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Reframing Personal History in Sophiatown

A Research Report

by Yavini Naidoo

Supervisor: Cynthia Kros

Due date: 31 May 2011

In partial fulfillment of a MA in Heritage Studies

by Coursework and Research Report

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg, 2011


SOPHIATOWN
Trevor Huddleston Centre
Shoprite Centre
Main Rd.
Victoria
Edward
Ludlow
Dublin Rd
Italian Rd.
Johannes Rd
Meyer Rd.
Coronation
Trim St. South
Trim St. North
Morris St.
Edith St.
Roy St.
Meyer St.
Gibson St.
Miller St.
Milner Ave
Mokete St.
Hermans Rd
Good St.
Gert St.
Bertha St.
Mommouth Rd
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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Heritage Studies to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.

.....	.....
Yavini Naidoo	31 May 2011
Student number: 9309457V	

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As Sophiatown increased in significance in new national, political and cultural narratives as a heritage site of sorts, a joint interest arose amongst various stakeholders to commemorate this space officially. For some time the suburb had been accumulating meanings in popular and protest culture, in plays, films and coffee-table books of the *Drum* era. One of the reasons Sophiatown is so important to the popular imagination is because it is a reminder that the present is always collapsing into the past – and the past is always intruding on the illusion of a self-contained present. In this sense Sophiatown is emblematic of the larger continual metamorphosis that is South African history.

A dominant way of remembering Sophiatown recalls a vibrant cosmopolitan melting pot. Other narratives describe the anger and alienation of the trauma of relocation - a more recent perspective is that of current residents, a community reluctant - or uncertain of *how* - to let go of Triomf's past. These competing frames easily add up to a diagnosis of 'contested space', which in turn can present the illusory question, 'who are the real residents of Sophiatown'? The idea of literally fixing the co-ordinates of this space is challenging as many different groups share a relationship to Sophiatown. Some residents have been relocated to Lenasia/ Meadowlands, some residents lived on from the Triomf legacy, while some new residents have recently moved in from all over the country. At the same time the wider symbolic identity of Sophiatown as a site of resistance, as a fantasy site of cosmopolitan cultural vibrancy, and as an example of Apartheid's destructiveness also plays a role in a larger map and understanding of South African history, and speaks to other communities affected by similar circumstances.

Currently there are two main organisations actively involved in commemorating the suburb. The University of Johannesburg hosts the Centre for Languages and Culture in Africa (CCLA) and in their bid to engage more with the historical and sociological concerns of the communities around them, have developed a

particular interest in Sophiatown. They are broadly interested in trying to get a wider section of the community involved in various activities with the guiding principle that residents fear engagement with their neighbours because of the ways in which history has divided us. I will discuss this further as I enter into some detail on the work of Dave Thelen (co-director of the project) further on. As a student researcher at this centre, part of this research report represents the project that I facilitated while working there.

The other existing heritage practices, under the umbrella of the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre (THMC), reference only the history of forced removals. Their walking tour through Sophiatown, with very few remaining old structures, requires a cold defamiliarising of the existing landscape to engage with a 'mental construction' of a past that entirely removes this space from the lived experience of the present, as well as the last fifty years.

They are currently developing a new cultural centre and museum at the immaculately restored Xuma House, "as a place for ex-residents to return home to" (T Sibbons – director). They have now engaged Johannesburg's top heritage consultants from the Trace Group (Constitutional Hill and Sharpeville) to extend this project into the suburb, to ensure that Sophiatown (and Johannesburg more generally) satisfies 'world city' criteria as a tourist destination, and even less of the everyday texture and social fabric gets represented in this grand strategy. Mbembe (2001) argues that it is in the deviations from the modern Cartesian understandings of the city and its dominating Eurocentric visions (that primarily satisfy a colonial gaze) wherein the potential to exist beyond the postcolonial lies. My research report aims to assert this view that the real transition beyond colonial rule is about identity, not dominion. Almost every post-apartheid heritage initiative shares the same criticism of not reflecting enough of a relationship with the people closest and most affected by it (Naidu 2003). Ex-residents of District Six report that it was the social fabric of their places that was the most valuable thing they lost with the forced removals that took place there (Rassool 2001). Can the rarefied space of the District Six Museum bare testimony to this loss? Is it even a space meant for them? The idea of new histories being written that literally

'give voice to the voiceless', in my mind, speaks to the everyday realities that are often missed by official accounts and representations. This research report in this light offers the potential to not just record some missed or overlooked aspects of the past, but also focuses on the present day reality to reflect on ways to engage a presently divided community as they try to negotiate their lives within this space. As an alternative to the history of heroes and leaders, this research aims to bring into focus the lives and past experiences of current residents in a way that restores their political and social agency through their everyday practices. This could ultimately contribute to various discussions around local issues, particularly the questions of commemoration and collective representation being currently posed.

THE PEOPLE OF SOPHIATOWN

The potential for the post-apartheid city is enacted upon the streets. In the context of Sophiatown, it soon became clear that in the absence of the old built fabric of the township, one necessary anchor 'to make real' the heritage simulations in the area would be the local residents. The clear rejection of previous attempts at engagements of the Afrikaans-speaking community made me curious as to the terms of their relationship to Sophiatown. Certain questions began to present themselves. How can the people who now live in Sophiatown, many of whom moved in quite early during the Triomf incarnation, relate to this iconic space - and how could they learn to appreciate different and diverse memories of the same place?

Sophiatown has experienced several transitions. Most recently, some of the older current residents have seen an obvious shift from the whites-only suburb of Triomf to the very diverse space that currently exists. The cultural norms that developed within Afrikaans groups in the suburb relied on an exclusive nurturing of certain rituals and behaviours. For example, all schools within the area followed Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, a practice that is now being phased out slowly as the needs of new English-speaking residents are addressed. And replacing apartheid's old racial hierarchies, a new democratic and diverse

political sphere has deployed new challenges and complicated the dynamics within the cultural and psychological frameworks of what was once a simple Triomf.

This bottom-up engagement imagines a structure of the locale that describes points of view and contestation from within. Forging oral history methods with civic engagement and memorialisation practices, this community building project gently challenges residents to live by the ideals of what the 'new South Africa' means. Whether they are hopeful or fearful of the new regime, this project questions residents and their conceptions of the good and bad, the familiar and unfamiliar, encouraging them to recognize the experience of others and begin to build trust, respect and confidence in each other.

The aim of this research report in particular is to develop and apply different interactional contexts for residents within the fractured suburb of Sophiatown, with a view to exploring their conflicting and familiar relationships to the past, space and community through narrative exercises and the creation of personal histories. My field research involved two distinct yet related activities that were undertaken simultaneously for over a year. The first part of this research, based on oral history practice, focused primarily on Afrikaans-speaking residents of Sophiatown. The second part of the research, essentially a study in community building, more broadly addressed the diverse residents of this heterogeneous suburb in a series of facilitated workshops. The central question behind these interactions and meetings is whether they can provide a platform for negotiation over a troubled past by acknowledging and appreciating shared experiences, and whether they can begin to foster healing and community pride.

One of the questions that I investigate is whether heritage work has the potential to play a role in civic engagement and social reconstruction. There is a widely-held assumption that an active community and civic participation are 'healthy' for society. This report asks whether social cohesion can be strategically controlled and constituted by external agents who work as facilitators and catalysts of change. The literature I have reviewed from various disciplinary fields in an

attempt to view this discussion of community and collective representation from different perspectives. I have included these insights as they have come to inform and shape this research topic. Whilst Freud and Thelen present two interesting challenges to be mindful of in the community building process, Lefebvre, Habermas and Young offer some insight into the shifting power dynamics of re-invigorating civil society and 'new spaces'. Later Field and de Certeau attempt to defy conventional recall and representation processes posing questions around alternate ways of remembering. The discussion on best practices in Chapter Two sees these principles being applied locally and internationally in diverse contexts that have each contributed to elements of this project, described in detail in Chapter Three.

Despite my scholastic interest as a researcher in the area, I too could not remain impartial in this process and often confronted within this document the tension between describing what is and the inclination to say what should happen. Certainly as a South African citizen, recalling some of the euphoria from having voted for the first time in the 1994 elections, my own aspirations for non-racial and a more sensitive human engagement gets projected into this document. However prescriptive this might seem, I was very mindful of reserving my own comment within the interviews, and rather encouraged participants as far as possible to feel comfortable within their own viewpoints. Even within the framework of the research I enter into a somewhat extensive discussion that interrogates the motives of community building from different perspectives.

Official histories tend to highlight only particular events that illuminate or legitimate the significance of prevailing political agendas. The popular 'Relocation History of Sophiatown', however important, sustains an unspoken, yet fundamental separation along racial lines within the suburb. But this is just the most obvious fracture. On closer inspection, people have experienced many different kinds of prejudices and points of divergence throughout the hundred-year period of this area. My conversations with residents revealed, for instance, that there is a long-standing animosity between English and Afrikaners as a result of the Anglo-Boer war. To a lesser degree, there is ongoing tension between

different churches, socioeconomic groups, and petty differences between people who do and don't keep dogs. Even the recent wave of xenophobic incidents has, on occasion, left residents from other African countries feeling uneasy in Sophiatown.

However I have tried to pursue a different way of looking at urban space which attempts to transcend identifying with (or critiquing) these atomised positions by looking for a common ground of shared meanings and activities, and seeing Sophiatown as a set of layered spaces where multiple translations and interpretations exist. As an antidote to the polarized discourses that separate racialised communities affiliated with the old or new South Africa, this research report looks at potential and existing 'spaces of affinity' (Nuttall 2009). This too is not something entirely new for the area, as people frequently recall the 'melting pot' of Sophiatown of the 50's. Surprisingly, most current white residents also describe Triomf as a diverse space with its mix of Italian, Greek, and German communities. And quite definitely, the community that is currently living in the area cannot simply be reduced to any one racial, ethnic, class or political grouping.

THE SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

In this section I will briefly introduce and describe the scope and focus of the two components of my field research. Although my research started more generally with interactions with the oldest current residents of the suburb (living there since the 60's), I later found the scope of this too broad for the purposes of the research report. This initial process did however allow me to gain some insight into a broader community of people living within the area for a long time, and to conduct a pilot study that would assess what interview techniques to consider. I also wanted to ascertain basically whether members of the community would be interested to share their experiences with me, and this preliminary interview process revealed a community eager to talk about their long relationship with the area.

The scope of the first part of my research report, which is essentially an oral history project, became more narrowly concentrated on white Afrikaans women between the ages of 60 and 75. They have all lived in the area for more than five years, and some for up to 45 years. I arrived at this selection group initially quite coincidentally because they were often the people at home that answered the door-bell when I rang; but I soon found that they were, quite fortuitously, the people I needed to be working with. I found the women to have a unique insight into the neighbourhood since they spend a lot of their time walking children to school, shopping and building social networks within the area. Also, being a female researcher, women seemed to respond less awkwardly to my proposition of visiting weekly for several months. The women who were finally selected were chosen because they were approachable conversationalists - and because they were individually interesting in that they occupied different niches within Triomf's social structure, which meant they would reflect differing worldviews within Afrikaans culture. Each of the participants is also currently the head of their respective household, which allows for new voices to be heard within a traditionally patriarchal Afrikaans culture.

Most of the interviews took the form of open-ended 'oral history' type discussions that encourage participants to share their life experiences relating to the places they have lived in, family, significant events, social networks and activities in Sophiatown, as well as issues in the media, etc. Of the various participants engaged, I visited six women at their homes most regularly; these conversations were held weekly for a period of one year, and I include an analysis of the outcomes of our discussions in some detail in Chapter 3. Other participants that this research engaged were mainly only available for group activities and their input is noted where relevant and appropriate in this report. The results aren't by any means a body of facts about the lives of the women that participated, but are instead narrative exercises that describe aspects of their worldviews.

My objectives within the interviews were multifold and flawed. Firstly, I hoped to develop a (limited) account of how and from where the 'community' of Triomf

developed. Secondly, I was blatantly curious to know what life was like living in this restricted area during Apartheid. Here I mainly wanted to get a sense of how and what social networks and points of contact were formed and still existed within the suburb, and how residents formed an impression of what was 'inside and outside'. Lastly, and most importantly, was the question of personal growth and social integration. My pilot study suggested that the renaming of the area to Sophiatown and any mention of 'History' invoked a rather defensive and nervous response in older residents, as the threat of land claims still loomed.

I therefore wanted to explore the theory that conventional approaches to the past have been divisive (Thelen 2010), and decided to investigate whether a comfortable re-writing of an individual history based on personal experiences would allow one to think of oneself outside of official political and historical categories. Would this new personal perspective of the past, situated in the present with the wisdom of hindsight, influence the way participants reconstructed their impressions of the present-day Sophiatown and the role they play in it? Could this potentially open up the social experience of the area for an individual, an involvement that was previously obstructed by the prejudice of group identity and group interests?

To this end, my rather ambitious aim was to celebrate the details of the individual pasts as they resurface in the new context of the present (our conversation). Marking one's everyday experiences as significant within this 'official' university exercise, could turn the focus of ones social reality to the ordinary, banal, obvious, which often gets overlooked as people generally refer to media comments when describing their socio-political climate. I was investigating the means by which to restore agency within everyday life as people become aware that their thoughts and actions shape the space within which they live (Lefebvre), and in turn the future. I was hoping that this conversation around the past would then nurture a curiosity about others' pasts (where does he/she come from?) whilst thinking about the possibility of being a part of the new community that has developed in the area and the ways in which to do this. This process explores the complex

tension between how one negotiates historical-official narratives and one's own personal experiences in constructing one's reality.

This part of my research then recognizes and tries to fill a gap that the larger commemoration work seems to ignore as a difficult issue. It attempts to engage around twenty white Afrikaans-speaking residents living in Sophiatown, in a way that conveys to them that they too are an important part of the heritage and social fabric of the area, and that their experiences and memories are important and should be remembered as part of the history of the neighbourhood.

A major question that confronted the research process was 'how was this to be done'? Is it possible to create a 'public' space for conversation that is not suspicious of difference and rather builds on points of commonality and shared experience? Certainly, issues of contention are necessary for the promotion of democratic designs (Mouffe 1999), but how to overcome the defensiveness towards experiencing the unfamiliar and to create an opportunity to appreciate diversity and recognize shared experiences? As described above, Sophiatown is a highly fragmented suburb. While they could hopefully be linked at some point in the future, the twin objectives of personal growth (through self-narration) and 'community building' (through sharing stories and feelings) would also initially need their own spaces of engagement - private conversations and public workshops, preferably with some interaction between the two at a certain stage.

The first part of the research, as described above, was thus conducted mainly in one-on-one interviews, where much of the theory from the literature on memory construction and oral histories found its place. I will return to a discussion of this when I enter into some detail on best practices in Chapter 2. Within the context of heritage, however, and in an attempt to start a conversation that could begin to produce some cohesive representation of the area as it currently exists, a wider pool of voices and engagements was necessary. Here the notion of 'community' became the central concept underpinning the possibility of collective representation.

This work constitutes the basis of the second part of my research report. The idea here was to develop an interactional context between near strangers to explore their ideas of the past and community that would draw on areas of commonality as a starting point. This objective required several phases and iterations to develop a guided experience that worked adequately as a workshop method. Despite research into best practices (Chapter 2), no existing exercise seemed to fit this particular context with its own set of challenges and sensitivities. I decided to look for markers within what already existed in the neighbourhood, and to build on the first phase of research that described community life within the suburb. I developed a series of mapping exercises that encouraged residents (invited randomly) to answer several questions graphically and symbolically on a map of the area. They were asked to plot their emotions, their experiences, to identify spatially significant sights and sites, and to simply trace routes that followed their activity through the suburb. As they described their responses, they shared with the group attending some of their lived experience in the area. The others were encouraged to respond, often remarking on what was familiar and different in their experience.

This raises the question of whether a register of shared everyday experiences, people's conceptions of good and bad, the familiar and unfamiliar, are sufficient to begin to build interest, trust and respect in each other. As people begin to share and recognize the experience of the other, could this begin to create the very familiarity that deconstructs 'otherness'? And on a larger scale could one then contemplate the power that exists within their everyday lives as a way of reconnecting citizens and building public life?

Before I enter into some detail describing the methods and process of the mapping exercises I would like to delve into some theoretical discussion around community. How valuable is the concept of community given our highly individualised society? And if desirable, what are our obstacles to community building? In the relatively new democratic public sphere of South Africa, the project of 'nation-building' is still in its infancy, leaving a once rigidly segregated population to now find its way in dealing with difference. Somehow the promise

of the 'Rainbow Nation' was never properly fulfilled, possibly because it came too soon, and too simply (without sufficient strategisation) – as if it could happen spontaneously. I enter into some detail in this section, as I believe the psychological and social impact of 'separate development' as a state policy needs to be addressed in the context of any 'new community' building. Within this discussion I will focus on two factors that I imagine are primary obstacles to creating a 'sense of community'. These are firstly, residents' relationship to 'the other' and secondly, peoples (mis)conceptions of the past.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

As a symbol and aspiration, the idea of community continues to resonate in public discourse and I will engage some sociological principles to explore this more fully. The term suggests many appealing features of human social relationships - "a sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, continuous loyalties, even the possibility of being appreciated for one's full personality and contribution to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement" (Brint 2001: 1). A simple, recent definition - yet defining the concept of community within the discourse of sociology has been a long, contested and unresolved process.

The early binary schemes used to describe ways of structuring social relations by Tonnies (1887), Durkheim (1895) and Weber (1922) developed the idea of 'community', with strong positive meanings and associations, in relation to the opposing structures of society and urbanity, which was implicitly read as negative. Here community is characterized by homogeneity and uniformity - a rather idealized view grounded on "consensual relationships among its members who are supposed to share not only a geographical area but also a set of common values and interests, a sense of solidarity and connectedness" (Colombo et al, in Brint 2001: 7). While conscientious portraits of village, small town and suburban life have been produced; few useful scientific generalizations - that broadly describe communal relations and human social organization in diverse contexts - have been conceptualized (Brint 2001).

As cities present with greater diversity, more movement and lesser social cohesion, alternate forms of community need to be considered. Community does not need to be seen as the antithesis of urbanity/society. "The virtues of urbanism - mental freedom, variety of opportunities, diversity of contacts and constant change - were found to be perfectly compatible with the virtues of community - close personal relations, safety, support, and belonging" (Brint 2001: 6). Other research implies that community can now only exist as a transitory phenomenon evident primarily in brief conversations and interaction rituals of small groups; or that people perform more long-term relationships only through social network structures where there might be some emotional engagement, but the main interest lies in its practical and material benefits.

In contemporary industrial societies looser, more sporadic, and ad hoc connections are the forms of community that seem to be developing (Maryanksi 1992). Maryanski maintains that this might be consistent with an underlying human predisposition for relatively loose and fluid social bonds, as indicated by studies of the social organization of the primates closest to humans (Maryanski 1992). Perhaps it is in these more loosely connected and activity-based groupings that the best hopes exist for bringing some of the virtues of community to the modern world. Importantly, fluid and communal relations do continue to exist within hyper-regulated modernity - yet new variables that influence social relations and social behaviour and their consequences need to be derived in order for these forms of community to be understood sociologically.

This discussion aims to look at more complex, dynamic and heterogeneous forms of community that recognize dialectical relations which emerge within urban contexts between the individuals, and their sub-community and [suburban] community contexts. In this framework, the existence within the community of different, and potentially conflicting, interests and points of views is seen as one of the essential elements that comes into play in the process of participation. Brint's work is of value to the community worker as he identifies different forms

of association that take place within communities, and different mechanisms that help to strengthen ties among members.

Associations of community can take many forms - Brint offers a useful breakdown of the various possibilities and permutations.

> Firstly, high levels of participation in community life; secondly, development of interpersonal obligations and practices of mutual support; thirdly, friendly feelings towards those members of the community with whom each individual is in most frequent interaction; fourthly, (generally as a consequence of preceding elements) a strong self-conscious connection with the community as a symbol of identity; and fifthly, knowledge and appreciation of the individual personalities of the community (Brint 2001: 15).

Brint (2001) finds that the most common associations are with outlooks and behaviours expressing 'fellow-feeling' and 'mutual support', which in turn create greater emotional strength and security in community members. I was particularly mindful of this description in trying to design questions within the mapping exercise that would point to areas of commonality as a good starting point for conversation, yet mainly believed that these possibilities were organic processes to observe within and beyond a space that we tried to create.

Certain voluntary mechanisms are available to most communities as obvious and less intrusive instruments of community building. According to Brint (2001) they include the following tried and tested tools:

> (1) ritual occasions, in which members come together to celebrate a symbol of their collective identity; (2) well-travelled paths and common meeting places, which provide opportunities for interaction; (3) either formally or informally designated times for members to gather together, which also provide opportunities for interaction; and (4) efforts by socio-emotional leaders to incorporate events and personalities into the community's 'idioculture' (Brint 2001: 19).

What is repeatedly stressed in his text is that face-to-face interaction seems to be of utmost importance (Brint 2001). The highly heterogeneous nature of the present Sophiatown community requires that we look to the simple possibilities that might already exist within everyday life. In this regard it was interesting to begin to note how different residents perform the 'rituals of the suburb' (for example, going to the shop, schools, clinics, visiting friends, walking dogs), and how in tracing and articulating these, they could begin to find potentially overlapping routes and practices with other participants.

Characteristically urbanites meet in highly segmented roles. Cities bring together people from the different ends of the earth precisely because they are different and useful to each other, rather than because they are homogenous and like-minded. The social interaction among such a variety of personality types tends to break down the rigidity of caste or ethnic lines, and to complicate the class structure – it thus "induces a more ramified and differentiated framework of social stratification than is found in more integrated societies" (Wirth 1938: 16). Back In 1938, Wirth found this heightened social mobility to be of value for the individual as it makes it easier for him to accept the instability and insecurity in the world at large as the prevailing norm.

Yet, as we all know, in the postmodern era we live in a particularly fragmented and mediated world, where fewer and fewer people personally engage (on a regular basis) other people whose opinions, values and culture are radically different from their own. South Africa, as it begins to recover from the spatial effects of apartheid, encounters this global 'homogenising' tendency most severely. This has fostered an increasing suspicion and mistrust in people considered 'other' and has undermined the possibility of unfacilitated solutions to urban problems. Xenophobia is just one such manifestation of a systemic cultural failure to accommodate 'the other'.

I found resonance in Frug's (1996) call for an urban policy designed to promote community building. His extensive work that engages the legal problems of local governments in the US, describes in detail how states stifle urban innovation. The

principles underlying the studies he has undertaken are of major importance to this study of the potential of 'community' in Sophiatown. His new urbanism describes a modern sense of 'community' based on the characteristic experience of living in a diverse city rather than on the romantic notion of togetherness often associated with the term. Similarly, and closer to home, Mbembe and Nuttal (2008) also write positively of multiple layers and juxtapositions that occupy and should describe space simultaneously.

His (Frug 1996) description of the complications that can result from problematic urban planning can be clearly seen in Johannesburg, a city which has through its spatial policies of separation, produced areas so radically distinct from one other they seem to be from different worlds. This has led to what is still a highly segregated and ghettoised urban population, often with little or no allegiance to an abstract social contract beyond the immediate networks of affiliation, identification and cooperation. We are now left to confront these continued differences within layered spaces like Sophiatown, where people from these diverse worlds now jostle amongst each other for space and identity. The old rules of "everyone knows where they don't belong" no longer apply here. Sophiatown's spatial transition is reflected in new spaces that are no longer simply nice or dangerous, but are now shared with a variety of 'others'.

In a similar vein to Frug, Iris Young (1990) refers to city life as the 'being together of strangers'. Her understanding of what the modern city offers to different groups in terms of a common belonging and limited common interest is particularly instructive for an attempt to think of a sense of community within diversity.

> In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness [...] City dwelling situates one's own identity and activity in relation to a horizon of a vast variety of other activity, and the awareness that this unknown, unfamiliar activity affects the conditions of one's own.[...] City

> dwellers are thus together, bound to one another in what should be, and sometimes is, a single polity. Their being together entails some common problems and common interests, but they do not create a community of shared final ends, of mutual identification and reciprocity (Young 1990: 237-8).

Unlike Young I do not think one should relegate the term community to the romance of pastoral togetherness. I believe that there must be some possibility of enjoying elements of communal life within the city context too – and it is this belief that underpins my interventions in Sophiatown. Whilst finding something in common is valuable as a starting point, the difficult part in community building work is dealing with the differences in the group. As a facilitator I came to realise that this task requires a specific emphasis - not cultivating a feeling of oneness with others, but rather "fostering a recognition that one has to share one's life with strangers, with strangeness, with the inassimilable, even with the intolerable" (Frug 1996: 3). But the question remained whether this fostering of recognition was a feasible idea in such a diverse society?

A decision about where to settle might have previously involved some sort of judgement about the kind of people one wished to live with, and the conditions under which one expected to live. But in very diverse suburbs such as Sophiatown, there are no such choices. At any given moment people might not know anything personal about the 'foreign' people that surround them, possibly not even knowing the neighbours next door. This should appear somewhat strange, considering the fact that the atomised residents who live in a typical middle-class suburb would still often think of themselves as constituting a coherent group. Yet in Sophiatown, residents generally lack any sense of common identity, partly because it is such a prime location for the pervasive experience of otherness.

Suburbs like Sophiatown can easily force people into contact, whether they like it or not, with men and women who have values, opinions, or desires that they found unfamiliar, strange or even offensive. As Frug puts it , "encountering this

kind of stranger does not generate the 'we' feeling- the sensation of similarity arising out of a desire to identify with other people, the desire to belong" (Frug 1996: 5). These are people who are still experienced not as one of 'us' but as one of 'them'. The only escape from this feeling of otherness is the aggregation in like-groups, which appear markedly homogenous.

This is not just an abstract sense of 'encountering strangers' in the neighbourhood. As Sophiatown has undergone its several transitions the function and use of concrete community spaces has changed. In the homogenous suburb of the Triomf, community building rituals ('church-going' for example) served to reinforce the residents' sense of being a coherent social group - now these repopulated public spaces and facilities require them to engage with people often quite different from themselves.

Iris Young (1990) built a global reputation for her work on democracy and difference in which she urged for the affirmation rather than suppression of social group differences. Young identifies four normative values associated with city life, values she labels social differentiation without exclusion, variety, eroticism, and publicity. She writes:

> Social differentiation without exclusion means the formation of a multiplicity of group affinities - ethnic, gay and lesbian, religious, and so forth-in an atmosphere that promotes their intermingling. Variety adds to this mix a diversity of activities within each city neighborhood and a differentiation between neighborhoods thereby producing a distinct sense of place when travelling from one location to another. Eroticism stresses the pleasure and excitement derived from the unusual, the strange, the surprising; it includes not only the stimulation of people watching but also of architectural and commercial variety. Publicity refers to the feelings generated when entering a public space - a space that, because it is open to anyone whatsoever, provides exposure to opinions and cultures very different from one's own (Young 1990: 238-40).

A central city could use its community building capabilities to promote all four of these normative values. But unfortunately they are not the values that characterize formerly homogeneous suburbs, and one cannot just prescribe them or wish them into existence. For these reasons, I support Frug's idea of a "city function of community building" (1996: 6), in order to not just simply be 'together as strangers', as in homogenous suburbs, but to promote citizens' active engagement with otherness. Yet one would have to ask whether cultivating a sense of community characterized by difference, complexity and strangeness would be desirable for the average South African? In fact, is it not human nature to avoid otherness, and seek instead association with similar people? Is that not why homogenous suburbs where created in the first place?

Frug (1996) offers three useful dimensions with which to approach these questions around the relevance of community building. He divides the reason into the following categories, the psychological, sociological and political - I find this a useful schema for my own discussion, and have deployed it below.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

In Richards Sennet's important book, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (1970), he presents different psychological readings of homogeneous and heterogeneous communities. I would like to develop his discussion a little further in trying to understand the state-legislated transition that has occurred from apartheid-generated Triomf to the diverse suburb of Sophiatown. Sennet associates the desire to live in a homogenous suburb with what he calls the individual's desire for a 'purified community'. These purified communities reflect a "desire for a collective form of identity, a collective defense against the unpredictable, the disorienting, or the painful" (1970: 36). Behind this desire it is more the fantasy of community that is longed for, than the actual experience of interpersonal contact. On the contrary, the image of purified community enables its residents to avoid dealing with each other. They need not suffer the disruption and annoyance of actual engagement with the strangers who live nearby because the 'we' feeling allows them to imagine that they know all about each other, and

"their knowledge becomes a vision of how they must be the same" (1970: 37).

Although this common identity is a fabrication, the collective self-image has concrete consequences. Frug (1996) accurately describes how this produces efforts to create a stable social order that can provide isolation from people considered unusual or deviant. It leads people to protect themselves against the unfamiliar, the surprising, and the unpleasant. Indeed, the collective sense of vulnerability to otherness becomes so strong that acts of aggression against outsiders, even violence, can appear life preserving; the very survival of the community seems to depend on the exclusion of difference, on the control of disorder (Frug 1996). This was largely the scenario generated by apartheid's policy of segregation, where everyday social realities of exclusion-control were constructed through - and as part of - the machinery of classification and inequality.

Sennet's sustained critique of this phenomenon is that it creates "a state of absolute bondage to the status quo" (1970: 67) and as a result limits people's lives to their existing domains. A reliance on stability, coherence, and order inhibits openness to experience: it undermines one's ability even to absorb, let alone enjoy, the flux and variety the world has to offer. Sennet (1970) argues that walling off dissonance and disorder in the effort to protect oneself from vulnerability paradoxically increases vulnerability to these very aspects of life, as this leaves us ill equipped with the attempt to ultimately escape from the self.

These general reflections on the experience and management of otherness I find particularly relevant to this localised research, as it begins to help explain how and why people position themselves in relation to others locally within a neighbourhood (as well as more broadly and abstractly within the 'new' South Africa). I will explore this more fully, by touching on the theory of Freudian psychoanalysis and its specific development in Wilton's theory of the public self. Wilton (1998) describes human identity as having three important characteristics - it is a) dynamic, b) intimately connected to the body, and c) intrinsically spatial. Thus the negotiation of a fundamentally fragmented self takes place through the

material and symbolic geographies of everyday life.

FREUD'S *UNHEIMLICH*

According to Wilton (1998), Sigmund Freud's theories of otherness are predicated on the spatialising tendencies of the psyche. Freud writes of the *unheimlich* (the uncanny or unfamiliar), the experience when something is perceived of as other, and experienced as something unsettling. But at the same time the uncanny suggests the reappearance of something which is familiar to the subject that has been concealed (Freud in Wilton 1998: 177). The significance of this characterization is its suggestion that the feeling of 'uncanniness' has its origins *within the fractured self* – the sense of familiarity in the uncanny is in fact something that reminds the perceiving subject of a repressed feeling (such as an unthinkable anxiety or desire) from an earlier stage of development, which is why it is also so disturbing. There is a clear reliance in this explanation on the importance of repression as a means of balancing unwanted elements that are buried in the unconscious with the agency of social constraint (the super-ego).

One of Freud's examples that illustrate this internal mechanism clearly is the strange behaviour of the epileptic or madman that triggers a fundamental anxiety about a loss of control within the self (and less consciously around the structure of the self). In other words there is a momentary identification. The disorderly body - the other - reminds us of terrifying, uncontrollable impulses that lie within ourselves. One way to deal with these is to 'project' them out again, to 'keep them out', into the other. The attribution of unwanted feelings and intentions to objects and individuals outside the self is achieved through projection, and removes this threat from the psyche, restoring a sense of internal equilibrium (Freud 1919). But now the threat is outside in the other. Freud (1919) explains the same mechanism of projection at work in the uncanny feeling associated with the 'evil eye'.

Clearly this has ramifications for any concept of the dynamics of public space in a heterogeneous society. As Wilton (1998) points out, spatial proximity weakens

the social distance between the self and other and challenges the integrity of individual identity, as well as notions of difference. What is normally projected outside and beyond the ego can no longer be completely distinguished from the self. The experience of anxiety Freud and Wilton write of is heightened in the public encounter with people who do not appear to belong in a place we think of as our own. But it is not just because people are different and 'out -of-place' - it also derives from the less conscious fear that they might not be different enough (Wilton 1998: 178).

Significantly, Wilton (1998) argues that the uncanny may be experienced at a collective level, at a scale above the individual. This casts an interesting light on my research area. Political strategies to affirm the distinction between the self and other are often spatial in nature, as South Africans experienced to their detriment through the Group Areas Act. In a culture wrapped up in illusory notions of superiority, Triomf, like other white suburbs, once provided a safe place for hiding from this anxiety around difference/sameness that is associated with the uncanny. Put another way, the political regulation of pure white suburban space by the exclusion of 'non-whites' was a physical manifestation of a psychic mechanism – projection – which had already separated things out. Spatial regulation allowed for the maintenance of a series of constructed oppositions and projections: superior/inferior, healthy/unhealthy, order/disorder, etc. Crime, for example, was something that happened from the township, and occasionally leaked out.

Wilton (1998) describes the political power of the 'abject' and uncanny as capable of disrupting an existing symbolic social order. He writes "the disturbingly familiar uncanny or the powers of horror possessed by the abject can rupture a taken-for-granted social reality, age or socioeconomic level" (Wilton 1998: 178). In other words, prolonged proximity to someone identified as abject/uncanny overwhelms the symbolic construction of him or her as 'other'. This produces anxiety and often a violent initial reaction, but subsequently forces a re-conceptualization and incorporation of the abject/uncanny as part of the social/psyche - since it can no

longer be distanced. More generally this suggests that proximity to the other can and often does promote acceptance because the subject has the opportunity to rethink self/social and incorporates a more nuanced understanding of 'difference'. In this light, heterogeneous suburbs like Sophiatown offer the potential for an unmediated public or civic engagement to initiate the processes of revision that may allow a more sensitive consideration of another's humanity.

Sennet (1970) suggests an alternative strategy, which involves a more conscious attitudinal decision on the part of the subject confronting otherness. It involves giving up the idea that the world can be purified or controlled to enjoy "the acceptance of chance in life", as well as the embracing of change, growth, and disappointment. Here he refers to a sense of resilience, an ability to cope with whatever surprises and conflicts one encounters, a feeling that one can live with, even learn to enjoy otherness. Ultimately, he suggests that openness to experiences makes life more fun. Yet in describing the tension that this sets up he also captures this familiar psychological experience as a source of both "vulnerability and pleasure" (1970: 8)

SOCIOLOGY OF THE CITY

Whilst some have romanticised urban life, far more emphasize its negative aspects. The catalogue of complaints can generally be reduced to two basic grievances: the city's physical conditions (e.g. noisy, too dirty) and the kind of people who live there (e.g. too many Nigerians, students, etc.). The first attitude simply responds to a familiar romanticisation of the countryside, which one can refer to as sentimental pastoralism (Frug 1996). Often to sustain a symbolic link with this pleasure, the urban resident develops the suburban yard and then has to edit out a great deal of daily experience; the noise coming from the neighbours, the traffic, in order to enjoy this idealization of nature.

Whilst Wirth (1938) understands the city to be defined by the very concept of heterogeneity, Herbert Gans (1973) argues that a markedly heterogeneous community is likely to lead to bickering and unsettled feuds because community

members cannot understand each other. He writes "extreme heterogeneity is likely to inhibit communication and to encourage mutual resentment, whereas moderate heterogeneity provides enough compatibility of interests and skills to enable communication - and therefore learning- to take place" (1973: 201). Yet as has been described, heterogeneous communities promote tolerance for social and cultural diversity precisely through acknowledging some initial confrontation and conflict. Sennet (1970) proposes that people learn to accept a larger range of differences if they are repeatedly exposed to a variety of cultural and social practices. Of course there are limits to what one may find tolerable. Sennet indicates that living in a heterogeneous community increases the kinds of otherness found to be bearable.

Sophiatown has seen a dramatic shift within the demographics of the suburb over the past 15 years. At one stage any stranger not seen 'as one of us' was experienced as unsettling, even frightening, so that deviance of even a minor sort was hard to stand. To complicate this further the pass laws and the Group Areas Act legitimated these feelings which generated a kind of moral order of the suburb, which has now been completely reformed. The culture of avoidance of contact with strangers is hard to perpetuate in the very diverse public space that currently exists. Since the area has been desegregated over the last fifteen years, various effects of this transition have been manifested in the social realm.

The argument for the developmental impact of living in a heterogeneous space is that it provides people with a broader range of life experiences. Not simply the opportunity for more fun, but also stimulation for growth, learning, creativity and experimentation. Associated with freedom, as compared to the pettiness and prejudices of living in a space where everyone knows of each other, a heterogeneous urban space tolerates and rewards individual differences. More recently, sociologists have focused on how heterogeneous cities cultivate not only individual eccentricity but the formation of groups that help expand the ways in which one can shape a life. These subcultures provide a basis for developing alternative lifestyles (Frug 1996).

Simmel and Wirth (1938) describe the dark side of this kind of freedom that can begin to undermine morality, perpetuating a classic image of the city as breeding ground of vice and corruption. In a more positive light, everyday encounters with strangers - at the bus stop, at the Shoprite - make people aware of a wide variety of subcultures. In this kind of space, people learn from strangers without speaking to them. Jane Jacobs writes "a good city street neighbourhood achieves a marvel of balance between its people's determination to have essential privacy and their simultaneous wishes for differing degrees of contact, enjoyment or help from the people around" (cited in Frug 1996: 18).

However the term heterogeneity does cover a very wide range of 'dissimilarity' and is often used to represent that which is unfamiliar. This terminology can be used euphemistically to classify people, usually in somewhat broad and negative terms. For instance, with reference to Sophiatown, reference to the potential of the area turning into a slum, or squatter camp, in the local media, suggests rather condescendingly the movement of black residents into the suburb. Angry or fearful residents that could afford to leave the area in light of these changes, made promises to their neighbours and requests to real estate agents that their houses only get sold to other white people (Mrs De Kok interview, 22 April 2010).

But already black demand has overcame white resistance, and various neighbourhoods like Sophiatown could be classified by their stages in the transition process – "all white, invasion, succession, consolidation, or all black" (Massey and Denton 1993: 30). Despite this rather cynical view the older residents, many of whom have built their homes over fifty years, know no alternative. They are comfortable here, and struggle to make sense of the new world around them. The new families that have moved into the area, mainly first time home owners, also reflect a diverse mix of people from all over Johannesburg.

THE POLITICS OF CITY LIFE

During apartheid, the government's strategy to deal with Joburg's black

workforce was to isolate them by creating and defending racially marked boundaries and spaces a good distance away from the rest of the rapidly developing city. This would essentially reduce the number of places outside of the working relationship where people encounter men and women different from themselves.

Most white South Africans looked upon their towns as places in which "white people live in by right and black people work in on sufferance" (Davenport 1969). This point of view received unusually direct expression in the report of the Stallard Commission of 1922 (Transvaal Local Government) during the segregation era, with its often quoted dictum that "the native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister" (Report of the Transvaal Local Government Commission, TP 1-1922, paragraph 42 , quoted in Davenport 1969: 95)

Later, the laws associated with the policy of 'separate development' regulated the separate use of residential and business districts by different racial groups , and was undoubtedly the most important regulation associated with the reality of the Apartheid era. The repeal of the Group Areas Act was a particular turning point in the political reform process in which the legal pillars of apartheid were eliminated in 1990 and 1991. All over the country persons of all skin colours could now acquire property and settle anywhere, providing their personal income allowed them to do so. The social implications of these legislated decisions still continue to be negotiated within the public realm twenty years later (Jurgens 1993).

Various academic disciplines aim to examine the connection between the spatial, social, and racial divisions within South African society. The historian Cooper (1983) emphasized that "social relations exist in space; even as society shapes space, space shapes society" (p23). Bonner and Lodge (1989) noted that this was especially prevalent in South Africa, where

> The policy of segregation has made the contestation of space one of the

> central political struggles… A central theme in the history of black urban communities in South Africa was… their attempts to create and defend illegal space. A central thrust of state urban policy was equally to close down such communities and to quarantine them in localities selected by the state where they could be more effectively regimented and controlled. (1989: 1)

The suspicion and fear that infest our metropolitan areas threaten to generate a self-reinforcing cycle of alienation: the more people withdraw from each other, the higher the percentage of strangers that cause them anxiety, thereby producing further withdrawal. As the number of people experienced as other expands, it is likely to produce a comparable increase in the desire to build more walls, more physical structures separating one from the other, rationalised as crime prevention measures. Suburbs have become divided up into little private fiefdoms in this way. Robert Parks' famous observation about cities still stands from 1916 - the processes of segregation, he said, "establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate" (1916: 29). In the suburbs of Joburg, we even live with domestic workers that share our space the most, yet we maintain a 'secure' mental construction of difference and distance.

The possibility of engaging the politics of this diverse and contested space in a democratic process is what motivates these intitaives. In this regard, the CCLA project in Sophiatown broadly aims to build (and study) individuals' capacities to participate as civically engaged citizens in the transition to a more participatory and democratic society. With assistance from *IDASA* (a capacity building organisation) the CCLA "gently challenges residents to live by the ideals of what the 'new South Africa' means"(proposal document 2010). So here a city function of community building would be not to only lower the overall levels of estrangement in the suburbs but also to begin the process of local negotiations designed to address the area's problems. Civil society movements would argue that the political element of many voluntary organizations facilitates better awareness and a more informed citizenry, who make better voting choices,

participate in politics, and hold government more accountable as a result. The statutes of these organizations, however informal, have often been considered micro-constitutions because they accustom participants to the formalities of democratic decision-making (Almond and Verba 1989).

These projects are merely a starting point as they refer to the possibility of everyday politics as a way for diverse citizens to build a common life. As an antidote to the current political apathy dosing itself on the excesses of leadership, this research initiative tries to reconnect citizens with a more engaged and responsible public life that relies on the talents and insights of local residents as crucial elements.

So what are these negotiations we strive for in Sophiatown? Jurgen Habermas, in *Structural Transformations* (1995) noted that social progress was impossible with only an elitist public sphere. Public discourse within a public sphere and what he later calls "communicative action", the search for the most rational solutions through listening and argumentation, are communication tools that point the way to a properly democratic and desirable mode of social organisation. Are these concepts applicable only to the bourgeoisie, or can we refer to these as essential processes in the formation of a public sphere and "people's public use of their reason" (1995: 27). This ideal of the public sphere calls for social integration to be based on rational-critical discourse. Integration, in other words, is to be based on communication rather than domination (Calhoun, 1992). Sometimes political change can be viewed as interference from outside. For example, in Sophiatown the thorny issue of name changes have met with opposition (similarly across the country), yet no public forums have been conducted to deal with the sense of alienation that has surfaced. Habermas defines the public sphere as a "sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion" (in Calhoun, 1992).

Essentially Habermas agrees with the typical postmodernist position that philosophical truth is untenable and that there can no longer be totalizing knowledge as dreamed up in the Age of Reason. However, this does not imply

that a ‘theory of rationality’ could not be universal. He shifts the emphasis in our definition of rationality from the conceptual to the social when he speaks of ‘communicative rationality’ that is “oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing consensus - and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticisable validity claims" (1995: 17).

This shift is fundamental to the theory of communicative action. It is based on assumptions about ‘the implicitly shared and imminent rationality of speech” (Habermas 1995: 42) In his theory of society, Habermas distinguishes the *social environment* or ‘*the world of life’ (*in which man leads his everyday life by establishing more or less direct relationships with others) from *social systems* (economic, political, legal-normative) as specifically structured and institutionalized interaction patterns among people. In the history of human society, social systems grew out of the world of life, yet through time the formation of new and finally modern institutions separates these systems from life, as they mediate among people wider principles of social integration, knowledge, legitimacy, and regulation. These systems eventually narrow their rational range to the extent that they become dominated by money and power orientations, monetarisation, bureaucratization and politicisation.

Clearly, we see this within the context of our study the narrowing of human free space, where the possibility of everyday life has been substantially subdued by the tendencies of political systems.

According to Habermas, the way out should be looked for in affirmation of the "communicative rationality", in strengthening of the autonomy of civil society, in expanding the space reserved for free action and communication of people who, in mutual communication, bring about rational decisions founded upon rational argumentation and consensus instead of the strengthening of authoritarian government forms and system enforcement. Here Habermas also notes a progressive role for new social movements, pleading for argumentation and communicative action principles where the practical issues of social life (including social conflicts) can be resolved by rational discourse among people. He stresses

the role of the speech act in the communication process where the challenge lies in developing new forms of participation or participative democracy. Habermas thinks that given conditions of free communication, problems of conflicts, crises and legitimacy can be solved in modern (capitalist or socialist) society, which amongst other things also suffers from a "legitimacy crisis". This means that it is faced with the crisis of its own identity, in addition to being overwhelmed with doubts, that result in it fragmenting into a variety of ideologies, worldviews, strategies and ways of governing (Mitrivic 1999: 221).

Communicative reason sounds like the panacea of all modernity's ills, but can it work in an extremely heterogeneous setting? Because everyday politics invariably falls short of the standards of communicative rationality, public life is probably best cultivated not in an ideal sphere that assumes away power, but in the many democratic and contested spaces where obstinate differences in power, material status, and hence personal and group interests can find expression. With the plurality that a contemporary concept of 'publicness' must contain, conflict becomes an inevitable and central part of this formula. In this regard, Habermas has been criticized for not accepting a fundamental focus on conflict and power, which forms the underlying thrust of, for example, Foucault's work. Nevertheless his work is still hugely significant in its consideration of the public sphere as a bulwark of freedom (Flyvberg 1997)

Perhaps the most appropriate perspective from which to analyse the space of Sophiatown is from a dynamic and practical point of view from within the environment, where the space itself feels like a living, changing being that can at one moment be working for you, the next against you. Considerations of the space as a complex field – "from the more human perspective of its dwellers, those who live in it, perceive and experience it in its multiplicities" (Mbembe 2008: 23), "and as a set of spaces where diverse ranges of relational webs coalesce, interconnect and fragment" (Amin 1997: 417) seem to better describe a space shared by people that is constantly evolving and relatively unstable.

Within this dynamic paradigm of space I found particular resonance in Lefebvre's work in *The Production of Space* (1991). This seminal 'urban theory' text argued that all space we encounter, including untouched natural or 'absolute space', as well as more complex social space, should be understood as a social product or construction that is not just a reflection of power relations but constitutive of a specific historical social reality and sense of everyday life. The construction of social space is always based on the dominant class's values, and the hegemonic production of meanings that affect spatial practices and perceptions. As a Marxist philosopher, Lefebvre (1905) argues that this social production of urban space is a critical component of the reproductive mechanism of society, perpetuating the relations of power and domination peculiar to it. With the extraordinary dense superimposition and interpenetration of social spaces within contemporary cities, the "urban scale appears to have become the central institutional, political and geographical interface upon, within and through which the contradictory politics of capitalist restructuring are currently being fought out" (1991: 'Introduction'). Lefebvre sees cities as strategic arenas for sociopolitical struggles where the space produced also serves as a tool of thought and action (Brenner 2000). Here social space is both produced and a product to be consumed. He writes, "social space is both a field of action and a basis for action" (2000: 56).

His view, which is of relevance to Sophiatown, particularly as a public space, is that social relations possess a spatial expression and this projects itself onto space. His words 'change life, change space' ring with a great depth, as neighbourhoods in transition are now to negotiate the impact of changing political legislation and the role individual residents have to play in it daily. There are various ways people in flux attempt to find new meaning through the re-appropriation of the body and the re-appropriation of space and this research attempts to investigate some of these experiences and processes. The mapping exercises are largely an alternative way to describe the suburb as a space through the personal recollections of its residents in a way that celebrates its current composition as a product of a long fight for equal rights and diversity. Facing the

current challenges in negotiating with difference brings in focus the individual's role to play in this struggle.

Lefebvre also remarked that through our relationship with architecture and the built environment "the spatial imagination was capable of confronting the past... and reading its less tangible secrets in the templates of its spatial structures" (1991: 64). I found this to be significant through several conversations with residents. A coloured resident living in the area for two years, mentioned that he too wanted to live in a nice house with a swimming pool like those reserved for white people in the past. Now when he comes home he can relax and be a different man with his family. By claiming this space for himself he feels that he can personally begin to correct the past and conceive of an equal life with dignity and respect. Another resident Mrs De Kok, when asked what she looks forward to in the new South Africa often says that she hopes that her domestic worker could also have a nice home like hers. Complaints from old residents about what has changed in the area also, mostly seems to be reflected within the physical environment with the dirt, noise, and crime being most frequently mentioned. These reflections are the early stages of people beginning to re-negotiate the notion of entitlement through the current transformation of segregation and land ownership issues.

In this way Lefebvre boldly uncovers his political project as he sees within urban conditions the ability to threaten the social order of the past and establish some autonomy with the creation of 'counter spaces'. By invoking local micropowers, political heterogeneity is recognized as important and the faint traces of human existence that remains in an almost entirely colonized life can be salvaged -

"(Social) space is a (social) product" (1991: 'Introduction').

The demographic design of the suburb has in this way experienced a profound shift from a top down administration of the past to a now locally negotiated organic, internal process, within which lies the potential to subvert old institutional or 'group' ideologies with more direct experiences. Can a community like Sophiatown overcome its racially obsessed politics of the past and work to

reflect its own profoundly complex and interesting set of contestations from within?

EXPERIENCES WITH HISTORY AND MEMORY

Dave Thelen argues that an additional barrier to building full lives and a rich community in the New South Africa has been the way in which history has propelled the struggle in the past. He sees history as a 'narrative of struggles' by groups, governments and institutions to possess and retain the power to shape peoples lives.

In his paper 'Walking through Sophiatown in the Shadow of Nietzsche' (2010), Thelen refers to Nietzsche's work from the 1870's that describes an emerging historical culture that was "increasingly sapping the capacity of people to live their lives fully" (Thelen 2010: 2). Here Thelen writes that Nietzsche was concerned that history was playing too big a part in peoples lives. Thelen describes two of the main concerns which were that "people felt dwarfed as individuals by the sheer power and thrust of historical processes around them", and "that the 'scientific' discipline of history… was imposing categories for explaining peoples movement through time" (2010: 2), which eroded alternate ways for which people could use the past to enliven their activities.

Throughout his work Thelen supports the call for an approach that helps people "to extricate themselves from history's grip" which could offer a more useful perspective of the past and present. In this particular instance he found within his research with the residents of Sophiatown, that people struggle with the challenges they face when dealing with building relationships amongst new neighbours. This was mainly due to the historical, racial categories in particular, that residents couldn't seem to transcend in overcoming simple divisions toward building relationships. Here Thelen's work explores the possibility of building elements of a different kind of history that can overcome what they experience as "barriers to ubuntu and non-racialism in everyday practice" (2010: 2). With a shift

in focus from the history of groups to the experiences of individuals and human beings, he believes that people might be better equipped to negotiate how they fit into the world and shape their lives and relationships with those around them.

Experiencing life within cultures and political groups tended to generate an over simplified history that was to keep people apart rather than to share a wide range of everyday experiences. This imposed uniformity on black and white experiences and developed many negative stereotypes around the way people behave.

David Thelen has explored this particular field of interest in many different contexts. Some of his earlier work in the US was published in his book, *Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (1998), that discusses how people collect and select details of the past in order to make sense of their present reality. He finds that people assemble their experiences into narratives that allow them to make sense of their personal histories, set priorities, project what might happen next and try to shape the future. The study reveals interesting patterns in the way different cultural groups fashion their identities, establish boundaries between inside and outside worlds, and feel disconnected by formal history taught in schools. Thelen writes:

> [w]ith cases from the past, we might imagine how political policies could begin not in ideologies or institutions but when people insist that policies or public spaces reflect their own experiences and narratives. A politics that values active individual engagement over group, ideology, institution may be built by listening for and to the deepest needs that individuals present, in places that presently elude pundits and pollsters, as they use the past to sustain and change the course of their lives and the world (Thelen 1998: 207).

David Thelen is currently co- director of the working group at the University of Johannesburg that is steering the Sophiatown project. I will discuss his project methodology in more detail in the section on best practice in Chapter 2.

I would like to extend this discussion with a brief look at the relationship with the past and remembering as an active process of construction in the present. In their book *Contested pasts: Politics of Memory*, Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (2003) unpack the question of what it means to contest the past. The discourse of memory has become central to thinking about the relationship between past and present, which they see as having both historical and political purchase. Not only can the past challenge privileged narratives but is also seen as a contest over the meaning of the present and what the past means in the present. Their understanding of the past has strategic, ethical and political consequences. "Ideas of restitution and reparation… recognition of wrongs done, or readiness to acknowledge hidden stories, all draw on a sense that the present is obliged to accommodate the past in order to move on from it" (2003: 'Introduction'). They essentially see memory *as a site of struggle over meaning* – an understanding that becomes a valuable tool in trying to understand issues of representation in Sophiatown, and the tensions involved in presenting a past that not everybody is willing to accept. They advise that ideas of memory should not work as a contest over official versions of the past but rather focus on relations of power within a society and why certain versions are favoured at various times. They also suggest that it is important to understand the cultural constructions into which these memories are constituted: "the meanings and narratives of the past that we live with are of critical importance in establishing our sense of ourselves and our cultures" (2003: 5).

This leads us back to the path breaking study on memory that was undertaken by Halbwachs, a French sociologist and philosopher who lived in the dramatic years between 1877 and 1945. Published posthumously, *On Collective Memory* (1992) described the construction of memories as an intensely social process, often contested, that individuals do with other individuals. He discusses the relationship of time and space to collective memory and offers fruitful definitions and applications of the differences between individual, collective and historical memory. He believed that social classes, families, unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time.

It is individuals who remember, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember and recreate the past. Halbwachs writes "while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as groups who remember" (1992: 88). For Halbwachs these memories tend to fade with time unless periodically reinforced through contact with persons with whom one shared the experiences in the past. Rooted in other people, only group members remember and these memories are lost if members don't get together over long periods of time (hence school reunions etc.).

With historical memory, the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions. Halbwachs believed that the present generation becomes conscious of itself in counter posing its present to its own constructed past - "How can currents of collective thought whose impetus lies in the past, be created when we can grasp only the present?" (1992: 24). His answer is that through participation in commemorative meetings with group members of the current generation we can recreate through imaginatively re-enacting a past that would otherwise slowly disappear in the haze of time.

What does this work mean for the Sophiatown context? What happens when the dynamics of the group have seen dramatic changes through forced removal, relocations and regime changes? Is this a dilemma of the city, more generally, where people constantly shift through many 'groups' and are left with a sense of alienation through a recurring loss of pasts? In light of Halbwach's theory, this Sophiatown study brings new neighbours together to discover and respect a wide range of ways in which individuals have experienced similar things in the past, despite perceived differences, and to begin to investigate/ develop the process of new memory/group making.

Teacher
Born in New Pietersburg
Lived here 16 years



People staying in a specific area. In a village, you are the whole village, but here in Joburg you speak of suburbs and its surroundings.

Nazeem Pather
Born in Cape Town
Lived here 5.5 years

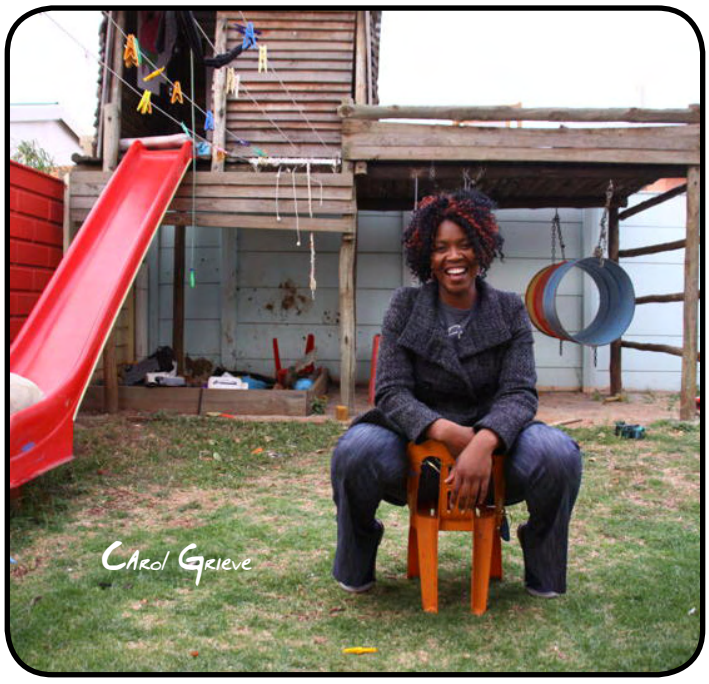
Sheila Pather
Born in Durban
Lived here 5.5 years



Community is a feeling of togetherness and unity. Its living together in a united kind of way.

Community is a sense of being part of a larger group which is related to a specific area.

Carol Grieve
Born in Johannesburg
Lived here 5 years



Its unity, a feeling of being a part of something bigger than yourself.
A safe place.
A happy place.
Where you are able to have closeness.
Where people can just drop in and you can feel at home and feel good in their space too.
Where our walls don't keep each other out.

Mrs De Kok
Born in Woolseley
Lived here 28 years



It's to know people, you know your neighbours in your area, you try to help wherever you can, if you live in an area then you can reach out to each other, you try to help.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY

Photography by Salym Fayad

Name Mrs Botes
Born in Johannesburg
Lived here 45 years



It s the people Around you, you try to figure out whAt you cAn do for eAch other, how you cAN help one ANother.

Dirk Kotze
Born in -Mashishini, Lydenburg
Lived here 23 years

Cathy Seefort
Born in Noordgesig
Lived here 16 years



People close to you. The environment where you live. Community is there to Assist you, they cAN come to you whenever A need Arises knowing you will be Able to Assist. Its At leAst to know your neighbour, then to even go beyond thAt.

Community stArts in my house with friends And nieces. Its knowing the people where you live. And even tAking it beyond thAt, .. mAking A collective. Where children wAlk And plAy in A sAfe And cleAN environment

Charles
Born in Accra, Ghana
Lived here 2 years



Community is the integrAtion of people from different bAckgrounds And cultures thAt come to live in A settlement or AreA, And then stArt A process of trying to understAnd eAch other, trying to live together, to live with eAch other, try to help And be there for eAch other. BAsicAlly, to be interdependent in the sAme vicinity or AreA.

Judi Bennett
Born in Albertsville
Lived here 15 years



A community should be integrAted And resourceful. They should be striving for A common purpose, yet still Allow eAch person to reflect their own uniqueness. As we identify our own individuAl needs. A community should be self-sustAining, AccountAble And should be Able to mAke its own chAnges As it Asserts its diversity.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY

Photography by Salym Fayad

Mrs Sarah Mathysen
Born in Vrededorp, Johannesburg
Lived here 20 years



Community is to be Able to communicAte with eAch other, to get Along.

Jan Small
Born in Boksburg
Lived here 1 year

Janette Small
Born in Johannesburg Southern Suburbs
Lived here 1 year



Sadly Mr Small pAssed AwAy in JAnuAry this yeAr.

Community is the people Around you working together to mAke life eAsier. We need to get pAst our own problems And try to be nicer to eAch other. Sometimes even A big smile goes A long wAy.

Naomi Franks
Born in Noordgesig
Lived here 18 years



It s getting everybody involved in whAt is hAppening , thAt s everybody thAt stAys in the AreA, A wide group of people.

Elise Bond
Born in Durban
Lived here 12 years



Residents living in An AreA.
Residents grouped in one AreA.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY

Photography by Salym Fayad

CHAPTER TWO

I would like to begin here with some investigation into current best practices and approaches within the field of community representation internationally and locally. The examples below have guided this research in terms of providing questions around the function of oral histories, the possibility of community-centered memorialisation, how to deal with intangible history and relocations sensitively, tracking emotional responses as a way of developing participatory models for communal representation, the use of photography as a tool to initiate and develop the group discussion, and finally, the effect of developing products on the project. Many of these practices cut across both parts of my research, the oral histories and the community-building workshops, and so I have not divided them rigidly according to my own research bifurcation.

ORAL HISTORY DEVELOPMENTS

Oral history has made us aware of the elusive quality of historical truth itself. So how does that locate the records and experiences of people's lives that are shared with us? Portelli (1991) writes in the introduction to his important work on *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, "an aspiration toward 'reality', 'fact' and 'truth' is essential to our work: though we know that certainty is bound to escape us, the search provides focus, shape, and purpose to everything we do" (1991: ix). The facts that he alludes to are here again an understanding of the cultural forms and processes by which individuals express their sense of themselves in history.

This oral history project is not a mining of community history on the relocations and struggles of marginalised peoples - instead this project focuses on the ordinary/everyday and wishes to express a full range of human experience, rather than simply the political. It takes heed of the current criticism of South African oral history projects that they haven't taken seriously the international turn towards theorizing about 'memory' and 'narratives'. Sean Field, from the Centre

for Popular Memory writes "many historians still view oral history as a supplement to historical research, which primarily draws on written sources, but occasionally turns off-stage to drag-in interviewees to provide vibrant colour to the serious business of history" (2008: 176). Despite a long and productive relationship within History academia, he criticises the History Workshop for their continuing empiricist approach that does not adequately interrogate the relationships of power in memory. From their inception in the 1970's, the formation of the History Workshop was driven by white left wing motivations at Wits University to change the history of South Africa by creating a new democratic history. They have been repeatedly criticised for their conservative approach to simply 'collecting the facts'. Sean Field suggests that their disregard for the dynamics of the interview, simply employ participants as ventriloquists' puppets that affirm already established points of view, without engaging individuals. Naturally, this critical tension raises questions about the uses of oral history. Whilst he is not suggesting that oral historians need to cast themselves as 'healers', he does recommend that oral history try to offer pragmatic contributions to "regenerating the agency of survivors and their descendants" (Field 2006: 3).

Phillipe Denis from the School of Theology, University of Natal traces the function that oral history traditions have served in South Africa in his paper 'Oral History in a Wounded Country' (2008). From the penetrating studies of van Onselen and Bozzoli he tracks the evolution to the impressive oral collection developed by the History Workshop. He highlights three phrases that reappear and that capture the purpose of oral history as it was understood 15 years ago: "it was 'to answer questions', to 'gain insights' and to 'uncover' " (2008: 3). For him, oral history of that period served to improve a 'true' knowledge of the past, particularly focusing on the preliterate poor. The 80's saw a shift in language to a culturally sensitive 'deepening of understanding and knowledge' that would ultimately contribute to political mobilization. Oral history post-apartheid became a government tool. The TRC, despite its shortcomings, has irreversibly changed the country's

understanding of its own history. Denis writes, "it is no longer possible to act as if nothing wrong happened under the apartheid regime" (2008: 209).

The University of Natal ensures that oral history fulfils a valuable function within the community and offers training and workshops on their projects. In this regard I will mention the Memories of AIDS project that documents the history of the epidemic, acknowledging its social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual dimensions. This project serves to help future generations understand "where they came from and in this way develop a sense of identity and strength in the face of massive adversity" (Sinomlando website 2010). As a site of memories it tries to explore the many vantage points that the history of AIDS can be recounted from. In interviewing caregivers, community workers and pastoral agents oral history proved suitable for documenting the day to day, subjectively apprehended and culturally appropriated reality of the epidemic. The Memory of Aids project is a four-year research project, with yearly follow-up interviews.

Denis critiques oral history norms that he believes to be envisaged from a Western point of view. His question challenges how the (South) African context affects the methodology of oral history. He believes that with a more sensitive practice, the function oral history is to serve should be locally determined. In this light this study aims to be an engaging practice of oral histories, grounded in civic life, aimed more at enhancing the participant's social being than contributing to an abstract corpus of knowledge.

Exploring the plethora of new insights into differing and intersecting dialogues, this research report focuses primarily on developing an understanding of the workings of neighbourhood life within a specific context that could potentially inform or initiate community-building practices within the same area.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE VISUAL

Another development has marked the tension between the verbal and the visual. Field (2008) critiques oral histories for a kind of 'logocentricism", commenting on the profoundly visual aspects of human memory that are rarely included. With this in mind, the significance of the visual became clearly evident within the interviews in the way the participants perform/construct spoken words, sentences and stories to convey a sense of their mental images and feelings about the past. Field writes "the story-tellers various acts of conveying 'verbal pictures' is surely at the dialogic heart of the oral history enterprise" (Field 2009: 12). This became of great significance within this research as I was particularly interested in overcoming well-established contextual barriers that residents faced when speaking about the past. This attention to the visual, somehow allowed for a more present recalling of events, which I was interested to investigate as a tool to further this project.

I initially asked participants on subsequent visits to add photographs they thought to be significant or helpful to add to the telling of their stories. The inclusion of these visual testimonies certainly added a greater depth to what was being shared. Conducting the interviews in the women's homes also provided an endless resource to explore their experiences and relationships over the years. The idea for the yard portraits called 'What is community' was also primarily an attempt to allow some of the texture of each resident's personal context to populate their early engagements with the developing community.

Ultimately the idea of mapping, first for the study group and later in the community workshops, was an extended exploration into the ability of the body and imagination to aid recall through visualisation in a less mediated and more instinctual way.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

There is certainly no fixed definition of what an interview is, even within the domain of oral history. Is the interview an 'account', an interpretation or a direct report of attitudes or perceptions? Rapley (2001) argues that interviews are

"inherently social encounters, dependent on local contingencies, in which the speakers draw from, and co-construct, broader social norms" (2001: 307). The interview in this way allows participants to construct themselves as certain types-of-people in relation to the topic, and reflexively to the interview situation itself. Cleary in this view, the interviewer plays a much larger role in determining the 'results' of the engagement – and by implication different-interviewer-same-interviewee combinations will yield different stories.

Along the same lines, Valerie Yow (1995) poses these important questions for the oral historian:

- What am I feeling about this narrator?
- What similarities and differences impinge on this interpersonal situation?
- How does my own ideology affect this process? What group outside of the process am I identifying with?
- Why am I doing the project in the first place?
- In selecting topics and questions, what alternatives might I have taken? Why didn't I choose these?
- What other possibilities are there? Why did I reject them?
- What are the effects on me as I go about this research? How are my reactions impinging on the research?

I regarded these questions with some seriousness in contemplating how I might be perceived and what impact I might have on what is said and not said. Still, I wanted to extend the boundaries of this interaction-construction further. In keeping with a more fluid and complex approach to understanding Sophiatown and the identity work at play in the community, I was eager to shift the interactional context to a larger group to enjoy what greater influence this might have.

A COMMUNITY CENTERED MODEL FOR MEMORIALISATION

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg embarked on a community-centred intervention programme, aimed at harnessing

the peace-building capacity of memory work and its potential to empower communities by forging reconciliation. The memory work was conducted through focus groups and interviews amongst survivors, scholars and provincial government officials and individuals working within the fields of memory and memorialisation in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Through this programme they developed a model and template that describes five phases that focus on a community-centred approach to memorialisation. They describe in detail the different processes that were undertaken in different phases so as to allow "practitioners and communities themselves to initiate their own memory projects" (CSVR website).

Ereshnee Naidu, who worked on the project, writes that memory plays various, but often significant, roles within societies undergoing transitional justice. She maintains that since memory within a transitional justice society is often a social construct that is mediated between state and individuals, memory may take the form of selective amnesia where the state influences collective memory formation (Naidu 2004). Within this context a lot is often 'forgotten' in an attempt to forge immediate reconciliation. However, it is her view, but one supported by various studies, that such processes tend to hinder reconciliation as well as fuel underlying tensions within a transitional society. However, if used constructively, memory or memorialisation processes can play a significant role in the reconciliation process as it "allows for the recognition of individual victims and survivors of the conflict; allows different generations to understand the conflict and mediate between the past and the present; and allows the society collective spaces for mourning that can promote the process of healing past wounds" (Naidu 2004: 2).

Looking at one of Naidu's reports as a template, the first phase describes the information-gathering phase, outlines the methodology, findings and some of the recommendations of the community-needs assessment that was conducted in the Vaal. This is usually a week long phase. The second part of the report, describes the actual intervention phase. In this case, the intervention focused on training members of the Khulumani Support group – the training addressed conceptual

issues around memory as well as basic project development with a specific focus on memory work. The second part of this report also includes a description of the design of the training manual, the selection of participants, the facilitated workshops that culminated in the conceptualisation of a memory project by the group; and finally, the evaluation phase.

These phases offer a useful template one reference, a model that can track and anticipate the course of a community-building programme over time. They are however somewhat prescriptive and could suggest the dominating presence of an external organization instead of a more organic process that could develop a greater sense of ownership from within. The timeframes they describe/prescribe might allow for a more cohesive programme, yet seem too short to develop an adequate level of respect and trust within the group to address points of contestation. However they do suggest that the consultation process should be linked to education and training around the processes so that communities could make informed decisions around their participation and needs.

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) heard many people's stories about their time in apartheid in the 1990s - it has been hailed a major turning point in oral history, but also criticized extensively from many positions. While it is beyond the scope of this writing to deal with the complexities of these debates, I would like to briefly revisit some of the guiding principles. According to the TRC report, 'symbolic reparations' refer to measures that facilitate the "communal process of remembering and commemorating the pain and victories of the past". Such measures, which are seen as mechanisms to restore the dignity of victims and survivors, include exhumations, tombstones, memorials and monuments and the renaming of streets and public facilities. In acknowledging the role of civil society in the process of reconciliation and healing, the RRC (Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee) argued that reparations should be viewed as a 'national project' that is a "multi-faceted process and can be approached from many sides by different people" (TRC Report 2003).

Thus far, whether it is the TRC or local government street renaming, we have seen mainly a top-down administration of public memory. These memory managers are inclined to claim, highlight and project famous persons and heroes as part of a hallowed group, often at the risk of further alienating those already marginalized groups and individuals that experience the commemorated sites daily. The community involvement described within the programme designed by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, is an attempt to engage and represent more closely a broader public view. When Nieftagodien writes, "memorialisation is important in the same way that I think that uncovering the past (is), making the past known to current generations is an important project… but I think that it should be an area of contestation... (quoted in Naidu 2004), he appears to be calling for a complex past, unsimplified and inclusive. Collective memory as a social construct is often utilized by - and in the interests of - the dominant ruling group; in response to this, in many post-conflict societies memorials have become a significant part of the transformation and transitional justice process. Memorials have become a means of reconstructing social identities more democratically. As different people and groups negotiate over spaces, sites, values, what is important and what defines their experiences at a community level, the potential for a more tolerant and diverse society develops.

In this way memorials can bring various stakeholders together into a public space of remembering, and thus may serve as vehicle of reconciliation. Naidu (2004) speaks of various Legacy projects that aim to harmonize the many initiatives, and to ensure integrity, inclusiveness, balance and broad participation within the communities they work with. Their focus lies on participatory research methodology used to encourage active participation, initiating a two way process of learning. With the view that national identity and community are imagined realities, continually contested and changing, there is no overriding dominant narrative. The broad open-ended conversation helps redefine the boundaries between us and them. However since community emphasizes commonalities, these representations are often reduced to generalisations at the risk of marginalizing and disinheriting other social, ethnic and religious groupings that

are outside the mainstream. This poses the challenge of creating multidimensional works that represent the complex process of this negotiation.

Another suggestion that Naidu's report (2004) offers this research is the Centre's work with emotional recall through visual stimulation. She notes that emotion is linked to motivation and it is only through the observation and questioning of people's emotion that the true needs for development and change can be identified. The facilitators agreed that ideal mechanisms would be through empowerment projects that focused on issues of memory, working, counselling, and talking through their feelings.

In an interview with Kantso, who was a member of the community focus group, she quotes a participant mostly aptly:

> Well, for reconciliation interaction is needed. We cannot wait for the 21st of March and then try and meet. It is like we are inventing a relationship that we don't have during the greater part of our lives…. Regular interaction and setting up a permanent program for everybody can make sure that people reconcile (quoted in Naidu 2004: 6)

DISTRICT SIX

> *Above all District Six retains its role in contemporary South Africa as a symbol of the will to remember* (Peggy Delport, chief curator in Coombes 2004: 124)

If one of the legacies of the apartheid era is the alienation of individuals and communities from their own histories, then the case of District Six in Cape Town is an important exception. District Six has assumed iconic status, taking it beyond the local into the national as a symbol of all those dehumanizing instances of forced removals that were an integral part of apartheid's master-plan.

Like Sophiatown, many other areas in the country were almost entirely razed to the ground and communities were racially segregated and relocated to their respective settlements after a destructive forced removals period that lasted

from the 1950's to 1980's. The two famous sites are however different in that the District Six community was relocated much later (1970's-1980's), and the area remained undeveloped despite its prime property value. It therefore remained (and remains) as a dark cloud on the city's conscience. Ex-residents organized themselves into the 'Hands Off District Six Committee', and as a result of accruing very little state recognition and being hugely underfinanced, developed the District Six Museum with a high degree of autonomy. The committee looks forward to this space developing a vibrant contested public culture. This is clearly not a usual museum but aims rather to give expression to a movement of community development and political consciousness.

In this regard, new national museums have presented themselves as sites of resistance, which echo the pervasive theme of the triumph of the human spirit. The District Six Museum however, states that it continues to resist being turned into "an object to be consumed, merely looked at and left behind, untouched" - instead the committee members aimed to create a space that could be continually "shifted, layered and subverted by its visitors" (Rassool 2001: 'Intro'). This was intended as a provocative experience that would encourage self-expression, discussion and criticism. As a site of forgiveness and for the healing of memories, it was intended as a series of spaces that would facilitate reflection. The committee decided that it didn't want to be a space of 'innocence or simplistic authenticity' which produced a mere replication of a past as a commodity. Many such places have recently sprung up, which sets up the atmosphere for an instant heritage-style themed environment that satisfies the most superficial tourist gaze.

Thus developing the intention of the museum was vitally important, as those around the project were acutely of aware that there were issues to address in the context of the New South Africa. A definite part of this process of representation would be to allow for much needed reflection, restoration and reconstruction. The action of the committee and the community that develops around the museum is also a way of intervening in debates about the future of the city. Through a formalized body they realize the necessity of being involved in the

processes of civic and social regeneration as ordinary people who can and must intervene in the bigger politics (Rassool 2001).

Unlike District Six the space of Sophiatown has run a very different course. The area has always been populated and new residents continue to move into the suburb everyday. Whilst the intentions described above are insightful and relevant in certain instances, Sophiatown speaks for/ to many different stakeholders that need to be addressed in different ways. Here the 'past' does not or should not refer to any specific era in the neighbourhood's history alone, as the District Six Museum rightfully does. Approaching the past through an exclusive or simplified lens discounts the texture and detail of the lives and layers that exist outside of it, and sustains the tension that exists in the present around who is 'in' and who is 'out'. This filtering would wrongly perpetuate the ills of the past and continue the cycle of segregation and discrimination.

In the living suburb of Sophiatown the intentionality of the museum faces several challenges - possibly fulfilling a reflective and restorative role for the relocated communities, but also for the residents of Triomf, as well as the more recent influx of current residents that bring to the area their experiences and values from all over the continent. This is an engaged approach of dealing with the diversity that describes the New South Africa and has a regard for civic politics beyond party policy. However, the real challenge lies in negotiating the terms and form of this representation in a way that could engage very different people and their stories that fit onto one map.

Annie Coombes references the work of de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Living,* within the context of the District Six museum and its map work within the area. She describes participants "that reclaim the city space simply by walking through it in ways that disrupt the intended logic of the urban planners" (2004: 131). She describes the act of recalling the streets through memory work as a similar kind of disruption that can occur. The French Situationists, and de Certeau in particular, examine the ways in which people can individualise mass culture, often altering things from objects and street plans to rituals, laws and language ,

in order to make them their own. He analyses the ways in which people reappropriate traditions and symbols in everyday situations, because in the activity of re-use lies an abundance of opportunities for ordinary people to subvert the rituals and representations that institutions seek to impose upon them. This is a dramatic shift in attention and agency away from producer/product to the 'consumer' as producer (de Certeau 1984: 'Intro').

The creation of the District Six map comprised a large canvas on the floor onto which ex-residents could inscribe where they lived and add whatever comments they wished. This served as a starting point for people to reconnect with their spaces, and through the act of 'walking' one could revive and rearticulate memory. This later developed into a heritage trail that took the form of a personal memoir of an ex- resident through the area.

Another major exhibition that the museum hosted as a way of providing "triggers of recognition, association and memory" (Coombes 2004: 141) was the large scale *Public Sculpture Project* (1997) that invited 96 artists to create, without restrictions or prescriptions, anti–monumental works of art to be placed in an outdoor space. These works served as transient markers, as opposed to fixed structures, that conveyed a delicate message of being ephemeral, physically vulnerable. The artists were encouraged to focus on developing an interactive and collaborative process with the residents they had selected to work with. I found the scale of the project to be of significance as it allowed for many new conversations to develop and many perspectives to be drawn, allowing for the more controversial aspects of the memory of District Six to be discussed. Also, as a body of work within the city centre it would have certainly registered with both ex-residents and visitors as a significant comment about the place for memory work in questions of redevelopment. Other exhibitions included *Fields of Play*, which focused on sports memories, and *Digging Deeper* (2000) that served as a public archaeology exercise.

The committee that developed the Museum also met once a week for 'Monday Sessions', which, apart from updating the group and exchanging feedback,

served as a calming, centering and sharing experience for the group (Rassool 2001). It should be clear that this kind of participative work demands a high level of commitment from a dedicated team.

Whilst I have set District Six apart from Sophiatown in the ways mentioned above, I would also like to stress that the former project's focus on process (and the passages that memory work could explore) is unusual, innovative and of interest to the Sophiatown interventions. Additionally, the ideas that community development and political consciousness are part of this engagement have become central to the project in Sophiatown.

CHRISTIAN NOLD AND EMOTIONAL MAPPING

Following a long and arduous Internet search that investigated various worldwide tools and exercises that satisfied what has already been described as a vital need to involve and represent as much of the community as possible, I encountered the work of Christian Nold which proved to be most inspiring.

Christian Nold is an artist, designer and educator working to develop new participatory models for communal representation. He makes it clear that his idea of community cannot be reduced to a 'picture of multi- hued children, or clasped hands', which he finds "impotent and non- threatening". He believes that engaging with these 'cuddly communities' involves no real concessions or consequences, yet "real communities tend to have many issues both internally and externally' ('Activist Christian Nold's Bio Mapping' 2008).

In 2001 he wrote the well-received book 'Mobile Vulgus', which examined the history of the political crowd and which set the tone for his research into participatory mapping. Here he began researching forms of social control, particularly the bizarre tactics of the police that were used to aggravate and spread panic in crowds that serves to drive most people away. When he began to conceptualise this world of alienation that is produced, he focused his studies on the dynamic of public spaces and the uses of technology, language and media in this context (Boyd 2010)

This enquiry into people and spaces would lead to Nold's most famous project – creating Bio Maps of cities like London, San Francisco and Bangalore. These have been a number of large scale participatory projects staged in different countries and over 1500 people have taken part in workshops and exhibitions. These projects have a strong pedagogical basis in which he then uses the research to produce accessible and socially constructive, community enhancing tools that change the balance of power. His collaborations have been with people that are interested in social, political and environmental innovation (Boyd 2010).

His work on Bio- Mapping has had particular significance within my research as it offered a fresh perspective to set aside popular constructions of the area and create a view through the real experience of its residents. This reliance on the *topos* or intelligence of the body could offer the potential for the participant to register some aspects of their memories through the suburb beyond the restrictive historical or interview boundaries.

In this way Nold's Bio Mapping is a research project which explores new ways that we as individuals can make use of the information we can gather about our own bodies. Instead of security technologies that are designed to control our behaviour that Nold initially studied, this project envisages new tools that allow people to selectively share and interpret their own bio data.

Nold describes that the Bio Mapping tool allows the wearer to record their Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), which is a simple indicator of emotional arousal in



GSR kit ('Christian Nold' website)

conjunction with their geographical location. "Arousal is not necessarily positive or negative and is best thought about in terms of heightened attention to ones body or surroundings" (Nold 2004).

By sharing this data they then construct maps that visualise where people as a community feel stressed and excited, points of high and low arousal. eg. New shopping centre low arousal, old market high arousal. Responses can also be annotated with comments like " this house always smells of great food cooking" or "here's were I first kissed Sam". The results are compiled into an 'emotional map' of the city that could help to draw on emotionally positive spaces and that could begin to integrate sacred spaces that are often overlooked into city planning ('Activist Christian Nold's Bio Mapping' 2008).

I found the working with maps particularly striking as maps have long been used as instruments for social and political ends, yet modern maps retain an unearned aura of objective rationality. A city or country map appears devoid of human influence, is a static and rigidly defined grid of buildings and landscape features, and is a poor representation of lived space. Nold harks back to maps from the seventh century, when sketched human figures were a common addition to the landscape ('Activist Christian Nold's Bio Mapping' 2008).

"I think it is interesting that in the past, people could be present on maps and it was not considered strange," Nold says, "because the social and physical bodies of the city are linked in obvious if not often articulated ways" ('Activist Christian Nold's Bio Mapping' 2008). There are no human-inhabited spaces that are not marked by experiences and memories that leave behind ghost trails.

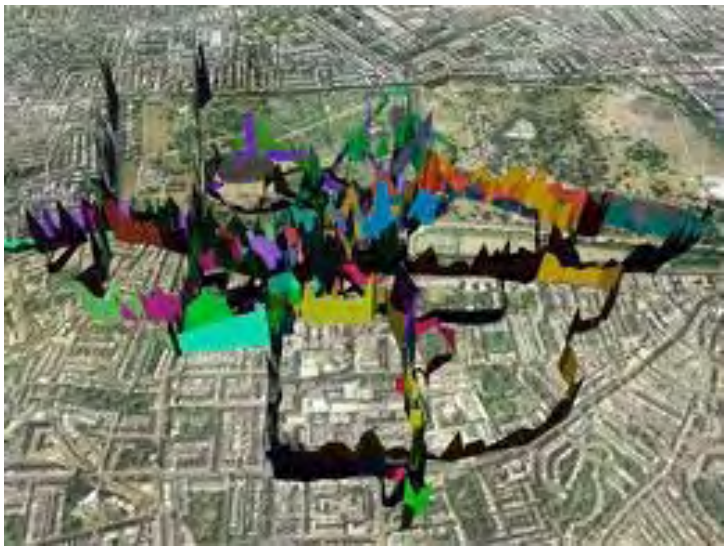
In bio-mapping cities around the world, Nold found that emotional content was what most defined a volunteer's reactions to his environment. Rigged with Galvanic Skin systems, people responded more strongly to interactions with one another than to architecture, design, or landscaping. "Architecture is the skeleton upon which experience happens," says Nold, " people are more into flirting than looking at buildings" (Nold 2004). How will our perceptions of our community and environment change when we become aware of our own and each others intimate body states?

To enter into some detail about the process, I will discuss the Greenwich Emotional map in slightly more detail.

The project involved weekly workshops with 80 local Greenwich Peninsula residents with the aim of re-exploring the area afresh with the help of a Bio Mapping device. The city was planning a re-development of the area and wanted some feedback that represented what was important to the residents. The resulting 'Emotion Maps' encourage personal reflection on the complex relationship between oneself, the environment and ones fellow citizens. In a group, people then commented about their experiences and left annotations on the map.

To create the communal Greenwich Emotion Map all the individual walks were aggregated to visualize a shared landscape of emotion. The map contains particular arousal hotspots reflecting many of the local discussions about regeneration of the Peninsula. As part of the commission they printed 1000 Greenwich Emotion Maps, which have turned out to be a great success communicating the project locally as well as nationally and internationally. Locally every participant received a map and a number are available at the tourism office

but the map was also distributed through arts venues such as the ICA and Tate Modern bookshops (Biomapping 2008).





Biomapping - Greenwich Emotion Map ('Christian Nold' website)

While this participatory project is now at an end, the local discussions about physical and social change in the area are continuing and we hope the map will play a strong part in this discussion.

These were large scale projects that had a lot of financial support and resources made available to them. But I became interested in some of the key concepts that

could be migrated into a far simpler exercise. In this regard, I was particularly intrigued by the possibility of new memories surfacing as the mind/body performs differently when contemplating a map.

PHOTOVOICE - Dave Thelen

This refers specifically to an exercise that was conducted by Dave Thelen (from chapter 1 on concerns about history) and Tom Chapman as part of the larger civic engagement project that operates in Sophiatown.

Following numerous consultations in block groups and one-on -one interviews, residents agreed in principle to the idea that they would be able to form deeper relationships with their neighbours if they "knew more about their experiences, where they had come from, what challenges they were experiencing" (Thelen 2010 p24). They found talking about personal details difficult, and this left residents feeling vulnerable, amongst a group of strangers that lived on the same block. It was therefore necessary to find ways to encourage them to communicate with neighbours about their experiences.

Photovoice became the way to advance the goal of encouraging dialogue "in which residents themselves identify and develop themes for an alternative history growing from their experiences (Thelen 2010 p24)". This method was developed by artists, who were trying to help others reveal things they could later express. They gave disposable cameras to residents, asking them to photograph what was important to them and "that by any standard they considered 'historical' (Thelen 2010 p24)". They then developed the pictures and returned them to the residents at a follow-up group meeting where the photographers were asked to talk about why the image was important to them. The rest of the group could also add their responses whether or not they recognized the image and the issues it presented.

Thelen writes, "Residents took to photo-voice with great enthusiasm. They reported that it was a process that "broke the ice" and enabled them to share their experiences with and get to know their neighbours better. They spoke of how one person's photo reminded them of experiences and scenes they would not otherwise have recalled. They liked the conversation about the photos and were eager for the next photo-voice session" (Thelen 2010: 25).

Thelen describes this as a process that turned individual experience into collective experience, or "imagining a theme of history that grows out of how they photographed life" (2010: 25). The exercise presented an incredible variety and depth of conversation about some of the images. Here the individual could negotiate ways in which to share his or her feelings and observations within the group, whether they were unique experienced or part of a larger pattern Naturally this was easy to discern through the reaction of neighbours to each others comments.

Thelen shared similar challenges in encouraging residents to talk about apartheid as a system or to volunteer their personal experiences on their own. But through the photographs people took amazing pictures of how they experienced it. The group in turn spoke candidly, yet informally about their memories. Photovoice became a way to surface memories that live for people as they try collectively to shape their worlds.

I've included one of Thelen's examples from the photo-voice sessions with the Good/Gold street group, "Taking pictures of the fence that divided him from his neighbours the colored photographer recalled the difficulties he experienced as he imagined how to approach his neighbors when he moved to the neighbourhood around 2003. He recalled that he "grew up in a time when we were told that the whites are the best....In our time it was difficult, it's almost like a respect thing," even to ask a white person a question. "It took me time to meet my neighbours. Fortunately for me I had very nice neighbours. So far no

problems, but you were afraid. You moved into a different territory. You don't know whether you can [greet]. What would they do if you greeted? You don't want to get dogs because if they bark too loud or too much it might be a problem" for neighbours. This man's colored neighbour, reflecting on her own earlier experiences and feelings when she first encountered white neighbours, confirmed: "Yes. It's true." (Thelen 2010: 26).

Developing this process of photovoice allowed current residents to present their view of Sophiatown and discover sites they share. In another example from the photo-sessions Tom Chapman can show you photos of how local residents, taking pictures of the Greek church, came to settle on the importance of negotiation among diverse cultures in Triomf and from that to this as an important foundation for their own challenges in negotiating among diverse cultures now.

DE PIJP NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT - SARA POLAK

This project started from a National Dialogue Day in the Netherlands that commemorated the tragic street murder of controversial artist Theo van Gogh. The idea behind this day was that it could potentially bring people together from different backgrounds, not for debate, but rather for exchange.

Sara Polak, presented this case at a seminar in Amsterdam that focused on best practices within the Netherlands. (I unfortunately could not get a translated copy of her paper to reference but have interviewed her and write with her approval). She is currently a history fellow at the University of Amsterdam but also works as a consultant writing people's life stories for their own consumption. These are not oral histories or academic projects of any kind. The stories are not investigated, but merely 'ghostwrittten autobiographies'. Polak attended one of these 'Dialogue'events in her neighbourhood, which turned out to be mainly one on one discussions in groups. De Pijp, was a working class suburb built at the end of the 19th century. It now functions as a very mixed area, with many new young couples with double incomes moving into the somewhat trendy neighbourhood. The dialogue was attended by 24 people, ranging in age from 21 to 72.

Very quickly the idea of a book representing the neighbourhood arose. Sara became involved and through a series of dinners, the group decided on and shaped the content. For one dinner, everyone brought along pictures of when they were young. And in this way they made up the contents of the book over the course of the year. The project was successful at getting funds since five of the steering committee members were useful in attracting funders from their places of business. The success of the project did however raise serious questions and problems, mainly about what is meant by successful.

The initial idea was that people could work together in forming a community, and that the book could be a good starting point for integration and social cohesion. The underlying thinking was that if the different images could be integrated into one document this would be suggest cohesiveness within the neighbourhood, and would encourage mutual understanding and a feeling of community.

But they faced several challenges in determining who the 'we' is thinking this. The larger group agreed on the project, but eventually the aims that were focused on were of the smaller group that were linked to the sponsoring organizations. Another issue that became problematic was that 24 participants represent only a very small percentage of de Pijps 33,000 residents. Generally, through the 'dialogue' selection process certain types had self-selected, which meant that problematic people were not there. The police also turned out to be a major funder, which meant that several people opted out, or told only 'safe stories'. This wasn't too great a cause for concern, as Sarah remarked that at least it created a place for 'non-problem types' , as opposed to the general attention that focuses on the problematic.

As the project became well-known in the area, lots of people wanted to jump on the bandwagon, but in exchange for their own requirements. There were now many agendas to compete with, and this posed larger theoretical questions about who owns history?

This is a valuable reflection on an open-ended organic process that had to deal with many challenges along the way. As the Sophiatown residents that have

participated in various exercises and aim at drawing in greater interest from the rest of the neighbourhood, the idea of developing results and products that represent these experiences often surfaces. It could serve as a record and testimony of their participation but as this case study reveals, these 'products' can take on a life of their own and leave participants feeling estranged. Interestingly Sara advises through this experience that more planning and discussion around ethical issues at the outset is crucial.

CHAPTER THREE

TRIOMF

The research started as an exploration through the oral history project into the social networks and mechanisms of community building within the area. The area I refer to is specifically limited to what was once designated as the suburb of Triomf. I understood through previous engagements with members of the Afrikaans community (I practised there as a dentist for a few years) and from my pilot study that any mention of 'the past', 'politics', or 'history' seemed to provoke an aggressively defensive attitude that I had not set out to challenge. However it seemed necessary to contemplate the potential roots of this disdain.

After the end of apartheid in 1991, Afrikaners still assumed a heavy burden for the actions of their ancestors who developed the ideas and values that were to underpin apartheid. Not all Afrikaners agreed with the apartheid policy of their government, and not all Afrikaners were vehemently racist. Yet Afrikaners still suffer the stereotypical label of 'perpetrators', of 'crimes against humanity'. Their challenge in the late 1990s was to find a role for themselves in the new South Africa. One could thus talk of an emergent Afrikaner identity crisis, which is still in process (as demonstrated by the recent nostalgic song 'De la Rey') - as Cloete (1992) puts it, "Afrikaners had always been fairly certain of what they were. Nowadays they are no longer sure" (1).

From the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism in the first few decades of this century until well into the eighties, the basic criteria for being an Afrikaner were that you had to be white and Afrikaans- speaking. This meant that coloured and black Afrikaans speakers were automatically excluded. More than fifteen years into a democratic and non-racial political dispensation, the image of the Afrikaner as a homogenous, unified group of people seems remote (Cloete 1992). Fewer and fewer white Afrikaners are investing their identity with notions of being 'God given'. But as the legacy of apartheid so clearly shows, this was not always the case. It was in the name of 'identity' that the Afrikaner elite created and enforced particularly

destructive laws to ensure that there was no possibility of 'racial contamination' and to maintain the 'purity' of the volk. And for a long time, the word Afrikaner will still appear for the majority of South Africans as a sinister signifier of suppression. The creation of Triomf through the apartheid regime's forced removals of 65,000 inhabitants marked the triumph of that policy.

However, the last fifteen years have seen a significant but gradual disintegration of what was once considered a cast-iron identity. The mid 1990's saw a regime change that led to the desegregation and renaming of Sophiatown. At first glance the treeless middle class suburb appears bleak, having receded behind high walls, electric fences and barking dogs. Beyond the continuity of street names it would be hard to find any traces of the storied Sophiatown—or Triomf.

Marlene Van Niekerk's novel *Triomf (1994)*, offers a mocking and rather repulsive representation of the poor white community that has contributed to the stigma associated with Afrikaners in the area. Set against the backdrop of the first democratic election, the novel is a portrait of the lives of the Benades - Pop, Mol, Treppie and Lambert - who live at 27 Martha Street in Triomf.

The novel tells the story of the suburb that was developed so that the urban blight of multi-cultural Sophiatown could be eradicated, and the needs of landless white working-class Afrikaners could be met. The Benades, are a gross caricature of a nuclear family and all the values it embodies: their incestuous history (all the men have sex with Mol, and Lambert is the genetically-impaired, monstrous offspring of siblings – either Pop or Treppie and Mol) has extinguished any hope of a future. Lambert is a "'cul-de-sac': the end point of the introversion of an Afrikaans community driven by its own isolationist logic" (Titlestad 2009: 4). The action of the novel – the self-destructive and often farcical exploits of the Benades – accentuates this dynamic of self-destruction; while they are victims of the state's failed planning, the Benades are really their own worst enemy. This shows how Apartheid failed even those it was ideologically designed to benefit. "Nationalism, the novel suggests, like Kronos, devours its children" (Titlestad 2009: 4).

Although this novel is not exclusively occupied with gender issues it demonstrates the oppression of women under the patriarchal authority which was essential to the maintenance of Afrikaner nationalism. The objectification of Mol, the sister of Pop and Treppie and mother of their child Lambert, reaches atrocious depths. She as the sexual tool of all three men, is also emotionally, verbally, physically abused. Her status as a (sex) object is underlined by the fact that their beat-up car is also called Mol. Racially she is part of a group who considers themselves superior to blacks (symbolic of the failure of the ideology of white supremacy); she is of a class looked down upon by other whites and Afrikaners, and she is of the gender oppressed by the patriarchal system prevalent in the race and class configuration in which she finds herself (Viljoen 1996).

Van Niekerk's account can be read as radically subverting Afrikaner nationalist thought and identity. Through her use of demotic language she radically interrogates ideas about white Afrikaner racial 'purity' and the racial designation of 'high' Afrikaans (Devarenne 2006). Devarenne celebrates the possibility this renders for 'white' Afrikaans to escape the cultural stagnation of Afrikaner Nationalism. The story forms part of a broader collection of post-apartheid white South African writing that seeks to interrogate the ambivalence of what Mark Behr (author of *Smell of Apples* [1998]) calls "coming to terms with one's own culpability for what is wrong in South Africa" (quoted in Heyns 2000: 1). Behr explains: "My own book was the beginnings of a showdown with myself for my own support of a system like Apartheid" (quoted in Heyns 2000: 1).

Perhaps then it is important to understand *Triomf* less as a literal realist description of the area and its Afrikaans residents but as a metonymic work which represents Afrikanerdom more generally. In this reading, the title is heavily ironic, suggesting the failure rather than the triumph of the nation. This is similar to the thrust of Titlestad's interpretation.

> Of course van Niekerk's *Triomf* does not represent the city after apartheid. It expresses the result of building (cities, identities and lives) on the ruins of suppressed black history. In the novel, the dogs

> of Sophiatown still howl and fragments of the bulldozed past keep resurfacing; the repressed, constantly returning, is on the verge of returning with a vengeance. Van Niekerk captures the moribund apartheid order: all subsequent literature about the city has to contend with the death this novel foreshadows (Titlestad 2009: 4).

Even if it is not about Triomf specifically, its middle-class audience will nevertheless make the associations. With its sordid brutality and shocking scenes of incest, the novel is clearly not going to be read by the Afrikaans working-class folk of Sophiatown. But through this book (and the recent film adaption) they will once again, unbeknownst to them, take the blame and the shame of apartheid. These lower-middle class and working class residents, often scoffed at by middle class whites as 'poor white trash', become the site of another convenient projection, a projection of guilt – the ones who literally built their homes "on the ruins of suppressed black history". Yes, they are the ones who benefited from apartheid.

In her paradoxical ability to evoke feelings of revulsion as well as compassion for the degenerate Benade family, the writer illustrates the intricate relationship between the colonial and the postcolonial that has to be negotiated when writing the new South Africa. Van Niekerk's novel demonstrates an awareness of the fact that the colonial cannot be eliminated from the postcolonial in a simple act of political amnesia and that the past has to be confronted rather than evaded when constructing a postcolonial discourse in South Africa (Viljoen 1996).

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

So where does this leave the Afrikaans community living in Sophiatown? They carry the burden of the stigma and guilt of apartheid, for whites and for blacks. Pawns of the past, and of the preset - in our ongoing National exercise that requires them to constantly demonstrate to us (as living, unpunished perpetrators) the virtues of the current ruling party. In this regard I found it crucial to separate as far as possible from popular or institutional references and terminology that describe the lives of others. I wanted to spare the participants the judgement and the categorisation. I was simply interested to share their own view of their world, as they would recall it to themselves, as far as possible.

I wanted our conversation to be framed largely within everyday experiences, the banal, the unsuspiciously familiar. I wanted my participants to feel at ease as they the only shift that was required of them initially was to generously allocate time to an Indian university student interested in Triomf's life stories. Most participants would declare at the outset that they had nothing special or valuable to add, but my interest lay precisely in what was usual, the texture and detail of routines.

I anticipated that the history of the suburb was largely contained in the experiences of its residents and decided on the oral history type interviews as a good starting place to understand the dynamics of the neighbourhood. I had three main research questions in this regard. Firstly, I was interested in how/ from where the community of Triomf had developed? This included family histories, childhood memories, and movements into the suburb. Next I was interested in the daily life and relationships people built over time here. How did people meet, where, how regularly? I was curious to learn how communities were built. And lastly, I wanted to get a sense of how old residents positioned themselves in regard to the changes that have occurred in the suburb over the last 15 years and how they have experienced the transition in the country, more generally.

This last question of transition was one that was deeply interesting, yet as I have mentioned, also highly sensitive. In essence, the question was how had the

momentous historical rupture in the 'story of the nation' affected their individual life narratives? Was there even a coherent life story? As economically embattled, elderly Afrikaners, who had seen their state-sponsored ideology collapse in a just a few years, how had they coped with the multitude of adjustments and changes required of them? New neighbours, the threat of land claims, diminishing economic opportunities, shared public spaces, a black government and public sector – all of these would have to have been processed and dealt with in some way. And were there also positives in all of this – were there new insights, negotiations, even relationships that had come as a result of 'transformation'? It felt that their transitions might have been so traumatic and alienating that the conversations themselves might help them to stitch their lives back together again.

South Africa's post-apartheid cities – in all of their emergent complexity – have proven to be the key sites for engaging and representing the nation's transformation. The abolition of racial segregation, in principle if not in reality, combined with the integration of South Africa's cities into the region, the continent and the world, has made them contexts of rivalries, contestations, threats and opportunities. Our diverse population contends with different histories and realities of urban life. What we share, though, is the recognition of the shock of the new: "that our habitual maps are inadequate to the challenges posed by the lived urban realities of the post-apartheid dispensation. We are challenged to seek new ways of seeing and coming to terms with a fluid and often excessive, fullness of life" (Titlestad 2009: 17). Hopefully these oral histories and exercises will contribute in a small way to replacing those 'habitual maps' of Sophiatown.

The results were collected from the unintentionally long, yet rich conversations that I shared with the women for over a year. I didn't assume that this brief and specific engagement could result in a resolved linear narrative of each woman's story, so I instead compiled these glimpses, in the form of three different narrative exercises. Through the family tree, memory mapping, and short stories I was hoping that one could develop their own composite interpretation of the

different characters and life stories that emerge. I have included the illustrations at the start of each section, and it might be helpful to refer to a photograph of the resident mentioned each time they appear in the text, as their stories develop.

In chapter 1 I stated that my intention was partly to generate a more inclusive representation of the area for memorialisation practices, but largely also as a civic engagement and community building exercise. My hypothesis was that providing a comfortable platform to render ones own experience outside of political and historical contexts within the interview, could suggest a relationship outside of the assumed prejudices and blame/guilt emotional landscape. This could in turn allow for Habermas' '*World of Life*' with its possibility for more direct relationships to penetrate the highly tainted and mediated interaction patterns between residents (South Africans), and potentially offer glimpses of how we could relate more humanely.

The story that develops comes from collaboration between two individuals. 'Life histories offer the opportunity to observe a particular society through the lens of individual lives' (Mirza & Strobel 1989: 1). The insider speaking about herself and her society, and an outsider asking questions from her own frame of reference offers more than one person's agenda, purpose and interests. Paradoxically, the agenda of the collector of the narrative is often easier to discern than that of the narrator herself. In this regard, after a period of reflection I'm still left with the task of asking the participants what motivated them to continue with the interview process. Was it a relief from the loneliness of old age, did they enjoy having someone to talk, or was it engaging in a way different to other conversations, did they have to perform an unfamiliar role, was it a valuable time for reflection?

Developing a trusting space only seemed possible after a sustained period of time. It was therefore necessary to keep a small group of participants that I visited weekly over a one-year period. In the oral history project I started interviewing 6 women. Two of the participants ended the process due to ill health and the other was relocating. Of the four remaining in-depth interviews I

conducted over the year, only three maintained their agreement to be published or presented in this document.

The interviews were conducted in the woman's homes and were an opportunity to record one's past, to describe one's own personal experiences in the suburb of Triomf and now Sophiatown, amongst sharing recipes and gardening tips. The interviews reveal the preoccupations, options, stresses, and strategies of women who live through several stages of Johannesburg's metamorphosis. These stories offer some insight into individuals, societies and historical processes of change through the lives of three women. The initial interviews were conducted not to collect a life history but rather to discover the interests and activities of Afrikaans women in Triomf, about whom very little had been written. The interviews were conducted in mainly English and some Afrikaans. Despite setting out my agenda very clearly in this document, I was more curious to learn about the women's lives and didn't set out to convert them to my own viewpoint. Surprisingly, participants rarely asked my opinion about things, and I rarely offered it. The affection that developed was based on a mutual trust and interest in this unspoken familiarity that was building between us. I grew to be involved in the three women's lives, celebrating birthdays, nursing them through illness, exchanging plants, visiting with family, and cooking together.

The three woman (coincidently) represent very different world views and social positions, which in turn reflect a great deal of diversity within the Afrikaans community living in Sophiatown. Many aspects were however similar and the conversations we shared not only taught me the value of real life skills, but also a respectful and warm manner. Etiquette is a way of life within the Afrikaans community - the women welcomed me into their homes, offered me a cup of tea, and always walked me to the car for a final farewell. They all worked during parts of their married life, however speak of a cultural tradition that frowns upon a woman who employs someone to assist them in their home. Afrikaans women are meant to be hard working, and each of them performs all their own household chores. They share a respect for the church that symbolizes the heart of community activity, yet mainly don't attend the services any longer. They all

mourn the change in family values, with distant, deceased, and estranged children, and are each preoccupied in the home space with boundless attention to their pets (mainly dogs). Despite markedly different financial situations, all their homes were well looked after, with all the comforts of city living.

As the relationship developed with each woman, the life history took on a direction dictated by the individual's own interests and activities. The story that developed around Mrs De Kok's life centered on her childhood memories growing up in a small town in the Boland in a large, religious and closely-knit family. Throughout her life she refers to this experience and how it shaped her values and outlook and defined her as a strong, distinguished Afrikaans woman in society. She is an open, practical woman, having dedicated most of her adult life to raising her daughters in her parents' example. Mrs De Kok married well and travelled widely through her husband's career as a sports journalist and later editor for the Afrikaans newspaper Rapport. They spent several years living in London before moving to Triomf in the 80's. Her husband's passing away left her in charge of the home, with a sizeable income to assist. She lives amongst a very impressive orchid collection, that she cultivated herself, with her two grandchildren and three dogs. Her two daughters live in London and Cape Town, and all three get together yearly, in either location, for a family holiday. She is an energetic and well-groomed woman and continues to enjoy the street life of the area. She walks every day - to the shops, with her dogs, and through her sincere and sociable disposition she has many acquaintances in the area, and is still very active within her experience of the community.

Mrs Mathysen was born to an English mum and Afrikaans dad in Vrededorp (Fietas), and this led her to be markedly bilingual within a larger society that was all about reinforcing very specific/ exclusive cultural practices that entrenched a clear division between English and Afrikaans speaking people. She developed an easy tolerance and understanding of difference in the world, which has helped her to remain very insightful into how others perceive and protect themselves in this regard. She's a survivor, and talks of how she's had to deal with life's harsh blows as she and her family continue to struggle to live off very little income.

Despite her Afrikaans husbands very strict language rules around the house, two of her four children grew up speaking English. Mrs Mathysen has had to deal with great loss, as she lost her husband and three children over the years. Having worked for most of her life, she is street smart and very aware of the plight of the poor within the neighbourhood. She lives with her daughter and granddaughter and the child of her late son, who died in a drug dispute in Westbury. Mrs Mathysen is a very generous woman, always helping those in need around her and imagines a community that is more supportive of each other. She plays a big role maintaining the household and children's schooling activities and enjoys being part of a social group of Afrikaans mums that gather informally at the school daily. She does however remain critical of their inability to engage with others, to see beyond racial stereotypes, and their restrictive fear of speaking English. She regards herself as being non-discriminating, yet is aware of the stereotypes she herself might be cast under.

At the heart of Mrs Botes' narrative is her love for her late husband and her despair over her estranged daughters. With her Swiss, German, Irish background she has embraced Afrikaans culture but still enjoys her own distinguished tastes.

She's on one hand a confidant, immaculate and elegant woman, and on the other, still strongly influenced by a dominant mother- in–law that introduced her to the hard working world of Afrikaans women. She has developed many life skills along the way. She enjoys both worlds, lunching and shopping with one side of the family, and skinning a buck, and making vetkoek on the other. She shares a very close relationship with her son who lives across the road, but rarely has any communication with her two daughters. She lives alone, with her African Grey parrot named Hoender, and is visited regularly by her sisters, who share her caustic sense of humour. Mrs De Kok sews all her own clothes, has mastered many crafts and enjoyed her life of dancing and socializing with her late husband. She was one of the early residents to have moved into Triomf and has maintained

long friendships in the area. She has an excellent memory for dates and events, but has kept a low profile socially for many years.

It was a difficult task trying to represent our conversations that drifted in and out of various topics, into a coherent description of a life story. I began reviewing the content and applying the tools of open and thematic coding to establish the main overlapping themes within the narrative. I then decided on different forms of narrative exercises with which I could revisit the previous topics with each of the women, in a more collaborative and engaging way. The results are represented in the following sections on Family Trees, Memory Maps and Short Stories. These exercises also offered some possibility for group work later.





Excelda Dawn Mitchell
Born 1937, Roodepoort, S.A.

Ilona Jean
Born 1941, Lives in Joburg
Had 2 children,

Letitia
Born 29 Nov 1958, Joburg Lagrangie

Chris Botes
Born 6 Nov 1962

Anita
Born 3 Feb 1961, Belville

5 Children

Second Marriage for Eva Hornshu

9 Other Children

Eva Hornshu
Born 27 Aug 1913
Groot Marico, Transvaal, S.A.

Celeste
Born in the Swiss Alps

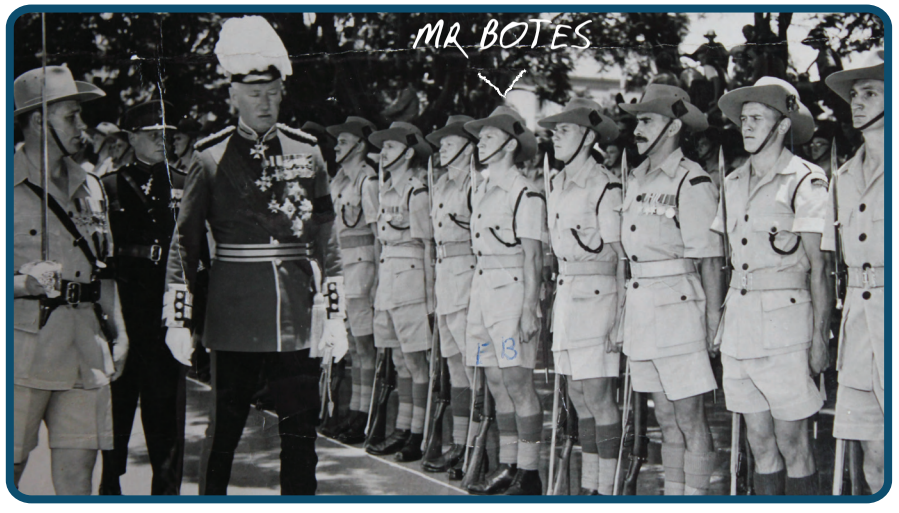
Met on a ship, Arranged marriage

Ludwig Hornshu
Born in Germany

William John Mitchell
Born 14 Nov 1910, S.A.
Died 1942

Esther
Born in Scotland

Name Unknown
Born in Ireland



Frans Botes
Born 10 Jul 1947, Lichtenburg
Was a diamond Digger, Died 2007

Piet Botes

7 Other Children

Beatrice Maria Gertruida Gringling
Born 28 September 1918
in Calitzdorp

Isak Jeremia Momsen Botes
Born 11 Sep 1907, Prince Albert
Diamond Digger and Builder

Family Tree 1





Anne Elizabeth van der Merwe
Born 1942, Woolsely

Maria Anna Elizabeth
Name from Grandmother

Jan Christiaan
Name from Dads Brother

Francois Petrus
Name from Dads Brother

Gert Erasmus Smith
Senderlinge

Mathys Louis
Name from Grandfather

Dirk Johannes
Name from Father

Johannes Jacobus
Name from Grandfather

7 Other Children

Anne Elizabeth Langeveldt
Born 1971, Citrusdale

Maria Anne Elizabeth Smit (Betta)

Citrus Farmers in Citrusdale

Mathys Louis Langeveldt

Norma Jean
Born 1994, Johannesburg

Jean
Born 1984

Marelise
Born 1966, Belville

Michelle
Born 1975 England, Parklane



Mechiel Joseas De Kok
Born 1939, Worcester

Morena Onkers
Orphan, De Rust

Martinus Steyn de Kok
Montigue, Railways worker Boer War General,

8 Other Children

Dirk Johannes van der Merwe
Born 1896, Hopefield
Farmer and Forester

Lenie

Johannes Jacobus van der Merwe
Farmer

Family Tree 2



Sarah Susanna Mathysen
Born 1950

Gertuid Johanna
1968 - 2008

Willem Johannes
1969 - 1994

Christine Sophia
Born 1970

Alwyn
1975 - 2007

Katherina Elizabeth

Pieter Johannes
Nickname Pietie

George Lambert

Daniel

Gertrude Emily Farley
Born 1906, Alberton

Gertrude van der venter

Mr Farley

4 Other Children

Johannes Pieter Snyder
Nickname Piet

Pieter Snyder
Born Brackpan

Susarah Sussana

Mr Mathysen
Born 19 Jun 1946, Joburg

3 Other Children

Christina

willem mathysen

FAMILY TREE 3

FAMILY TREES

For all three people I found the exercise of drawing out family trees useful to begin to plot their experience within a larger, yet still personal context, other than that of the suburb. Here the diverse backgrounds and geographies that are referenced offer some insight into the making of Triomf's community, and in turn the larger South African story.

Whilst Mrs Botes (Family Tree ONE) traces the routes from several Europe countries to the suburb, Mrs De Kok (Family Tree TWO) comes from a well established Afrikaans family in the Boland and brings with her the traditions of country life.

I found particularly the size of the families and naming traditions interesting. In rural communities, more generally, Afrikaner families were large because children represented wealth. Some Afrikaner politicians advocated a policy of large families to assure the position of whites in South Africa. Later, we see that families average two or three children (De Klerk 1975). In perpetuating the family heritage it is also the custom for Afrikaner married couples to name their first son after the husband's father and their first daughter after the wifes mother, as we see in the case of Mrs De Kok's family. Here all the brothers and sisters derived names from elders of either family, a tradition popularly referred to as *naamvas*, which translates as 'name fixed/ permanent'. Whilst this tradition implies a strong desire to perpetuate family traditions and identity, it often realised quite humorous practice since many sons often had the same name and were then referred to by character- specific versions that distinguished them. All three women cite versions that they find endearing like Klein Piet, Volkswagen Fred and Swart Jan. All of these naturally are accompanied with an amusing tale.

Interestingly, these traditions seem to have held within more homogenous rural areas and not so significantly within the diverse space of the city as seen in generations that moved to Johannesburg.

People often pointed to dominant and inspiring characters within the family and became a good way to trace their lines of influence. For example, in Mrs Botes

life' her mother-in-law was a very proud and tough, yet loving, Afrikaans woman, and it is largely through her that she learned this love for Afrikaans culture that she passed onto her sister (from another marriage), and her children. So despite her diverse lineage, she is today a proud Afrikaans woman. She also adds that living within a predominantly Afrikaans community has certainly strengthened her cultural identity.

Mrs Mathysen's family (Family Tree THREE) have been in the region for a long time. Following the popular movement into the city in search of employment and greater opportunities, they moved from the outlying areas into Johannesburg central, and areas like Vrededorp (Fietas) offered convenient and affordable accommodation. Many families were later encouraged to move from Fietas into the newly developed Triomf, and she often recognises faces in the neighbourhood from these earlier days. Her family still maintained a version of the naming traditions, with three generations of men called Pieter, Piet, and Pietie. Sadly, her family has seen trying times and only one of her three children is still alive.

The residents mostly describe similar reasons for why they moved to Triomf. The area provided affordable housing for a young family starting out, it is centrally located and close to good Afrikaans schools. Each of them was a first time homeowner, very excited at the prospect of a garden and reasonably sized house. The area always had efficient and safe transport into the city, at first via the tram system and was later situated on a major bus route. Each of them enjoyed the fact that it was quieter and safer than the places they left behind and with all the amenities close by, "you could walk ten minutes to anywhere" (Mrs De Kok).

For each of the women their lives have centered on their families and homes. Virtually, all the houses in the street were government owned and built roughly identical, so the women take pride in the improvements they've made to make their homes more comfortable. Home represents a self contained, safe place where they can live comfortably without intrusions of noise and crime from the outside.

Residents fondly remember the suburb of Triomf as a place without fences, where people felt safe and familiar. Each of the women describes the evening family walks around the suburb where they would meet and greet the rest of the community and children would play in the street unattended. They describe a place where 'everybody knew each other', and knew what to expect, "there was a way of doing things" (Mrs Botes). This created the picture of a close and dense community that everyone seemed to miss.

Yet, when I regularly returned to the question of social networks, people spoke reluctantly not really able to mark themselves within any group, other than the church. All the women spoke haphazardly of people that they knew, mainly those that they had engaged with most recently, not the closest connections. I got the sense that even within this 'closely knit' suburb people knew of each other mainly that, which could be observed and picked up, through fleeting engagements over the years. People rarely visited each other at their homes. I found that the relations and knowledge of each other that developed within the area were largely as a consequence of their walking patterns and behaviour through the suburb. I collected these routes and plotted out the relations that were described through the interviews and they matched – so much so that people became familiar enough to approach each other after repeatedly noticing each other and meeting along common routes.



Mrs Viljoen moved in 2 weeks before us on 16 December 1965. We've been friends for 46 years. She gives me 2 rings on the telephone and that means that she's coming over. She's obsessed with house cleaning and lives with her unmarried son Dave, who's in his 50's. Her husband tragically shot himself just before the elections in 1994 He was a prisoner of war in his early days and was fearful that might happen again.

This was one of the few houses that was built from scratch. It was privately owned and had a totally different design. It looked triangular from the outside.

He was Chris's friend. His mum Aida I got to know she was a real boozer. Her son says she's still boozing/partying. Their eldest son was killed in a car accident. They moved in 16 December 1965.

My son has a blue card in explosives training, and was the 2nd best at target practice in the army. He works from home modifying cars, so we are together the whole day. He keeps me busy.

The wife was damn lazy, she sat around all day in her leopard skin tights. The day they moved in, she sat fanning herself with her feet on a chair.

Mrs Davies taught me how to sew, almost once a week in the morning when the kids were at school. She helped me make my sisters wedding dress. We share the same birthday. When my husband died she came with sandwiches for us. She died soon after.

Viljoen

Sherman

Reynders

Andre Reyneke

Chris Botes

UDE Stralindorf

Pieter Botha

Greeks

Davies

GERTY ST

Italians

VAN der Merwe

Ver Heems

Badenhorst

MRS BOTES

Stood as empty stand for a long time

Koos van Jaarsveld

Terreblanche

Coetzee

Their son was Rolf also one of Chris's friends. They would play cricket on the street together till late in the night sometimes.

They moved in 6 February 1966. They were older than us. We lent them a cord with electricity for the first few weeks while they were getting connected. They are very quiet. They're part of the old age club, and they once invited me on a trip with them to Sun City.

We moved in here 4 January 1966 from Westdene. I remember the first night, being so happy in my own home, sitting in the dark eating pap and vleis.

My sons friend, Hanlie, still lives there, her husband died last year. They moved in 16 December 1965. Koos and Chris were naughty together when young, always getting into trouble.

Also moved in from Mr Smith's rented houses in 2nd Avenue, Westdene. We had kids the same age. She died just after my husband.

Their grandson was killed in the dam disaster. Chris and him were friends, he used to walk here everyday. It was a very tragic time for the community.

STREET GEOGRAPHY

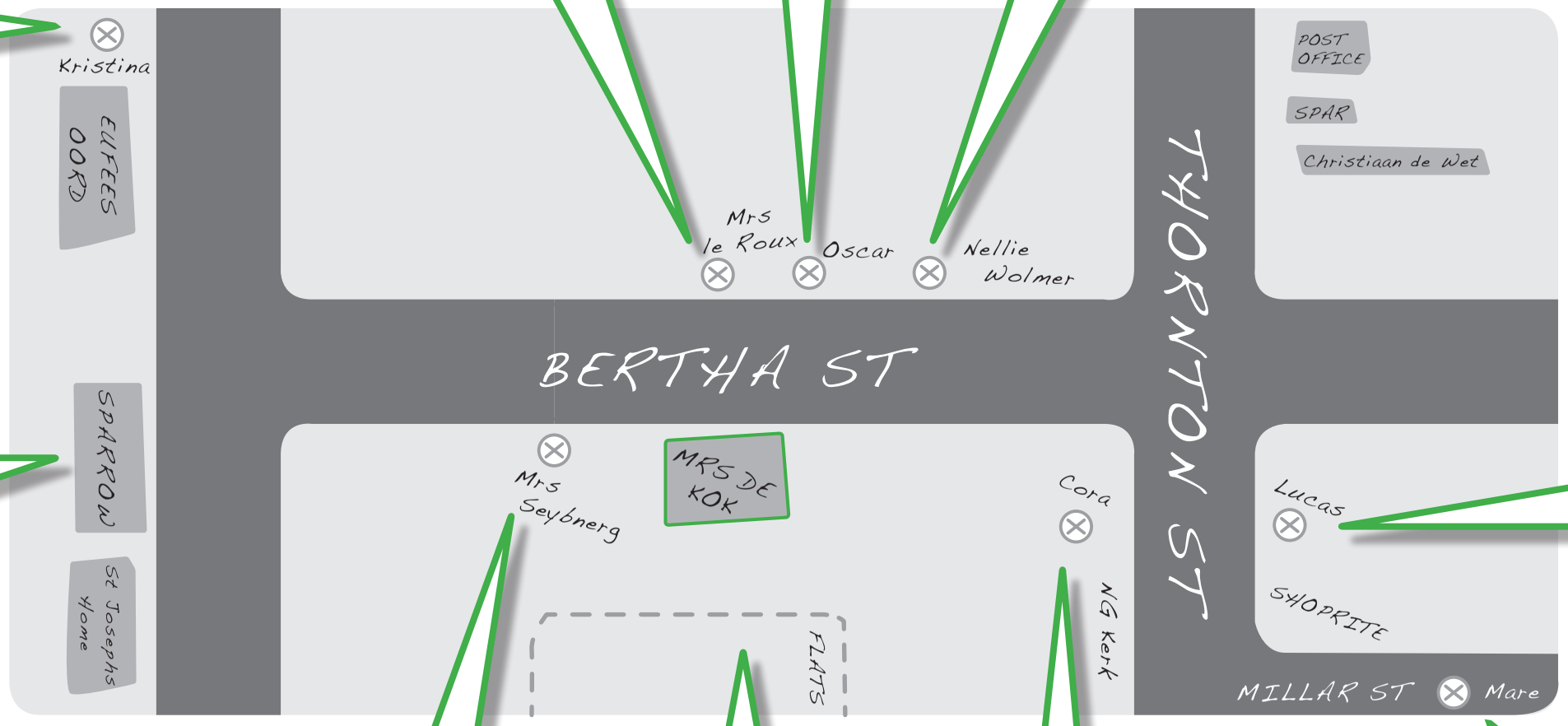


She's a great woman. I've seen her for years but the Greeks and Afrikaans never really mixed. I met her through another lady, I lent money to her one day at Shoprite. Now I visit her often and take her extra fruits and veges. I met many other Greek people through her.

We have been neighbours for 27 years. They are good hard working people. also beautiful gardeners - I got my first orchid slips from late Mr le Roux.

He's a coloured guy - very nice. His wife is an air hostess. Her mother I like, we have the same old school values. I always visit when she's around.

I've seen her for many years before I went to say hello, she's quite a busy woman. She's working into her 70's because she got no pension from her husband. I tried to get her to church but she's not interested. We share the same farm eggs between us once a month.



He sometimes helps me in the garden, he sits there every day waiting for work. I feel hypnotised by the way he stares at me, I feel so guilty even if I walk past with one small packet of groceries.

We signed a petition about people selling dagga around the school and I know its also white people who come and sell liquor too.

She is from the church but was also a teacher at Christiaan de Wet. I always send orchids from my garden for her mother.

I used to walk the dogs there in the park, I still do, but not always. The flats are home to me, when I visit elsewhere and see it in the distance then I know I'm home.

She has 9 dogs. Everything with us is about the dogs, she's like my sister. I nursed her for many months and she's a gardener. Her husband died 1 year after they married so she has no kids. We look after each others places when we're away. We visit the cinema together every Saturday.

Our daughters were at school together for grade 1 - 11. She thinks its too expensive to phone so i always need to call her back after 2 rings.

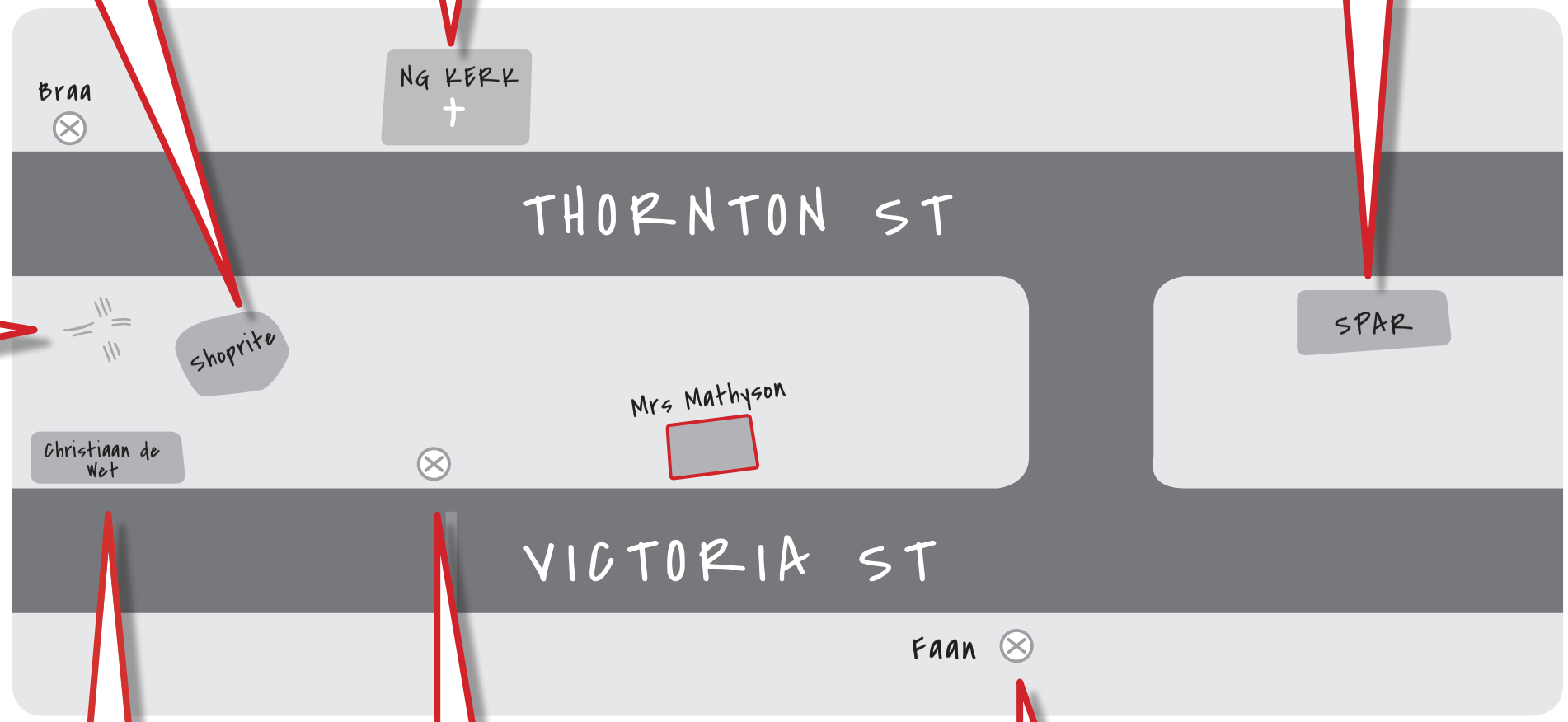
There used to be a mobile library in a big van, full of books, that came to the parking lot every few weeks. You could get English and Afrikaans books and it moved through the Western suburbs.

I worked here for many years, sometimes waking up at 5am to go and cook for the pad kafee. It was a good community, but now there's not many people left, and there are too many hands to help.

The police community organised to raise funds for the organization by selling boerewors outside Spar every Saturday. I helped for a while.



Very often, at the weekends, someone would let you know that they are braaing opposite the shops, and we would take some meat and go along, and others might join well into the night with kids.



They used to always have fetes and sports carrying on into the night. The whole neighbourhood would be walking around to and from, eating ice-cream, and we'd stop and chat and children would play in the street at night. It's one of my only existing networks. The Afrikaans mums come an hour early each day and we chat about the price of things, naughty kids, and the English creeping into the school and neighbourhood.

There are some poor kids that live here. I see that they don't have food and whenever I can I get polony and bread and drop it off along the way to school. I used to ask a few ladies to get together and help with a small donation. Nice idea, but nobody really did anything.

Faan is a key member of the N.G.Kerk. I used to go with him every week to buy vegetables. He makes the best 'famous' potjie, but he is an outright racist. He really doesn't like whats going on in the neighbourhood. Last week he called the police because people across the road had music on too loud.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

MEMORY MAPPING

SOCIAL NETWORKS / STREET GEOGRAPHY/ COMMUNITY SERVICES

Here I simply plotted all of the characters/ places that emerged in the interviews onto a hand drawn 'memory map' of the area. Whilst I was now referring to a tangible reference (the map), the narrative around the characters that emerged was still free flowing recollections not necessarily positioned in any chronological context.

This memory map I worked on together with the women, adding and revising information where necessary. In the case of Mrs De Kok and Mrs Mathysen, I found this useful as a way to begin to visualize how people move through space and experience their locale as a self-contained environment within which they perform their daily practices that extended out of the household. More generally I enjoyed how the simple recollections of three women offered a personal insight beyond the high walls and barking dogs, into the stories of the neighbourhood that started to fill the spaces of stereotypes around 'who lives where' with personal accounts and real names. Immediately the grey areas dissolve into a more humane curiosity and sensitivity around the narratives and people.

The process of locating people on the map also allowed a less restrained or focused recollection process for the teller as it allowed one to simply trace the very familiar street experience without necessary adding any other context to the memory. For example, although I repeatedly asked Mrs De Kok about how she felt about the changes within the suburb, she always responded flatly with an outright positive attitude that embraced people that were good and kind and kept the area clean. Yet without intentionally re-framing this question, the memory map of 'people she knows in the area' allowed her to tell the story of Lucas, a man who sits on Thorton Street everyday waiting for casual labour, onto her portfolio of neighbourhood engagements. I have included this insightful account as a short story in the following section. Since she walks to the shops

daily, this is a regular experience for her to confront and she talks about her different reactions and feelings. This encounter seems to expose her raw emotions as she describes feeling at once guilty and tired of feeling guilty, and sometimes trying to distance herself from others' problems, and at other times feeling very involved. She enters into a long discussion of potential community driven schemes that could address the problem more formerly, clearly indicating that this is something that she has long deliberated over.

This free narrative also allowed people to talk about the humorous aspects that often paint such a vivid visual image of a person and their predicament. Mrs Botes speaks of 'the Greek' who used to own a café at Wits and when she talks of his lazy wife who would sit around all day in her leopard skin tights, you can imagine that for a hard working Afrikaans mother of three this was something quite difficult for her to process. The image of her new neighbour sitting amongst boxes and furniture with her feet up on a chair whilst her husband and the removal team rallied around, has survived in her memory for over forty years. This was one of her earliest neighbourhood memories in which she had experienced difference. We discussed how gender relations became critical aspects of culture because they shaped the way daily life is lived in the family, and also in the wider community. She described how within Afrikaans culture there are clear patterns of 'women's work' and 'men's work', and in this way gender functions as an organising principle for the community through the cultural meanings given to being male and female. In spite of these differences, the families continued a long relationship since the remained neighbours for twenty years. Essentially I found this exercise valuable because it allowed participants to recall many new experiences and characters that they were not previously able to, and because it offered us a visual and experiential way of describing ones relationship with the suburb.

The Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre, a cultural organisation working in the area, spent the better part of last year trying to develop a Heritage Trail through Sophiatown. Their content focused solely on the Sophiatown of the fifties, and the City of Joburg disapproved of their application for funding as it didn't engage

sufficiently with the current residents in the area. I imagine that these maps could begin to contribute to a more inclusive neighbourhood history that describes the life of the suburb throughout its various incarnations. I think these anecdotes would add a depth in appreciating the past and future possibilities of the area as you walk through it.

For example, Mrs Mathysen points to the now disused parks that families would gather at on hot summer nights for open neighbourhood braais. With little income, hosting friends at one's own home was far too costly and many residents relied on outdoor public spaces in the area within which to socialize. Mrs Mathysen has kept herself abreast with what the neighbourhood has to offer, and she often visits the street stalls, dog dipping days, mobile library, and local clinics all around the Shoprite area. She in turn is a very generous woman, helping those in need around her whenever possible and participating in community fund raising initiatives. She often speaks of helping someone out with a bag of groceries, and is shocked at the living conditions some people have to contend with in the area.

All the residents report that their experiences with their neighbours and community changed with the transformations in 1994. They talk of the initial panic and fear that the new regime would seize their homes and hand them over to black people. They tell of gatherings in the local church where an enraged crowd vowed together that they would burn their houses before they were forced to leave. Mrs De Kok talks of the legal processes that they followed to ensure that the ownership deeds were in order, and of many of the people she knew that were forced to flee with the arrival of black and coloured neighbours. This moment of panic was short lived and people recall this time as if it was in the distant past.

However, the order of things had shifted profoundly and now the laws that kept people apart were suddenly repealed. Anybody who could afford to live in the area could buy a house and move in, meaning people from all different

backgrounds, places, and cultural traditions now lived amongst the remaining Triomf community.

SHORT STORIES

The conversation around transition experiences always presented with different layers of responses, often starting with the pleasantly indifferent. When pushed to interrogate what they perceived as different with the new residents, the women mainly complained about the dirt, noise or ill disciplined children. I based the following stories on what I considered glimpses into the real challenges and insights that people experience/d. I considered this section as a way of keeping the narrative as similar to the speaker's version as possible, and I've tried to maintain as close a representation to the transcripts as possible. In doing so, I wanted the women's perspectives of the world to come through with their own speech patterns. Through these conversations in which these stories transpired I got the distinct feeling that these were not stories that people shared regularly and that the symbolic experience underlying them remains somewhat unprocessed. The challenges faced in understanding the new social co-ordinates that often surface within these encounters seem to need some negotiation within a larger group. However, the focus group that we are to develop within the Afrikaans community exists outside of the timeframes of this research report.

These stories focus mainly on the transition experiences of the women, but also include their insights into the suburb and the passing of time within the area. They reflect the prejudice they have experienced, the guilt, and anxiety around re-considering one's own group identity in an entirely new context. The stories also reflect their patience, and the small, hesitant yet concerned way that they attempt to engage with difference.

MRS DE KOK

LUCAS

You know there is this one man, named Lucas. He works at Cora and my garden. Sometimes when Cora sees him then she gives him six eggs and bread and food. But he is always there. Just as you step out of your house, Lucas is there. He sits and stares at you, as to hypnotize you into giving him things. Sometimes when I'm

walking back from the Shoprite, he makes me feel so guilty, as if I have something that he should have. I feel like throwing all my packets out to say look, 'Lucas, it's just Jik'. It's terrible. It's a problem

I often count when I'm walking back from the shops and sometimes I count 40 people waiting for work. This is too many - obviously some of them need another plan and that's why they burgle. Social workers need to address this problem, to see what going on. Maybe there needs to be a soup kitchen here 3 times a week. People need food, otherwise it's a problem. And these men are very hungry. When I buy my veggies I often give them some if it's extra. When Lucas comes to work in my garden I give him a facecloth and soap to wash himself, and I always give him some extra food supplies to take home.

I really hope people could do more for these people.

DOGS

When I first moved in here people used to make me feel like the 'Wild Lady of Triomf". Because I used to walk the dogs in the streets. Some of them used to actually turn their hosepipes on me. I suppose they thought my dogs were going to be pooing in the streets, so they head to make sure it wasn't in their part. People used to also open their gates, so that their big dogs would rush towards us and we would move along very quickly. Some of the people here drink too much and then do mean things. They are not really churchgoers.

There was one Oom who used to do this. He had really big dogs so it was very unpleasant. It was quite strange when after his wife died 20 years later he started coming to church. Then we used to sit alongside each other but I neither of us spoke about it. I wondered what could have made him decide to attend church suddenly. I later found out when the dominee made an announcement. This is how we kept up to date, like about someone having a birthday or cancer or if someone was in hospital. One day he mentioned that his wife passed away.

So I usually try to avoid the trouble and I walk the dogs when the area is quiet. Like at 8'o clock when the news is on, this is a good time. Now I don't walk in the night so

much, so I walk when the people are at work. I often walk to the park at the flats, and I let the leashes off and the dogs have a nice chance to run about.

(When Mrs De Kok told this story at a group workshop some time later, an interesting conversation developed. Another participant, a lady named Gladys whom had been working at the Shoprite for 28years, responded saying that when she used to visit Triomf for work in the 80's she had similar experiences but she knew that people did this because she was black. Then both women laughed and chatted at this unlikely point of reference they shared, yet each had understood this animosity in different ways. They had the same experience and could empathize with each other.)

STREETS

Yes, things did change after '94. You know when you walk on the sidewalk black girls will walk straight into you. They have no respect for older people. Now look I must tell you the colour.

The other day as I was walking down the street, there was a girl in front of me who was putting on airtime on her cellphone. When she finished she threw the paper right there. I couldn't believe it. I called her and asked her why she did that? She smiled at me and walked on without saying anything.

These girls walk through you like you're not really there. It's an attitude thing, saying this country belongs to us. Now there are something like 4 million whites. That's like a drop in the ocean.

I do feel this stiffness in the streets. Especially after Terreblanche died. Sometimes it feels like people wish that white people were not here anymore. But I don't mind, where must I go?

All over children don't have any respect. This is also because there is no respect for history, so how can they respect us?

About 1994, nobody's stupid, we can't carry on like it was before. I also want my gardener to have a nice house. I was excited to vote, I went down to vote at the recreation centre, obviously not for the ANC.

But people like Malema are trouble. They add to this problem we are facing with the farm murders. We need help, maybe from the World Court. I think its something to do with the name ***boer.*** *Criminals think that boer is someone against black people. But actually Boer is a farmer. We are all farmers (from the farming tradition).*

Just after 1994 I was one day in Clicks at Campus Square, I was waiting in the queue to pay. All of a sudden this black lady pushes in front of me and stands in front of the till. I said " Sorry excuse me but I'm waiting in line". And she says to me "Jou boer" , I didn't know what to say but I remember thinking ("What does she mean by this, why is she calling me a boer, does she think this is a swear word, doesn't she know that boer means farmer? Would she like me to use the K word to her?"')

It's terrible but some people with a low mentality think that after 1994, you can do what you like.

MRS BOTES

MONKEY

This man is my son's worker. His name is Kevin and I call him my 'Black Baby'. He's been working here for a very long time. He even calls me gogo. He sometimes comes into the house when he sees that I am busy and he takes over the cleaning of the fridge and big things like that. One day there were some other people working with them and my son gave them some food. Everybody was quiet and Chris (my son] said "kan jy nie dankie se nie?" .

Later they were asking Kevin what is the problem with baas, why he was calling them monkeys. Now it's our joke. Whenever I offer him some tea or something, he says 'MONKEY'.

The other day Mrs Viljoen my neighbour, was around, and she very nervously asked me if I know he's calling me a monkey.

2010

Sophiatown has changed a lot, but it's still very quiet. This isn't really a noisy street and I don't really try to know peoples stories. Once a week I walk with Mrs Viljoen to Shoprite or Spar. For us, this is an outing we enjoy. I talk to people wherever I am. I'm very cheeky you know.

The other day I was walking back from Checkers and there was this African lady walking with her screaming daughter. I stopped and spoke to this child, I told her that this was no way for a lady to behave, that she must act like a 'little lady' , and that she must listen to her mother. Now whenever I see them in the street they go out of the way to come say "Hello GOGO'. It is a good place if everybody can just behave.

I won't walk in the streets at night, or at a quiet time. Just last week Chris, my son, saw a young girl walking in the streets by herself. You just don't do this.

Before I used to send my children to the shops when they were young, but nowadays you can't. But I don't think Triomf has so much crime. But I don't know if it's just the World Cup and everyone's behaving themselves more than they used to. Anyway, I wish it can stay just as it is.

Sometimes it's the politicians that cause more trouble than anything. Look at sport, like the Comrades marathon. There is no racism in sports. They look like a closely-knit bunch of people. Its people like Julius Malema that cause the trouble and change the mood for everyone.

I enjoy watching the soccer. I think Brazil will win. You should see Mrs Viljoen's car it's full of flags. I don't put up any flags. The car isn't a Christmas tree, besides it scratches the car.

Look the new South Africa definitely has some improvements. When we look at all the things we have accomplished- we have had sanctions lifted, now this country can partake in world sports. And people aren't hostile to blacks anymore. Both Frans myhusband and Chris accepted blacks. Just look at the way we relate to Kevin. I tell everyone he is my Black son.

SARAH MATHYSEN

TELKOM

When I worked at Telkom, we had some very strange but strict rules. Like one week we were allowed to speak only in English then the next was only Afrikaans. In my department there were 13 blacks and 10 coloureds that worked in the back. There was this one black guy who had finished his matric, his name was Justice. You see he had potential and I knew it. There were very strict rules about who did what but I knew he could manage just about everything and I let him get on with it. My bosses would always say to me "you want them to take over'.

The other day I met an Afrikaans lady that used to work there too. She was much younger than me. It was funny when she said that she had been on this course a few months ago in Pretoria and was very surprised to see that the hotshot guest speaker turned out to be Justice. The same Justice.

You see that was Apartheid. He didn't need to be a packer, he had so much more. There was this huge fear of people taking over their jobs.

Towards the end, we needed to start teaching blacks the work, but I had long before started sharing responsibilities. But then when things changed there was no longer this respect for procedure. People would break contracts. There was no respect for the old system. When I left, a lot of the black guys got high positions. But they were not really interested in procedure. Things had changed. There was no longer any need for order- forms and logs. The logic had changed. There was no respect for structure and people, especially clients. Instead, people now are rude and impatient and frustrated.

But when I go to the Shoprite up the road here and stand in the queue with my coins, I see the black people next to me with their trolleys full then I know for sure that times are different now. But you got to make the most of it and get on.

Whilst developing these three narrative exercises (family trees, short stories and memory maps) with the four women was insightful as to the social workings of a once exclusive community, another pressing question constantly presented itself. The real value of these experiences could not truly be realised within the one-to one interview or within this research report but would benefit largely from being shared within the community. So could these heritage practices play a role in civic engagement?

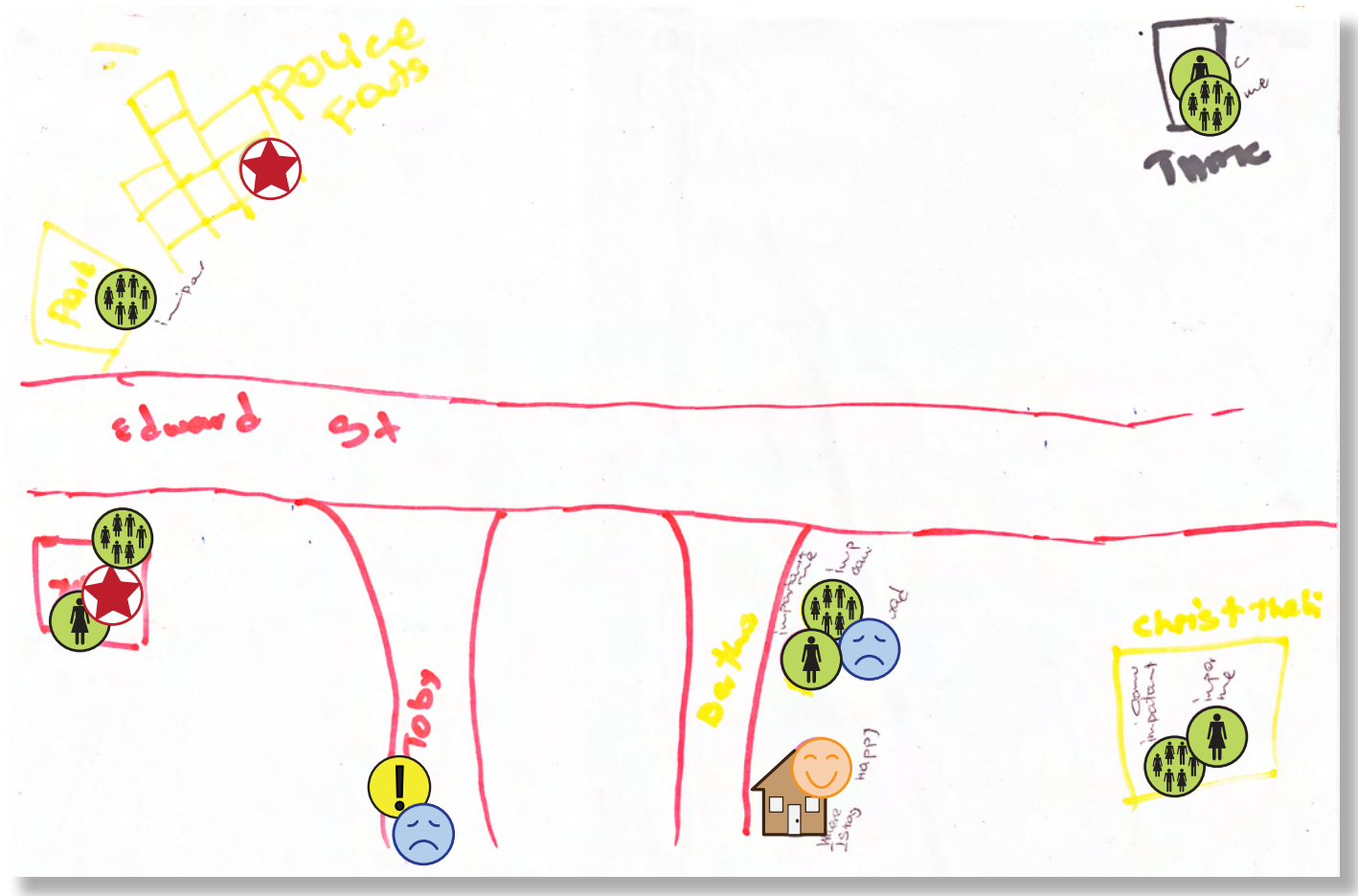
I considered these three exercises as good starting points that could possibly develop into larger community projects that could engage the residents of the area more broadly. I understand that I have indicated a strong bias in the selection of these particular stories as bearing some significance to my following agenda. Here I would like to refer back to Chapter 1 and the argument I have developed in favour of community-building, which served as the motivation for wanting to expand on this project, and for providing different contexts within which these and other residents could engage with 'difference'. I apologise that at times this may sound too coercive, even prescriptive, within this document but again I must add that I tried to reserve comment within the interview and our conversation covered a wide range of topics and interests (please refer to the revised transcripts within the addendum). Also, although I advocate for better neighbourhood relations, and might offer starting points as a potential 'ice breaker', people naturally establish their own affinities and interests that decide the various routes that conversations and relationships may take.

Through feedback from a broad range of engagements through the area, I've considered some options for how these exercises could potentially develop into neighbourhood activities. Residents always say about each other, *"but I don't know where he/she comes from"…*

One way of engaging this curiosity productively could be to have a Heritage month in Sophiatown where the youth group could visit interested residents to help record their Family Trees. They could exhibit this together to investigate or visualize the roots/ routes of the present community. This would certainly illuminate the current diversity of residents' backgrounds.

Neighbourhood heritage trails, evenings with old photographs and stories to share, all offer the possibility for creating talking points around which residents could meet. One dilemma that often presented itself was the availability of a suitable venue that this diverse group of people would consider common ground or feel comfortable attending. The shortage of public spaces within the area often required very strategic planning in order to facilitate public gatherings.

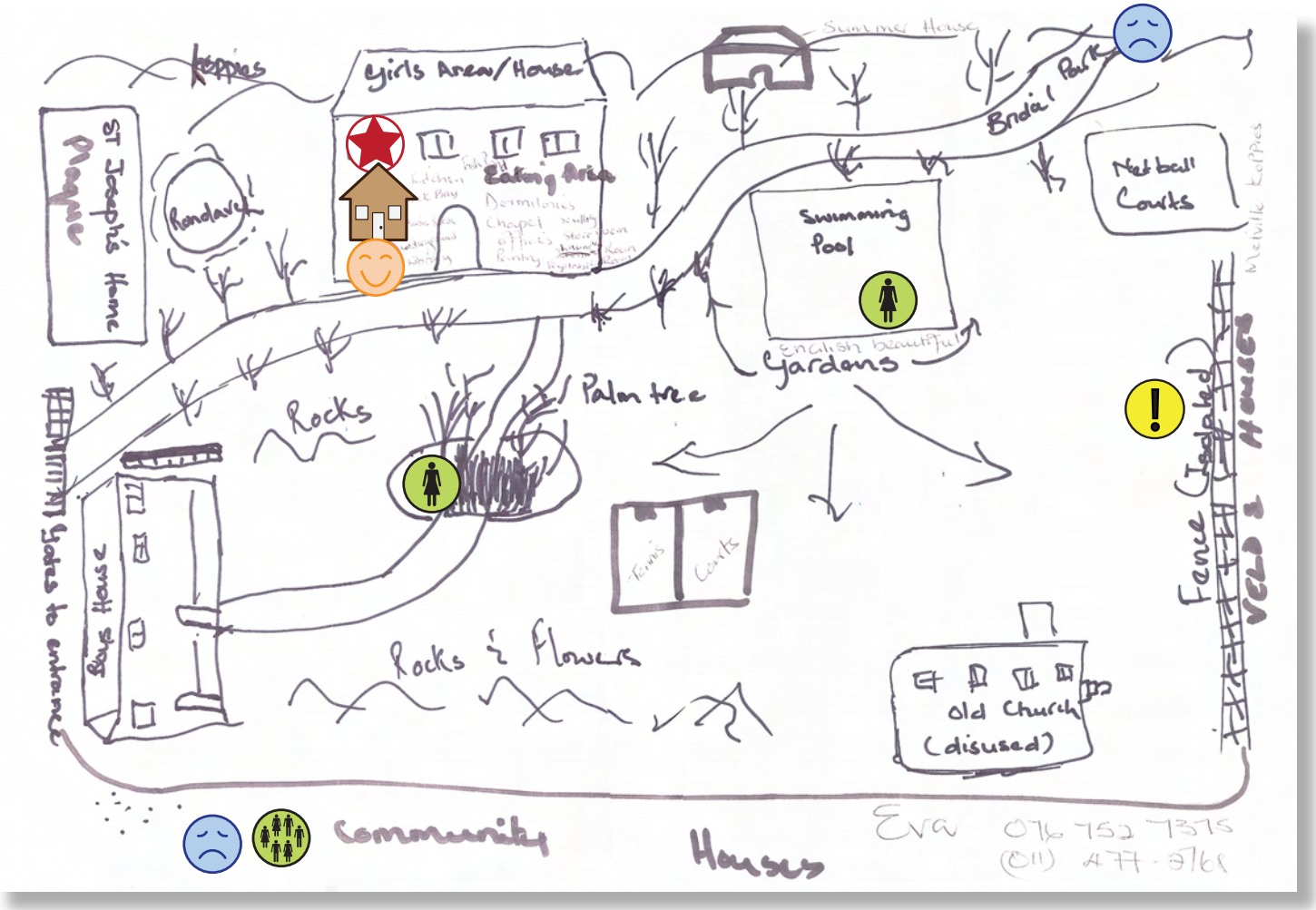




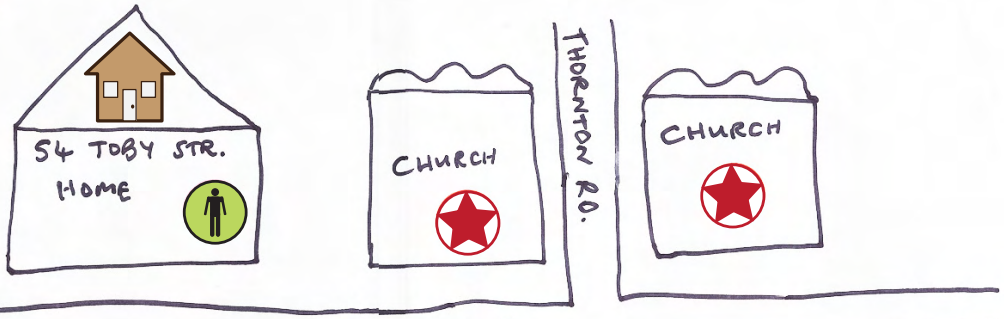
WHERE I LIVE | SAD | DANGEROUS | IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY

HAPPY | DOMINANT | IMPORTANT TO MYSELF

MAPPING EMOTIONS



- Moved into the area in 2005
- Happy moments
  - Moving into the house.
  - Parties
  - Visiting family and friends



- Enjoying the pool.
- Enjoying quite time

- Sad Times
  - Cat was killed by the Dogs
  - Gate motor stolen
  - My Son broke his arm
  - My Sons bike was stolen in the park
  - Attack on Neighbors

Dominant
- The Churches on the corner
- Shops
- Taxis

Dangerous
- All over can be dangerous
- Koppies

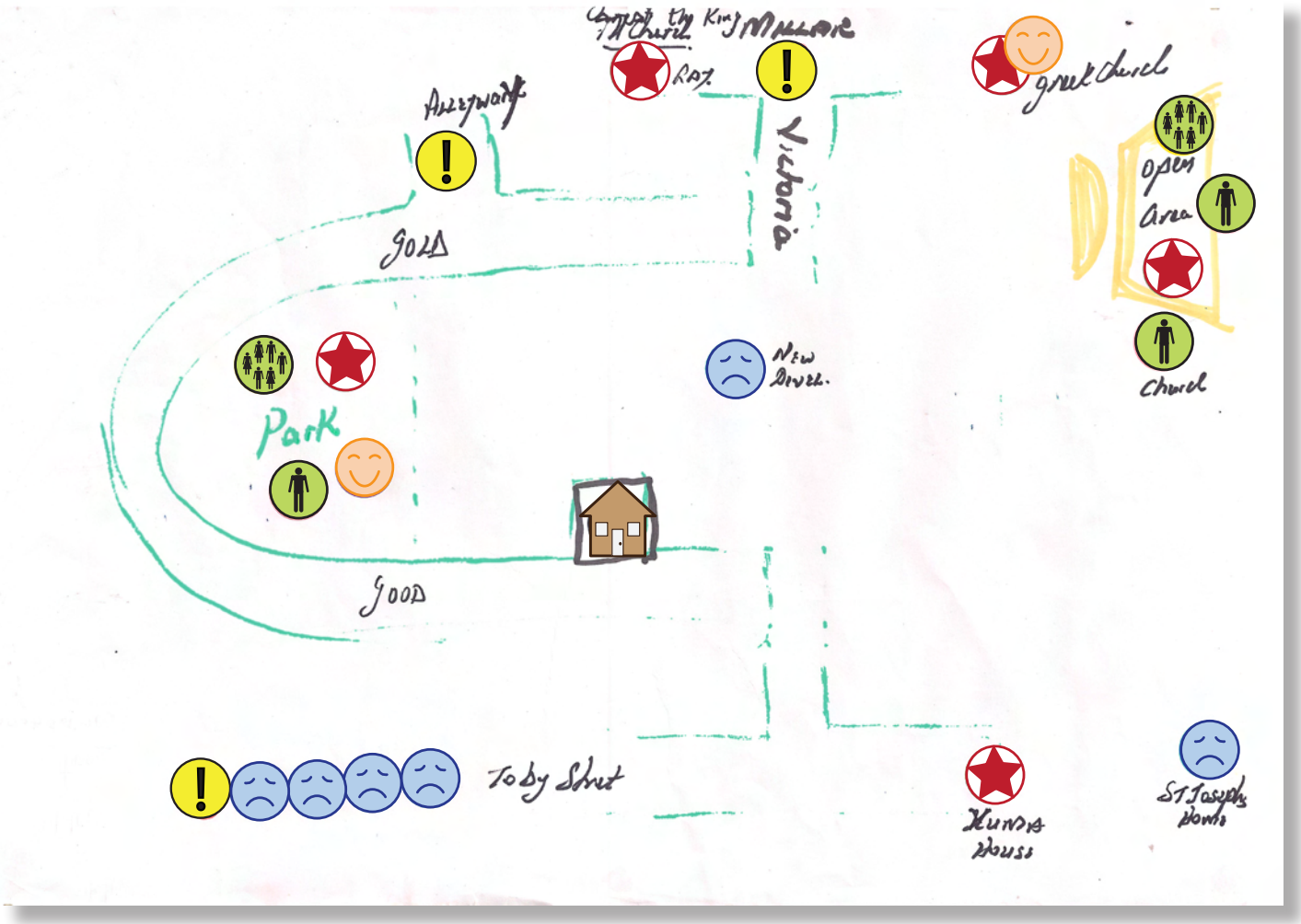
Me
- Enjoy living in the area
- The area is central and easibly accessible
- I dont see me self moving out soon.
- People friendly in the area.

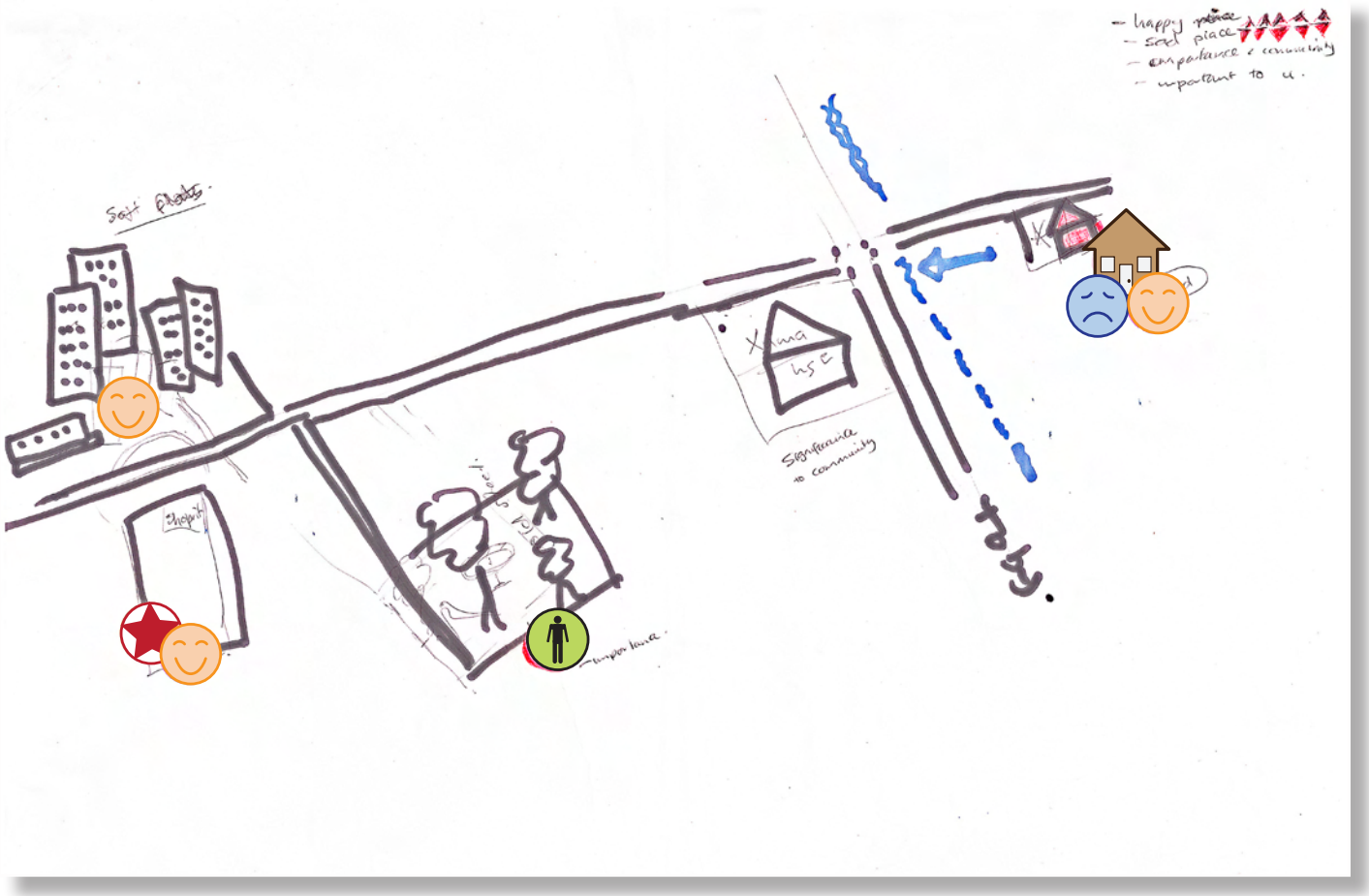
Community
- I have been detached from the Community
- Westdene REC underutilized
- No facilities for Children
- No restaurants + Pubs

Nazeem.

WHERE I LIVE · SAD · DANGEROUS · IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY
HAPPY · DOMINANT · IMPORTANT TO MYSELF

MAPPING EMOTIONS





WHERE I LIVE
SAD
DANGEROUS
IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY
HAPPY
DOMINANT
IMPORTANT TO MYSELF

MAPPING EMOTIONS

MAPPING 1

The challenge of finding a direction and means for moving the project from one phase to the next was always present. Through the relative success in the first phase with the introduction of maps, the next stage became apparent, as it seemed entirely necessary and possible to engage a broader network of people by applying similar principles. I found the creation of maps to allow certain ease and flow as people began to rely on the memory of the body to recall instances as they imagined 'walking' through the space. This seemed to minimize the usual contextual baggage and rather invoked the power described through everyday living by *de Certeau* (1984), as they traced their selected pathways through the suburb.

The first mapping exercise required residents to draw their own Emotional Map of the area guided by the following questions:

- Where do you live?
- Where were you happy?
- Where were you sad?
- What is important to you?
- What is important to the community?
- What is your dominant image of Sophiatown?
- Where is it dangerous?

Naturally, this was not intended to be an exercise that measured one's true artistic ability, so the altered balance of scale and juxtaposition of elements reflected values and concerns within the participants' images of the area. As the group began to share their maps with each other, this offered a fellow resident an insight into their experiences within Sophiatown. The intention was to develop, in each session, a view of the area that looked beyond the traffic and the dirt, but one that was dotted/ animated by each other's personal stories. Here we were building a Sophiatown of characters and experiences, as well as concerns, but one

shaped by the people who inhabit it. The 'dangerous' question allowed participants to vent their frustration over crime and negligence, which was always immediately met with a gush of group support and interest.

Since this initial exercise was not restricted by a theme, any person living in the area could participate without preparation. This was useful since I was also trying to introduce the project to new members of the community. In this regard it was highly successful, as we got about thirty new residents curious about each other and the prospect of community building. The simple exercise was also mobile, which made it possible for us to set out tables in the park and run a workshop with small groups of passersby.

Generally, I worked with small groups of between 4- 9 residents. There were 6 workshops in this series (mapping 1). Often, a very diverse group of people, with a mix between young and old, and residents that have lived in the area for 1-40 years would sit around a table and share their stories over tea. Each person was required to introduce him or herself, which I found helpful to engage the more shy participants from the beginning. The playfulness involved in drawing a picture also helped 'to break the ice', as residents shared different stickers and helped each other figure out the exercise key. Drawing ones own picture also allowed participants to claim their view of the suburb as something unique and credible. It seemed to offer residents a sense of agency, placing everyone on an equal footing, allowing them to claim a sense of ownership of their civic space.

Residents often recognized each other from the area, and greeted for the first time. Sometimes people simply observed each other and listened, and as one resident commented- fulfilling a deep curiosity about the old Afrikaans women, or the slick young black man or the mixed race couple - all stereotypes they had never really had the chance to engage with, but somehow feared (Judy's comment). Once the drawings were completed, we moved around the table for a feedback session and residents shared their responses with the group. The drawings (I have included several versions) revealed a suburb as described by ones' own co-oordinates. Residents described that churches ,parks and their

homes were important and where they felt happy. Family tragedy and crime related stories offered featured as the sad and dangerous spots. Many mentioned the cultural centre and other open public spaces as important for the community. By far most people decided that the Shoprite was the dominant image of the neighbourhood, with the police flats coming up as another important site. As individuals within a group they began establishing areas of interest, and hearing of residents different/ similar relationships to these sites.

Other participants were encouraged to speak at leisure, and add or comment on each others' stories. At the best of moments, the group took up the individual story and residents shared their different points of view to what now became a community issue. I will include the following example that highlights the main trends in one conversation.

- Mrs De Kok describes the police flats as her dominant image of Sophiatown. She says that even when she goes away to visit friends she feels safe and comforted when she sees the flats in the distance from the highway.

- A young English student from UJ responds by saying that he recently went up to the rooftop and was overwhelmed by the view, maybe we should have a restaurant up there?

-Mdu, a local community worker, says that it is a shame to see the police being treated so poorly, making a comment about the poor living conditions and the lift that hasn't worked since the 80's. We should be looking after them, since they look after us.

- Dirk Kotze, from the residents association, comments that every time something gets fixed, it gets broken again twice as fast

- Mrs Volmer, an old German resident remembers when the grassy area around the flats were great for kids to play and people to walk their dogs, even at night. But now we're so afraid, don't know what's in the dark.

- Sheila, a coloured lady from Toby Street remarks that safety is an issue and that the kids have no where to go , the yards are not big enough, and we all need some time away from TV.

Usually this kind of conversation only happened after 2 or 3 people had a chance to share their experiences, as if a certain level of trust needed to develop within the group before people felt safe enough to contribute.

From this simple question (conversations like this in other workshops developed randomly from other questions) the group of near strangers quite easily established talking points, areas of commonality (children, dogs), common concerns around safety in the neighbourhood, and hinted at points of contention.

Each exercise was planned for one and a half hours but usually people lingered over snacks for three hours on a Saturday afternoon and seemed moved and grateful for the experience.

The exercise conducted in the park offered less of an opportunity to share one's ideas in a group, but residents still enjoyed being asked personal questions about their experiences in Sophiatown that discounted their feelings of being anonymous and overlooked.

The first mapping exercise was also a way of providing some larger community network for the six women (at this stage) that I was interviewing to start to engage with. Whilst only two attended the workshop, due to other commitments or a lack of interest, it was interesting to notice that the participants answered the questions quite generously. Having had some background into their life stories, I was pleased to note that they regarded the forum with integrity and often shared very personal experiences. Mrs Volmer told the group how exhausting it was to be still working well into her seventies, as she had no other source of income. And how it often saddened her to think of her son in his fifties that suffers with epilepsy and still lives under her care.

Within this relatively short exercise, it seemed that most people were eager to tell as much about themselves as possible, and it felt like these simple questions were a good way of introducing oneself.

However, whilst the exercise did achieve these results, they existed in isolation. Towards the end of each of the workshops, residents would be all fired up asking how to move forward, but the next step was unclear. Whilst the opportunity to engage was valuable, it was too brief. A once –off exercise didn't consolidate the relationships sufficiently to mobilize people to any further end. I sometimes sensed an awkwardness at the end of a session as people began to disengage from the activity and each other, and prepare to retreat into their own worlds. The bonds of community were still not strong enough to follow through as significant ties, despite the often-intimate memories and experiences that have surfaced.

To create some outcomes, residents were asked whether we could utilize the exercise to map out the interests and concerns of the neighbourhood, which we could then present back to the community. They agreed to this and it provided another occasion to get together. This time we introduced a more conventional map of the area, which was slightly removed from the exercise itself, yet it suggested on a small scale how residents input and experiences can begin to influence and shape the suburb. Here I linked the different peoples comments between the various groups that marked out the same places and tagged them onto a site.

So, for example, the combined notes for *Christ the King Church* read:

> *This stands as an important symbol of the old Sophiatown.*
>
> *It's a special walk up the hill on Ray Street to the church, I feel peaceful, calm, elevated.*
>
> *Are all these churches necessary? These spaces should be better utilized for something else.*

Did you know that this church was actually used as a boxing gym in the 70's?



Placing these varied comments next to each other brought to light the diverse perspectives of different individuals. This simple exercise made it clear that there could be a space for all the voices to be heard and to allow the layers of memory and experiences to speak for themselves.

This exhibition was displayed at the Xuma House, the cultural centre being developed by the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre. For many of the residents this was the first time they had participated in a community exercise and hoped it would lead to greater involvement.



There's a woman I always meet, I don't know her name but she reminds me of my grandmum. She always greets everyone she meets along her way even if they're on the other side of the road. When I see here I think here's my granny coming.

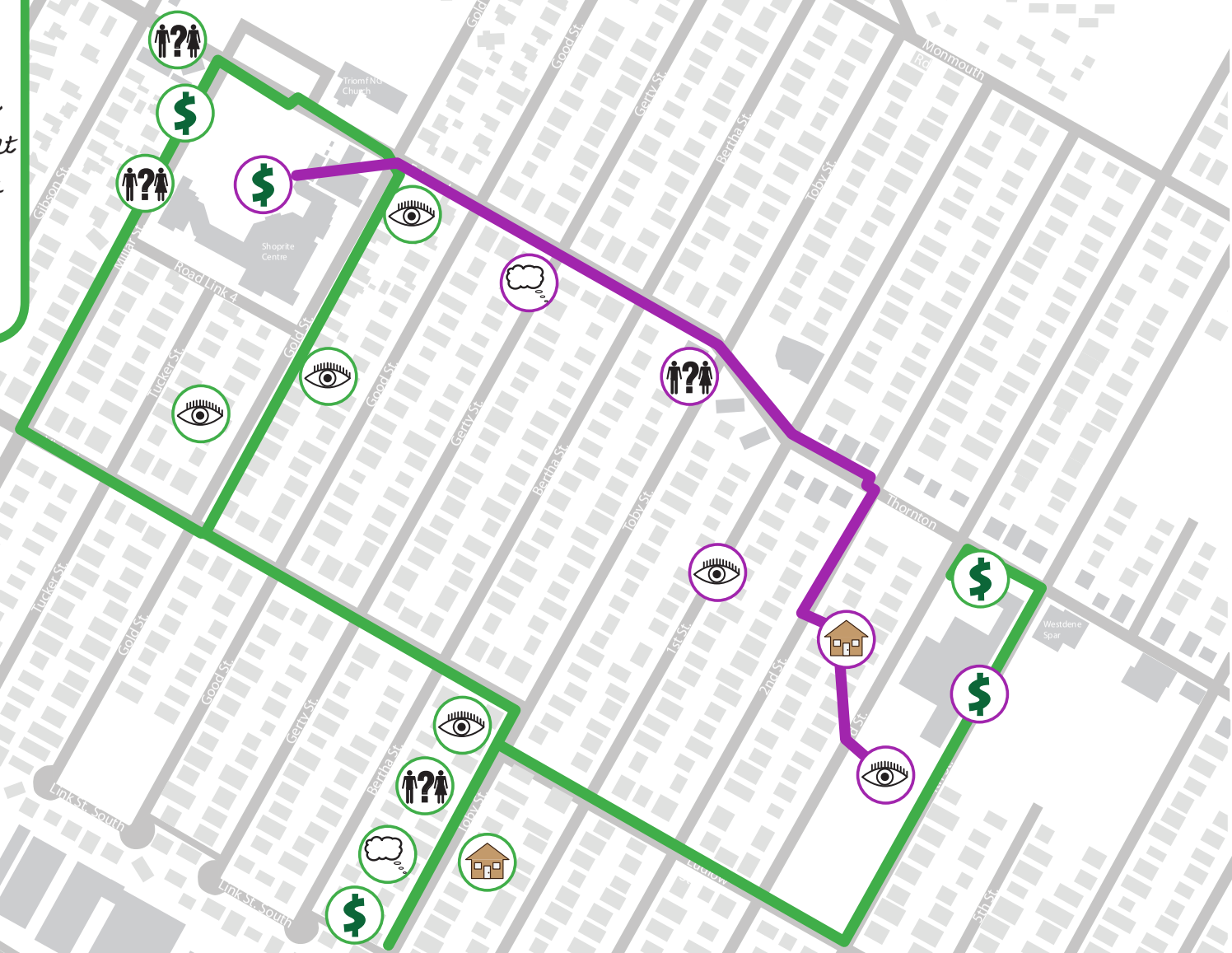
I don't like walking through the park because there are this group of guys who always scare me. I was once attacked and robbed by these guys and now I always have to meet them on my way from work.

I call this the police spot which reminds me of when we were stopped by the police when a friend and I were stopped by the police because we were carrying my TV back from the repair shop. The police refused to believe us and my friend was arrested. With no one to help I had to leave the TV in the Street.



My opposite neighbour is an odd man who never greets any body in the street. Even other white people talk about him. That was until I arranged a street bash on a new years eve. We had a big party, and now we're great friends.

I know all the car guards in the area, they always go out of their way to greet me, and for them I'm a mother figure and they call me Mummy.



WHERE I LIVE | WHO DO I MEET | WHERE I SHOP | MEMORIES OR EXPERIENCES | THINGS I NOTICE

SHOPPING















WHERE I LIVE

WHO DO I MEET

WHERE I SHOP

MEMORIES OR EXPERIENCES

THINGS I NOTICE

SHOPPING

MAPPING 2

Bearing in mind the concerns I have just mentioned, and following a series of workshops involving the first exercise, I decided that a big enough group existed that remained interested in mapping to try a second exercise. (In the interim the University of Johannesburg project, that I am also involved with had created a cooking club that residents could join to share recipes and food histories, and several other events including a cultural evening where a discussion was planned to ask residents together to shape a way forward for community action.)

For the second mapping workshop I decided to utilize a formal map onto which people could plot their own responses to a series of questions that related to a specific theme. I decided that the map could serve as an anchor establishing an easy common ground on which to base one's experiences within a group. I still affirmed the walking process that de Certeau (1984) described as a way to think beyond the usual paradigms and the map would help in this regard.

In deciding on the topic to begin with, I relied heavily on the kinds of activity and public life already described by the initial study group, whom have lived in the area for a long time - i.e. The Afrikaans women I interviewed. It had already emerged from my research that Triomf, like Sophiatown is a very walked space, with most people having moved here for mainly this convenience of having all the amenities within walking distance. I found that the long relationships and passing information that residents have about each other is largely as a result of meeting regularly on the street. This 'propinquity' effect, which is the tendency for people to form relationships with those whom they encounter often, is described in sociology as one of the main factors leading to interpersonal attraction (Festinger, Schachter and Back 1950). This research stated simply that as we meet people we become familiar and find things we like about them, and the more we meet and interact with people, the more likely we are to become friends with them. Nahemow and Lawtons' research (1975) into similarity and propinquity in friendship formation also states that friendships between people of different

ages and races were found almost exclusively among those who lived very close to one another (1975: 207).

Unlike most other Johannesburg suburban spaces Sophiatown's residents still walk to the shop, dentist, clinic, school, butcher - and I decided to expand on this experience by focusing the second mapping workshop on 'SHOPPING'. The intention of this exercise was to make residents conscious of the sights and sounds they witness along their regular routes to the shop, often up to several times a day. The exercise would build on this experience and shift it from being a mundane chore to an event that celebrates the rituals of suburban life. I found that from the previous exercises most people that see each other regularly don't feel free enough to acknowledge each other as familiar. I was hoping that within the space of the exercise it would permit people to acknowledge that even through a brief visual engagement, the people around them influence them and contribute to each other's social framework. The objective by the end of the exercise was to overlay the pathways and see the lines of confluence that exist among the group, enjoying the possibility of these shared experiences.

The questions asked were the following:

1. Mark your house on the map
2. Mark out the places on the map where you go shopping
3. Is there a regular route that you take? Draw this onto the map
4. Mark out things that you notice along the way. Places of significance, beauty, threat, etc

   Now you have arrived at your stop
5. Who do you meet there? Can you sketch some of the characters you encounter there (car guard, shop assistants, friends)? How long have you known them.
6. Can you share some experiences that stand out in you memory around these sites?
7. What differences have you noticed over time?
8. Superimpose the maps to see if any common ground

This was conducted as a once-off exercise. The seven residents that were present had all had a prior experience of the first mapping exercise. Unfortunately, none of the Afrikaans women involved in my study group attended, though the group reflected a diverse mix of Sophiatown residents. This exercise worked very well - all the participants are still involved in the project in some way and often reference some aspect of what was shared as if 'anchors' to the new relationships were formed at that engagement. People seemed quite lively and animated through this exercise, in my mind relaxed by the easy familiarity that the street scenes provided. As residents shared their stories, people again engaged with each others experiences, adding their own insights and tales to form a new composite picture. I have again included one conversation that demonstrates this.

- Dirk Kotze says that a character that stands out on his route is Fred Volkswagen on Toby Street. We are friends that share everything. He's been around here a long time, from the old Sophiatown. He's always fixing old cars and that's how he got that name.

- Janette (an Afrikaans women, new in the area, living at the old age home) says that she sees all the cars parked in the road and she thinks its dangerous because that's a busy road and the traffic has to weave around. And there are always kids running around on the street there.

- Cathy (a coloured lady, very active in the community) says that he rents out many small rooms there and the children are from this yard.

- Gladys (in her 50's) tells the group that she also knows Fred Volkwagen and that she rented a back room at his place in 1991 when she moved into the area. She says that she had been working at Shoprite since 1983, when Triomf was a different place and people would open their gates to let out their dogs when you walked past. "When I started staying here things started changing. Fred is a good man, he even used to fix my car, and though I don't stay there I still go to visit him sometimes. Nowadays my neighbours are black and white. My father used to live in Old

Sophiatown before they moved to Meadowlands and he tells the stories of Good/ Gold Street and now I see its going back to that. We don't only see colour, we see people, we are all together."

Again we see how one point of commonality allows people to share their pasts and presents. Throughout the exercise people enjoyed recognizing other characters, sights, events, even if they only heard about it in the newspaper, these were their things, from their world, and they were taking on a new life within the group. It allowed the participants to claim their experiences within this space and time both individually and importantly, as part of a collective sharing common ground, possibly offering a glimpse into community life. It was interesting to witness some common points shared, but also variations on the commentary and themes that develop as people tell stories differently. Residents seemed satisfied to simply add their contribution to something larger than their own lives.



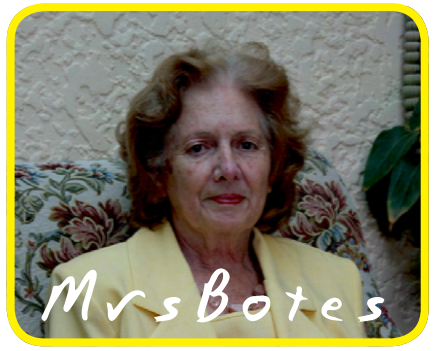
The community life at church makes my religious encounter greater. There is a sense of belonging to something greater. It allows me to stay connected on a deeper level. People are encouragement to each other - we are able to help each other out when we struggle.

I love church because of the community it has created. We all have a common belief and that unites us. I dislike the expectations of perfectionism. I dislike hypocrisy (and people who don't change with the times).

There is this guy who always gives the pastor a problem. The pastor just looks at him and all he says to him is 'I still love you as you are'.



In the church we are like a big family, which will not put you down nor keep things from you. The church has made me a better person.



I feel peaceful and calm at church. Some people come to listen, some just sit and whisper. I guess its really an opportunity to see old friends and be together with people.

There is a guy that sing very loud and also makes sure that he finishes the wine before anyone can have any.

What is special about the Church it's the vibrant, respectful, amusing, goal driven, identity, peace, system practice and more.



People who go to Church are good pretenders (but not all of them). Church teaches us ethical ways of life and make us adapt to the community.



CHURCHES

MAPPING 3

The topic for mapping exercise three was also drawn from the insight into community networks as described by the original study group. Sophiatown has an unusually dense concentration of churches and many of the residents I have met mentioned having an active religious life which formed the basis of most of their relationships in the area.

We decided on the topic of 'CHURCHES' since it became apparent through prior conversations that people address their community needs within this institution, but don't always manage to transcend the boundaries of that space in terms of the values and needs that become the focus of relationships there. It was also nearing the end of the year, decorations were up, Christmas fever was high and I was curious to investigate the impact of reflecting on one's experience of going to church, but in a new context. Here the residents would be in the company of their neighbours and we were to try and locate some of our feelings and experiences within the context of Sophiatown, again using the map as a structural tool.

Here I encouraged participants to enjoy points that they share, which is a good starting point when meeting someone new, but I also encouraged them to enjoy points of departure, where we celebrate our diversity and difference. The intention was primarily to give voice to the values and traditions that contribute to the creation of this vibrant public life people enjoy at church and interrogate whether this could potentially help to build our community life more broadly.

Another motivating factor that gave rise to this topic was that I was nearing the end of my research, and still wasn't able to draw two of the six women from my study group into a group activity; so I artfully selected a topic that they too might be interested in. Only two of the ladies attended.

The following questions were asked:

1. Where do you live in Sophiatown?

Can you mark out your house/street on the map

2. Do you visit any churches in the area?
   Please mark this on map. How did you come to this church?
   How do you go there, can you mark walking route on map
3. With whom do you share this experience?
   With whom do you normally go to church, do you share a relationship outside of church?
4. You could enjoy a spiritual life at home, but we choose to visit the church…. What is fulfilled at church in the way we want to spend time with other people, what do you enjoy about this engagement, how does this make you feel. Its different from our experience in other spaces.. e.g. going to Shoprite, butcher, children's functions. What's special about church?
5. I want you to take a good look around the church now….every church has got its characters. Can you share a sketch of a character of someone that you encounter there? Not necessarily someone that you have spoken to. This can be someone you admire, that confuses you, intrigues you, amuses you, that you've shared a strange incident with, or just someone that you always notice
6. What is different between someone who visits church and someone who doesn't?
7. How has going to church changed your experience of the larger world and the way you relate to people?
8. What are the ingredients for community building?

Unfortunately, this exercise was flawed and problematic for several reasons. Firstly, I am not personally that familiar with Christianity as a religion and wasn't quite equipped to handle the differences that arose in residents' interpretations. Another fault was that the questions didn't really relate to the map, so the key anchor that was present in other exercises was not here. It seemed that although a healthy sharing of personal affects and experiences did evolve, people were

quite protective of their different approaches to religion and respected this as a private space, not really opening up the conversation for responses and feedback.

However as the exercise developed I could sense that people were looking for common ground, trying to enjoy the humour in each other's stories, and looking for more everyday experiences to explain concepts like 'grace' and 'forgiveness'. Whilst it was still valuable for the group to get together and share their feelings and ideas within the community, the exercise was perhaps a bit too ambitious in its intentions. Still, the opportunity to witness and engage with other residents was here the underlying aim towards community building, and this exercise might have contributed slightly in this regard.

CONCLUSION

I set out to determine the possible terms of engagement of a few Afrikaans women within the suburb of Sophiatown to inclusive community based Heritage initiatives in the area. In order to do this I developed some background into their previous and current neighbourhood practices so that the exercises would largely be framed within their familiar relationship with the space of the suburb.

Over the last fifty years, Sophiatown has experienced a dramatic shift from the apartheid engineered white working class suburb to a diverse postcolonial space with people from very different backgrounds and cultures now living next door to each other. Perhaps it was a shortfall of this research to have not given sufficient consideration to the suburbs history of forced removals and the subsequent impact that has had on the psyche of the current residents.

Within the scope of this research report, I attempted to create a space where residents could share and engage with each other, without the usual categorizations of race, chronology, or class, but rather through the immediate intimate recall of their lived experiences. With the use of a suburb map as an anchor, I hoped that framing these exercises through emotions and the 'walking process' that relies on the intelligence of the body, residents might enjoy a less apprehensive and reserved response, but rather intuitively share their personal experiences of past and present that describe their different worlds.

The underlying intention here is primarily a community building exercise that attempts to create non threatening contexts for current residents to come together, establish potential talking points and a means to engage with the diversity in the area, in a way that interferes with their current stereotypes, stigmas and prejudices. My belief is that the familiarity this sets up will begin undoing the construction of 'the other', through which a humane negotiation of neighbourhood concerns becomes possible.

My particular interest in developing a collective representation of the area is for this inclusive group to be able to initiate its own memory projects that describes a

complex composite of the diverse pasts of the current residents that contribute to the history of the suburb, and to South African history more broadly.

Unfortunately, this research report is only the beginning of a much longer process. This over-ambitious start has however developed and sustained the interest of about twenty residents, within a project that struggles to initiate ongoing participation. City life is much too demanding, and consumer culture has taught us that identity work only happens within the space of the mall. So despite what I consider an immensely interesting and rewarding possibility, it is difficult to get residents to attend. People have become so complacent as passive victims of Apartheid, we've come to feel secure in our prejudice and rather build higher walls, buy more things, and enjoy a political life through the endlessly shocking and complaining media. In my view, this in turn drives a further need for alternate forms of representation. In this way this kind of project is repeatedly renewed, and will surely continue beyond the scope of this research report.

Whilst the initial study group was much too small, the stories of only three women barely offers a slice of life into the full picture of the resident's experience of Triomf, the women brought other friends from the neighbourhood into the group exercises. This offered a way in to the local events and happenings that has provided a much larger contact base within the Afrikaans community in the area. Also, the vast difference between the three women themselves immediately undoes the notion of a truly homogenous Triomf and possibly other stereotypes that have described it. For the women, middle aged to elderly housewives, the opportunity to write up some of their life stories and have their experiences marked out as significant will hopefully alter the way they position themselves within history and the suburb.

What we set out to achieve in terms of overcoming the prejudice of groups by shifting the focus to the individual and building community relationships is still very difficult to assess. The potential of insightful moments is often only revealed to one at a later instance, but I sincerely hope that these exercises might influence how people respond to the constant confrontation of others (as people

with fears, aspirations, regrets) as we navigate through life and develop some curiosity about the rich stories that often lie behind the myriad of different faces we encounter daily.

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