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Buur, Lars

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Lars Buur

Guest researcher at the Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, Denmark and Ph.D. student at Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology, University of Aarhus, Denmark. etnolb@hotmail.com
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Monumental History: Visibility and Invisibility in the Work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Introduction

This paper will explore one of the most striking features of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter SATRC): the extreme public exposure of the SATRC and simultaneous lack of knowledge about what the commission actually did while "bringing truth to light", "ascertaining the facts" "revealing" or "finding the truth about the past" [1].

As the title indicates, we are confronted with a somewhat paradoxical phenomenon in the literature and extensive public coverage on the SATRC, in that there is literally no information about everyday aspects of the Commission[2]. It is as if the SATRC consisted of nothing but the political and social context of the commission, the mandate of the commission, the commissioners who lead the commission, their reflections and thoughts about the process, the material emerging from public hearings and of course the final report it produced. It is as if there is an arbitrary relation between the everyday work of

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[1] Normally in the comparative literature on official truth commissions, the everyday work of official truth commissions is described through concepts like "bringing", "revealing" or "finding" the past about human rights abuses (see for example Hayner, 1994). What this vocabulary indicates, if not directly assumes, is that the there is a truth out there to be found. See for example Michelle Parlevliet (1998) for further comments on this subject.

[2] Just to mention a few articles and books published recently: Priscilla Hayner, (1994,1996,1997); H. Russel Botman and Robin M. Petersen (1996); Richard A. Wilson (1996); Mark Osiel (1997); Ian Liebenberg and Abebe Zegeye (1998). The silence in the literature was corroborated when during my fieldwork I realised that victims I interviewed who had gone through the mill of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hardly ever remembered anything about the everyday workers they had dealt with. This was further emphasised by media coverage of the SATRC which almost never featured articles about everyday conditions inside the commission. Instead, hundreds of articles about the commissioners and public SATRC products filled the newspapers.

SATRC in general, and the truth it produced. It is as if the everyday work was just a neutral medium for information gathering and processing - a means to an end.

The paper will explore this silence and apparently arbitrary relation, firstly by very briefly outlining the immanent propositions making actual commission work a no-go-land in literature on official commissions. In order to do so, I will analyse one of the foremost exponents of the comparative studies of official truth commissions - the work of Priscilla B. Hayner. I will focus on the manner in which everyday work of official truth commissions in her authorship is described and analysed. The point that will be made here is that the comparative study of TRCs rests on the implicit proposition that norms, actions and representations are basically the same. This means that what a commission should do, what they actually did and the manner in which people in charge of commissions represent and reflect on what they did, all belong to the same level of social reality. It has the implicit consequence that for example political and social forces are presented as either something that influences commission work either before the commission is established or afterwards - it is never something that is an inherent part of actual commission work. The result of this is that analyses and descriptions of actual commission work end up being far too coherent; and further, that important information is excluded about how mandates (and their internal tensions) are exercised among the staff members of commissions while working.

Secondly, I will through a concrete case study[3] analyse the often invisible and complex negotiations and translations going on in the process of the everyday work of the SATRC when case material is classified, produced and given stability, i.e. when statements from victims are classified and corroborated by different units. I will analyse one of the implicit consequences of the positivistic Human Rights methodology applied by the SATRC while processing victim statements, that is, the ordering of the past according to the parameters of calendar time and place. It will be suggested that this particular ordering enables a

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[3] The data discussed in this paper were collected in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 during preparation for field work and in1997, 1998 and 1999 during field research conducted under the auspices of the Ph.D. project: To establish a Truth: Victims, Perpetrators, Experts and the Work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology, Aarhus University, Denmark, which is due for completion by 30.06.2000. I am indebted to Ph.D. student Steffen Jensen, Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen and M.A. Michelle Parlevliet for their critical comments on earlier versions of this text.

particular kind of collective identity to emerge, the identity associated with "imagined communities".

Thirdly, through another piece of field material, this time dealing with some of the activities the SATRC embarked on which do not fall within the narrow definition of Human Rights and its applied methodology, I will look into how the dominant positivistic methodology of the SATRC is exercised - what happens when other methodologies surface in the everyday work of the SATRC and contest the ideal of "objectivity". This section will furthermore explore how other methodologies present in the work of the SATRC have disappeared in the retrospective writing up of the Final Report. The point that will be made is that the retrospective writing up, makes the work of the SATRC far more coherent than was actually the case. This can of course be said always to be the case when one retrospectively writes up - something is either deliberately left out or rephrased. The intention here is to trace some of the processual and silent aspects of retrospective writing which tend to escape scrutiny, simply because there is no direct actor guiding the writing hand.

Finally, in the last part of the paper the conclusions will be summarised and put into the *perspective of the general intentions of the conference.*

The proposition

A remarkable text by Priscilla Hayner (Hayner, 1994) in the Human Rights Quarterly is the first systematic analysis of officially sanctioned Truth Commissions. She later develops this perspective in a more systematic manner in relation to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) when the concept of reconciliation enters the discourse with the implementation of the SATRC in 1995 (Hayner, 1996,1997). Her work does not mark the beginning of a comparative study of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, but is in itself impressive simply for its comparison of fifteen Truth Commissions which have operated between 1974 and 1994. Common patterns and differences in relation to mandates, working style and outcome, and constraints imposed by political and social context are analysed. It is therefore a proper point of departure for my analysis of what I consider to be a constitutive element of how TRCs are analysed, not least because Hayner's comparative analysis superbly illustrates the phenomenon under discussion in this paper:

a particular relation between visibility and invisibility in the work of the SATRC, where almost all the attention is dedicated to the visible and public dimensions of the SATRC, while everyday aspects of the work of the SATRC remain hidden behind a veil of so-called transparency.

Everyday work out of sight

Hayner seldom deals with everyday aspects of TRCs[4], except a few times when she indicates that something must happen. Generally, the examples have the following character:

> *"The commission staff* ***took*** *testimony from witness or victims of violence,* ***investigated*** *a number of cases in great depth, and* ***compiled*** *statistics on the tens of thousands of cases brought to its attention" (Hayner, 1994:599).*
>
> *"Given the scope of information available to the SPO (the Special Prosecutors Office which worked as an official truth commission in Ethiopia), we are* ***implementing*** *an ambitious computerization plan in the hope that we will* ***record*** *for posterity's sake a significant percentage of the information available" (SPO working plan Hayner, 1994:634)*
>
> *"The SPO is staffed with approximately thirty legal and support staff, as well as several international legal consultants hired to* ***set up*** *the computer system and* ***advise*** *the office on international human rights standards." (Hayner, 1994:635 my emphasis)*

The words I have emphasised all describe action, something which is done in the course of an official truth commission's work. But strangely enough this is of no interest for Hayner (or others dealing with TRCs I will suggest). Common to these descriptions is the fact that the tone describing everyday work is *neutral.* Staff do something, use certain forms of technology like databases; they code information, take statements and create statistics, but these actions are described as pure *technical mediation.* Mediation on behalf of the mandates.

Everyday work and commission work in general is described as if it was only an instrument, a mere tool, which has no bearing on the subjects or the subject matter it is

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[4] Four staff members are mentioned in her comparative analysis, most of them staff members of the El Salvador commission. They are Ted Piccone, Ignacio Cano and Patricia Valdez, the CEO of the El Salvadorian commission. One staff member of the Bolivian commission, executive secretary Loyola Guzman, was mentioned. Several commissioners are mentioned.

dealing with. It is purely a *means to an end*[5]. It seems that commissions as such do nothing in themselves, except "portray a global truth" (Hayner, 1994:652), "[write] a report that will be universally accepted as impartial, fair and an accurate representation of history", or "[leave] an honest account of the violence" (Hayner, 1996:19-20, 21). As such, a commission is described as being a medium, a neutral carrier of the will of the mandates, or terms of reference which constitute them. If the mandate is working from the position of good intentions, then the commission will be used wisely and will do only what is expected.

This tendency is furthermore enforced by analysing power and social and political power relations as something that influence official commissions either during the initial discussions about whether to implement a commission, or during the actual drafting of the mandates (see for example Hayner, 1994: 608, 635). Hayner rightly states that official commissions often are both "closely watched and sometimes challenged" by social and political powers (Hayner, 1994:636), but the manner in which social and political forces influence everyday work is never considered. What instead is analysed in detail is the limitations written into the mandates of official commissions. According to Hayner "the most significant limitations to many truth commissions", are the ones written into the mandates, or terms of reference (Hayner, 1994:636).

Hayner rightfully identifies the political dimension of TRCs, but she presents the actual work of the commission as "power free" by ascribing the "contaminational" effect i.e. the influence of social and political forces, to the context alone: the setting up of a commission, the drafting of the mandates, the mandates themselves and what happens after a commission has handed over its report. Even though the political limitations dominate all aspects of setting up a commission and creating the mandate - sometimes even hindering a commission from working optimally, for example by keeping the final reports confidential - the actual work of the commission is never taken into consideration as being under the same constraints that are identified and analysed within the political domain. It is as if the political forces at play outside of commissions do not operate within

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[5] It should be mentioned that Hayner in her authorship increasingly points at the value of the process of official truth commissions, for example the value of giving victims a space to tell their stories, but this processual reorientation has not had any bearing on how everyday aspects of official commission work is described and analysed.

the commissions too. The wider rationality behind this separation - between what goes on inside and outside a commission - will be analysed in greater detail in a discussion of the two case studies. Here it will become apparent that this ideal is less easy to maintain in reality.

A specific relation between norms and action

If this was a set of notions Hayner and other people dealing with official commissions hold about how commission work should be done, there would not be a problem. This notion - which I will call the notion about the *proper organisation* of commissions - which statesthat commissions in their everyday work should strictly follow what is outlined in the mandates, and should be clearly separated from social and political forces, would then only be a set of notions which they hold about commission work. They would hold them and could discuss them in hypothetical terms with others, future commissions or researchers discussing the strengths and weaknesses of official commissions. But this is not exactly what happens. Hayner present her thoughts about the *proper organisation*, implicitly and explicitly, also as a representation of what actually happens in the actual work of official commissions, in other words, as referring to a set of empirical facts. One such example is:

> *"The very **mandate** of truth commissions generally **prevents** them from playing an active role in the prosecution vs. amnesty decision that often follows a truth commission report, although some truth commissions have recommended prosecutions or forwarded their material to the courts[6]." (Hayner, 1994:604)*

If the mandate says that the life of a commission stops on a particular date, that is what happens. If a mandate states that a commission should work even-handedly and objectively, this is what happens in Hayner and others descriptions and analysis of official commission work. The notion about the *proper organisation* of commission work refers simultaneously in the work of Hayner to a set of notions and the patterns of social processes, the manner in which commissions organise their work. Workers, committee

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[6] If a commission's life span is defined, then the possibility for a commission to be active after its mandate is terminated is what happens in real life. In South Africa, after the commission had finished its work and closed down its Human Rights Violation Committee (HRVC) and Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee (R&RC) new allegations relating to persons committing violations were reported in newspapers based on previously unpublished SATRC material twice a week. It was material from in-camera hearings, but even though the material was not allowed to be published staff members and others slipped it to journalists. Therefore a commission's life is more than *just* its life span.

members and commissioners not only hold and discuss these notions about the *proper organisation*, but they also make them manifest in their behaviour; they organise their actual social relations and activities in terms of this *proper organisation*[7].

If one follows the logic of Hayner then the implicit idea is that norms are the same as action. If the mandate structured by power limits a commission in doing something, then the reality is so.

Following the perspective of Ladislav Holy and Milan Stuchlik (1983) it would be easy to show that we are dealing with a theoretical short circuit. Norms and actions are not the same, they are "referring to different levels or domains of social reality" (Holy and Stuchlik, 1983:6). Generally, what people working for commissions do and what they say they are doing - for example in the Final Report which often has a small chapter called "Methodology," or in public speeches - connotes *existential differences* between domains or levels of social reality. Social reality as such is not unitary - official representations are not the same as actual social processes.

Nonetheless, this is the manner in which commission work is perceived and dealt with within the authorship of Hayner. An authorship which I see as paradigmatic and exemplary of how commission work more generally, is described and analysed. The fact that reality is conceived of in this way is ultimately responsible for the neglect of important areas of research into both the actual processes of official commission work, and into the notions about them which exist in societies where official commission models have been implemented. A simplistic and non-problematical understanding of social reality, plays an important role in such a conflation of norms and action/practice.

My point is that the apparent lack of information about important aspects of official commission work, is not just consigned to media representations as such but is also to be found in the domain of the social sciences. I have traced this lack of interest to a

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[7] The notion about the *proper organisation* (the following of mandates and the clear separation between what is going outside a commission and inside) - where norms are manifest in social processes in a one-to-one relation - are held by everyday workers, commissioners, the people setting up commissions and people studying commissions. This position on social processes and notions is problematic, because the view that the ideal of proper organisation is a representation of empirically observable social processes is not that well founded, as Holy and Stuchlik (1983) have shown for most of social science and in particular anthropology (see in particular Chapter One 1983 for good examples). This paper can be seen as an analysis bringing the hindsight of Holy and Stuchlik into another domain that they themselves did not deal with, but which can benefit from their perspective.

particular theoretical point of view regarding social processes which on the one hand holds that commission work should be organised in a particular way which keeps political/social forces and commission work strictly separate. On the other hand this theoretical perspective simultaneously states that this proper way of organising commission work is what happens when official commissions work. To take my point one step further, because of this theoretical short circuit, the object for description and analysis is official representations emerging from official commission work. If one look at what is going on behind what Anthony Giddens (1992) calls the "access points" of modern institutions, referring to "points of connection between lay individuals or collectives and the representatives of abstract systems" (Giddens, 1992:88), I will suggest we will find a far more complex picture of official commission work. This does not mean that official representation in the form of mandates, public statements, hearings, media coverage etc. is without importance - they are important because they inform everyday work within official commissions. Instead the point is that one should look at the interface between norms, actions and representations - the space where (arte)facts[8] are produced through complex processes of negotiations and translations.

I will now turn to some of the often complex negotiations and translations going on in the process of the everyday work of the SATRC when material about the past is "revealed" or "found". It will become apparent that when material about the past finds its stability (when victim statements are classified and corroborated) through being classified and produced, there is more to it than smooth fact-finding. The focus in this section will be on how the positivistic methodology guiding the manner in which information about the past is processed (maybe unintended) makes possible a particular kind of collective identity. The example I will present in the next section is taken from the Investigative Unit and is related to the corroboration of a victim statement alleging that a person has been shot during riots in the seventies.

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[8] The intention behind using this spelling of (arte)facts instead of just facts is that I want to direct attention towards the double nature of the concept. It is both an human construction as well as "fact" which connotes something more solid.

Case one - need for clarity

The Investigative Unit is tasked with analysing and "corroborating statements[9]" received by the SATRC in order to find out whether the statements fall within the mandate of the SATRC. The unit is only one of several units working together on this project. Its work can be seen as the third step in an ongoing process of verification of the received information captured in the statement from alleged victims. The end product is either the classification of the protagonists as victims of Gross Human Rights Violations or the dismissal of the statement as being "out of mandate". The co-operation between the different units participating in the many layers of corroboration is done through an electronic, computer-supported liaison network known as Oracle. In this liaison network the different units can write to each other and change the information already captured on the database. Once this information has stabilised over time, a statistical picture of atrocities can be created.

The problem is to identify the data which can be categorised as "false" data. This is continually negotiated between the statement, the normative Human Rights classification schema and the different units. In this process, the statement is experimented with and used in different ways, just as the normative classifications are negotiated between the different role-players: commissioners, statement takers, data processors, investigators, human rights organisations, victims and perpetrators etc. In order to understand the complex process of establishing the facts about Human Rights Violations (HRV) it is important to remember that in the construction and negotiation of what "false" data are, the statement as well as the different units are active participants in the game, so to speak.

The methodology is in essence "positivistic". By this I mean that each step in the data processing is part of an ongoing systematic cross-correlation and confirmation of the "raw data" captured by the statement takers. The aim of this process of cross-correlation is, as

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[9] The intentions were from the beginning to properly "investigate" each case of GHRV. But by the end of 1997 this methodology was dropped in favour of a corroboration strategy, when it became apparent that there were not enough resources available for such a resource-intensive strategy. It has to be mentioned that one reason for this shift was the resource-intensive "hearings driven" public work of the SATRC which began in April 1996, making it almost impossible for the Investigative Unit to deal with cases which were not going to be presented in public. A backlog of thousands of cases (around 90% of the cases did not enter this public process) accumulated in the offices of the SATRC, which had to be dealt with in order to fulfil the mandate of the SATRC. (This note is based on fieldwork material from 1997 and interviews with investigators and leaders of the different investigative units of the SATRC).

I have described elsewhere (Buur, 1999) neutral and objective fact finding, which ideally can be said to have been written into the mandate of the SATRC. This is a point we will return to after the presentation of the case.

Investigative work - striving to settle and verify

Two investigators from the SATRC and one Danish anthropologist went on a routine expedition to a small village half an hour from Cape Town. They were to visit a Muslim person, who had handed in an insufficient statement, a statement which according to the investigators contained unclear information about what had happened to the person. In the statement he described the Human Rights violation he had suffered in a sparse four-line narrative written in the space provided for narratives in the protocol formula of the SATRC. When they arrived, the person's father, mother and a sister were there, waiting. The son was out they were told, but he would soon be there. They invited us into the living room - a room created by a bookshelf filled with groceries, which separated what appeared to be a front shop from the back living room - and placed the visitors comfortably in the best chairs that were available in the room. Sitting in a half circle facing the family, the father immediately began to tell what had happened to their son around 20 years ago:

- *"One day my son and a friend had been on their way to buy meat at the butcher. It was at the time when there were riots all the time. Outside the shop my son had been shot in the stomach. They (the police) brought him to the hospital, where he was operated on several times. We took the police to court because we wanted compensation, but lost the case". The father told us that the consequence of this incident was that the son became incapable of working during winter time, because of pain in the bones. The father asked: "What shall we do now when our oldest son cannot support the family?"*
- *When the son arrived after around twenty minutes, one of the TRC investigators told him "We have come to your house to ask additional questions and to get things right". He asked the son to tell his story in greater detail. The son delivered exactly the same story we already had heard from the father and which was stated in the protocol formula.*
- *The investigators were not satisfied, and told him that it was a "small statement that you have given to the statement-taker, we need to know more about what happened and when it*

happened". The investigator then began to ask his additional questions. The investigator systematically posed questions which centred around the times and places of the different incidents in the young man's story, and names of the people involved, such as: "When exactly did it happen?"; "Where did the incident happen?"; "Which hospital did they transfer you to?"; "Who did you walk to the butcher together with?"; "Who shot you?"; "What is the name of the doctor who treated you?"; and "What is the name of the lawyer who ran your court case?".

- *Each question triggered a flurry of activity among the family members and friends who by now had gathered in the shop/living room, and all participated vigorously in giving answers to the many questions, much to the annoyance of the investigators. Nobody could remember in which year the incident actually took place, but it was the year when the neighbour who lived behind their house still lived there. After a fairly long reconstruction, at one stage involving a consultation of the Islamic calendar, even this new opening turned out to be in vain. The exact year and date were not to be remembered. It was furthermore impossible to get the names of the persons involved in the story: not the policeman (the perpetrator) who had fired the shot, not the friend who had accompanied him, not the doctor who had treated him nor even the lawyer who had argued his case in court, not to mention the name of the neighbour who lived next door at the time of the incident.*
- *The sparse new information the investigators received was delivered after lengthy discussions among the people in the room. Several times the investigators asked for objective clues like press cuttings, files from the court or the hospital, or official letters from the institutions mentioned above, which could corroborate the story, but this information was apparently not important to them or the story the family wanted to tell. Quite some time was spent going systematically through the chest of drawers in the living room looking for papers, but they were not to be found, although the family told us that they knew that they had some papers somewhere. However not a single document relating to the so-called traumatic event could be produced.*
- *At each question the family seemed to get more and more impatient, as if the questions posed were not important. Instead they constantly repeated their restricted version of the story, and stressed how the incident affected the son during winter time. The investigators, too, became more and more impatient with the son, the rest of the family and the friends who had gathered in the room telling stories about neighbours, the Islamic calendar, and long gone relatives.*
- *At the end of the session the son exposed the scar on his body as a final proof of the story he had just told. The scar looked quite dramatic and he seemed satisfied when he had delivered*

this final piece of evidence. There could be no doubt that something really had happened to him.

- *But there was one person who had relevant information -- the investigator. He had researched the case before he went into the house. From the Research Unit he had found out that the incident must have taken place during the September Riots in 1976. He had found the name of the doctor who had treated the young man at the hospital, and talked to the lawyer who had argued his case in court.*
- *Then something strange happened. The "new" information presented by the investigator just slipped into the story told by the family, slowly and without any problems and embarrassment They stated: "For sure it was in 1976, yes, that was the year the neighbour moved away" etc. Hereafter the story about the event in 1976 was retold, this time including the parameters the investigator had been looking for. In this manner the afternoon slipped away with frustrated investigators, "victims" agitating for their case, and a few cups of coffee all consumed in a friendly mood.*
- *A year later, I asked the investigator in charge of the case what the outcome had been. He remembered the case clearly and smiled and told me that as far as he remembered he had classified the case as being out of mandate; that they (the family) were only trying to get money from the SATRC, because the son had not been politically active. He had been shot, that was a fact, but it was an accident, he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. As far as he was concerned it was now up to the commissioners to take the final decision, he had done his part of the work" (Field work notes 1996, 1997, 1998)*

There are many cases like this one, cases where the judgement done by everyday workers of the SATRC has enormous consequences for people coming to the SATRC. As I have illustrated in another article, it could just as well have been a judgement favouring the victim (Buur, 1999). Before I look in greater detail at the story presented above let me outline the context of this story, the positivistic scientific methodology of the SATRC informing the investigative data corroboration.

The context and its grammar

The general task, according to the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34, 1995 of the SATRC is to "[establish] as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights..[..]..including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations..[and decide]..whether such

violations were the result of deliberate planning on the part of the State or a former state or any of their organs." (Act, 1995:805-6, 809). The aim of establishing as "complete a picture as possible" of atrocities committed in the past is to create a shared sense of the past in the midst of an extreme diversity of different experiences.

In order to do so, the Commission needs *unambiguous information* which is classified according to a Human Rights based *"trichotomy"*: victim, perpetrator and witness (Buur, 1999:9). This Human Rights schema is in essence an individualised, liberal way of dealing with the past, as Mahmood Mamdani has pointed out (Mamdani, 1996). It is so because it has primarily dealt with and documented the abuses committed by the Apartheid state institutions and its foremost opponents, as well as trying to capture as many stories as possible from victims of Gross Human Rights Violations within an individual interpretation of its terms of reference. Both dimensions of the work of the SATRC - respectively the work of the Amnesty and Human Rights committees - have been done in order to "find" material for writing up a "new" common national history -- a process of "transparent" data collection.

Let us look more closely at what characterises the process of transparent data collection and corroboration. I have claimed that the everyday methodology of the SATRC – the processing of data about Human Rights with the aim of accumulating a comprehensive database – is governed by a scientific positivistic "ideal" (Buur, 1999:13).

The parameters of this ideal are briefly outlined in the mandate of the SATRC. Here it is stated that the SATRC "shall function without political or other bias" and in an "objective and even-handed manner" (Act:843). It is therefore obliged to be an independent body separated from the political environment from which its constitution comes, and which grants it time extensions (which happened several times) and funding. The Act states that in order to fulfil its obligations -- documenting and laying the foundation for a morally just society -- the Commission shall be: "..independent from any party, government, administration, or any other functionary or body directly or indirectly representing the interests of any such entity" (Act:843).

Following Bruno Latour (1993) this insistence on neutrality and objectivity is of course not restricted to official commissions. The point is that the ideal expressed in the mandate of the SATRC -- the separation between politics and science, between the intervention

and those who are the subjects/objects of the whole intervention -- is not only a common feature of all official commissions, but is one of the constitutive features of modern institutions in general.

My claim that the work of the SATRC is guided by an essentially positivistic methodology needs a few qualifications. Although the SATRC's everyday work of processing information was spelled out as being positivistic in an Appendix to the Final Report (see volume one), and although the Commission claims that this approach was prescribed by the Act, nevertheless, it is not automatically given that this scientific, positivistic ideal was in fact determined by the Act. Actually, the Act does not refer to the positivistic scientific ideal as such, and the Commission *chose* to interpret quite general terms like "objectivity", "even-handed", "independence" etc. in this way. In other words -- as with all interpretation, which is not a mechanical affair -- individuals make real choices[10].

Secondly, during the early stages of the Commission, when the public victim hearings were central, the SATRC methodology was not based on a positivistic methodology, but was equally within the mandate as set out in the Act[11]. As I will illustrate in the following sections of this paper, other methodologies were simultaneously present in the everyday work of the SATRC, although I maintain that the positivistic scientific methodology is the dominant methodology around which other methodologies revolve, and in relation to which they have to position themselves. The underlying problem here is whether one assumes that the SATRC is unified and coherent or not. I would stress that there are major tensions between the *process* (especially the victim hearings and what I will later call extra Human Rights activities), the *everyday work* and the *product* (the Report), and also that the process itself went through different and distinct stages depending on what part of the SATRC process one analyses. I therefore do not claim that the positivistic methodology was hegemonic all along, but more that it functions as an operational current to which other methodologies have to relate themselves.

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[10] With every fear for sounding tautological one could explain this with reference to the positivist assumptions of mainstream social science and law in South Africa. Within such a perspective these interpretations are probably quite justifiable.

[11] Here it was stated that the methodology of the SATRC should be victim-friendly.

This writing up of a "new" national history by collapsing different world views into a common narrative about the painful past does not mean that each and every Human Rights violation finds its place in the Human Rights Violation schema - the script guiding the data processing. Besides fitting into the four main categories of Human Rights Violations that the SATRC deals with[12], the stories forwarded to the SATRC need to contain certain information in order to fit the script, over and above clear-cut definitions of who the victim and perpetrators are and what they did. They also need to be structured around certain "universal" parameters: common and abstract concepts like calendar time and place which go beyond localised conceptions. In other words, this means that there is a certain grammar attached to the script.

Below, through a contextualisation of the investigators' apparent obsession with calendar time and place, we will take a closer look at how this positivistic methodology is connected to one particular form of historical identity, quite different from the one which the victim/family embarked on. Several observations are worth taking into account when trying to make sense of the field-trip in relation to the context outlined above.

One thing that immediately emerges is a clash between different narrative styles – one structured around calendar time and space, another drawing on a different set of parameters altogether, parameters which come closer to the kind of collective memory Pierre Nora calls "milieux de mémoire" - real environments of memory. "Milieux de mémoire" is characterised by the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists (Nora, 1989:7) without any necessary reference to abstract concepts like calendar time and place. The family did not use the "objective" criteria of calendar time and place to structure their story about what had happened 20 years ago --

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[12] As Mamdani (1996) has stressed, the liberal, individualised Human Rights perspective of the SATRC does not capture the gross institutionalised injustice of Apartheid as a system. Mamdani mentions in particular "forced removals", "the pass laws" and the "economic legacy" of Colonialism/Apartheid. Instead of making it possible to actively deal with the deprived living conditions of 30 million people and to deal powerfully with the causes, the individualised Human Rights perspective of the SATRC only reaches 22.000 victims. But it has to be mentioned that the four basic categories applied by the SATRC also refer to a rather chaotic situation in which, since they began their work in 1996, the normative classification scheme has developed from two pages to ten pages. Nearly every week new domains of violence were included in the HRV classification scheme which guided the work of the SATRC. One example is arson which was not included before the KTC Special Event Hearing in Guguleto, Cape Town in mid-1997 (based on information from interview with former Commissioner Mary Burton, 1999).

or at least, not to begin with -- while the investigators concentrated their efforts on that subject: why?

Layers of intervention

It would be a mistake to criticise the investigators for brutally wiping out the narrative style of the victim/family without sensitivity to the victim's story. From their perspective it is totally justified, for it has been the dominant manner in which the past has been settled right from the beginning of the SATRC process. The first posters which encouraged people to come forward to the SATRC, began the creation of a new national timeline by highlighting a new set of events in the national history. For the first time, incidents such as the Sharpville massacre, the Soweto uprising, the Church Street bomb, "Trojan Horse" incident, the Bisho killings, the St James Church massacre, etc. were given formal acknowledgement, placed alongside each other and chronologically organised so they covered the time span of the SATRC's mandate and the national territory of the South African nation-state. These posters indicated what events the SATRC saw as important in the "new" national history, and encouraged people to come forward and tell stories about them.

This early obsession with calendar time and place was also evident at the end of the SATRC process[13]: in the Final Report extensive space is used on a chronology of Apartheid. Between the first poster and the Final Report this approach to calendar time and place was apparent in nearly all interventions between the SATRC and victims or victim communities. I will suggest that this approach has re-configured the whole narrative landscape of South Africa and created one possible manner in which the "new" nation-state can be imagined. In the next few sections of this chapter I will look briefly at how the different interventions made by the SATRC in the lives of victims or victim communities, silently followed the script outlined above.

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[13] It should be mentioned that the researchers employed by the SATRC were ordered by research director Charles Villa-Vicencio, to produce endless lists of chronologies ranging from chronologies dealing with a variety of specific events in the history of South Africa to local and regional chronological profiles and national and international chronological profiles. Only a few of them found a place in the Final Report (based on interviews with researchers and fieldwork observations).

The protocol formula and statement taking

If you thought that authentic narratives -- narratives not contaminated by the SATRC's intensive focus on time and place – were to be found in the protocol formula of the 22 000 victim statements handed over to the SATRC to be stored in the National Archive, I will have to disappoint you. In the statements protocol formula -- which was much debated within the SATRC -- a space was consigned to the narratives of victims, but the narratives captured here are far from "authentic". Several layers of intervention took place even before the narratives were put to paper, not to mention being captured by the database of the SATRC -- layers of intervention that restructure the original stories of the victims[14].

The first thing one has to take into account is the development of the statements protocol formula. At the beginning of the SATRC process six pages in the protocol formula were assigned to the narrative of victims. Initially, statement takers tried to capture the narrative of the victim word-for-word, but this strategy was abandoned for several reasons. One such was that it produced too much information - six pages is a lot of text material - another reason was that the stories of victims were "badly organised" - the structure and narrative "run through" was not chronological enough for the "kind" of information the SATRC needed for developing its database (information based on interviews with statements takers and data processors). Yet another reason was that the actual writing down of six pages of narrative and sometimes more, was extremely time consuming. Finally, the statement-takers were relieved and grateful when things changed, because they were finding it difficult to distance themselves from the stories -- "they came too close to us" as several statements takers expressed it. To cut a rather long story short, the statements protocol formula officially went through eight stages before it found its final outline around mid-1997-- a one-and-a half year process. Through this process of gradually becoming a stable entity, the protocol formula developed from eight pages to more than twenty pages, and went from six pages of narrative space to one and a half pages, with one version in the process not even having a space consigned to capture the stories of the victims. In reality more than the eight official versions have been used

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[14] This is part of an even wider restructuring that has happened over many years. The SATRC is not the first institution to capture statements from victims of Apartheid. During the Apartheid era several Human Rights organisations like Black Sash, Umac etc. took statements about Human Rights violations in South Africa.

during the time span of the SATRC - I have seen more than eleven versions applied in the Cape Town offices alone[15].

This rather dramatic change in narrative length from six down to one and a half pages, points to a change in the actual manner in which narratives are captured. From initially writing down the victim's story word-for-word, a statement taking session -- including writing down the "narrative", the "statement" or as it is called in later versions of the protocol formula "Brief Description of the Violation of Human Rights" -- came to follow more or less this sequence: First, the victim would tell her or his story in the language preferred, which normally took around 20 to 30 minutes; then the statement taker would ask a few questions in order to clarify questions related to time, place, kind of violation, persons involved etc.; next, the statement taker would write down the narrative in English. Seldom was the statement taker's version read aloud to the victim for approval[16].

After this initial accessing of the victim's story, around one and a half hours would be spent on dissection of the story so that detailed information on the victim's identity was captured. Around this information, the identity of perpetrators and witnesses would evolve. Sometimes it was necessary to ask a whole range of additional questions; at other times the statement taker could fill in the different categories related to the four main categories of Human Rights Violations on the basis of the initial story. In these cases the role of the victim changed and became a verifying corroborator who confirmed the interpretation made by the statement taker. Besides the obvious aim of cross-checking the story of the alleged victim, this parcelling out of information into around 12 pages of categories in the later versions of the statements protocol formula was aimed at generating information that, through the intervention of the data processors, could be "fed" into the database of the SATRC. Most of the information contained in the protocol formula and the database did not have any "value" for the investigators doing the actual verification of the

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[15] The effect of these metamorphic processes of the classification schema and the statement protocol formula, was that the data processors constantly had to rewrite data already captured on the database. What the consequence of this constant process of rewriting has been for the statistical information generated from the database one can only guess.

[16] It can sound like the statements taking sessions were done in a cold and unfriendly manner, but that was not the case. The sessions were often tense, because of the nature of the story telling and the kind of stories the statements takers were dealing with, but generally, based on the sessions I observed and the victims I have interviewed, victims experienced the sessions as a positive experience.

statements. Instead the value of the around 12 pages of dissection of the story into categories, was to do with the possibility of generating statistical material.

The point I want to stress is not that there is something profoundly wrong with this methodology. It is following a positivistic scientific ideal where one chain in the process captures the statement, another investigates the statement and yet another makes the final judgement. Instead, my interest is focused on how this bureaucratic way of processing data makes possible one kind of history; how it selects and transforms data and creates opportunities for new modes of identity. We will in the next part look more closely at what kind of history this kind of positivistic Human Rights methodology caters for.

Bringing everybody to an equal footing

This way of coding past experiences entails a mode of revealing and bringing forth a truth which is based on stable, unambiguous referents like calendar time and spatial cardinals. This makes it possible to turn experiences into visible images without excluding the possibility of being personally or communally present at the same time. By this I mean without excluding people from identifying themselves with collective identities emerging from the work of the SATRC, because they have, at least technically, something in common.

In order to achieve this, what is needed is a kind of knowledge which must be, 1) perceptible to others, 2) impossible to misunderstand, but still 3), interpretable according to different intentions and life experiences. In other words, unlike the conditions the knowledge deals with, it has to be clear of ambivalence.

Therefore the knowledge used by the commission must be expressed in a shared, authorised and supra-individual code[17]. Such a code is brought about by the use of calendar time and place. These things are seen as objective, impersonal criteria for

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[17] The identification of a shared, authorised and supra-individual code cannot do it alone; the hermeneutic authority to guarantee non-partisanship and dispassion has to been accredited to an institution believed to contain these characteristics. Science is such an institution. But as Bauman has pointed out, science is barred to the ordinary person, a mediator is needed to "translate personal, subjective needs into questions which could be answered in the impartial and reliable, but hermetically sealed, highly technical language of science" (Bauman, 1991:199). The mediator who is trustworthy combines "the person's capacity to understand with the power of science to make right decisions..[such a person]..is called an expert." (Bauman, 1991:199).

identification, whereby the probability of misreading is reduced. As we saw in the example above, the private person/family understood and had a language for their experiences and needs, but only the investigator as an "expert" knew how to translate them into parameters beyond the specific experience, so that they could be verified, evaluated and used in the construction of collective identity. An expert's main role relates to his or her capacity to interpret and translate uncertainty. They can translate problems which occur in one domain to a realm outside this specific context. What we encounter is a special power relation between rationality, experts and knowledge. The concepts which connect these three are in this case calendar time and place.

The use of the objective parameters of calendar time and space are important for the construction of imagined communities and collective histories -- a point which was made years ago by Benedict Anderson (1983, 1991) when he used the concept *homogeneous empty time*[18] to describe the change that new modes of representing time resulted in, regarding collective identities. Anderson's point of view is rather simple, but nonetheless extremely illustrative. By relating the experiences of different individuals to the concepts of time and place, they are reduced to the same formula, one which is structured around a temporal and spatial coincident of simultaneity, which according to Anderson is a precondition for the birth of the "imagined community" of the nation-state (Anderson, 1991:24). But the flip-side of this process of reduction is a simultaneous process of elevation whereby stories can be encompassed in a wider story - the "new" national story about the victims of Apartheid. In the case mentioned above, the intervention of the commission brought forth supra-individual knowledge. The young man's story became structured by calendar time and space. These new parameters were located outside the intimate environment of the living room and the known environment the family was living in. By first being decontextualised, the experiences of Son and Family in general become translatable, recognisable to other people or families, as victims and as members of the same nation. The nation now has the possibility of connecting and comparing its son's injury to other events which took place during the apartheid system -- simply through the use of the cardinals of calendar time and space. The same can be said about the actual

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[18] Anderson got this concept from Walter Benjamin (1968).

son and the family in the case study, who now have the possibility of thinking about themselves as part of the history of other victims they never have seen or met - a common history of national suffering has been forged[19]. This process would have been even more explicit if the SATRC had, as planned, extracted a condensed, one-and-a-half lines from the database to describe every Human Rights violation it had found to be within the mandate of the SATRC.

While processing the information captured in the statements formula, the data processors had the task of first writing three lines about what happened the particular victims mentioned in the statement. These three lines were later reduced to one and a half lines due to space constraints in the Final Report, and finally not used because it would have required a whole volume alone containing descriptions of all those identified as victims by the SATRC. The guidelines for writing the three lines and later one and a half lines were what was known among data processors as "the four wives and the husband". It was "when", "where", "what", "who" and "how" did the Human Rights violation happen. As the "four wives and the husband" indicates this condensed writing falls well within the Human Rights mantra "who did what to whom" guiding the creation of the extensive database (Ball, 1996), but the additional two categories "when" and "where" makes it possible to contextualise the Human Rights classification within the wider framework of national history writing and the "imagined community" of the nation[20].

When one looks at official commission work from the point of view of everyday processes of negotiations and translations happening between the mandate of the SATRC, everyday workers, statements protocol formulas, victims aspirations, a positivistic methodology etc. - what one find is not a smooth and straight forward process of "fact finding". The ritualised public representations of the SATRC, except for a few stories from the pen of Piers Pigot (1998), seldom tell the other side of the history-writing exercise of

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[19] This way of creating collective identity within the context of official truth commissions is not new. The first well known official truth commission in Argentina from 1983 and the Chilean truth commission from 1991 framed the individual stories in exactly the same manner. In the Argentinean commission each and every story began with the date and the place for the story which was about to unfold (Buur, 1996).

[20] There is a kind of precedence for this kind of collective identity formation in official commission work. At one of the first workshops for staff members discussing the format of the Final Report in the SATRC Charles Villa-Vicencio distributed one page from the Chilean Final Report where the story of each and every person found to be a victim of Human Rights Violations in Chile was listed and their story told in a three line sentence. Charles then said he wanted to show us, how it could be done in South Africa (based on field notes).

the SATRC i.e. the selective and creative production of a specific kind of truth. What I have focused my attention on in the above, is how the everyday work of processing and corroborating material about the past through highly complicated processes, objectifies the past in a particular and individualised manner which simultaneously makes possible collective identity. Not only identity as a victim and as part of a group of victims,[21] but also a way of imagining victims as part of a wider national history[22].

The everyday work of the SATRC is in this sense not just a neutral means to an end, finding or revealing the truth about the past, as has been illustrated above. The work in itself restructures the past and makes new identities and forms of identification possible - probably as an unintended consequence of a particular methodological approach. Emerging from the analysis so far is a picture of the work of the SATRC as uniformly following one methodology -- the positivistic Human Rights methodology described above. But this would be a reduction of the complexities going on. As mentioned earlier, other methodologies are simultaneously at stake in the work of the SATRC. It is some of these methodologies I will take a closer look at in the next section.

Case two - exercising the borders

The following case is meant both as an illustration of the kind of problems the SATRC encountered while exercising the positivistic methodology dominant in the everyday work, as well as to point at other methodologies which were simultaneously present in the work of the SATRC -- methodologies erased from the public presentation of the SATRC's Final Report as part of the process itself, not because "somebody" deliberately removed them from the final representation of the work of the SATRC - the Final Report.

In the report there is no mention of the enormous work the SATRC did in order to get the coloured community of Athlone on board the SATRC process before the Special Event[23] hearing on the Trojan Horse incident of 1985. Right from the beginning of the

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[21] Several groups of victim organisations are currently being established to lobby for the implementation of the recommendations made by the SATRC in the Final Report regarding monetary compensations and reparation for the victims of Apartheid.

[22] Whether victims and people really do identify themselves with the history made available by the SATRC is another story, which I do not want to embark on here. In this paper I have focused on the technical parameters provided by the positivistic Human Rights methodology applied by the SATRC.

[23] The SATRC ran a series of Special Events hearing in 1997 taking up specific events that had happened during the Apartheid era where both the victims of the atrocities committed participated, as well as the

process the Commission had tremendous problems in gathering statements. Commissioner Mary Burton a few years later recalled her first meeting with the community early in 1996 and the problems the SATRC encountered in the following manner:

"..[..]..it was a very well attended meeting and a very hot meeting; people were extremely critical of the Commission, of it's mandate; of the amnesty clause; and of the work that it was setting out to do. And it was very healthy for us as commissioners to engage with that anger from the community; part of the anger of course came from the events of the past and they came also from the feeling that many militant activists had had, that the whole negotiating process in fact had been a compromise. There was a sense among many of the young activist militants that they could have won a war, they could have brought the previous government to its knees and that the negotiation was a capitulation and all of those feelings I think were mixed up in that public meeting and we had to try very hard to explain what we were aiming to do and I don't think the issues were really resolved at the end of that meeting at all; it was I think a healthy warning to us that this reconciliation process was not going to be as easy as some people might have thought it was." (extract from interview with Commissioner Mary Burton)

When the SATRC came back a year later to the Athlone community in order to gather statements relating to the Trojan Horse incident it was not only activists who were hostile to the SATRC, but also the families of the three school children who were shot dead by police in the incident.

A whole range of activities was implemented towards getting statements as well as getting the community involved. Some of these activities were what I will call extra Human Rights methodological activities while others fell within the narrow, defined realm of Human Rights statement-taking activities. One activity which falls under this extra Human Rights category was the Candlelight March.

The Candlelight March

The idea about a candlelight march commemorating the death of the three young students killed by security forces during what is widely known as the Trojan Horse incident was not a novel invention made by the SATRC, but an idea which drew on "local knowledge" from

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alleged perpetrators, often because they had been subpoenaed under section 29 of the Act governing the SATRC.

the community of Athlone. After the incident had happened in 1985 people from the community had placed lit candles in the windows of their houses week after week, as a way of silently showing their remembrance of the gruesome killing of the three students. Many people from the community, including several SATRC staff members coming from the same area, had clear and warm memories about this localised manifestation of resistance towards the Apartheid regime. Ten years later, the ANC local branch had organised a candlelight march before the 1995 local government election as a way of reminding the community about the incident, and the complicity between the old Apartheid regime and the current New National Party, who by 1995 had a substantial support base in the community -- and in fact actually won the local election.

Setting the candlelight march up is a story in itself, which included complex negotiations between: local organisations (the RDP forum, ANC branches, schools from the community, faith communities etc.); the local police who had to approve the march in the middle of managing the probability of an armed confrontation between gangsters and the militant anti-gangster faction Pagad; the victim families; and the SATRC. To cut this long story short, the March was in the end approved by the police and began with a gathering at the Alexander Sinton High school, which was one of the main centres for student resistance during the 1985-6 years of student revolt against the Apartheid regime, before people should march to the Hewitt school a few hundreds meters away, where the Trojan Horse Special Event hearing the next day would begin. In the following I will present an extract from my field notes:

- *"It was a cold evening. Few people had arrived when we (I arrived together with Paul Haupt who worked as a briefer in the SATRC) entered the sports hall of the Alexander Sinton High School in Athlone. The crowd consisted mainly of journalists, TRC staff members, academic researchers, NGO representatives and people from the local community - in total around 150 to 200 people.*
- *Along the right wall as one entered the hall, posters were up consisting of colourful drawings and slogans mixing the rhetoric of the past and the present. Some of the posters were commemorating the three dead school children, others were directed at the then National Party leader of Western Cape and Provincial Premier Hermanus Kriel -- who at the time of the Trojan Horse incident was national Minister of Police -- and former State President FW de Klerk, calling them killers with the blood of innocent school children on their hands.*

- *When one turned the posters over, one saw that they were nearly all painted on the back of old ANC election posters from 1994 In the beginning nobody took any notice -- it seemed natural that it was so. When people turned the posters they laughed as if the posters brought back memories of a time long gone, but not forgotten. As the first posters were turned, more and more people joined in, and at one stage nearly half of the posters were turned, showing the characteristic ANC logo in green, yellow and black calling for people to vote for ANC, as well as the national icon Nelson Mandela smiling to people.*
- *One of the commissioners, the Deputy Chairperson of the SATRC, spoke to one of the staff members of the SATRC Cape Town office, then a kind of unpleasant, hectic atmosphere spread among the other staff members of the SATRC. Something was not quite right, I was told ,and a few seconds later, all the posters were pointing in the right direction - showing the front messages. Then one of the posters was discreetly grabbed by a commission staff member and the ANC poster was stripped off. Then the next poster and so forth, but the glue must have been exceptionally good back in 1994. Some of these posters had not only resisted three years of storage in humid garages, but now they did not want to leave for the sake of political correctness. The result was that half of the posters were left with the election message from 1994 intact. Newcomers would not have known anything about the few minutes laughter and remembrance of a time when the future was vibrantly felt with big hopes. The public face of a community commemoration was re-established.*
- *When I asked a staff member why the ANC election posters were stripped off I was told that Dr. Alex Boraine "had made it clear that he and thereby the commission could not take responsibility for the incident (fearing that the commemoration turned into a ANC political manifestation!) that had happened if this became public", so something had to happen, that was the reason why they had tried to rip off the ANC election posters.*
- *Then we walked the 300 meters from Sinton to Hewitt. Candles were lit, protected from the wind by paper bags. These were handed out to people by TRC staff members before the march -- as were the posters.*
- *When we came to Hewitt, national Minister of Justice Dullar Omar, who lives in the community, was standing next to the veiled plaque that was to be revealed. Photographers and journalists stood in a closed ring around him together with a few people from the community, some of whom were still holding posters from the hall. From further back they were holding ANC election posters up over their heads. The flip-side of the SATRC's neat and public face revealed itself in this strangest of ways.*

- *I remember thinking that Dullar Omar was probably the only person who could see the official, front message of the posters, while for the rest of us was this momentary glimpse under the skirts of the SATRC - for almost instantly SATRC staff pulled out the embarrassing ANC election posters and asked those holding them to put them aside. Thereafter, order was re-established and it was the official commemoration that took the stage again.*

Political messages which mix past and present by creating a chain of equivalence between the killing of the three school children, the perpetrators, De Klerk the former State President and Hermanus Kriel the former Minister of Police and at this time Premier of the Western Cape, are pointing at yet other methodologies and processes of creating imagined communities in the work of the SATRC. Drawing partly on the mainstream Human Rights discourse dominant in the SATRC and partly on localised "interests" like the one we glimpsed in the candlelight event described above, the work of the SATRC cannot be reduced to one single uniform style of working. Out of lack of any better concept I have so far called the different other methodologies extra Human Rights methodologies, pointing at activities the SATRC embarked on outside the dominant positivistic methodology of statement taking, data processing, investigation etc. guided by the task of creating a comprehensive database of Human Rights Violations. In the next section I will briefly describe the contours of some of the activities this implied -- activities which are not mentioned in the Final Report.

The contours of one of the extra Human Rights methodologies

One the problems the SATRC was confronted with, was that many communities were split between people who either benefited from or supported Apartheid, and those who fought Apartheid. In the words of a senior SATRC public communications official:

"[..] one of the central problems that we had with not only..[activities related to setting up the Trojan Horse hearing]..but all the hearings of the TRC was it was difficult to draw in people who had been the advocates of apartheid, who had been on the side of -- or rather not on the side of anti-apartheid movements. You know those who were associated with the old system in some way. It was difficult to get the National Party to participate. It was difficult to get..[the conservative]..element in the community to participate. We always had that problem that people who participated in the liberation movements are generally the people who participated in the activities of the TRC. In retrospect one can say now that it was still a small percentage of the coloured community that participated in the struggle. Maybe those of us who were involved

in the liberation struggle, including myself, we deluded ourselves into believing that everyone in the coloured community was involved. Now in retrospect, it's easy to speak in retrospect, but you can say with quite a lot of clarity and understanding that there was only a small percentage of coloured people who participated. The history of the struggle was quite relatively young in the coloured community." (extract from interview with SATRC staff member)

The problem was how the SATRC could construct a common national history based on the "Truth" about the past -- a "Truth" which ideally should lead to a shared understanding of the "nature, causes and extent of gross violations of Human Rights" in South Africa committed by the past regime and its former opponents (the Act of 1995). This common national history should in a double manoeuvre reconcile individual victims and perpetrators, as well as social, political and ethnic groups, with their common past.

One way of getting around problems like this was to mediate past and present through public media coverage. Radio and television were used extensively, although perhaps something more profound was achieved via direct interaction with local communities, for example at school level. These were interactions which fell partly outside the narrow methodology of accessing information about the past, but were still possible to interpret as part of the mandate of the SATRC, particularly in terms of its broad definition of reconciliation -- which encompassed the writing of a "new" national history by collapsing different world views into a common narrative about the painful past. Here the issue of Human Rights as an apparently neutral entry point was particularly effective, not to say a legitimate way of speaking about the past and celebrating the history of struggle. It was recalled in the following manner by a senior staff member of the SATRC:

"The Trojan Horse hearings took place in 1997. Now you must remember the incident took place in 1985. A high school student in his last year would be about 18 years old and the time the Trojan Horse incident took place they were six or five years old. They must have some distant recollection of what happened, but for the other students at the school they were anything between just having been born to about you know four or five years old, still in pre-school. So they would have had very little recollection of what happened in the area. So it became important for us to target the schools, not to kind-of work up or open old wounds but for the young people to understand what happened, because the central message in the TRC was "people need to know the truth so that we don't repeat what.has happened in our history". We have got a very dark history; history of violence; history of division, and for us to be able to

build a better future the idea is very simple that we have to learn from our mistakes. It was very important just to target those young people and that's why we decided to go around to the schools.

We had commissioners and staff members going to address the assemblies at the schools when the kids get together on a Monday morning. We went to speak for an hour explaining what the TRC is about, and what it is about to do. We did that at a number of schools.

But by and large we managed to get to at least I would say two dozen schools and between 800 and 1000 pupils at each school and we got something like 18 to 20,000 school children in the period, as well as maybe, six, seven hundred teachers."

The point I would like to make here is not that the SATRC did something wrong by targeting schools: on the contrary, I find it valuable and absolutely reasonable seen within the context of public education and communicating as widely as possible the message of the SATRC and the "new" nation-state based on Human Rights.

Instead the point is that the dominant positivistic methodology of data processing was only one among many methodologies in the SATRC. Sometimes the different methodologies shared "truth candidates" - for example the issue of Human Rights - sometimes they did not - as we saw in the extract from my field notes above, when the question of politics and objectivity were exercised. The interesting thing is that traces of these other methodologies which were part of the SATRC process can hardly be found in the five-volume Final Report. It is this apparent paradox I will turn towards now.

Erasure - that just happens

When I asked the people responsible for the section of the Final Report on the Western Cape profile why the march and other initiatives of the SATRCs regional office of Cape Town -- like the school involvement -- were not mentioned in the Final Report, two explanations came up: firstly the editorial process, and secondly the mandate of the SATRC.

The editorial process

The first explanation refers to the intense process of keeping the Final Report within the limits set up by the pre-planned format of the Final Report. In order to make the report coherent and as short as possible, a company was hired to do the editing of the Final Report. The material the editors worked with included extensive manuscripts written up

either by researchers contracted by the SATRC or the staff researchers of the SATRC. This process was extremely painful for the researchers. One researcher recalled the process in the following manner:

> *"I remember the section that I was responsible for..[..]..the section on the Mass Democratic Movement inside the country and the ANC on the inside, you know that comes as one section. I remember that the section on the ANC inside, must have had about 300 pages, and the Mass Democratic Movement must have had something like 80 to 110 pages, something like that, that would amount to something like 400, 500 pages all inside that section. But I remember the first time it came back..[..]..it was something like 160 pages and that was just a beginning and then it at some point came to 90 pages. The thing was not about pages as such, you know the number of pages, it was about the formation you wanted to be in the Final Report so that people can read enough and make up their own minds at the end about what was happening." (extract from interview with a SATRC researcher)*

What researchers tried to do was present information in such a way that it did not only reflect one side of the story. They tried to integrate different sources like victim statements, amnesty applications and hearings, documents etc. into one story-line which was far more open ended. In the editorial process, different kinds of information were parcelled out and directed towards the issue of making findings, which refers to the positivistic legalistic interpretation of the mandate. In this retrospective history, pragmatic concerns of the editorial process like space were the guiding imperatives; and, as indicated above, what I have called the dominant interpretation of the mandate itself became selective. Let me therefore turn to the second explanation, the one referring to the mandate.

The Human Rights violation interpretation of the Mandate

According to this explanation the task of the SATRC was to write up a Human Rights violation record. Therefore the extra Human Rights activities like the March and the school projects belonging to the process of the SATRC simply did not belong to the Final Report. Elements of the work of the SATRC not strictly falling within the interpretation of the narrow Human Rights focus of the SATRC, were in other words excluded right from the beginning of the writing process, without even a real decision on anybody's part, and what's more, one can hardly argue against it. The space limits and the invocation of the

mandate makes the reasoning impossible to challenge without doing great injustice to the writers of the Final Report. The second explanation is closely connected to the first explanation but refers to another level of editing: how the dominant interpretation of the mandate of the SATRC informed a particular way of writing. This way of writing the report elevated some elements of the work of the Commission and reduced other elements, resulting in the creation of far more coherence in the work of the SATRC than was actually the case.

What is perhaps more important in considering the cases presented so far, is the simultaneous coexistence of several methodologies in the process of the SATRC, methodologies which are erased from the public representation in the end. Some of these methodologies are possible to trace in the public performance of the SATRC, as the paper Professor Andre du Toit is presenting at this conference will show, while others disappear as soon as the material that the SATRC objectifies is inscribed in the information chains processing Human Rights violations. Much has been written about the narrow definition of Human Rights, most profoundly by Professor Mahmood Mamdani (1996). However this focus on a particular interpretation of the Mandate can easily both establish a too-coherent picture of the work of the SATRC, as well as divert attention away from the many interfaces between different, but nonetheless simultaneous, discourses within the work of the SATRC.

Concluding remarks

Ritualised public representations emerging from the work of the SATRC - in particular the public hearings process and the Final Report it produced - are powerful performances of the "new" nation-state of "truth-telling" which clearly distinguish it from the former violent and evil Apartheid state of "mendacity". But the scope of this public process of "truth-telling" has also created a blindness - an invisibility - around the work of the SATRC.

I have tried to trace some of the processes creating this invisibility. Firstly, by analysing certain aspects of the authorship of Priscilla Hayner. I suggested that a particular theoretical short circuit causes the everyday practices and actions of commissions to be seen as *reflections* of the normative frameworks provided by the mandates of those commissions. This, in turn, causes a kind of "blind spot" about important aspects of official

commission work – in particular, aspects related to the everyday work of processing and corroborating information about the past are left out, as well as an exploration of the interfaces between norms and everyday practices informed by the ideal about what a commission should do and how a commission should work. It is an interface that seldom, if ever, can be smooth.

It would probably not be far from the point to say that this theoretical "blind spot" is partly caused by the assumption that human actions and agency are governed by rational choices. This is at least what is accentuated by Hayner in her comparative analysis of the rational decision-making and fact-finding methodology of official truth commissions, which is based on transparent and objective criteria for defining who are victims and who are perpetrators. But, as illustrated, the (arte)facts produced were constructed through highly complex processes of negotiations and translations which undoubtedly were informed, if not governed, by the positivistic Human Rights methodology dominating most of the work of the SATRC. Thus norms are important, but as we saw above, there was a metamorphic process involving intense interactions between investigators and victims, a reparation policy, a Human Rights classification schema, alleged victim aspirations and the different ways in which memory is structured. This metamorphosis transformed a victim's narrative into a clear and unambiguous message. The statement was judged to be out of mandate. Whether this decision was right or wrong was of less importance, simply because the final word had not yet been said. The analysis of the case material was instead directed towards how this metamorphosis, through a process of reduction and decontextualisation, makes it possible to create new forms of identification through a process of recontextualisation and elevation of the statement. It also demonstrated how these processes -- the everyday work within official truth commissions -- which technically create the possibility for a "new" form of collective identification, are "not just a neutral means to an end, finding or revealing the truth about the past", but have real bearing on the historical material which is processed.

We also saw, in the process of the analysis, how the whole SATRC process of objective and transparent fact finding was, in a sense, a metamorphic process. It was illustrated not only how the human components of the process participated in this metamorphosis, but also how each and every one of the non-human components: the

protocol formula, the classification schema, the database etc. was characterised by a high degree of ambiguity and instability, which through the process was transformed into a set of uniform entities. And yes, one could actually argue the same about the Final Report without overstating the point!

This brings me to some of the other processes creating invisibility in the public representations emerging from the SATRC. In particular two processes were analysed. They were the editorial process of the Final Report and how the narrow Human Rights violation interpretation of the mandate of the SATRC erased traces of other methodologies present in the work of the SATRC. As illustrated above several methodologies - which I have called "extra Human Rights methodologies" - coexisted simultaneously in the work of the SATRC alongside the dominant positivistic Human Rights fact-finding methodology. These methodologies have bearing on our understanding of the immense influence of the SATRC on the South African society. The erasure of these methodologies was partly traced to pragmatic concerns related to the editorial process, where space became a guiding principle for what should be excluded and included in the Final Report. The other dimension was closely connected to the pragmatic explanation and referred to what I have called the "dominant interpretation of the mandate", which, without even a real decision on anybody's part, itself became selective. Pragmatism and rational fulfilment of prescribed end-goals in this sense not only influenced inclusions and exclusions relating to the Final Report, but probably also kept thousands of victims away from the SATRC process.

These two explanations share what most modern bureaucratic institutions can be said to be inherently characterised by, namely: on the one hand the tendency of bureaucratic institutions to accentuate their rational side - here in the form of transparent and rational criteria for defining who are victims and who are perpetrators made public in the Final report - on the other hand, their tendency to erase irrational actions and decisions from the public eye (Weber, 1968:244). In the context of the SATRC, this took the form of the erasure of what the dominant positivistic methodology did not find proper or acceptable - the "noise" not fitting into the positivistic Human Rights methodology. This is the flip-side of the transparency of bureaucratic institutions like the SATRC: by controlling the circulation of knowledge, "irrational" actions are made invisible through a whole range of

logical and rational – and themselves almost invisible -- strategies. These include strategies like "dis-embedding[24]" the work of the SATRC from other state institutions and the broader society in general, security checks, media departments and other kinds of ritualised "access points" as well as the public emphasis on openness and transparency.

They are strategies one hardly can argue against without either doing great injustice to people taking decisions under difficult conditions, such as time constraints and public pressure, or without being blamed for criticising the work and the decisions on the basis of unjust grounds. If I may use Ian Hacking's (1985) celebrated phrase, it can not be otherwise, simply because the work done and the decisions taken are both logical and rational within the "style of reasoning" dominating the SATRC. Or maybe I should say, the "style and reasoning" that came to dominate the end product of the SATRC, because there was more than one methodology at stake. The work of the SATRC is in this sense both about display and removal -- magnification and effacement in one and the same movement. In other words the SATRC is simultaneously about both remembrance and forgetting.

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[24] The concept "disembedding" comes from Giddens 1992) and describes the processes whereby social relations are "lifted" out of local and bounded wholes and are reconstructed across time and place, creating a new time-space. In this case on the margin of the nation-state. This can be seen as a part of the social

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isolation of the SATRC, where it is lifted out of the nitty gritty of everyday political compromise – i.e. de-politicisation.

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