Retelling the City: Competing Spaces of Social Engagement in Cape Town

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This paper critically investigates some microcosms of social engagement in Cape Town, South Africa. It argues that, in contrast to the lens in the recent literature focusing on the city as the new level of analysis of (post-conflict) governance, cities in themselves need to be broken down even further to understand community narratives and projects below the level of the city as a whole. Indeed, zooming into community-specific narratives, particularly in large cities such as Cape Town, illustrates the extent to which agents such as community centres, museums, schools, social movements and so forth re-localise policies to make them work for their respective communities at small scale. In Cape Town, it is the multiplicity of social divisions, whether they be class, geography or ethnicity, which sub-compartmentalises the city and necessitates the development of competing narratives of social peace and justice. A variety of actors in turn facilitate and challenge those discourses to cater for the needs arising in their respective microcosms. Local soup kitchens, protest movements, trauma projects and township journalism are only a few examples of narratives developing in diverse communities of Cape Town. However, instead of demonising the fragmentation of the city per se, the chapter suggests that such microcosms are not strictly geographical in nature and have the potential to be mutually reconnected whenever common narratives yield a benefit for the users of those microcosms. Social management is thus informally taken away from formal policy actors at the policy core (usually located in the city centre), and flexibly reconnected through the activities emerging at the alleged peripheries of the city. City management therefore needs to be understood as an activity initiated at multiple points of origin in the city, rather than as a mere exercise of central policy control.

Introduction

Cape Town is known around the world for its beauty, the view of Table Mountain, and perhaps also for its proximity to Robben Island, which has become a major tourist destination. At the same time, the city has become South Africa's most segregated city since 1985 when 150 000 people were forced to leave their homes and to relocate outside the city centre. In fact, it is impossible to read and understand Cape Town outside the context of apartheid and its associated attempt to segregate cities along racial lines (Cook, 1991). The legacy of apartheid and its policies of racial segregation is nowhere more visible than in Cape Town, which is the most internally diverse city of South Africa, but, as a result, also the one where efforts to racially segregate the cityscape have been most intense during apartheid. And although the latter formally ended in 1994, its legacy on the urban landscape is still clearly visible (cf. Turok, 2001). At the same time, South African cities have also been said to be centres of resistance against apartheid as a result of a variety of transformative practices emerging from cities (Robinson, 2004: 161).

What this chapter aims to do is, rather than investigating the processes of segregation and transformation of the city as a whole, to focus on what is going on underneath the surface of the city as a whole, and to look at movements and processes within the cityscape. Ironically, the very transformative activities we can find in the contemporary era seem to be taking place in the very segregated areas that were created under apartheid. Resistance is taking place in the townships created by apartheid politicians to undermine it, and activities are happening where they were supposed to be oppressed. Hence, the deliberate attempt to distance black and coloured people from the centre of gravity of the city (that would be the city centre) by relocating them to the political peripheries of the city, has led to the emergence of multiple, alternative centres of agency and transformation. Townships, for instance, have developed their own, often informal, mechanisms to cope with the marginalisation from the political centre. This chapter therefore takes account of the resilience of communities under pressure in the cities to shed light on their abilities to reconstruct semi-formal political structures where they feel excluded from formal structures, spatially, politically and economically. I argue that peripheries are never only marginal, but have the ability to turn into cores and centres themselves. The question as to whether a locale (a township or district) is at the core or at the periphery of a city is therefore a matter of perspective.

Against this background, this chapter highlights the spatial policies of segregation and relocation as highly contested issues of the post-apartheid city of Cape Town. In fact, the contestations around the ways in which cities should be inhabited, governed and structured have not waned after South Africa's democratic transition since 1994, but have instead taken on a modified form, with segregation still remaining one of the core challenges of the city. At the same time, segregation and relocation are not exclusively matter of race any more – although the racial dimension must not be neglected - but instead they represent the complex interplay between identity categories, including race, gender and class. The associated forms of segregation continuing to exist based on such categories and the restrictions in cross-category mobility (spatially, ethnically, economically and politically) act as sources of frustration among those disadvantaged, and as targets of resistance at the same time.

Through its focus on the subjective cores and peripheries that emerge in this complex spatio-political landscape of Cape Town, this chapter aims to contribute to the literature of Peace and Conflict Studies. It brings a spatial perspective into the ways in which conflict is rendered visible, highlighting the centrality of space in the ways in which people experience conflict. In that respect, spatial organisation, that is, where one lives, where one moves and which places are denied, represent important everyday-life experiences of conflict and help us understand not only municipality bureaucracy, but also the underlying political economies of segregation and relocation.

This chapter is informed by two longer trips to Cape Town during the course of which I had the privilege of being able to move around from very privileged parts of the city to poorer townships. Not only the ability to move around the different areas of Cape Town, but also interviews and conversations with a variety of community activists, peace workers and academic institutions helped my understanding of the complex challenges that the inhabitants of the Greater Cape Town area face as well as the central significance of space and location in the politicisation of communities. In spending time with residents of different parts of Cape Town, I was amazed by the ability of people to not only cope with the constraints imposed upon them by geopolitics on a small scale, but also by their creative abilities to transgress those constraints in order to make their voices heard. At the same time, while moving around in the different parts of the city, it became obvious that the location of a 'core' or centre of activity as opposed to a periphery or marginalised area is

largely a matter of perspective. For instance, quite a few people located in the city centre would point out to me that the townships outside the city centre were far away from political activities. Yet speaking to people in those townships did not suggest an apolitical or even apathetic stance of shack dwellers at all. And, of course, it must not be neglected that my own positionality as an 'outsider' played into the ways in which spatiality was presented to me in conversations (cf. Kappler, 2013). In that sense, a reflexive approach to 'field' research was necessary, in terms of acknowledging the researcher's own positionality in the research jigsaw, and even the fact that the researcher can be a site of investigation themselves (Robertson, 2002: 786f.). However, even a reflexive approach comes with the danger of essentialising or 'othering' a particular place as different from one's own (Robertson, 2002: 789). In that respect, rather than claiming that such processes as I will outline below are unique to Cape Town, I would suggest that similar mechanisms are at play in different locales. Yet it is the context of apartheid which makes issues around racial segregation and relocation so notable in South African cities, so Cape Town represents a powerful example of how spatial politics serve as tools of repression and liberation alike.

From cores to peripheries

Following Lefebvre (1979: 290), in the context of globalisation and redifferentiation, we can see an 'explosion of spaces', that is, the formation of a number of spaces developing in the context of the capitalist division of labour. Similarly, Soja (1996) has emphasised the networked nature of space, connected between cores and peripheries. Based on this, Soja (2009: 3) highlights the political nature of spatial control in its attempt to control, privilege and create hierarchies between different spatial units:

> The political organization of space is a particularly powerful source of spatial injustice, with examples ranging from the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the redlining of urban investments, and the effects of exclusionary zoning to territorial apartheid, institutionalized residential segregation, the imprint of colonial and/or military geographies of social control, and the creation of other core-periphery spatial structures of privilege from the local to the global scales.

In the context of this chapter, it therefore suggests itself to briefly investigate the notion of *core* (or centre) and *periphery* as ways of structuring the city, both academically and politically. This debate reflects an underlying paradigmatic reasoning (Vanolo, 2009: 28) to conceptualise power asymmetries (Vanolo, 2009: 30), while a clear-cut binary representation of the city can at the same time be criticised. Indeed, the question which arises at this stage is the fact whether we can define in an analytically clear-cut way which urban spaces are more central, or, alternatively, more marginal? The chapter will claim that the distinction between cores and peripheries is not neat, but subjective and flexible in nature. Therefore, the inherent multiplicity of space (Massey, 2001: 259) would suggest that it is not sufficient to investigate what is formally considered a core or periphery, but instead to look at the multiple readings and interpretations of space. How is it used, interpreted and understood from various perspectives? What are the mechanisms of control and resistance inscribed into spaces and spatial divisions?

In the field of urban studies, the multiplicity of space has not always been clearly investigated. Instead, there has been a tendency to read the city as an emancipatory space, particularly in the West (Lees, 2004: 5). As Lees (2004: 9) has suggested, we tend to work with a flawed Anglo-American notion of the emancipatory city, confronted with oppressive suburbs. However, this notion seems to neglect the complex life which we can observe in suburbs, as well as the reconstruction of political life outside the administrative centre of the city as a whole. In this context, Back and Keith (2004: 62) have emphasised the need to look at micro-levels of analysis (such as suburbs) "as nuclei around which official cartographies of much wider areas coalesce" and how they shape policy actions. Back and Keith (2004: 58) add that "it is helpful to think about the landscapes of the city in terms of the *micro-public spheres* of specific buildings, sites, and places associated with routinized forms of behaviour structuring the temporality of social processes".

In that sense, a focus on smaller entities, such as buildings, but also smaller communities within cities as we find them in neighbourhoods or townships, can help us understand the formation of new socio-political centres as they emerge in communities. In South Africa, this can be seen as an outcome of apartheid policy the "self-sustaining geography" of which has made "residential segregation […] natural and normal" (Besteman, 2008: 50). However, this is not to say that these artificially created 'containers' of segregation are stable or static. Instead, as much as they restrict movement, they open possibilities of transgression and

movement (cf. Robinson, 1998). This is not only in resistance to policies of the centre, but also as stand-alone strategies in their own right, often to satisfy needs of the respective local communities.

Such reversions of meaning, that is, the policies that turn a periphery into a core, is not least a result of the power and agency of those operating within what can be considered a restricted or marginalised space. In that vein, Robinson (2000: 286) suggests that "the imaginative spatialities with which we describe processes of transformation shape our sense of political possibilities and hence our political choices." Cresswell (1996: 163) suggests that "[t]he unintended consequence of making space a means of control is to simultaneously make it a site of meaningful resistance." This points to the ability of actors to create structures, such as contexts and boundaries of neighbourhood, by engaging "in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction" (Appadurai, 1996: 185). Agency can therefore be read as a spatial practice, not only complicit in the creation of control structures, but also in the ability to challenge and overcome them in various ways. Agency can thus turn a core into a periphery, or vice versa.

The ambivalence of residential segregation policies is therefore, as I argue, that whilst they aim to restrict agency and try to prevent resistance against deeply embedded power imbalances, they often result in the transformation of power relations and trigger new configurations, both within the structures created, and across them. New networks emerge based on oppressive politics, not only to comply with them, but also to challenge them on their own terms. The new infrastructures built within the engineered microscapes of cities therefore reflect attempts of communities to cope with formal politics, and to re-place them with alternatives in their local context. The use of these spaces of oppression and transformation is reflected in their infrastructures, their users, their practices and symbolisms. This speaks to Lefebvre's notion of 'representational spaces' or *espace vécu/ lived space* (Lefebvre, 1991). Representational spaces represent complex symbolisms and link to the underground side of social life (Lefebvre, 1991). They constitute a "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" as well as a "space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). In that sense, lived space denotes the fact that spaces are always filled with a life of their own, with symbolisms and meanings developed by the very users of that space.

Against this background, microspheres within urban spaces (whether they be cores or peripheries) can be considered lived sub-spaces of the urban, yet developing their very own dynamics and infrastructures which do not necessarily parallel the infrastructures of the wider city. While they may replicate power structures as present in the formal realm of urban administration, they may also counter and challenge them, overtly and/or subtly. In that respect, James Scott's notion of peasant resistance (Scott, 1990) is not limited to rural areas, but we can also observe 'hidden transcripts' and the subversion of oppressive structures in the political, economic or social peripheries of cities. This also means that, through subversive practices, cores can be turned into peripheries, and vice versa.

South Africa, Cape Town and spatial divisions

South Africa has had to grapple with a difficult history of war, conflict, violence and racial segregation. The 20th century was largely shaped by power politics of a white minority over a black majority, and black / coloured resistance against the politics of oppression and segregation. Black people were worst off in terms of being denied all access to whites-only facilities and being denied political rights, while policies towards coloured people were less predictable in that some were interpreted as more white or more black (Besteman, 2008: 171ff.). It was only in 1994 that the African National Congress (ANC), under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, won in democratic elections and started to launch a transition away from politics of apartheid to democracy.

At the same time, this process of transition was accompanied by rapid privatisation and the transformation into a market economy through measures of privatization and neo-liberalisation of the economy, as a result of both internal and external debates between the leading political parties, international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund, and foreign investors (Habib and Padayachee, 2000). Such policies brought their own problems, including unemployment, a reduction in public service delivery, social exclusion and 'racial capitalism' (Beall, 2002: 47-50). In 2012, the World Bank produced a rather critical report, outlining 'inequality of opportunity' as one of the key challenges that South

Africa faces, while pointing to the fact that economic growth has not benefitted all sectors of society equally (World Bank, 2012).

Hence, while hopes for the transformation of society, linked to the political and economic empowerment particularly of black and coloured people were high, such hopes were increasingly disappointed as practices of exclusion persisted. Large numbers of the poor live in townships, excluded from access to the job market or the market economy more generally. At the same time, the government struggles to overcome the physical racial divisions still visible in the cities as a legacy of the apartheid system. Indeed, despite the city government's move to rename boulevards after opponents of apartheid – most notably Nelson Mandela and Helen Suzman, the physical racial divisions in the city's infrastructures cannot be overlooked, while some areas appear white-only, and others black-only or coloured-only (cf. Polgreen, 2012).

Cape Town has been affected massively by policies of racial segregation and hosts at the same time a large number of coloured people who have long found themselves in between white and black identity, socially, culturally and even linguistically (cf. Kamwangamalu, 2004). In terms of segregation, we find that the black communities, and the coloured communities to a slightly lower extent, have been affected most strongly by policies of segregation and spatial control. Most notably, the Group Areas Act, passed in 1950, foresaw the relocation of non-whites to townships, away from the city centres and resulted in massive relocation campaigns. Their end goal was to remove blacks from the city centres, to further divide society along racial lines, and to engrain white supremacy in the spatial outlook of the city. These divisions are still clearly visible, for instance in townships such as Khayelitsha (an estimated populace of more than 1 million people) or the smaller suburb of Langa, having become almost towns of their own, to name but two. The history of Langa even dates back to a pre-apartheid law, the so-called Natives (Urban Areas) Act No 21 of 1923, which restricted the movement of blacks between rural and urban areas and which led to the creation of Langa in 1927. Other areas designed to host black and coloured people who were forced out of the city included Gugulethu, Nyanga, Mitchell's Plain, Delft, and Blue Downs, all lacking public facilities and services (Turok, 2001: 2351). According to Wilkinson (2000: 197)

[b]y 1980, Greater Cape Town's population had increased to almost 1.9 million people, of whom 573 000 were White, 995600 were Coloured and African households were again living in informal settlements or under intolerably overcrowded conditions in the townships.

These racial divisional are still persistent in the urban geography of Cape Town, as Besteman (2008) highlights. At the same time, these divisions have increasingly changed into economic cleavages, with increasing class divisions in the urban landscape (Besteman, 2008: 50). Indeed, the negative effects of neo-liberalisation coupled with the transitional period after the end of apartheid in 1994 has exacerbated economic fault lines in society. While it can now be said that the upper class is racially mixed, poverty still seems to be affecting the black and coloured communities most. These divisions are reflected in the urban landscape of Cape Town (and other South African cities) as well. It becomes particularly evident through the deliberate isolation of the so-called 'gated communities' from their neighbourhoods (Lemanski, 2006), with walls around the wealthier enclaves cementing the cleavages between the rich and the poor. Communities are therefore increasingly based on a cemented separation between the rich and the poor, and communication between them is difficult, not least through the physical obstacles preventing dialogue and meeting on an everyday basis. However, not just through walls can divisions be observed directly, but also from the geographical distance of the townships from the city centre. The lack of a comprehensive (bus) network to connect the different parts of the city is indicative of the administrative centre's low concern with the mobilisation of larger parts of the population, let alone efforts to bring together the city's inhabitants. Despite increasing subsidies for public transport, Turok (2001: 2352) observed that the poor still spend at least 10% of their income on public transport. There is still a pressing need for a coordinated, convenient and affordable public transport system for the city as a whole in order to ensure genuine mobility between communities (Wilkinson, 2000: 203).

In this context, it has also been argued that the townships are not only disconnected from the centre due to the costs associated with public transport, but that this is a deliberate decision (Robinson, 2004: 167). At the same time, the divisions are permeable, and, to a certain extent, people do move across the city and transgress those divisions (Robinson, 2004: 167). Due to the lack of adequate public transport, a lot of the poorer population use the minibus system to move outside their neighbourhood. At the same time, Besteman

(2008: 82) suggests that divisions are more than merely logistical, pointing to people's fear of crossing into an area they are not familiar with. Such fears are not least linked to the country's high levels of criminality, but also to psychological barriers and feelings of not being welcome in particular areas. Markers of exclusion continue to be race, but also one's economic situation, the lack of employment outside one's community and so forth. The attachment to the political centre thus remains weak, with networks being formed mainly within communities rather than outside or across them.

Against this background, the following section will investigate in more detail the ways in which communities have reconstructed their own 'cores' in the light of growing disappointment with the city administration and the state as a whole. I will highlight a few examples which reflect the extent to which communities have demonstrated their resilience and ability to substitute for the lack of central services and how new centres of social and political gravity have been able to emerge from this lack. For this purpose, I will first look at two initiatives in the township Khayelitsha, before attempting a closer reading of District Six. These examples will shed light on the extent to which different sets of agents (community actors, social movements and museums) have developed the capability of transforming seemingly marginalised peripheries of the city into core areas in their own right, and to rebrand the perception of those marginalised spaces into key spaces of are political agency.

Community divisions and social fabric in Cape Town – the formation of new cores

Khayelitsha

I would first like to shed light on Khayelitsha, the largest township outside Cape Town. As outlined above, Khayelitsha is a product of apartheid policies aiming to push black and coloured people outside the city centres. Khayelitsha is perhaps slightly more privileged than some other townships (such as Malawi Town) in that it meanwhile has electric provision. Poverty levels, however, are still deeply worrying, sanitation and the provision or basic services is more than limited and crime rates have contributed to the overall feeling of insecurity, particularly for women in the township (cf. Nleya and Thompson, 2009). Interestingly enough, justifiably, a big body of literature on Khayelitsha focuses on the role

of HIV/AIDS as well as the associated problems. At the same time, the resilience of the community of dealing with this has only marginally been subject to research (cf. Chandler, 2012). In this context, Tshehla (2002) has highlighted non-state and informal actors that have emerged in Khayelitsha, such as street communities and private security agents. Although these arrangements are a response to the lack of central provision of such services, they are still not inclusive to the whole community, which is rather large in Khayelitsha (Tshehla, 2002). This reflects the extent to which the township is heterogeneous, shaped by a diversity of formal and informal actors and is not just one coherent unit. At the same time, the township is often referred to in relative terms, that is, in relation to the city of Cape Town. In that vein, Khayelitsha is seen as being a township on the 'outskirts' of Cape Town, although it could also be considered a city on its own. Against this background, a number of initiatives have emerged in the township aiming to cater for and include people marginalised from formal politics, and partly even from informal political mechanisms. Such initiatives have claimed back the agency that spatial segregation has tried to deny them. They have been able to redefine their position in relation to the social and political centre of Cape Town as well as demonstrate the political power situated in those areas which have suffered most from divisive politics.

One of those initiatives is Abigail's Women's Movement (AWM),[1] a movement which started in 1999 from a prayer group. The group started working with seniors as, according to a door-to-door survey by the movement, they were in most need of community support due to a lack of services they receive from the municipality or the state. AWM kept expanding its services to various members of the community. They include elderly people, children, stroke patients and blind people, that is, people who need additional community support. AWM's approach is clearly needs-based in that they respond to the deficiencies in Khayelitsha, including transport, food and health care. In that respect, they pick people up and bring them to the community centre; they provide food, medicine, physiotherapy, entertainment and opportunities for people to socialise. People using their services are numerous, and according to the organiser, the group has a 'hectic programme'. A lot of the work is being

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[1] Information about this movement is from a visit in their community centre in 2012 and an interview with the main organiser, Ntsoaki Dina Motolwana, Khayelitsha, 03 September 2012.

done by volunteers, including people working in the soup kitchen or a retired teacher helping the children with their schoolwork. Volunteers also go to people's houses when they are unable to come to the group centre, and there is counselling support for orphans through a bereavement support group. It is interesting to see that AWM grew from a very small faith-based initiative into a larger community support network to which people from the whole of Khayelitsha are invited to come. This is also reflected in the movement's funding situation, with no funding being allocated when they first started their activities. Now, what evolved from campaigning at people's doors to raise money has turned into a government-funded initiative as AWM receives the premises and water use for free. Hence, although the support from the government is not excessive, it helps AWM to go about their daily work, which has become so popular that they had to start turning people down.

The people using the services of AWM receive their services from there, just like a number of other similar groups located in Khayelitsha. For many of them, such community centres have become the core of their social activities, reducing their focus and dependency on the city of Cape Town, from where they are physically and often also ideationally distant. Such community centres thus become new cores of a community around which they centre their social life. One could argue that the resilience that such communities demonstrate reinforce existing divisions, while, on the other hand, it contributes to a stronger feeling of integration in the local community. The ambition to distance oneself from the alleged core of the city thus renders more gravity to the cohesion of the periphery. It is interesting to note that the government is acknowledging AWM's achievements, the reasons for which may be subject to debate, but certainly not least connected to the effort of outsourcing public services to 'subcontractors' in a market environment (cf. Bezuidenhout and Fakier, 2006). This is coupled with an increasing 'socio-spatial fragmentation' of the urban landscape as a result of the inequalities brought through neo-liberal policies (Roshan Samara, 2010: 640). At the same time, this fragmentation and growing distance between the city centre, or even the state, and the 'peripheries' has not resulted in a lack of organisation, but has instead provided the ground for a new decentralised order during the course of which community actors have taken on the burden of basic service provision. Yet such activities are not restricted to social care, but have also taken on a political character, so political mobilisation seems to happen in communities rather than on a city-scale. Political agency as such is

maybe not what one would expect through such community groups, but it cannot be neglected to what extent such groups have helped empower the most marginalised groups in townships in terms of giving them a voice as well as translating local needs into political action. This becomes spatially relevant in that actors such as AWM are responding to the marginalisation of Khayelitsha in city politics, and instead empower the local neighbourhood by responding to their needs and voicing those needs to potential funders, which are most likely placed at municipal or national level. AWM are not putting up with being located at the periphery, but create their own cohesion mechanisms to make their centre a relevant core to the local community.

In that sense, political mobilisation has been strong in Cape Town's peripheries, which the example of Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) aptly illustrates.[2]

The shackdweller's movement Abahlali baseMjondolo started in the city of Durban in 2005 through a road blockade of around 20,000 people. From the beginning on, the movement demonstrated its disappointment with the government they had long supported, but who, as the shackdwellers felt, was not interested in their everyday challenges (cf. Gibson, 2008: 7ff). The movement particularly took issue with the government-directed relocations, which made them feel almost like during the relocation policies during apartheid (Gibson, 2008: 7). The campaign increasingly spread from Durban to other cities, such as Cape Town, and created an alliance with the Landless People's Movement in Johannesburg. It was in 2008 that AbM was launched in the Western Cape, increasingly building its agenda as different from the movement in Durban.

It can be argued that the needs of the communities in Cape Town and Durban are rather similar in that they are related to poor people's marginalisation from the city centres and the repeated relocation orders. However, tensions between the work in Durban and the Western Cape (primarily about the degree to which the movement should be structured, but also about the fact that AbM in Durban often served as a resource to white academics, NB: on a self-critical note) meant that AbM Western Cape increasingly focused its own work on the challenges they specifically faced in Cape Town. In Khayelitsha, the movement strongly concentrated on the provision of electricity, which the township was only given in

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[2] Information about this movement is mainly based on an interview with the former organizer of the campaign in the Western Cape, Mzonke Poni, Khayelitsha, 30 August 2012.

2012, and undermined people's possibilities of disseminating information as widely and globally as possible in terms of a website or the associated possibilities of township journalism for which electricity is needed.

AbM in Cape Town also successfully fought against the mass evictions of around 4000 people ordered by the Ministry of Housing in 2005. AbM particularly highlighted the lack of security, of public transport and the health implications linked to the forced relocations and evictions of the shackdwellers. In highlighting to the government that evictions would be more expensive than building facilities for the people, they managed to stop the eviction campaign. 2010 was a particularly important year for AbM as a result of the Football World Cup, as the construction of new stadia meant the forced removal of a large number or residents in those areas. AbM highlighted the fact that due to those evictions, established informal social networks, as they arise in townships, are usually broken, which meant the breakdown of the social fabric of informally organised neighbourhoods. Their 'Right to the City Campaign' also pointed to the lack of consultation with community members during the course of these relocalisations, so demonstrations in town followed. All these effort are attempts, according to the coordinator, to 'challenge the ANC from the inside', while suffering from the perception that politicians are not willing to listen to the grievances of the shackdwellers. However, when journalists became more involved in reporting on such grievances due to mass protests and the work of AbM, the organisation felt some improvement in terms of how they were being heard in government. The creation of their own website (http://abahlali.org/) as well as some donations from the South Africa Development Fund are indicative of this gradual success.

What this example reflects is the extent to which the peripheries of the city become the centre of political mobilisation. This may not be surprising given that political mobilisation often arises from a perspective of exclusion, but it is arguably not in line with the city administration's envisaged plans of relocation. I would instead argue that the destruction of the social fabric linked to the eviction campaigns is meant to undermine resistance as it not only pushes people away from the geographical centres of policy-making, but it also undermines the opportunities to mobilise communities through long-term contact and interaction within the communities. Yet, these measures do not seem to have eliminated the possibilities of collective protest, while they have maybe changed the conditions under which protest happens. The government may not have expected nor supported the

shackdwellers to be agents of change, but the latter did manage to politicise the forced relocations and thus to exert political pressure which did not go unnoticed.

District Six

Let us now turn our attention to District Six, a residential area in the inner city of Cape Town. District Six has long had a reputation of being multicultural, cosmopolitan and colourful, hosting a mix of different ethnic groups. However in the late 1960s, the area was declared 'whites only' and all coloured and black people were forcefully evicted from the area (Geschier, 2007: 38). At the same time, this notion of a cosmopolitan area is still contested today, as Geschier (2007: 40) suggests that District Six only came to be an important signifier of multicultural life due to its destruction. In that sense, the place can be said to have come into existence because of its loss, a narrative which currently strengthens the community of returnees to the district.

This is also the capital on which the District Six Museum, launched in 1994, builds its narrative.[3] The museum is not only an exhibition space symbolising the district as an area, but is also involved in supporting people returning to District Six. It is in this frame that the museum has evolved from a history of activism, not least through a campaign called "Hands off District 6". This campaign was launched in 1989 to stop multi-national corporations from occupying the district and paved at the same time the way for restitution of the land to those formerly expelled.

One of the aims is to reconnect different generations in order to establish a memory in dialogue between older generations (still remembering the pre-eviction life in the area) and children who often lack the spatial memory and imagination of District Six. This is particularly crucial in a context in which young people tend to grow up with seemingly natural divisions and have not experienced the feeling of being mixed and part of a racially diverse community. The museum sheds light on the possibility of living community independent of one's ethnic or racial identity and thus relies on an intergenerational

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[3] The insights about the District Six Museum and Homecoming Centre are based on museum visits, an event in the Homecoming Centre as well as two meetings with organisers and curators of the museum. Crischene Julius, Tina Smith and Mandy Sanger, Cape Town, 19 August 2012; and Crischene Julius and Tina Smith, Cape Town, 06 December 2012.

memory narrative where the past can serve as an inspiration for the present. Such an approach is clearly transformative in nature in that it encourages people to see beyond the divisions and challenge the impression that these are irreversible and set in stone.

In this context, Geschier (2007: 39) outlines how the museum is based on a participatory approach in that it is based on contributions of former residents and returnees. In that sense, the museum claims to be more than a 'normal' museum through its appeal to social consciousness and allowing people from within the community to throw ideas into the space. Participants have included musicians, writers, artists, community, politicians and academics, and claims to have its voice present in bigger community discourses. The latter include the media on the one hand, but schools and everyday life discourses on the other hand.

The idea of becoming a community space is further reinforced by the Homecoming Centre, located next to the Museum and affiliated with it. The centre serves as a venue for different kinds of events such as book launches, usually with a socially engaged character to them. It is also a venue where the museum staff organise soup kitchens and high tea for elderly people, all of which are rather popular in the community and are well-attended. In that sense, the Homecoming Centre can be considered as an arena for meetings as well as a platform on which people can exchange their stories of relocation as well as their potential opportunities to return to District Six. The strong nostalgia that relocated people and returnees seem to have for the district makes the Homecoming Centre a popular location. The centre indeed hosts a regular series of events, often funded with sporadic international donations and grants, and has turned into a place where people from different racial and economic backgrounds can meet, all in the spirit of how District Six is remembered.

The aims of the museum are not only social, but also political in nature in that it deals with contested issues such as land restitution policy since 1994 and the different modes of restitution. The museum's campaign "Hands on District Six" similarly picks up the contested issues of memory, and follows up on the "Hands off District 6" campaign outlined above. The new campaign foresaw the creation of a memorial project highlighting the contested issue of land ownership, which is one of the core concerns of the museum.

Without claiming that the museum represents the whole of District Six, it can certainly be argued that it has become one of the socio-political centres of gravity around which

narratives of returnees have been centred and organised. The Homecoming Centre is becoming a key location in which people from different backgrounds can meet and interact in order to reconstitute a District Six that accounts for the contemporary challenges of the city. The question of land restitution and return is thus heavily debated in the venues of the actual district itself, rather than exclusively in the formal centres of the city.

The example of District Six interestingly reflects the contested notion of what the 'centre' of a city is and should represent. District Six is physically in the inner city and has undergone a transformation in terms of its population and politicisation. Before apartheid a rather cosmopolitan community, the area was later used as a way of cementing white supremacy in the cityscape through the expulsion of non-whites. Interestingly, similar to what happened in Khayelitsha, District Six has now undergone a transformation in meaning in that it now represents a platform on which the past can be dealt with and, to a certain extent, be overcome. The creation of the District Six Museum and the Homecoming Centre indeed symbolise an attempt, a spatial strategy, to counter the efforts to segregate society during apartheid times as well as the idea to use the legacy of the past to construct a better future. The keywords on the walls of the museum "Formation-Resistance-Restitution" are indeed indicative of the museum's attempt to use history as a point of departure on which a different future for the district can be built. This equally implies the relabeling of space, that is, the attempt to challenge a narrative of spatial segregation in favour of a more diverse interpretation of District Six, where people can feel welcome irrespective of their ethnic or racial identity. The narratives collected in the museum space and implemented through the work of the Homecoming Centre reflect the creation of a community on cosmopolitan values as celebrated in the district's past and reflect the extent to which such narratives do not centre around the city as a whole, but around the district as a point of gravity for the construction of such narratives. For returnees, this is not so much about returning to Cape Town, but about returning to District Six. The museum has certainly been playing a key role in the transformation of District Six and it can certainly be said to have displayed more agency than what an exhibition space would be expected to do. It was not least a certain degree of international attention (through research and funding) that may have helped promote the museum's work beyond its immediate local context.

Concluding reflections

Against the background of policies of segregation and relocation, which continue to divide Cape Town still today, 20 years after the formal end of apartheid, this chapter has suggested a closer focus on the agents of change, not only situated in the city's cores, but also in its alleged peripheries. The size of Cape Town alone would probably suffice to claim that the city cannot only be investigated as a unit, and instead justify a focus on its smaller units, such as neighbourhoods, townships or districts. However, it is often mistakenly assumed that activities, both in the centre and the peripheries of the city are oriented towards a common political core.

In contrast, what this chapter shows is, as a reaction to segregation and relocalisation, the emergence of lived subcultures in townships and districts, which develop their narratives beyond the official stories of the city. A number of actors, including social movements, community actors, museum and centres are contributing to the political activation of the socio-political peripheries and make them actors in their own right. At the same time, this observation raises a question about how we define a 'core' of the city? Where is it that all activities are concentrated? Is there a common point of orientation or a centre of gravity? The example of Cape Town strongly suggests that such cores depend on one's position in the system and the extent to which the core is operational to a community's needs. This is to do with the physical position of the community, which, as with the case of Khayelitsha, is geographically distant from the city centre. On the other hand, while District Six can be considered part of Cape Town's inner city, it still has its very specific narratives around its own *particular* history and the ways in which this can impact upon its future. We can therefore see discourses emerge which potentially challenge narratives concerning the city as a whole, and people using smaller communities are centres of orientation. Indeed, a high number of (especially poorer) people on the outskirts of Cape Town have never been to the city as such, and although we may refer to them as Capetonians, they may not feel the affiliation with the city as much as with their smaller communities. It is also these communities in which political mobilisation takes place, not least due to their social fabric, which the government has often sought to undermine due to its relocation policies. I would therefore suggest that the city is not just managed and controlled from its very political centre, but that its impulses and energies originate from multiple points, and often from

those where they are least expected or even sought to be silenced. A variety of actors as presented above fulfil the functions that formal bureaucracies are unable or even unwilling to fulfil. This may be in the form of soup kitchens or community services, but also political mobilisation and resistance against socio-political structures which are perceived as unjust. It can be argued that the agency of those alleged peripheries to define their existence in their own right creates further cleavages in the urban landscape. At the same time, the cohesion we find in smaller neighbourhoods are mechanisms of ensuring that agency is not just concentrated in the power centres, but is claimed back by the people who are politically marginalised. Therefore, in order to understand city life, we need to grasp the complex (and often informal) networks through which people find orientation and stability, and how they cope with segregation and conflict. A formal centre may only be a formal centre, but where the real political centres of Cape Town are, is a different question and points to the centrifugal forces of the divisive politics of the apartheid past, and, to a certain extent, to the divisive effects in economic terms as brought about by the neo-liberalisation in increasing impoverishment of society in Cape Town.

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