

Abstract

This research report explores how private security is materially assembled in suburban Johannesburg. Based on ethnographic fieldwork within a private security company operating across the northern suburbs of Greater Johannesburg, it examines how the materiality of security is intimately intertwined with shaping the socio-spatial terrain of the city. Using a new materialist “assemblage” theory proposed by Jane Bennett, it contends although the materials of private security are designed to protect and exclude, they often work rather differently on the ground, resulting in strange new ways of seeing, moving, and relating in the city.