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South African Social Assistance and the 2012 Privatised National Payment System

An examination of insecurities and technopolitics in social grant administration and payment

Natasha Thandiwe Vally

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, September 2016

In passionate and loving memory of my Papa, Mohamed Vally, 26 September 1932 – 29 April 2015

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

Natasha Thandiwe Vally

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Student signature

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Date

ABSTRACT

In 2012 the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) contracted a private company, Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), to design a standardised national social assistance payment and registration system. The 2012 system was imagined by the government, the media, and by CPS, as a departure from previous social assistance design. There is a poverty of social assistance scholarship in South Africa which is inquisitive about how grants operate and the ways that we can complicate and reframe our understanding of how associated practices are enacted. I argue that understanding the 2012 system requires attention to the confluence of many factors including technologies (and the associated materiality and infrastructures), state practice (through bureaucracies of social grants), the boundaries of the state, policies and law, privatisation, and waiting. The 2012 system in practice renders claimants and grants insecure with regards to movement: grant money is prone to deductions (the movement of money over which a claimant has no control and potentially an end to movement of money altogether), claimants' personal information is vulnerable (the unknown and unpredictable movement of data), and there is pressure on claimants' time (a hemming-in of the free movement of claimants coupled with a lack of choice and possibilities in 'taking up' or 'using' time). The thesis explores the effects of privatisation, and the roots and revelations of technologies and infrastructures, in the administration and payment of social grants.

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Tags: CPS, machine, pay point, retailers, SASSA, Moneyline, Net1, bureaucracy 150

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) contracted a private company, Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), to design a standardised national social assistance payment and registration system. The 2012 system was imagined by the government, the media, and by CPS, as a departure from previous social assistance design. CPS' winning bid occurred in the context of the worldwide growth of globally oriented consulting companies which promised to merge universality with specific local conditions.[1] The system was promoted as the epitome of technological progress and innovation connecting advancements in banking and biometric machinery. CPS was to use biometric identification technology – the measurement of physical and behavioural characteristics in order to confirm the identity of individuals – to register, administer, and pay grant claimants. The CPS national payment system's most obvious difference from previous payment programmes was not the use of biometrics, but the organisation and scale of enrolment. Over a year after the initiation of the large-scale registration drive, 19 million people (40 per cent of the total population) had their fingerprints documented, their voices recorded, their photographs captured, and their signatures digitised.[2]

My research looks at the ways that grants work in the milieu of the private national registration and payment system. It also considers the ways that grant payment and administration fails. Acknowledging deviations from the desired delivery and effects of grants is important, but I argue that analytically it is valuable to see why and how the world inscribed in and by grants *operates*. In essence, I am interested in the practices of grant administration and the ideologies involved at all stages of grant imagination and delivery. Social grants are directly paid to more than 30 per cent of the population, with the cash transfers an important indirect income for a much larger part of the population. In the context of high unemployment, casualization of labour with no benefits or job security, and large-scale non-contributory grant programs, it is assistance rather than workplace social insurance that holds the space of welfare. Grants are the most significant income in many households, and in a majority of these cases they may be the only source of money. The value of grants then is not only monetary or bound up in consumption. They also impact kinship relations, mould relationships to the state, and shift

[1] Gabrielle Hecht, *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, ed. Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2011), 9.
[2] SASSA, "Annual Report 2012/2013" (Pretoria: SASSA, 2013).

interactions with wage labour.[3] For example, if one looks at the everyday practices of grant delivery, state practice does not just mirror relations of society, it also creates its own relations and reinforces others. Infrastructures, defined by Brian Larkin as 'built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space'[4] interact with all of the social, economic, and political resonances of grants. Technological infrastructure of grants does not simply serve as a mode of transferral but is itself a site of politics and negotiation; the forms and terrains of the political that shape the world are multiple. As von Schnitzler has written in her work on prepaid water and electricity meters in South Africa, this can be considered as a 'politics of non-publics taking shape at the register and in the language of technology.'[5]

This thesis traces the grant system in practice, with the 2012 moment as the pivot for a recalibrating grant system in South Africa. The first reason for this temporal focus is partly pragmatic: updated or changed processes, interactions, and standards in social assistance were, for this short period after 2012, less veiled and more easily analysable. The process of re-registration required people to congregate into centralised locations like churches and recreation halls. The groups of people in the expansive network of social assistance – claimants, applicants, government and private officials – would otherwise have been unlikely to congregate in one place. Additionally, the modified forms of bureaucratic recording and payment involved bringing in new machines and training officials in their operation. This training, and the introduction of new hardware, unmasked some of the details of the data capturing and operation of the machines which at another time in the daily functioning of the social assistance system may have remained obscure to me.[6] Through this framing, 2012 became the moment *and* object of exploration. Furthermore, the privatisation of grant payment emphasises a point that is often overlooked in analyses of state social transfer: that there is a third party other than the state and the grant claimant, and that party, in their role as enabler of the transaction, controls the important 'means of value transfer'.[7] Bill Maurer calls this the unexpected world of payments and payment-related fees, and in the 2012 privatisation of grants, important questions

[3] Javier Auyero, "Patients of the State: An Ethnographic Account of Poor People's Waiting," *Latin American Research Review* 46, no. 1 (2011): 24.
[4] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2013): 328.
[5] Antina von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (2013): 673.
[6] Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift, "Out of Order Understanding Repair and Maintenance," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 3 (2007): 8.
[7] Bill Maurer, "Late to the Party: Debt and Data," *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (2012): 477.

arise about who 'owns and owes in exchange for the mountains of information that are transferred'.[8]

South African social assistance grants are paid to just under 11 million people on a monthly basis.[9] The financial support that grants extend, however, indirectly affects many more people.[10] The government-to-citizen non-contributory cash grants have been promoted as an anti-poverty measure – in its twenty-year review, the African National Congress (ANC) government called social grants South Africa's most effective intervention of this kind.[11] This pronouncement from the ANC does not account for the way that the government both acknowledges the grants' importance in garnering electoral support while simultaneously decrying that people should seek work instead of receiving what it calls handouts.[12] Scholars also consider grants one of the most important forms of redistribution in post-apartheid South Africa (partly because no other efforts have been made).[13] In the wake of apartheid it was imagined that a more substantive redistribution of wealth would take place after generations of colonial and apartheid white minority rule and following a strong history of black communities' protests against rents, housing, and inferior and non-existent services. In the 2000 municipal elections, the ANC campaigned on a platform of free basic services for all, but the payment of services remains in place with the burden of cost recovery imposed on poor black communities.[14] South Africa's income inequality increased between 1993 and 2008 and poverty and inequality has remained fractured along 'racial' lines; black people are more likely to live in poverty than white South Africans.[15] Taxation remains the only mechanism of redistribution and is even then governed by a relatively conservative framework – evidenced by a comparison between the absence of a

[8] Ibid., 475.
[9] This is the number of recipients. Because one recipient may receive grants for multiple beneficiaries, the number of beneficiaries is higher. See also http://www.sassa.gov.za/Portals/1/Documents/905e088d-befd-42ae-b17f-84c6ae1c682f.pdf
[10] Erik Bähre, "Liberation and Redistribution: Social Grants, Commercial Insurance, and Religious Riches in South Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 2 (2011): 371–92.
[11] The Republic of South Africa, "Twenty Year Review South Africa, 1994 - 2014," 2014, 44, 45, http://www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za/news/Documents/20 per cent20Year per cent20Review.pdf; Vivienne Taylor, "The Social Security Journey" (Conference Presentation, The Social Security Seminar, hosted by the Black Sash and ActionAid South Africa, The Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg, August 11, 2015).
[12] Franco Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa* (Scottsville: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 98.
[13] Bähre, "Liberation and Redistribution."
[14] Prishani Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm" (Doctor of Philosophy, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010), 16.
[15] Murray V Leibbrandt et al., "Trends in South African Income Distribution and Poverty Since the Fall of Apartheid," Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010), 4,9.

wealth tax on the one hand, and the ANC's insistence on a *duty to pay*[16] for basic services on the other.

The South African government allocates the third largest portion of its budget (after health and education) to social protection (the combined social grants and social welfare services program). Claimants qualify to get a grant through an income- and asset-based means test.[17] The post-apartheid state delivers something tangible and valuable through cash transfers, a visible and tactile form of state-to-citizen support. These grants are labelled non-contributory because they do not require any previous labour-related monetary 'input' in the way that work insurance or retirement schemes would. In 2015 Sassa transferred a total of 16.9 million social grants which included more than half a million and a million foster care and disability grants respectively, 3.1 million old-age pensions, and 11.9 million child support grants.[18]

As with biometrics, the outsourcing of grant administration was not an invention of the 2012 system in South Africa; CPS was one of several companies operational at a provincial level prior to this new phase. CPS is a subsidiary of Net1 Universal Electronic Payment System (UEPS), which is listed on both the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ. The five-year agreement that began in 2012 was worth more than R10 billion to the company.[19] In their 2013 annual report, Net1 reported that 42 per cent of the company's annual revenue comes from the CPS contract for the payment of grants. As the first nationally applicable contract that Sassa signed, it represented what they described as the 'first opportunity to standardise things'.[20] The standardisation and centralisation was a key concern in post-apartheid South Africa and this impetus lead to the formation of Sassa itself. In addition, the idea of producing the new, of accelerating novelty, is important to convincing people of a potentially different and better future.[21] So while many of the systems around privatising grants were already in place, in 2012 the systems became more intimately entwined with innovation and the

[16] Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa," 18.
[17] They should not be accommodated in a state institution, and other particular requirements for each grant (for example age specifications for the OAG). For an OAG a single person should not have an annual income above R49,920 and a married couple's combined income should fall below R99,840. In addition, a single person's assets should be below the ceiling of R831,600 and R1.7 million if married. Caregivers of children under 18 are eligible if they earn an annual income of less than R34,800 and R69,600 if single or a married couple respectively.
[18] South African Social Security Agency, "A Statistical Summary of Social Grants in South Africa: Fact Sheet 6 of 2015," June 30, 2015, http://www.sassa.gov.za/index.php/statistical-reports.
[19] Over 751 million US dollars
[20] Jabulani Sikhakhane, "R10bn Tender to Streamline Social Grant Payments for Recipients," *Sunday Independent*, January 22, 2012.
[21] See for example Samuel Gerald Collins, *All Tomorrow's Cultures: Anthropological Engagements with the Future* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 25.

projection of a utopian technological future. Already-existing static systems were now endowed with the movement possible in future change. Net1 relies on the company being perceived as already existing in the future.

When awarded the contract, Net1 went on to harness UEPS to supply state grant claimants with a MasterCard debit card that would be linked to a Net1 partner, Grindrod Bank. The bank had only a marginal presence in the banking environment in South Africa prior to this; its client base was composed of high net worth individuals and some institutions. For almost a decade after 1994 financial service providers targeted employed middle-class clientele, particularly white middle-class South Africans. Elizabeth Hull and Deborah James explain that financial service providers realised the saturation of this market after 2004 and, in their search for new markets and greater profit, began to target 'riskier' 'gap markets' composed of poor (often previously unbanked) people.[22] However, Grindrod Bank, in its new role as partner in establishing bank accounts for grant claimants, accesses ten million new clients with relatively low risk.[23] The ten million new Grindrod Bank accounts are managed under the terms of the contract between Sassa and CPS. The management of the bank accounts is only one part of the system that was introduced, and like all systems, as Pierre Bourdieu theorised, it provides officials with a set of rules and classifications but also ensures the system's malleability through vagaries and loopholes.[24] The contingencies apparent in systems of government permeate the 2012 system to create porous membranes between categories like legal/illegal, official/unofficial, and state/private that are documented in this thesis.

Details and Digits of South African Cash Transfers

Social security is divided into two foundationally different forms: social assistance is paid in the form of grants by the state; social insurance on the other hand is connected to waged employment, and sometimes subsidised by the employer. Social insurance is largely contributory and relies on occupational schemes like retirement pensions, medical aid, and unemployment benefits. Social assistance is non-contributory, means tested, and administered

[22] Elizabeth Hull and Deborah James, "Introduction: Popular Economies in South Africa," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 82, no. 1 (2012): 4; See also Susan Coutin, *Legalizing Moves: Salvadoran Immigrants' Struggle for U.S. Residency* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

[23] This low risk is the key way in which this institution deviates from the model explained by Hull and James because the payments are made, with regularity, by the state. Hull and James, "Introduction."

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–18; Colin Hoag, "Seeing Like a Magical State: Discretion, (De)Stabilisation, and the Development of Street-Level Systems of Meaning at the South African Immigration Bureaucracy" (Masters, University of the Witwatersrand, 2009), 90.

by the Department of Social Development (DSD) (formerly the Department of Welfare and Population Development). Social assistance in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly from 2004, has been the spark for such fundamental and varied public debates as those around individual responsibility, macroeconomic policies, the role of the state, unemployment, and the centrality of waged employment.[25] These concerns traverse a broad landscape of political and social questions, and are indicative of how investigations of social assistance allow for a mapping of complex social, political and economic dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa. These concerns are even more pertinent since the scale and scope of grants has grown dramatically since the end of apartheid.

Non-contributory grants are independent of labour in that their receipt is not based on any historical payment into a scheme or program. The foundational premise of insurance schemes is tied to a presumption of widespread wage labour so that the insurance serves as a 'cushion' that is established to support 'dependents' or assist the 'breadwinner' in the case of accident.[26] Sassa explains social assistance as an income transfer in the form of grants provided by government and all of this money is received by the claimants in cash.[27] These grants include an old age grant (OAG) for women and men over 60, a war-veterans grant, a disability grant (persons over 18 who are medically certified as disabled), a foster care grant (for parents of fostered children), a care dependency grant (for parents of a disabled child), and a child support grant (CSG) which is paid to the primary caregiver of children under 18. Claimants qualify to get a grant through an income and asset based means test[28] They should not be accommodated in a state institution, and there are also other particular requirements for each grant (for example age specifications for the OAG). OAGs and CSGs constitute the majority of grants paid – 19 per cent and 70 per cent of total grant expenditure respectively – and in terms of numbers more than 11.3 million children receive the CSG.[29]

[25]Franco Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): 561–75.

[26] Grants do, however, presume a certain logic of 'dependents' as they pay out the young and elderly.

[27] South African Social Security Agency, "You and Your Grants 2011/2," *South African Social Security Agency*, accessed July 12, 2012, www.sassa.gov.za.

[28]For an OAG a single person should not have an annual income above R49,920 and a married couple's combined income should fall below R99,840. In addition, a single person's assets should be below the ceiling of R831,600 and R1.7 million if married. Caregivers of children under 18 are eligible if they earn an annual income of less than R34,800 and R69,600 if single or a married couple respectively.

[29] Lerato Moloi, "South Africa Survey Online 2014/2015: Social Security," South Africa Survey (Institute of Race Relations, December 4, 2014), 5.

The CSG applies a 'follow the child' method; it is paid to the child's primary caregiver. This has been an important shift from grants that presume a specific familial make up and pay grants only to parents. Caregivers are understood to be anyone, biologically related to the child or not, who live with and provide care for the child. Despite the 'follow the child' method, there is still the presumption that mothering is a natural responsibility. This is evidenced by the monetary discrepancy in grants provided to mother carers versus the larger payments transferred to foster parents.[30] 'Following the child' became fundamental in the context of growing rates of HIV/Aids infections and the failure of the Mbeki administration to provide anti-retroviral medications. As a result of this, many children were orphaned and were raised by familial networks. These realities of household constitution and domestic labour are some of the considerations that needed to be reflected in the policy of the post-apartheid state.

Internationally, there are often stipulations that attend the distribution of social grants; there may be behavioural conditions – for example mandatory school attendance or proof of vaccination as is the case with the Brazilian *Bolsa Familia*. In South Africa, however, grants are minimally conditional; the only official behavioural 'condition' of school attendance, introduced in January 2010, is not monitored or acknowledged by grant administrators. The reality is that the administrative burden of monitoring school attendance seems superfluous in the context of widespread primary school attendance. Furthermore, numerous studies already confirm that the CSG increases school attendance.[31] Conditionality places responsibility onto grant claimants to access schools or clinics but does not take into account the availability of such services, and does not hold the state similarly responsible for providing access to quality services. Non-behavioural conditions include age-specific parameters which change often: from its inception the CSG age ceiling has increased dramatically from seven to 18 and there are policy discussions underway to raise this to 21. OAGs were initially paid to men over 65 and women older than 60, but have been expanded to include both men and women over 60. South African grants do require the passing of a means test that is based on an assessment of income, assets, and whether or not the applicant is married (and the income of both the applicant and her/his spouse). The means test for the OAG has largely been overlooked: in the

[30] Shireen Hassim, "Social Justice, Care and Developmental Welfare in South Africa: A Capabilities Perspective," *Social Dynamics* 34, no. 2 (2008): 114.

[31] Frances Lund, "A Step in the Wrong Direction: Linking the South Africa Child Support Grant to School Attendance," *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice* 19, no. 1 (2011): 2; Frances Lund, "Children, Citizenship and Child Support: The Child Support Grant in South Africa," in *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*, ed. Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 475–94.

Bushbuckridge Municipality, Sassa officials told me, 'We know they are businessmen, but they are old'. In general, means tests for the OAG, provided to people over sixty, are generally only loosely implemented and the government has indicated that they will be phased out by 2016.[32] The reasoning for the retraction is that it 'will simplify [OAG] administration and address the disincentive to save that arises from the present means tests'.[33] At registration centres in early 2012, very few people reregistering for an OAG were required to complete a declaration of income whereas all claimants registering for a CSG were. The World Bank and similar global entities have encouraged the implementation of condition-bound receipt of cash transfers.[34] Despite this, grant conditionalities in South Africa remain constrained because of pressure from anti-apartheid organising (especially in the 1980s) and some progressive policy makers after 1994.

Policy shifts from welfare toward cash transfers is not peculiar to South Africa.[35] There are national cash transfer programs in Botswana and Namibia and smaller programs in Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique. Countries that intend to scale up their current cash transfer programs to national level include Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In total, the World Bank identified 123 cash transfer programs in Africa.[36] Cash transfers also have a presence on other continents with a strong grounding in Latin America. The first of these programs was *Opportunidades* in Mexico and thereafter the establishment of the paradigmatic *Bolsa Familia* program in Brazil. Notably, the rise in cash transfers has been particular to the global South[37].

[32] National Treasury, "Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan Presents the 2013 Budget Speech," *South African Government Information*, February 27, 2013, http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=34533&tid=99785.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Lund, "A Step in the Wrong Direction: Linking the South Africa Child Support Grant to School Attendance," 2.
[35] Cases have been most fully presented in the 2010 book "Just Give Money to the Poor" where the authors survey current programs, provide a historical overview of some case studies, and argue for the efficacy of this form of welfare in combating poverty. Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos, and David Hulme, *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Kumarian Press, 2010).
[36] World Bank, "Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty" (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2009).
[37] I capitalise 'South' throughout this thesis to show that I am alert to the problems of homogenisation that arise from this general term. I am also aware that this framing can presume that the 'North' and 'South' are distinct geographical and ideological entities. Despite acknowledging the problematics in using the terminology, it is valuable in this thesis to gesture toward a 'particular historical conjecture of place, power, and knowledge.' Akhil Gupta, *Blurred Boundaries* (1995), 395.

Social Assistance Scholarship in South Africa

Poor, precarious and landless people occupy what has been considered the margins of the political,[38] especially in post-colonial contexts. Partha Chatterjee argues that marginality constricts engagement with the state to the level of administration and service delivery.[39] It is the contestability of administration and bureaucracy, where 'rules may be bent and stretched'[40], that also makes them fertile ground for political action. This is also important when we are cognisant of how the state should be thought of other than as a fixed object of political practice and analysis.[41] As Veena Das and Deborah Poole have concluded, if the state is viewed as a set of practices, then these operate at the centre *as well as* the margins of state performance.[42] Chatterjee, Das and Poole are not unique in making these arguments. Work on welfare[43] and welfare offices[44] as well as research on South Africa[45] confirm that 'neoliberalism' and 'globalisation' do not appear to anyone, particularly the poor, as uniform blocks of policy and outcomes. Instead, neoliberalism is experienced through shabby waiting rooms, prepaid water and electricity meters, delays, and opaque channels of recourse.

The literature on social assistance in South Africa either focuses on making theoretical arguments about the nature of welfare,[46] or tends toward a macro-economic analysis.[47] This

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[38] Where the 'real' Political (capitalisation intended) occurs in the public sphere

[39] Partha Chatterjee, "Two Poets and Death: On Civil and Political Society in the Non-Christian World," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell, vol. 11, Contradictions of Modernity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Columbia University Press, 2004).

[40] Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*, 60.

[41] Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 59.

[42] Veena Das and Deborah Poole, eds., *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004).

[43] For seminal examples see Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, eds., *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage, 1971); Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[44] Specific research on the space of welfare offices are sparse, but some of these accounts arise from the work of Auyero, "Patients of the State"; Javier Auyero, *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

[45] The guiding work of Hoag looks to the institutional space of a South African office of Home Affairs Hoag, "Seeing Like a Magical State: Discretion, (De)Stabilisation, and the Development of Street-Level Systems of Meaning at the South African Immigration Bureaucracy"; This thesis also shows the construction of "the poor" through the logic of neoliberalism and its reifying and challenged practices Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm"; Throughout, I look to von Schnitzler and her research on the technopolitics of prepaid water meters in post-apartheid South Africa von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies."

[46] For example James Ferguson, "Formalities of Poverty: Thinking about Social Assistance in Neoliberal South Africa," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2007): 71–86; James Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015).

[47] For example Jeremy Seekings, "The Broader Importance of Welfare Reform in South Africa," *Social Dynamics* 28, no. 2 (2002): 1–38; Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, *Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa* (Yale

literature generally fails to capture the empirical experience or to animate the lived reality of those on the sharp end of receiving (or not receiving) grants. The reality is that in a model that presumed the state to have common-sense functions, such as 'the determining and implementing of goals, the enforcement of law, the legitimation of order, the expropriation and allocation of resources, and the integration of conflict'[48], there is little exploration of the felt and experienced outcomes of these multiple assemblages. Much of the statistical data around the effects of cash transfers speak to 'developmental' metrics like mortality and infant health, but do not probe frustrations about waiting, access to recourse, and fears of deductions from monthly payments.[49] Another growing body of literature has engaged in sociological analyses of social assistance with an interest in viewing the grant as an income and in detailing household expenditure with a focus on gender relations.[50] Daily, patterned engagements of the dominated with state institutions and associated private entities can provide insight into the quotidian practices that texture relations of subjection.[51] The research that informs this thesis pauses at moments of bureaucracy in the life of the grant and uses ethnography to consider technological privatised social grant operation. This thesis draws on ethnographic research in the Bushbuckridge Municipality[52] between 2012 and 2014, along with media reports and extensive engagements with the human rights organisation The Black Sash. The method foregrounds daily conversations, informal interactions, and observations over extended periods. An ethnographic approach that takes seriously the history of grants and ways people interact with grant infrastructure provides insights into the interconnections and contradictions between various scales of grant making.

University Press, 2005); Makhulu Anne-Maria, "A Brief History of the Social Wage: Welfare before and after Racial Fordism," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, no. 1 (January 2016): 113–24.

[48] Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," 64–65.

[49] Anne Case, Victoria Hosegood, and Frances Lund, "The Reach and Impact of Child Support Grants: Evidence from KwaZulu-Natal," *Development Southern Africa* 22, no. 4 (2005); Anne Case and Alicia Menendez, "Does Money Empower the Elderly? Evidence from The Agincourt Demographic Surveillance Site, South Africa," *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 35, no. 69 (2007): 157–64; Rhian Twine et al., "Evaluating Access to a Child-Oriented Poverty Alleviation Intervention in Rural South Africa," *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 35, no. 69 (2007): 118–27; Progressus Research Development Consultancy and Ros Gordon, "The Payment Experiences of Social Grant Beneficiaries" (FinMark Trust, April 2012).

[50] Grace Khunou, "Fathers Don't Stand a Chance: Experiences of Custody, Access, and Maintenance," *Baba. Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, 2006, 265–77; Tessa Hochfeld, "Cash Transfers and Social Transformation: How Do Women Receiving the Child Support Grant in Sophiatown, Johannesburg Experience Intra-Household Gender Relations?" (Proposal, University of the Witwatersrand, 2010); Sarah Mosoetsa, "Eating from One Pot," *Wits University Press*, 2011, http://witspress.co.za/catalogue/eating-from-one-pot/.

[51] Auyero, "Patients of the State," 24.

[52] The Bushbuckridge Municipality is made up of several small towns: Acornhoek, Thulamahashe, Bushbuckridge, Marite, Dwarsloop, and Mkhuhlu. Only 9% of the population live in these centres, the remainder reside in small rural villages. See E. Mavungu, 'Frontiers of Prosperity and Power: Explaining Provincial Boundary Disputes In Post-Apartheid South Africa' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 2011), p. 41.

A noticeable effect of the 2012 implementation on claimants was the real fear of grant cancellation. The preoccupation with cancelling fraudulent grants predated the single contractor. Fraud was described in 1996, by the then Department of Welfare, as when 'money is paid to people who should not be in the system in the first place'.[53] The anxieties were notable in the content, as well as the establishment, of five national commissions of enquiry around welfare from the beginning of 1992 (as well as four committees between 1996 and 2000). Streamlining social assistance became variably connected to eliminating unauthorised grant claims. The committees generally advanced the view that the burdens of fragmentation combined with the disjointedness of apartheid's organising forms were the primary obstacles preventing efficiency and the curbing of profligacy.[54] While committees emphasised the need to 'correctly' identify claimants, government began to freeze out recipients it thought were defrauding the system, with a spike after 2012. The logic was that targeting and shutting out unauthorised individuals would facilitate a sleek grant delivery infrastructure.

Literature on social assistance has also paid little attention to the expanding field of the anthropology of infrastructure which posits that machines do not only move across locations or serve as a bridge to send information between different points; the technologies themselves create politics, subjectivities, and sentience.[55] Machines have long played a role in social grant delivery and administration but became protagonists in 2012. My account considers machines in social assistance in Bushbuckridge as they operated at multiple sites along the path of grant administration and payment. Machines involved in the enrolment and payment of state social assistance were (literal and figurative) vehicles from which to view the landscape of social grants in post-apartheid South Africa. Infrastructures of social assistance are critical in the making of 'political actors and of political engagement'.[56]

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[53]Department of Welfare, 'Report of the Committee for the Restructuring of Social Security (Chikane Committee)' (Pretoria: Department of Welfare and Population Development, 1996).

[54]Donovan, 'The Biometric Imaginary: Bureaucratic Technopolitics in Post-Apartheid Welfare.'

[55] See for example Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Duke University Press, 2008); Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure"; Antina von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 4 (December 2008): 899–917; von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies."

[56] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 672; See also Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2009).

The quotidian nature of the social grant machinery can be nourished by understanding the large promises – in particular, how the imagination of a technology and the mundane operations coalesce to tie the ideological and pragmatic visions of state social grant system together. A persistent theme in the imagination of grants, and their technologies in particular, is the promise of novelty and innovation. Some of the most prolific and obvious cases that showcase slippages between reality and expectations after 2012 include: the way the state and private companies view claimants; instabilities in the technologies themselves; how money becomes precarious; the fragility of wage labour; and the ultimate precarity of the lives of grant claimants. Foregrounding these instances challenges the perspective that privatisation and new technologies necessarily improve systems and experiences.

Neoliberalism and Social Grants

One of the emphases of this thesis is to situate grants in the post-apartheid moment and in the context of a neoliberal state. In order to look more closely at the ways that grants may be considered as a 'politics of distribution' in the 2012 moment, it is valuable to consider first the context of changing social assistance after 1994. It is also necessary to think of neoliberalism as it spills outside of the parameters of macro-economic policy. In this thesis I argue that grants *qua* grants do not fall outside of a neoliberal ideology and that proponents of universal basic income provisions, may unwittingly embrace a logic of neoliberalism. Furthermore, I argue that the 2012 moment extends neoliberalism in its macroeconomic form as well as in the ways that it permeates beyond fiscal constraints. For all of the above, it is necessary to pause and provide a working definition of neoliberalism as it was embraced in the post-apartheid South African context. The bright colours that make up the South African flag emblazoned on the Sassa cards that would be carried by all grant claimants in 2012 echoed the colourful cover of the African National Congress' (ANC) Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) base document. This document, which was drafted by COSATU and other popular organisations, outlined the party's socio-economic policy before the national election in 1994. The socio-economic policy framework outlined in the RDP was reconfigured and much of the framework was disregarded as early as September 1994. The RDP White Paper made policy recommendations that substituted the Keynesian thrust and focus on redistribution in the original document with an economic framework that embraced the 'trickle down' effect and neoliberal economics. In total, the September White Paper sought: fiscal conservatism, maintain or reduce direct taxes, promote private sector growth, encourage business confidence,

and reduce government expenditure.[57] Two years later, in June 1996, under Finance Minister Trevor Manual, technical experts were tasked with drafting a model of the economy resulting in the GEAR package. GEAR followed prescripts of neoliberal macroeconomic policy: fiscal austerity, wage restraints, reduction in corporate taxes, trade liberalisation, and the phasing out of exchange controls.

The transitional period between the apartheid government and that of the ANC saw a flurry of policy-oriented activity that voiced two particularly significant and overlapping immediate concerns: racial inequalities in society, and how economic and social inequalities were to be addressed. Those advocating a neoliberal economic program were assisted by an internationally hegemonic market-centred logic and 'a lame succumbing to the policy dictates and ideological pressures of the international financial institutions'.[58] In addition, the IMF and the World Bank had grown in status and influence in the global economy. Along with this, markets and market institutions had already been established (albeit in a racially distorted manner) in South Africa and they were globally linked. Before the transition, powerful conglomerates in fields as diverse and central as finance, mining, energy and industry campaigned actively to ensure the incumbent government would embrace a neoliberal macroeconomic policy. The economic trajectory of South Africa after 1994 incorporated the liberalisation of trade and finance relations, privatization, deregulation, a fast-track deficit reduction program and generally minimalist state intervention concurrent with the growth of social assistance.[59]

The ANC's welcome of neoliberal economic policy has achieved much scholarly attention. Gillian Hart writes that there is insufficient complexity to the argument that the ANC had no choice as they faced the pressure of globally integrated capitalisms in the forms of international financial agencies, foreign investors, and local business interests.[60] Rather, Hart says that the

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[57] Gillian Patricia Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18.
[58] Quoted in John Saul, *The Next Liberation Struggle* (Monthly Review Press, 2005), 207.
[59] Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Pluto Press London, 2000); Andries du Toit, "Poverty Measurement Blues: Some Reflections on the Space for Understanding 'chronic' and 'structural' Poverty in South Africa," *Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies, School of Government, University of the Western Cape*, PLAAS Chronic Poverty and Development Policy Series No. 6, CPRC Working Paper 55 (2005); Saul, *The Next Liberation Struggle*; Vishnu Padayachee, *The Development Decade?: Economic and Social Change in South Africa, 1994-2004* (HSRC Press, 2006); Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm"; Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (Zed Books, 2011).
[60] Ibid., 21.

TINA argument - there is no alternative – presumes a fixed unidirectional top-down narrative. Instead, she argues for an analysis of the ANC's move towards neoliberalism that,

> views the process that culminated in GEAR as driven neither by the inexorable forces of globalization, nor by a simple sell-out, but by complex power struggles within and beyond the ANC and its alliance partners. In the course of these struggles, both critiques of neoliberalism and other possibilities were sidelined.[61]

The failure to acknowledge alternatives and to make neoliberalism appear inevitable, even natural, is an important consideration for this thesis. Gillian Hart provides one explanation for the triumph of GEAR and its persistence despite failure to materialise any of the 'trickle down' promises. Hart explains that the rapid entrenchment of neoliberalism in post-apartheid South Africa owed in part to the establishment of a series of dichotomies that presumed an irrefutable logic,

Apartheid	Post-apartheid
State	Market
Repression	Freedom
Racial Fordism	Non-racial post-Fordism
Rigidity	Flexibility[62]

This mapping also alludes to the links between factors that may be seen as strictly economic and those that do not immediately read as having economic connotations. I argue that Hart's set of five dichotomies above can be illustrative of connections that resulted in the speed and uptake of neoliberalism over and above the five binaries. This argument relies on the understanding that all of those factors in the first column are understood as a whole such that those conditions in the second column appear as a block: where each factor is seen as a necessary condition for all the others in that column. It is this logic that not only presents binaries such as the 'State' versus the 'Market' but that also equates the 'Market' with 'Freedom' and the 'State' with 'Repression'. David Harvey writes that neoliberalism subsumes, even requires, concepts such as 'freedom' and 'well being',

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 25.

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practice that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.[63]

Well-being and freedom are advanced as possible only through the general theory and practice of neoliberalism. The definition and practice of freedom in neoliberalism is robbed of possibility and imagination and instead is equated with free enterprise and situated at the site of the individual through a 'market-based populist culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism.'[64] The way that freedom and neoliberalism map onto one another are important in this thesis because it provides a framework from which to critique the argument that a grant can be a tool of freedom in isolation from the socio-economic context. Neoliberalism instrumentalises the concept of freedom as it does a multitude of institutions, politics, and affectations. In fact, it is this quality of neoliberalism to use and subsume the world around it that makes it a particular type of capitalist accumulation.

The numerous techniques that neoliberal accumulation mobilises to infiltrate and swallow legal, economic, and political realms operate using what David Harvey has called 'accumulation by dispossession.'[65] Overaccumulation occurs when there is a surplus of capital[66] but there is no outlet for this capital to generate profit. Accumulation by dispossession releases assets so that overaccumulated capital can in turn make those released assets profitable. In the case of Marx's 'primitive accumulation', land, for example, could be seized (that is 'dispossessed') so that it could be released onto the market and be available for capitalist accumulation. Newer types of accumulation by dispossession encompass the case that is presented in this thesis, where publicly owned assets or processes are privatised and so open for profiteering on the market. Harvey situates the neoliberal moment of accumulation as one which can be loosely traced to the boom in financialisation after 1973 when the problem of overaccumulation was targeted using privatisation.[67]

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[63] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.
[64] Ibid., 42.
[65] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[66] This can take on various forms including a surplus of labour.
[67] Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 149.

The post-apartheid focus on 'responsibilisation' saw the ANC emphasise individualism and promote a paying 'moral' citizen – ideologies specifically targeted at the poor.[68] In *The Making of the Poor in Post-Apartheid South Africa,*[69] Prishani Naidoo details how the poor are divided into 'deserving' and 'undeserving' with an emphasis placed on individual responsibility.[70] Naidoo's thesis also highlights that the category of 'the poor' is not a self-evident population stratum but is perpetually shaped through a complex interplay of factors that include policies, repression, and resistance.[71] As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write, the bonds of the label 'the poor' are sometimes challenged by those who supposedly fit into the category which again indicates that the delineation of the poor is heavily constructed, it is 'at the same time a product and productive, constituted in and constitutive of the vast networks of social labour.'[72]

The productive work of making 'the poor' simultaneously produces an undifferentiated mass but also creates a market for an individualised subject that can be sold individual products (as with the example of prepaid water and electricity meters noted above). Naidoo argues that denying people decommodified services and instead forcing individual payment with the veneer of 'pro-poor' policy entrenches inequality. Indigent management, following this, can be seen to be about moulding good citizens under neoliberalism – tied to the logic of conservation, self-restraint and frugality.[73] According to the logic of responsibilisation, people and institutions should carry responsibility and risk – and so irresponsibility and failure – as individual subjects. These individual subjects would then take on what neoliberal reforms have called 'cost recovery'[74]. Inequality and poverty is transferred from the public sphere to the individual psyche. This transference is felt most acutely by poor individuals; a stark example of this is the roll-out of prepaid water and electricity meters which situate the responsibility and risks of non/payment at the site of households in poorer black neighbourhoods.[75]

[68] von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid."
[69] Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm."
[70] Ibid.
[71] See also du Toit, "Poverty Measurement Blues: Some Reflections on the Space for Understanding 'chronic' and 'structural' Poverty in South Africa."
[72] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 12.
[73] Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm," 186.
[74] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 671.
[75] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies."

Give a Man a Fish, Distribution and Neoliberal Ideology

In a recent extensive account of the growing number of social welfare programs in the global South, James Ferguson considers unconditional cash transfers which the book captures in its title, *Give a Man a Fish*.[76] This section outlines the arguments that Ferguson makes in his text and addresses these claims. Ferguson views social assistance, in the form of cash transfers, as a way that distribution appears in contemporary societies. In the context of global market-based economic systems, he argues, it is surprising that many places in the global South have expanding welfare programs in the form of cash transfers. This revelation is what Ferguson takes as his point of departure – that it is easy to miss the development of support from national states if one takes as fixed the narrative that neoliberalism means less state intervention in the form of welfare. This constellation of unconditional cash transfers, says Ferguson, positions the state as both 'universally engaged' in that it provides money to citizens (and in the case of the Basic Income Grant to every citizen) and 'maximally disengaged' in that it does not prescribe how the money should be spent.[77]

Give a Man a Fish explores the possibilities of a 'politics of distribution' in the absence or lack of wage labour, Ferguson defines these politics as,

> ...the general processes of distribution as they unfold in contemporary societies, and about the sorts of binding claims and counterclaims that can be made about these processes. It is this that I refer to as the politics of distribution, and this volume has the ambition of linking the recent rise of new sorts of welfare states in the global South to the possibilities and dangers of emergent forms of distributive politics...[78]

Ferguson's argument about the politics of distribution is that cash transfers may be an exemplar of a way of distributing the wealth – perhaps of a nation – to those who have not received an equal share: where a share is not only a part making up a whole but also as embodying a common, a *rightful* share.[79] In his imagination of a kind of assistance where there would be a basic cash transfer for all citizens so that 'a social payment might be understood not as aid, assistance, gift, or charity but instead as a kind of share.'[80] Social grants as sharing in the wealth

[76] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution.*
[77] Ibid., 157.
[78] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 20.
[79] Ibid., 26.
[80] Ibid, 174.

is a very narrow view of the potential for distribution and sharing and flattens feelings, motivations, care, affect and the potential for radical change, an argument which I will expand on in the next section.

In what he imagines as a new social contract that is being forged in southern Africa in particular, Ferguson is concerned with what he sees as the disjuncture between 'influential scholarly stories about neoliberalism' and concrete developments in social policy.[81] Why, he asks, does there appear to be expansion of social assistance in southern Africa, a region where neoliberalism has supposedly taken a strong hold. Ferguson argues against thinking of social assistance through cash transfers as another tool of neoliberal ideology. Ferguson considers the emergence and growth of cash transfers in South Africa as emblematic of a state form that is creating a new kind of social distributive arrangement. He says that the possibilities represented by this new social arrangement and its potential for a radical distributive politics are ignored in the standard narrative of the move towards privatisation and deregulation in post-apartheid South Africa. He has two main critiques of the conceptual framing of South African society as 'neoliberal'. First that it is based on a politics of 'anti-neoliberalism', a negatively defined political aim. This politics doesn't propose alternatives alongside the many critiques it enables. Secondly, the large percentage of the GDP that goes towards cash transfers, as well as the large proportion of the population (one third) that receives these grants, contradict a neoliberal narrative of exclusion. This seems to him the antithesis of a standard model of neoliberalism.

Ferguson only discusses the use of technologies and infrastructures of assistance payment and administration in passing. In his earlier work in Lesotho in the 1990s he observed that people considered cards (or money in forms other than cash) as 'safer' for two reasons.[82] The first reason was that theft was less likely and the second was that money in forms other than cash serve as a buttress against unwanted familial and kinship claims on that money. In *Give a Man a Fish*, Ferguson makes only several passing comments about technological infrastructures. Where his book does speak about technology, Ferguson claims that technologies may increase efficiency[83] and he explicitly posits that technologies decrease the need for cumbersome reams

[81] Ibid., 2.
[82] In a reference to ethnographic work in Lesotho from Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 95.
[83] Ibid., 158.

of paperwork and bureaucracy.[84] Since Ferguson does not engage with the concerns about data sharing, especially with the introduction of biometric technologies, he hopefully suggests that:

> Instead of all the paperwork, files, and social workers that conditional schemes require to sort out who qualifies and who does not (what's your name, where were you born, how many children do you have, are they really yours, what is your income level, etc.), the BIG and its biometric recognition scheme would have to answer only one question: have you already been paid yet this month or not?...Thus is a radically stripped down form of recognition envisioned, one that requires far less from the state (in informational and registration terms) than the social of old.[85]

The evidence that Ferguson provides for the claims in this quote rely on examples of biometric payments from two countries. In the case of Namibia, the argument advanced is that social grants are paid effectively through smartcards and fingerprint readers since people in remote parts of the country are able to access their cash transfers.[86] While access to grants is a vital part of efficiency, as Ferguson claims, access is not the only factor that constitutes efficiency. Some of the other considerations appear throughout this thesis, they include the periods that people are expected to wait, whether the machines actually operate when they reach the remote paypoints, and whether money is prone to deductions once the amount is paid to a claimant. Ferguson does invoke Keith Breckenridge's[87] findings from Ghanaian biometric systems to note the dangers of such schemes to primarily benefit banks and wealthy depositors, yet, *Give a Man a Fish* still asserts that these concerns are marginal compared to the benefits of biometric systems. The second site that Ferguson provides as substantiation for the efficiency of biometric technologies for cash payment is India. Again, Ferguson claims efficiency on the basis of distribution and adds that the technological systems can prevent the 'leakage' of public finance.[88] I discuss Wendy Brown's work on economisation below, but this relationship between efficiency and fiscal streamlining that Ferguson invokes, speaks to her observation that, under neoliberalism, 'All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly

[84] Ibid., 84.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., 84-85.
[87] Keith Breckenridge, "The World's First Biometric Money: Ghana's E-Zwich and the Contemporary Influence of South African Biometrics," *Africa* 80, no. 4 (2010): 642–62.
[88] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 85.

monetised.'[89] With Ferguson, the effects of large-scale projects of biometric registration on people in India as well as people's experience of the systems are left unaddressed. In both the examples of India and Namibia, the book provides no evidence that the presence of (or need for) paper, files, or social workers has disappeared or even diminished since the introduction of biometric smartcards for social grant payment in Namibia.

My research, at many points, engages with Ferguson's text as it is the most recent and thorough account of social assistance in the global South with a particular focus on southern Africa. I consider Ferguson's specific claims about social assistance, distribution, neoliberalism, and the technologies of grant administration. As I address each of these themes, my aim is to show that a 'bird's eye view' perspective of social assistance results in the glaring absence of claimants' experiences and attention to technologies of administration and payment. Acknowledging this absence is necessary but not sufficient; I also aim to show how Ferguson's overview simplifies (and sometimes misreads) cash transfers' redistributive potential. Because scholarship on social assistance shows a poverty of attention to practice and technology, my claim in this thesis is that prioritising operation and practice alongside the ideology of social assistance is a key way in which we can better grasp the potential and limitations of cash transfers.

Ferguson emphasises that cash transfers fall outside the obvious moves towards liberalisation. In their uniqueness, he also sees the potential for cash transfers as a way of distributing a 'rightful share'. This overarching claim can be challenged from various perspectives. Following from the overview of post-apartheid responsibilisation given above, it is prescient to turn to Ferguson's use of the language of a 'share', a linguistic representation of the general logic of economization, defined by actuarial reasoning, that underpins his argument. This 'neoliberal reason' that Ferguson relies on involves, as Wendy Brown explains in *Undoing the Demos*, transferring the '*political* character, meaning, and operation' of statecraft and life into *economic* ones.[90]

A glaring example of Brown's observation of the rise in the 'economisation' of political life appears in the way that Ferguson collapses collective and political self-rule, into receiving grants

[89] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 10.
[90] This conversion of political elements of democracy to economic elements is not unique to statecraft. The conversion is present in all spheres: in the workplace, jurisprudence, education, and further. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 17.

as 'rightful shares that are due to owners'.[91] This monetary 'share' that Ferguson proposes distils sharing in democratic decision making into a monetary provision. Rather, Ferguson's point is that there should be no choice, no collective decision making:

> Here, then, is a different figure of "the social" – not the abstract membership, citizenship, and social contract of the nation state but a concrete and embodied presence and the obligation it implies. This is an obligation that is neither a matter of charitable giving nor even of exchanging but rather of *sharing* – sharing within a community of responsibility that is *not* formed by free association, that is in fact involuntary, and within which co-presence, with all of its entailments, is not a political choice but simply the most elementary sort of social fact.[92]

Neoliberalism is a governing rationality that seeps into all of human life. Its genesis points to a historically particular reaction to Keynesianism and socialism, and the economic and political thrust of neoliberalism subsumes spheres into the realm of 'economisation'.[93] What is generalizable about neoliberalism, argues Wendy Brown, is that it has the ability to shapeshift and ensconce other discourses, this I argue is why even though he is positing it as a 'politics of distribution', Ferguson's understanding of what it means to share is economisation, it is neoliberalism in practice. His conflation of citizens with shareholders easily slips into a framing of the polity or the state as a company and citizens as share-holders in this enterprise of the nation. In total, Ferguson equates share/sharing (a verb) with share (a noun), he calls it a 'model of sharing based on ownership (ownership precisely of a share): ultimately he sees the action as one of owning not one of sharing."[94] By mobilising the Namibia's provision of a basic income grant as a case study, Ferguson emphasises that, as in this example of the politics of distribution, the state does not have a choice as to whether it should pay this grant but it is a basic right. I argue though, that conceiving citizens as shareholders exposes both a lack of political imagination for the possibilities of a redistributive politics, but also reads as an example of neoliberal thinking. I call this neoliberal thinking because collective and active choice disappears in favour of a mandated monetary provision. To underscore this, those very central characteristics of democracy, 'the practices and principles of speech, deliberation, law, popular

[91] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 26.
[92] Ibid, 215.
[93] Ibid., 21.
[94] Ibid, 181.

sovereignty, participation, education, public goods, and shared power entailed in rule by the people'[95] are rendered as background to an obligatory monthly state payment.

Relative and Absolute Poverty

By considering two understandings of poverty, it is possible to clarify that the co-presence of neoliberalism and a basic income grant is possible; moreover, a generalised state payment in the form of a basic income transfer is commensurate with, and part of, neoliberal ideology. The set of actions connected to absolute poverty surround a payment from the state to people based on an arbitrarily defined minimum level of 'poverty'. This 'poverty floor' does not aim to address inequalities in wealth, in fact, the wealthy are not directly affected. On the contrary, a conception of relative poverty aims to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. The set of actions related to relative poverty are composed of social security measures. Sociologist Daniel Zamora argues that in the past forty years, politics has shifted from relative poverty to absolute poverty (he borrows this terminology from Lionel Stoléru's 1974 book *Conquering Poverty in the Rich Countries*: 'we've gone from a politics aimed at combatting inequality, grounded in social security, to a politics aiming to combat poverty, increasingly organized around specific budget allocations and targeted populations.'[96] The latter uses a basic income grant and aims to ensure that no individual's income falls below a fixed minimum income floor: this amount is an arbitrarily determined level of 'poverty'. In total, these actions and understandings of absolute poverty are not in place to target societal inequities and disparities, and, as Zamora notes, are definitional policies of liberalism.[97]

Relative poverty on the other hand, where social security is central has the opposite emphasis: not in place as part of neoliberalism but, Zamora says, as an attempt to distance individuals from the market. Zamora argues that the move from relative poverty to absolute poverty, that is, the move from social security to a basic income grant, is not simply a pragmatic question but a fundamentally political move towards accepting capitalism as the dominant economic form. The argument that James Ferguson makes for the basic income grant as a tool of redistribution can, therefore, be understood as a way of targeting poverty, not inequality, and in turn as a way of maintaining a status quo, following Zamora, 'the fight against poverty, far from limiting the

[95]Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, 10.
[96] Daniel Zamora, Can We Criticize Foucault? | Jacobin Magazine, interview by Ballast, December 2014, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/12/foucault-interview/.
[97] Ibid.

effects of neoliberal policies, has in reality mitigated for its political hegemony.'[98] This is why, even though it appears as a contradiction, it is common for philanthropists to support the fight against poverty and contribute financially to programs with these aims, while simultaneously embracing privatisation of public services.

Richard Dienst in *The Bonds of Debt: Borrowing Against the Common Good* reasserts this process of market ideology and logic presenting what are proposed as freedoms but where, in actuality, there is an absence of real choice and genuine sharedness:

> Market ideology, working its way deeper into the textures of social life, becomes something more absolute: a legitimation of every present indignity for the sake of unnamed opportunities to come. Market logic, elevated to the status of a natural law, demands that everybody should live within the circle of free choices and calculable consequences, even while inventing a full range of techniques to deprive nearly everyone of effective freedoms, channelling rewards immediately upward while dumping bad consequences onto those least able to bear them, somewhere else and sometime later. Through the vigilant management of expectations and the peremptory refusal of alternatives, our common life is split up into countless schemes for survival.[99]

Dienst, draws our attention to those methods presented as 'effective freedoms' – such as a basic income grant as the totality of sharedness in society – where democratic involvement is limited and always delayed, where radical change in the political and economic landscape are side-lined for the potential of a better future. I argue that Ferguson's claim that token income injections could be a project of redistribution lacks imagination and is part of the monopoly that money has 'on what deserves to exist.'[100] Dienst also acknowledges how those 'effective freedoms', while basking in their supposed generalised benefits, automatically channel benefits away from most. It is striking that banks, financial institutions and their economists are taciturn in challenging grants. An explanation is that these institutions directly profit from fees and the maintenance of retailing and credit systems.[101] The 'unbanked' (those mostly poor South

[98] Ibid.
[99] Richard Dienst, *The Bonds of Debt: Borrowing Against the Common Good* (London ; New York: Verso, 2011), 2.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Thomas Stafford, "NET1: Electronic Delivery," *Financial Mail*, April 29, 2010, http://www.fm.co.za/fm/2010/04/29/net-1.

Africans who do not have bank accounts) are seen as potential customers.[102] Furthermore large corporate retailers such as Shoprite pay out grants (in relationship with CPS) with the recognition that recipients will purchase groceries from their stores. With the introduction of retailer grant payments connected to the national system in 2012, some retailers' full-year headline earnings increased by 20 per cent.[103]

Access to information and especially ownership of that information is extremely valuable. The importance of the value of information is side-lined in Ferguson's argument.[104] In the current moment of capitalism, access to information and especially ownership of that information is invaluable since electronic payments and marketing are some of the largest, most profitable, and fastest growing industries.[105] In trying to find the logic behind the growth of cash transfer programs in the context of market-centered economies, Ferguson ignores the potential that large scale distribution networks open for information capture. Ferguson explains that the critique of technological grant administration and payment is based on a fear of the loss of personal contact.[106] However, of more concern are the following questions: Who has the information? How is it being used? This is surveillance in less of the all-knowing panopticon[107] variety, but certainly as the sharing and movement of information. When Ferguson claims that poor people aspire to certain forms of surveillance,[108] he does not consider the surveillance in the form of information sharing that permits unauthorised deductions for electricity, airtime and loans. To the extent that one can claim that people desire surveillance in the sense of being recognised by the state and other institutions, this is not the same claim that poor people desire murky information sharing.

In the context of cash transfers being heralded by influential scholars,[109] multinational agencies,[110] and governments as the most effective available method for poverty alleviation – and

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[102] Martin Mittner, "Banks - Co-Operative Banks," *Financial Mail*, 2011, http://www.fm.co.za/fm/2011/09/01/banks---co-operative-banks.
[103] "Shoprite Becomes 'bank' for the Unbanked," *Business Day Live*, accessed January 12, 2013, http://www.bdlive.co.za/companies/2012/08/22/shoprite-becomes-bank-for-the-unbanked.
[104] Bill Maurer, "Late to the Party: Debt and Data," *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (2012): 474–481.

[106] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 85.
[107] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Second Vintage Books Edition (Vintage, 1995), 195–210.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos, and David Hulme, *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Kumarian Press, 2010); Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*.
[110] World Bank, "Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty."

perhaps even redistribution – it is imperative that serious analyses of insecurity be taken up. The greatest weakness of *Give a Man a Fish* is that the ethnographic material is almost exclusively from prior to the implementation of the 2012 biometric system. The ethnographic work conducted by the author that he references is mostly from his 1990 work in Lesotho and later ethnography in the Zambian Copperbelt before the turn of the millennium. Many of the gaps and much of the thinness of Ferguson's work stem from the absence of ethnographic explorations or evidence (besides the scholarship and reports he quotes) that stretches beyond the anecdotal. The *everyday* of social grant administration and bureaucracy has been parenthesised or ignored by scholars. This is a key contribution of this thesis, in turn illuminating how both profit-making and anti-poor practices operate. The bureaucracy of social grants and the technologies involved in the new system can uncover some of the political rationalities which promote their implementation.

Biometrics Re-imprinted: Efficacy, Administration, and Social Grants

One of the ways of unpacking the social life of grants from the 2012 moment is to look at the ways they are coordinated and delivered. The scale of payments requires infrastructures and networks capable of the massive task. This administration and payment was centralised and privatised in 2012 and, Sassa announced, the new biometric system would prioritise convenience: the country's 10 million grant recipients would receive a MasterCard-branded debit card that could be used throughout the country. Since its inception, claimants have been required to digitally register their fingerprints, their voice and their signature and have this information linked to the Sassa card. The card provided to claimants can be used, like a debit card, both to withdraw and swipe in order to pay for purchases as well as to gain access to a formal bank account linked to this card. While fingerprint identification remains the most widespread identification tool, technological developments have also advanced the use of DNA, iris scans, vocal recognition, facial features, and hand geometry. Biometrics may conjure visions of techno-utopic futures, but they do not represent a new phenomenon: the first recorded usage of fingerprint identification was as far back as the 1300s in China, and by the 19th century the British had begun developing a fingerprint database. In South Africa, the use of biometrics has not only a long history but also one that involves large scale implementation, where the colonial and apartheid states used fingerprinting for population registration and

surveillance.[111] Hendrik Verwoerd, as Minister of the Department of Native Affairs (and later as Prime Minister from 1958), was so obsessed with registration and bureaucracy that the department has been referred to as a 'state within a state'.[112] In the 1950s the formation of a centralised fingerprint database became an obsession of Verwoerd's government. The formation of the bantustans in 1960 diminished the capabilities of such a repository. As the bantustan project unravelled after 1990, there was renewed commitment to centralisation.[113] This extensive implementation is indicative of South Africa's obsession with measurement.

This thesis approaches biometric implementation from 2012 as a focus for analysis in several ways. While long used in South Africa in population registration and in labour control, the use of biometrics was not inevitable in the realm of social assistance. The 2012 moment was heavily influenced by fears of fraud from several actors involved in social assistance provision. Sassa explained the efficacy of grant delivery under the new system in two broad ways. The first was in terms of it being more efficient to claimants. In the early stages after the awarding of the contract, Virginia Petersen, the CEO of Sassa, indicated that the new system would allow more options and locations for where claimants would be able to claim their monthly grants. The second reason that Sassa provided for the new system's efficiency is that it would be more streamlined in terms of cost and delivery. Cost reduction purportedly comes from efficiencies in how CPS actually pays grants, as well through the biometric registration program's capacity to diminish fraudulent access to grants (labelled by Sassa and CPS as a fundamental inefficiency in the pre-2012 system). According to Sassa's accounting, the CPS contract allowed a ceiling to be placed on administrative costs. The administrative unit cost of grant payment would be lowered to R16.50 and capped at this amount for the five-year period of the contract (2012-2017), resulting in a total saving, according to Sassa, of R3 billion.[114]

[111] Keith Breckenridge, "The Biometric State: The Promise and Peril of Digital Government in the New South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 2 (June 1, 2005): 267–82; Keith Breckenridge, "No Will To Know: The Rise and Fall Of African Civil Registration in 20th Century South Africa," in *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*, ed. Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter, Proceedings of the British Academy 182 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[112] Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64.
[113] K. Breckenridge, 'The Elusive Panopticon: The HANIS Project And The Politics of Standards in South Africa', in C. Bennett and D. Lyon (eds.), *Playing the Identity Card: Surveillance, Security and Identity in Global Perspective* (New York, Routledge, 2008), p.41.
[114] Sikhakhane, "R10bn Tender to Streamline Social Grant Payments for Recipients."

Almost all of the literature suggests that many households in South Africa have grants as their primary or sole incomes.[115] The financial importance of social grants in people's lives has been explored by scholars who have shown in detail how there is no merit to the arguments that grants reinforce dependency as money is almost exclusively spent on services the state has claimed to be free and accesible. Quantitative data generated about social assistance, while critical, unwittingly addresses an audience who request – but are never satiated by – data that shows that claimants use their money primarily for food, health, housing, and education.[116] However, the point about how grant money is used is more complex than whether or not dependency is promoted; it also provides insight into how considerations of appropriate spending are projected onto claimants. The extent to which grants 'work' is most commonly measured using indices around poverty reduction, benefits to childhood development, public policy, and access to education. These are vital metrics of security. Social security, in the form of state-funded social grants, is intended to target those seen as vulnerable in society. However, understanding vulnerability requires analysis of a complex set of factors. So, even though grants are a monetary income, following from the direction provided by economic anthropology[117], understanding grants requires consideration of value in its economic sense as well as values in terms of those principles and beliefs that organise social life. This thesis also explores some of the ways that cash transfers may not work. In the context of the supply of labour completely outstripping demand, Jonny Steinberg's and Ferguson's arguments are that grants are not a stop-gap measure until work is found but are likely to be the only income. Steinberg argues that grants extend dignity to claimants and support 'life, not idleness'.[118] While grants do sustain life, the processes that surround them do have important temporal elements, amongst them stuckedness and idleness. The singular lens of poverty reduction can mask other dimensions of how grants may not work. For instance, waiting is shown in this thesis to be one of the ways that claimants' lives are made more difficult.

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[115] The literature that acknowledges this is expansive, I consult extensively the work of Prishani Naidoo, "Indigent Management: A Strategic Response to the Struggles of the Poor in Post-Apartheid South Africa," in *New South African Review 1: Development or Decline*, ed. Roger Southall et al. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010); von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies."

[116] Case, Hosegood, and Lund, "The Reach and Impact of Child Support Grants: Evidence from KwaZulu-Natal"; Case and Menendez, "Does Money Empower the Elderly? Evidence from The Agincourt Demographic Surveillance Site, South Africa"; Progressus Research Development Consultancy and Ros Gordon, "The Payment Experiences of Social Grant Beneficiaries."

[117] On "value" and "values" in particular see David Graeber, "Debt, Violence, and Impersonal Markets: Polanyian Meditations," in *Market and Society: The Great Transformation Today*, ed. Chris Hann and Keith Hart (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 107.

[118] Jonny Steinberg, "Idea of Jobs for All Blinds Us to Need for Welfare," *Business Day*, July 26, 2013.

Technopolitics, Distribution and 2012

Net1 has cultivated relationships which were promoted as efficiency measures but which the state has no purchase on. For example, extensive relationships between Net1 and retailers have made it possible to collect grants from shops. Reregistration in 2012 was an arduous task and it would be a huge administrative undertaking and a great pressure on claimants to repeat the process. The centrality of machines in grant delivery has allowed Net1 to solidify a monopoly of much of the currently operational hardware. The promise of more places to claim grants, a decrease in fraud and faster service times presume the supremacy of the machines over other forms of administration and recording. Advocates of the BIG argue that new technologies diminish the documentation necessary for cash transfers.[119] These proponents are optimistic about new technologies and are especially enthusiastic about biometrics, as Ferguson emphasises[120]: 'the BIG and its biometric recognition scheme would have to answer only one question: have you already been paid this month yet or not?'[121]

However, the Black Sash, an unwavering supporter of the BIG, is unequivocal about the failure of new technologies to secure grant payment and retention. This thesis shows that new technologies do not ameliorate the problem of excessive documentation but instead generate new and more types of paper. Generation of paper qua paper is not the problem, but this paper is sometimes similar to those that technologies are supposedly in place to diminish: place of residence, identification, birth certificates. There is also a plethora of new documentation that technologies have secured: affidavits for lost cards, receipts to 'prove' grants were paid, receipts that document any deductions, copious pamphlets that sell life and other insurance at pay points, proof of address, copies of identification documents, doctors' certificates, and many others.

In sum, grants reveal a complicated mode of governance in post-apartheid society, and in the context of globalisation and the growth of cash transfers in the global South. The most thorough coverage of grants in southern Africa provided by James Ferguson is limited in its claim that grants are an example of the potential of a 'politics of distribution'. Grants in practice are mired in instances of neoliberal logics and my thesis shows that these are clearly visible at the point of distribution. Ethnography at the site of grant distribution, which shows the multiple actors, technologies and relations created at and through grant distribution, shows us what the

[119] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 84.
[120] The line that follows appears in a longer quote from *Give a Man a Fish* on page 14 of this thesis
[121] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Redistribution*, 84.

grant is and what it does as a social mechanism. The grant is part of a welfare regime and attention to the politics at the site of distribution is very important for reading the grant as part of this system of governmentality.

Research Methods and Field Sites

It is difficult to unknot the political and analytical impetus of this research from the methodological approach taken. As a result, many of the points made above segue into the methods employed in my research in a more general way. Some of these foundational points have as their fulcrum questioning standard assumptions in analyses of welfare and cash transfers: the object of the state, the cohesion of institutions, the simplification of neoliberal and anti-neoliberal analyses, and also the focus on developmental matrices. The research that informs this thesis pauses at moments of bureaucracy in the life of the grant to observe technological privatised social grant operation. This thesis is not an attempt at a systematic explanation of every stage of social assistance. It is more a choreography of grant movements through moments of social grants, from the perspectives of multiple actors and against the backdrop of social grant life over time and space. As an earlier part of this introduction explained, through the machines of social assistance, locations, politics, and forms may converge into 'techno-political terrains'.[122] The object of study – a payment system in practice – required me to move around to consider a 'complex set of spatially intersecting representations and practices'.[123]

This thesis draws on ethnographic research in the Bushbuckridge Municipality[124] between 2012 and 2014, along with media reports and extensive engagements with the human rights

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[122] A term used in von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies" and from the literature of Science and Technology Studies. This literature includes, but is certainly not limited to, David F. Noble, *America By Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); David F. Noble, *Forces of Production: A Social History of Industrial Automation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (Princeton University Press, 1985); Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas Parke Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch, *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (MIT Press, 1987); David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (University of Chicago Press, 1991); Thomas Parke Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (JHU Press, 1993).

[123] Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State," *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 2 (1995): 377.

[124] The Bushbuckridge Municipality is made up of several small towns: Acornhoek, Thulamahashe, Bushbuckridge, Marite, Dwarsloop, and Mkhuhlu. Only 9% of the population live in these centres; the remainder reside in small rural villages. See E. Mavungu, 'Frontiers of Prosperity and Power: Explaining Provincial Boundary Disputes in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 2011), p. 41.

organisation The Black Sash. Critical ethnographic research actively rejects positivistic scientific ethnography and scientific realism.[125] While this is a general feature, 'critical ethnography' is an umbrella term that encompasses various forms of ethnographic practice. The history of this sort of ethnography is textured not only with the rejection of objective social science but also with a commitment to research that could promote a more equal society with the articulated intention of building theory and local practical knowledge.[126] I spent approximately six months in each of the three year 2012-2014 engaging in participant observation in the field sites listed below. The experiences, conversations, and sentiments of myself and others were documented daily in a fieldwork notebook.[127] The material in the fieldwork notebooks was primarily composed of words and illustrations marking observations, in addition I recorded contact details, stored leaflets, marked areas I wanted to expand upon, and expressed my affective responses to experiences. These fieldwork notebooks were transcribed and read and analysed for the multiplicity of meanings therein. I read the fieldwork notes for themes and marked and isolated these themes using a rudimentary coding system. It was also important to read the fieldwork notes as a comprehensive text, that is, as they appeared, without actively attempting to extract themes. This facilitates thick background understanding and mitigates against oversimplifying descriptions embedded in context. That being noted, it is also important in the act of reading fieldnotes not to solidify and make teleological what may be a series of sparks and reminders, snippets of observation, doodles, chance notations, and interstices of events.[128]

The study is anchored in four main locations: a well-known retail merchant that pays out a large number of grants in the area every month, a local Sassa grant office, a mobile pension pay point, and the moving site of a pick-up truck driven by Andrew[129], a local official employed by CPS. Moving between these places foregrounds the relationships between the 'formalisation' of social assistance – the documents, policies and national guidelines, and the 'informal' – the daily practices, bureaucracy and negotiations, meaning-making and unravelling that play out in applying for and claiming grants. Below is an overview of the four key sites where I conducted

[125] Douglas Foley and Angela Valenzuela, "Critical Ethnography: The Politics of Collaboration," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Third Edition (Sage Publications, Inc, 2005), 217–34.
[126] Ibid., 217.
[127] An example of several days of fieldwork notes is provided in the Appendix

[128] For more on fieldwork notebooks and the manners of reading them see Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press, 2011).
[129] Not his real name

the ethnographic portions of my research and thereafter an introduction to the area of Bushbuckridge.

A. CPS Bakkie

Many of the field site interactions were underpinned by ongoing conversations with several central characters. Andrew is a 'support supervisor' for CPS and – because of the intimate arrangement between all companies linked to Net1 – he also does work for several other Net1 subsidiaries. Andrew spends most of his working time travelling in a white *bakkie* across the expanse of Bushbuckridge. At the beginning of 2012, he assisted with the registration process of transferring data to the new national system and continues to maintain the hardware supplied by Net1. Andrew also established payment terminals at retailers, sold Net1 subsidiaries' services and technologies, and coordinated the work done by Net1 throughout the municipality.

A significant amount of my time in Bushbuckridge was spent sitting in the passenger seat of Andrew's vehicle as he conducted his work. The 315-kilometre provincial road that runs through Bushbuckridge is a single lane tarred highway that stretches between Phalaborwa and the Swaziland border. While Andrew drove along this R40 route and its capillary roads, we would speak about the purpose of the stop we were going to make, detail the area we were in, and talk about Net1 and social assistance more generally. During these trips, Andrew would always have two cell phones on his lap and would take calls from CPS headquarters, mobile pay point operators, family, and subsidiary company employees who would get lifts. These calls would plot the route that he would follow to the places where his help was needed.

In their work on everyday bureaucracies, Bernstein and Mertz contend that the main activities of contemporary states involve 'administration, regulation and delegation'.[130] They go on to speak about how bureaucracy happens in fluorescent buildings with many partitioned offices. The experience of driving around with Andrew invites a challenge to the idea of the immobile bureaucrat. Privatisation of social grant administration and payment has resulted in bureaucrats – the people who primarily engage with claimants – who are constantly on the move. Andrew's *bakkie* was more than a means of transportation; it was in effect his mobile office. This roving

[130] Anya Bernstein and Elizabeth Mertz, "Introduction Bureaucracy: Ethnography of the State in Everyday Life," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 34, no. 1 (2011).

work space always contained pieces of paper and hardware that were important objects of analysis for this research.

B. A Large Local Retailer

A second hub of this research is a large retailer that dispenses grants. The retailer sells groceries from large metal shelves which stretch five metres high up into the warehouse-like interior. Shop assistants roll wheeled stepladders around to retrieve items from the highest shelves which stock larger products like bags of maize meal and containers of cooking oil. Smaller items are stacked at eye level interspersed with paper flags that protrude into the aisles announcing specials and advertising other products. The back of the store has a glass-walled manager's office and also houses the huge safe that contains the money deposited from the day's earnings as well as a stock of money to replenish the tills at the front of the shop. The busiest days at the shop were not typically paydays, but the first day of grant payment. During these days I would sit with a cashier, shadow the manager, and speak with grant claimants. Through these conversations and observations, I built up a picture of how claiming grants operated in the context of a retailer and the impacts that this environment had on the processes of grant delivery and on claimants' experiences.

C. Monthly Paypoints

An older method of grant payment, one that has persisted into the new payment system, is mobile payment points. Payments are made monthly in fixed areas which are often empty land or the grounds of churches and recreation centres. On a fixed day within the first two weeks of every month, CPS vans, accompanied by armoured vehicles which transport money and sometimes one Sassa vehicle to oversee the process, arrive at the payment point. Grant claimants know when the date of payment is, as it is typically on the same day at the same site every month, but also because they are informed as to the following month's payment date as they receive their grant.

Outside monthly pay points, markets set up to sell goods to claimants. The products are diverse and include fruit, second-hand clothes, hot meals and Tupperware. The vendors place their goods on sheets on the ground or hook clear packets of vegetables and fruit onto stands for display. As the payment location moves during the day, so do the vendors, who follow the CPS vans' routes and times closely. The close proximity of Bushbuckridge to Mozambique

means that the sale of second-hand clothing and shoes is more prominent outside paypoints here than anywhere in the country. Bales of second-hand goods arrive in Mozambique through an international network that distributes them from Europe and North America across the world.[131] Vendors and claimants recognise each other and often even acknowledge one another by name. The vendors sell products to people they know on credit and mark off amounts that have been paid in ruled notebooks until the debt has been settled and the name is crossed off. In the chapters of this thesis the intricacies of these paypoints are expanded on – including observations on the journey in Andrew's *bakkie*. The research draws primarily on two transitory paypoints. Claimants tend to go to the same point monthly, and a focus on specific sites allows an understanding of their experiences over time. Temporary paypoints in Bushbuckridge are almost always outside to afford a large enough space for payment vehicles, an accompanying armed vehicle, and claimants. One of the paypoints is on the grounds of a disused church which was stalled in its construction and remains as a shell for protection from the rain and as a shaded space to wait for payments.

D. A Sassa Office

The one Sassa office in Bushbuckridge doubled as the local branch of the Department of Social Development (DSD). The offices are badly maintained but well signposted with the bright Sassa logo. The office is not a big space at first inspection but it is a maze of long, dark corridors which break into rooms to the left and right. The rooms to the left of the corridor are offices for administrative processing of grants and to the right are smaller private offices for some of the senior staff. Claimants sit against the right-hand wall of the corridor and face the walls of the larger offices. The already-small corridor lined with chairs means that traffic along it can only be in single file. I found that every time I entered the office my eyes had to adjust to the darkness. Once one proceeds along this claustrophobic corridor, past all the offices, there is an open area where CPS has a permanent presence, albeit with a temporary set-up. The units that CPS sets up daily are the same kits that they used in the initial reregistration process in 2012 and, because the kits are assembled daily, they always appear to be transitory. Research at these offices involved time sitting in the Sassa administration offices where applications for grants are processed, observing CPS as they logged new applicants onto the system, and sitting and waiting with grant claimants and the family members and friends who accompanied them.

[131] Andrew Brooks, *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

Bushbuckridge Municipality

Under the 1913 Land Act, Bushbuckridge was scheduled as a 'released area' for sole occupation by Africans. In 1948 the South African Native Trust bought the area and it became a Native Reserve under the Assistant Native Affairs Commissioner.[132] With the 1960 introduction of Bantu Authorities, the area was divided into the Mapulaneng Regional Authority for the Northern Sotho in the west and the Mhala Regional Authority was cordoned off for the Shangaan in the east. These areas became the Lebowa and Gazankulu bantustans respectively in 1973. Bushbuckridge was fraught with provincial demarcation disputes after 1994. The area was first incorporated against the wishes of local people into the Limpopo Province in 1994. In this province, 89 per cent of grant beneficiaries live in rural villages – by far the province with the greatest majority of recipients not located in an urban or metropolitan area.[133] There are five municipalities in the Elhanzeni District, one of which is Bushbuckridge. Bushbuckridge Municipality has been part of an ongoing provincial boundary dispute between Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. Bushbuckridge closely traces the Mozambican border and has many residents who were born in Mozambique but have South African citizenship. The Municipality is made up of several small towns: Acornhoek, Thulamahashe, Bushbuckridge, Marite, Dwarsloop, and Mkhuhlu (figure 1). Only 9 per cent of the population live in these centres, 29 per cent live in small rural villages and 61 per cent of people are based in larger villages.[134] Bushbuckridge is one of the poorest areas of South Africa, with even official unemployment rates reported at 69 per cent.[135] This figure reflects how there is little subsistence agriculture and livestock farming and in sum results in two thirds of households having persistent food insecurity.[136]

The field of public health has been foremost in conducting academic research in Bushbuckridge. In Agincourt, a rural sub-district of the municipality, the Medical Research

[132] Isak A Niehaus, "Doing Politics In Bushbuckridge: Work, Welfare And The South African Elections of 2004," *Africa* 76, no. 4 (2006): 526.
[133] Progressus Research Development Consultancy and Ros Gordon, "The Payment Experiences of Social Grant Beneficiaries," 13.
[134] Mavungu, "Frontiers Of Prosperity And Power: Explaining Provincial Boundary Disputes In Post-Apartheid South Africa."
[135] Tara Polzer, "We Are All South Africans Now": The Integration of Mozambican Refugees in Rural South Africa," *University of the Witwatersrand, Forced Migration Studies Programme Working Paper Series* 8 (2004): 4, http://www.cormsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/Research/SADC/8_polzerwp.pdf.
[136] Ibid.

Council/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt) has been collecting information since 1992 on the birth, death, and migration of all individuals identified as members of the approximately 11,500 households in the project. This is one of the largest demography projects in the country. Isak Niehaus detailed formal political groupings and parties around the 2004 elections and provided an ethnographic snapshot of the area during that moment of political organising.[137] The cash transfer system was established in its current format close to a decade after Niehaus' work but the political environment and contestations in the new millennium have been instructive in the contextualisation of this research. All of the field sites above inscribe and are inscribed in geographic locations with their own histories.

[137] Niehaus, "Doing Politics In Bushbuckridge: Work, Welfare And The South African Elections of 2004."



Figure 1 Bushbuckridge in South Africa: Borders and Provinces

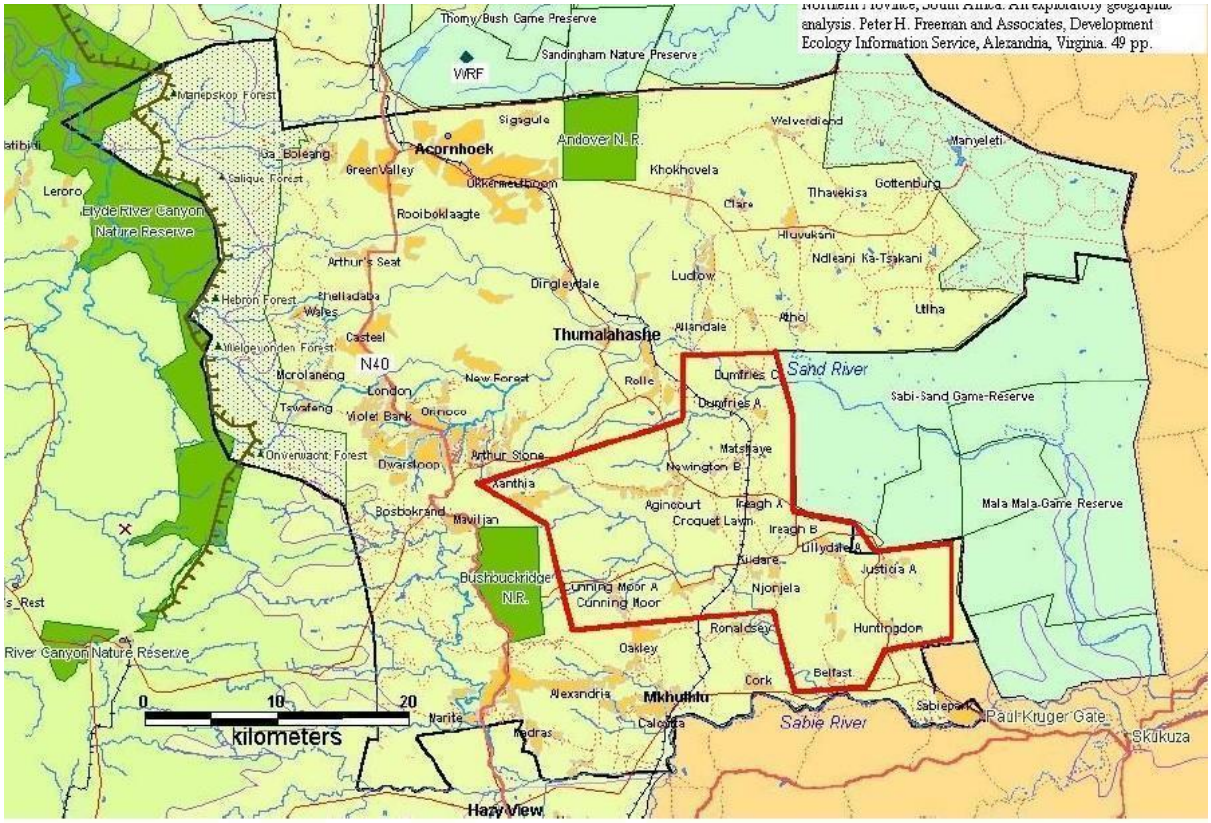


Figure 2 Map of Bushbuckridge showing villages and small towns

Chapter Outlines

Chapter one situates welfare in the concept of the 'modern'. In this discussion, I explore theories which aim to rethink the modern outside of a Eurocentric script. Welfare should be considered through its historical situation in the ideas of modernity. Local analysis can inform the complexities, and in South Africa, the raced nature, of the discourses of welfare and modernity in general. This chapter explores social welfare in the critical historical and transitional political moments in South Africa and how these were shaped by and shaped global economic environments. I set up the questions and concerns that led to the desire for, and implementation of, the 2012 private system of grant administration and payment.

Chapter two explains that the efficiency that outsourcing was supposed to ensure was fragile, and '[d]espite the privatisation of services, problems still persisted'.[138] Efficiency gave way to insecurity and ambiguity, and the changes that were introduced (or the ideas that failed to materialise) exposed, and sometimes created, breaks and cracks in the social grant system. This chapter considers insecurity in South African social assistance, especially after 2012. The 2012 system in practice rendered grant money vulnerable to cancellation or deductions, but also threatened the security of grant claimants' personal information and put pressure on claimants' time. An inability to predict - the potential for the loss of all or some of a grant – exacerbates the insecurity of livelihoods, time and access to money.

Chapter three engages with the physical machines and technologies mobilised in grant registration including the 2012-specific machinery lodged in suitcase-like metal cases for delivering grants. It argues that biometric machines in themselves create meaning. I also untangle the connections between paper documentation and digital and electrical technologies. Building on Science and Technology studies, this chapter nevertheless focuses on paper. This is because the field takes seriously not only materiality but what Latour called associations or 'object institutions' constituted of human and nonhuman actors.[139] I argue that technopolitics, the social and political meaning read into and embedded in machines, is not happenstance and can be a valuable lens into the enaction of grants in the everyday. It is an attempt to unscrew the

[138]SAHRC, 'The Right to Social Security', in *Economic and Social Rights Report Series* (Pretoria, South African Human Rights Commission, 2002_3), p. 30.
[139] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social - An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory,* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

machinery of grants, as Susan Leigh Star prompts in her work on studying cyberspace, as a way to 'attend ethnographically to the plugs, settings, sizes, and other mundane aspects'.[140]

Chapter four looks forward through the perspective of The Black Sash and organisations that compile cases of how biometrics and the 2012 system as a whole have impacted grant payments and delivery. I dissect the role that social assistance has played in shaping both the ideology and work of the Black Sash; and in turn the manner in which the Black Sash has framed and changed policy and work on social assistance provision. This analysis permits a tracing of grants and their connections and ruptures with the very specific moment of 2012. Furthermore, the chapter harnesses Black Sash as a prism through which to refract the historical assemblages that informed social assistance policy and advocacy work related to this.

[140] Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 3 (1999): 377–391.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter moves through some of the key events in the genesis of South Africa's social assistance programs and the structural and intellectual influences that shaped them. The chapter intends to extend several central arguments. Firstly, welfare should be understood historically and local contextualised analysis is necessary to comprehend the complexities involved in social assistance. The latter includes the racialised nature of South Africa's social formation, the discourses of welfare and the ideas of modernity that run through social welfare models. Secondly, the study of social assistance provides an opportunity to challenge the idea of a unified and uniform conception of the state and the simplistic unidirectional assumption of the passage from policy to practice. Relatedly, if we are to understand the complex and paradoxical nature of a fragmentary state then we are compelled to examine both the dialectic and the disjuncture between policy and implementation. Through an engagement with the key issues of social assistance in South Africa, I show how policy has always performed as only one of many coexisting ideological tools in the state's practice (or arsenal), and this is a sentiment that informs why this research is not directed at policy recommendations or reform. Influences on the state's policy - both endogenous and exogenous - include notions of welfarism, social control, shifting global conceptions of poverty, the constraints of racialized capitalism, and tensions between actors' desires to centralise or to fragment social assistance implementation.

The 2012 biometric-based payment and enrolment system, privately contracted to Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), was facilitated by social protection infrastructures – material and legislative – that had been in place for decades prior. The history of social protection in South Africa provides the backdrop to understand why biometrics and the privatisation of services were possible and ultimately successful. This allows for a contextualisation for the timing and implementation of a national biometric system. This chapter is loosely organised in a chronological manner, but the intention is also to provide more than sequential background by engaging with context and history. I aim to show the themes above – a non-uniform state, complex negotiations between policy and pressure groups - to have persisted throughout the history of social protection in South Africa. The historical cleavages, contestations and policy volte-faces emphasise that social protection and the technologies surrounding it, while

ostensibly aimed at ways to address poverty and inequality, can also potentially unmask structural socio-political features that maintain injustice.

The Modern and Governmentality

Considerations of historical and social milieus are imperative to begin to think about the environment that made social assistance both possible and generative. This section reviews the standard narrative of European modernity and sets out and develops the concept of 'governmentality'. Thereafter it troubles the Euro-centric temporal and spatial homogenising of modernity and 'the social sphere'. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of modernity, the social or welfare but serves to flag some of the central debates through which one can anchor the story of South African welfare and social protection.

In Europe prior to the 20th century, what would later be called 'social' issues were still heavily embedded in ideas of morality.[141] As the century progressed, these preoccupations with the 'moral' edged towards becoming 'social' issues. The implication was that poverty was not a result of immoral actions or the preordained order of things, but rather the effects of the lived world – the social. In the following paragraphs I zoom in on the late 18th century and the subsequent two centuries to frame scholarship on European modernity. Foucault points to the period from the late 18th century in Europe as a time when two 'technologies of power' coalesced.[142] The first is directed at the body - the disciplinary technology of power individualises bodies so that they are simultaneously productive and pliable. The second technology of power targets life; it generalises the population in order to make predictions and to effect 'solutions'. This technology is what Foucault names 'governmentality', an 'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power.'[143] According to Foucault's analysis, governmentality underlines all modern forms of political thought and action. In his genealogy of the modern state, Foucault explores political power in terms of 'political rationalities' and 'technologies of government', in particular, he is interested in those regulatory mechanisms which empower government and which serve to draw individuals and

[141] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (Picador, 2003).
[142] Ibid., 249.
[143] Michel Foucault, "On Governmentality," *Ideology and Consciousness* 6 (1979): 20.

institutions into broader political objectives.[144] These mechanisms are not necessarily direct interventions, but may instead work through promoting self-regulation. The move from the concept of 'the State' to 'government' indicates rule that is exercised from a range of forces and groups. Foucault explains that 'the State' (note the change in article from 'a State') becomes the form that government takes in liberal democracy.

One mechanism that shapes and normalizes the self-regulation of subjects relies on 'expertise' that is, 'the social authority ascribed to particular agents and forms of judgement on the basis of their claims to possess specialized truths and rare powers,'[145] and it is these powers of expertise that Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller consider crucial in order to govern in a liberal democratic way. Rose and Miller explain that expertise serves to guide technical features of production, moreover, and significantly, expertise also plays a role in those psychological features that produce subjects.[146] One of the most important terrains of government from the 18th century was *population*; thus, authorities became concerned with regulating populations by delineating what constituted problems and designating action and expertise to shape solutions. As the ideologies of 'problems' like 'poverty' shifted, so too did the structures and measures put in place to address them. In fact, the very concept of 'addressing them' is critical: since the 'problems' were now considered social, there could logically be social solutions. Zygmunt Bauman underlines this point by arguing that 'the poor' are not only a problem, but also a threat to the 'proper' functioning of society and thus addressing poverty is not only about finding solutions, it is about asserting control.[147] Bauman following Foucault, argues that governmentality ties itself to the mode of 'discipline'. The technology of governmentality engendered new occupations such as social work, social statistics, social reform, the social policy expert, the social scientist, and rationality in general.[148] Tellingly, the discipline of sociology has as two of its central questions, 'How did societies come to be recognisably "modern"?' and, 'How did selves come to be seen as individual and rational subjects?'[149] It is not by chance that *mentality* is embedded in 'governmentality', understanding the role of knowledge is fundamental in governing and being governed.

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[144] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality.*, ed. G Burchell, C Gordon, and P Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
[145] Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Governing Economic Life," *Economy and Society* 19, no. 1 (February 1990): 2.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998).
[148] James Ferguson, *Registration and Recognition Documenting the Person in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2012).
[149] Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff, eds., *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology* (Duke University Press Books, 2005), 3.

Like the work of Foucault, Rose and other scholars, this thesis is not a sociological examination of the organisation of government or the detailing of its programs and policies; it is not a project of studying governance. The research considers governmentality useful as an analytic tool that allows for the exposure of 'practices that connect and make visible the relationship between words and concepts, the emotions that are mobilized'[150]. Governmentality is most effective in the study of liberal and neoliberal rationalities- and this analysis is a central theme of the thesis. Furthermore, what I aim to foreground with governmentality as an approach to regimes of rule is to uncover and try to make sense of the order and rule rather than list and explain it. In this work I use governmentality as a tool of analysis which permits the opening up of 'the possibilities of tracing not only policies and practices, but also actors and their subject positions in the discourses that form them.'[151]

In late 19th and early 20th century Europe, not only did understandings of poverty shift, so too did the politics of infrastructure, evidenced in the expansion of electricity grids and sanitation networks.[152] It is not surprising then, that when 'the social' became important in understanding the world, and the solutions changed accordingly, then the value and material of infrastructure were modified. Expanding automation in the 19th century materialised distinctly modern anxieties[153] in the populations of Europe. These appeared as corollaries of one another: suspicion of machines and their agency played out alongside the positive anthropomorphism of machines.[154] As urban working classes grew in the late 1800s and early 1900s, elites felt pressed to implement measures of control, regulation, and order.[155] Biopolitics, regulation, discipline, and the attempts to find 'solutions' promoted infrastructural conditions[156] that would increase the productivity of the typified male able-bodied worker and (both literally and figuratively) 'sanitise' domestic spaces. Workers were encouraged to be both producers and consumers, propelled by the economic milieu of increased consumerism and the rise of credit.[157]

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[150] Calin Cotoi, "Neoliberalism: A Foucauldian Perspective," *International Review of Social Research* 1, no. 2 (2011): 112.
[151] Pamela Christie, "Changing Regimes: Governmentality and Education Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *International Journal of Educational Development* 26 (2006): 378.
[152] Antina von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (2013): 677 In chapter three I go on to discuss how infrastructure mirrors, and is mirrored by, society.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid., 677–678.
[155] Ibid.
[156] For example, access to electricity grids, running water, and gas connections
[157] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 678.

Rationalism placed emphasis on a sanitary home and a consuming worker. Movements away from moral underpinnings (acknowledging though that moral idioms remained key to characterisations of economic life) provided the space for a more radical (literally getting to the root of) critique of inequalities in society, but what was also exposed was the possibility to make solutions calculable – to replace justice with compensation and so only address the issues superficially.

The Modern and the Welfare State

This section is not intended to engage with the voluminous body of literature on the welfare state, but rather reviews a critical body of literature. The rise of the modern moved 'economy' away from its confinement to the domestic terrain and enabled 'political economy' to arise as a discipline that concerned itself with the 'public consequences of economic actions'.[158] Social welfare in the 20th century began with male wage labourers in large firms moving from initially joining voluntary trade organisations, to becoming members of compulsory social insurance schemes.[159] These systems not only applied to formal sector workers but were extended to their 'dependants' (wives and children) through the critical institution of the family where wage labour institutions solidified connections with the broader urban population.[160] Social protection shifted some material responsibility away from families and kinship ties towards the state. Intervention (privately and by the state) is based on a male workforce and female dependents. In the context where men are able to find and access wage labour, risk is defined as sickness, old age, and unemployment; it is therefore male labour that inscribes the 'social' that requires protection.[161]

For many US sociologists the 'welfare state'[162] is shorthand for social provision in the developed capitalist world.[163] Before the language of 'welfare state' became widely used, phrases such as 'social state' and 'relief' were more common. In South Africa, Barchiesi argues, a shift occurred

[158] Chris Hann and Keith Hart, eds., *Market and Society: The Great Transformation Today* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 10.
[159] François Ewald, "A Concept of Social Law," *Dilemmas of Law in the Welfare State*, 1986, 40–75; Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government.," *British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1992): 172–205; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought.* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[160] Ferguson, *Registration and Recognition Documenting the Person in World History*.
[161] Ann Shola Orloff, "Social Provision and Regulation: Theories of States, Social Policies, and Modernity," in *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*, ed. Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff (Duke University Press Books, 2005), 198.
[162] The British first used the phrase 'welfare state' in 1939 to differentiate themselves from 'warfare states'
[163] Orloff, "Social Provision and Regulation: Theories of States, Social Policies, and Modernity," 196.

again away from the use of 'welfare' back to 'social development' as this is terminology that is more acceptable to neoliberal rationality.[164] Schools of thought have interpreted this 'welfare state' differently. Modernisation theorists, accepted that these states were involved in the welfare of its citizens. While Marxist intellectuals asserted that the gains of social protection were a result of class struggle, they also maintained that social citizenship could be understood as 'ransom from capital'[165] to nourish a disciplined populace and a productive workforce. Theorists influenced by Marxist thought accepted that social protection was instituted by the elite to control the population, but this conception presented the state as a homogenous entity. Furthermore, these scholars also take as given that, alongside control and regulation, state social protection does contribute to the wellbeing of citizens. However, part of what is absent from these analyses is, firstly, a complex understanding of the state and, secondly, a troubling of 'welfare' – that is, whether it actually does allow people to fare well.[166] For example, feminist theorists argue that welfare regimes (state and private) presume male workers and their 'dependents' and ignore equality more generally including issues of 'race', access, service, gender, and care.[167] Importantly for this thesis, 'welfare state' also glosses over the interplay between private and public provision. The phenomenon of the public-private partnership is incredibly important in shaping the state as a facilitator and in motivating individualised notions of success.[168]

The making of 'the social' impacted the forms and functions that welfare *and* infrastructure would go on to take. A theme that permeates this thesis is that part of the attraction of biometric governance is the imagined potential for teleological progress and success. The adjustments that arose out of the 'social question' presumed certain kinds of risk (identified earlier) and so developed the actuarial self and the actuarial populace where solutions weren't focused on ethics, but on faults and technical solutions. There is something of the allure of

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[164] Franco Barchiesi, "Work in the Constitution of the Human: Twentieth-Century South African Entanglements of Welfare, Blackness, and Political Economy," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, no. 1 (January 2016): 151.
[165] Orloff, "Social Provision and Regulation: Theories of States, Social Policies, and Modernity," 192 Marx himself does address race when discussing the Caribbean, but even this is related to Europe's relationship with the islands.
[166] Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (Harvard University Press, 1995); Orloff, "Social Provision and Regulation: Theories of States, Social Policies, and Modernity"; Shireen Hassim, "Turning Gender Rights into Entitlements: Women and Welfare Provision in Postapartheid South Africa," *Social Research* 72, no. 3 (October 1, 2005): 621–46; Andries Bezuidenhout et al., "Globalisation and Poverty: Impacts on Households of Employment and Restructuring in the Textiles Industry of South Africa," *Journal of International Development* 19, no. 5 (2007): 545–65.
[167] Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
[168] Barchiesi, "Work in the Constitution of the Human: Twentieth-Century South African Entanglements of Welfare, Blackness, and Political Economy," 151.

Enlightenment ideals of controlling and shaping the future rationally – giving weight to Freud's 'with every tool man (sic) is perfecting his own organs'[169] – in the discourse around the 2012 system. The next two chapters discuss the ideological, infrastructural, and tactile politics of social assistance infrastructure after 2012.

The Modern in and from the South

Analysis of 'the modern' is often located in Europe or through a Eurocentric lens.[170] However, there is a scholarship that asserts that the European modernity theorised by Foucault and others was not only more intensely enacted but also present earlier in non-European locations as a result of colonisation. Marx, while still pivoting his analysis on Europe, pointed out that the origins of modernity included the force of colonisation (including by colonising corporations).[171] Governmental power over a group calibrated as 'the population', says Partha Chatterjee, was used first in colonised territories *outside* of Europe.[172] As the introduction chapter mentioned and this chapter expands upon, governmentality using identification documents and biometrics (along with many other infrastructures of control) were rolled out in the global South much before they were ever used on a large scale in the North.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides a seminal account of how the European 'culture' as an identity is composed through colonial exploits.[173] The critical scholarship that troubles modernity as anchored to Europe warns, however, that there is the risk of homogenisation of the modern if one simply reverses the directionality of experience and 'invention' of the modern from the South to the North. While this may provide a counter-narrative to the centrality of the North, it does again fix modernity as a thing that can be moved around as a block. In order to govern the experiences they had of the colonies, colonisers obsessed about ordering these worlds through identity categories. This *simultaneously* reformulated and reshaped European identity. The making of the modern and the rational subject it deploys should be thought of as iterative and temporally and spatially volatile. Where narratives,

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[169] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents.*, trans. J Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), 43.
[170] Craig Calhoun, "The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 305–38.
[171] Karl Marx, *Capital Vol 1* (Penguin Books Limited, 1992).
[172] Partha Chatterjee, "Two Poets and Death: On Civil and Political Society in the Non-Christian World," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell, vol. 11, Contradictions of Modernity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
[173] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Representations of the Orient [1978]* (London: Penguin, 2003); Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell, vol. 11, Contradictions of Modernity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

including those of Foucault, chart the rise of modernism from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the elevation of biopower – the governance of individual and collective bodies' life and death – these elements were present in earlier theories of Enlightenment and in the exploits of empire. Timothy Mitchell provides the example of the Caribbean to illustrate this.[174] In his dissertation on colonial repair garages in Tanzania, Joshua Grace charts the ways that modernisation is shaped by local knowledge and technological practices and how, after independence, the young men's ability to 'creatively' mobilise their automobile knowledge challenged colonial and racial hierarchies.[175] These cases magnify how the earlier examples of the temporal and spatial homogenisation of 'the modern' can erroneously ignore (and re-inscribe and reify) 'race' and empire.

The following sections speak to some of the debates above. The skewed racial provision of both private and public social protection presumes a 'social' that has assemblages in 'race', nation, employment, and control. While provision of social protection provides some material amelioration of hardships, who it is delivered to, when, and why can be a violent process of exclusion from the social and goes on to affect sociality. The effects of modernisation in conjunction with neoliberal reforms in the global South shifted the idea of the state as an institution that could promote development to one where the state was viewed as inimical to the project of development.[176] A similar question to that of Akhil Gupta in his research on bureaucracy and structural inequality in India arises– that is, how do we understand how the state 'simultaneously articulates inclusion and care with arbitrariness and structural violence'?[177]

Social Welfare in South Africa: From Poor Whites to Apartheid

Colin Bundy writes that the 'poor white problem' generated governmental anxiety from as early as the 1890s[178] in the Cape, when 'there was a redefinition of poverty (which reflected a metropolitan as well as a local ideological shift) as a social problem to be tackled by state action

[174] Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," 13.
[175] Joshua Grace, "Modernization Bubu: Cars, Roads, And the Politics of Development in Tanzania, 1870s - 1980s" (Doctor of Philosophy, Michigan State University, 2013).
[176] Gillian Patricia Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 25; Antina von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 22.
[177] Akhil Gupta, *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 41.
[178] Bundy notes though, that although this was the stage that poor whites became acknowledged as a generalised 'problem', there were poor whites in the decades prior to this.

rather than as a phenomenon of individual failure to be assuaged by charity'.[179] In the 19th century, however, measures to address the 'poor white problem', partly owing to the relatively low numbers of white people, did not concentrate on state social assistance. Furthermore, it was late in this century that, as explained earlier, Britain's ideologies of poverty shifted to focus on how and where people lived; that is, their social environment. Fears of poor whiteness in South Africa converged with changes in thinking about poverty in colonial Britain. This intensified measures, especially from the Native Affairs Department, to enforce racial residential segregation – especially of the urban poor - and to heighten control of where black people lived and were able to work.[180]

Of course, the 'poor white problem' was not merely a financial anxiety, it also presumed a 'black problem' which included the 'mixing' of black and white people in urban areas. But, in general, even the small white population received primarily employment-related protections including racially segregated occupations (job reservation for white workers), benefits, and education and training, instead of any form of generalised social assistance.[181] Evidence of racialised practices include the 1911 Native Labour Regulation Act which protected white jobs and ensured a pool of cheap African labourers (especially for the mines) who faced legislated restrictions on their movement in urban areas. From the 1890s into the first decade of the 20th century, government supplied welfare to white farmers in the form of tax relief, program subsidies, and technical and infrastructural advice, all of which served to promote the commercialisation of white farms and the suffocation of African peasants who would thus be forced into wage labour.[182] Between 1910 and 1937 state welfare was only directed towards white and to a lesser extent 'coloured' people.[183] The exclusion of African and Indian populations was justified on the grounds that these groups had extended familial and customary

[179] Colin Bundy, "Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape before Poor Whiteism," in *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*, ed. William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido (South Africa: Ravan Press, 1986), 104.
[180] Bundy, "Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape before Poor Whiteism."
[181] Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, *Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa* (Yale University Press, 2005); Franco Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): 561–75.
[182] Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the African Peasantry* (London: James Currey Publishers, 1988), 116. For a rich background on the lives and pressures faced by share croppers see Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996).
[183] These were racial categories used by the state. For more background on the complexities of this categorisation, particularly with regard to the term "coloured", see the edited collection Zimitri Erasmus, ed., *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place - New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books and SAHO, 2001).

support.[184] This logic would extend into social assistance rhetoric, into the migrant labour system, and through to the present. The argument was that African people could 'go home' to a rural homestead and be cared for and live on smaller amounts of money. This argument has served as 'justification' for lower wages and lower assistance payments.

Since wage labour has been fundamental in the analysis of the realm of the social and social protection in particular it follows that it is valuable to note that early industrialisation and the laws that forced Africans into cheap wage labour in South Africa resulted in a relatively permanent urbanised working class. This economic context provided an opportunity for the country to establish fiscal foundations for social assistance programs.[185] Old age pensions were extended to the white population in the 1920s as part of the epic redistributive effort on the part of the state in response to the 'poor white problem'.[186] The Old Age Pensions Act Number 22 of 1928 introduced old age pensions for the white and 'coloured' populations. The government hoped that social assistance for poor whites could serve as a possible buttress against the rise of 'racial cohabitation' in the slums of urban areas.[187] The measures also tried to militate against any potential class solidarity and white resistance as well as to ensure the security of white labour in the growing urban areas. The Pact Government, a coalition of the Labour Party and the Afrikaner National Party, was elected in 1924 on a ticket that promised to protect white jobs and respectability. Jeremy Seekings writes that the provision of pensions in 1928 was part of the response of '"civilised labour" policies by which the Pact Government sought to raise all white people to "civilized" standards of living, above rather than below or alongside the "native" (African) population.'[188]

Between 1929 and 1930 the Carnegie Commission codified many of the above concerns about white poverty. Stephen Devereux explains further that the implementation of the old age pensions for white people in 1928 can be understood in terms of the two theories of 'welfare industrialisation' and 'interest group theory', where the general white population used their

[184] Sandy Liebenberg and Allison Tilley, "Background Paper Compiled for the South African National Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO) and the South African Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Gender Equality," Social Security Theme, Poverty and Inequality Hearings, (April 28, 1998).
[185] Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy," 263.
[186] Jeremy Seekings, "'Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under': Swartgevaar and the Origins of South Africa's Welfare State, 1924-1929," *Journal of African History* 48, no. 3 (2007): 375.
[187] Susan Parnell, "Slums, Segregation and Poor Whites in Johannesburg, 1920-1934," in *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940*, ed. Robert Morrell, 1992, 115–29; Seekings, "Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under'."
[188] Seekings, "Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under'," 378.

political and economic sway to cushion the white labourers migrating to the cities of South Africa.[189] Along with support, scholars have also argued that old age pensions for white people from 1928 were methods of control, paternalism and an assertion of the need for self-determination.[190] Old age pensions were just one of many 'welfare' measures directed towards solving the 'poor white problem'; further interventions included job reservation, and laws in the 1930s which advanced white housing schemes with rental subsidisation for their residents.

A basic social welfare program was instituted in 1937 and, to manage the various provisions, the Department of Welfare was established in that same year. Despite this, for most of the 1930s state welfare for Africans was limited to emergency relief measures like food parcels and short-term work. The United Party, which came to power in 1933, made small welfare concessions like the exemption of elderly Africans from paying taxes.[191] Liezl Gevers notes the important role that the Blind Person's Act passed in 1936 played in ushering in an old age pension for Africans; the Act facilitated a monthly payment to blind Africans through the Department of Native Affairs.[192] Gevers explains that once the grant for the blind was established, it was difficult to 'prove' and police blindness. As a result the number of people receiving the monthly state income escalated and, in 1944, the old age pension was officially extended to 'Indians' and Africans in urban areas.

The move from the blind persons' grant to the provision of old age pensions to Africans did not occur in a vacuum. Seekings notes that in 1928 there was little opposition by Africans to their exclusion from the 'white' and 'coloured' pension provisions. He explains that this may be because of the more generalised deepening of racism that affected everyday African life as well as the more immediately pressing concern of Africans concerning imminent disenfranchisement in the Cape.[193] Once the pension payments moved from edict to implementation, however, African opposition to the discriminatory pension provisions became more apparent and vocal. Gevers outlines the formal opposition; resolutions which condemned

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[189] Stephen Devereux, "Social Pensions in Southern Africa in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): 539–60.
[190] Seekings, "Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under'."
[191] Liezl Gevers, "Black Sash and Red Tape: The Plight of the African Aged in KwaZulu and Natal, 1979 - 1990" (Honours in History, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012), 11.
[192] Liezl Gevers, "'We Cannot Carry Our Own Poverty': The Development and Evolution of the Old Age and Social Pension Scheme for Africans in the Union of South Africa, 1937-1947," in *History of Welfare Policy in South Africa* (Workshop on Social Protection in Africa, Center for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town, 2014).
[193] Seekings, "Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under'," 391–392.

African exclusion from old age pensions were passed at the two Non-European Conferences in Cape Town in January of 1930 and 1931, and another Conference of the Transkeian Territories General Council in April 1930 also petitioned the government to let Africans be eligible for state-provided old age pensions.[194]

Old age pensions were paid by the central government until 1959 when the responsibility was transferred to the Bantu Authorities. Departmental name changes along with changes in which administrative entity would oversee social protection administration – particularly for Africans – are informative. They indicate variations in the state's emphases and shifting ideas of where responsibility for social protection should lie. In the 1950s, with trained sociologist Hendrik Verwoerd as the Minister of the Department of Native Affairs and later as the Prime Minister, the state embraced bureaucracy with a particular obsession with ordering and accounting for the black population.[195] In 1958 state pensions were moved from the Department of Labour to the new Department of Welfare and Pensions. This shift relates to the movement from social insurance – presuming contributory waged labour – to non-contributory forms of social welfare and assistance. Soon after that, in 1961, as apartheid legislation deepened and the ideology of segregation escalated into the formation of bantustans (described in more historical detail in the following section), welfare for African people came to be administered by the Department of Bantu Administration.

While there was always racial discrimination in pension and welfare provision, the emphasis on separating welfare services along racial lines in all areas of administration was heightened from the 1960s. At the formation of the Republic in 1961, white pensions paid up to five times that of pensions to black people.[196] Furthermore, separation in the private sector was also encouraged by the provision of different salary scales for different 'races'. State provision for Africans was patchy and unreliable, particularly outside of urban areas. Of those living in rural areas, it was in the bantustans – where people were poorest – that the greatest racial and spatial gaps in social welfare were exposed.

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[194] Gevers, "Black Sash and Red Tape: The Plight of the African Aged in KwaZulu and Natal, 1979 - 1990," 10.
[195] The place this bureaucratic recording holds in establishing biometric repositories is discussed in the introduction and more extensively in Keith Breckenridge's work on registration and population control.
[196] Liebenberg and Tilley, "Background Paper Compiled for the South African National Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition (SANGOCO) and the South African Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Gender Equality."

The Fragmentation of Social Assistance and bantustans

Social welfare administration and control in South Africa has gone through many variations from centralisation to decentralisation and back again. The formation of the bantustans was consolidated under 'high apartheid', marked in the historiography as beginning in 1960.[197] Bantustans were areas divided along dubious linguistic lines; people were forced to move to these 'nations' regardless of where they were born, worked, or based at the time. Before this, there were two land-specific pieces of legislation in 1913 and in 1936 which became important progenitors (or harbingers) to the 'high apartheid' policies of 'separate development' and facilitated bantustan formation. The 1913 Land Act legislated that black South Africans could only live on or purchase designated and limited land. The 1936 Native Land and Trust Act established an entity called the South African Native Trust; the Trust could buy land and either add it to the existing reserves or keep it 'in trust' allowing the land to be occupied by black South Africans on a 99-year lease.

In 1951 the apartheid state passed the Bantu Authorities Act which 'established a hierarchy of Bantu authorities: tribal, regional, and territorial. These had limited legislative, executive, and judicial powers, each guided and ultimately controlled by whites.'[198] The 1955 Tomlinson Committee reinforced the Bantu Authorities Act and emphasised the 'necessity' for territorial segregation.[199] The Tomlinson Committee went on to map how this territorial segregation could be organised: it proposed an expansion of the existing reserve areas, and advanced the appointment of nominally independent territorial authorities on an ethnic basis.[200] The formation of the bantustans followed apartheid's 'separate development plan'; the bantustans manifested a myriad of bureaucratic structures with 13 'national' and four provincial head offices plus three coordinating departments; this unsurprisingly resulted in administrative disarray, repetition of personal information, and lack of administrative oversight.[201] Bantustans were created by the apartheid state to be 'independent nations' ruled by chiefs. Transkei was established in 1963 as the first independent 'nation' but in effect was headed by proxies for the Pretoria government. These bantustans were certainly not created with the efficiency of welfare provision in mind and, as Lund notes, '[t]hose on the periphery lost track of what it was that the

[197] Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[198] Jeffrey Butler, Robert I. Rotberg, and John Adams, *The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 28.
[199] Sarah Godsell, "Blurred Borders of Belonging: Hammanskraal Histories 1942-2002" (University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, 2015), 52.
[200] Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[201] Frances Lund, *Changing Social Policy: The Child Support Grant in South Africa* (HSRC Press, 2008), 11.

centre was still administering'.[202] In the ten bantustan areas, there was not one government-subsidised private rural welfare organisation.[203] Despite the attempts at population control and surveillance, population registration spanned 'a dozen discrete yet overlapping and duplicated population registers'.[204] In the 1970s, as the capitalist economy began to idle and workers' struggles intensified, reluctant reforms were made in the provision of social assistance. In response, conservative economists lamented that the 'improved coverage of Black people may put the fiscal viability of the system in jeopardy'.[205] It was at this time in the late 1970s that these economists overtly welcomed neoliberal ideas. In addition to official state programs guided by these apartheid-era economists, private entities began to make themselves available to shift 'urban reforms' away from an overtly 'political' terrain realm into the auspices of business and its resultant bureaucratic and technical realm.[206] Von Schnitzler explains, as I outlined in the introduction of this thesis, that understanding the history of neoliberalism in South Africa allows a breadth of thought that accounts for the way that the political rationality was more 'haphazard' than a combination of internal and external pressures after 1994. She writes,

> The history of the circulation of neoliberal ideas also destabilizes conventional ways of thinking about neoliberalism and enables a tracing of such continuities and discontinuities across several registers and multiple terrains. Thus, rather than being merely an effect of the external influence of international financial institutions in the aftermath of liberation in 1994, by the late 1970s, neoliberal thought had already emerged as a conceptual resource that could be pragmatically drawn on by reformers and linked to a larger project of urban reform and counterinsurgency.[207]

In the push to shift political concerns into the realm of administration, fragmentation was compounded: the intensified implementation of complex and often opaque systems of registration, particularly for adult black men.[208] In 1983 the National Party (NP), the ruling political party under apartheid, introduced a new parliamentary system composed of three

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[202] Ibid., 12.
[203] Frances Lund, "State Social Benefits in South Africa," *International Social Security Review* 46, no. 1 (1993): 5–25.
[204] Keith Breckenridge, "The Biometric State: The Promise and Peril of Digital Government in the New South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 2 (June 1, 2005): 276.
[205] S Van der Berg, "Issues in South African Social Security," Background Paper Prepared for the World Bank (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 1994), 4.
[206] von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid*, 23.
[207] Ibid.
[208] These registration systems, which were present prior to 1948 and beyond, served to monitor movement into urban areas and to regulate African employment.

houses for white, coloured and Indian people respectively. The Tricameral Parliament presented only a veneer of inclusivity and was largely rejected by black South Africans. In 1984 the Tricameral Parliament declared welfare an 'own affair' (and thus to be administered internally by the various racially delineated population groups) thus compounding and extending the fragmentation. The disorganisation and disconnects in administering welfare during the apartheid era established the fault lines for future attempts to redress skewed social grant administration and provision.

In the 1980s, the NP made desperate attempts to gain legitimacy and equalised the value of pensions for 'racial groups'.[209] They attempted, in their words, to 'harmonise' the Republic's and the bantustans' policies with regard to social assistance.[210] Welfare services were used as a platform for rolling out infrastructure projects, for instance, roads were needed in order to transport money to claimants. Simultaneously, bureaucratic recording connected to welfare rollouts was used to trace and identify resistance leaders.[211] In the 1980s and 1990s, with structural adjustment programs in force, policy attempted to cope with the consequences of a macroeconomic policy characterised by escalating privatisation and solidifying neoliberal reforms.[212]

Moving Towards Elections

In sub-Saharan Africa, programs to provide cash transfers to the poor from both private donors and the state had been on the rise.[213] By the early 1990s the positive impact of the grants in South Africa was widely accepted and, three years later, the system had formally renounced racial discrimination.[214] As early as 1992 the South African Social Assistance Act made provision for pensions to be paid to all elderly citizens regardless of 'race'. In policy conferences and congresses leading up to the 1994 elections, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) demanded the integration of non-contributory social assistance and contributory employment-based social insurance.[215] The ANC however, rejected this call and maintained the two separate systems as had been in place under apartheid: social insurance and

[209] Van der Berg, "Issues in South African Social Security," 7.
[210] Ibid., 14.
[211] Lund, *Changing Social Policy*, 13.
[212] Van der Berg, "Issues in South African Social Security," vi.
[213] Marito Garcia and Charity MT Moore, *The Cash Dividend: The Rise of Cash Transfer Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank, 2012).
[214] Lund, *Changing Social Policy*.
[215] Franco Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa* (Scottsville: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 69.

social assistance. After the 1994 elections, the NP was given the welfare portfolio under the sharing arrangement of the 1994 Government of National Unity (GNU) made up of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), COSATU, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the NP.

The new Department of Welfare was burdened with a complex and scattered legacy. While the social assistance budget grew, it was not accompanied with an equal growth in the number of skilled planners and administrators to distribute the grants.[216] For example, social workers were employed but were not sufficiently trained in grant processes. Furthermore, the grant information software SOCPEN was inefficient at addressing the multiplicity of problems involved in the welfare system, many of which were inherited and inherent in its design. While the Department of Welfare operated nationally, in 1994 departments of health and welfare were combined under the purview of one MEC per province. This resulted in a massive amount of work amassed under a single coordinating member in each province. Frances Lund also notes that these MECs were not equipped to manage the epic task of welfare oversight and were also not representative of the constituencies they served: of the nine MECs, eight were men and six were medical doctors.[217] In the following short sections that follow I consider the committees that were constituted after 1994 to specifically address questions about social welfare policy.

The Chikane Commission

The first of the four committees between 1996 and 2000, the *Committee for Restructuring of Social Security,* was led by deputy president Thabo Mbeki's advisor, Frank Chikane, and was informally referred to as the Chikane Commission. The Commission formed in 1996 was appointed to review the social security system in totality and concluded that it was undergoing a crisis. Key recommendations from the report included the need for a nationally organised social security system that would be implemented with a specified administrative budget and where management would be standardised and integrated. One of the recommendations of the Commission that was implemented and whose effects ricochet into present struggles and contestations was a call for the outsourcing of the distribution of social grant payments. The Commission's primary finding that social security was in crisis prompted them to propose

[216] Lund, *Changing Social Policy*, 29.
[217] Ibid.

outsourcing as a solution to address efficiency. The two private companies contracted were Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) and AllPay.

The 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare

Within the climate of austerity, the Department of Welfare and Population Development issued a relatively conservative 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare, which focused on legislative reforms. This was in the context of a trend towards developmental social welfare internationally.[218] The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) position was to advance 'development' rather than the transfer of money from the fiscus to social welfare programs. This perspective emphasised that people be 'masters of their own destiny' and embraced the call for 'development and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities, teaching them to be self-reliant'.[219] In a similar vein the White Paper embraced the need for individual financial discipline. The White Paper also emphasised the difference between social insurance and social assistance explained in the introduction. The document outlined that public welfare expenditure be directed to the 'special needs' of individuals, largely the elderly, children and persons with disabilities, who were structurally impeded from entering the labour market. The White Paper carries particular weight in current welfare policy in South Africa because it is in the process of being reviewed. This review process allows policy makers and commentators to comment and critique the welfare system as it currently operates. In the conclusion of this thesis, I discuss the process and the findings of this review with emphasis on the dynamics of the post-2012 social assistance infrastructure.

The Lund Committee and the Child Support Grant

The first large-scale overhaul of welfare policy in post-apartheid South Africa came with the reform of children's benefits under the government-appointed Lund Committee for Child and Family Support and the introduction of the Child Support Grant (CSG) in 1998. In April 1998, following the Lund Committee, a new form of state social assistance was introduced for poor children from birth to their seventh birthday. The CSG pays a small monthly cash amount to poor children via their primary caregivers in a pioneering and arguably progressive 'follow the child' policy and is currently payable to children under the age of 18.

[218] Republic of South Africa, "White Paper for Social Welfare" (Pretoria: Department of Welfare, 1997).
[219] Zola Skweyiya, "The Service Delivery Model: Foreword by the Minister of Social Development," 2006, www.welfare.gov.za/Documents/2006/sdm.doc.

The new CSG expressed the sentiments of progressive policy makers as well as brought to the fore the limitations that policy makers faced in trying to advance their views in the face of political opposition.[220] Policy interventions around social assistance generally considered 'the family' as the core organising unit towards which welfare policy was directed.[221] The CSG shifted this somewhat through the 'follow the child' method, but the grant did not challenge the underlying assumption of women and children as 'dependents'. It also still presumed mothering as a 'natural' responsibility, as evidenced by the three times bigger grant paid to foster parents compared with the CSG. Shireen Hassim explains that this approach (which maintained 'the family' and particularly biological maternal relations as the de facto unit of care) dominated in the absence of strong feminist organising.[222] This paternalistic approach also forecloses alternative possibilities such as 'state-provided institutions of care, or of support for socialised programs of care, particularly for the very young and the very old'.[223]

While the Lund Committee was investigating aspects of social welfare during 1996, the South African government embraced a more conservative neoliberal macroeconomic policy in the form of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program.[224] The cash transfer being suggested by the Lund Committee was initially intended to be a universal benefit for all children up to a certain age. However, because of both fiscal constraints and, importantly, resistance to the universal benefit, the 'benefit' became the 'grant' and universality was displaced by means tests.[225] Frances Lund explained, 'This is an uncertain climate for social security, and there is a lack of popular and political support for the grants for women. If we devise a plan within the fiscal limits set by GEAR (whose basic message was, come up within the existing envelope) we are unlikely to retain the existing budget for family-related social security. If not, we'll lose it.'[226] The Committee made the decision to withdraw the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) in order, as Lund defends, to reach millions of poor women and children through the CSG. It was the decision to withdraw the SMG that marked the

[220] Shireen Hassim, "Social Justice, Care and Developmental Welfare in South Africa: A Capabilities Perspective," *Social Dynamics* 34, no. 2 (2008): 110.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Hassim, "Social Justice, Care and Developmental Welfare in South Africa: A Capabilities Perspective."
[223] Ibid., 110.
[224] Elisabeth Ardington and Frances Lund, "Pensions and Development: Social Security as Complementary to Programmes of Reconstruction and Development," *Development Southern Africa* 12, no. 4 (1995): 557–77.
[225] Lund, *Changing Social Policy*, x.
[226] Quoted in Shireen Hassim, "Gender Equality and Developmental Social Welfare in South Africa," in *Gender and Social Policy in a Global Context: Uncovering the Gendered Structure of the "Social,"* ed. Shireen Hassim and Shahra Razavi (Basingtsoke: Palgrave, 2006), 236.

movement from racialised 'depth' (larger grants afforded mostly to 'coloured' and Indian women) to generalised 'breadth' (smaller grants that were paid to claimants regardless of 'race').

Unravelling 'Unconditionality'

Cash transfers, say Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme in their book *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South*,[227] represent a change in thinking around poverty reduction; they are not charity, nor short-term, and they reach large sections of the population, even in places where the transfers are conditional. The authors argue that cash transfers in the global South have been speedily and widely instituted mostly as a result of the failures of neoliberalism.[228] The 'southern response' is a phrase used to describe grant payment in the form of cash transfers that burgeoned in many parts of the global South. The paradigmatic shift of the 'southern response' in the 21st century happened most quickly in Brazil, Mexico and South Africa – countries where precarious conditions are heightened.[229] Already 45 countries throughout Africa, Asia and South America give cash transfers to 110 million families with dramatic variations in scale and amounts paid depending on local conditions, histories and politics.[230] Hanlon et al assert that cash transfers should be made unconditional in order to best work towards poverty alleviation and that cash transfers are a direct challenge, whether intended or not, to the belief that the poor are wholly or partly to 'blame' for their circumstances.[231] *Just Give Money to the Poor* provides a broad-brushstroke account of country case studies and so overlooks the multidimensional reasons, histories, and geographies of poverty in the places which they survey. The authors also fail to establish why institutions which typify neoliberal policies, like the World Bank, encourage cash transfers as an anti-poverty measure.[232] This omission means that throughout the text cash transfers are presumed to ameliorate the vilification of poor people for their poverty. This one plane of analysis denies readers an analysis of the mechanisms through which cash transfers place responsibility and risk at the site of individual claimants.

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[227] Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos, and David Hulme, *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Kumarian Press, 2010).
[228] Ibid.
[229] Van der Berg, "Issues in South African Social Security," 20.
[230] Ibid., 47.
[231] Hanlon, Barrientos, and Hulme, *Just Give Money to the Poor*, 10.
[232] World Bank, "Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty" (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2009).

The CSG, like other cash transfers provided by the state, began by being 'unconditional' in that their receipt was not officially tied to the fulfilment of any behavioural requirements. I established the schematic requirements of the means test in the introductory chapter. Means tests have been shown to be structurally exclusionary and are far from being purely objective exercises in scientific rationality.[233] Instituting behavioural 'conditions' along with means tests add an additional level of administration to grant delivery. The Brazilian example, where grants are conditional as well as means tested, is instructive. In Brazil, the economic crises of the mid-1990s as well as the impact of the 1998 Asian economic crisis contributed to the then president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, introducing cash transfers between 1996 and 1999 for food and gas, and to assist in eradicating child labour. The school grant – Bolsa Escolar – moved from the municipal level to being instituted nationally in 2001 and by 2002 reached 8.2 million children.[234] All the cash transfers were consolidated in 2003 into the family grant – la Bolsa Familia. The family grant is means tested and the conditional requirements are clinic attendance and 85 per cent school attendance. There are also rural and urban pension schemes and altogether, 74 million people or 39 per cent of the population directly benefit from social transfers.[235] Brazil is an example of a federally organised and overseen social assistance 'eligibility database'. The country's 'household targeting system' – Cadastro Único (Cadúnico) – involves an array of detailed, complicated and extensive mechanisms that are meant to target social programs to the poor.

South Africa's social assistance policies and delivery do not come close to this level of assessment regulation and surveillance. Initially, in order to receive the CSG cash transfer, the caregiver was required to have a green South African identity document (ID) with a thirteen-digit ID number. The child was also required to have a birth certificate recording their registration at birth. By 2001, 400,000 new CSG beneficiaries were being added each year and by 2010 more than ten million children were claimants.[236] More recently, grants that were initiated and envisioned as 'unconditional' began to require primary school attendance.[237] During my observations of children being registered on to the social assistance system, not once

[233] Prishani Naidoo, "The Making of 'The Poor' in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg and Orange Farm" (Doctor of Philosophy, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010).
[234] Hanlon, Barrientos, and Hulme, *Just Give Money to the Poor*, 39.
[235] Ibid., 40.
[236] Frances Lund, "Children, Citizenship and Child Support: The Child Support Grant in South Africa," in *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*, ed. Keith Breckenridge and Simon Szreter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 475–94.
[237] Republic of South Africa, "Government Gazette, Republic of South Africa Regulation Gazette No. 9192; Vol. 533," November 27, 2009.

was a carer requested to provide proof that the child attends school. South Africa has almost 100 per cent primary school attendance and the seemingly redundant implementation of such a conditionality points to pressures to show, at least in policy, that recipients are following certain normative moral and social prescriptions.[238]

Comparatively (or to some extent), the legislated 'unconditionality' of grants was a progressive feature that lifted many administrative burdens for poor mothers in particular. But, there were many features of the CSG that were steeped in pragmatism and in the politics of 'fiscal restraint' which re-emphasised responsibiliation. While not decreed in policy, arbitrariness and moral judgements on the part of officials and retailers, as well as numerous bureaucratic hurdles, make grant receipt intimately linked to what are deemed 'appropriate' behaviours, particularly on the part of young women. South Africa's exceptionality with regard to social assistance is often partly explained by this legislation of 'unconditionality'. There are conditions imposed onto people's bodies and behaviours, sometimes in some of the same ways as in countries where conditionality is legislated. Although there are no formal conditions, the everyday practices impose subtle forms of regulation. These experiences of implicit conditionality are shown throughout this thesis.

Moving into the New Century: From the Department of Welfare to the Department of Social Development

While those in the domain of policy development tussled with possibilities and constraints around social assistance, they foreshadowed this complexity in the name change of the Department of Welfare to the Department of Social Development (DSD) in July 2000 and the increase of the social assistance budget. Even though the cash amount claimants received over the years increased in nominal terms, often these were not inflation-rated. It was possible for the state to claim the year-on-year increase in grants without acknowledging that the cost of living and inflation was growing at a faster rate and therefore that this was not an increase in real terms.[239]

Along with expanding social assistance, the government was retreating from involvement in social insurance and social welfare. Social security and welfare in South Africa have always been

[238] Frances Lund, "A Step in the Wrong Direction: Linking the South Africa Child Support Grant to School Attendance," *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice* 19, no. 1 (2011): 5–14.
[239] Lerato Moloi, "South Africa Survey Online 2014/2015: Social Security," South Africa Survey (Institute of Race Relations, December 4, 2014), 10.

coloured by inequality, both with regards to claimants and resource allocation. Profound levels of inequality stretched into post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, several social protection-related factors remained: a strong private-sector influence in healthcare and retirement, means tests, and a lack of universal state-funded programs.[240] For example, the state does not contribute to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), there is no national retirement program, and there is no current national health insurance. Consequently, this results in the increasing desperation of those in low-wage and precarious work who do not qualify for state grants *and* are not provided with social insurance at their places of work.[241]

The Taylor Committee and a Critique of a Politics of Efficiency

In March 2000, the Cabinet appointed the Taylor Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa. The Committee was constituted of academics, economists, jurists and research organisations and was named for its leadership by Vivienne Taylor, a professor in the Department of Social Development in Cape Town and a special advisor to the then Welfare Minister Zola Skweyiya. Initially there was an absence of civil society representation in the Taylor Commission, an omission that was partly rectified by civil society consultations later that year. In 2002 the Taylor Committee published a report that acknowledged the fragmentation of social security in South Africa and advocated for a 'comprehensive system of social security'.[242] The Committee found that the correlation between increase in efficiency and a decrease in poverty is dubious. They noted that even if there was 100 per cent efficacy of the grant payment system and its uptake, more than half the South African population would still live in poverty.

Basic Income Grant (BIG) Debates

Despite economic growth, the early years of the 2000s saw a decline in the number of decent jobs and a rise in protests across the country against the government's failure to deliver on its promises.[243] It was in this milieu that debates around a universal grant found fertile soil. The

[240] Elize S. Van Eeden, Elma H. Ryke, and I. C. De Necker, "The Welfare Function of the South African Government before and after Apartheid," *Social Work - Stellenbosch* 36, no. 1 (2000): 1–24.
[241] Franco Barchiesi, "Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa," Centre for Civil Society Research Report (Durban: UKZN, 2004); Lund, *Changing Social Policy*, 6.
[242] Republic of South Africa, "Transforming the Present - Protecting the Future: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa," March 2002, x.
[243] Natasha Vally and Jane Duncan, "National Trends Around Protest Action: Mapping Protest Action in South Africa" (Center for Sociological Research and the Freedom of Expression Institute, 2009) The ANC has, in the run-up to all elections campaigned around slogans such as "A Better Life for All" and "Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!"

Taylor Committee did show an appreciation of the 'widening gap between wage labour as an icon of official discourse and waged employment as a material social reality'.[244] In their subsequent attempts at reforming social assistance, the Committee recommended a comprehensive income support program anchored by a basic income grant (BIG) of R100 per citizen. This income would be provided without a means test and regardless of income.

Prior to the release of the 2002 Committee report, intensive debates were taking place in public and policy circles about the politics and viability of a BIG. In 2001, as the Taylor Committee's report to cabinet was imminent, Jonny Steinberg argued that 'the choice in SA is not between welfare and Tony Blair's The Third Way. For many, it is between welfare and starvation'.[245] Steinberg shared the concern of unions that the government was using the promise of employment in public works projects as a means to avoid expanding the social protection net. Advocating intensive public works programs may fit into a logic that rests on the values of dignity and self-sufficiency inscribed onto wage labour, however as Steinberg puts it, 'the constitution gives everyone the right to sufficient food, water and social security. It does not say: 'You may eat, as long as you dig a trench in sweltering heat'.[246] Critiques levelled against the public works programs were only one of the debates around the BIG; others included questions of government's responsibility, gender, redistribution, the post-apartheid state and other key political interventions.[247]

Ministers and government officials were concerned about the costs of the BIG. In July 2003 the Cabinet had rejected the introduction of a BIG despite the support of its introduction by many trade unions and non-governmental organisations. In state president[248] Thabo Mbeki's own terminology, welfare benefits would 'abandon' citizens to a life of irresponsibility and the only way that the government could guard against this would be to further regulate welfare

[244] Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy," 562.
[245] Jonny Steinberg, "Social Welfare Blues," *Business Day*, October 24, 2001.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Shireen Hassim, "The Gender Pact and Democratic Consolidation: Institutionalizing Gender Equality in the South African State," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 505–28; Barchiesi, "Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa"; Hassim, "Turning Gender Rights into Entitlements"; Greg Ruiters, *Knowing Your Place: Urban Services and New Modes of Governability in South African Cities* (Durban: Centre for Civil Society, 2005); Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy."
[248] Thabo Mbeki served as state president, and president of the ANC, between 1999 and 2008.

provision.[249] In his 2004 budget speech, then Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, announced that 'more generous increases could be a disincentive for people to look for jobs as being disabled could suddenly appear relatively lucrative'.[250] The Taylor Committee's tentative call for a BIG has been largely side-lined in policy discussions since, despite intermittent pressure from the trade union movement, the rhetoric of self-improvement, responsibilisation, and individualisation has solidified in its stead.

The Formation of Sassa

As with many of the commissions prior to the formation of Sassa, the Public Service Commission of 1998 starkly displayed the tensions between provincial and national administration. In 1998 they reported to the Welfare Portfolio Committee task group that provincial officials should be trained to administer services efficiently while being overseen by the national department. Along with the provincial responsibility of administering social grants, the Commission also recommended a national database, specification of types and amounts of grants, and that the social security fiscus should be controlled nationally and allocations should be made to provinces. They identified past backlogs as a national responsibility and decreed that all future bottlenecks were to be a provincial concern.

This 1998 Commission was not the first to suggest a social assistance system that would be overseen by a national body. The Taylor Committee advanced a similar organisation which would facilitate a more stable social protection system. One of the areas where the recommendations were implemented was around its findings that a 'revised operational framework is required to ensure effective service delivery in both social assistance and social insurance'.[251] They went on to recommend 'the implementation of a social security board (reporting to the Minister of Social Development) and agency (reporting to the social security board) to operationalise various social security functions outside of the civil service'.[252] In order to show how Sassa was envisaged, it is worth quoting the Committee's recommendations for the functions of the social security agency in full:

[249] Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*, 10.
[250] Ibid., 102.
[251] Republic of South Africa, "Taylor Committee Report," 122.
[252] Ibid., 122–124.

> Social assistance: The agency will have the function of managing the non-contributory social assistance fund, including budget determination and grant administration.
>
> Social insurance: The agency will become the oversight authority for all social insurance funds operating in South Africa. This will not extend to policy control, as this function will rest with the lead ministers responsible for particular policy areas.
>
> Intermediary services: The important interface between the general public and all areas of the social security system, whether contributory or non-contributory, would become the responsibility of the social security agency. The agency may be developed eventually into an intermediary between the general public and relevant Government departments (e.g. Home Affairs) or social assistance and social insurance institutions (e.g. UIF, COIDA).[253]

The South African Social Security Agency dates back to 2005. Its existence was mandated by the South African Social Security Agency Act, (No 13 of 2004) signed by then President Thabo Mbeki on the 28th May 2004. The Social Assistance Act (2004), a precursor to the Social Security Agency Act, made the National Department of Social Development responsible for regulating social assistance in South Africa including developing policy and monitoring the work of Sassa.[254] Sassa was established in line with this general push for the centralisation of social grant delivery, and in particular in response to the above call for an interface between the public and the social security system. This centralisation was a dramatic move from various grant payment bodies each with their own systems of delivery and administration. In 2007, the Gauteng Social Development MEC, Kgaogelo Lekgoro, argued that the creation of Sassa allowed for the 'Department of Social Development to give more attention to other social welfare services needed in our communities' – that is, the Department would then not be bogged down by grant administration and payment and could focus more attention on social welfare measures other than grants.[255] Another Social Development MEC from the Free State, Mantseng Tsopo, stated in the same year that the Service Level Agreement signed between the department and Sassa would 'certify the extent to which the government is able to account at the provincial level on the extension of access to grants by our people, it will increasingly link

[253] Republic of South Africa, "Taylor Committee Report."
[254] Kalie Pauw and Liberty Mncube, "Expanding the Social Security Net in South Africa: Opportunities, Challenges and Constraints.," DPRU Working Paper (Cape Town: Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town, 2007).
[255] Gauteng Social Development, "Advert: Gauteng Social Development Leading the Way," *Leadership SA*, October 1, 2007.

services of the department of social security, and it will also ensure that these service are delivered to reflect the ethos of People First – Batho Pele'.[256]

Social Grants for Political Support

In his 2013 budget speech, Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, announced that South Africa's welfare net was to grow marginally with a 9.2 per cent increase to R120 billion in 2014.[257] The amount paid per month to grant recipients amounts to approximately R105 billion.[258] In particular, old age and disability grants were both increased to R1,260, foster care grants were to rise to R800 and child support grants were reconfigured to an amount of R300.[259] In the same budget speech, Gordhan also exhorted stricter spending by the state. Alongside this, he celebrated the impact that increased social spending – including a threefold increase of people receiving social grants in the last decade – had made in the lives of South Africans. The contrasting sentiments of these two statements echo past declarations of the financial burden of grants alongside the importance of state assistance of those living in poverty.[260]

A key reason for this, as scholars have argued, is that social grants do serve to entrench and garner political loyalties from poor communities.[261] Working in Bushbuckridge, the municipality where my research was undertaken, Isak Niehaus exposed local patronage networks ensuring ANC support through grants.[262] The point that relief-giving is functional in 'regulating the political and economic behaviour of the poor' is a convincing and longstanding narrative around welfare provision.[263] Despite this narrative, my research cautions against a straightforward causality between social grants and political behaviour. Grant claimants' support for local political parties is contested and debated, and while the ANC wins most wards in

[256] Jabulani Dlamini, "Changes to Get Back on Track," *Express*, October 12, 2007.
[257] National Treasury, "Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan Presents the 2013 Budget Speech," *South African Government Information*, February 27, 2013, http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=34533&tid=99785.
[258] Sangonet, "Govt Tackles Social Grants Fraud and Corruption," *Sangonet Pulse*, June 19, 2012, http://www.ngopulse.org/newsflash/govt-tackles-social-grants-fraud-and-corruption.
[259] National Treasury, "Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan Presents the 2013 Budget Speech."
[260] Ibid.
[261] Barchiesi, "South African Debates on the Basic Income Grant: Wage Labour and the Post-Apartheid Social Policy"; Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*.
[262] Isak A Niehaus, "Doing Politics In Bushbuckridge: Work, Welfare And The South African Elections of 2004," *Africa* 76, no. 4 (2006): 526.
[263] Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, eds., *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage, 1971), xv.

Bushbuckridge, it does not appear that people attribute this to the receipt of social grants or the networks connected to their administration or delivery.[264]

Were grants to secure support, then the ostensible individualisation of grant payment through a card-based system would serve to distance claimants from the direct face-to-face influence of patrons. This would be because, were a claimant to collect money from an ATM, for example, there would be fewer opportunities for mass campaigning and provision of food or other items associated with 'buying' votes. This does not imply that patronage politics is rendered null through a card-based system. Certainly there are other pressures of clientelism heaped on claimants, including retailers who employ strategies, some more coercive than others, to encourage spending at their stores. This is covered in more detail in a broader discussion of deductions from social grants in the following chapters. The formation of Sassa, which reports only to the DSD, has resulted in local governmental officials and apparatuses having less of a formalised role in the administration or payment of grants. As a result, localised patronage networks have lost some of their power to ensure political support through the payment of grants. This centralisation has also diminished the possibilities of localised recourse against ineffective or unjust practices of social assistance, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Centralisation of social assistance became a fundamental concern of the post-apartheid government and was the impetus behind the formation of Sassa. Some of this logic of centralisation informed a nationalised system of grant administration and payment. However, centralisation did not provide a salve for the inequality and precarity that were widespread during apartheid. The reality is that centralisation was in many respects just a *different kind of fragmentation*. A national outsourced grant infrastructure mobilised numerous private entities, many connected to Net1, who would control information and distribute grants in un-transparent and non-uniform ways. As Barchiesi says, 'The South African system of social grants ... generalizes and organizes precariousness while containing its undesirable social consequences.'[265] Centralisation with outsourcing as its partner embraces a model which advances technocratic crutches for a system that exploits the poor. This centralisation can be

[264] The Bushbuckridge Residents' Association has support in some wards and is sometimes noted as being a more immediate and legitimate representative of local concerns.
[265] Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*, 104.

seen as a genuine attempt to inject standardisation and efficacy into a grant system; however, it simultaneously allows the social grant system to distance itself from critiques of market rationality and glibly conceives of a 'caring and compassionate state'[266] without the state practicing genuine commitment to such a project. This negotiation is raised by Akhil Gupta who argues in his work on bureaucracy and poverty in India that, 'the goals of efficiency do not necessarily coincide with the goals of justice'.[267]

[266] Ibid.
[267] Gupta, *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*, 25.

CHAPTER TWO

GAPS, LOOPHOLES, AND LOSS IN SOCIAL SECURITY: DEDUCTIONS AND WAITING

Many of the solutions offered by the introduction of the national payment system were premised on making social grant services more efficient and secure. Despite this, efficiency gave way to ambiguity and loss and exposed cracks in the grant system. In certain ways, 2012 rerouted the processes involved in social grant administration and payment. The changes that the private national payment system introduced (or the ideas that failed to materialise) exposed, and sometimes created, breaks and cracks in the social grant system. This chapter considers expectations and failure in South African social assistance, especially after 2012. The chapter also highlights the complexities involved in establishing efficacy as a finite standard, and rather emphasises gaps, loopholes, precarity, and hiccups.[268] Some of the most prolific and obvious cases that showcase slippages between reality and expectations after 2012 include: the way the state and private companies view claimants, instabilities in the technologies themselves, the precarity of a monthly fixed income that is not subject to deductions, the fragility of wage labour, and the broader precarity of the lives of grant claimants. Foregrounding these instances challenges the perspective that privatisation and new technologies necessarily improve systems and experiences.

In the following sections I chart instances where gaps in the 2012 social grant system are apparent: the expansive unauthorised monetary deductions from claimants' accounts, and the new kinds of waiting that the system has introduced. In this chapter, gaps also appear as instances of opaqueness and arbitrariness – gaps in clarity. It follows that a key feature of insecurity is arbitrariness; grant money is not only under threat from cancelations and deductions, but when this happens and to whom also seems largely random. The apparently arbitrary loss of grant money exacerbates broader unpredictability surrounding grants, resulting from a lack of control over time and personal information. All of this underlines the persistent insecurity of life and livelihoods among grant recipients. This kind of arbitrariness is not alien in the context of post-apartheid neoliberal reform in South Africa, where prepaid water and

[268] Akhil Gupta, *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 25.

electricity metres have heightened precarity and resulted in the insecurity that von Schnitzler calls 'living prepaid'.[269] To exemplify, even though access to clean water is fundamental to the sustenance of life, the supply of this resource is not guaranteed by the state. 25 litres per person per day are provided for by the state. However, beyond this people have to pay for water upfront – on a prepaid metre system – and if they do not have the money to pay, they do not receive water. The inability to predict in this instance lies not only with irregular monetary income with which to 'fill the meter', but also the related contingency of whether one will be able to maintain life (through commodified access to water and electricity, and cheap, insecure work).

Social security, in the form of state-funded social grants, is intended to target those seen as 'vulnerable' in society. As this thesis has already suggested, fully understanding vulnerability and insecurity requires analysis of a complex set of factors that extend beyond monetary analyses. By 'monetary analyses' I refer to two interrelated frameworks. The first is the analysis of money as only cash: this is what Jane Guyer calls 'soft' money which is transactional and relational as opposed to 'hard' money that considers the depth of affective and abstract value.[270] The second is the 'economisation' of thinking that Wendy Brown discusses and which this thesis considered in the introduction. With regard to the former (that is thinking of grants as more than just cash income), 'vulnerability' should be taken to mean those parts of life where precarity is not bound by poverty and therefore cannot be remedied simply by the safety net that a financial input provides.

Linda Gordon's instructive text on welfare in the United States, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*, begins with this assessment:[271]

> The hostility is remarkably democratic, however: "Welfare" is hated by the prosperous and the poor, by the women who receive it and by those who feel they are paying for it. It stigmatises its recipients, not least because they are so often suspected of cheating, claiming "welfare" when they could be working or paying their own way. It humiliates its recipients by subjecting them to

[269] Antina von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (2013): 671.
[270] Jane Guyer, "Soft Currencies, Cash Economies, New Monies: Past and Present," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2012, http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1118397109.
[271] These assessments specifically refer to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program in the United States.

> demeaning supervision and invasions of privacy. Yet it does nothing to move poor women and their children out of poverty and often places obstacles in the paths of women's own attempts to do so.[272]

Linda Gordon acknowledges the multiple vulnerabilities faced by claimants including the pervasive presumption of laziness, the ongoing accusations of reckless spending, and failure to consider claimants' lives, histories, and needs as complex and shifting. On the point of the rejection of the 'economisation' of all spheres of life under neoliberalism, I argue that vulnerability and insecurity should not be thought of as the opposite of efficiency. Instead, I posit that analyses of vulnerability should consider all of those parts of life where movement is compromised: this may be because movement is halted or dammed-in or because movement is controlled by entities over which the vulnerable have no control. Following this, this chapter considers how the 2012 system in practice renders claimants and grants insecure with regards to movement: grant money is prone to deductions (the movement of money over which a claimant has no control and potentially an end to movement of money altogether), claimants' personal information is vulnerable (the unknown and unpredictable movement of data), and there is pressure on claimants' time (a hemming-in of the free movement of claimants coupled with a lack of choice and possibilities in 'taking up' or 'using' time).

By contrast, Net1 moves across financial markets and geographies relatively freely. The company insists on its commitment to 'emerging markets' (a sentiment it communicates primarily through the organisation's unofficial spokesperson, its CEO Serge Belamant). And it holds up South Africa as emblematic of its 'market-leading payment processors'.[273] One of the strengths of the company in terms of meeting the contractual requirements for the South African national social assistance tender was its experience in the use and implementation of biometric services in the global South.

Deductions and the Vagaries of the 2012 National Payment System

The most public and endemic insecurity in the current social grant system is deductions from social grants which have occurred more frequently and in new ways since 2012. Debit

[272] Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 2.
[273] Dhruv Chopra, "Press Release: Net1 UEPS Technologies, Inc. Reports Third Quarter 2015 Results," Financial Report, (May 7, 2015), http://www.marketwatch.com/story/net-1-ueps-technologies-inc-reports-third-quarter-2015-results-2015-05-07-16173533.

deductions from grants exposed a serious gap in the efficacy of the 2012 system and exacerbated an absence of money in the bank accounts of claimants. Deductions cover a range of account debits including loan repayments, prescribed debt, multiple funeral schemes, advance electricity and airtime purchases, and even water payments.[274] Regulation 26(A) of the Social Assistance Act states that 'grants may not be transferred, ceded, or pledged or in any way encumbered or disposed of' and that only one deduction for a funeral benefit, not exceeding ten percent of the monthly grant amount, may be authorised by the grant beneficiary and paid by Sassa.[275] No other deductions may be made from a beneficiary's grant through their bank account. Furthermore, officially social grants cannot be used as collateral against a loan. Accusations have been levelled at private financial service providers, some of whom are financially associated with Net1, for using grant claimants' information for direct advertising as well as to deduct loan repayments directly from claimants' accounts. While CPS is paid R2 billion a year from the state for grant distribution, they also earn unspecified additional sums from profits on the sale of airtime, electricity and loans through Net1 subsidiary companies.

The private contracting of Net1 has permitted novel ways of obtaining loans; a claimant can borrow money from private companies associated with Net1 using social grants as a form of surety. Thereafter, the lending private company deducts payments from future grant payouts to that claimant. These loans extract exorbitant interest fees. The assistant manager of a CPS office, Nara Nkanyana, countered the argument that Net1 subsidiaries extract high interest rates, defining them rather as necessary 'service fees'.[276] Delineating cases of clear illegality is difficult; similarly the language of borrowing escapes clarity as it falls into the chasm of wordplay. Despite the disingenuous linguistic deference that replaced 'interest' with 'service fees', the rough forms provided to borrowers in Bushbuckridge confirmed that the additional amount paid on top of a loan was 34.1 per cent.[277] The service fees correlated to the loan amount, which presumed that more service was required for larger loans even though the administrative burdens (explored below) seemed identical. Viewed in this way, the fees behave more like interest than service costs. By marking costs as service fees, laws and limitations

[274] While the state is compelled to provide a fixed amount of free water per month, this often does not reach people or is not sufficient. Some work has shown that households can spend a third of their income on water payments see von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies"; von Schnitzler's work references a study by Michael Nefale, "A Survey on Attitudes Towards Prepaid Meters in Soweto" (Johannesburg: Centre for Applied Legal Studies: University of the Witwatersrand, 2004).
[275] Republic of South Africa, *Social Assistance Act, 2004, Act 13, 2004*, 2004.
[276] Nokuthula Ntuli, "Grants Mixed Up In Microlending," *The Mercury*, September 5, 2014.
[277] Ibid. Under the National Credit Act passed in 2006, the maximum permissible interest rate on loans is 44 percent.

around interest rates do not apply. The reality is that loans taken against social grants pose very little risk of payment defaults. Since the risk is smaller compared to other loans where money is not recouped (almost directly) from a monthly monetary state payout, the interest rate on these loans should be extremely low. Masking interest on loans as service fees obscure the critical point that this is a relatively risk-free environment for Net1 and its subsidiaries.

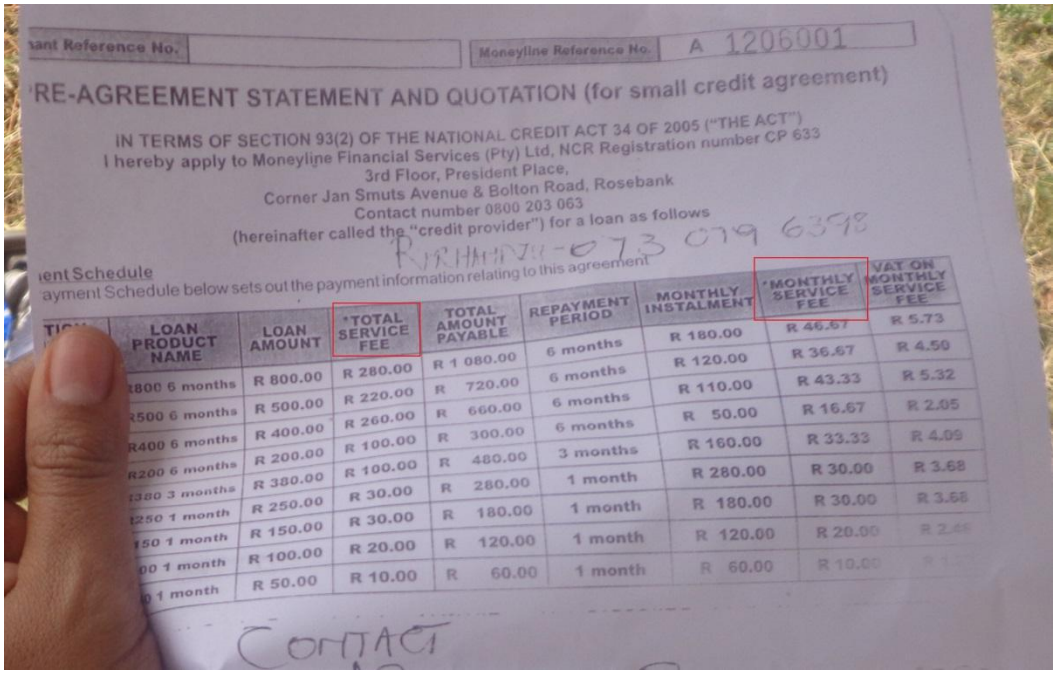


Figure 1 Moneyline loan agreement form (service fees highlighted in red)

The largest Net1 subsidiary offering short-term loans is Moneyline Financial Services (Pty) Ltd. which provides 'micro finance services' and is officially headquartered in Johannesburg.[278] The company advertises itself as offering 'credit solutions to unbanked South Africans', with a speciality in 'the design and delivery of unique value and solution-based funding options tailored around borrower requirements'.[279] My first contact with Moneyline officials was at the beginning of a very wet and muddy March, when I walked with Andrew (the CPS official introduced in the introductory chapter and with whom I travelled as he conducted his work) out of one of the monthly grant paypoint points. He walked down the road towards a shelter that was being erected from a flimsy camping gazebo with no branding and no chairs in its shade. It was situated on the same road as the paypoint entrance which allowed Moneyline employees to stop claimants and convince them of the benefits of such a loan with enough time

[278] Bloomberg Business, "Company Overview of Moneyline Financial Services (Pty) Ltd.," *Bloomberg Business*, Unknown, www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=53268714.
[279] Ibid.

for the sell. The standard approach was to tell claimants that a R250 loan could be available immediately and then every month R50 would get debited off of their account.

CPS officials and money lenders working for Moneyline praised the service on account of the company being 'legal' and therefore running credit checks: unlike the loan sharks. That said, the Moneyline officials who set up outside paypoints in the first few days of every month never appeared to check anyone's credit record and asked only for a Sassa card, a fingerprint, and a signature.[280] Regardless, credit checks would be impossible in the time it took a claimant to walk the short distance to the payment point, where the loan they took would already be available and paid out at the same time as their grant. The speed at which the loan was provided was something that Moneyline employees claimed made them superior to banks. Immediacy trumped credit checks and, in reality, many of the people borrowing money would not be able to receive loans if checks were instituted – legally social grants cannot be put up as surety. owever, the letter of the law might be conspicuously followed in other instances: at monthly paypoints, it often seemed that Moneyline officials had carefully measured 100 meters from the entrance, the minimum legal proximity for micro-lenders.[281] But uncertainty about what actually distinguishes registered and unregistered moneylenders magnifies claimants' insecure positions vis-à-vis their grant money and accounts.

While 'infamous' *mashonisas*[282] (neighbourhood moneylenders or loan sharks) operated in close proximity at monthly paypoints, and micro-lenders observed their distance, in other places of payment like retailers and ATMs, Moneyline would ignore proximity limitations. Nondescript gazebos would appear at a retailer's front entrance where, despite the absence of a uniform or signage, claimants would know that loans were available immediately. Moneyline workers became recognisable to claimants over time, but it was the presence of the portable electronic payment units with the fingerprint reader that marked their affiliation to Net1 most clearly. This moving marker was necessary as Moneyline employees were all on short-term contracts and, while the faces might change, the familiarity and formality of the machines remained consistent. As Jane Guyer writes, 'formalisation is experienced by the population in

[280] Pharie Sefali, "South Africa: Moneyline to Be Taken to Consumer Tribunal for Reckless Lending," *GroundUp (Cape Town)*, August 13, 2015, http://allafrica.com/stories/201508131007.html.
[281] According to the Social Assistance Acts
[282] As Deborah James notes, 'mashonisa' is sometimes used by borrowers to refer to registered or unregistered lenders. However, for the purposes of drawing distinctions, I use the term to refer solely to the latter. James, *Money From Nothing*, p. 7.

its plural and concrete forms...rather than as an enduring generalizable principle.'[283] In the blurry realm of registered and unregistered lenders, machines marked formality more than any other signifier.

Net1 subsidiaries providing loans established themselves as an alternative, both to the vagaries of *mashonisas* and to the formal regulation of banks. However, they inhabited a world reminiscent of each. The difficulty of categorising Moneyline mirrored the ways formality and informality intertwined more generally.[284] Moneyline operates through portals of non-regulation or partial regulation, enabled by the absence of an office, eschewing credit checks, and ignoring detailed questions. Such a grey approach is detailed further below. Yet it also mobilised the formality of fingerprinting machines, paperwork, and an electronic system that was built to recoup loans through regular deductions from future grants.

Net1 argues that formal loans should not only be accessible to those with regular incomes and assets. Their assertion is that these short term loans are safer than informal lenders and also offer much needed capital to allow people to open businesses or to save. Net1's position is that *not* providing these financial services to the poor is an unequal practice. They say that the deductions are not illegal and that the company is merely responding to demands, and promoting financial inclusion.[285] Net1 maintains that their actions are 'ethically defensible', and that 'People are free of mind, and you still have to allow them to do what they want with their grant money. If they want to spend it on airtime, they're going to'.[286] Many of Net1's positions around its role in directly or indirectly offering loans are summarised in the following statement from the company's chief executive, Serge Belamant:

> I think it is key that an authority such as the public protector evaluates what our company does and importantly compares it to what is currently being done by other less scrupulous organisations. Once the naive notion that ordinary people, including social welfare beneficiaries, should not be able to

[283] Jane I. Guyer, *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 158.
[284] See the following economic anthropological analyses, with varying degrees of focus on South Africa: J. I. Guyer, *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa* (Chicago, Illinois, University of Chicago Press, 2004); K. Hart, J. L. Laville, and A. D. Cattani, 'Informal Economy', in *The Human Economy: A Citizen's Guide* (Polity Press, 2010); M. Bolt, 'Waged Entrepreneurs, Policed Informality: Work, the Regulation of Space and the Economy of the Zimbabwean-South African Border', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, 82, 1 (February 2012), pp. 111–130.
[285] Evan Pickworth, "Net1 Denies Subsidiary Has Behaved Illegally," *Business Day Live*, September 12, 2014.
[286] Serge Belamant quoted in Ann Crotty, "Millions of Grant Recipients Ripped Off," *Business Day Live*, September 7, 2014.

> access loans and do not need loans is finally put to bed, our social programmes may start to get recognised for what the intention has always been: to provide affordable financial services to all.[287]

Deborah James on the other hand, addressing the related practice of debtors and creditors in South Africa, insists that for illegitimate exercises which go on in the name of the law to be effectively clamped down upon, there should be a much stronger focus on the curbing of lending, rather than on the castigation of borrowers.[288] Inflated interest rates applied to those poor enough to claim social grants certainly punish the borrowers, and moreover diminish Net1's claim that this service is aimed at promoting the economic wellbeing of claimant lenders.

The National Credit Regulator *had* applied to cancel the registration of Moneyline Financial Services as a credit provider. The regulator argued that Moneyline contravenes the law by including CSGs and foster care grants in their affordability assessments. However, despite support from non-governmental organisations, the Credit Regulator was unable to follow up on these applications as they did not have the requisite finances and were concerned about libel charges.[289] A loophole that prompts questioning is whether automatic deductions from future grants are considered payment of debt, or, in more general terms, whether these deductions can be disguised as something else. The company that recoups an amount from a future grant has no risk of non-payment. The public protector, Thuli Madonsela, launched an investigation into Net1 for loan repayment deductions directly from claimants' accounts. Net1 justified the practice by saying that while grants were not used as collateral (this would be illegal), money was deducted 'if they sign a debit order with us'.[290]

Belamant dismissed criticism: 'If people believe that what we're doing is unethical then as far as I am concerned they're idiots', and went on to, again, to position Net1 CPS as legitimately responding to demands of claimants, 'We talk to the pensioners themselves, not to the people who claim to represent the pensioners. We meet with 10 million of them every month, so it is

[287] Asha Speckman, "Claims of Illegal Loans Probed," *The Star*, May 28, 2013.
[288] James, *Money From Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa*.
[289] Black Sash, Telephonic Interview, June 18, 2015.
[290] Chris Barron, "Belamant Hits Back at His Accusers," *Business Day Live*, June 2, 2013, http://www.bdlive.co.za/businesstimes/2013/06/02/belamant-hits-back-at-his-accusers.

not difficult to get feedback from them in terms of what do they actually want'.[291] In a letter from their lawyers in 2014, Net1 stated, 'Once payment has been effected to a beneficiary, the beneficiary is at liberty to utilise the funds received in such manner as he/she deems fit. If the beneficiary elects to pay debts therewith, she/he is free to do so'.[292] The letter named Moneyline as an instance of a company 'providing financial services (including loans) to the South African public (including social grant beneficiaries) for many years. It continues to do so independently from CPS and within the relevant legislative framework'.

Deductions and Securing Cards

An overlap that betrays the absence of a gap between *mashonisas* and 'legitimate' businesses is apparent in the withholding of Sassa cards. At paypoints they seldom arrive in person, choosing rather to dispatch 'representatives' who are known to the community and who often know their clientele and the details of their loans by memory – a necessary tool when signed contracts and paper trails are scarce. The people employed by the loan sharks withhold the cards of grant claimants who are yet to repay the money that they have borrowed. Withholding cards and documentation is often perceived as the sole remit of *mashonisas*. However, there are many cases of card confiscations by other lenders, such as shopkeepers offering credit, who appear more formal as they have permanent premises.

In July 2015, a shop owner from a village in the North West province was found with 47 social grant cards on the shop's premises. The cards were being used as surety on loans and credit-bought groceries. The shopkeeper explained that the cards were safer with her.[293] The National Credit Regulator (NCR) carried out numerous 'raids' across the country in an attempt to stifle the practice of withholding Sassa cards. As part of a joint operation between Sassa and the South African Police Services, beginning in 2013, 800 social grant cards were found in the possession of 18 *mashonisas*. These loan sharks' services are illegal according to section 20(1) of Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, and the National Credit Act section 133(1). While all of the lenders appeared in magistrate courts, 400 claimants whose cards were in their possession were sent letters of intent to suspend their grants.[294] The shopkeeper was also found to have collected money from claimants for burial scheme insurance. The case shows how cards may

[291] Ibid.
[292] "Minister Sets Sights on Loan Sharks," *Eastern Cape Today*, September 17, 2014.
[293] Naledi Shange, "Shop Owner Found With 47 Social Grant Cards," *News24*, July 10, 2015.
[294] "Money Lenders in Court Over SASSA Fraud," *The Weekly*, July 18, 2014.

be used exploitatively; however, the shopkeeper's argument that people needed their cards held safely highlights critical issues around the meaning of cards.

Over the period of research, I watched and heard numerous grant claimants express how precarious their cards felt. Women in informal housing would leave their cards at the homes of their parents for safekeeping. These were not cases of cards being held as surety, but indicate the value embodied in the card. The safekeeping of cards is partially attributable to the importance of the finances it makes accessible. That said, there was something other, or certainly more, to the cards. The card itself came to become an extension of the self that could be kept safe. Accordingly, (where even houses are precarious) the card becomes something that is formal and, through the convenience of its size and shape, can be stored in places that are considered safe, for example with family members who have formal housing. The card can be secured even when the money 'on' it as well as the person to whom it belongs cannot.

A further instantiation of the safekeeping of cards occurs at the very site of the paypoint. Cards are necessary to claim the grant and thus need to be taken from a static site of safekeeping and carried to the place of payment. Married women in Bushbuckridge often wear wrapped headscarves, primarily to signify respectability, sometimes grounded in religious beliefs. Despite bags being omnipresent, even sold at paypoints, women would not keep their cards in their bags and instead would tuck the card into a fold in the headscarf. Once women retrieved their money, as they turned away from the machine, the card was replaced under the scarf. When asked, women told me it is less likely to be stolen tucked away like this but, further, that they can then *feel* that it is still there. The invocation in these observations is that the card not only allows access to money but can be seen as an orienting device – borrowing from Sara Ahmed[295] – indicating a way that someone is *oriented* to others and the world; people's relational identities are embodied in the cards. Sassa cards are not just the way that a claimant accesses money, they are representative of formality and personhood.

Insuring life, ensuring deductions

In light of widespread deductions, an ongoing Sassa publicity campaign began in mid-2015 to warn claimants against companies who offer life insurance policies where monthly premiums are deducted from grants. The campaign stresses that Sassa is not affiliated to any funeral or life

[295] Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014).

insurance companies and that claimants should guard against entities who purport to be Sassa-endorsed. 1Life is a particularly stark example of a life insurance company that used misrepresentation to facilitate deductions. The company is not a Net1 subsidiary but is indicative of the kind of manipulation that can occur when private companies are connected to the delivery of state services. Agents for 1Life targeted old age grant recipients and garnered confidence by assuring them that the company was approved by Sassa. Because grant claimants already associated private companies with SASSA, it was plausible that a 1Life official could have authorisation. The life policies taken through 1Life were often in addition to another policy or policies held by claimants. This should not have been possible. The Social Assistance Act specifies that the only deduction that is permitted from a grant is for a funeral policy, and this cannot exceed 10 per cent of the grant amount.

Faced with pressure from persistent claimants, advocacy groups and negative media attention, 1Life eventually announced that it had stopped deductions and refunded all beneficiaries. However, the company insisted that it could not cancel policies that were older than three months. The desires and efforts to hold 1Life accountable were also complicated by the reality that old-age grant claimants did not receive any paperwork from the agents selling the policies and were therefore left with no contractual documentation. Claimants' only paper trail was the monthly line item indicating a deduction from their state pensions. Once again, insecurity in relation to these deductions extended beyond the loss of money. It also resulted from uncertainties as to whether third-party providers were officially connected to SASSA or the grant system, and how exactly they were regulated.

Airtime Deductions: Umoya Manje

Selling airtime involved advertising that was more clearly classified as 'illegal' as it involved direct marketing. The advertisements for airtime appear on the receipt provided to grant claimants when they retrieve their transfers. I was told that it should be 'wrong for them to sell us something on our slips', an objection frequently made in interviews during my research. The advertisement entices grant recipients through a marketing campaign called Umoya Manje ('air now') to dial '*130*444# for amazing cardholder benefits'.

Airtime deductions are the most ubiquitous case of unauthorised grant debits. The monetary value of the deductions is generally smaller than others – deductions are also made for

electricity and water – but the scale of the monthly deductions widespread and voluminous. There are helplines to record these deductions and the Black Sash local advice offices have begun to compose a file of the complaints that reach them. Rudimentary mechanisms are in place for documenting the unauthorised deductions immediately after grants are claimed at mobile paypoints. As claimants in Bushbuckridge received their receipt an unauthorised deduction might appear as one of the line items. If claimants took this complaint to the CPS official dispensing the grants they were directed to a Sassa vehicle which, unlike the unmarked white CPS *bakkies*, was stamped with the logo of handprints in the colours of the South African flag. A Sassa official sat in the front seat with the door open and a queue formed alongside this temporary office. On his lap the official held a piece of graph paper upon which he documented the claimant's name, the type of grant received, their ID number, the deduction amount and their telephone number.[296] Of those claimants who had airtime deductions, the majority of whom were OAG claimants, many did not have cellphones. This is shown in figure 4 below, with 'N/A' under the relevant column. The list was taken at one paypoint and by 11am three full sheets had been covered. The Sassa official, on his maiden voyage as a monitor at the paypoints, told me that he was overwhelmed and feared that he would exhaust his supply of graph paper to record the complaints. The lined paper with a rudimentary table, as evidenced in the photograph below, was not a formal document and the official would add it to a growing pile of complaints recorded on scraps of paper at the Sassa offices.

[296] Natasha Vally, *A List of Deductions Recorded by a Sassa Official at a Paypoint in Bushbuckridge*, Photograph, August 12, 2014.

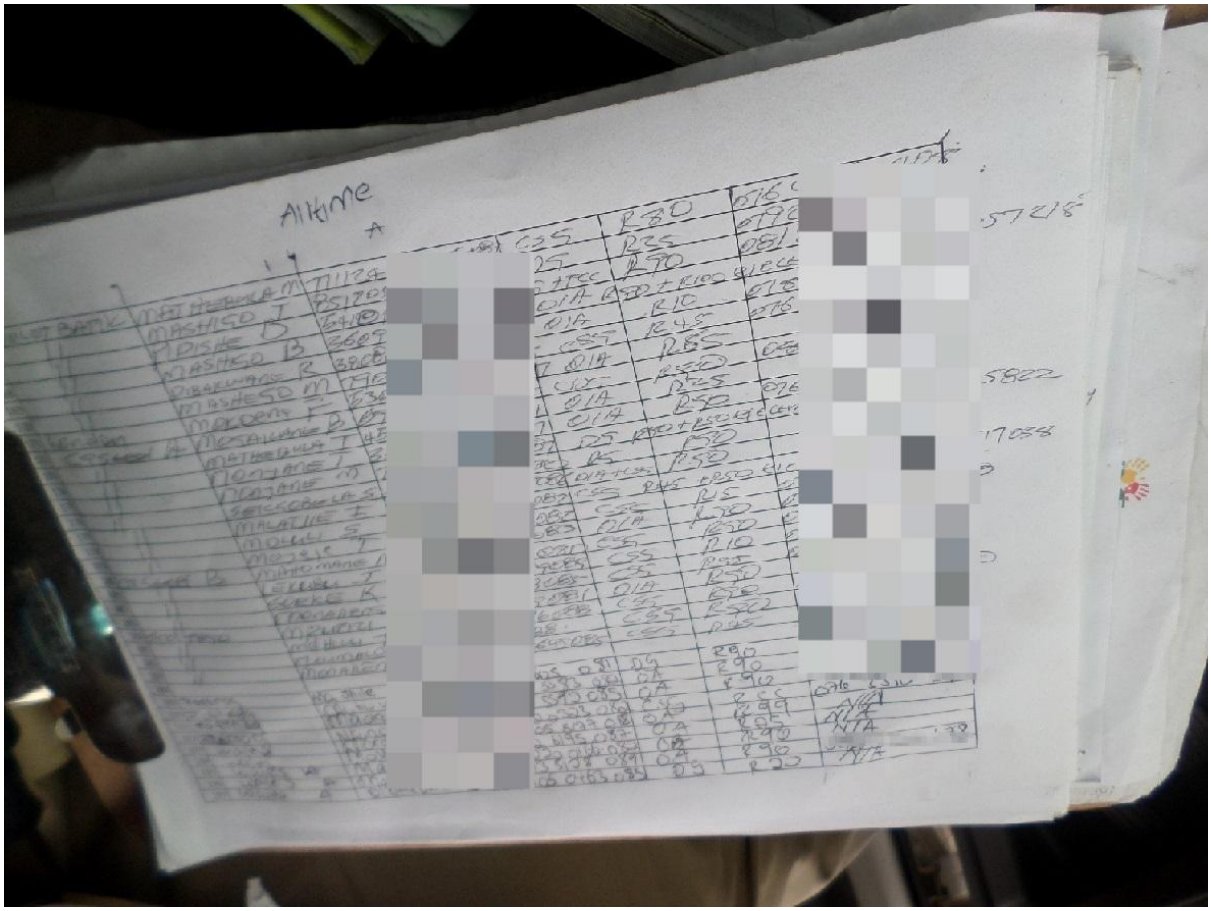


Figure 2 Handwritten form by a Sassa official documenting airtime deductions at a mobile paypoint

Protocols and Recourse

An obvious gap presented by the 2012 system is the distance between claimants and their access to effective mechanisms to address queries and complaints. The protocols grant claimants are required to follow to query debt deductions are opaque and unstandardised. The advertisement for the 'social grants fraud and corruption hotline', which appears at the bottom of every page of Sassa's website, displays a toll-free number and shows a hand holding an eraser that is in the process of deleting the word 'corruption' in the phrase 'stamp out corruption'.[297] In the many newspaper reports and advertisements warning about deductions, the number to call is seldom the same. 'I've changed my Sassa card twice. I called the helpline and office numbers, but could never get through. When I got through they said I should contact CPS. I got so angry because no one was helping me and the money was still being deducted', Esme

[297] SASSA, "South African Social Security Agency," *SASSA Home*, accessed December 1, 2013, http://www.sassa.gov.za/.

Pamplin from Heideveld recalled, mirroring the frustration of many claimants.[298] In a similar case of administrative frustration, Lorraine Goldman lamented that in April 2014 her R1350 pension had dissolved into R1.16 because of unauthorised deductions. Goldman confirmed that her husband and neighbours had similar experiences but received no response from the Sassa hotline.

The lack of attention and recourse is partly attributable to the shifting of responsibility between institutions. Claimants seeking redress are routed back and forth between Sassa and CPS. Even claimants who had permitted debits from their Sassa accounts are lost in the administrative shuffling when they discover that the amounts being debited are not uniform.[299] One consequence of the form that biometric states take is that they necessitate centralised institutions of identification, and so, in turn, shape a particular form of state-craft.[300] Chapter one plotted how the formation of Sassa was explicitly a project of centralisation. Along with the privatisation of grant services, centralisation paralyses local Sassa offices from providing recourse to claimants who query aspects of grant administration and delivery. Diena Twala, who detailed her frustrations about deductions that began from her account in November 2013, said 'I went to complain at the SASSA office. I told them I haven't made any loans and I don't buy electricity using this card'. Despite the hotlines directing her to consult her local Sassa office, Twala's attempts were fruitless: 'They shouted at me and told me they couldn't help me because it had nothing to do with them. It continued with different amounts [being deducted] in 2014, but in December [2014] I got nothing, they took everything...I spent so much money calling help lines and traveling into town and still nothing helped'.[301]

Backtracking on Biometrics and Troubling the "Us" and "Them"

Beyond South Africa, there have been cases of resistance to the use of biometrics and/or the centralised storage of biometric data. In some instances, this has resulted in the retraction of the technology or negotiations as to the specifics of data storage. In the United Kingdom in 2010 the proposed national biometric identification system was retracted, and in Germany

[298] Barbara Maragele, "Now I Can't Afford Groceries," *GroundUp*, May 19, 2014.
[299] Sidwell Guduka, "Pensioner Exploited?," *News24*, accessed July 26, 2015, http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/Express-News/Pensioner-exploited-20150721.
[300] Keith Breckenridge, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 19–20.
[301] Barbara Maragele, "SASSA Beneficiaries Still Struggling With Illegal Deductions," *GroundUp (Cape Town)*, July 22, 2015, http://allafrica.com/stories/201507221226.html.

(even though biometric passports were introduced) the centralisation of a biometric database was rejected. Biometrics map onto social and political contexts and can serve to reinforce them. Further, biometric technology has the potential to generate its own forms of sociality and politics. One of the ways this reiteration and generation appears in practice, for example, is in the European Union where, alongside the privacy concerns listed above, there is still support and advancement of biometric programs that reinforce national and territorial boundaries.[302]

The rapid promulgation of expansive biometric systems has not been matched by corresponding legal and policy frameworks and regulations. This is not peculiar to the South but the absence of regulation is more acute because of the scale of the biometric programs in these places. Alongside this, there are greater concerns about the possible abuses of private information when there is limited (or an absence of) legal protection of privacy in many of these countries and where the implementation of sparse legislation is unequal and inconsistent.

The use of biometrics at the largest scale and in the most aggressive way in the South raises several considerations. The first of these is whether using biometrics in these places can be seen to be a testing ground or experimental space for the North. This consideration flips on its head the consideration of the 'them', defined as those on the margins of power, as an example of 'our past' and rather posits that the 'them' may be a possibility for 'our future'. In this case, the South serves not as 'origin but the advanced state that is on the other side of European control and purity'.[303] Either way, these can be seen as orientalist positions, holding the South up as a mirror to the past or future. Because of my aim to proceed in a reflexively anti-orientalist way, I am aware that what I argue is not as simple as to say that these technologies are more easily rolled out without challenge in developing countries.

Waiting for Social Grants After 2012

At this point much has been discussed in relation to the movement of data, the movement of deductions, the movement of cards, and even the moving post of definitions of legality. The next section examines a lack of movement – immobility and waiting – and further helps to complicate particularities in the way the state and private companies may view claimants. For a grant to 'work', factors other than development indicators are critical. Thinking of 'the poor' as

[302] Programs such as the Smart Border Package and EURODAC

[303] Srinivas Aravamudan, "Surpassing the North: Can the Antipodean Avantgarde Trump Postcolonial Belatedness?," *JWTC: The Salon*, 2012, 11, http://www.jwtc.org.za/salon_volume_5.htm.

affected only, or perhaps primarily, by a decrease in material hardships ignores the affective dimensions of life – with or without grants. There are particularities in the kinds of waiting that follow the 2012 system – in part because of the diversity of locations where grants are paid. Through the presumed mundane and routine activities of waiting, there is the potential to challenge the 'commonsense' and scrutinise some of the less-scripted dynamics of social grant processes.

While waiting has important temporal dimensions, it also involves action, the fostering of relationships and complex interactions. Analysing waiting provides the potential to break out of the commonsense since the activities of waiting, while occurring in public, are less entwined in a public hegemonic conversation, in dominant ideologies, than many other actions surrounding grants are. The reason for this is that waiting is superficially considered an individual act, therefore less soaked in the pressures of being commonsense; the reality though is that waiting is often a highly social and communal mode of being. Of course, everyone waits, but in different ways and for different things. As Ghassan Hage summarises it, 'But the differences in waiting are not just differences in individual forms of waiting, they are also differences in the way waiting is present systematically in society.'[304]

Feelings of uncertainty, frustration, complacency, sociality (friends meet in queues, sales are made in the lines, snacks are shared, and new relationships are formed) and an acknowledgement of arbitrariness were amongst those fostered in the queues at the various administrative loci of social assistance. The primary locations where social grant claimants are made to wait is at grant offices, at public pension paypoints and at retailers paying out monthly state grants. Waiting and the emotions it mobilises are not confined to the registration moment; they are followed through to the claiming of the cash transfer, the querying of payments and procedures – the failures and hiccups – and everyday running of biometric grant technologies.

One of the conditions associated with waiting is immobility, or what Ghassan Hage calls 'stuckedness'.[305] Its significance can be further appreciated through Jane Bennet's provocation that enchantment – affective connections to the world – is found in the moments of mobility and changing. The state of immobility, therefore, also has the potential of robbing one of the

[304] Ghassan Hage, "Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality," in *Waiting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2009), 1.
[305] Hage, "Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality."

possibilities of enchantment.[306] As such, one of the few ways that agency is reclaimed in the supposed absence of choice, and the apparently overwhelming objectification of the processes of waiting, is through endurance. Endurance can be resolve, as in being willing to wait it out, but also can be to suffer (something painful and prolonged) patiently. Coming back to seek recourse, returning to submit ever newer documents, can be an act of disobedience – a persistence that even in the face of what seem insurmountable obstacles can be indicative of *willfulness*, using Sara Ahmed's framework.[307] Oftentimes the reason for waiting is not a choice – in this case to receive money in order to survive – but this does not foreclose how one acts or engages while waiting. Furthermore, even in a situation where there is apparently no choice, endurance implies asserting agency in a situation where one supposedly has none.[308]

The intricacy and intimacy of relationships bound up in the act of waiting is further revealed by Pierre Bourdieu, who posits that waiting is one of the ways that power and domination play out in daily life, '[m]aking people wait ... delaying without destroying hope ... adjourning without totally disappointing'.[309] Javier Auyero, who also engaged in ethnographic work in a welfare office (at the Ministerio de Desarrollo Social in Buenos Aires), explains the location as 'a site of intense sociability amidst pervasive uncertainty'.[310] He argues that governmental practice of economy and order are enacted through the control of poor people's time.[311] Indeed, one of the punitive aspects of waiting is not necessarily the waiting itself, but the lack of clarity about the length of time and the processes involved at each stage. This arbitrariness runs through every moment of social assistance. Auyero's main argument is that being forced to wait for welfare services persuades poor people to be patient clients of the state or *Patients of the State*.[312] If, as Auyero contends, waiting is a tool to create a more submissive client citizen, then the question can rather be distilled to that asked by Schwartz in his critical works on the politics of waiting: how does objective waiting become subjective submission?[313]

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[306] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2001).
[307] Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014), 2.
[308] Hage, "Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality," 101.
[309] Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford,CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 228.
[310] Javier Auyero, "Patients of the State: An Ethnographic Account of Poor People's Waiting," *Latin American Research Review* 46, no. 1 (2011): 5.
[311] Ibid., 25.
[312] Javier Auyero, *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
[313] B Schwartz, "Waiting, Exchange, and Power: The Distribution of Time in Social Systems.," *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 79 (1974): 841–70.

In South Africa, many grant recipients welcomed the convenience that the centralised CPS system and the large card-linked cash distribution network promised. The system was promoted as an overhaul of social grant payouts so as to increase order and so decrease the long times spent in queues.[314] One of the ways to consider whether grants 'work' is to look at the impact that they have on people's time. In order to assess the ways that the new grant system made the system more secure in the sense of securing time or avoiding waiting, an ethnographic snapshot can be informative.

Early one day Andrew, a CPS employee, was dispatched to a large retailer in one of the main towns of Bushbuckridge to assist with faulty biometric grant payment machines. There were two long queues that originated from the retailer. The first squirmed into the parking lot, through the market, and stretched into the street. This month, they had moved the tables for the first step of the process (loading the money onto the card) to just outside the entrance of the shop. Previously, money was loaded onto the card just inside the glass doors. The new way, Johan (the shop's manager) explained, makes congestion less likely. The first step was attended by a young woman, Nthabiseng. I had been standing there for about five minutes and she had not yet been able to serve a woman at the head of the queue. Nthabiseng explained that the battery was low and even though the unit was plugged in to a wall socket, the rate at which it charged was slower than the battery power that was being used to load the money onto the cards.

The queue on the other side of the shop ran more smoothly and the light of the machine glowed red when it was ready to scan a fingerprint. Most claimants held their fingers on the pad for too long and with too little pressure to register the print, although there is no clear sense of a standard time or pressure. The retail employee operating the machine was perched on the table. She didn't make eye contact while the production line cranked along – receiving the card, jiggling it, red light, pressing a finger down, tearing a receipt off, returning the card and receipt – or was stalled at one of these stages.

A man at the front of the queue stood off to the side. He was vigorously wiping his hands on his trousers. As he waited, there was a second elderly man with his card inserted into the machine that would not recognise his print. He went on to try several different fingers, wiped

[314] Lisa Steyn, "Stores Score on Pension Payday," *The M&G Online*, February 3, 2012, http://mg.co.za/article/2012-02-03-stores-score-on-pension-payday/.

them on his trousers and tried again. That did not work, so he moved patiently to the side while other claimants shuffled through the procession. Both men went on to be directed by the store official to wipe their hands in an attempt to get the fingerprint pad to recognise their prints. This crude solution in fact often worked: dust, or products applied to the hands, can make fingerprint ridges difficult to recognise. The two men were old and their hands looked rough and heavily worked. The reason that elderly people, men in particular, were most likely to have their fingerprints go unrecognised was that manual labour and wear over time could affect or prevent readings. After about five minutes an employee came out with a cloth, a normal dishtowel collected from inside the store. The men wiped their hands again and this time the machine registered their fingerprints.

These queues were the first of two stops a claimant had to make at the shop. At the lines outside, after claimants gave the employees their Sassa card and put their finger onto the pad, they were provided with a receipt along with the returned card. This receipt served to establish that there were funds allocated for the claimant in the linked account. At the second stage, the card and the receipt from the first stop were handed to the teller. The cost of any purchased goods was calculated and deducted from the grant, and then the claimant chose how much of the money that remained in the account they wished to receive in cash. At the till, the cashier put the card into a second unit and the fingerprint was read again.

Johan told me that, in the first three days this month, this particular shop paid out R6 million in social grants – an indication of the scale of the service. Despite large monthly grant payouts, Johan complained that the shop made no profits from paying grant money, partly because an additional staff contingent was hired. Women doing this work at the beginning of the month operate the biometric keypads, restock the shelves, as well as clean the store during its busiest period, when opening hours are extended. All the women I spoke to doing this work receive CSGs. The supplementary workers are hired on a casual basis and therefore receive no access to worker benefits, nor are they guaranteed consistent employment. Men are hired as additional security guards, and despite earning minimum wage in casual employment, they are not eligible for grants.

As with the gendered dimension of who is considered 'vulnerable' by the state and therefore eligible for direct financial assistance, there are also related presumptions about labour and gender. Both men and women involved in this casual labour are in positions of insecurity with

regard to workplace benefits connected to wage labour but also in terms of the amount of money paid. People in casual labour are thus also, during the grant payment process, waiting for work that is arbitrary in its regularity and in the kind of work that is expected. Women though, are still considered worthy of assistance by the state under these precarious conditions, whereas men who fall outside of the security that wage labour is supposed to provide are also rendered insecure by the lack of a grant. Ferguson takes this privileging of the value of work over distribution – in other words, the valorisation of production over distribution – and connects it to 'the valorization of the masculine over the feminine'.[315] He makes the point that this is why the politics of welfare are inextricably bound with various forms of misogyny where, even in the absence of wage labour, men are still considered able to look after themselves and should be 'productive' in the workforce.

Johan relayed that, since many of the stores find that they are not profiting from the payment of social grants, a meeting of the shop's management decided that only one till would be dedicated solely to paying out grant money. The other tills would be 'made available' should any claimant wish to purchase something while retrieving their grant payment. As I walked around inside I noticed that there was a sign above every till but one that read, 'This till if you're buying grosery [sic]'; the last till's sign said, 'Use this till if you only want pension'. The last queue was much longer than the others, and in addition to its length, it also shuffled along more slowly than the other lines. People were made to choose between the immediacy of purchasing something at this shop, or waiting. Johan explained this decision: 'So we are not forcing people to buy something, but they may say I'm rather going to buy something than wait in a queue of 400 people'.

Johan's insistence that paying out grants was not profitable did not mirror national reports. The South African media, in the first months that grant payments were available from stores, called the system a 'bonanza' for retailers.[316] While claimants are not obligated to spend money at the store, people are 'encouraged' to spend 10 per cent of the money that has been loaded onto their cards and only then withdraw the remaining amount from the cashiers at the tills.[317] The amount of money that people spend at retailers after claiming grants is variable, but the director

[315] Duke University Press, "Q&A with James Ferguson," *News From Duke University Press*, May 6, 2015, https://dukeupress.wordpress.com/2015/05/06/qa-with-james-ferguson/.
[316] Mail and Guardian, 'Grants: Short-Changed in Long Queues', *Mail and Guardian*, 3 February 2012, available at http://mg.co.za/multimedia/2012-02-02-grants-shortchanged-in-long-queues.
[317] Ibid.

of Boxer Superstores said that across the 95 stores nationwide, more money was spent on grant payment days than on payday.[318] In areas where there are few retail stores accessible, it is more convenient to spend grant money at the payout point in order to mitigate transport costs.

Even though Sassa encouraged a system that would allow claimants greater numbers of places to collect grants, the arrangement with retailers was initiated, and came to be coordinated, by Net1. Retail outlets thus had no formalised communication with any governmental body and co-ordinated their logistics and recovered their money from the contracted company. Stores were required to give an amount equal to approximately 0.25 per cent of the figure that they paid out back to Net1 for what the contractor called 'equipment hiring costs'. At a national level, stores were able safely to recoup these Net1 'rental' fees, due to the fact, as detailed above, that many claimants were also direct consumers who increased the stores' profits. The arrangement for payment from retailers provoked three concerns from the Department of Social Development (DSD).[319] The first was that grant claimants may not be paid the full amount; the second, that people were obligated to buy products at these stores in order to claim money; and lastly, that the stores were not accountable to anyone regarding the quality of food and other products being sold to claimants.

A concern that government did not raise in their challenge to the relationship between retailers and Net1 was that the efficiency promised by supermarkets has often not been realised. Claimants at supermarkets often still go on to wait in long queues despite the payment at supermarkets having been touted as a service that would diminish waiting times. The vignette of a payment day above is indicative of this tedious process. Another factor that has contributed to long waits is that cashiers, primarily for safety but also because of the physical limitations of cash registers, are only permitted to hold a limited amount of money in their registers. During the period of fieldwork, the average amount in a till was R20,000, which meant that only 14 old-age grants (with a monthly transfer amount of R1,350 per person) could be paid before the cashier needed to replenish the money in the register. In order to refill the register at the retailer in Bushbuckridge, a cashier was required to go to the management's offices in the rear of the large shop. Once there, the cashier completed a form and then used their fingerprint to access a safe, and afterwards another document was signed confirming retrieval of the money. This process – which connected the biometric requirements of the cashier and those of the

[318]Steyn, 'Stores Score on Pension Payday'.
[319]Ibid.

claimant – took time. Since a cashier was assigned a specific machine for the day, no one was able to relieve them from their position while they were away and as a result all those waiting in the queue were further delayed. At the one till that was allocated exclusively to retrieving a grant, the need to replenish the money in the till was frequent and the waiting persistent.

A further anxiety of large retailers in the early days of the month was the concern of having large amounts of money on the premises. The director of Boxer Superstores, Andrew Mills, argued that retailers offered a safer point of withdrawal than mobile cash paypoints, which had attracted armed robbery in the past.[320] However, Johan said that fears of armed robbery at the stores were acute and justified. For this reason, only when the store had almost exhausted its cache of money did it go on to request a dispatch of armoured vehicles from CPS headquarters. The armoured vehicles travelled 100km from the CPS headquarters in Hoedspruit along a regional road that is an artery for large trucks transporting coal. Once the money arrived, armed guards escorted the cash to the safe and the necessary documentation of receipt was filed. Throughout, claimants would continue to wait in queues to retrieve their money.

The presumption that technologies of grant delivery through the access point of supermarkets would ameliorate crime – or the fear thereof – is unfounded. Furthermore, an earlier form of insecurity, which came from needing money and time to travel substantial distances to access grants, has been replaced by static waiting, where bodies are shuffled along in unpredictable stops and starts. One of the punitive aspects of waiting is precisely the uncertainty – the lack of clarity about the length of time and the processes involved at each stage.

Conclusion

Insecurities in the life of social grants have taken on unexpected forms since the introduction of a national payment system. The privatisation of grant administration and payment have led to insecurities in the privacy of grant claimants' personal information. This in turn has resulted in the precarity of grant money itself, largely in the form of fraudulent deductions. Unwieldy on-the-ground arrangements have produced a third form of insecurity, as people with fragile livelihoods are left waiting for unpredictable periods for grant payments. In conclusion, privatisation of the national card-based biometric enrolment and payment system was advanced

[320] Ibid.

as a way to make social grant payment more efficient and secure. The reality however is that the pursuit of efficiency and efficacy, via the insecure movement of money and information, has permitted and emphasised loopholes, disconnects and precarity. This chapter challenges the perspective that privatisation and new technologies necessarily improve systems and experiences, and further argues that when private companies are connected to the delivery of state services a shadowy landscape can emerge. In such an environment, confusion abounds regarding the degree to which arrangements are officially sanctioned. The line between registered and unregistered, between legal and illegal, becomes increasingly malleable. And recourse becomes ever more difficult, as grant claimants are led hither and thither in a manner that only underlines everyday insecurity.

CHAPTER THREE

TECHNOPOLITICS AND THE ENROLMENT AND PAYMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL GRANTS

Machines have long played a role in social grant delivery and administration but they became protagonists in 2012. My account considers machines in social assistance in Bushbuckridge as they operate and move through the imagination of designers and the implementation at multiple sites along the path of grant administration and payment. This chapter looks to machines involved in the enrolment and payment of state social assistance as (literal and figurative) vehicles from which we can view the landscape of social grants in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter considers the actors involved in the implementation of social assistance technologies, whether and how the stakes change if a machine looks and performs outside of specifications. Embedded in this is a demonstration of the contrast between the political claims made on behalf of the machines and the actual social and political experiences read through and inscribed in the machines.

Previous chapters explained that the complex world of grants in South Africa connects the state, private entities, claimants, the roles of bureaucracy and officials, and sociality writ large. The part of the 2012 system that is foregrounded in this chapter is that the new infrastructure was envisioned to be technologically superior in terms of the machinery that paid out grants, and the software that systematised claimants' data. Important, too, was that the promises of superior hardware and software would permit payments to take place in more and varied locations. This meant shops, ATMs and mobile paypoints, as well as more places across South Africa – the sturdiness of the machinery and the connectivity promoted by digital technology would ensure grant payments would be viable in rural areas. Apart from locational shifts, the new system also proffered a temporal schism, catapulting South Africa into a 'futuristic' vision of social assistance.

Biometric technologies in general have been preoccupied, from their development to their current incarnation, with the 'solving' and 'ordering' of 'the limits of the old paper state – of slow, susceptible or unreliable bureaucratic processing, of forgery, deception and translation in

the preparation of documents'.[321] This 'smart future' would be fast, predictable, organised and reliable.[322] However, large technological systems do not necessarily translate into the stability imagined.

Through an investigation of the intersections between the grant process and the machinery envisaged to deliver the grant 'productively', I intend to demystify some fragilities inherent in the rollout of the national payment system initiated in 2012. These breaks and glitches take on further significance in relation to questions around how such technologies and machines should best be implemented, given South Africa's particular historical and geographical landscape. In this sense it will be argued that it is not only the machinery of the technologies of social assistance that (sometimes) fail, but also the very idea of them.[323] This follows from the understanding that technologies not only serve as representations and metaphors for politics and sociality, but that *technologies can be the landscape* upon which politics and sociality play out.[324] This understanding means that changes to technologies, while they may appear small, are also changes to how the political landscape is understood.

Science, Technology, and Social Assistance: Large Promises and the Quotidian

The expanding field of the anthropology of infrastructure posits that machines do not only move across locations or serve as a bridge to send information between different points; the technologies themselves create politics, subjectivities, and sentience.[325] Along with the burgeoning literature in the anthropology of infrastructure, texts that discuss materiality and the role it plays in shaping political actors and political terrains are also relevant to the discussions in this section.[326] Examining the quotidian of social grant machinery can be nourished by

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[321] Keith Breckenridge, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 16.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Bryan Pfaffenberger, "The Harsh Facts of Hydraulics: Technology and Society in Sri Lanka's Colonization Schemes," *Technology and Culture*, 1990, 361–97.
[324] This idea is the grounding of much of Science and Technology Studies; it is explained in the South African context by, amongst others, von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies."
[325] See for example Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Duke University Press, 2008); Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2013): 327–43; Antina von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 4 (December 2008): 899–917; Antina von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, Ethical Regimes and the Materiality of Politics in South Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (2013): 670–93.
[326] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (University of California Press, 2002); von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid"; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2009); Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure."

understanding the large promises – how the imagination of a technology and the mundane operations coalesce to tie the ideological and pragmatic visions of a state social grant system together. A persistent theme in the imagination of grants, and their technologies in particular, is the promise of novelty and innovation. However, it is not only the idea of the machine, but the machine itself that I am interested in, following scholars' calls to consider materiality as important in the making of 'political actors and of political engagement'.[327] Gabrielle Hecht begins her book *Entangled Geographies* with a discussion of scholarship that examines 'technology and science as multi-dimensional forms of politics, (and culture, and other social forms).'[328] The technopolitical is not only a subject matter but a methodology, Hecht continues:

> Underlying much of our analysis is the notion of technopolitics, a concept that captures the hybrid forms of power embedded in technological artefacts, systems and practices. In my book on French nuclear power, I used the term to describe the strategic practice of designing or using technology to enact political goals. Such practices, I argued, were not simply politics by another name; they produced systems whose design features mattered fundamentally to their success and shaped the ways in which those systems acted on the world.[329]

My aim is to permit a space where machines are 'allowed to speak' in ways that take seriously the technopolitical, and to investigate what it would entail to do this sociotechnically, that is, looking at social *and* technical assemblages.[330] Studying grant machines in South Africa – as actors – allows for un-layering specificity in order to reveal contestability and contingency in a specific historical context.[331] Ethnographic enquiry into biometric technology, in the country that is the epicentre of its germination and development, provides a valuable vantage point. The material technologies fundamental to the infrastructure of 2012 social assistance include the following: metallic suitcases which contain enrolment kits composed of a laptop, fingerprint reader, microphone, modem, and signature pad; point-of-sale units with embedded fingerprint recognition pads; metallic boxes that accompany the suitcases and are used to dispense money

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[327] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 672; Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.
[328] Gabrielle Hecht, *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, ed. Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2011), 2.
[329] Ibid., 3.
[330] John Law, 'Introduction,' in *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology, and Domination*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge, 1991), 16–17.
[331] Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 186,198.

at mobile payment sites; and the vehicles which are repurposed to mount traveling payment units.

Science and Technology Studies (STS) posits that science and technology incorporate complex permutations of politics, culture and other social forms.[332] The foundational material in the field of STS from the late 1970s and 1980s saw intellectual concerns drifting from the history of ideas to serious engagements with science in society.[333] For example, the field offers instances of repair as a tool for thinking about the related questions of contingency, the role of human agency, and about the making of knowledge.[334] In their seminal study of (natural) philosophers Boyle and Hobbes, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* authors Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer show Boyle's insistence on documenting malfunction and error as part of his commitment to experimentalism and with specific reference to the air-pump.[335] Even in these instances, Boyle's commitment to the minutiae of experimental failure was not about the failure of the idea, but rather of the machine itself. In this analytic framing, maintenance can be seen as the framework through which the dichotomy of a mechanistic nature and a constructed society can be troubled.[336] Following core methodological suggestions from Actor Network Theory (ANT) literature, exploring the technologies of social assistance means paying attention to networks and associations rather than examining machines as things in and of themselves or as the props for human action.[337] This involves a move away from thinking of humans and the state as the only ordering agents.

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[332] As Gabrielle Hecht notes: "The relationship between technology and political power is an old and important theme in historical and social analysis, dating back at least as far as Karl Marx's discussions of means of production as a controlling factor in political economy and continuing on into the twentieth century with public intellectuals such as Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul. The modern field of Science and Technology Studies has vastly expanded and deepened such reflections."

[333] This literature includes, but is certainly not limited to, David F. Noble, *America By Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); David F. Noble, *Forces of Production: A Social History of Industrial Automation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (Princeton University Press, 1985); Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas Parke Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch, *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (MIT Press, 1987); David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (University of Chicago Press, 1991); Thomas Parke Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (JHU Press, 1993).

[334] Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (Princeton University Press, 1985); Hecht, *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*.

[335] Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life*.

[336] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

[337] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social - An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory,* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 64,72.

STS has contributed substantially to making visible and elevating the person(al) in technological networks – a critical project in the otherwise static examination of the worlds of machines.

From State of the Art to State of the Artifice: The Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) Building in Bushbuckridge

Earlier chapters built on some of the effects and details of the 2012 state's contracting of CPS to implement a national enrolment and payment infrastructure which would harness biometric technology. This chapter begins with CPS in a different way: at the front door of the company's offices in Bushbuckridge. To arrive at the offices, one turns off of the long R40 regional road that connects Nelspruit to Swaziland at a point approximately a third of the distance between the towns of Acornhoek and Phalaborwa. The exit off of the R40 is labelled with a simple square sign displaying an aeroplane symbol. Once on the smaller road, the scenery is noticeably different, it is shouldered on both sides by electrified fences instead of the homes and informal shops and bustle of the larger regional road. Expansive private game lodges line the road and it is common to see zebra or giraffe along the approximately twenty kilometres until it reaches the town of Hoedspruit. This small town, which plays host to tourists traveling to or from the Kruger National Park game reserve, is also home to the CPS offices. That this company's offices rolled out the most up to date technology was belied by the peeling sign and the chipped walls of the outwardly small house in Bushbuckridge that displayed the dusty blue 'CPS (Pty) ltd BBR Department' sign (figure 1). The property was surrounded by a flimsy chicken-wire fence which was in turn protected by a guard in a makeshift shelter constructed from a reworked *bakkie* canopy. The only two windows visible from the street were darkly tinted. Net1 UEPS subsidiary CPS's headquarters in Bushbuckridge are based on an obscure and untarred plot of land next to the refuse bins of a fruit and vegetable shop. The state of the building affirms that this was never intended to be a place frequented by grant claimants or by visitors. It is a purely functional space for those who work there; the building doesn't need to 'brand' itself well, neither literally with its signage, nor with the upkeep of the premises.



Figure 1 External view of CPS offices in Bushbuckridge

The CPS offices in Bushbuckridge were to become an important symbolic and material example of the mismatch between the promotion of a futuristic company and the CPS working to pay grants. CPS's offices do not need to be easily locatable by the public; it is possible that they are obscurely placed so as to ensure they remain inaccessible. Claimants told me that they did not know where the company was formally housed in their municipality or where the national office was based. In the large-scale enrolment on to the new system that began in 2012, CPS would temporarily occupy community centres or would erect tents behind Sassa buildings in order to register recipients biometrically. Part of the invisibility of CPS offices follows the logic of the 2012 payment system which had the mobility of cash transfers as one of its bedrocks. This is because space is not required in a static location; vehicles with their grant payment kits, and backseats strewn with paperwork are CPS's offices. The MasterCard promise of mobile money is materially visible in the lack of office space and general upkeep of the CPS building since, following the promise, it is cards, money, and officials that are required to travel, not claimants.

In contrast, the locations of Sassa offices are available online with their addresses known to people who live in the surrounding areas. While many Sassa offices are not state of the art buildings, their signage is always clear, the logo bright in the colours of the South African flag, and the largest local branches occupy sprawling offices constituted of small adjoining buildings, some of which are newly built. Other than the familiar and luminous signage, one of the reasons for the local familiarity with Sassa offices is that, in order to receive a grant, a claimant has to have presented him or herself at a grant office on at least one occasion, often many more, to complete the relevant paperwork and supply the necessary identification documentation. The enrolment process involves an overwhelming number of people practiced in waiting, grounded at an unyielding office building. By contrast, the point at which recipients come into contact with CPS staffers is almost exclusively at impermanent, 'virtual', monthly paypoints.

The Ghost of the Static Bureaucrat

The physical presentations of CPS and Sassa are indicative of different types of bureaucratic practice. Andrew, as the CPS co-ordinator in the municipality, conducted most of his work from his vehicle – the seats were variously covered in paperwork and hard-drives and he ate on the road every day. Andrew and I met on one of my first days at a monthly pension paypoint where he was involved in the dispensing of grants, he spoke with intensity about the work he did for CPS and we arranged to speak more about his work. When I began traveling the roads around Bushbuckridge with Andrew it quickly became clear that he was an indispensable part of the daily operation of Net1 and its subsidiaries in the municipality. His office work in the crumbling CPS building was formulaic and regular, he went there to cash in and cash out, to open and close the safe, and to direct the daily schedule of employees of Net1's subsidiaries. In contrast, Andrew's time on the road was fraught with unpredictability and excitement. He was required to shift haphazardly between tasks – maintenance, coordination, sales – while literally shifting between locations. In a single day Andrew drove back and forth on the same road several times as he received calls dispatching him to various shops and Sassa offices throughout the municipality. The work on the road was more satisfying to him than the mundanity of office tasks. During my research, the position of supervisor became available at the CPS headquarters in Bushbuckridge, a job for which Andrew was qualified and encouraged to apply. He turned the offer down because, as he told me, he would be in the office all day and he would prefer to be on the road, despite a nagging lower back pain from navigating the bumpy roads. Andrew, as

an official of a private company, was far removed from the characterisation of a bureaucrat as desk-bound and static.

A Brighter Future through 2012 Social Assistance Infrastructure

Grant technologies are designed to encapsulate the idea of a 'brighter future', a phrase which also commonly suggests novelty and innovation. What is promoted is technological progress itself, which in turn is viewed as invariably improving lives by being safe, efficient, precise and convenient.[338] Celebrated as a veritable technological development, the 2012 social assistance system was viewed as break from the past. Innovation can be read as the cornerstone of the design underpinning the national payment system, in intent and aesthetics. It was depicted as a global, modern advancement that would improve lives through 'state of the art technology'.[339] In figure 2, this projection of a future is apparent on a point of sale payment unit marked with a Net1 logo which holds a card that promises a 'smart future'. This is not a surprising expectation. As Thomas Hughes noted in *The Evolution of Large Technical Systems*, these large systems are generally those that are invested in fixing problems and reaching goals by ordering the physical world.[340] The Net1 machinery projected into a future the possibility to correct the failures of the past.

[338] Alf James, "Providing Tighter Security and Greater Convenience," *The Star*, October 28, 2011; Alf James, "Access Control with Biometric Precision," *The Star*, October 28, 2011; Alf James, "Ensuring Safety and Security," *The Star*, October 28, 2011; Paseka Letsatsi, "State of the Art Technology Behind SA's Social Grants," *The New Age*, April 29, 2013.

[339] Letsatsi, "State of the Art Technology Behind SA's Social Grants" Public pronouncements of technologies of social assistance being used to streamline the system were not isolated to this period, see for example; Gudrun Heckl, "Province's Pension Payouts Made Easy," *The Star*, July 26, 2001.

[340] Thomas Hughes, "The Evolution of Large Technical Systems," in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas Hughes, and Trevor Pinch (MIT press, 1987), 47 Here, Hughes rests on Heidegger's definition of technology, which Heidegger called "enframing", as a means ordering the world in order to solve problems.



Figure 2 Net1 point of sale payment unit, 'Advance: Your Link to a Smart Future'

Innovation and the Users of Technology: Do People Disappear?

As my exploration of social grants is situated in a moment of supposed technological innovation, it is valuable to return to the literature of STS to consider how theories of the 'users of technology' may begin to unearth how grant claimants' experiences interface with the national payment system. Feminist sociologists have been interested in end users of technologies, or 'implicated actors'.[341] These scholars challenge Actor-Network Theory's general preoccupation with experts and producers. Commitment to this methodology soothes the risk that people in the stories of social assistance will be rendered silent. The experience of networks is not uniform for all actors; the affective and socio-economic implications are invariably skewed.

[341] Monica J. Casper and Adele E. Clarke, "Making the Pap Smear into the Right Tool for the Job: Cervical Cancer Screening in the USA, circa 1940-95," *Social Studies of Science* 28, no. 2 (1998): 255–90; Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch, eds., *How Users Matter: The Co-Construction of Users and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

Despite this co-construction, James Ferguson says that the worry from the left is that '[i]n this technocratic utopia, functional 'recognition' is stripped free of the person-to-person social relationships that have historically accompanied it'.[342] However in the ongoing public debates around grants, union and organisational resistance, legal contestations, and the importance of local advice offices, many social relationships have flourished. This has happened alongside grant claimants being removed from more direct person-to-person means of recourse. When machines fail to do what was intended (and sometimes actually break), person-to-person interactions do not cease but take on new forms. Some of these new forms are discussed throughout this chapter.

Steven Shapin, an important scholar in the field of STS argues, 'There is as much "society" inside the scientist's laboratory, and internal to the development of scientific knowledge, as there is "outside"'.[343] While machines are often advanced as both infallible and impervious to 'tinkering', von Schnitzler's case study of prepaid water and electricity meters uncovers the technical micro-politics where protest and the political are enacted exactly at the site of and in the 'language of technology itself'.[344] Residents who have prepaid meters installed intervene to bypass, short circuit, and immobilise their meters. Walter Benjamin too, beautifully depicts both the technical purpose and affective weight of transportation in his *Arcades Project.*[345] Evoking the construction and desires built into and through the arcades he writes, 'In this *ville en passages,* the engineer's construction takes on a phantasmagorical character. The "city of arcades" is a dream that will charm the fancy of Parisians...'.[346] These positive affectations can exist alongside grief, disappointment, abjection and failure. Larkin, in part of his work that refers to post-soviet rule in Eastern Europe, explains that a road can generate these myriad sensations separate to the technical function of transport from one point to another.[347] The deeply intertwined relationship between material and ideological progress shows itself in many infrastructural projects. An example is the large-scale road projects in Albania, which were initiated while the state simultaneously prevented car ownership.

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[342] James Ferguson, "Declarations of Dependence: Labour, Personhood, and Welfare in Southern Africa," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 2 (2013): 36.
[343] Quoted in Willian Kelleher Storey, *Science and Power in Colonial Mauritius* (University of Rochester Press, 1997), 1.
[344] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 671.
[345] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Ralph Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McClaughlin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[346] Ibid., 17.
[347] Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," 332–333.

At one of the small shops mentioned above, the Bushbuckridge shopkeeper asked to keep a Net1 point of sale payment machine on the premises even though it was not connected to a power source. He told me that he 'just likes to have it here'. As with Larkin's road, the machine's presence fulfilled a purpose other than the ability to electronically sell airtime or electricity; it appeared novel and appealing to the manager and perhaps, he imagined, to his customers. People and machines are not mutually exclusive physical objects but translate feelings, hopes, imaginations and failures onto and through one another. Material culture theory has spurred work in South Africa to look at questions of the 'conversations' between people and things. Helen Meintjes undertook research that holds these interactions at its core in her work on household appliances in Soweto[348] as well as in Lusaka,

> I examine symbolic constructions and creations in these people's homes, gleaning some of the meaning people attributed to particular modes of equipping their homes, and how aspects of their image of themselves and each other were presented, acted out, created, 'conversationed', contested and negotiated through material goods.[349]

In a journal article published after her thesis, Meintjes focuses in on how household appliances construct and negotiate women's roles in the home.[350] She argues that washing machines and coal stoves in homes are sites where contestations around gender roles and identity are staged. However, it is also critical to see the study of 'things' as more than just reflections of the world around them. Artefacts are not just a way to read contestations and negotiations that are omnipresent, but instead may present forms of sociality that other processes may not expose.[351] If one were to apply this to the case of social grant technologies and efficiency then one may consider Bowker and Star's STS-grounded observation that technologies (or infrastructures, systems, and appliances) not only make work easier but also change 'the very nature of what is understood by such work.'[352]

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[348] Helen Meintjes, "'Washing Machines Make Lazy Women': Domestic Appliances and the Negotiation of Women's Propriety in Soweto," *Journal of Material Culture* 6, no. 3 (November 1, 2001): 345–63, doi:10.1177/135918350100600304.

[349] Helen Meintjes, "Poverty, Possessions and Proper Living: Constructing and Contesting Propriety in Soweto and Lusaka City" (Masters in Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town, 2000), i.

[350] Meintjes, "'Washing Machines Make Lazy Women.'"

[351] Matthew S. Hull, "Documents and Bureaucracy," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 257.

[352] Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (MIT Press, 2000), 108.

Persisting and Rerouting Paper

In the ordering of the 'old paper state' through technological interventions, the presumption is that paper is what resulted in the sluggishness and vicissitudes of state bureaucracy. However, the reams of paper generated in grant offices in Bushbuckridge are still present more than two decades after the introduction of the technology of computers and biometrics. Paper does not disappear and in some instances additional paper is generated as supplementary to the systems, or in response to unexpected failures of machinery. The mazes of paper-filled Sassa offices in Bushbuckridge are testament to this. The first office to the left in the dark corridor of the Sassa offices is where applicants provide paper documentation including an identity document, a birth certificate (where appropriate), and a completed application form. Once the Sassa official had confirmed that these documents were all present and correctly completed, the paperwork was slotted into a yellow folder and the applicant moved outside again to wait in the line. As the folders were passed to the next official seated at a desk alongside the first, applicants were then called in from the corridor again and their names and details typed into the software program. The applicant was then informed that they would receive confirmation of the outcome of the process via post. Throughout the two years I visited these Sassa offices, paper remained omnipresent despite the introduction of CPS's national biometric system. Reading paper along with technologies also challenges the idea of scale, that is that technologies are 'big' and paper is 'small' (as with, for instance, studies of the local and the global). 'Paper' and 'technology' may be different but their scales are not mutually exclusive. There is interpolation and interplay, and these should be sites of attention.[353]

It would be easy to argue that the first step of application, where applicants are vetted by Sassa, involves more cumbersome paperwork than the process of enrolment on to the digital biometric system conducted by CPS. However, this is not the case, although the location and types of paper are different. Andrew's car became a mobile office – and compared with the Sassa office's piles of paper on top of computer monitors and in filing cabinets, his were dispersed around the *bakkie.* In Andrew's vehicle, documents very seldom related to individual applicants or claimants: there were advertisements for Net1 subsidiaries, pricing lists for the rent that retailers pay for using a grant payment or point-of-sale payment unit, and documentation for the parts of machines that needed to be sent in for repairs or maintenance. This is a notable point because the persistence of paper allows us to see both the genuine

[353] Michael K. Buckland, "What Is a 'Document'?," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science (1986-1998)* 48, no. 9 (1997): 804.

novelty of digital technologies as well as the continuities that persist in their presence. This allows for theorising of technology in a way that thoughtfully troubles the rhetoric of 'revolution' every time a technology appears.[354]

An example of the unintended repercussions of the centrality of documentation to post-2012 bureaucracy involves the requirement for proof of residence. Many of the streets in Bushbuckridge have no official names and no specific house numbers. Houses are indicated by their proximity to well-known landmarks. This was not too great of a challenge when there were official forms that claimants had to fill in and could give the address of a friend or relative or an approximation of their plot's location. However, as scanners were placed in offices in mid-2014, claimants were asked to provide municipal bills or official communications that were addressed to their homes. This information, submitted to a CPS official operating an enrolment kit, would then be sent to CPS's database, a change from the printouts that were made from the filled-in forms and hand-delivered to the local headquarters. Claimants indicated to me that the more 'professional' proof of residence had made enrolment processes an arduous task and required them to go to police stations to complete affidavits, which were sometimes not accepted by CPS after a long day waiting in the queue. This requirement has moved the burden of paper onto claimants and away from CPS; the company's scanners may minimise photocopying requirements but the responsibility is transferred to claimants to procure acceptable paper proof of their residence. The (re)emergence of paper in the wake of the introduction of scanners displays the connectedness of technologies and paper in non-linear and often unexpected ways. Electronic methods of copying, recording and analysing not only build on paper technologies (for example the electronic signature or the email template taking the form of a memo heading), but also generate paper and interpolate with paper as an abstract form.

Productivity and CPS Kits for Enrolment

The definition of productivity shifts as it is moulded by actors through a series of translations, links, choices, representations, circulations, and displacements. The private parties involved in the introduction of the national system, including Net1 and MasterCard, launched advertising campaigns, in newspapers and online, to promote productivity on the basis of efficiency and innovation, a theme also encountered in earlier chapters. In a short video clip, a collaboration

[354] Geoffrey C. Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences* (Cambridge MA: Mit Press, 2005).

between Sassa and MasterCard (although strangely no Sassa representatives appear), there is lilting repetitive acoustic guitar played over a video of grant claimants happily enrolling for the biometric cards and subsequently using them at retailers with vox-pops of claimants smiling and praising the system.[355] Interspersed with these are headshots of Philip Panaino, Division President for South Africa MasterCard Worldwide, and the CEO of Net1, Serge Belamant. Both men are suited, and Panaino appears to be providing a formal pitch, declaring that with biometric cards, 'suddenly the world is open'. Belamant, however, reclines, is relaxed, and presents himself less as a salesperson than as an impassioned conversationalist.[356] Belamant's disposition is reminiscent of the statements he made, quoted in the previous chapter, about the secondary financial services linked to Net1 as providing basic access – almost what he considers a right – to grant claimants and the poor. For Belamant, his project is not one of trying to promote a product; rather, he sees the implementation of these technologies as a service, one that should be considered a basic extension of the market economy and not as a luxurious upgrade to previous technologies and methods of conducting monetary transfer and loans.

The imagination of machines, and how these mis/translate or morph in practice, are evidenced in the operation of grant enrolment kits. Metallic kits designed and packaged to travel and be duplicated were analysed in Peter Redfield's account of these modular units in his study of Doctors Without Borders[357] and their global work.[358] These kits, while differing in content, were aesthetically similar to the CPS units. Furthermore, both kits were designed, engineered and scripted to reflect the politics and place they were destined for.[359] In a promotional video clip from 2012, Vice President of MasterCard's 'Emerging Payments', Kim Slate, can be seen standing next to a two-dimensional wall hanging of clouds and grassland. In the video, Slate is holding a Sassa card and demonstrating the silver biometric enrolment kit that would go on to become the baggage of payment and enrolment officials around the country (figures 3 and 4).[360] The stage at which the kit was on display in the MasterCard promotional video, can be seen, as Appadurai explains, as the 'commodity phase' (where the machine has been produced and is

[355] *MasterCard and South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpwlx0nLFdE&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
[356] Ibid.
[357] In French, Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF)
[358] Peter Redfield, *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors without Borders* (University of California Press, 2013).
[359] Ibid.
[360] MasterCard News, "MasterCard Technology Helping the South African Social Security Agency," *You Tube*, October 25, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWMs5qTqIF0.

available for exchange) in the life of the machine or the 'thing' in the social life of things.[361] She refers to claimants as 'consumers', and continues, 'They [claimants] can use the card to shop anywhere MasterCard is accepted'.[362] In the video clip the case is polished and displayed on a white table cloth so that the open lid falls just above the horizon of the landscape wall-hanging while Slate demonstrates to passers-by the ease of operation (figure 3).

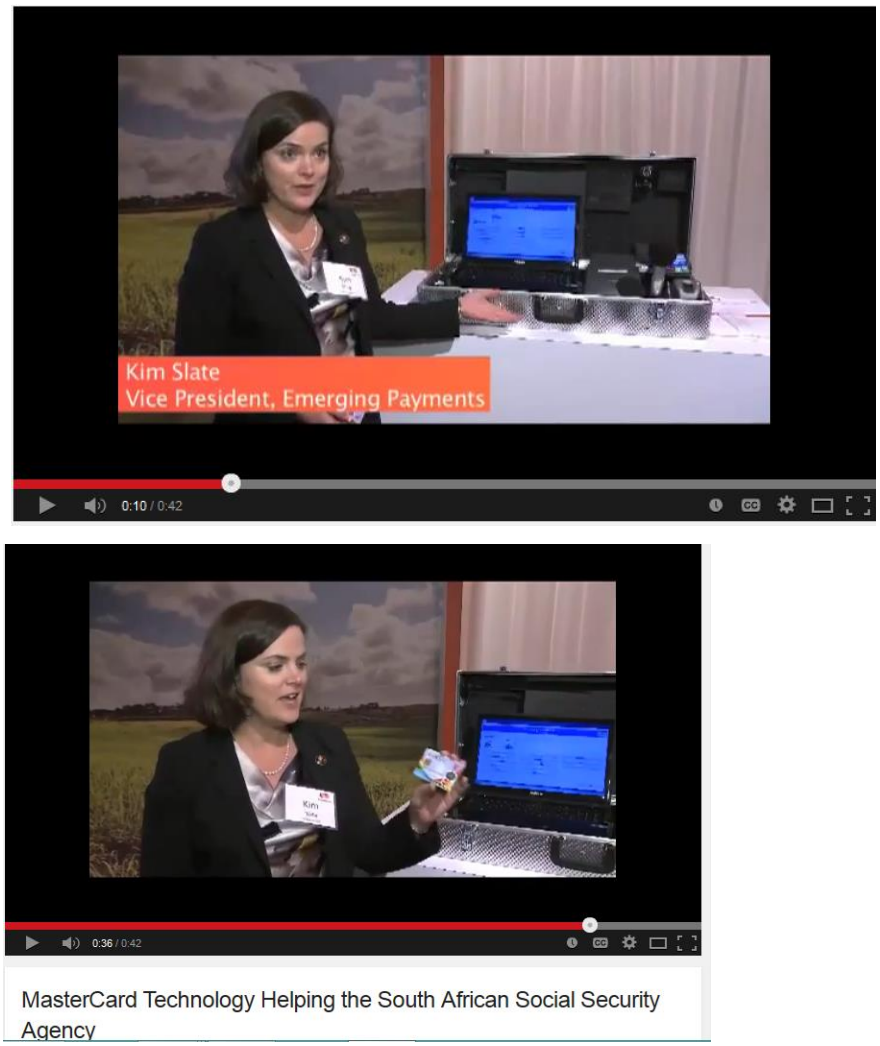


Figure 3 Master Card Vice President of 'Emerging Payments' demonstrating the enrolment and payment kit and the associated MasterCard-branded Sassa debit card

[361] Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).
[362] MasterCard News, "MasterCard Technology Helping the South African Social Security Agency."



Figure 4 Close-up view of MasterCard demonstrational enrolment and payment kit featuring laptop, printer, microphone, camera, card reader, and fingerprint reader enclosed in metallic case

The kit is lined with black foam to protect the hardware and when closed it resembles a silver suitcase, with a black plastic handle that has two clasps on either side for temporary locking. Inside the kit is a fingerprint reader, a laptop most commonly manufactured by Mecer with a Windows operating system, a microphone for biometric voice recording, and a small printer manufactured by Epson, which dispenses receipts (figure 4). HSB, a manufacturer of similar biometric registration kits, proudly describes their kit as a 'flexible' biometric solution in 'ruggedized cases' for registration, identification and verification purposes.[363] The same interplay between contesting notions of adaptability and dependability are espoused by Net1 as applying to their technology. The Net1 website suggests that it promotes adaptability through the utilisation of both biometric fingerprint and voice identification technology, which accommodates greater access and functions for their beneficiaries. This flexibility is the task of sensitive machines, which need to be housed in rigid cases, replete with customised foam inlays intended to 'protect the components during transportation, against water, dust and drops'.[364] The scourge of 'dust and drops' once again belie the fragility of machines. The model kit thus encapsulates several of the ideologies behind the new social assistance system. It too was conceived of as being convenient, productive, portable, innovative and secure. Fundamentally,

[363] HSB Identification, "Biometric Registration Kits," *HSB Identification*, accessed April 29, 2016, http://www.hsb.nl/our-products/biometric-registration-kits/.
[364] Ibid.

the kit is also materially and symbolically representative of the packaging of public 'solutions'; commodification and privatisation are embedded in *the kit as a commodity* and in *the kit as neoliberal ideology*.

According to HSB, 'The inlay is designed to let the equipment be operated while still in the case. Optionally, an inlay can be used that allows the equipment to be easily removed, so the operators can select the ergonomically best setup, depending on the circumstances.' The interpolation is that, from your most comfortable chair, with a serene, pastoral backdrop, anyone is free to engage with the kit in a leisurely manner. The compact and snug fit of various hi-tech machines in concert, the space-age metallic sheen of the exterior, the morphing Transformer-nature of a suitcase that becomes a biometric identification lab summoning one's personal information on request, all recall science-fiction stories and spy style gadgets. This image appeals to a nostalgic and fictional futurism as yet 'beyond imagination'. I would argue that it is exactly this *fantastic*al atmosphere which marketers of these kinds of kits hope to conjure in the customers' imagination (in this case governments as prospective clients).

Repair and Maintenance: CPS Kits in Bushbuckridge

The aesthetics and functioning of the kits on display have little in common with those at the sites of enrolment or payment in Bushbuckridge. Invisible in the MasterCard advert are the materials that lie between the laptop and the bottom of the case. The foam under the laptop is concave and houses a portable modem with several protruding USB sticks. This design requires that the laptop be placed alongside or balanced on the case in order to grant access to the internet and external drive connections. The microphone in the kit often doesn't fit into the receptacle provided as a stand and it is commonly tucked under the payment terminal. The balancing laptop and microphone point towards a common difference from the display version of the enrolment kit, in that the walls of the case do not serve as a boundary for the hardware associated with it. This can be read as a figurative escape from the boundaries of specifications and intended application. The first time I encountered the kits, the most immediate and visible difference from those on the showroom floor was the presence of tangles of cables and wires. The immediate period after the announcement of the new system saw a flurry of registration-related activities and the need to set up venues and protocols for notifying claimants about the new system, what it was to entail, and where they had to go to register. Thereafter there was the actual physical process of recording and enrolling claimants. However, many glitches

materialised, which the large companies involved in the roll-out of the machinery saw as unexpected, deviating from their 'hermetically sealed, all-in-one, "plug-and-play" design', as they had often disregarded the many locally-specific uncertainties.[365] It was possible that these were growing pains and that once these growing pains were addressed, the new system would result in a slicker grant delivery and payment system.

Along with the change in appearance and functioning, the kits at times did not work at all. The first persistent design failure was that the original stand-alone fingerprint readers repeatedly malfunctioned. Newer machines with a built-in fingerprint reader went on to replace them. This retrofitting acknowledged a context where spurious cables strained from twisting, turning and tangling. However, the newer self-contained system now required more battery power and machines lost charge more quickly than they were able to be recharged – the previous chapter covered this in the narrative of waiting at a retail merchant.

Repair, in the social assistance milieu in South Africa, takes on multi-dimensional forms and became regular in the activities and materials of the operation of social assistance.[366] Andrew's schedule was plotted by hardware breaks and software glitches across Bushbuckridge. The quotidian of maintenance provides a site of controversy that can unravel the complexities of living with these machines. One of the important things that repair does in the analysis of technology is to underline contingency and agency and, as a result, permit the erosion of ideas of universal assent and the deification of technology. Repair is also a useful analytic tool as machines have the capacity to provide rich information, both analytically and literally, because they hold on to and translate interactions in ways that may be easier to grasp, owing to their simultaneous pliability and durability.[367] Studying repair reveals contestability and contingency in a specific historical context.

The deviations and failures of kits in Bushbuckridge suggested – as in Madeleine Akrich's examination of photoelectric lighting kits in Senegal – how the movement of technical objects into situations that were not envisaged by designers and engineers can expose negotiations and

[365] Lilly Irani et al., "Postcolonial Computing: A Lens on Design and Development," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (ACM, 2010), 2.
[366] Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 32.
[367] Bruno Latour, "Pragmatogonies A Mythical Account of How Humans and Nonhumans Swap Properties," *American Behavioral Scientist* 37, no. 6 (May 1, 1994): 803.

mediations that may otherwise have receded into the background[368] Akrich calls this *de-scription* and the use of this term is multiply relevant; it implies deviation from a script but it also carries the connotation of un-writing, an important factor in the introduction of these technologies. An example of this, again, was the presumption that technical solutions would alleviate the need for paper in the 2012 grant infrastructure. Reading *de-scription*, for Akrich, permits an understanding that moves between the worlds of designers and users, and scripted users and real users. The result is an analysis that looks at '*the world inscribed in the object* and *the world described by its displacement*'.[369] Another local case of this is how the kits look and are designed to operate on the tablecloths in MasterCard advertisements and how this model, and its *inscriptions*, function differently (or not at all) in grant payment in Bushbuckridge, when the technologies are *displaced*. Von Schnitzler extends this analysis with the concept of 'traveling technologies' where, 'technologies are enrolled within ethical and political assemblages which may or may not "travel" elsewhere and that may shift over time'.[370] Using this framework, machines are not only a method of reading the world around them but also become the objects of study themselves.

The machines that were used to pay monthly grants at mobile points from CPS vehicles shared the basic features of the enrolment machines. They too were fitted into silver cases and contained biometric fingerprint readers. Slightly less flashy, with no cushioning foam, the component parts of card readers, fingerprint scanners, printers, cables, modems and USB ports slotted more or less into separate compartments. The tray supporting these devices was dispatched, rather awkwardly, from a protective, aluminium housing on a metal trolley. The processing units were contained in an aluminium case on a trolley similar to those used to serve beverages on a plane: this modular addition was the key distinguishing feature between enrolment and payment kits (figure 5). In the Bushbuckridge area, three *bakkies* and one truck would travel around in the first two weeks of the month to pay cash transfers to grant claimants.[371] All of these vehicles were white and did not have any markings that identified them as belonging to CPS, an invisibility that mirrored the placement and aesthetic of their offices. Each *bakkie* opened up on its sides to expose four payment machines – two on each side of the vehicle. While all merchants had begun to use the Bio 930 machine with its in-built biometric

[368] Madeleine Akrich, "The De-Scription of Technical Objects: Studies in Sociotechnical Change," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 211.
[369] Ibid., 209 Italics in original.
[370] von Schnitzler, "Traveling Technologies," 675.
[371] The next chapter discusses why people still choose to use these monthly paypoints despite the system actively encouraging (and certainly being premised upon) accessing grants at retailers or ATMs.

pad, the payment vehicles still made use of the temperamental stand-alone fingerprint reader connected to the payment terminal.



Figure 5 Payment kit with standalone fingerprint reader mounted on a vehicle

The denomination of the bills provided was also literally blocked from claimants. The largest denomination these machines were able to pay out was a R100 note because, as Andrew put it, 'you never know if the money gets stolen or lost, R200 is a lot of money for these people'.[372] Claimants stood to the right of the CPS official poised at the machine. The official then slipped the Sassa card provided into the slot, and the claimant moved to the official's left and put their finger on to the keypad. After this process, it took about 20 seconds for a receipt to be printed and handed to the claimant along with the money dispensed (in controlled denominations). As the 20 seconds passed, the official gestured for the next claimant's Sassa card and then hovered it in front of the chip-reader ready to begin the next transaction.

The reasons for hiccups and stoppages in this production line were numerous. The most common reasons for the bottlenecks involved claimants being paid the incorrect amount, queries about unauthorised airtime deductions, administrative questions, and the laboured pace of the elderly and those with disabilities. Before the *bakkies* were even ready to begin

[372] Andrew, Interview with Andrew, Arthurseat Pay Point, August 12, 2014.

paying claimants, Andrew often had to assist with malfunctions, most frequently mechanical failures or card-readers not recognising built-in chips. On one occasion, on the first payment stop of the day at 8am, Jimmy, Andrew and Fenze all clumsily stood around the metal case on trolley wheels that they had hauled out of the rear of the white *bakkie*, and busied themselves pulling and tweaking metal arms and levers (figure 6). Grant claimants, some of whom had been here since 6am, stood outside the mesh fencing watching, or ignoring, the set-up that they had seen too often. On one of our drives, Andrew explained that faulty gears, especially those that controlled the dispensing of money, were the most common problem associated with the payment machines. Indeed, this caused him routinely to ask CPS officials to take a break from dispensing money in order to avoid overheating.

To emphasise the precarity of gears, Andrew reached into the door handle and shook several loose metal discs as though about to roll dice. 'See, even they [the machines] get tired', he explained with a sigh. On two occasions I witnessed the mechanism that dispenses the money whirring and failing and, after all the waiting and the eventual processing at a payment terminal, the complete despondency that claimants displayed connected to the everyday precarity that I elaborated on in the previous chapter.



Figure 6 Dismantling a broken trolley at a monthly paypoint

Productive Breaks: 'Continually growing a basket of products'

By following the machines, a picture of a new kind of productivity, associated with breaks, began to become clearer. As the payment terminals malfunctioned, the presence of Net1-branded terminals that would take their place proliferated. This small stamped logo began to chart a map of how Net1 stretched its tentacles into companies that were able to provide all of the software and hardware required for grant administration. In a discussion between a CPS

employee and a Sassa official at a paypoint in early 2014, the former proclaimed that 'whether or not CPS keeps the contract to stay until 2017, I think that it has its foot firmly in social grants in South Africa for a lot longer than that even'. The state official agreed earnestly.[373]

One of the ways that Net1 has solidified its presence in the South African business landscape is to use social grant payments as a springboard for the introduction of further products and what it calls its 'continually growing a basket of products'.[374] One of the increasingly important companies in the bouquet of Net1 subsidiaries is RMT Systems. Net1 refers to these subsidiaries as members of its group and in an interview with a Net1 employee, he said that '[they] are different companies, but you can think of them like brother and sister – like children of Net1'.[375] Net1 supplies payment terminals through RMT Systems and provides the additional services of installation and ongoing technical support.[376] RMT Systems advertises and sells infrastructure and hardware to private entities which allow access to various payment services. The RMT brochure – notably handed out by Net1 employees – offers a range of 'vending devices' allowing for the payment of accounts and purchasing of prepaid electricity and airtime.[377] Any merchant, both small shops with sparsely lined shelves or giant retailers, can apply for one of these machines by completing and submitting a contract and paying a monthly 'retailer fee'.

These payment terminals (the only terminal that Net1 supports) are manufactured by the Ingenico Group and are emblazoned with the Net1 logo on their bottom right (figure 7). The Ingenico Bio 930 is the machine that Net1 introduced with a built-in fingerprint reader.[378] Ingenico is French-based and is involved in the business of electronic transactions in 125 countries. The payment units are marketed to governments globally for ID schemes, electoral processes, attendance tracking, law enforcement and pension payments.[379] According to RMT Systems, the four authentication features available on the units: chip, PIN, GPS, and fingerprint

[373] Kabelo, Interview with CPS Team Leader, Lilydale Paypoint, March 4, 2014.
[374] RMT Systems, "RMT Systems, a Member of the Net1 Group: Introducing the Safe Virtual Vending System," 2014.
[375] Interview with CPS Team Leader, Lilydale Paypoint.
[376] Ingenico Smart Terminals, "iWB Bio Series: Mobile Fingerprint Secure Solution Delivering Services at the Last Mile," *Ingenico Group*, April 18, 2013, http://www.ingenico.com/en/products/payment-terminals/biometrics/.
[377] RMT Systems, "RMT Systems, a Member of the Net1 Group: Introducing the Safe Virtual Vending System."
[378] Ingenico Smart Terminals, "iWB Bio Series: Mobile Fingerprint Secure Solution Delivering Services at the Last Mile."
[379] Ibid.

verification, allow for superior 'KYC' (know your customer) performance.[380] Ingenico reinforces efficiency as its key marketing message but also establishes its products as hardy and mobile. The Vice President of Global Solutions, Product Management and Marketing at Ingenico said in a press release that 'It [Ingenico Bio machines] changes the way governments and financial institutions distribute service and the promise of delivering services at the last mile comes true'.[381] Ingenico professed that 'biometric technology is the key to identifying the population and delivering the right services to the right people and iWB Bio Series is a perfect and unique platform to deploy these new channels in an efficient and cost-effective way'.[382] This statement relates to many strands of argument in this thesis. It is also poignantly similar to Sassa's slogan, 'Paying the right social grant, to the right person, at the right time and place'.[383]



Figure 7 Ingenico payment units at a retailer featuring the Net1 logo

[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] SASSA, "South African Social Security Agency," *SASSA Home*, accessed December 1, 2013, http://www.sassa.gov.za/.

Another case of failures, hiccups and negotiations in everyday technological implementation is evident from the following paradigmatic story. Over a period of two weeks, I travelled with Andrew to containers around Bushbuckridge to install card-reading and fingerprinting machines. The containers are large, rectangular, metal structures that were once cargo containers and had been repurposed as a base to sell dry groceries including maize and beans in bulk. The first hurdle for unit installation was that none of these containers seemed to have formal addresses. Andrew grew up and lives in Bushbuckridge, and even though the municipality is notoriously expansive, he has a delicate knowledge of the winding roads and many villages. Even with his intimate geographical sense, we struggled to locate the obscure landmarks provided by the containers' owners. Once located, Andrew was expected to register the containers' GPS coordinates with no device, and so resorted to refining the murky address initially provided. This updated handwritten address was manoeuvred into the small document table; squashed shyly into the upper right corner of an A4 page, with rows already straining to contain their information. A further challenge was the lack of electricity in the containers, a requirement in order to run and charge the machines. I was present for a conversation where the idea of solar panels on the containers was discarded because of the ease with which the panels can be stolen. The negotiated plan always seemed to involve rerouting a cable from the nearest electrical supply – in most cases a shop, but in one instance a connection was made to a generator operated for use in the adjacent taxi rank.

A similar example of the failure to account for some practical considerations became apparent in the 2012 Kenyan elections, which cost a total of $293 million. While the biometric technology was implemented to register voters and so render the election more effective, the overall failure of the biometric kits led to ID numbers being laboriously recorded manually. In addition, the biometric system presumed the presence of electricity in classrooms used as polling stations, while voting officials forgot their identification numbers, or the system simply failed to work.[384]

Conclusion

New privatised social assistance infrastructure, its implementers and designers argued, was an effective and streamlined way to identify individuals and address exclusion. This belief was

[384] Michaela Wrong, "Africa's Election Aid Fiasco," *The Spectator*, April 20, 2013, http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/8890471/the-technological-fix/.

grounded in the presumption that digital technologies are objective and neutral. Furthermore, private companies are imagined to have (and promote themselves as having) the monopoly on the infrastructures upon which these social assistance technologies can operate. However, the presence of older forms of bureaucracy belie the claim to efficiency. Failure to consider basic logistical issues like electricity supply has, during the course of this ethnography, exposed situations where superficially slick processes are rendered a laborious and sometimes farcical procedure. These findings also underline the fallacy that global private technology companies automatically advance functional and futuristic systems, even when machines are modified for application to 'locally specific conditions'. These technologies, outside of their 'commodity phase', are always other than slick, hyper-effective products: they always embody alienation, ongoing work, repair, dissatisfaction, hiccups, error and failure. Yet, if we continue to examine technologies in an abstract way that ignores their application and attends only to their private sellers, then all we see is the commodity phase. This is not to argue that the state would necessarily deliver a 'better' system – we know from earlier chapters the burdens and bureaucracy of paper states. But, because of the sluggishness and failures of grant systems prior to 2012, it has been easy to promote the promises of efficiency and productivity possible with private biometric technologies and systems. An idealised characterisation of a technological utopia disregards the biographies of machines, the biographies of people and the biographies of people/machines; it also ignores the ongoing 'economisation' of access and functionality. Tracing the machines complicates the idea of a uniform productivity within this nexus. Slippages in how machines are expected to function, and how this actually translates into every day practice, underline user contingency and agency, and erode easy ideas of either infallible machines, or notions of privatisation, innovations and upgrades as indisputable 'progress'.

CHAPTER FOUR

ASSISTING DATA SHARING: THE BLACK SASH'S EXPERIENCES WITH GRANT PRACTICE AND THE OPAQUE STATE AND PRIVATE GRANTING OF DATA ACCESS

In previous chapters I argued that the grant cannot be looked at simply as a monetary transfer or a political economic policy outside of a set of contextual and network factors that always position and define its meaning. The assemblages of grant processes are paramount in understanding what the grant actually is as a social mechanism. The Black Sash, a human rights organisation formed in 1955, hinged its work from 1960 and through to the present on the problems with grant administration and payments. The organisation has thus been doing the work that I argue is imperative to understanding grant provision and meaning outside of a logic of 'economisation', that is, *the Black Sash has been engaged primarily with the practice of grants*. Since the Black Sash pays attention to grant practice, they have noticed an upsurge in deductions and cancellations of social grants after 2012, explored in chapter two. In light of the practices of deductions and company entanglements, the Black Sash has realised that claimants' information is somehow being shared. As a result, they have become particularly concerned with trying to understand the processes of social assistance data gathering and sharing, especially after 2012. This chapter brings together the Black Sash's work around social grant practice over time with their immediate anxiety about data collection and security. It relates intervention by the Black Sash to the themes of the earlier chapters, reprising historical aspects discussed in chapter one, insecurities in chapter two and the technopolitical concerns of chapter three

The Emergence of the Political Object of the Social Grant in the Black Sash

The programmatic importance of social assistance for the Black Sash is not a product of the 2012 moment. Historical changes in the form and content of the organisation directed their work towards social grants. The Black Sash advice offices, first opened in Cape Town in 1958, were locally-based legal advice centres that provided one-on-one consultations between the organisation and community members. The milestone of providing face-to-face services through advice offices and bail funds collected for women arrested under the pass laws meant that the Black Sash, often unintentionally, began to translate the formalities and loopholes in

state legislation to those Africans they interacted with. Second to the pass laws, the greatest number of complaints brought to the advice offices involved old age pensions and other social grants.[385] The following sections look back to the work of advice offices and the centrality of the pass laws in order to show the trajectories of South African grant practice, the Black Sash's focus on grant practice, and the concerns of grant claimants over time. I then return to the 2012 national payment system and the work that the Black Sash undertook to address the 'avalanche' of complaints from claimants about unauthorised deductions.

Advice Offices

Attention to the manner in which the Black Sash advice offices operated, and the politics which they nurtured, paves a path for viewing the entanglements of the Black Sash and social assistance. The early leadership of the Black Sash realised the need for advice offices when black women began to queue outside the members' homes seeking advice (and sometimes intervention) around the pass laws. The women of the Black Sash slowly began to establish centres around the country. Kathryn Spink gives this summary of the work of the advice offices in her history of the Black Sash:

> As far as the Black Sash was concerned, the philosophy behind the advice offices was to enable people to understand what the law was, to enable them to make choices about how they wished to act and to support them in their chosen action...Where it was a matter of officials being unduly slow to provide documents, white persuasive powers could be brought to bear. Legal loopholes could be found. Appeals could be made against some orders. Test cases were taken to court by *pro amico* lawyers and occasionally won.[386]

Most often, cases were brought *to* the Black Sash, so while for a long time the leadership of the organisation was white and privileged, black people were, to a degree, shaping the organisational content. From the outset, cases brought to the advice offices were labelled 'interviews' and involved lengthy recording of the specifics as well as the background to the incident. Furthermore, advice offices' workers were seldom confined to the office itself, they moved in and out of the areas they worked in, sometimes writing 'repression monitoring'

[385] Mary Ingouville Burton, *The Black Sash: Women for Justice and Peace* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2015), 108.
[386]Kathryn Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa* (Great Britain: Metheun London, 1991), 75.

bulletins. The employees also had connections to local charities and organisations, which they used as a support network for assistance. The 'interviews', 'repression monitoring', and knowledge of local issues and organisations made the information collected by the Black Sash read as part of a series of biographies embedded in the political and social context, very similar to an ethnographer's field notes. The material collected by advice office workers contextualised individual stories and as such their information traversed various scales; it was attentive to the political and economic landscape as well as the particularities of the stories of the complainants. This blueprint continues today: members of the Black Sash tell me, and have underlined in the media, that through individual cases brought to advice offices and local partners it was clear that from 2012 social grant deductions were a widespread problem affecting social grant claimants across the country.

The following observations from Mary Burton of the complaints brought to the advice offices in the 1970s and 1980s about grants are instructive and noticeably parallel the themes of social assistance-related problems under the 2012 system:

> Not only did amounts differ according to racial classification, but the payment system was an enormous burden. All over the country African people were obliged to wait in long queues at pay-out points every month, sometimes every second month, and when they did eventually receive the pension it was not always the correct amount. Those who were illiterate were brusquely fobbed off and made to place their thumbprints on receipts which they could not read. Black Sash monitors were drawn into observing the practices at these points.[387]

The advice offices would assist with applications for grants and follow up on the progress. The need for this sort of administrative help was initially communicated to the organisation by potential claimants at monthly payout points.[388] At the payout points, Black Sash organisers also facilitated question and answer sessions for claimants as they waited for their grant payments or to submit application forms. Complaints about unemployment and precarious employment presented to the Back Sash almost logically extended to include the problems and insufficiencies of social assistance.

[387] Burton, *The Black Sash: Women for Justice and Peace*, 108.
[388] Ibid.

In chapter one I discussed how state old age pensions for Africans date to 1944. These were administered and delivered by Pretoria until 1959, when the responsibility for old age pension delivery for Africans was officially shifted to 'bantu authorities' and administered by the Department of Bantu Administration. This shift in responsibility arose because of the formalisation and vigorous implementation of apartheid segregation in the form of bantustans. As chapter one explored, bantustans instituted pension systems that were administratively inferior and resource poor compared to those in South Africa. Furthermore, pensioners received more money from Pretoria than from bantustan treasuries. This difference between the quality of delivery and the monetary value of grants meant that claimants communicated to advice offices that it was preferable to have South African 'citizenship' rather than the supposed 'citizenship' extended by the bantustans. In attempts to ameliorate the skewed services, and by request of claimants, advice offices frequently tried to assist people to prove they legally lived in South Africa and therefore were entitled to a South African pension.

As a specific example, authorities in the KwaZulu bantustan began to administer pensions by the mid-70s and shifted the administrative headquarters to Ulundi, the 'capital' of the bantustan.[389] The lack of resources and administrative backlogs accumulated and by 1978 no pensions were being paid.[390] As the year waned, all recipients were required to re-apply, an arduous process that took several trips, was taxing on the elderly, and was expensive. Were a claimant to succeed and arrive at the administration offices to re-apply, an age check might be required and this data was housed in Pretoria. The application and verification processes were long and forms were frequently lost. There were cases where after two years no response had arrived and others where eighty and ninety year olds were rejected on the basis of not meeting the age requirements.[391]

The 'commonsense' notion that money is being paid to those who are 'undeserving' imbues welfare debates internationally. Delineating whether people had 'legitimate' claims to grants remained in 2012, and as with the earlier incarnation of Pretoria and its bantustans, attention was strongly directed towards securing identification data, and centralising this information.

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[389] These dates may seem incongruous with the dates indicated for the formation of the bantustans and the shifting of administration to bantu authorities in the paragraph before. However, it's important to note that the bantustans were officially 'founded' at different times and that the shifting of 'administrative responsibility' was not always immediate or complete.

[390] Mary Kleinenberg and Christopher Merrett, *Standing on Street Corners: A History of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015).

[391] Ibid., 235, 243.

The Black Sash in the 1980s: Fighting South Africa to be South African

By the 1980s, the Black Sash shifted towards taking on work that stretched further than individual cases into the domain of structural inequalities and generalisable political issues. The 1980 'special project' of the Pietermaritzburg advice office focused on old age pensions. They saw it as an issue that encompassed, and was symbolic of, the struggles that faced most of their clients.[392] While the advice offices still dispensed assistance to individuals, this was the first time that the individual stories were generalised on the basis of a large number of cases *and also* on the basis of the assemblages of oppression evidenced through these cases. Through the pressures that surfaced around claiming old age grants, the Black Sash was able to foreground some of its core political projects: unequal state treatment based on race, the confusing and unreliable administrative processes faced by Africans, the clear puppetry of the bantustans by the apartheid government, and the inability and lack of desire from Pretoria to provide and maintain sufficient and efficient welfare for Africans.

By 1981, the Pietermaritzburg advice office's cases relating to old age pensions and disability grants more than doubled (a total of 19.8 per cent of its total case load) from the previous year's 42 cases.[393] White pensioners in 1980 received a maximum grant that was three times more than the ceiling placed on pensions for Africans. African pensioners were only paid every two months, and surveys that showed that pensioners would prefer to collect their money at post offices, banks, or building societies went ignored. Together, the inflexible payment locations and the long waits between grant payouts perpetuated the long and tiresome queues at paypoints.[394]

Advice offices tracked all of these misgivings and conditions. Alongside this, the organisation expanded its mandate beyond legal action. For instance, the Pietermaritzburg office started a monitoring project at two pension paypoints in Swartkop location. Under the leadership of Pat Merrett, the advice office received multiple accounts that fraud and intimidation were rampant at these paypoints. In a letter to the media at the time, she summarised the consternation facing grant claimants:

[392]Ibid., 235.
[393]Ibid., 237.
[394]Ibid., 238.

> Our office can confirm that a number of elderly people who live in Sweetwaters, Edendale and adjacent areas are living in severe poverty because of the inadequacy and inefficiency of so-called Black pensions. There are, for instance numerous obstacles which may hinder the filling in of application forms; applications can take months to be processed; and in some cases pensioners are told at the payout point that there is no money for them that month and they subsequently never receive back-pay ... The treatment of Black South African citizens of pensionable age is a disgrace, particularly in a country as wealthy as South Africa. A measure of the level of civilisation in any country can be gained from the way that country treats its disadvantaged citizens. In these terms South Africa's record is abysmal. It has the wealth to pay all old people an equal living pension, yet chooses to condemn those with black skins to struggle for the basic essentials of life. This policy is unjust, un-Christian and indefensible.[395]

The advice office raised their grievances in the media, as in the letter above, and to the relevant government ministries. They placed monitors at paypoints, and also fought to collect pension arrears. In 1981 and 1982 the office collected R60,000, despite insults from the KwaZulu bantustan minister who called the efforts the work of 'white pseudo-liberal[s]'.[396] Concurrent with their relative successes, the advice office also faced many apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Towards the mid-80s the organisation saw – in their work on social assistance – a paradigmatic example of structural violence: 'It [the many hardships facing pensioners] is, however, an inevitable, although unfortunate, concomitant of the underdevelopment of the so-called Black areas of South Africa, and the remedy is a long-term one', read a letter in 1982 from the Pietermaritzburg advice office.[397] In 1989 the Durban advice office had taken its usual log of new cases. The breakdown shows the overwhelming instances of concerns around pensions: 1,455 cases about social pensions, 121 cases about pay disputes and job losses, 72 government and work pension cases, 55 insurance cases, 29 cases involving maintenance and care grants, 29

[395]Ibid., 237.
[396]Ibid., 238.
[397]Letter to the press from the Pietermaritzburg advice office 1 April 1982 in ibid., 240.

housing and flood relief instances, 68 unclassified and a total of 1,949 interviews.[398] This statistical breakdown is indicative of the preponderance of cases pertaining to welfare and assistance but also how heavily weighted the total is towards cases regarding state assistance as opposed to contributory employment pensions. The mere numbers of social assistance complaints versus social insurance concerns reinforce the point made throughout this thesis that the social of South Africa is primarily located in government-to-citizen cash transfers.

From 1989 the East London premises also fielded a large number of pension-related cases.[399] The office only had four full-time employees and nine volunteers. The offices were incredibly busy because of their location in a small slice of South Africa, bordered by the bantustans of Ciskei and Transkei. The difficulties of access to social assistance in the bantustans made the East London office doubly busy with people living in poverty, from Ciskei and Transkei, arriving to seek advice and, hopefully, respite. A visitor to the East London office in 1989 observed:

> The queue of desperate people began to form each day at 4 a.m. Anything up to eight people in a family could be living on one person's pension. By that time a pension was R150 a month. That was assuming that the individual concerned was eligible for a pension in South Africa, and even then blacks were frequently disadvantaged by comparison with whites. In Port Elizabeth white pensions had been computerised. This meant that application could be processed within forty-eight hours. Blacks had to wait for nine months and often even longer. In the homelands, pensions were smaller and payouts were unreliable. Many advice office hours were spent helping people to prove that they actually lived in South Africa.[400]

Ostensibly the system of receiving a grant only in a bantustan was instituted because of the fear that a pension would be claimed both there and in South Africa. The real and imagined fraud perpetrated by individual claimants again became a motivating state concern. Furthermore, in the instances where people did have formal housing in South Africa, it was difficult to access documentation that proved this: a mandatory requirement to register as a resident and to receive a South African pension. In a 1987 article in the *Star*, the Department of Home Affairs

[398]Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 303.
[399]Ibid., 118.
[400]Ibid.

explained that it would stall issuing 253,986 identity documents until South Africa felt satisfied in their negotiations with Bophuthatswana, a bantustan.[401] The Black Sash argued that this was counter to the recent 1986 Restoration of South African Citizenship Act of 1 July 1986 which entitled people to reclaim their South African citizenship which had been lost upon the formation of the bantustans.

Legality, Illegality, and the State in the Work of the Black Sash

Purchase and the State

One of the characteristics of the Black Sash over the decades is how it sees traction for political work within the workings of the state. The Black Sash has moulded their interactions with the state, and vice versa, over time, issue and place – often in ambiguous and fraught ways. In the early years of the advice offices, the Black Sash explained to those accessing the service that the organisation would not act illegally but would assist in guaranteeing rights within the legal framework. This was a possibility permitted by their not being banned but also by understanding that the organisation could manoeuvre, even within a largely oppressive legal system, because of its modes of civility, its white leadership and membership, and financial and professional resources.

By using the evidence gathered from the advice offices, the Black Sash was equipped with a wealth of information: both in the form of stories and the evidence of statistics. A foundational strategy employed by the Black Sash was to inform the government, using the facts they had gathered, in an attempt to direct focus to the issues that the organisation took to be vital.[402] Unlike many other groups doing work with black people on issues affecting their everyday lives under apartheid, the Black Sash made use of the existing executive, judicial, and legislative frameworks *whilst* critiquing these structures. The Black Sash would meet with and make appeals to Cabinet ministers, and provide information to opposition party members who would raise questions in parliament. The organisation would seek legal assistance and take issues to court, coordinate public meetings and, of course, assist people who came to the advice offices in the action the person wished to pursue. The Black Sash also assisted in setting up Rural Action Committees at the beginning of the 1980s. These committees had full-time paid

[401] Quoted in ibid., 269.

[402] In a society that was structurally and deeply divided, spreading this information was a challenging task and an unusual one too.

fieldworkers and assisted with organising meetings, conducting surveys, networking with other organisations, and directing advice.[403] Along with their magazine, *Black Sash*, the organisation also began to publish short informational pamphlets that explained the content and implications of laws as well as the rights of people affected.[404]

In the 1980s the offices in Pietermaritzburg called into question how people (and here they were directing their critique primarily to the Nationalist Party government) could refer to themselves as 'concerned Christians', 'White civilisation' and as accepting of 'just and equal treatment for all'. The Black Sash of today's motto, 'making human rights real', shows a slight departure from such appeals to morality. However, the convergences between the Black Sash of the 1980s and the organisation today are also notable; for example, both make appeals grounded in the language in which the government wishes to portray itself. The centrality of rights in the post-apartheid discourse and imagination fuels the strategic capacity of an appeal based on human rights. Similarly, the passion with which the attack of being un-Christian was delivered, in Pat Merrett's letter in 1982 (quoted above), showed a purposeful attempt at exposing the ambiguities in the government's self-styled values. What remains is the clear position of the Black Sash as an organisation that appeals to and mobilises government using methods of recording, monitoring, moral questioning, the law, and partnerships with groups and organisations.

Hands On Our Data, Hands Off Our Grants

Ongoing conversations with the Black Sash indicate that there is something particular about a national privatised system that has resulted in unexpected insecurities. The DSD echoed this sentiment by claiming an obvious spike in deductions since the contract was awarded to CPS in 2012.[405] After the national contracting of CPS, the Black Sash, through their local advice offices,[406] was inundated with an 'avalanche'[407] of complaints about debit deductions from social grant accounts. Deductions were observed from an estimated 2.3 million out of the ten million bank accounts into which grants were paid.[408] The advice offices and their organisational

[403]Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 105.
[404] An example of one of these pamphlets was Sheena Duncan's, 'You and the New Pass Laws' published in 1982.
[405]"Minister Sets Sights on Loan Sharks," *Eastern Cape Today*, September 17, 2014.
[406] Black Sash partners with the Association for Community Advice Offices in South Africa
[407] Black Sash, "Unlawful, Immoral Deductions from Social Grants Should Stop, Says Black Sash," *Black Sash*, May 29, 2013, http://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/media-and-publications/media-statements/1397-unlawful-immoral-deductions-from-social-grants-should-stop-says-black-sash-29-may-2013.
[408] Mubeen Banderker, "Grant Deductions Are Immoral: Black Sash," *Voice of the Cape*, September 11, 2014.

networks argue that the introduction of the newer forms of administration and payment have effected further and different possibilities for fraud, theft, and inconvenience.[409] The Black Sash is confident that the deductions are 'immoral', but the organisation was advised against terming them illegal.[410] There are several factors that contribute to the fuzziness and the resultant loopholes: the inability of the law to keep pace with the changing uses of technology; the consolidation to one company for the outsourcing of grants; uncertainty about the bounds of privacy and personal information; and the murky realm of information swapping and sharing that subsidiary companies allow. Furthermore, there are several different legislative documents that govern social assistance, including committee recommendations, service level agreements, and other legislation not explicitly targeted at social assistance.[411] In this swamp of ambiguity, it is difficult adequately and consistently to define the degree of unlawfulness of such deductions. The opacity has led to media, press statements, lawyers, and spokespeople using a range of terms to refer to these deductions, including 'immoral', 'illegal', 'unlawful', and 'unauthorised'. Elroy Paulus, advocacy manager for the Black Sash, explained that even if loans are authorised they often proved a burden to claimants: 'Many deductions continue even if the loan or service has been paid off because these third parties have access to the recipient's bank accounts'.[412] Another example of equivocation can be found in a statement made by the Minister of the Department of Social Development as she grappled with disentangling the language:

> While some of these deductions may be technically legal, they remain immoral as they serve to rob the poor from the resources that we as South Africans provide for them, to meet their basic needs. Worse still, the money lenders do not even carry out appropriate risk and affordability checks as required by law. his exacerbates their vulnerability and in turn drives borrowers into a vicious cycle of never-ending debts.[413]

As the cases of deductions began to swell, and technologies applied in 2012 were shown not to ameliorate many of the insecurities faced by claimants, the Black Sash formed the *Hands off*

[409] Lynette Maart and Elroy Paulus, eds., "Black Sash Social Grant Advocacy Manual" (The Black Sash, To be published).
[410] Mubeen Banderker, "Black Sash Welcomes Legal Action Against CPS," *Voice of the Cape*, September 17, 2014.
[411] This includes the Constitution particularly the following sections: S27(1) the right to social security, S27(2) that these rights are subject to progressive realisation, and S27(36) that the right can be limited to the extent that it is 'reasonable and justifiable in an open democratic society'. Furthermore there are newer recommendations in the National Development Plan (NDP) that call for a social floor, or basic minimum standards, to be implemented by 2030.
[412] Ann Crotty, "Millions of Grant Recipients Ripped Off," *Business Day Live*, September 7, 2014.
[413] "Minister Sets Sights on Loan Sharks."

Our Grants campaign in November 2013. At first, as the organisation had done from the inception of the advice offices, it compiled a list of grant claimants who had filed complaints about unauthorised deductions, many of whom had kept their receipts and recorded the money leaking from their grants. In total, the *Hands off Our Grants* campaign resulted in a log of hundreds of deductions for airtime, water, electricity, and loans from their grant accounts.[414]

Social Pension (SOCPEN) System for Information Management

The *Hands off Our Grants* campaign included 'speak out' sessions for claimants to discuss, in the presence of DSD officials, their concerns over grant administration and payment. The Acting Director General for DSD was quoted at a Black Sash 'speak out' in July 2015 as saying: 'Introducing the SASSA Mastercard meant people could access their money from anywhere instead of everyone having to queue for hours. While this card is doing good, it also introduced blue-collar companies having access to your money.'[415] The Black Sash appreciated this long-overdue acknowledgment by the state. However, the government did not grasp that the monetary deductions were only a symptom of the Black Sash's main concern: data sharing. Conversations with members of the Black Sash into the present highlight the single greatest gap in knowledge and the apotheosis of their concerns: how, in practice, is claimants' data collected, used, shared, and protected? The Black Sash warned claimants about this information sharing, saying '[t]hat private information is now being traded and stolen. Your identity is being stolen'.[416]

The government, has itself participated in the information sharing with which the Black Sash was most concerned. But the government has seemed oblivious of this more generalised anxiety harboured by the Black Sash. It is logical that the government has been myopic and sees deductions as being primarily about monetary loss. In the logic of the 'economisation' of grants, the fullness of life becomes the flatness of 'money'. The government system that is most under scrutiny for its sharing of claimants' data is the SOCPEN system (social pension system). SOCPEN is a digital information management system for the administration, application, and delivery of social grants, which was introduced by the South African government as a platform

[414]In the media, these bank accounts are often referred to as 'Sassa accounts'. However, while the card is branded with Sassa's name and logo, it is a Grindrod bank account and it is CPS that has a partnership with the bank.
[415]Barbara Maragele, "SASSA Beneficiaries Still Struggling With Illegal Deductions," *GroundUp (Cape Town)*, July 22, 2015, http://allafrica.com/stories/201507221226.html.
[416]Elroy Paulus quoted in Banderker, "Grant Deductions Are Immoral: Black Sash."

for grant processing in 1980.[417] SOCPEN is still operational, but the Department of Social Development and Sassa are insistent that it be not only an information management system, but a system that can be integrated across multiple platforms.[418] This centralisation and integration mirrors the post-apartheid policy and institutional rearrangements mapped in chapter one. Virginia Petersen, CEO of Sassa, explained in a conference presentation in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2012 (the year that forms the particular focus of this thesis), that an integrated information system would ensure the following objectives:

> a) an improved management and administration of social security, b) ensure an effective and cost efficient administration, c) build a customer focused institution, with special attention paid to contact points, d) ensure enhanced financial accountability through client management systems (back office function), e) better grant review and maintenance systems and f) enhancing fraud prevention strategies.[419]

These objectives are telling of Sassa and government's views of the social assistance program and claimants in numerous ways. The objectives invoke the 'economisation' of thinking that forms the foundation of thinking about the social assistance system. None of the objectives refer to care but rather emphasise efficiency and management. Claimants are explicitly called 'customers', which reinforces the idea of the state as a business with the goals of cost efficiency and financial accountability. Ferguson's insistence, explored in the introduction, that people receive a financial share in the economy unfortunately reifies this position of state-as-business. Critically, especially for this chapter, the outline of the failures of the system indicate that where claimants are not 'customers', they are 'fraudulent'; these appear as the only two possibilities of being a social grant claimant. In another overseas conference presentation, this time in Jakarta, Indonesia, as late as 2015, Petersen explained that the earlier failures of the SOCPEN system were functions of the following (extremely technical) issues: old technology, persistence of manual information gathering, inefficient system updates, a lack of real-time interfaces with other information management systems, and an absence of integration with information

[417] Virginia Petersen, Caesar Vundule, and Carin Koster, "South Africa's SOCPEN: A Legacy System Which Still Delivers" (Workshop on Integrated Data and Information Management for Social Protection: Bridging the Gaps between Theory and Practice Jakarta, Jakarta, 2015), http://www.opml.co.uk/sites/default/files/Poster%20South%20Africa_FINAL.pdf.
[418] Ibid.
[419] Virginia Petersen and Clifford Appel, "Integrating MIS – The Example of South Africa: SASSA MIS Solutions" (Developing Management Information Systems for Social Protection, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2012), 27–30.

management systems outside of grant administration.[420] In light of the political and social reasons for fragmentation, slow delivery, and the skewed racial provision of grants outlined in chapter one, it seems purposefully oblique to criticise the technological shortfalls of a system while making no comment about the apartheid context of grant administration and delivery.

SOCPEN is an integrated system across multiple platforms, and at the same conference in Kyrgyzstan mentioned above, Sassa representatives explained that its 'has interfaces with a series of other management information systems (MIS) in order to cross-check information and prevent fraud.'[421] These other information systems are extensive and the ostensible reasons for each of these interfaces was explained by Petersen and Appel in 2012,

> a) Department of Home Affairs (to determine the status of beneficiaries), b) Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), c) Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), PERSAL (Government's payroll system), PERSOL (Payroll system of the Defense force), National Treasury (to verify the banking details of beneficiaries), LURITS (The Department of Basic Education's learner database) and special investigations unit (to identify fraudulent grants).[422]

This information sharing is not communicated to potential claimants when they apply to Sassa offices for social grants. There were numerous things that went unexplained in the Sassa offices where I spent my time in Bushbuckridge. One of the things that did not require explanation was the location of the Sassa offices. Unlike the CPS offices tucked behind a vegetable shop described in the last chapter, everyone in the area knew where these Sassa offices were because everyone had either been to the office or was close with someone who had. The building was a squat single floor building designed to maximise office space and minimise light. The dark tunnel that ran along the length of the building bisected the rectangular innards into two smaller rectangles, each of which was divided into square offices. There was one room in the Sassa office in Bushbuckridge dedicated to loading applicants' information onto the SOCPEN system. Office 22 displayed a sign typed on a dog-eared piece of paper taped to the door that read 'attesting, capturing, quality assessment, e verification.' In this nerve centre of Sassa's operations, five Sassa officials worked at a series of PC desks arranged in a haphazard manner around the office. The PC desks, the staple furniture sold in office supply stores, were only

[420] Petersen, Vundule, and Koster, "South Africa's SOCPEN: A Legacy System Which Still Delivers."
[421] Petersen and Appel, "Integrating MIS – The Example of South Africa: SASSA MIS Solutions," 28.
[422] Ibid.

large enough for a chunky grey monitor and a keyboard that fitted onto a retractable shelf. The shortage of desk space resulted in towers of paper perched on the one shelf above the monitor intended for a printer and in small document stacks and spreads at the officials' feet. There was one chair to the side of each of these computer screens where an applicant sat while the official processed their documents. /The first official was charged with collecting an applicant's documents, which included an identity document, an application form for the grant, and a declaration of income. The applicant then went back into the corridor to wait until called for he next step. In the interim one of the Sassa officials would check that all the necessary documents were submitted and a name and ID number was recorded in a lined hardcover book. The last step was adding all the information onto the SOCPEN system (figure 1) and the claimant was sent away with the acknowledgement that they would receive a letter in the post alerting them to the outcome of their application.

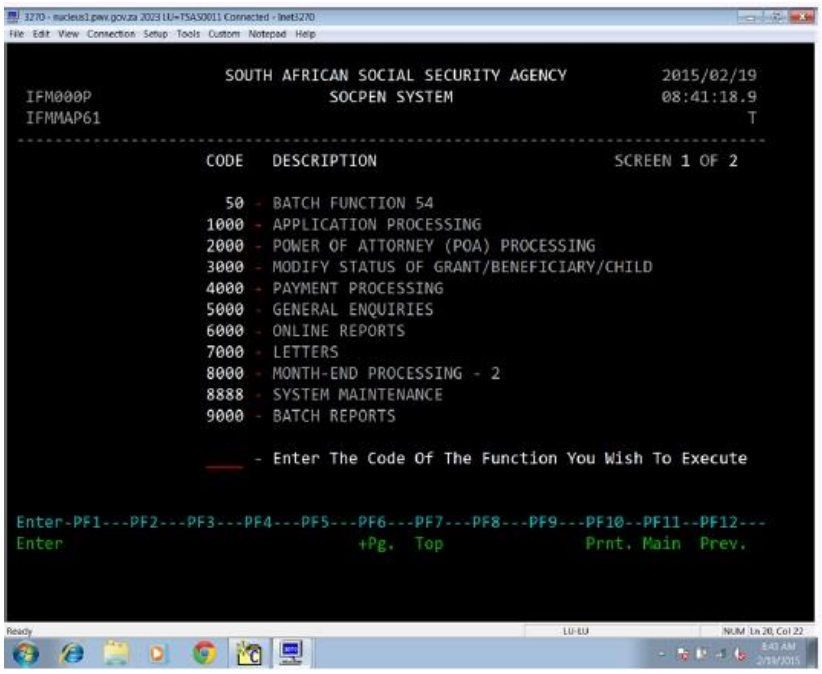


Figure 1. SOCPEN homepage screenshot[423]

[423] Graphic from the poster presented by Sassa. Petersen, Vundule, and Koster, "South Africa's SOCPEN: A Legacy System Which Still Delivers."

The Sassa office and the application process foreground several factors. The Sassa offices are not designed for applicants but rather for the monotony and bureaucracy that facilitates their processing. The only windows in the building lined its perimeter, providing natural light to supplement the fluorescent bulbs, but the tunnel where applicants waited remained dark. The differential lighting between the passage and the offices forced your eyes to get used to the darkness once again. This is not only metaphorical but designed in a way that does not acknowledge applicants as present in the space at all. Also important is the immobile and cramped office space, a stark contrast to the modular kits designed to be used by CPS for the fast and futuristic registration of claimants onto their biometric system. The SOCPEN system presents a purely functional, numerically coded, serif-free interface. There are no graphics and no videos like those on the slick CPS computers, which demonstrate to claimants the way that their fingers should be placed on the glowing fingerprint reader. Claimants' physical interaction with CPS machines is not echoed by the SOCPEN interface that is populated by a Sassa official as an applicant sits in a chair besides the computer.

Despite all of these differences, the key similarity is the lack of information provided to applicants or claimants about any stage of the process and especially about what their information may be used for further than the application and delivery of a grant. This information sharing is what put the Black Sash on high alert. The way that information gathering and sharing seems to be hidden from those whom it directly affects is also evidenced by the places and purposes where Sassa *has* begun to explain the portals though which applicant data is shared: international conferences which do not focus on social assistance, but on the functioning and integration of software on large subsets of the population. It is unclear whether the systems that integrate with SOCPEN do so in real time, whether the information can be shared bilaterally or even across all the platforms and for what further purposes this data sharing can be harnessed.[424] If one looks at the number of government platforms that network with the SOCPEN system in figure 2 and in the conference presentation by Sassa, it is clear that providing information at the point of applying for a grant permits almost all governmental bodies other than the revenue services some level of access to personal identification data. This, like the darkened corridors, does not consider claimants as the focus of the social

[424] Figure 2 suggests through the use of bidirectional arrows that information from SOCPEN can access as well as be accessed by other government platforms. Furthermore, the graphic seems to suggest that the government bodies can then remove this information and store it in an offline location (see bottom right of image)

assistance system, but rather their metrics and the technologies – hardware and software – that mediate the data sharing.

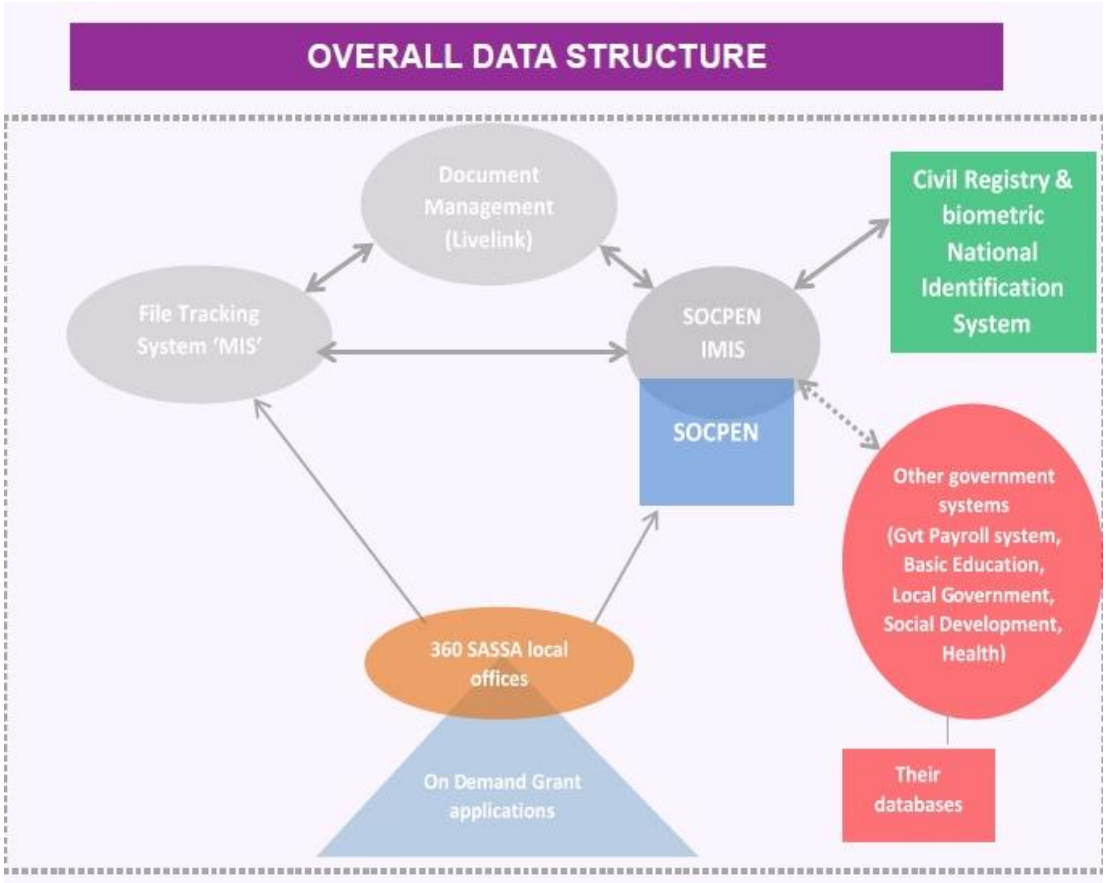


Figure 2. SOCPEN Data Structure showing information sharing[425]

[425] Graphic from the conference poster presented by Sassa Petersen, Vundule, and Koster, "South Africa's SOCPEN: A Legacy System Which Still Delivers."

'A more sophisticated form of extortion'

The data sharing connection, which resulted in the escalating deductions from 2012 that the Black Sash noticed in its daily interactions with grant practice, is not shown in figure 2. But its presence looms large. CPS was contracted in 2012 and its massive reregistration of grant claimants as well as the ongoing processes of registering claimants onto the biometric grant system have secured the data of more than 20 million people. Claimants, again, were not informed of how their personal data and biometric information would be stored, managed, and shared. The DSD concurred that there was an obvious spike in deductions since the contract was awarded in 2012[426] and that the CPS-provided Sassa-branded card made way for a 'more sophisticated form of extortion'.[427] Zane Dangor, from the Ministry of Social Development, has said: 'The nature of the loan sharks has changed; it is now sophisticated and run by people who are skilled in the financial services industry'.[428] In a television documentary on the grant system, aired in early 2015, a DSD representative argued that the blame for deductions should be placed on a 'bigger group called Net1 that has related financial service industry players within that group and that's the place where we're finding a lot of abuse is happening'.[429] Net1 subsidiaries do rank among the country's largest micro-lenders.[430] Even though Sassa and DSD acknowledge the escalation of deductions after 2012, they are careful not to attribute systematic problems too overtly to the company they contracted, but rather deflect responsibility on to the other 'industry players' that are connected to Net1. Sassa's attempts at distancing itself from the mounting claims of abuse and failure of the national system rely partly on characterising CPS and Net1 as separate from the other 'industry players'. Yet, it is exactly because there is little distance between Net1 and its subsidiaries that data travels amongst them so freely.

However, Net1 maintains that its actions are 'ethically defensible', and as I said previously, they insist, 'People are free of mind, and you still have to allow them to do what they want with their grant money'.[431] Net1 maintains that the subsidiary companies are merely responding to

[426] "Minister Sets Sights on Loan Sharks."
[427] "Grant Grabs," Documentary, *Special Assignment* (SABC 3, February 27, 2015).
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Nokuthula Ntuli, "Grants Mixed Up In Microlending," *The Mercury*, September 5, 2014.
[431] Belamant quoted in Crotty, "Millions of Grant Recipients Ripped Off."

demands, and promoting financial inclusion.[432] The CEO of Net1 says that subsidiaries have been active over many years and that any overlap between subsidiary companies such as EasyPay and Moneyline and grant beneficiaries is purely coincidental and does not indicate that the companies have access to beneficiary data.[433] Net1's insistence that these companies are independent is belied by several entanglements even if one were to exclude data sharing. For example, subsidiaries are 'sister companies' of the same parent company (Net1) and are therefore bound by similar management and administrative frameworks. Also, the share price of Net1 and the group CEO are common to all companies.

Data movement can seem ethereal and intangible because it is not visible therefore it is instructive to look to other connections between Net1 subsidiaries in grant practice to show the contiguity between the companies. As grants are paid out monthly, CPS and Moneyline are tightly knotted in numerous ways. During the first weeks of the month, Moneyline employees would meet early at the CPS offices to receive the necessary forms and a portable payment machine each. All of these short-term casual Moneyline employees were hired by a handful of CPS officials, all on longer-term contracts. Andrew shifted between his roles as CPS supervisor, Moneyline coordinator, RMS Systems salesperson, and Net1 representative. Even though his role was as official coordinator of CPS's operations, he would organise and negotiate the work of other Net1 subsidiaries in the area as well. After collecting their biometric payment machines from the CPS headquarters, Moneyline employees climbed into the back of Andrew's *bakkie* and were taken from Hoedspruit to the villages and small towns of Bushbuckridge, ready to offer credit. As the employees climbed out of the back, they would arrange a time and place to meet, late that afternoon, to be driven back to Hoedspruit to 'cash up'. The machines, people, and final accounting all came from, and returned to one place – the CPS headquarters.

Dealing in Data

Alongside all the other connections between subsidiary companies, the dramatic scale of the problem of deductions necessitates data sharing between Net1 and its subsidiaries. This data sharing is indicative of a historical moment where there is enhanced potential for profit making in the business of infrastructures that store and share data. Bill Maurer, an economic

[432] Evan Pickworth, "Net1 Denies Subsidiary Has Behaved Illegally," *Business Day Live*, September 12, 2014.
[433] Linda Ensor, "Grants Agency Told to Protect Beneficiary Data," *Business Day*, September 12, 2014.

anthropologist interested in debt and data, asserts the importance of data in profit making in the current international context: he explains that from the 1990s the 'money in money', where the profits lie, became less ensconced in interest and moved towards the fees that could be accrued.[434] This too began to shift and in the present the 'money in money' is in the exchange of data. Since the potential for monetary gain is focused in the exchange of data, it follows that those entities that control the technologies used to transfer and share data are optimally placed for financial gain. Through the debt of data, who *owes and who owns is negotiated through the exchange of data*. Therefore, the infrastructures that were set up to facilitate this data exchange are immensely important and valuable. As early as 1999, the private payments infrastructure business model was one of the largest industries in the world.[435] The way that Maurer understands this is to say that it is 'enaction' rather than 'transaction' that is at the core of this large industry – it is based on enabling exchange and connecting transacting parties. Net1 works as a financial service that permits access to financial services.

Responding to Data Sharing and Deductions

Forming a Ministerial Task Team

Although they continued with their information gathering, the Black Sash realised that Sassa's growing dissatisfaction with the CPS system offered further possibilities for action. As with the actions of the Black Sash that pressured the government prior to 1994, the Black Sash of 2012 mobilised for more concrete changes. The Black Sash's management team met with the DSD in March 2014 to begin to draft a terms-of-reference document for the formation of a joint task team. The recommendations that came out of the task team were that CPS should restrict third party access to information or grant money; immediately stop any new Umoya Manje deductions as well as reverse any that had already been set up; and be accountable for any party lending money 'recklessly', including the reimbursement of any debt incurred. All the recommendations were accepted by the Minister. The terms of reference also proposed a reassessment of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Sassa and the grant service provider. The push to revise the SLA was well timed. In April 2014 the Constitutional Court ruled that, since the current tender was invalid,[436] Sassa would be required to revise its specifications and run another tender process. In the meantime, in order to ensure that there

[434] Bill Maurer, "Late to the Party: Debt and Data," *Social Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (2012): 475.
[435] Ibid., 476.
[436] As per the November 2013 Constitutional Court ruling.

was no halt to the delivery of grant services, CPS would continue as the service provider until a new contractor was appointed.

Sassa drafted a revised Request for Proposals (RFP) in early April 2014, and bidders were expected to have submitted their applications by the 17th of the month. In the new specifications, the winning contractor would distribute grants at a flat rate of R14.50 per claimant, as well as extend free banking services to all claimants. The Constitutional Court ruling did make the provision that, if none of the new bidders were able to execute the administration and payment of grants according to the new tender specifications, the contract would revert back to CPS on the current terms. CPS unexpectedly announced to its shareholders on 18th May 2015 that it would withdraw from the tender process. Net1 reiterated that it would persist in providing products and services for South Africans, but independently and without Sassa's limitations and constraints: Net1 'will no longer be limited by a five year contract... [not being contractually bound] provides the company with the ability to freely determine pricing that is both competitive and profitable and removes any unknown or contingent liabilities associated with government contracts'.[437] Were Net1 to have bid, they would be liable to provide services according to the RFP.[438] Net1's withdrawal from the tendering process was not unexpected among officials in Bushbuckridge, who foresaw that the company's interest in secondary financial services was more important than that of the payment of grants. In the periods that I spent in Bushbuckridge over two years, officials would spend more time involved in the business of Moneyline and other Net1 subsidiaries than in the work of CPS and the payment of grants. Ultimately, Net1 had acquired the machinery and other hardware, the knowledge of how to put them into practice in South Africa, the employment of people with the required skills and local knowledge to implement their infrastructure, and the information and databases that it needed in order to maintain a thriving business without direct connections to the state. The stockpiling of data as a valuable commodity is an almost literal case of people as things, as bits, and as bytes. In this formulation, people are both paramount and irrelevant. Data is the driving economic good however the lives of the people it encodes are marginalised. In the neoliberal social assistance system, public and private relationships pivot on storing and sharing data.

[437]G. van Zyl, 'Net1 Walks Away from New Sassa Tender | TechCentral', *Tech Central*, 18 May 2015, available at http://www.techcentral.co.za/net1-walks-away-from-new-sassa-tender/56704/; retrieved 15 November 2015.
[438]E. Paulus and L. Maart, Meeting About Latest Social Assistance Developments, Johannesburg, 6 July 2015.

Conclusion

This focus views humans as economic inputs, a claim that extends through the deductions and waiting in chapter two, and the elevation of technological innovation as the salve for inequality in chapter three. As the Black Sash celebrates its 60th year, social assistance retains the symbolic and representative importance that it did from the time of 'special projects' at the advice offices. Lynette Maart uses the lens of social assistance to explore these fights, symbolisms, and possibilities for the future:

> One of the big things that we had to turn around in the discourse was that individual grant beneficiaries were blamed for the problem. It is your granddaughter etcetera....We had to shift it to saying that the problem is in the system. The system is rotten. You have created these bank accounts that structure these deductions and so on. So it's hard to tell but we certainly think that we made a breakthrough and when we got the tender specifications in the public domain. And you know sometimes you can go to court and you can fight the battle there, and sometimes you have to. And then sometimes you can do mind-set change and you can make people feel that they're part of a genuine conversation and that they can turn things around. And so, given where we were we needed to see, can we see that there can be change and what kind of change can we get. And we said that we can try for that.[439]

This quote is an effective distillation of the scales at which the Black Sash continues to work. They move through attempts to make policy change as well as prioritising 'genuine conversation'. There is also the understanding that taking cases to court is not necessarily the only or best way to tackle the concerns brought to the organisation. Tellingly, historical material on the Black Sash seldom refers to the work of the organisation as research or evidence, but instead references the 'Black Sash's experience.' The Black Sash has positioned itself to work with the DSD and Sassa to the extent that it feels these relationships further its goals to draw attention to and stop the violations of claimants' rights after the introduction of the national CPS contract. However, the Black Sash has also decried the delayed and cautious position that Sassa took to its souring relationship with Net1. The Black Sash's advocacy manager explained, 'If you are an organ of state, you have to abide by the rule of how a public entity should be rendering a public service. In addition to the merit of the case, the core of the [2014 Constitutional Court] judgement is the obligation of an organ of state to respect, protect,

[439]Asha Speckman, "Now We Can Clip the Wings of CPS - SASSA," *Iol.co.za*, April 22, 2014.

promote, and fulfil the rights contained in the bill of rights, beyond mere contractual obligations.'[440]

[440]Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the 2012 system requires attention to the confluence of many factors including technologies (and the associated materiality and infrastructures), state practice (through bureaucracies of social grants), the boundaries of the state, policies and law, privatisation, and waiting. There is a poverty of social assistance scholarship in South Africa, and generally, which is inquisitive about grants in practice and the ways that we can complicate and reframe our understanding of how associated practices are enacted. In a sense, part of what is missing recalls Bruno Latour's *Paris: Ville Invisible* and his metaphorical push to study the city through its sewers and, conjuring the book title, to look at the invisible streets.[441] This is an invocation to think of the everyday technologies of social assistance as passages and tunnels, (its 'symbolic sewers') may expose the technopolitics in a way that the sweeping dedication to technologies of innovation cannot.[442]

Furthermore, there is a need to look not only at the systems that are put in place, but also at the conceptualisation of the projects in the first instance. Even though South African grants are unconditional, there are more indirect and delayed practices that make claimants *Patients of the State,*[443] in Javier Auyero's double entendre. 'Responsibiliation' occurs in other and more compelling ways than in directly conditioning the use of cash received as a state transfer. Waiting, bureaucracy, the confusing and opaque relationships between state and private bureaucrats, and the lack of recourse are all types of governmentality that corner citizens into ways of being. There is the need for complexity in looking at welfare and seeing it as more than a tool for degradation.[444]

It is illuminating to read the everyday engagements with technologies alongside the state and its contractors' narratives, to delve into the imaginary that is encapsulated in machines as well as to expose the perpetual slippages that occur when the ideal is not realised. This ethnography reads beyond the advertisements, press releases and policy documents on technological infrastructures centred on the delivery and administration of social grants to elevate the 'flexible

[441] Bruno Latour and E Hermant, *Paris: Ville Invisible* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1998).
[442] Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," 379.
[443] Javier Auyero, *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
[444] Anna Marie Smith, *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

technological actors who excelled in the messy world of *bricolage* and tinkering.'[445] Exploring the technical functioning of card-based biometric systems is fundamental to understanding some of the political rationalities and forms of governmentality associated with their implementation. Much of the foundational material in the field of STS, particularly from the late 1970s and 1980s, touched upon failure and maintenance, as intellectual concerns drifted from the history of ideas to serious engagements with science in society. Despite these initial interests, scholarship on science and technology has been occupied with 'flashy flagships' including space exploration, nuclear weaponry, disarmament, and robots and artificial intelligence.[446] It is because of this pigeon-holing of what were considered technological concerns worthy of analysis – 'serious things like disarmament, technology transfer, sociology of innovation or history of science' - that maintenance, failure, and repair were relegated to the background and largely used to provide flesh to the characters of officials rather than as an area of analysis in-and-of itself.[447] The reality is that machines created to read, store, and share claimant data are tangled into the fabric of a new social assistance system. This thesis has asserted that detailing the practices, enactments, pulling-apart and drawing-together of technologies can add depth to the histories and generate novel ways of encountering bureaucracy, welfare, the state, biometrics and power. It is both instructive and necessary, I argue, to bring the material and tactile details of the technologies involved in social assistance into future analyses of grant systems. Granular enquiries into the machines hint at the dramas and politics involved in South African social assistance, key among them promises of efficiency, novelty, and innovation. The co-construction of the state, private companies, machines, and users are in constant tension in the landscape of social assistance infrastructure. These negotiations should be considered political and the elasticity of the co-construction can be read with the help of literature that looks to agency as embedded in machines as well as people and institutions. Michel Callon's *agencement*[448] – the ongoing contestation between and mutual constitution of agencies – is often ignored on the techno-political level and doing so reflects a troubling marginalisation of some of the most important agents in social assistance payment and delivery: the technologies and devices themselves.

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[445] Joshua Grace, "Modernization Bubu: Cars, Roads, And the Politics of Development in Tanzania, 1870s - 1980s" (Doctor of Philosophy, Michigan State University, 2013), 5.

[446] Gabrielle Hecht, *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, ed. Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2011), 2.

[447] Bruno Latour, "Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World," in *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, ed. Karin Knorr-Cetina and Michael Mulkay (Sage, 1983), 162.

[448] Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay," in *Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. John Law, vol. 32 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 196–223.

Net1's Future

Achille Mbembe[449] has explored how the awarding of contracts often has more to do with patronage networks and accessing government contracts than with the purported technical function of the project undertaken[450]. One of the reasons for Net1's bid on the 2012 national social assistance administration and delivery contract was certainly the R10 billion fee they stood to win. Over time though, it appears that the contract would be less profitable to Net1 than the infrastructures and technologies they instituted. Mbembe's argument about the primacy of tenders over the projects undertaken is likely to hold true for all but the opaque world of data infrastructure. As I've noted in this thesis, immense profits lie in holding the keys to the infrastructures that permit information transfer, that is, in those entities involved in enaction rather than transaction. Net1, through its subsidiary companies' tentacles, has become connected to the largest micro-lenders in South Africa. The company has also formed partnerships with hardware providers like Ingenico who manufacture point-of-sale machines and the portable units with built-in fingerprint readers. Net1 has also trained officials so that employees have a monopoly on knowledge of the hardware and software that function in the net of Net1's services, including those of social assistance delivery.

A result of this monopoly through introduction of the 2012 system has been large-scale deductions, many of them unauthorised, coming out of claimants' grants. These cancellations and deductions appear in this thesis through the experiences of claimants, the stories of officials, and the work of human rights organisations like the Black Sash. The swelling number of cases indicates that deductions have increased since the national contracting of CPS. In a more general way, deductions provide an opportunity to look at the relationship between private companies and public bodies as related to the delivery of social grants. Most recently, these relationships have been unravelling in South African courts. In May 2016, Sassa acted to stop all direct deductions from social grants, even where the claimant had consented to such

[449] Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (University of California Press, 2001).

[450] The saga of the awarding of contracts for the Arms Deal is a notable South African example. In their detailed exposition, *The Devil in the Detail: How the Arms Deal Changed Everything*, Paul Holden and Hennie Van Vuuren (2011) look at the complex patronage networks, the arms deal as a conduit for political funding and corruption involved in contracting for defence in South Africa. They too acknowledge the general superfluous purpose of the actual arms themselves calling the acquisitions "economically irrational" and generally absurd.

deductions.[451] To date, Sassa has only begun to implement regulations on deductions from funeral policies. As of December 2016 only one funeral policy may be deducted from a grant, and the claimant has to confirm in person at a Sassa office that they have consented to this action. Furthermore, no funeral policies will be permitted from child support grants – the majority of all grants paid. A great deal of uncertainty surrounds the future of other forms of deductions. Sassa's move to clamp down on deductions led to litigation from all sides, with Net1 and other parties including Grindrod bank taking legal action to lift the ban.[452] Net1 and its banking partner are also responding to the South African Reserve Bank's position that claimants should be able to choose the bank account that they would like to have their grant money paid into. Grindrod[453], which had the banking monopoly on accounts into which grants were paid, are concerned that the profit-generating core of their business will be eroded.[454] The legal pressure to lift the ban on deductions has pulled Sassa into court again to lodge a case against CPS for continuing to allow, and facilitate, deductions.[455] With Net1's contract to disburse social grants coming to an end in March 2017, and a great deal of their profit coming from financial services connected to the actual disbursements, the ban on deductions could impact Net1 heavily. Financial head of Net1, Herman Kotze was quoted in the Business Day as saying:

> We have several other channels to provide clients with the services they require external to any potential Sassa account restrictions, Net1 has an extensive footprint across SA through its EasyPay network, ATMs, and branches, and will be able to continue servicing its customer base regardless of the court's ruling.[456]

This quote reinforces the argument I make that the expansive social, geographical and technological information gained by the company over the four years that it has been the provider of the national grant payment system is, arguably, of greater long-term financial

[451] Moyagabo Maake, "Sassa Does Not Have Details of Loans," *Business Day*, August 17, 2016, http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2016/08/17/sassa-does-not-have-details-of-loans.
[452] Anthony Sguazzin, "Controversy Still Dogs Sassa Tender," *Tech Central*, July 8, 2016, https://www.techcentral.co.za/controversy-still-dogs-sassa-tender/66738/.
[453] As of 2014, Grindrod Bank had 163 employees with assets under management of R14,3bn, according to its website. Standard Bank, South Africa's biggest bank by assets, had more than 54 000 workers at the end of last year, and assets 47 times that of Grindrod. South Africa's three other major banking groups, Nedbank, Barclays Africa and FirstRand, have between 31 000 and 43 000 employees each.
[454] Sguazzin, "Controversy Still Dogs Sassa Tender."
[455] Ibid.
[456] Moyagabo Maake, "Net1 UEPS Earnings up but It Warns Growth May Stall," *Business Day Live*, August 29, 2016, http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/financial/2016/08/29/net1-ueps-earnings-up-but-it-warns-growth-may-stall.

interest than the initial DSD contract or any future government contracts. One of the ways that Net1 has solidified its presence in the South African business landscape, and is 'continually growing a basket of products', is by using social grant payments as a springboard for the introduction of further products.

Until the end of 2015, the role and place of Sassa in social assistance seemed to be confined to the vetting of applications with private companies paying and administering social grants. Sassa did portions of the administrative work, including assessing whether someone is 'deserving' of the grant, but over time it had appeared that the possibility of a state paid and run grant system had faded from the imagination of government. At the beginning of this research, a Sassa official said in a conference presentation that after the 2012 contract (from 2017), the government would begin to run its grant payments independently. However, as of the end of 2015, when I raised this possibility with Sassa officials or even the Black Sash, it seemed unfathomable to them that the state could *ever* run its own grant system. The reasons for this retraction are multiple and complex. In general, the argument provided for the need for private grant administration and delivery is that the state does not have the capacity. It is difficult to unravel the pragmatic and political challenges embedded in the claim of a lack of capacity for state-run grant administration and delivery.

Sassa's Future

After the Constitutional Court finding in 2014 that the CPS contract was 'unconstitutional', Sassa was ordered to reissue the contract by October of 2015. No new contract was announced by this date and Sassa explained that 'the bids were non-responsive in mandatory administrative functionality which is a key consideration in evaluating a tender'.[457] Essentially, there were no contractors who had either existing, or potential, infrastructures through which to coordinate the grant system. As a result, CPS would continue to pay grants until the expiration of the contract in 2017. The critical question then became: after 2017 who would go on to administer and pay claimants? As the earlier paragraphs noted, Sassa officials did not seem to consider a Sassa-run social system as within their 'capacity'. However, as I finished the research for this thesis and began to write on the complexities of grant practice, Sassa made the announcement in November 2015 that it, as a government agency, would go on to pay and administer grants from 2017.

[457] Gareth Van Zyl, "Sassa Tender Won't Be Reissued," *Tech Central*, November 6, 2015, https://www.techcentral.co.za/sassa-tender-wont-be-reissued/61119/.

Along with the announcement, Sassa also stressed that this was not just a stop-gap measure but was to be the future of social assistance payment. Spokesman Kgomoco Diseko said, 'Sassa does not intend to go on payment tender again and it is currently putting all its efforts on getting ready to take over the distribution of social grants when the current contract ends.'[458] In a filing to the Constitutional Court that coincided with this announcement, Sassa said that they had always had the intention to 'take over the control, administration and management of payment of the social grants by 2017 when the contract with CPS expires'. This statement is not evidenced by the conversations I had with Sassa towards the end of 2014 but probably arose through the convergence of several factors. At the early stages of the contract in 2012, Sassa did acknowledge that they would go on to pay grants after 2017 but, as the years progressed, even the potential for imagining this possibility faded from view. Thereafter, in light of the increasing number of deductions and resultant political pressure, particularly from claimants and the Black Sash, Sassa revised its service level agreements for any future contractor. These revisions diminished the financial returns that any future contractor could make (because of the limitations on data sharing and the halt to deductions from grants) and in turn curbed applications from private contractors with the necessary capacity. Altogether, the relationship between CPS and Sassa had soured considerably. In the context of all of this, particularly the pressure harnessed by the Black Sash, Sassa remembered its initial position from 2012: the agency would pay grants after 2017.

The Future of Social Grants

The assemblages, networks, and connections patterned throughout the life of the South African social grant are indicative of processes and epistemologies that sustain and scaffold ideas and protocols that shape economics, politics, and the state. In the case of biometric social assistance, the global South has historically, and is currently, used as the petri dish for the implementation of technologies of identification and population – they are where the material technologies of governmentality operate firstly and forcefully. In the sphere of the relationships between social assistance, neoliberalism, state, and livelihoods, South Africa is an important epistemological location. Daniel Zamora explains in an interview entitled 'Can we Criticise Foucault?' that many scholars of the left who generally consider themselves 'Foucauldians' have not probed the intimate relationships between social security and wealth distribution in

[458] Ibid.

Foucault's work.[459] Zamora writes that the movement from an understanding of relative poverty to absolute poverty greatly changes the ideological underpinnings of a society from one which seeks to address inequality to one that accepts a fixed and arbitrary level of 'poverty'. It is fundamental that work on social assistance be aware of the ways in which mechanisms that seek to target 'poverty' are not inimical to a market-focused state and a neoliberal society. Once this theoretical work is formulated, and what may seem contradictory factors are visibilised, it is possible to see the ways that the wish to 'target poverty' can be threatening to legitimate attempts to reduce inequality. This theoretical understanding evidences how privatisation of the public distribution of social grants is not aberrant, but a further way that profits can be ensured from public services. However, this argument does not imply that social assistance invariably reifies neoliberal logic. Inasmuch as programs that aim to combat poverty should be questioned, there is also a need to be generous about the political challenges that social security may pose to market logic. The challenge for scholars becomes unpacking social security that plays a role in minimising the gap between the rich and the poor and those endeavours like a negative income tax that do not challenge neoliberal hegemony. Furthermore, we should be cognisant of the ways that social security measures may be diluted to facilitate programmes that are embedded in the logic of containing 'poverty'.

As this thesis demonstrates, grants and the everyday practices that surround their administration and delivery, reveal a complicated mode of governance in post-apartheid South Africa. Seeing social grants in South Africa as evidence that rebuts the characterisation of the country as a neoliberal state ignores the complexities of the ideologies and practices surrounding social grants. Simultaneously, cash transfers should not be considered as mere tools for propping up the status quo – be it in terms of maintaining the current government or reinforcing neoliberal economic conditions. One of the ways to explore the complexities of social assistance is to understand that neoliberalism plays out in the realm of economics but also permeates the ways we assess what defines efficacy, novelty, and success. For this reason, technological progress and redistribution are more textured and interesting than the slick delivery of cash transfers and the sharing of money. Grants are of course an important welfarist mechanism and this thesis does not deny this or call for their abolition. However, grant provision as the end goal of a redistributive politics side-lines collective decision making, participation, sharing and care. In this thesis I have called this a poverty of imagination, it is also

[459] Daniel Zamora, Can We Criticize Foucault? | Jacobin Magazine, interview by Ballast, December 2014, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/12/foucault-interview/.

indicative of a poverty of understanding redistribution as sharing public space and of the fundamental understanding that people are connected and oriented in ways that move beyond and escape money. It is not sufficient to analyse the principle of grants; understanding grants at the points of distribution and administration permits analysis of the important practice of grants. Grants are not only monetary transfers or enactments of political economic policy; they are subsets of contextual and network factors that always position, inscribe, and define the meaning of social assistance.

APPENDIX

EXAMPLE OF TEXT FROM FIELDWORK NOTEBOOK[460]

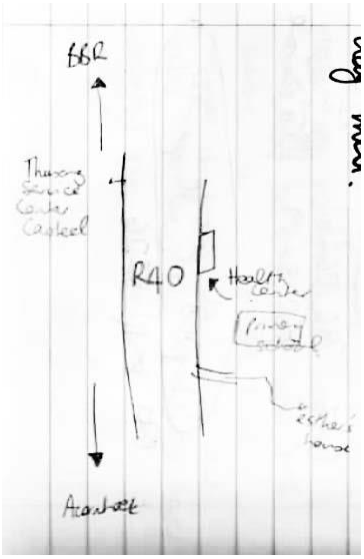
Monday 3rd March, 2014

Tags: pay point, CPS, machine, bureaucracy, retailer

I drove down the R40 and on my right saw an open muddy area with umbrellas and the tell-tale funeral service provider vans. I stop, not able to drive up the slope because of the muddiness and fear that I won't get enough traction.

Photo 03032014_Muddy BBR Pay point

I park next to the road behind a white bakkie and precariously walk up the hill with its wet, clay mud.



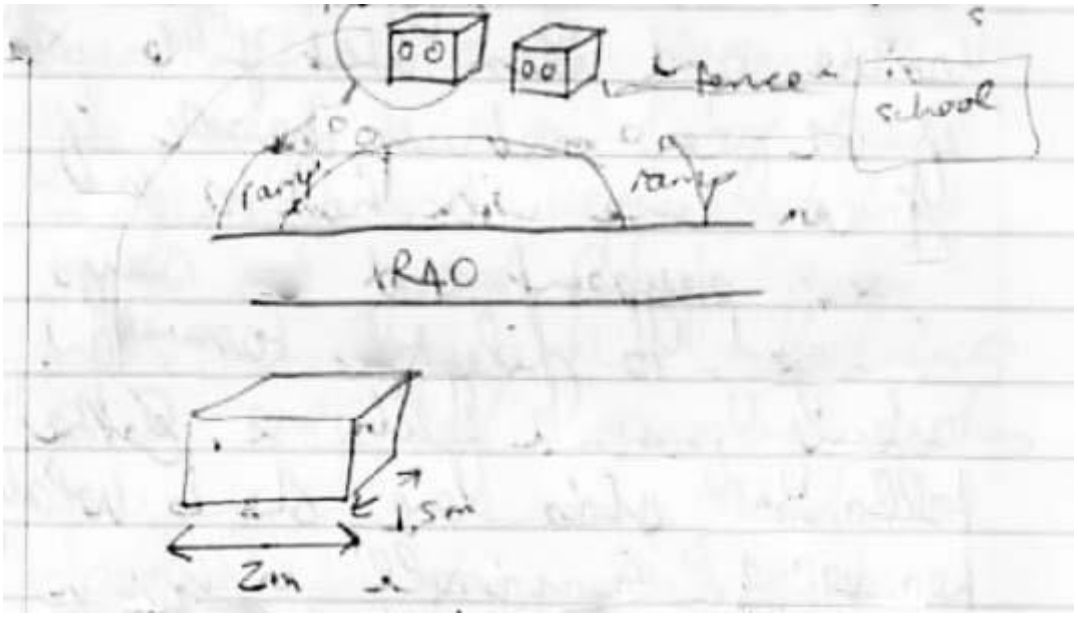
There are umbrellas with wooden handles forming extensions to people's hands and I walk up to a long queue and stand behind a woman. I ask her if she is here to collect a grant. She says yes, I ask her why she doesn't go to the shops. She tells me that the machines always break there and there are always queues. She also says that here she can buy some vegetables and other things (like pay back debts which I find out later). She also says that some people are just used to it here- this is what they know and is comfortable for them. We queue for another 5

[460] All names and identifying features have been substituted to ensure privacy

minutes; she waves to her sister who is standing with a woman selling oily atchaar. We go into a more busy, small area (it's all generally quite small-right next to a health centre).

There are two mobile units, both white, like a refrigerator and trailer in one. Each of these has four machines on them two on each side. All the CPS employees who 'man' them are casually dressed men in their late 30's to mid-40. E tries to take down my number and tells me to do it later rather because she is scared of using her cell phone around here. She says that the CPS people may think that you are trying to rob them so, 'even if your phone rings you mustn't answer it.' When I take a photo of the floor (and the mud) she tells me to be careful about using my camera. I ask her if she feels safe walking home with her money. She says yes, it's not on the way home that you get robbed; it is when you get home. She says it's especially those young boys. I say to her that maybe it's because they can't get jobs. She tells me that that is no excuse and points to a woman selling nuts and says- see even for her, at least 50c here and there, she is selling. I ask E if she works, she says no, she says she used to sell kip-kip and other small things at the primary school (that her 10 year old) attends, but that now, she has no money for purchasing the goods. Her husband works at Spar.

They used to live in Jo'burg in Tsakani, close to Carnival City, but her grandmother passed away and herself and her two sisters came back to BBR (where she grew up) to help her parents who are getting older now. As we're talking, someone comes up to us and offers steel wool. We both shake our heads- all of a sudden the queue we are in, disintegrates. E tells me the machine has broken and we just move over to the left to another queue. It's relatively quiet- I'm told that this is because the old people get here at eight- 'you know they don't like to be late.' As we slosh towards the front of the queue, the man at the machine beckons me. He asks me why I'm there, but in a flirty and non-aggressive manner. I tell him. He then asks if I'm married. I laugh and walk back to E.



Mobile unit illustration

We talk a bit and the man calls me again. I get his number and ask if he works for SASSA, he says he (and I wonder if I'm making up the disdain in his voice) works for CPS. It seems that at this point people get fingerprinted and then move around to the other side of the fridge thing. As I walk with E to the other side, another CPS person calls me again. I'm afraid that I'm going to be told off. He takes me aside and asks what I do and if we can meet up, he asks if I can come with him to the next pay point. He says he is going there (Lily dale) tomorrow. I ask if he will fetch me. E tells me she's done; she is holding her money in a roll, in her hand. I take a photo of her receipt which tells her when the next payday is. The receipt also says something about smsing for great deals. E says that some of the funeral cover and life insurance companies that are here are also one the reasons people may come here instead of go to a bank or a grocer. She says at those places they need so much information and paperwork. She says that some of these companies are very bad, but some are good. As I follow her through the mud once she's collected her money, she's paying a woman R50. The woman is going through a list of names in a tattered notebook. She sells Tupperware. E tells me Tupperware is quality and beautiful and you cannot use it every day.

3	Photos	03032014	Repaying	Tupperware	Debt_1
03032014	Repaying		Tupperware		Debt_2
03032014	Repaying		Tupperware		Debt_3

The woman finds E name and crosses out R250 and replaces it with R200. She explains this to E. I ask E if people ever forget that you owe them. She says never, the only thing that can happen is that people don't pay, but that is not a good thing to do. E also pays money back to someone she bought pots from. The woman can't seem to find her name in the school notebook. She produces a second, thick, well-populated and worn book. They spend a few more minutes looking for E name. Once they can't find it, E just writes her name in the book. Once we've paid the woman, she hands us tattered brochures for shoes. E gives them back and says that she is short on money, but maybe next month.
We meet up with E's sister, J. She is wearing a baby blue scarf on her head. We are standing close to a woman selling panties. They are tiny and she buys a red pair for her niece. Next to that stall, we buy 2 clear bags of atchaar. E points out a man who is the 'boss' of the largest stall. She says he owns a shop in town. He has a big protruding belly and is holding a stack of money at least 30 notes thick. He has 3 boys/men helping him, between maybe 17 and 23. He sells potatoes, tomatoes, apples and onions. They hang in long clear bags from hooks on a metal frame, seemingly crafted for the purpose. Mostly elderly women stand at the vegetables and pass notes to the young men who get their change from the man with the belly.

E tells me that there are men here, but they are elderly-here to collect their pensions. As I'm there, I see a total of about 10 people with obvious physical disabilities. One woman has no right hand. I see two people sitting in the back of an open bakkie alongside a wheelchair. They remind me of one of those Matric Newtonian physics questions. A woman with weak legs negotiates herself into a backseat as someone holds her wheelchair. An old woman walks by clutching her middle-aged daughter's arm. E looks at the woman's feet for a long time. "See," she says, "they are very weak, they need our help." I offer them a lift and J says she wants to try to find the Tupperware woman. It appears she has left and E tells me people have probably moved on to sell things at the next pay station.

There is an old and dark human-sized trailer that lots of people are gathered around. I see that they are selling chips and russians. A small polystyrene container is loaded with chips so that the clasp can barely close. J puts this in her bag with the atchaar. As we're leaving we also buy a long skinny bag of apples which are themselves teeny. 'Hideable' in a closed fist. We trek down the hill, muddy and even after being folded about by feet and cars. I watch an old woman double checking the stability of each foot as she transfers her weight. J, E and I scrape the mud off of our feet, as best we can, before climbing into my car and they direct me to their home.

We drive for only five minutes, but pass two yellow T-shirts with Zuma's face on them (one of the young guys selling vegetables did have a COPE T-shirt on and someone else later was wearing a suspiciously red beret with an ANC embroidered patch). It's about 12 o'clock now. We drive for about 50m on the R40 and then turn left onto a well-packed dirt road, then right, left and right again. We drive just past a house that E points out as hers then go on to the next house where she tells me to park under a tree. The neighbour- a man in about his 50s (probably younger) is sitting in his wheelchair on the patio. There is a gaudy sign outside this face brick house that advertises that duvet covers and comforters are made here. We walk to E and J's parents' home and they show me the avo tree. E explains that when the avos are ripe they tend to lose their shine and you can hear the pip when you shake them. She says if I came in June they are ripe and I can come collect as many as I like. At that time the litchis are also ripe she tells me. Black chickens chase one another between our legs. E leads me into a lounge while she goes into a separate room on the right that is in the kitchen. Her parents, clearly old, are sitting far apart on a long couch watching TV. Her niece, a sweet toddler-just walking- holds one of the small apples we just bought. E's parents are warm and her mother is fluent in English. They tell me they both collect their grants at the 'complex' because that way they can do all their shopping in one trip. We speak for a while, they invite me back and I drive away slowly telling E that I'll call her next month. They hug me warmly and their niece U squirms away from me uncomfortably.

I drive to the BBR complex to get some groceries and see if I can still catch people receiving grants. Outside the Spar there is a long queue that winds around the corner and just into the entrance of the shop. There is one Spar employee behind a table with a fingerprint reader and a machine that prints receipts. Right after people collect their receipts then there is a stand with brochures of Spar's specials. People take one as they walk past and invariably go into the shop. I buy my groceries and wait in a long queue that enters halfway down the aisle. I wait for about 10 minutes until someone asks me if I'm paying cash or credit. I say cash and she tells me I'm in the wrong queue.

Tuesday 4th March, 2014

Tags: CPS, machine, pay point, retailers, SASSA, Moneyline, Net1, bureaucracy

D tells me he is building a house in Matsikisiki. He takes me past this house. All the roofing and foundation has been done and he says he wants to move by July. He stays with his parents

in Thulamahashe. We drive to a packed pay point, it is far into the leafy part of BBR and we left the road more than 25 minutes ago. We are also speeding along the potholes as though if we go faster we will somehow plane over the gaps. The effect is not successfully executed and rather every jiggly part of me jiggles further. D says that one of the things that makes him most tired when he gets home is the bodily pain he has from riding along these roads all day.

Next we arrive at a pay point, where one of the machines seems to have a mechanical problem. D says that ATMs are too far away for people and they would rather prefer to come here.

Photo 04032014_X Pay point

Also, ATMs and the banks connected to them, would not set up the machines here- they would be easy to rob, explode, or rob the cash in transit vehicles on the way to dropping or and collecting money. We drive slowly through people who are buying things. We stop and looked for a security guard to let us into the fenced area where the two white bakkies and the eight portable machines are. I find out later that the BBR has three bakkies and one truck. Often, the two bakkies travel together. This is all calculated according to statistics and where there is the greatest need for a greater number of machines. D introduces me to the team manager, F: 082------, he says that they are finished making payments at the site and now they were waiting to get the machine fixed before they get to the next site. It is about 8:30 am at this stage. I see F holding a receipt and I think it is the total amount cashed up from this site. It is about R60, 000. There is a woman working for CPS here, but she is very quiet. It is very much like a boy's club. There is even camaraderie with the Fidelity Security Guards. Although it is quite a strange, unequal relationship. At this first pay point, D gives his keys to one of the guards and the guard pulls the bakkie into the fenced area.

Photo 04032014_Bakkie at X



REPRINT

CPS FULL PAY
WBP0210.902 2014/03/04 11:26:59
NAME : G MNISI
PEN ID : 7012250600085
CLNT USN: 2382140[illegible] TSN : 38
OPER.USN: 2148384269 BATCH: 645
PAYPOINT: 0
Child Support Gra: R 1200.00+
PAY AMOUNT : R 1200.00-
NEW BAL. : R 0.00+
Next Pay Date is :2014/04/02
For access to amazing
cardholder benefits
dial *130*44448# now
2014/03/04 11:27:27
00000000x.00000000x EXP[00.00]

Receipt: Child Support Grant

He says that a big concern is overheating and the machines may just get over-worked. D says that there are also sometimes networking problems, but 'it is much better now that we get Diebold because the old system Doluru needed a lot of information and detailing and this one needs less. He also says that sometimes there is a problem with the reader and the mechanism that dispenses money and in this case, the motherboard is just sent to head office for replacement (in Nelspruit). Mostly the issues have to do with overheating. We leave the first pay point, they are packing up. We are on our way to L (where we were meant to go in the morning). Again we speed along holey, dusty roads. D says that because there is only one machine in L, he doesn't like being late because people have to wait. As we are driving, we get several phone calls, some of them from head office to check up the status of the machines and what is happening. On our way D says he wants to stop for a drink. We go to a Spar that appears to materialise in the middle of the dirt road. It is in a complex that has a standard bank and an under construction Built-It. The area is called Xi. D says you can take a taxi from Acornhoek to Thulamahashe and then from there to Xi. When I asked about monthly deductions of SASSA card the first thing he tells me about is something called Landco (?)

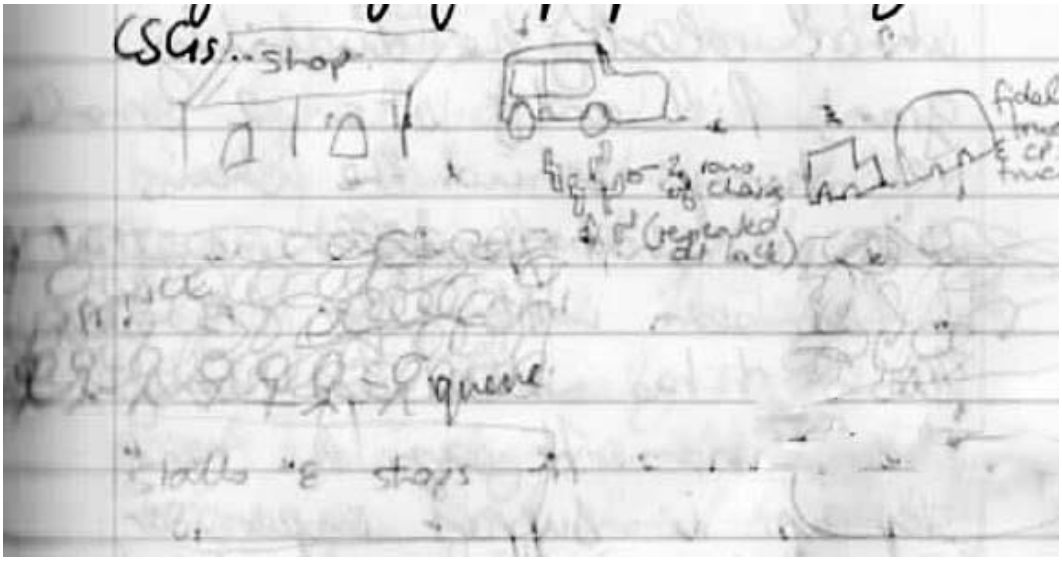
where you can go to Build-It with your card and ID to get building material. Sometimes he says, people do not remember that they do this, or lie and say that they didn't actually agree to it. FOLLOW UP. I need to go to Build-It and to look into this.

We go into the Spar and D greets someone. I ask to use the bathroom and walk to the edge of the Spar to a staircase along the wall. Once we get to the shop D introduces me to the assistant manager. He shows me the toilets, but it doesn't flush. As I come out I wash my hands but find that they can't be rinsed, again because there is no water. The assistant manager, W, fills a bowl of water for me and I dip my hands into it. It is a strange feature of grocery shops here and maybe it's because I'm just oblivious in Johannesburg but there is always one way glass that allows the surveillance of the entire shop. We walk into the owner's office; it is at the very end of the corridor with a large computer screen and a full view of the shop. He tells me that he is in Johannesburg often and has business ventures there.

RM: 082---------- (_____@gmail.com)

It does still seem that we drive quite a while and he tells me that there are better roads, but we are taking these as shortcuts. There is a fascinating 100m of perfectly tarred road at one stage in the road. We get to a wide dirt road that is very full and there is a long queue along the fence to the left of the car. I watched the elderly woman sitting on the floor. They seem to be selling things in a more ordered and larger scale here in L then at Bushbuckridge yesterday. I wonder if it has to do with us being earlier today as well as the weather being much better. I found out later that the specific pay point on average they pay 1600 people a month! We wait in the bakkie while D, annoyed, calls someone from CPS inside the fence. He says he always has to call; we manoeuvre as another bakkie tries to get past us in the other direction. Things I see that are being sold: large plastic skottels and enamel cups and pots. Someone walks past this woman and one lifts a lid in the manner of browsers everywhere. They are many smaller vegetable stands with potatoes and tomatoes and apples in packets on hooks. People who sells sweet potatoes and sweet potato looking vegetable are piled up in enamel bales and are still covered in soil. There are skottels right in front of the gate with raw meat and for the hours that we were there; the woman sitting at the stove does not stop waving flies away. There are also the omnipresent atchaar bags and buckets, and they seem to be sold with a salty powdery substance that I think may be dry garlic. There are also chips in polystyrene containers and very subdued white feathered chickens in double cages. People walk around with chickens holding their

wings together and they appear almost numb and hypnotised. There were also blankets and plastic sheets with neatly arranged trinkets including mirrors, plastic toys and guns. Another man sat with an array of hats- from caps to feathered, rimmed formal ones. Eventually we squash past everyone and a guard with a large metal gun pulls open the gate. We pull in and park just to the right. There are a few rooms and black plastic chairs that are roughly spray painted SASSA and a number on their backs. Later on the people who work at the shop in the area collected the chairs and say that they are only for people collecting CSG's.



L paypoint

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