different socio-economic statuses and educational backgrounds and nationalities, dominant nationality being the Basotho reclaimers, with only two South Africans individuals in the group. The structure of the Bekezela plus group is like this; there are individual reclaimers who reclaim independently. The Bekezela plus always encourages one other daily to arrive first before the rest of the other reclaimers from elsewhere in the city can pick on their streets without them knowing. If the reclaimers are late, they are left with no choice but to move further up northeast, and into the Randburg area to ensure that they do not go back home empty handed and also to make up for what they have missed.

Tsiietsi who appears to be the leader of the Bekezela plus reclaimers, alongside Reitumetsi are leading together the reclaimers, by surfing their trolleys in front but at the same time keeping an eye on the other reclaimers behind them. Along the road they stopped to usher the reclaimers and watch for the cars at one point in the journey or tell the reclaimers to keep on surfing if they detect any unusual situation on the road. Reitumetsi is the only guy with a reflector vest, which he has worn on top of his jacket protecting him from the intense cold wind, as he goes down the slope.

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A Thursday morning Northcliff hill close to Fairlands included is taking out their wheelie bins for Pikitup to collect the garbage inside and then leave the bins at their doorsteps. Reclaimers follow the schedule set by Pikitup to collect at a certain time. However, since 2007 when Tsiietsi started reclaiming in Northcliff, the waste collection routine has changed. All reclaimers need to ensure that they arrive to the curbside atleast three hours early before the Pikitup truck arrives. Tsiietsi patiently waits at each gate for the first bin to come out of any house, which is anytime now. He surveils the street where he is reclaiming to see if there are any unusual things he might come across. He greets a few males' builders who are working here and there a man wearing blue overalls, tenaciously attending their garden and some sweeping or watering the grass in the early mornings, around 6h30. At some houses reclaimers can see the bin outside the house or garage, but are still not yet outside the gate to be touched and fiddled with, so the reclaimers stay waiting looking from a distance and hoping for the resident to take notice and freely give.

4.5.2. Royals

However, in that group four reclaimers have decided to form a sub-group, which I will the 'royals' for explanation and identification purposes. The 'royals' stated operating in June of 2016 and the members are Tsiietsi, Themba, and Njabulo. The reason why it was formed was so that the reclaimers can make more profit, after they have seen that the competition is getter tougher and also the Separation at Source (S@S) programme has decreased the amount of work. The strategy for these reclaimers is to who remain separately and sort and store recycables together and share at the end of each month. They have seen that they receive a greater amount of money if they leave the recycables to accumulate and then they can go weight it in bulks. They also decided to operate like this so that everyone can be accountable to sort recycables, because someone might steal their recycables when they are not watching. The 'Royals' members live close to each other, making work become a practice that comes naturally and effortlessly.

The 'Royal' they make sure that their bags are visually appealing, high up compared to that of counterpart. In the meantime, I took a picture of Themba standing next to his well-decorated colorful trolley. Tsiietsi decides to go to a 'spaza shop' (informal convenient store or tuck shop) nearby and buy himself a coke, while we wait for more bins to come to the kerbside of the road. Themba wears a hat made by a local designer, he has many hats like these and his trademark is the gold chain with a gold coin that he has around his neck which he reclaimed long before the stokvel was formed. Tsiietsi, who likes keeping with current news, is interested in T-shirt brands. His favourite is the original 'Springbok South African T-shirt.' Njabulo and Themba are more into the 'best quality' shoes, that will help them created a culture that is elite like reclaiming, that make them distinct and glorified reclaimers from the

rest of the people in the group. These reclaimers speak highly of each other, there is also influence of the knowledge from back home in Free State between Tsiietsi and Themba, who know and seen the treatment that each of them receive them they are back home. They are both building big houses, and taking care of their wives. Even though, they are harassed and stigmatized as dirty in the city, when they are at home they become kings in their own rights. And, this is how the lines are blurred between an insider and an outsider.

4.5.3. The 'Royals' and the stokvel

The Royals have a stokvel, which is known as a "practical concept of savings or investment society to which members regularly contribute an agreed amount and from which they receive a lump sum payment" (Khanyile, 2018, Dec 10). Another element to this 'stokvel' is that the members may loan out money to each other but not from the 'stokvel.' This creates an atmosphere based on brotherhood and unity amongst 'the royals.' If there is a member who wants in extra work, they must ensure that he consult with 'the royals.' Individual work as a form as a freelance, only happens once in a while, for a particular reason that is made known, and the members should be reclaiming small scale at their own time, in close parameters to Bekezela. Working Independent means that the reclaimers are not collecting together in a group and they do not share whatever they have. It also means that they can start wherever collecting on the days when they want to. They do not necessary have to follow the group.

The 'Royals' have agreed to share the money equally over the recyclable materials only, because this is what the Buyback centers take, making things less complicated for the group. If one member finds something outside the recyclable catalog, it is considered his luck and may decide whether he wants to share it or not. The 'Royal' members have no say on how his

luck is spent; the same goes for the ‘individual profit’ that the members share. They do, however, advise each other on the best ways to spend their profit without debilitating their strengths and focus in the reclaiming sector. None of the members of the ‘Royals’ stokvel drinks alcohol, and all smoke except for Tsiietsi.

Thursday is an important day for the ‘Royals' and the rest of the reclaimers who are part of the Bekezela plus. The ‘Royals’ consider themselves as a sub-group of the Bekezela plus, both for economic and social purposes. It is important to state that I have named the group for identification purposes and to make clear distinction when I explain. In reality these name do not exist, although, the ‘Royals’ group to address each other with high respect and consideration. Together, they undertake the tasks of collecting, sorting, storage and selling collectively. This is so that they can sell immediately to the Buy Back Centre while it is still open, and for the extra recyclables not mix with a month's work of recyclables. There are a number of ways in which the Royals are differentiated from the broader group.

The ‘Royals' have certain agreements that they would not usually have done if they were not members. Their style of the collection is different from the rest of the group in that; firstly, they do not leave each other behind. When they see that they are not going to make it to a location on time, they would rather connect their trolleys so that they all make it, a practice that they refer to as ‘code 14', this is when they connect two trolleys in a way that they look and function as one. This is done for many reasons, one of them being to make work faster and singular, in a way that it starts functioning like a ‘truck’ for reclaimers. By connecting their trolleys, the reclaimers are then able to reach a specific location at the same time, because only one person who is the strongest pulls and surfs and the other reclaimer gets on to the trolley and gets transported around. This was most how I got around the city because

I did not have any trolley experience. This is so that each member sees what is being collected from the first hour of collection.

So while they may be mixed in this larger group of twenty or more reclaimers riding their trolleys to Northcliff on a cold Thursday morning, they are conscious that the three of them are a distinct group when it comes to the operational aspect of collecting once in Northcliff hill close to Fairlands. While each has a trolley, Themba may decide to put particular items he collects, used cover plastic, cereal boxes, domestic soap containers etc. in a trolley driven by Tsiietsi, if he determines that the latter's' trolleys are overwhelmingly made of such items, and his trolley is made of metallic items or that his trolley is already full. He would never put any valuable item, particular one that the group values and collects, in the trolley of a reclaimer who is not a member of the 'Royals.' When they are collecting they take care of each other's trolley, as they are collecting individually, at the same time they are overlooking at what is happening on the other member's trolley, without being too close or doing work for them. It appears like this is a way of looking out for each other and also a way of looking out for their 'profits.' It is, therefore, these characteristics that make them a sub-group of the Bekezela plus.

Membership and practicalities of making a stokvel depends on rules that link to everyday work and lifestyles. The rules of the 'stokvel' develop from the basis of collecting, sorting and selling "together," as a single corporate group but one that is not formal or legally registered. The 'stokvel' allows them to save their desired amount of money they need, but they all need to agree and transparent as possible.

Tsiietsi is the most experienced, and the reclaimers go to him to ask about the plans and expectations of the 'stokvel' from all the members. However, Themba had to take over and

cover up for Tsiietsi while he is attending to his personal stuff. Themba had to do collection points and look through his streets and Tsiietsi's. This continued for a full two months, and then Themba had to collect in two streets and had to carry two trolleys and carry them back to Bekezela, with the assistance of Njabulo, Tsiietsi's brother, each individual reclaimers, part of the Bekezela plus.

It should be noted that the two reclaimers Tsiietsi and Themba are 'royal' members and at the same time leaders of the 'stokvel,' all three of them. They are the ones who started the stokvel, and they are the ones who know where money is kept. They were also very secret about telling me how they preserve their money because of the previous attacks that have happened on them. "We give our money to an old gentleman here, who keeps our money secretly so that nobody knows. This is until a certain time when we as a group decide it is time to take it out" explains Tsiietsi, going through the recyclables in his trolley by hand. When you are the leader of the stokvel you also realized you have to be brave, loud and assertive. You must ensure that you know all corners of the city very well to lead people in a safe and beneficial way.

When Tsiietsi was back from reclaiming in n the field, he continued his work as usual and was not questioned by anyone: Themba starts to unpack a black plastic bag out of boredom and out of curiosity to see what is inside because, from the feel of it, it did not feel like waste material. He comes across a few clothing items that both for males and females. Some of the clothes were brand new; turquoise and white beach slippers neatly packaged with a 'pick and pay 'clothing plastic bag (see figure 5 below). Themba then calls Tsiietsi who is wrapping up in his street to come and see. They put up the clothes into the air to speculate sizes; Themba picks the flip-flops from the bale, Tsiietsi then takes a t-shirt. The women' items consist of a

knitted royal blue bag with tassels at the bottom which Themba gifted me with right there when I was still in the field. There are also a few washed blouses and skirts; these are then packed away separately and put inside the recyclable bag. They both decide at that moment that they will give them to some woman at Bekezela who stay a few rooms from where they store their recyclables.



Figure 4: showing the described flip-flops that Themba has reclaimed from the bin(Manape, 2017).

These clothing items reclaimed are not discussed when the reclaimers convene, because they are not part of the 'agreed interest.' Themba was reclaiming on the same day when we were coming back from in his designated street, a reclaimer who is not a Bekezela, nor a member of the 'royals'; took with him some recyclables from the bins which he had not looked through. These reclaiming terms would be called 'stealing' because it goes against the general rules of reclaiming. Although Themba could not see him because he was focused on the work and his body was inside the bin, because they work so close to each other and overlook at each other's progress, Tsiietsi from a corner could see what was happening and quickly

jumped to confront the reclaimer stealing because he is stealing not only from the individual but the entire ‘stokvel’ and its members. The confrontation was not violent; they merely asked the reclaimer to return the items. The reclaimer knew who they were but he was not from Bekezela, it is someone they meet on the street; he complied and asked to pay ten rands worth of damages, as incentive or levee so that he can be forgiven.

This common financial scheme, ‘stokvel' has made the reclaimers voice more plural and authoritative because of the members have structured it and the way they treat each other; in a way that “an injury to one, is an injury to all” as Tsiietsi would say. The slogan is of the South African union federation COSATU, reclaimers use it to express how they resist in a group and repeat in moments of defeat, as a small victory.

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As we make our way back from reclaiming in the afternoon heading towards Bekezela, Tsiietsi, Themba, Njabulo (royals) and another seven to nine reclaimers of who some I did not have the opportunity to learn their names are about to entire a street with a steep-slope parallel to Melville 7th Avenue. Everyone seems to be slowing down, in that moment as we are going up a steep-slope.

“We have weighed out material at this Buyback (BBC) center for years now, because it is the closest for us here," says Tsiietsi. BBC, is a ‘business that purchases recycled materials’ (SAWIC, 2014) He says this while taking out material out of his bag to take up to weigh. The reclaimers determine their target according to how many members are there in the group in order to share the money, determined by price each material is list with at the Buyback centre, which

unfortunately in most cases remains unknown because it changes at anytime. Although there is a price list posted on the window close to the scale, it was posted years ago; although prices go up and down the "material price list stays the unchanged" again Njabulo comments. Despite the precarious price list, the 'Royals' still depend on that list to determine how much will be paid for each material and how much they will get. The price for material stands as follows… the white paper, card boxes, two-liter bottle and so on. Half of the recyclable bag with regular solid waste recyclable cost around R85-90 and the full bag can go up to R120 a day after being sorted.



Figure 5: Themba and I on the road back from reclaiming (Mokobane, 2017).

My colleague Amogelang, who was also doing research on reclaimers for the "Lessons from Waste Picker Integration Project" took a picture showing Themba and myself at the back pulling our half-full trolleys back to Newtown, from Westdene.

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Themba, who is a resident of Bekezela and member of the 'royals' inner reclaiming circle, says to me: *"Don't forget about us when you finally get that degree… Then, you will have a job, flashy car and probably you might hoot us off the street as you drive pass*". Although this was said in jest, his voice carried a degree of seriousness in its tone. Gently he looks away into the distance, far from where we are doing further separation of recycables. This statement comes straight after my notes taking. The conversation then switched quickly from being conversational and chatty to being a straightforward and a little awkward.

Instead of asking him right then what he means by the statement he made earlier, I embodied it. Following his glance, I could see three old men in their 60's sitting on wooden bunk stool and some men sitting on plastic crates, basking under the winter sun. Here an under-weight little toddler runs sluggishly across the yard with his top off. He has a swollen belly showing symptoms of under nutrition, which could be a result of the kind of food the residents get, if they get food at all. Looking closer, I see a woman sweeping a quarter of her yard demarcated by recycled office carpets, situated opposite the broken open-gate where the highway cold breeze blows from under the bridge. This was completely different from what I had experienced in the morning. When were surfing on our trolleys, I shared with the reclaimers a breath taking moment, a slice of freedom. The speed of the trolley and the rise in adrenaline made me feel like someone new, present and fearless. We were pushing against the wind, and it felt like we were leaving the troubles of Bekezela, atleast for a few seconds. The Bekezela surroundings are not for the faint-hearted, yet this remains the daily encounters of the reclaimers.

The image of poverty, homelessness and illness is a daily struggle in the Bekezela society. Tsiietsi puts the recyclables down, and the other reclaimers who are busy continue sorting.

He then leaves the group in the trash field where they are further separating, which is at the middle of Bekezela to go pick his daughter up from door of his room from where she was watching her father. He brings her to the sorting space, and tells me that her name is Mpho, which means gift in Sesotho. He looks at me and then looks back into her eyes and smiles.

Mpho is carrying a lollypop that has made her dirty and Tsiietsi complains that the mother does not take care and bath the daughter. “Mpho needs to go to crèche next year because I do not think she is safe when I leave her with the mother, especially now because she I doing drugs again. When he was done introducing Mpho to me he went straight from where they normally sort waste recyclables back to his room which more or less 8metres in distance.

Now and again he would show his face and watch from a distance, peeling potatoes, and observing what his colleagues, the Royals are doing. At times making small chats from his door and laughing at the jokes made in the sorting area, when he can hear them talk. Tsiietsi then tells me that he plans to eat with his brother after Njabulo and colleague Themba. Tsiietsi says that Mpho’s mom was chased away from Bekezela after several fights and she now stays in the slum next to Bekezela called Fietas.

When I returned to where we were sorting, after talking to Dube, I asked Themba, why he is reclaiming. His reply was that “Monna o ja ka phatla ya mofufutso wa hae," which can be directly translated from Sesotho to English to say that ‘A man only eats from the sweat on his forehead.' The hopes and dreams that these young men hold about their futures are connected to their present participation in activities around where they live.

When he comes back from Fietas , he invites He said later he will called Themba and Njabulo to come eat with them and then watch his favourite local television at Dube’s house at 9 pm

next door and then sleep go to his room to sleep at 10pm. During his cooking he entertains a grey cat at his doorstep and feeds it some pap (common staple food in South Africa). Themba tells me that most pets that I see around Bekezela are from where they pick their recyclables, usually in Northcliff, they find some these domestic animals lost in the street and sometimes inside the bins and some reclaimers take them.

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On the 28th of June 2017, Wednesday I decided to join Themba, Tsiietsi to Westdene, where separation at source does not take place in order to see the contrast. When the royals are reclaiming they take organized breaks and buy themselves what they want collectively from local shops or a regular ‘one stop shop' garage; usually lunch consists of cold drinks (sodas) or some chips. On good days, they can enjoy both. They are articulate and negotiate to go into spaces where other reclaimers cannot reclaim such as large complexes, bed and breakfasts and small-scale factories.

When I was following Tsiietsi one sunny Wednesday morning, he went around the police station a couple of times, checking his watch and then, and once he could see a white car going in, he also went in. "Wait here; I will be back. They do not want to see anyone besides me in this police station" Tsiietsi cautioned. I retreated to where Themba and the rest of ‘the Royal' members were, waiting from a distance, looking through other bins in the nearby complexes. Tsiietsi has a well-established agreement with a police officer in a managerial position to collect inside the police station in the Northcliff area, but he has been advised not to bring the other members if he wants to keep the connection. The people working at the police station do not even ask him questions anymore. He goes straight to where the bins are

and takes out the recyclables from the big rubbish bin. However, he is not allowed to bring his trolley inside the police station. He communicated this agreement with the members of the group, and they listened. The only negative side of it is that when Tsiietsi is absent, the group gets less income because there is not much being collected from the station other than shredded white paper, and cardboard and plastic files with metallic coils.



Figure 7: Moments of waiting in Westdene (Shogole, 2017)

4.4 Chatting Lives and Work

Finally after nine hours of work and surfing across the city, Bekezela plus including the Royals returned at about 14h00 into the yard. When I arrive back at Bekezela, some of the Bekezela plus and Royal reclaimers who were the first to return from Northcliff were already inside the sorting space with their legs covered in a load full of waste. They were sorting recyclables according to colour while chatting about all that was happening in their lives, women, cars, sports, and upcoming events that they want to attend, when they will be going shopping, *etc.*

Now, it is time to sort the day's collection at a place that looks like a plantation of recyclables, clustered and messy but some of the compartments arranged in colour and material that only the people who are inside, reclaiming can understand. Themba explains to me how clear plastic does not mix with coloured plastic because it decreases the value of the material when they go and weigh it. The different colours of recyclables were inviting from a distance; the activities were now happening inside this space situated at the centre of the Bekezela away from the social patio but close to where the reclaimer's domestic space.

Conclusion

Moments of becoming a human being with collective identity, and social organization at Bekezela are embedded in the present-histories of the people who are in the space. The acts of acquiring and consuming material goods reveal the social and the economic motivation of who the reclaimers are; as a way of re-humanizing the reclaimers in a society that has disposed them and the spaces in which they live in (Dias and Samson, 2016). A reclaimer is a person who is leading a complex life with a diverse group of people with different social hierarchies in a cultural space that allows for social formation and organization happen naturally, influenced by shared morals and interest.

Chapter Five: The Reclaimer in Johannesburg: Complex and Ambiguous Figure

"Sweat, sweat, sweat! Work and sweat, cry and sweat, pray and sweat!”‖ (Hurston, 1985: 1641) in (Asmarani, 2018: 3)

In the early hours of the morning, I encounter an informal street reclaimer passing quickly within a blink of an eye on their way out to reclaiming. When they return from reclaiming, they are seen pulling and sometimes pushing to control a heavy load full of about 70kg to 120kg of recyclable material depending on the day. These trolleys become more visible, and at times it is surprising to witness large items such as a broken plastic chair, a plastic bath, an old bucket, large aluminum sticks or even a washing machine peeking out from the top of a reclaimer’s recycling bag. Sometimes, I would encounter a series of reclaimers, almost identical in clothing and movement, rushing to beat the cars by standing in front of the robots so they can be the first ones to go when it turns green. I have also encountered reclaimers inside a taxi rank or next to busy shops in town; reclaimer's arms stretch out as they hold municipal plastic bags full of recyclable material in both hands. Moreover, some can be seen using old suitcases to collect, sort and transport recyclables.

5.1 Getting on the road

Reclaimers emerge from out of a room that looks like an abandoned office, which is divided into squatter rooms inside; there is no electricity, so they use their phone lights to get around,

picking wood to get their trolleys together. Bekezela is quite in the early mornings and there almost no car traveling over the bridge at about 3:15. A few apollo lights are shining from a distance behind the railway and chicken is clocking now and again to remind of time. Themba is one of the leading members of the Royals, he lights up his cell phone torch to look for wood planks which he will be using to assemble his trolleys. He searches close to where they sort their recyclables, making some noise as he moves the object around to reach down where he has hidden them. "*Things like these (referring to the wooden plank) disappear quickly in a place with so many reclaimers"* he says. Around the space, many people who are not traveling far for work are still sleeping, and only the ones who will be going to Northcliff and Fairlands are up and preparing for the road. He was throwing ropes back and forth to connect their trolleys and checks to see if the recycling bag does not have holes in them.



Figure 8: Preparing for the road. Photo credit: Manape Shogole, 2017, July 27

'geresi!'; 'geresi!' 'Hela gerese!'

geresi!'; 'geresi!' 'Hela gerese!'

geresi!'; 'geresi!' 'Hela gerese!'

The reclaimers call each other for the last time as they leave their place to assemble outside the Bekezela yard. This is a transition to where the city is 'straight' and street lights are beaming orange in a line, a contrast from inside of the slum. 'Garesi' can be directly translated to 'hustler!' hustler! 'Hey, there hustler!'… (In Sesotho-Jozi slag). This is a greeting that sounds almost like a rhyme. The response is calculated. The 'm' is silent, and each reclaimer says only one word and anticipates for the second word to come from the respondent. In different corners from which they come from inside the Bekezela plus, reclaimers in the space do not exchange many words in the morning, but this is enough to know if the other person is in the space, alive and well and will be joining once more.

5.2 Last call out

Themba, with the big voice, is hyperactive as he swings his trolley left and right. He surfs only a few steps away from the group, but close enough to still 'call out.' He does the last 'call out' for the surf to begin. The line of Bekezela plus begins to move, the form takes shape, and it is seems organized; as each one of them is pushing the trolley forward with only one leg on the road and then jumps on it as soon as it gets momentum. Bekezela plus is gradually walking towards the bridge next to Fordsburg.

While doing so, they are testing their trolleys, to check if they are ready for the road. While waiting for the last group of individual latecomers at 3h35 in the morning, they compare their trolleys to see who has not taken their trolley for service in a while. "A common priority, when it comes to making it in reclaiming is to ensure that your trolley is well serviced. This shows that you take your work serious" Tsiietsi explains this to me. All the reclaimers that I have

interviews own their trolleys. This is because they are reclaiming groups that are traveling far or because they have been in the reclaiming sector for long time. Tsiietsi told me that, sometime some reclaimers prefer to rent trolleys from Dube until they are making enough money and to buy one. However they all make it a point that they take their trolleys to be serviced, which entails putting some oil in between the rusting steels on the trolley or in between the wheels; it also includes replacing tires etc. “Many other people are better and cheaper than Dube when it comes to trolley services but, we use him because he is closer to where we live.” Pausing, he added “We get the material to make our trolleys from some gentlemen behind the Woolworth store in town, but we still need to get the use Dube's equipment to put it together.” The bags are found at a nearby factory, called Antlanta, found on Link road, opposite Laanglaagt Depot.



Figure 9: View of the building called Atlanta, where the reclaimers find their recycling bags. (Satellite google image, 2019)

5.3 Mapping the city with the reclaimers

When the group have decided it is time to leave they surf out from Newtown, close to Fietas, some shout directly as the taxi pass by: ‘*Mageza'! ‘Heyi mageza'!;* The regular taxi commuters

know very well not to call taxi drivers *'Abo' mageza'* because it is taken to be very offensive if it comes from someone else. However, the taxi drivers joke around and call each other with the same name. 'Abo mageza' is a word in isiZulu which can be directly translated to the 'ones who do not want bath' or 'and who enjoys fooling around.' There is a paradox here because those who are seen as dirty are calling people on the road dirty even when they are not. This is because of the stereotype that was there a long time ago and even when the taxi industry was advancing and changing, it seems that the perception about their lifestyle remains the same. Even so, the reclaimers still shout 'mageza' to the passing taxis, although their intention is not for the taxi drivers to hear, other reclaimers hear them. It is almost like a way to warn the other reclaimers in front to take caution, because these drivers may not see them on the road.

It is also a way to shout directly at the people who have been dominant and unruly when it comes to street ownership and South African driving. The 'call out' can also be read as an expression to mean a careful way to cure reclaimer's insecurities in a way that moves them around the city more assertively and confidently. When the reclaimers who is not attentive here another reclaimer shouting, he immediately puts his attention on the road and take necessary defenses.

The first hooter from a white private car goes around 05h27 on the June 22, 2017, and the reclaimers have just gone past the Total garage on the main road of Melville. They have already covered about 5.3 kilo meters and still heading in the north. Here they are following the rhythm of Pikitup's collection schedule. By that time the Bekezela plus had gotten on and off their trolley three times before we could get to Linden area at around 05h45, due to

friction caused by some unevenness of roads, it is difficult for them to surf thoroughly, so they have to pull their trolleys across the rough roads and when the road is smooth they surf again.

5.4. Entering and exiting of spaces where they is Separation at Source (S@S).

When we get to Northcliff the dogs begin to bark as they hear and see them passing by the high gated community houses. The reclaimers are followed by black security guards who are coming out of their small wooden houses close and 24hours cars patrolling the neighborhood start to multiply as the reclaimers are in the premises and high voltage electric fences can be heard from where they walk. The trolleys are making loud noises as they beat against not so well-constructed roads in Northcliff. Some residents light the front of their houses when they hear the noise of reclaimers in sequences moving forward. The entry of the reclaimer is carefully monitored through CCTV cameras and armed response. Once they are in, the Bekezela plus regroup at a roundabout next to a church on Suzanne crescent after the great surveilled grand entrance which is unusual and uncomfortable for them to get used to.

The history of police on the Solid waste management in South Africa, the documents is mostly concerned about the Bylaws, which also do not consider the reclaimers (DEA, 2014). The Police have not find ways or been trained to integrate the reclaimers in to their policies of law enforcement. This becomes a challenge for both parties to entire dialogue because the reclaimer does not know how the bylaws apply, trolley that they drive is not a car. And the police officials do not know what criminal offence they might arrest the reclaimers for.

Due to lack of recognition of the reclaimers by the state and civil society, the reclaimers always feel like they have done something wrong even when they have not. This has also led

to forms the reclaimers having to pay the way around the city, even with the little money that they get from reclaiming.

However, Private police is very territorial and rude to the informal street reclaimers, especially when they see them entering high-income. They threaten the reclaimers as they enter the neighborhood, falling them around, until they leave the premises. They do not allow them to move freely in the space collecting their waste recycables.

5.5. Reclaimers, residents and separation at source bags

Some people who work in the garden prefers not to have eye contact with the reclaimers, at least not until it is time to take the bins out. Only then do they greet and exchange a couple of words in their home languages. Tsiietsi starts by un-wrapping his sack that is neatly tied to the trolley. He puts two planks parallel to each other at the bottom of the sack to give it structure and balance. Then, he puts on an old rubber glove on the one hand and another garden glove with a few holes on the other hand. These gloves have also been recovered from the trash that he works with daily. The first houses to take out their bins are those with working residents or kids attending school. Those are the people that aspire to beat the morning traffic, and usually they do not have anyone left behind to take their bins later. The last houses to take out their bins are usually old retired residents or residents that have people working for them. These are the residents who wait for the sound of Pikitup trucks or glance at a time to see the municipality workers approaching.

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5.6.The material that is collected by the reclaimers

However, sooner or later, the bins are out. Tsiietsi first sees the wheelie bin that is assembled neatly with the recycling bags. Moreover, without hesitation, Tsiietsi goes first for the white sack with green logos written: 'City of Johannesburg and Pikitup'. These are usually filled with newspapers and old magazines, two or three tall brown, "Black Label" beer bottles and one tall "Jack Daniels" clear bottle. "If you see these just take them, they have a lot of money. Each bottle you bring you back between R10 and R30", Tsiietsi advises. The two clear plastic bags next to the bin also have the green logos of the City of Johannesburg and Pikitup; they contain two-liter soft drink bottles. The branded separation at source plastics are emptied straight into the trolley that is temporarily parked on top of the paving moving into the 'evergreen' grass that is outside the yards.

Straight into the wheelie bin he goes. He starts by tilting the wheelie bin with half of his body in it. The amount of weight that he puts on the bin already tells him about the weight of the bin and kinds of material that he will reclaim, and sometimes even how much money he will make from the recyclables he has already gathered. He goes through the first bin with boxes, PET, balloons, glitter, leftover, and colorful paper. Microwave containers, Red-bull soft drink cans. a few open tins of canned beans and an empty deodorant container such as a body spray, roll-on, and a box of perfume with no sign of the perfume bottle. There are also boxes of new kitchen equipment such as new blender and a kettle, torn gift wraps and few a pages of white paper and open envelops with old read bills, one or two broken hangers, etc. The larger size and weight of the recycling material, the more useful it is and the higher the rewards one gets from recycling it. Sometimes it is not about how heavy or full the recycling

bag is but about perhaps, how lucky they were on that day. One day in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg entails going home carrying only a few recyclables of waste material and some days a gold chain, functioning smart phone or valuable earring, in bins, one finds everything almost anything, but *"it is where one chooses to pick [reclaim]that increases their chances of earning more*", adds Tsiietsi.

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Chapter Six: Complex arrangements: The pioneers of separation at source

"In our bins, there is no waste, only resources which are being misplaced". Simon Mbata (2010, 10th Dec) *waste pickers: Paving the solution path to climate changes.* Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=chxxlWuAnDI&t=484s

When I was first starting to work on my research proposal and long before I began my ethnographic work, I was looking for more information on ongoing debates and discussion about Separating at Source (S@S) particularly in Johannesburg. Then I came across Simon Mbata on Youtube (Simon Mbata 2010, 10th Dec) *waste pickers: Paving the solution path to climate changes.* Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=chxxlWuAnDI&t=484s).Who said the above words while seated amongst other advocate reclaimers from across the globe. Automatically, my perception of what a reclaimer is changed. I no longer saw a reclaimer as someone who is found on the kerbside collecting waste to make money (Langenhoven and Dyssel, 2007; Schenck and Blaauw, 2011). Simon, just like Lucky represented reclaimers as active agents in the waste management system, people who can represent themselves and say what they want without anyone controlling them. They gracefully shy away from the stigma of being seen as vulnerable victims to the capitalist society. They do not want anyone to pity them, but they want people who will start giving them business opportunity and formal work that will make it easy for them to compete in the waste management sector.

His statement made by Mbata (2010) became a gateway through which I interpret reclaimer's engagement with bins as reservoirs through which resources (recyclables) flow from or mines from which they are extracted (Samson forthcoming). Simon's speech at COP21 in Paris was to link recyclables that are not meant to be inside the bin, that are supposed to be separated to environment clean justice and sustaining a livelihood. However, from what I have observed

in the streets, virtually no reclaimer articulates environmental reasons for why they reclaim, it is all economically motivated and driven as the main reason to why the reclaim is to earn an income.

The reclaimers disregard wasteful behavior happening both privately or in public, according to Department of Environmental Affairs (2016b) which states that “South Africa in 2011 only approximately 10% of waste was recycled. The unrecycled substances (98 million tons) end up in landfills”. The first draft report issued on South Africa's State of waste explains the separation at source (S@S) project aims to divert recyclables waste away from landfills dumpsites to save airspace, reduce transport cost of waste, reduce littering and contribute to poverty alleviation efforts (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2018). Godfrey and Oelofse (2017) cite valuable information saying ‘South African informal sector is responsible for the collection of 80–90% (by weight) of the post-consumer paper and packaging recovered for recycling, saving municipalities between R309.2–R748.8 million in landfill airspace (in 2014), at little to no cost’.

People of Johannesburg produce in the region of 6000 tons of waste per day, most of which is directed to the City's four active landfill sites. The city is running out of landfill space, and the municipality has made it a priority to promote recycling in formal and informal sectors (Pikitiup, 2019; Pillay, 2017). ‘The separation at source programme has been in place since 2009 in selected areas but it has been operational on a voluntary basis. The only change now is that it has been made mandatory because of the low amounts of recyclable materials per household that have been derived from the areas where it is being implemented and the low

participation rate' (Pikitup, 2015). It was announced on the Pikitup website through a public press release statement that S@S would be mandatory from the 1st of July 2018 (Pikitup, 2015). The announcement therefore signaled a significant policy shift and transformation of waste management and recycling in the city. Notably, reclaimers were not consulted about these plans, plans that would have (and have had) profound implications for their work. Dolly from Bekezela captured the thoughts of many reclaimers when she said:

> *"I think the people from Pikitup and City of Johannesburg need to talk to the old reclaimers from here at Bekezela if they want to involve reclaimers in separation at source. The people who have been reclaiming for a long time should be the first ones to be included into the programme, and only then they will have better solutions on how to work or even where to start [integrating reclaimers]"(Dolly, August 2017).*

6.1 Separation at source on the ground

Early in the year of 2018, 10th January, an article was written in the Sandton chronicle Caxton newspaper, saying 'Pikitup and The City of Joburg have outsourced Dikala (contrated waste company) to hand out bags and collect recyclable materials. Dikala will then take waste to the depot for it to be reused. The idea is to incorporate waste pickers [reclaimers] in this process, but the details of their involvement are still to be arranged' (Koning, 2018). In the Citizen newspaper a similar story appears with a title 'The mandatory recycling is here. But how will it work?' coved by Nica Schreuder (2018, 02nd July). In the article separation at source and different kinds of recycables are explained in details, 'Clear bags go to areas where Pikitup facilitates recycling, and the blue bags will go to three areas where the organization has contractors to facilitate recycling' (Schreuder, 2018). This is also one of the articles that states that separation is source (S@S) as a strategic plan that is meant to make changes in South

Africa, partially class-based information and the how accessible and effective one is from their Pikitup facilities.

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It is 09h45 of July 06th, 2017 on a Thursdays morning at around 10:15am and the 'Dikala Group' white truck that collects and separated recyclables is around the corner of Celia Avenue and the exit point of Norman Street in Northcliff. Themba takes part in assisting Tsiietsi to make sure that they finish before the Pikitup truck gets there. The white truck has already gone past Themba's street, fortunately for him he had already gone through all the bins in that street, besides the ones that the residents were holding on to so that they can take them personally to the truck collectors. His trolley is neatly placed on the side of the pavement next to the exit point heading south. This is also in the opposite direction to where the truck is facing. All of a sudden there appears a man rushing to arrange the bins for collection. He is not wearing any uniform or working clothes, only gloves; he says he works for NEWMOUA (Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association).

Even in his presence, the reclaimers go on reclaiming at the few outstanding collections points outside residential houses. The reclaimers continue their collection, grabbing the last bits of the garbage before it can no longer be retrieved. Calmly but with awareness, Tsiietsi starts to pick selectively cereal boxes, two litres bottles with his hand and put them on a white sack filled with newspapers and magazines. He pours it into his load, while in the meantime Themba empties a clear separation at source plastic bag, that that is clear; in the plastic bag, where residents have put old newspapers and broachers from super markets, they have also threw some chocolate and candy bar wraps, and the toilet paper cardboard tubes. There resident put a lot of their light waste material in the plastic and heavy waste in

the sack. It does not seem like they understand how waste should be separated. There are instance where the resident had a lot of newspaper to throw, so they were all put together into the white sack and also some in the clear plastic. There are also instances where the reclaimers only separated wine bottles and put them in the clear plastic. Some residence said that they do not want to take out their sacks anymore because they do not get them back. And they do not know what they would say if the municipality came back to ask if they are activity recycling. Some reclaimers, told me that they only take out one recycling bag at the time because they are afraid that they might wear out or be destroyed before they can get more. The reclaimer who said this continued to state that the plastic distributed were not enough in the first place, so they need to take care of these.

Themba reclaims with his senses, he smells, feels and weighs by hands the kinds of recyclable material inside the plastic bags. At the top the wheelie bin there are many leaves collected and put inside a black plastic bag; at the bottom of the bins there are a few items of PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate) material, which consists of water plastic bottles, containers of body care products and two-liter bottles, broken plastic chairs, etc. There are also pieces of used foil, Styrofoam cups and some useful white paper from print outs. Before the truck could get to the reclaimers, some of the Pikitup employees were running in front of the truck to see if the wheelie bins has been assembled correctly and that reclaimers have done collecting what they need. In households where the residents have recycled correctly, their recycling bags are then taken back inside the yard by Themba. He then leaves the transparent plastic bag outside the resident's house, but still in inside the separation at source clear bag. Tsiietsi does not reclaim wine because of the long distance that need to travel back, and if it happens the bottle, while they are surfing on their trolley, they are aware that it cause a serious

problem. And so, the reclaimers leave it for the Pikitup up truck to collect as well as everything that is left behind in the wheelie bins.

Some of these plastic bags make it back into the resident's houses when the contracted formal worker has remembered, but at times it never return. “Please take what you need from the bag and don’t forget to leave the plastic bags behind, because they don’t give us enough and they complain when we want more”, says a concerned residents, who has just given me all her waste material that she has separated and the ones in the wheelie bin. The wheelie bin is usually heavy and the one that smells the most because, that is where most wet waste goes. In most bins, they have put their household waste with recycbles and then over the cause of the week, it got covered up by the garden waste, died plants and leaves and a lot of soil. Then on top again the residents have put more waste material, a mixture of all sorts of recycles and non- recycables.

It is a challenge for the reclaimers because, firstly most residents do not want reclaimers looking throws their bins next to their house, because they say that they will leave all the excess waste on their gate or pavement. So, the wheelie bins have to be pulled from their house, and be moved closer to where their trolley is. This means the reclaimers need to put more effort after a long distance travel to pull these wheelie bins that ate full of sand and grass. Secondary, reclaimers have took the initiative to put all the bins that they has search through in a line after, collecting them individually and every house gate, this is so that it is easier for the Pikitup people to collect them. However, it is not all the reclaimers who like the idea of not having their bins at their sight, for many reasons relating to theft of bins and people’s privacy. So, when the resident ask the reclaimer not to take the bins away, the reclaimer takes full consideration of the statement and ensures that the resident’s bin is seen at all times. The reclaimer, in the royal group can go to the extent of ensuring that the people

whom he reclaims with knows the demands of the residents and does by all means not to offend them.

The Pikitup truck comes every Thursday to Northcliff hill and Linden after 10am in the morning. One of the Pikitup employees wearing a uniform greets the reclaimers, and they greet back, nothing else is said. Themba starts to let go of the wheelie bin and the Pikitup employee grabs it while waiting for the truck. The municipal employee picks up and puts down the wheelie bins without looking at what is inside. Unlike the reclaimers, they do not pay much attention to what is inside the recycling bags. The Pikitup employee just picks the green recycling bag to check if there are any bottles in the recycling bags. He searches for some weight to feel if there are not any bottles, he touches the outside of the bag. If there are bottle in the bag the Pikitup employee puts in the truck. This is what a reclaimer would not collect because of one, the bottles are dangerous to travel long distance with, and they can fall off the trolley and create serious accidents. Another reason is because 'we do not have right machines to collect them' says Tsiietsi.

We will need a crusher (sort of machine used to recycle) to break all these hard wine bottles into pieces", says Tsiietsi. He explains to me while is loading more recyclable items into this trolley. If there are still some items left in the sack or plastic bags, normally things such as milk or juice cartons, take away containers, small food tins, and a couple of chocolate or chip packages, the Pikitup truck leaves them behind for 'Dikala Group' to come around and collect. The 'royals' do not collect the small open food cans, only the large cans, such as baby milk cans and paint cans. Themba says that they do not collect the small cans because they take up space in the trolley and they are dangerous when they are open, as they constantly putting

their hands in the trolley to fix its structure as they are reclaiming and it bring them little money in return.

'Dikala Group' should return the recycling bags that they have provided to the residents, after they have collected everything that has been left behind. Most times of the contracted employees working for 'Dikala Group' do not take the separation at source bas back inside the yards; instead they leave them alongside the wheel bins, hoping that the residents will take back everything. I observe one of the employees throwing the recycling bags on the grassy pavement and then running to catch up on their lift which was going to the next street. The reclaimers start heading back to the main road, Norman drive, from which they will exit from. Their faces and entire bodies are covered in sweat, their trolleys are being pushed from the back, while they look forward, steady walking in front of on-coming cars. The Pikitup truck is going inside the streets that have been revisited by the reclaimers. The 'Dikala Group' truck is going with almost nothing but leaves from the trees, some garden waste and a few recyclable materials from places where the reclaimers could not reach due to time and travel constraints.



Figure 10: Seeing inside the separation at source plastic bag, recycling done by residents. Inside there is a wine bottle, empty packets of snacks and plastic juice bottles. The photo was taken by Manape Shogole (July, 06th, 2017)

The picture above is showing how easy it is to identify the 'separation at source' bags which are branded with corporate logos and messages, including the black wheelie bins from across the road, with the corporate logos plus the Pikitup logo. Residents say that the wheelie bins were the first to be handed out, years ago by Pikitup and then it was the separation at source bags that followed. "Some people came to our houses saying that they are coming from the municipality, and they gave us a pamphlet (See below), the two bags and told us they will be coming to collect every week", says another white female residents, who looks like she is on her mid-forties. From the gate of her house she continues to explain to me how the separation at source began in their neighborhood.

"There is nothing wrong with separation at source; it is how it is operating that marginalized us" (Lucky, August, 2017).''



Figure 11: Pamphlet given to the residents during the issuing out of separation at source bags. (Printed the pamphlet in different South African languages).

There are documents stating that the "municipal solid waste (MSW) is generally considered to encompass household solid waste that is produced by normal residential households' activities" (Zhang et al, 2010). However on the ground the residents have shown that there is still lack of understanding of what separation at source really is and to whom do they give their separation at source bags to. Some still prefer to leave their waste until the Pikitup truck comes to collect, unaware that there are now different groups of people collecting different waste material, depending on their occupation and agreement with their sector, either formal or informal.

6.2. Residents and Separation at source

At about 09:45 on a Thursday morning in Northcliff, an elderly white lady in her mid-60s, elegantly dressed and wearing bright pearls, appears behind the black remote control gate. It is a white house in the neighborhood, and as the gate is rolling backward, three small dogs come running towards Themba who froze for a while and became completely immobile, until the lady assured him that the dogs would not bite him.

“They gave us these two different bags (she lifts them) so that we can separate our waste”. By the time I started my fieldwork, the separation at source programme was well developed in Fairlands and Northcliff areas, where once a week the residents placed their separation at source plastic bags, white sack and wheelie bins at the kerbside to be cleared. From the transparent plastic it is easy to see that residents do not always get it right. It is quite often that the non-recyclable waste and organic waste was mixed with the recyclables because of the limited knowledge they have about recycling. It seems like the recycling bags were handed out without imparting any knowledge to the resident. Although some did say the people who were distributing the bags, said they will come back and give teach them how to separate their waste.

Only then Themba rushed forward to greet the elderly lady, taking from her hands what she carried; three large clear non-branded plastics full of recyclables separated according to the type of containers. She had two litres bottles of different colours, washed and packed away, large tins of five liters paint plain white plastic. “Hello,” Themba says briefly as he takes the plastics out of her hands. “You are lucky that I still have them here, which had to be collected last week already. I had told myself that if I do not see any of you today, I will just put them with the rest of the rubbish for the truck to take away”, says the lady. “I always keep stuff there; you must come again next week you will find something”. Themba nods and smiles in

approval, at what the resident is saying, it seems he was not expecting so many recyclables to come from that house. "…wait here as I go fetch some more from the back of my garage". Her gate closes again, and after a few minutes she brings another plastic full of cereal boxes, and milk plastic bottles, not cartons. To which she says "I am keeping the card boxes for my nephew who is coming later in the week to collect, he also recycles!"The lady gave a generous smile, turned her back again and returned into her yard along with the dogs, the gate closes up, and she disappears again from the street.

"This is what we do for a living… in the evening when we come back… we have to separate the white ones this side and green bottles that side. So that when we go to sell it, they can recycle it according to colors. You see this [referring to the lid] is a different material, it does not belong to this [referring to the bottle], and so we have to take them off. Moreover, this one is HD bottles of milk, and they are also being recycled. Moreover, also cans, it does not matter what kind of a can but it must be made out of aluminum; Aluminum cans you must separate from steel; these ones one side and these one side. Moreover, this one is polypropa (polypropylene). You can use it to make buckets or washing dishes. Yea! So you put them one side also. Even these buckets for ice-cream… They belong to one side, also polypropa. Steel, for the companies, which manufacture steel… They melt it and then produce what they want if they want to produce cars, wheelbarrows; anything which they want to produce. From the steel, this is how we live there is no way we can find jobs. It is better to help the government with recycling like this, because no one can do this, some do not want even to touch these things…They say it is dirty, however, for us, we are trying to earn a living" (Weigoglobal, 8th July, 2018; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0yd431jlxY).

It is only after the gate was closed that Themba continued with his work. Emptying the material into his trolley, he puts even the clear plastic inside the trolley which is something he does not usually do when it is a ‘separation at source' recycling bags. Before he could load the two-liter bottles into his sack on the trolley, he first takes the lid off and then crushes the bottle with his feet, and then he pushes the plastic bottles in with the papers and boxes with his hand into the sack that is left lying on top of the trolley on the side of the pavement. This validates Kadyamaedare’s study of resident wasting practices in the same neighborhood in which she states that ‘it is the relationships had been forged between some of the residents and waste pickers that resulted in the waste pickers being personally given recyclables waste by the residents instead of Pikitup’ (Kadyamadare, 2017).

He first ignored us, but after running two blocks he found us still there. It was almost around 10 am before the Pikitup up trucks arrive and his bin was still in his yard, but he still wanted to chat to us. He saw that I was busy writing some notes after my observation and I started to make small talk, directing towards answering the question I had on Separation at Source. The government and municipalities such as Pikitup cannot impose the recycling culture on residents to do separation at source, and hence they hire private companies to do the work of separation at source. However, Samson (forthcoming) argues that the initiative to integrate reclaimers into Johannesburg's through waste management programme has resulted in new forms of dispossession of reclaimers. Reclaimers have told me stories about how they have been bullied off the street by the private truck that we see when we are collecting. These are people who feel entitled to the waste because they are dressed in uniforms and they have trucks, which legitimatizes their formality in the space. I have also been missed by a private truck that I was driving slowly close to the trolley that I was pulling as we were leaving

Northcliff. Not only that but the reclaimers have to compete with the private companies as well as Pikitup employees over who gets to the waste, this in turn shows that the reclaimer's income is unstable because of these factors.

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By this point it was around 10:45 and the Pikitup truck has just passed. Bekezela plus were going down the slope on the road heading to Newtown, this is because once the truck has passed it clears all the bins into the truck and the reclaimer have nothing to reclaim. Some trying to balance friction with their backs hang to the trolley, passionately pushing their feet, towards the ground as if they are about to lift tar and create footsteps. This is a few meters out of Northcliff and as we curved corners, we approached from a distance an old gentleman in his early 60s, wearing a torn and fading brown jacket and some grey hair peeking from the front of his afro, he is seated close to the road, under a shade, where he hangs his trolley on to a tree, watching in dismay at other reclaimers as they pass; and then he shouts: *"Ayala Ama line",* directly translated as 'the lines are refusing' in isiZulu; swhich

Themba explain means that the number of reclaimers returning to the city with bags full of recyclables is decreasing little by little. When he talks about the line, he is referring to the reclaimers that are following each other. No one in the crowd said anything to the old man, but it made the reclaimers aware of what they were carrying, because after that a conversation was sparked amongst the Bekezelas, comparing their loads and making fun of each other, *"Wena, Tsiietsi, if the metro police could pass us, they would arrest you because you are the only one amongst us all who is carrying a load that is against the law"* says Njabulo

6.3. 'Fixing the bag': Valorization as a solution to separation at source by reclaimers

After a day's work on Thursday 31th July of 2017 also my first day in the field, 'the Royals' took me to the Buy-back center in Newtown, close to Cambridge to weigh what I have collected for the day. When we are there, Tsiietsi is asked to assist me to take out milk cartons that he put in his bale, after I had asked him whether the Buyback centre takes these or they do not. After the sorted bale is checked by someone who works there at the Buy-back-centre, they give me a receipt with the kilograms of how much my collection weighs. Once that is done we proceed to a mirrored window, and I was paid R85 from reclaiming in a day. Tsiietsi then said to me that before, in 2010, he used to make about R200 or R180 every day and but now on a typical day he only gets R50 or R120 a day on a good day.

"At corner Bree, a taxi rank close to Bekezela, I see late at night and sometimes during the day, reclaimers, bending over the excess water that is coming out of a drain underground. They take large cardboards, such as those used to store fruits and veggies and soak them in that water, why is that" I ask Tsiietsi, who is looking at the bottom of the two liters, now and again to see if there is something inside, before throwing it in a category to which it belongs. He laughs at my observation, and even the reclaimers in the space who have overheard me laugh as well. *"This is what we call robbery!"* Tsiietsi explains. "All the time when we go to weigh our recyclables, we are starting to get less than what we did before, and we know it… We have fought so many times with the buy-back owners, and they deny the fact that they have tampered with the scale".

"So when we see that this will not be enough. There is tap up there (pointing to the far end of Bekezela). After sorting we get close to the tap and pour water over the bottles so that it weighs more", Themba adds to the conversation.

Valorization comes from collecting, washing, sorting and re-selling materials (Samson 2017). This means that even the boxes that are The reclaimers say there could be two reasons why they are earning less and less from the returns that they do. Firstly, it could be related to how some Buy-back center adjusts with the scale so that they can get more recyclable material and give the reclaimers less income. And secondly it could be related to how residents handle waste recyclable if they do separately. In addition to the responses of how 'separation at source' is taking shape on the ground, the reclaimers are again creating opportunities for themselves to ensure that they get the maximum gain out of each bag of recycling material they produce.

"So why do you think the city is asking the resident to separate waste from their household?" I ask doubting how quick the answer will come because Tsiietsi looking focused on how he does the sorting. To my surprise he responded: *"You see the city of Johannesburg highly demands these plastic bottles that we collect because it is material used to sew the Bafana Bafana soccer jerseys, and also the sportswear for our famous local soccer clubs; Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs. There is much money in here"* (pointing with his head at the recyclable while his hands are digging into the waste)says Tsiietsi(Bekezela,2007).The reclaimers understand that material that is collected them has chemicals in them that makes it possible them to be recycled in something new. For an example, the t-shirts are made up of the plastic fiber to make them elastic and less heavy.

6.4. Reclaimers planned demonstration to Pikitup

Although other strike between the City, Pikitup and the reclaimers were held after that workshop, no issues were resolved .Eventually the reclaimers decided to organize a march

and demonstration to the City offices, where they will present read a memorandum to Pikitup and the City. And so they did. On 5th July, 2017 the reclaimers read their memorandum to the Managing Director of Pikitup on the steps of the City offices (Flourie, 2017). The reclaimers addressed the Pikitup officials and read out loud their s demands. Momo and Lucky were the ones speaking, they said that they want recognition for the work they do and ask to be consulted with dignity and respect about future recycling work of the city. The reclaimers also said that they demand contracts in place 'immediately'. The second demand was that the reclaimers wanted to be paid for the work that they do in the city. The reclaimers are aware of the potential introduction of the Separation at Source programme, WIEGO and waste-pickers have been asking Pikitup and the City to disclose and discuss the contracts since September last year, but to no avail. As a result, an Interim Johannesburg Reclaimers Committee (IJRC) was set up and in July reclaimers from seven regions of the City marched to protest outside Pikitup's offices.

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6.5. AFRICAN RECLAIMERS ORGANIZATIN (ARO)

After the March, the reclaimers seem very optimistic about the future of reclaiming in Johannesburg. It was a good space for reclaimer's be, since Interim Johannesburg Reclaimer Committee has been in operating and all the only thing left was to discuss name change, so that it can officially be called ARO which stands for African Reclaiming Organisation. And more optimistic than ever, they decided to register an organization from the large number of reclaimers who have been attending meetings, where the leadership of ARO attends meetings and represent ARO to negotiate with the city around S@S. ARO has made the reclaimers to be more optimistic about their future in the recycling waste system in this country. It is

important to note that since they began to organize, rather than seeing themselves as victims they see themselves as team leaders and reliable team members of ARO since S@S started to actively counter it into active social actors who have autonomy and dedicated themselves to seeing transformation through their lives.

However, reclaimers in the 'Royal' stokvel believed in their own way of doing things, so much so that they found it unrewarding to attend meetings because this is also the time they are suppose to be collecting recyclables, While the collective meetings that were held around the city by the Johannesburg reclaimers, which at times involved the people from the municipality. This too had implications on the current outcomes of them feeling uprooted and lost, because the reclaimers who did go to meeting had new hope and new dreams, that they are getting closer to their goal of being recognized as equal actors in the waste management system.

6.6. Consequences of waste programme on the reclaimers

At the end of November of 2017 I received a call by from Themba, one of the leader of the Bekezela plus and a strong member of the 'royals' stokvel. *"I am leaving, I am going back home. It is very tough being here. There is no progress for us here"*. I asked if he is going back to the Free State where he was born and he said, Yes. *"I might come back again to reclaim the streets in the years to come or I may not. This year has been different and difficult for all of us". Themba make this call to me a week after the previous occasion where we were missed by being hit by a Rea Vaya bus twice, in the same day. It was all weighing on him. The stories of the violence that is happening in the streets was escalated and he had no hope that his leader, business partner and friend,* Reitumetsi was still around at Bekezela but even he was no longer reclaiming in Northcliff, which is where Separation at Source started. Even before I

finished my fieldwork at Bekezela, I could see how disjointed the group was becoming. Even from back then, Reitumetsi was already on drugs but, now and again he would still go to Northcliff with the Bekezela plus to reclaim. Some reclaimers warned him, that he might get killed by the road if he continues to take drugs, traveling such a long distance, some advised that he does not return to reclaiming for his own safety. Most of the remaining Bekezela plus, ended up joining ARO, and becoming one of the most respected team leaders, alongside Lucky and Dube who are representing the reclaimer at Bekezela and Nationwide .

6.7. The media representation when it come to reclaimers

'Reclaimers on average pull a weight that is equal to their body mass' says the Gauteng MEC, Lebogang Maile who appeared in August of 2017 on SABC news, explaining how he understands the work that the reclaimers do. However, this can vary depending on the intensions of the reclaimer and how well advanced they are in the informal reclaiming sector. He also alluded to social exclusion and health risks, and other kinds of harassments that the reclaimers face while doing their work. The reality, Cumming notes is starkly grimmer; as she underlines 'waste pickers are undeniably part of the 'urban landscape' of Johannesburg. Like many others in this City of Gold, their lives are also of 'hopes and dreams' even though, unlike most, their lives and struggles for a livelihood in the streets are marked by high risks of exploitation and or violent assaults from gangsters and thieves' (Cumming 2016).

Recent estimates suggest that Gauteng Province alone, with Johannesburg as its capital city, accounts for 50 000 informal reclaimers among the 74 000 or so informal reclaimers for South Africa as a whole (Tseke, 2017). Although reclaimers are thus a somewhat visible presence in the city of Johannesburg, much like in many other large cities in South Africa, although it

depends on the population ratio (Huegel, 2013; Mkhize, 2014 ; Muller, 2015; Peres, 2016; Samson 2010, Viljoen, 2016;). The public or collective representations of or "encounters" with reclaimers, are most immediately sensed from regular accounts in the local media. Of course, these representations are by no means monolithic. The oldest, and perhaps most enduring strand of these representations tends to define reclaimers as hazards of sorts, actors that potentially embody and or pose the risks of crime and insecurity (Pelus, 2014; Hummelsheim et al, 2012). This also meant that local government officials almost entirely avoided giving them serious consideration in matters associated with policies on waste recycling (Samson, 2010).

Since early of 2017 public coverage of reclaimers has generally become more concerned and sympathetic to the plight of reclaimers and their working conditions. Notably, this coverage highlights issues that undermine the abilities of reclaimers to earn a living doing their work. Overall, then, reclaimers are now recognized as people who have the potential to contribute immensely in the economy of South Africa. Consider, for example, the reporting of a local newspaper, 'City Press', Buthelezi (2018) which recently did a bold photo feature with the title "All hail trash gods" in its issue of 14th January 2018. The feature showed the different images of reclaimers being experts in the underground informal recycling sector. The purpose was to show the diversity that is within the reclaimers who have become an 'ubiquitous sight on the streets' at the same time making invisible, visible (Buthelezi, 2018, 14 Jan). The reclaimers are also praised and recognized through art and culture one may see them appear in exhibitions, music videos, short films and on which most of them are not given credit for. Even when reclaimers are represented as being manmade out of steel or some unsung superheroes in their own right; it is hard to leave behind the everyday struggles that they have embodied as they try to enter the waste recycling system that is not designed for them.

Policy documents that look at waste management have recently started to reflect on reclaimers as a highly contested and complex group of people, who make it difficult for the state to govern, monitor or even contain into one terminology. This makes it even difficult for the state to make conclusions on reclaimers based on a system of rules .

These interruptions end up leaving the reclaimers hopes and dream broken, ending up back in the street, homeless and jobless or becoming an advocate or activist of the reclaimers until they are finally seen or heard. Either way the act of reclaiming is still a dominant thing that gives reclaimers reason to make meaning of themselves in the city. The work-lives of informal street reclaimers who live in Bekezela are studied in this paper in relations to Separation at Source (S@S). The ethnographic paper undertook reveals how Separation at Source (S@S) remains a highly contested state programme for waste management stakeholders in the city of Johannesburg. In order to see the kinds of effects that the state programme has on reclaimers, I discussed the gap/missing link between South Africa's waste management policy and possibilities to implementation, where guideline are more inclusive and considerate of the reclaimers by the government official involved.

Reclaimers work in the fast-paced street of the city almost each day, being stigmatized and mis-treated because of the dirty work that they do. Informal reclaimer's way of work and livelihood are vulnerably exposes to a formal waste management sector and state programme that constantly exploits and undervalues the amount of work that they do in cleaning the environment and saving airspace.

The reclaimers from Bekezela have lived their lives in a precarious manner, being victims of evictions by the Red Ants and harassment by the metro police because they do not have the 'right' papers such as their national identification documents or work permits Bekezela in Newtown Johannesburg is a cultural space that births common identities and socio-economic interests relating to reclaiming. In this space we see the domestic life of reclaimers and what motivates them; reclaimers are breadwinners, fathers, mothers and heroes of their birthplaces and respected business people while rummaging through Johannesburg's urban-

city environment. I also note that their some of the reclaimers are shamed to tell their families about the work that they do. The reclaimers are not paid for the work of cleaning that they do, instead the money is given to private companies that have been contracted by Pikitup. This is has been an unfair and unequal way to deal with the waste problem that is facing the country, especially in a place where unemployment and poverty is facing the majority.

The reclaimers as complex 'human beings' with multi-dimensional work-lives, I provide detailed accounts and in-depth analysis done through the anthropological methods; one of them being embodiment. The research reveals key policy players and important waste stakeholders such as informal and formal reclaimers, residents Departments of Environment, City of Johannesburg and Pikitup. This remains the one of the options for the state to appreciate the skills and the knowledge that the reclaimers are bringing to the sector.

The reclaimer's identity also works at a disadvantage because it encompasses a lot of informality. Since most of the reclaimers are not registered as workers because of not having a work permit, citizenship or even a place to stay in the city. The evictions that happened in Bekezela increased the reclaimer's instability and made them even more vulnerable and easy to exploit because they can then take whatever amount that they get from the buyback center because they have to rebuild everything that they have lost. The reclaimer's stability is also attached to their health, social and kinship relations and work group formation and maintaince.

A common thread is the concern of how unfairly the reclaimers are treated in the streets by civic society and state officials. This shows the many people who are poor and are striving for a decent income are not recognized, instead they are dispossessed which causes many more uncertainties in the city. In many cases this outlook maintains the stereotype of perceiving

reclaimers through the waste that they hold that has made them less human and more 'scavengers'.

Bekezela reclaimers have a culture if their own. They always strive to break boundaries and avoid sitting and feeling sorry for themselves. They are always thinking of ways of bettering their lives through reclaiming but also other socially accepted jobs which do not come all the time. The reclaimers at Bekezela do reflect on the world but do not take everything as it is and practice it in their everyday lives. For an example the stokvel something that is common in the South African societies but the way that the reclaimers practice circulated around how they reclaim and issues relating to separation at source. Their sense of dress and who they choose to associate themselves with is directly link to their work and how to improve it.

Again, we see how the informal reclaimers resisting these kinds of programmes set out by the state that are affecting them directly by staying true their own unspoken rules, practicing reclaimers norms and enhancing reclaimers' group settings and strategies. As Simon Mbata (SAWPA) would say, "we do not want anyone to feel pity for us. We want to be seen as equal partners with equal shares in the waste management sector". The relevance of this study is to open up a dialogue about the recognition of the reclaimers as part of a society, even though working with waste has marginalized and devalued their social status.

The Bekezela plus and the smaller sub-group 'royals' informal street reclaimers who have transformed the way that a cooperative can be looked at and formed. This work group has shown how that people can be organized without necessary being formalized and controlled by central authority. The essence of reclaiming were demonstrated, many centers of power have been exposed, knowledge sharing has been key, lived experience and material culture have been reflecting in the live of the people who are reclaiming to sustain a livelihood.

Separation at source is one of the contested waste management programmes that affect the reclaimers both in the landfilled and on the street. The programme has made the reclaimers come forward with complaints and be in dialogue with them even when this might bring further exploitation. The state officials are now aware of the reclaimer's livelihood, while some want to assist them; some officials see separation at source (S@S) as a programme that could open more opportunities for the state and them as individuals. The reclaimer is always compromised in some way when it comes to these state initiated plans, and the officials do not want to take accountability. The house resident who separates their waste material but gives them to informal reclaimers counters the state created dispossession (Kadyamadare 2017).

The group formations and social organization through ARO that reclaimers have built are designed for economic security which sustains the reclaimers in the long run. At first they did not identify with each other because of the fact that they are coming from different backgrounds but as time went by the saw the needed to create a reclaimer's culture. A culture that presents their struggle and common goals to people with similar objectives and desires. Which I will protect them from being exploited and also creating good working conditions. Re-enforcing social norms that are important to how the 'urban poor' to retain their presence in the Bekezela. For an example, it is evident that 'royals' are creating a sub-group culture that speaks directly to how their maximum income that will sustain them here at Bekezela and even beyond these city's parameters, back home. The ambitious reclaimers have dreams of building a legacy and ending poverty in the birth places through the money they get from

recycling. Some have nowhere else to go, so they have fully invested themselves in their presence.

The 'royals' push further by being developers of new rules and dynamic social orders. govern their own personalized act of reclaiming which have been practiced for years. This development on the ground is not there in policy or in any of the state documents; the urban poor mobilized and created collectives and communities when they realized that has value that is in the waste and want to seize it for themselves. As discussed in the literature review, there is an urgent need to formalize the reclaimers, with actually considering what it actually means for the reclaimers to be formalized.

The informal reclaimers have found ways of recreating themselves with passion and drive that reflects their past-present histories as well as their dreams, hopes and aspirations about the future. The way that the reclaimers have organized their social relations has made them difficult to get rid of or swap out. State officials have been planning state programmes in the absence of reclaimers, even though they do acknowledge that they are the ones who have been doing much work in keeping the city clean and fast tracking the recycling progress.

The reclaimers from Bekezela have shown their ability to exercise individual and group autonomy. They have resisted from being trapped into the formal employments because some where saying that they would get even lesser than what they make on their own. The reclaimers has also asked the state officials to stop addressing them and begin to see them as equal partners in the waste management, by negotiating programmes because official as mandatory policy that do not benefit them. They further point to the fact that the state is putting in place S@S without consulting them and as a result this programme has interrupted their complex work-life which entails complex relations and social organizations expressed

and understood only by them, setting them backwards in their relationships and overall work progress.

Reclaimers are present throughout the city, and the reclaimers from Bekezela move through multiple spaces. They start from the Bekezela setting, where they live, and go across the city, collecting in the gentrified areas continuing to collect until North of Johannesburg. This distance traveled reflects on the dedication of the informal street reclaimers goes through in yielding the highest value in the available recyclables in the city. Their experience of reclaiming is shown through these particular movements, leading to how they interpret or re-map the city. This is done so that the 'informal' street reclaimers can get to quicker to their resource (recyclables) without them being harassed ran over or policed on the roads.

Even though they travel long distances of more than 31.2 kilometers for recyclables, they do not earn enough. The 'fixing' of the bag for maximum gain is a direct response to the exploitation done to them Buy-back centres, even more so to the damage done by Separation at Source (S@S). The waiting for responses, countless meetings and formal engagements that the reclaimers have to go through to negotiate with the state requires them to move out of their comfort zone and navigate new terrains and to a point of compromising their own time to reclaim and to build strong social relations. The fixing of the bag becomes a calculated act as the reclaimers have to ensure they have recycables to weigh well in advance. The contestation around who owns recyclables and who owns the street is proof of the underlying complexities that goes into developing waste management guidelines that will work for all stakeholders. Mary Douglas (1983) says that garbage is personal; therefore it is essential that the waste collection in the city is also personalized, in order to make recycling a sentimental act that can be taught from generation to generation and across all class and

genders. It seems that the forging of relationships around recycling is important for both reclaimers and residents, and this is something that could be studied further and it should be taken into account in the development of policy.

7.1 Recommendations to the study and future projects

This can also be extended into a future study of ARO as an organization that was started on the ground using a bottom-up approach. This research project provided insights into the internal relations between the reclaimers in Bekezela plus and the royals through analysis of their daily working life. One key area for future research would be to delve further into how to consider group formation in making such collaborations possible. It is hard to capture the lived experiences of reclaimers in an academic text. An ideal way forward would be through storytelling performed in the arts, via theatre plays and film making, which includes the reclaimers. A safe space of the reclaimers is needed, such as a socio-economic environmental hub, which is extend the networks that the reclaimers have, opening new possibilities and collaboration between them and the creative. This place would have all necessary technology to ensure that the reclaimer's work-life are painted, designed, written, in a better light than before. The hub will also launch the reclaimers into new worlds of recycling and hopefully in the end they will be integrated.

7.1 Possible future research

Lucky, who is a leader in the ARO committee says *, "I'm just afraid that once we as ARO are starting to get the businesses that we said we are going to get, and we are finally a multi-billion company that we are working towards, I will be at the front, and we will be starting to driving big expensive cars, and some reclaimers who do not understand how much we have*

worked will start to say that we have exploited them or we are eating their money. That's why I do not want anyone to be left behind as we fight for this recognition and spaces in the city".

Some reclaimers want to secure formal employment, some want to open their own businesses that have nothing to do with the cooperative and the formalization plans of the state, other reclaimers want to further assist reclaimers who want to continue reclaiming. There is a whole system that is interrupted when state programmes are introduced on the ground without informing or consulting with the reclaimers (Samson, forthcoming). The heterogeneous group of reclaimers shows again that it is not everyone that shares these similar hopes and big dreams. Due to the level of involvement in the organization, reclaimers have different responses to S@S and different expectations of the future.

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