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Subjectivity, Politics and Neo-Liberalism in Post-Apartheid Cape Town
by Peter van Heusden and Rebecca Pointer

"In February 2001 I attended the launch of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, and the community centre in Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain. The launch was a vibrant event, a hall full of people who were gathered to say "No more!" to the newly formed Cape Town Unicity Council's policy of evicting rent defaulters from council houses. This raw emotion in my mind merged with the "Ya Basta!" of the Zapatistas, and echoes of the "self reduction" of rents I'd read about, where Italians in the '70s, poor Italians in rental housing just like the poor of Tafelsig, had simply refused to pay more than a rent that they decided for themselves." – Peter van Heusden

Yet that launch was hardly a beginning, as what was witnessed on that day in February 2001 had its roots in the "spontaneous" resistance to the eviction of the Lategan household in November 2000. When the police came with the sheriff to evict the Lategans (for the second time), a reported 300 residents were drawn into the argument against the eviction. One of them, Ashraf Cassiem, was singled out by the police as particularly vocal and was brutally assaulted. Ashraf, his mother, and a small group of other residents, went on to form the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign, and as they came into contact with other community organisations and activists fighting the wave of evictions that greeted the birth of the Unicity, the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign was formed.

We do not wish, however, to document the history of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign. Maybe someone else will do that somewhere, in a way that will no doubt be at least as contested as that organisation has been. What interests us, instead, is that a crowd gathered in Olifansthoek Road, Tafelsig, in an area which most wrote off as "depoliticised" or even "reactionary". Months later, an attempt to disconnect some 2000 household's water in a military-style operation led to the "Tafelsig Water War" as police violence was countered with blockades of burning tyres. At the time of the "Water War", the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign had waned as an organisation from that February launch, and in fact there had not been mass meetings in the area for several months. Years later (in 2002), an attempt to evict over 100 households in Lavender Hill was met with crowds, barricades, resistance that stopped the programme of Unicity evictions in its tracks. Again, the organisations that had stood up to resist evictions in Lavender Hill were at a low ebb at that stage.

It was in the context of these struggles and our relation to them that we undertook to study the development of subjectivity within poor communities in Cape Town. In order to understand how resistance arose without being organised, we decided to look to how the articulation of 'life strategies' by township dwellers fed into a possibility of resistance. As Peter van Heusden stated in the research proposal:

"In examining the articulation of power it is, however, important not only to focus on objectively visible power – expressed through structures, meetings, protests, police actions and so forth – but it is also necessary to focus on the subject as a locus of networks of power. The subject – the human being that thinks and feels – is not merely operated upon externally by power, but power penetrates into the process of
subject-formation. The subject creates and recreates itself, and this process brings into existence a particular kind of subjective existence, i.e. a subjectivity. This subjectivity does not form at random, but is rather appropriate to particular ‘objective circumstances’ (monthly bill payments, punitive state actions, etc.) and also the human relations (family and neighbourhood networks, etc.), which operate in particular historic circumstances. The structuring of human relations is thus a form of exercise of power, the effects of which leave their trace in forms of subjectivity."

In this research, we study the human relations, subjectivities and live strategies that underlay resistance to neo-liberal policies in Cape Town. We intend for this study to not merely be of academic value, but also of value to activists within movements contesting neo-liberalism in South Africa, and thus we also discuss the limitations observed within these movements of resistance, with a view to overcoming them.

In particular, we seek to understand how the subjectivities uncovered in the townships we visited relate to the project of political activism. In this regard, we study both the relationship between township residents and existing activist organisations, and also the relationship between subjectivity, life strategies and the emergence of new activists.

Research Methodology

Research was conducted in three different townships: Driftsands, Tafelsig and Vrygrond. These areas were chosen for study because of three factors:

2) The author’s familiarity with activists and residents in the areas.
3) A variety of histories, both in terms of the demographics of the residents (“African/Black” vs. “Coloured”) and also how the areas came into being.

The main aim of our research was to help "social movements talk to themselves" (Barchiesi, 2002): this includes, reflecting on past practices, evaluation and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of structures and activities, and allowing this to inform future directions and strategies.

From the outset, we postulated our role as researchers from within social movements, and not as "objective" outsiders. Our research intended to be participatory and seeks to acknowledge the role of our own subjectivity, both as researchers and as activists in the social movements. Our own insights, experience, knowledge and activities have converged with those of township activists and this has necessarily impacted on the shape and texture of struggles. Specifically, we hoped that the research would allow a two-way flow of energy, information and activity – from the township to the research paper and from the research back into the township. The research "process and outcomes should put more power and control into the hands" of township activists (Winberg, p 27).

Therefore, our research methodology allowed for phases of information gathering and reflection of that information back to the community, as follows:

1) The initial phase of our research consisted of going house to house and filling in questionnaires about those who live in the township being studied.
2) The data was then collated to create an overall view of the township.
3) Several groups and individuals in the township were then approached to elaborate on particular aspects that had been highlighted by the research.

4) This information was then collated to create a first draft of the research paper.

5) The research paper was then presented to:
   a) Township activists in the form of a workshop, which highlighted the main aspects of the research and allowed for reflection and comment. This workshop was also intended to allow for self-reflection of township activists.
   b) Activists from other social movements in South Africa, which allowed for any unanswered questions to be raised and addressed.

6) Based on the comments, reflections and questions the final draft of the research paper was created.
Case study 1: Driftsands

The role of political allegiance in Driftsands' history

The pre-history of Driftsands dates back to 1986, when the majority of Driftsands residents lived in the township of Crossroads. There, they were caught in the intra-community struggle that centred on Johnson Nngxobongwana, and the rivalry between ‘traditional’ and ‘youth’ leadership which developed in the context of the Apartheid state’s ‘criminal social engineering’ (Greenwell, p. 6) in the area. From Crossroads, many residents fled to Site C in Khayelitsha, often seeking a place to stay with friends or relatives.

One resident, Adelaide Nqokomashe, described the situation that prompted her flight from Crossroads: “We were just saving ourselves. My mother was get back from work and then we must get up and run away, there was fighting at midnight, then in the early morning you must demolish your shack, and in the evening, after 4 o' clock you must come and build your house so that you can sleep.”

In Site C, however, “Johnson’s people” received a hostile reception: “Even the relatives wouldn’t take them because they would bring more fights from Crossroads” (Adelaide). Here, in Site C, “community” was something exclusive and suspicious of outsiders: “The people were standing together and knew each and every person in this street. If there is somebody new in this street then they must go and report to the street committee. That is why people come and hide in the forest here.” (Adelaide) The “forest” was the Driftsands Nature Reserve in 1989, located on the opposite site of the N2 from Site C and, at that time, covered with “rooiokrans” trees. There, these refugees formed the settlement of Driftsands.

From its beginnings, Driftsands bore the stamp of Nngxobongwana’s leadership. According to Alice Greenwell’s history of conflict in Crossroads, “[In 1990] Nngxobongwana was away in the Ciskei (his 'Tribal Homeland') at the time, as was often the case when conflict was looming. On his return, hearing his house had been burnt, he went into hiding in the Crossroads town committee offices. Meanwhile, the CPA hurriedly provided an electrified 'site and service' facility for him and his PAC followers at Driftsands an area across the N2 high-way from Khayelitsha.” (Greenwell, p. 35).

Nngxobongwana brought with him to Driftsands both the patronage of elements within the Cape Provincial Administration as well as an autocratic leadership style as a “paternalistic strongman type” (Schelhase cited in Greenwell, p. 38). Development came to Driftsands through Mr Nngxobongwana and in return, he demanded payments from residents: as each stand was provided with a tap and a toilet, and a crèche was built, payments of R 20.50 per month were demanded. These were not administered through local government, but rather collected by Nngxobongwana’s committee, a practice that caused conflict: “Some people could go pay and some people couldn’t pay. Mostly the people calling themselves PAC they didn’t pay, they say they have been paying all this time.” (Adelaide)

Many Driftsands residents talk of being long-time PAC members, and associate the PAC with assistance they received during the conflict in Crossroads. In the words of
‘Ten Ten’ Mwezo: “The PAC is one of the organisations I will never leave, because I was in a mess in PAC and the PAC did save us in Crossroads.” However, this political identity as separate from and antagonistic to Ngxobongwana’s leadership was solidified by Ngxobongwana’s formal turn to the NP and canvassing for the NP in the 1994 election.

The conflict within Driftsands came to a head in 1994, as the area was flooded by heavy rains: “When the people were under water then he chose certain people, though there were people really in need of blankets or food, but because you didn’t vote for NP, then you didn’t get access to facilities that were given from the Tygerberg Administration.” (Adelaide).

Driftsands' residents identifying themselves with the ANC and the PAC expelled Ngxobongwana and some of his supporters from the area: “Community members said that funds collected by Mr. Ngxobongwana, allegedly for development, had been misused and the community had not received reportbacks on development in the area. Residents also complained of policing which showed bias in favour of NP supporters: 'A group of 30 National Party (NP) squatter supporters were allegedly driven out of Driftsands by PAC and ANC supporters’.” (Greenwell, p. 36).

Central to the conflict between Driftsands residents and Ngxobongwana was control over the ‘development’ agenda, and with Ngxobongwana out of the picture, there was a need to fill the political vacuum left by his departure. Zodwa Tika, a member of the Driftsands Residents Association committee, described this process: “After Ngxobongwana had left, then the community called a meeting, so they elect a new committee. It was democratically elected, so it was PAC, ANC”.

Despite the fact that both political parties that were prominent in the area were represented on this committee, during 1995 there was fighting between ANC and PAC supporters that led to a number of the ANC supporters leaving and moving to nearby Green Park. By this time, however, political identities based on strict party allegiance apparently exhausted themselves. Adelaide, an ANC supporter, described her decision to not leave Driftsands, despite the fighting: “I am not PAC, I am not ANC, I am myself. I will not build up this shack again.”

When Zodwa, a PAC supporter, was questioned about the ANC/PAC tensions, she said: “Now we don’t make a big deal.” Adelaide also attributed this to the effect of the 1999 elections: “After 1999 they [PAC supporters in Driftsands] see there is more ANC than they thought, then people are cooling off again.”

The exhaustion of political allegiance as a political identity (and as subjectivity) is linked to the emergence of new forms of civic relationship between the state and the residents of Driftsands. Since the time of the formation of Driftsands in 1990, residents have moved from being effective non-citizens in their own country under Apartheid, to enjoying a number of citizenship rights as expressed in the Constitution of post-Apartheid South Africa. The emergence of this fuller citizenship and the multiplication of points of contact between the state and its citizens (in the form of elections, the Provincial Housing Board, a democratically elected councillor, etc) acted to undercut the politics of patronage expressed both by Ngxobongwana and the rival ANC and PAC power blocs that wished to replace him. Adelaide describes the
contrast: “In previous times, when Johnson went, then nobody else was allowed to go, but now everybody is free to go [to state institutions].”

**Beyond political allegiance: The constitution of community in post-Apartheid Driftsands**

Adelaide, however, went on to complain: “Since now that we’ve got these houses, now people do their own thing.” The fact that she learnt practical first-aid through treating the many people injured in intra-community conflict in the mid-1990s shows how tense the process of constituting the "community" in post-Apartheid Driftsands was. The integration of the residents into a new relationship with the post-Apartheid state happened along two axes: on the one hand, repression acted to limit non-state forms of power, and on the other hand, interactions between organs of the state and the Driftsands residents acted to form a "civil society" within the settlement.

In Crossroads, in Site C, and later in Driftsands, residents spoke of various forms of force deployed by groups within the townships in ways that threatened to undermine the state monopoly on violence that is a key feature of liberal democracy. While some of these incidents were remembered positively – for instance a time when Driftsands residents mobilised to retrieve stolen goods from a known criminal – as a rule residents interviewed were critical of such action, consigning it, at best, to a past era. This corresponds with a changed attitude on the part of the state to vigilante activities: while the Apartheid state typically turned a blind eye to township vigilantes, the post-Apartheid state treats this matter differently, singling out residents engaged in vigilante action for prosecution. As Adelaide explains: “Even if we go as a crowd [to confront a suspected criminal] then one person will be in jail.”

The second aspect to the changing relationship between the state and Driftsands residents relates to the formation of a "civil society" within the settlement. The main vehicle for this has been the Driftsands Residents Association (DRA). The DRA was founded in 1993, and has a committee of 10 people chosen from within Driftsands. While residents spoke of the DRA calling meetings for the "whole community", in practice the work of the organisation is focussed on its executive committee.

Ten Ten Mwezo, one of the committee members, explains: “If there is a problem the committee sits together first and talks about that, and then it calls the community and tells the community, hears from the community what the community says and after that the committee tells them that we were thinking about this and this and this.”

Within Driftsands, however, residents interviewed spoke of the DRA committee in a way that suggests that they accept its authority. In fact, most residents referred to it as simply "the committee". It seems that this authority derives from the effective role that this group has played in the development of Driftsands – the crèche (the only public venue in Driftsands, where community meetings and meetings of various groups are held), the primary school, and the two highly visible food garden projects in the township are all credited as being the work of "the committee".

This authority did not arise 'naturally', though: the first food garden project in Driftsands was started in 1993, and Ten Ten describes this, in a written history of the project, as a "peace garden", which she hoped would put an end to the conflict which
had rocked Driftsands since its inception. This dream was not, however, realised, as
the history related above shows, and the "peace garden" project was not able to move
forward and expand for many years. In the post-1994 era, however, "the committee"
fulfils an important role in that it plays a representative role, allowing the state to
interact with a small, 'manageable' group rather than each individual within the
township.

The housing development process, probably the biggest development project in
Driftsands' history, shows how this representative role was constituted. The decision
to approach the Provincial Housing Board in Cape Town to apply for "RDP houses"
was made by individuals working together in small groups. This is in accord with the
design of the RDP housing policy, which imagines applicants as individuals,
representatives of family units that are allocated houses based on whether they meet
certain criteria (age, number of dependents, etc).

Significantly, Adelaide's description of this phase of development emphasised the
private nature of proceedings: "[They were] silent meetings, little meetings in the
houses." Under pressure from the Provincial Housing Board, the individual
applications for housing were amalgamated into a single development project that
targeted all families resident in Driftsands in 1998.

Each recipient of a house had to pay an amount of R250, apparently in order to
contribute towards the purchase of the land that the houses were built on. This led to
considerable controversy within Driftsands: "There was fighting amongst each other,
swearing amongst each other, and it was really heavy." (Adelaide)

The money was to be collected by the DRA committee, and according to Ten Ten:
“They thought the community committee wanted the money for themselves.” This
expectation is hardly surprising, given the history of Johnson Ngxobongwana's use of
similarly collected money for his own benefit. The conflict over the R 250 payments
did not, however, splinter the community like previous conflicts, and as Zodwa
describes: “There was R250 and so everybody must pay that R250 for the land. Most
of the people didn’t like that, but it was necessary, but we told before in 1998 that
people must keep that R5 every month. Most of the people they didn’t do that. The
community decided that if people didn’t pay that R250 then they mustn’t build that
house. Whether you’ve got money or don’t have money you must pay that R250. It
was a very hard time for the people because they didn’t want to pay that, there were
60 left behind.”

The DRA committee in this case seems to have played a disciplinary role, imposing
the "reality" of the need for R 250 payments (something that is not a uniform
requirement in all RDP housing projects) on the Driftsands community.

The DRA has thus developed to play a two sided role characteristic of "civil society"
organisations: on the one hand it constitutes a conduit and training ground where
residents may express themselves as "political beings", taking forward common
demands and learning about the machinery of state power. On the other hand it plays
a disciplinary role, policing the boundaries of what it means to be a "good citizen"
within Driftsands.
In this way it has ensured that the rule by force and patronage, the approach that characterised the Apartheid era was replaced not by an unformed void, but rather by a notion of citizenship appropriate to citizen-state relations in the "new South Africa". The notion of a citizen must be understood both as a legal concept and also as an expression of subjectivity, a subjectivity that contains within it at least some notion of loyalty to the state and identification with "the nation".

State planners and the members of the DRA committee do not, however, share an identical notion of a "good citizen". Within Driftsands, the responsibilities that each resident carries are expressed not through some individual notion of citizenship duties, but rather through an understanding of their duty as a member of "the community". For instance, on the R250 controversy, Zodwa explained: "Those people we do feel sorry about them because if you stay in a community then there is something that everybody must do something you have to do that because everyone is doing that. If you have no money, you can speak to the people how can I make an arrangement because I have no money now, because we were told that long time ago that we must keep every month R5 or R2 till 2000."

Zodwa's explanation illustrates the complexity of the notion of "belonging to a community" in the context of Driftsands. The "arrangements" that Zodwa talks about are in fact at the core of what makes "the community" a reality for Driftsands residents – these arrangements are a set of mutually reinforcing financial and affective exchanges and obligations that provide a shared dimension to the everyday struggle for life and survival.

The betrayal of citizenship: Neo-liberal punitive policies and Driftsands residents' response

On the 18th of July 2002, the residents of Driftsands were woken from their sleep by the arrival of the sheriff of the court, supported by SAPS and the newly deployed City Police. The sheriff had arrived to confiscate the furniture of residents who owed the Cape Town Unicity money for unpaid water bills.

Zodwa describes the shock that this caused: “It was a surprise, because that time when we built up the houses, nobody came to us and told us listen here, now you’ve got a new house now you pay rates, you pay water. We used to pay water before, but it was only R20 per month, for services.

To the Driftsands residents, the actions of the sheriff seemed arbitrary: those who were targeted weren't the ones who owed the most to the Unicity and residents were left in fear that any of them might become the next target. They were also angry because they had been billed for the water that was used to build their houses. As a result, the first bills they received showed them to be in arrears of hundreds of Rands.

As Zodwa explained: "They just came with an account, and the builders were building with this water then they didn’t tell us [that]. Then when we told them what about the builders, because they shouldn’t use our water because the account must come to us,

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1 Affective labour: Labour pertaining to or exciting emotion or emotive relationships.
then they didn’t care about that because they just sent the sheriff to collect the people’s things. Even the councillor didn’t know about that.”

A close reading of Zodwa's words "they didn't tell us", "we told them", "they didn't care", which were echoed in different form by other members of the community, is revealing in that it presupposes an inclusion, through language, of the Driftsands residents within the population of the state. Zodwa demands of the state that it be transparent from her perspective as a person living in Driftsands.

Ten Ten puts forward a similar demand, focussing on the role of the councillor as a conduit between the Driftsands residents and the institutions of the state: “Our councillor doesn’t visit us, he doesn’t know what we are short of, what we need. It is the end of the year now, we have not seen him the whole year. I wonder what is he reporting when he goes to the council, because he must support each and every one, but what is he reporting for us, he doesn’t know what we want.”

Both Zodwa and Ten Ten are members of the DRA committee, and as mentioned above, their labour as part of that structure has reached in two directions – on the one hand towards the institutions of the state, and on the other hand towards the residents. By participating in this labour and flowing out of this labour, a subjectivity has developed, that is a collective self-identification, a set of notions and practices that describe being a "member of the community" as a mode of life.

Foucault (1993, p. 203) talks of the modern state being founded on the principle of "governmentality", which describes a form of state power based on "the interaction between those two types of techniques - techniques of domination and techniques of the self. [One] has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, [one] has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination."

Barchiesi (2004) summarises governmentality as "the ability of power to 'structure' the citizen's field of possible actions". Foucault (1993, p. 204) points out that this implies a "versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and process through which the self is constructed or modified by himself."

Again, Barchiesi (2004) speaks of deferral: "The [state's] management of popular desires had led to their deferral once 'liberation' became inscribed in the template of successful entrepreneurialism and individualised market competition." Note here the R250 payments for houses – some 60 households did not get a house because they could not or would not pay the R250 demanded. The fact that relatively greater poverty might explain this non-payment was not mentioned by any of the Driftsands residents interviewed – the need for this payment was simply accepted and the ability to meet this payment was deferred to market mechanisms.

A similar process of deferral was observed when residents were asked about their rights to electricity. All electricity in Driftsands' homes is supplied through 'pre-paid' meters that limit the supply based on the household's ability to pay. While the back
and forth borrowing of money to pay for electricity is one factor that binds the community together, resistance to the imposition of electricity charges is fragmented by the ‘technical’ nature of electricity supply and disconnection – there is no way to negotiate, no visible human agent of disconnection, only a switch embedded in a dumb box on the wall. Constant monitoring and high fines (reportedly over R1000) for people found tampering with their meters are used to defend the integrity of the pre-paid system.

The fact that people have attempted to defeat this system, however, points to a contradiction: on the one hand the supposed ‘neutrality’ of money acts to distribute power across many nodes – income sources, the pre-paid pay points, etc. – in such a way as to diffuse and disarm antagonism through aligning the “field of possible actions” (Barchiesi, 2004, p. 16) with the structures of the ‘free market’. On the other hand, Driftsands residents, repeatedly expressed their belief that they had a right to basic services such as electricity, water and housing, and questioned (sometimes hesitantly, sometimes boldly) the deferral of those rights.

In this context, the sheriff's raid constituted a rupture, a dramatically visible betrayal of the promise of citizenship. For if citizenship – the inclusion of each person within the state, with associated rights that flow from that inclusion – was the fruit of 1994, then what kind of meaning could be attached to the sheriff's raid? It is one thing to defer popular desires, it is quite another to negate them entire. Residents' anger spilled out into the streets and several hundred marched to the house of the local councillor, threatening to hold him hostage until the confiscated furniture was returned. After negotiations, the furniture was in fact returned (some days later), but the meaning of the sheriff's raid still loomed large within the minds of Driftsands residents. After all, who would be next?

The question of meaning is crucial because the level upon which it operates is within the subject. If, in the post-1994 era, the coherence (and stability) of Driftsands was built around the development of a new subjectivity (citizenship) – that is a collective process self-identification – then the rupture caused by the sheriff's raid was a rupture within that subjectivity.

The political significance of this rupture within the subjectivity of Driftsands residents is that it potentially signifies a break in the chain of government, a rupture from which expressions of power autonomous from the channels of the state (and its associated 'civil society') can emerge.

Certainly there appears to be a disconnection between the Driftsands residents and the administrative machinery of government. The water and service bills that the Tygerberg administration of the Unicity sends to residents are not seen as informative: residents interviewed questioned the amounts and categories printed on the bills. This is not surprising, since charges and deductions seem arbitrary, made according to policies that are not readily available.

In part, this is due to the incomplete state of policy development in the Cape Town Unicity, where policies inherited from the previously separate administrations have not been unified, but it must be noted that a Debt Management policy (mandating punitive action towards those who owe the Unicity money) was adopted in 2002,
whereas the Indigent Policy (mandating reduced payments for households living in poverty) is still in draft stage at the time of writing. On the other hand, no explanation of charges helps residents pay when they don't have the means to.

Ten Ten explained “We don’t know what to do with these letters, the council letters. I don’t even open them because I don’t know what am I going to do.”

So far the sheriff's raid of July 2002 has been the most visible imposition of the punitive policies of debt management. In November 2002, a confrontation between residents of Lavender Hill and sheriffs trying to evict residents resulted in the physical prevention of evictions and the Unicity council's decision to suspend punitive actions for one week. Soon thereafter, the realignment of the New National Party with the ANC in the Unicity council led to a new mayor, Nomaindia Mfeketo of the ANC, being elected, and the suspension of punitive action against debtors for six months. Even after that six-month moratorium expired in 2003, no new sheriff's raids or other punitive action has taken place – signalling a shift of practice on behalf of the Unicity, if not a shift in policy.

Conclusion: resistance and compliance

The violence of the sheriff's raid was, it seems, a response to the ineffectiveness of the previous punitive policy: water cutoffs. As one resident said about the disconnection of water supplies from debtors: “We just let them switch it off but then when they leave we switch it on again.” As the Unicity reached for new forms of punitive action to impose their 'cost recovery' policies, so Driftsands residents reached back to old forms of community solidarity and struggle (and subjectivity) to resist this attack and allow their lives to go on.

While it is possible to read the impressive ability of Driftsands residents to resist the attacks that have resulted from neo-liberal 'debt management' policies as a symptom of a rupture of governmentality, it seems that to do so would be to go too far. On the one hand, the ability of Driftsands residents to stop further attacks is limited.

As Ten Ten said about final demand notices from the Unicity: “But what can you do, the letters are there, they ask for money”. While resistance has forced a rethink within the Unicity council and administration, it hasn't resulted in a formal policy change, with the result that the respite from punitive actions is likely to only be a 'honeymoon period', probably related to the 2004 and 2005 elections.

Residents interviewed were apprehensive about the future, but could not offer any solutions to their payments crisis. On the other hand, residents repeatedly spoke of the need for political figures such as the local councillor to become involved in further development of the settlement, and the aspirations of Driftsands residents generally seemed to be towards engaging with various levels of government in order to secure the rights guaranteed to them by the South African Constitution. In this way, governmentality re-asserts itself, as aspirations are expressed in terms of a juristic framework held in common by citizens and state bodies. The extent to which the primacy of 'economic laws' over social rights in neo-liberal South Africa will build pressure towards further rupture is a question for the future.
In addition, in residents minds, Driftsands to some extent represents the success of South Africa’s post-Apartheid development policies. The end of the Apartheid era brought stability and houses to the residents of Driftsands, and these were delivered through an administrative system (the housing subsidy system) that is associated with the post-1994 order. The violence of the sheriff confronts the residents of Driftsands and the activists of the DRA as a “broken promise”, yet this is a broken promise within a history of accommodation. As stated above, the question of a rupture in the logic of governmentality is a question for the future, but at this stage, it would seem that there is no political pressure towards rupture from the side of Driftsands residents. On the question of neo-liberal policies, the DRA seems reactive, responding to events as they happen. In this context, the ‘developmental’ programmes initiated by DRA members, such as the crèche and food gardens, appear to exist alongside neo-liberalism, accommodating needs such as childcare and food security without challenging the commodification of residents’ lives. Again, the extent to which such accommodation can contain residents’ aspirations is a question for the future.
Case study 2: Tafelsig

Landing on the Cape Flats
Tafelsig occupies the Southeast corner of Mitchell's Plain, bounded by Swartklip Road to the East, Spine Road to the North, A Z Berman Road to the West and the Wolfagt Nature Reserve to the South. This is an area of about 500 metres wide on each side. It was developed from the early 1980s onwards, first in the form of council rental accommodation, and then from the early to mid-1990s in the form of several self-build schemes.

The effect of these several phases of development is still clearly visible, with residents referring to Old Tafelsig, New Tafelsig, Mitchell's Heights, Lost City, Silver City, and so on. These are all labels chosen by the residents themselves and seldom appear on official maps. Even within the same development scheme, divisions are made, e.g. a raised area of Old Tafelsig is known as 'Die Bult' ('The Rise'), and in people's speech, residents are often associated with the small area of streets near where they live. Given the stable nature of council housing rentals, many residents have lived in the same street, alongside the same neighbours for over 10 years, some for over two decades.

Rampant gangsterism has bred on and reinforced these geographic identities. Depending on who you talk to, there are any number from four up to more than a dozen gangs claiming territory in Tafelsig. The numbers vary because of affiliations between some of the smaller groups and the 'big' (Cape Flats-wide) gangs, affiliations that can lead to Tafelsig being sharply divided at times of inter-gang tension. Groups of youths sometimes label themselves with a name even when not a criminal gang, which makes enumerating gangs even more difficult. What is certain, however, is that gangs make up a key part of Tafelsig's social structure, as discussed in more detail below.

Under Apartheid, Tafelsig was designated as a 'Coloured' area, and the provision of housing was linked to the incorporation of 'Coloured' people into Apartheid's limited 'welfare state'. The stability of occupancy of council rental housing has kept the population of Tafelsig largely 'Coloured', though new housing developments on the eastern side of Tafelsig have accommodated 'African' Black people. The areas focussed on in our research, however, were in New Tafelsig, Old Tafelsig and Mitchell's Heights, all predominantly 'Coloured' areas. This focus was a result of our historic contacts within the area: because the anti-eviction struggle mostly affected 'Coloured' occupants of council rental accommodation, the people we knew were from these areas of Tafelsig, and since trust and in-depth interaction were vital for research to take place, we had to focus our research in these areas.

In describing the dynamics of life in Tafelsig, one might start with the dynamic of displacement: Many of the residents of Mitchell's Plain were forcibly removed from areas designated 'white' under the Apartheid Group Areas Act, and others moved to Mitchell's Plain due to overcrowding and a lack of housing in areas designated for 'Coloureds'. Countering this sense of displacement is a sense of place, of home.

Three areas of Tafelsig were targeted for interviews:
1) The area around Dwarsberg and Olifantshoek Roads, which is the historic centre of the post-2000 anti-eviction struggle. This is an area of mixed council rental accommodation and rent-to-buy houses, and was established 22 years ago (in 1982), making it the oldest part of Tafelsig.

2) The area around Fakkie Street. This is also a council rental housing area, though not as old as the area around Dwarsberg Road. Fakkie Road is also very close to the 'headquarters' of the Americans gang, and the area is a hotbed of gangster activity.

3) Mitchell's Heights, which is a 'self-build' scheme developed some seven years ago.

Tafelsig residents' sense of home should be read against their state as poor people, previously displaced either by racial laws or their poverty. Their economic and political marginalisation makes them vulnerable, and in this climate of threat and vulnerability, their homes are rare islands of stability. Yet, particularly in the period since 2000, these very islands of stability have come under threat: one of the first aspects of the Cape Town Unicity that was visible to Tafelsig residents was its debt collection activity, which resulted in evictions and threats of evictions across the whole area.

In the face of this threatened displacement, Tafelsig residents asserted their right to a home. Joyce Dampies explained: "I'm staying here now for 22 years. Apparently this house belongs to us already because how many years have we paid rent already."

Joyce's argument was based on economics: over the years the rental that she and other residents had paid for the houses had more than paid for the value of their houses. Siyaam Cassiem, however, employed an explanation based on her basic needs: "Where am I going to live if I haven't got a house? I must have a house, I need a house. Nobody will give you a place to live especially if you are not working. In my case I am a disability pensioner and I need this house."

Siyaam's identification of her precarious position is echoed by Linda Bedford's comments about the struggles of people in Tafelsig: "Mense is werkloos, mense het nie inkomste nie, mense word uitgesit, council verstaan nie." (People are unemployed, people don't have an income, people get evicted, council doesn't understand.) And later: "Mense se reg tot krag of water is nie 'n kwessie van of hulle geld het om dit te betaal nie" (People's right to electricity or water is not a question of whether they have money to pay for it or not).

Joyce, Siyaam and Linda's comments should be read in the context of their experience of evictions: in November 2000, the Lategan family that lived just around the corner from Dwarsberg Road were evicted with the help of the police. The dispute over that eviction, which involved the police, the sheriff, local gangsters and other members of the local community, turned violent, with police assaulting Ashraf Cassiem (Siyaam Cassiem's son) and others, leaving Ashraf with injuries that plague him to this day. These evictions arose from the Cape Town City Council's attempt to 'manage' the debt owed to it by poor residents. In fact, acting City Manager Hans Smit told protesters in March 2001 that evictions were a "credit control problem".
Linda's refusal of this discourse is shared by other Tafelsig residents, for example, Cecelia Davids insisted: "We are not animals!", and Siyaam Cassiem said: "Water is a basic right. You must have water. Without it illnesses occur. You can't pull the chain, number one. This leads to health hazards. So water is a basic need."

Certainly, officials in the Cape Town Unicity would disagree with these comments that water is a right, regardless of your ability to pay. The policies adopted by the Cape Town Unicity since 2000 turn citizens into consumers, linking access to services to the ability to pay. Yet in the post-1994 South African Constitution, socio-economic rights (such as the rights to water and housing) are given some protection, leading to a situation where the discourse of rights is ambiguous: on the one hand, it can be recuperated within liberal discourse in legalistic terms that demand that the state is the final mediator of rights. Alternatively, the rights discourse can "sustain solidarity and a sense of morality" (Barchiesi, 2004, p.32) that locates its reference points outside of and against state institutions.

The urgency with which Tafelsig residents articulate a counter-discourse in which to root their rights to a home is understandable if the extreme precariousness of their financial situation is considered. According to research (De Swardt) conducted by PLAAS (Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape) during 2001 in the townships of Khayelitsha and Greater Nyanga, more than three quarters of households (76.4%) fall below the official poverty line of R 352,00 per adult per month. While this research was done in other townships, its finding correlate with our own research in Tafelsig.

This paltry income comes in the form of wages and state grants, and the high unemployment rate in Tafelsig (approximately 70% of adults are unemployed according to a survey conducted by the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign in 2001), contributes to the structure of households in the area: within most households, only a minority of the adults are employed, and wages are thus shared within a family unit.

Where household members are employed, their jobs are often precarious – either short-term contracts or jobs informally arranged via relatives and friends, liable to cease at any moment – and as a result the family home remains a refuge, a fallback in times of need. This dynamic is strengthened by the fact that low-income housing is scarce in Cape Town (Cape Town's housing backlog was estimated at 300 000 people, growing at 60 000 people a year in 2003, and RDP subsidy housing is only available to adults with dependents).

Siyaam, like many others, depends on her state disability grant for survival. Like Salima Lamara in Mitchell's Heights, she worked in the textile industry before being forced to stop working due to a heart problem. While the state disability grants of R740 per month are clearly inadequate to support a household, they are a more stable source of income than formal employment. Between 1993 and 1998, some 644 837 jobs were lost in South Africa (Bhorat, 2001). PLAAS's study showed that the trend continued: in 32% of households studied the main breadwinner lost his/her job during 2002.

A study done by the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign in 2001 showed that the unemployment rate in Tafelsig is about 70%. Employment is thus an increasingly rare
and increasingly precarious source of income for Tafelsig households. Even when formal employment is the main source of household income, it is often spread over a larger household size than in the case of state grants. As a consequence, Joyce Lopez's household still survives on R200 per person per month. A third source of income is employment in the informal sector: there are a number of 'house shops' in Tafelsig, where goods (typically basic foodstuffs, sweets, cigarettes and other household items) are traded out of people's houses. The profitability of such ventures is, however, impacted on by the poverty of Tafelsig residents.

De Swardt found that the average household income was R212 per person per month, with 50% of all households having less than R167 per household member per month to survive on. In contrast, rent and bond payments are often over R200 per month, and in Mitchell's Heights, repayments for building materials are often over R500 per month. A trip to the Mitchell's Plain town centre, the location of the nearest supermarket, costs R6.

As a result of this mismatch between income and expenditure, residents interviewed spoke of the need to borrow to make it through the month. In the context of persistent poverty, however, debts are difficult to repay, and constitute part of a 'poverty trap'. Siyaam spoke of her entire disability grant (which averages out at R185 per household member per month) being spent within a few days of receiving it every month, paying monthly bills and repaying accumulated debts. For the rest of the month she is dependent on her neighbours for survival. As a result, maintaining a friendly relationship with the people on her street becomes, for her, a vital task.

The work of maintaining relationships is a form of affective labour. Affective labour involves the creation of communities and collective subjectivities, and is a form of labour that has traditionally been associated with women. Jobs categories such as nursing, telesales and personal assistants, historically dominated by women, involve labour whose primary product is a relationship or a feeling of well-being. In the domestic sphere, the unpaid labour of housewives is also a form of affective labour, and in our research a number of the women interviewed described themselves as housewives. For example, Joyce Dampies describes herself as follows: "I am a humble and I like to help everybody where I can help them. I am just an ordinary housewife."

Many of the women also described themselves in terms of the ways they managed their affective relationships. For example, Cecilia Davids said of her role in her family and with neighbours: "I am the problem solver of the family… I wouldn't say that I am a leader in the area but people always come to me if there is something wrong. People look to me." She goes on to describe how this role has grown over time: "First I had to convince them [people in her area] to trust me because it is not everybody that tells you about their problems."

Dawn Damons who described herself as 'a good housewife and mother' explained: "Ek is lief om anders te help, soos mense wat minder bevoegte is, met jong kinders te verkeer, te gesels met hulle … Ek is 'n mens wat lief is om die deel en geselskap." (I love help others such as those less fortunate, to care for young children – talk to them … I am a person who loves sharing and conversation.)"
In Tafelsig, two roles of the 'housewife' are made especially significant by the precariousness of everyday life: the management of household finances and the affective labour of maintaining relationships with neighbours and 'the community'.

Managing the domestic economy
As described above, most households in Tafelsig are extremely poor. The management of expenditure and income within the household is therefore a vital, complex and time-consuming task for the survival of the household. Furthermore, concerns of the household budget inform much of everyday life in the area.

Linda Bedford painted a vivid picture of the complexity of managing the precarious household income: "Daar's baie mense wat eintlik swaar kry hier. En ek myself kry 'n incomste, my een seun wat hy verdien is net 'n R150 'n week, en my ander seun hy betaal net 'n board en dit is nie elke maand wat ek dieselfde kry nie and dan lewe ek net van my disability. En daar is party keer dat ek nie can cope nie because ek moet na moneylenders toe gaan en dan moet ek gaan leen daar geld en as die einde van die maand gekom het dan betaal ek weer uit dan is dit net die selfde probleem dan sit ek net weer waar ek gesit het." (There's actually many people with difficulties here. I myself get some income from my one son who earns only R150 a week, and my other son only pays board but I don't get the same amount from month to month, then I just live on my disability grant. And there are also times that I can't cope and I have to go to moneylenders and borrow money. Then when the end of the month comes I have to pay that out again, then it's just the same problem again and I'm sitting in the same position again."

As can be expected based on the extreme poverty of Tafelsig residents, all households surveyed stated that the highest proportion of their monthly budget was spent on food. In most cases, energy (either electricity, or in the case of residents in the informal settlement of Freedom Park, candles and paraffin) was rated as the second highest monthly expense.

An interesting pattern was noted where households with relatively higher income listed rent and water payments high up in their spending priorities, whereas poorer households listed those as a lower priority. Many poorer residents elaborated by explaining that they were unable to pay their full bill, and paid "what they can".

Those with relatively higher income also more often noted various forms of credit repayment as an expense. Items bought on credit included clothing (especially clothing for children, school uniforms, etc.) and furniture.

Most households interviewed mentioned borrowing during the month in order to pay for food and other basic necessities such as pre-paid electricity and taxi fares (transport costs). These loans take two forms: in the case of Mitchell's Heights residents, there is a mobile shop that services the area, and sells goods on credit. The assumption made by the shop is that credit is offered 'till pay day' or till state grants are paid. In other cases, loans are made from other members of the community. These are also typically of a short-term nature, with the assumption that they will be repaid in a matter of days or weeks, when money comes in.
In-kind sharing of basic necessities – like rice, sugar, etc. – is very common in Tafelsig. As Linda Bedford explains: "As ene nou kom by my en hy se hy het nie dit en dit nie en ek het nie iets om te gee nie, dan voel ek baie sleg." ("If someone comes to me and says they don't have this or that, and I have nothing to give them, I feel bad.") And Joyce Dampies said: "Anything, what they ask, if I got, I give, I share." This sharing, and the cash borrowing between neighbours and relatives, to some extent escapes the bounds of strict accounting. Each individual's 'credit rating' in terms of how much people are willing to lend or give them, is determined not just by their ability to repay, but also based on previous generosity and their location within a network of 'affective relationships'.

The ability to meet basic needs through sharing is, however, limited and Tafelsig residents are dependent on cash income for their survival and well-being. Most households surveyed consisted of more than one adult and a number of children, and in most cases the adults were related. Often three generations were sharing the same home, with the authority as head of the household residing in the oldest generation (the grandparents).

Within the household the status of "the family" as a social unit confronts the figure of the "wage earner". The dynamics of family life involve negotiation between the "management of the household" and the wage earners' "private income". This negotiation often has both generational and gender dynamics, which are conditioned by the image of the nuclear family, with a father-provider and a mother-housewife. In both cases, the underlying tension is between the division of the wage between personal and household income. In this regard, women (typically the older woman in the household) play a vital role, as "the mother" or "housewife" and the one who is responsible for ensuring that the basic needs (food, water, etc) of the household are met.

Women, as "housewives" and "mothers" are often called on to negotiate the tension between this idealised role of a family and the reality of daily household arrangements. In some cases, they can call on other family members. Joyce Dampies spoke of the role that her sisters played in resolving tensions in their respective households: when a problem arose between a child and the parents in one household, an aunt might be called in to intervene and mediate: "Some of my sisters is my children's godparents, and if I have a problem in the house then we go to them and they come into a room and say: 'What's your problem?' Wherever there is people sick or there is a death in the family then the call me to watch them.

In many cases, however, family are geographically scattered across the Cape Flats and even beyond, and the cost of transportation effectively isolates residents from their extended families. As a result, a number of women interviewed spoke of a sense of isolation, of trying to deal with the tension within their households with no support. In some cases this manifested as recurring arguments where pressure was exerted for family members to "fit the mould" of received norms. At other times certain family members – in two cases people with a history of mental illness – were pointed out as "problem" people.

Despite being "problems" because of their erratic behaviour, these mentally ill household members also were a resource to the household since they were entitled to
and received a disability grant. State disability grants and pensions are a significant source of income in Tafelsig, since they provide a stable source of income. This income is, however, at a very low level (R740 per month), and those families that relied entirely on a state grant for their source of income were notably poorer than families where there was at least one person with a job.

Having exhausted all sources of income in the form of sharing, wages or state grants, one final way open to those managing household income is the non-payment of debts. As previously noted, food is both the most important spending priority and also the biggest item in household budgets in Tafelsig. Other items – transport, schooling, etc – are paid for in so far as money is available.

In this list of priorities, payments towards debts are not just a lower priority than payments towards current essentials, but these payments are also qualitatively different in that they are a payment which, if reduced, contributes to the household income without detracting from the benefits in terms of goods or services.

If the payment of debts can be deferred, or debts somehow written off, the household will simply be better off, since debts relate to goods that already have been consumed by the household. The management of these debt payments (and 'illegal' connections) are a form of management of household income (a task which, as was noted above, is primarily undertaken by women).

**Life strategies and collectivity in Tafelsig**

The management of debt payments (and 'illegal' connections) highlights the fact that money exists not merely as itself (coins, notes, etc.) but as a social relation. In other words, a debt, or poverty (the absence of money) itself, expressed in terms of money, is a reality that becomes objective in so far as it is given validity by social processes. Put simply, it is the fence around the bakery that enforces hunger, and the wall around the bank that enforces poverty. In so far as the poor residents of Tafelsig employ non-payment of debts and 'illegal' connections as a strategy for managing household income, they challenge the imposition of the rule of money as a social relation.

As Siyaam Cassiem said with regard to 'illegal' connections: "I feel it is right. They must do that because there is always circumstances to things … because people are unemployed and council doesn't want to understand people's situations and circumstances, so people do that and I agree with it."

The specific nature of the debts that families in Tafelsig owe bears commenting on. The poorest residents are not able to access any private sector credit, and thus owe money for state provided basic services such as rent for housing and payments for water. Those able to access some form of consumer credit owe money for clothing and furniture. To a greater or lesser extent, however, all families in Tafelsig have debts that arise from acquiring the basic necessities of life. Within a capitalist society, the 'basic necessities of life' are not simply consumed for the benefit of those people doing the consumption – in so far as the people of Tafelsig manage to survive, it is to live another day as potential workers within capitalism. In other words, consumption by Tafelsig's residents reproduces the people who live in that township as labour power, a commodity that is purchased by capitalists.
Ironically, then, the people of Tafelsig survive not just for themselves, but also to be the builders, machine operators, fisherpeople, domestic workers, shop assistants, etc. of the South African capitalist economy. In doing the tremendous labour that goes into the process of meeting the needs of survival is labour that is provided 'for free' to the economy. The provision of 'basic services' (and indirectly, the provision of social grants, education, etc.) by the state is a subsidy to the reproduction of labour power for the economy, and the reduction of such services from the side of the state results on a higher burden of reproductive labour being placed upon poor households in Tafelsig.

The sheriffs and water disconnection teams that moved into Tafelsig with increasing frequency from 2000 onwards were putting the established strategies of managing the household economy – and thus in a broader sense the life strategies of poor households at risk. As was noted above, women, in their role as "housewives" and "mothers" play a crucial role in managing Tafelsig domestic economies. They were thus at the forefront of those impacted by punitive "debt management" policies imposed by the Cape Town Unicity Council.

Mass meetings of the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign (the only community organisation active in Tafelsig according to most residents interviewed) are typically composed mostly of women. While the Tafelsig AEC has moved through waves of strength and weakness since its foundation in 2000, at times of mass mobilisation it has also been mostly composed of women activists. At the same time, the public spokespeople of the Tafelsig AEC have always been men, and while some women I interviewed who had also been activists in the Campaign complained about the lack of report-backs from prominent male comrades, they had not responded by trying to achieve similar status as spokespeople or leaders. In part this appears related to their additional domestic responsibilities: as “mothers” they bear the brunt of managing the maintenance of the household (including washing, childcare, cooking and resolving household disputes) on a daily basis. Women are also sometimes actively excluded from participating in ‘activist’ spaces, with one woman activist relating how a male activist called her ‘stupid’ and refused to share knowledge with her on ongoing activist issues.

In interviews with residents, it became clear that what provided the momentum for people to get involved in the Tafelsig AEC was the threat that neo-liberal strategies posed for their strategies of survival. However, as pointed out above, non-payment of debts is only one amongst a number of sources of household income that the poor of Tafelsig rely on, and the management of the household involves the "mothers" of Tafelsig – precisely the same group that numerically forms the basis for political mobilisation – in extensive reproductive labour that limits their ability to be full-time activists. Many of the vital tasks that reproductive labour entails – such as waiting in line at a clinic in order to get medical attention for a sick child, going to buy goods at a shop – take place in spaces where people are marshalled and made subservient. In these spaces resistance has not yet taken a visible form.

The previous section has described the labour that goes into managing the household economy. However, as pointed out in that section, household economy relies not just on sources of income, but it also relies on the management of relationships between
household members and with the wider community. The labour of managing such relationships is called affective labour – and once again, women largely undertake it.

**Churches and mosques, bureaucrats and gangsters**

When quizzed about the roles that she plays for her neighbours, Joyce Dampies mentioned that she washes the bodies of the dead. If someone dies in the neighbourhood, people turn to "Antie Joyce" (Joyce Dampies) to wash the deceased's body before burial. While this service apparently crosses barriers of church denomination and religion, it is probably not incidental that Joyce is a respected figure in her church (the Anglican Church). Joyce's case is not the only example of religion transferring attributes to the realm of interpersonal relations: Cecelia Davids is the only Muslim from a historically Christian family. She reported being called on to deal with issues when frankness and forcefulness was required, and expressed a feeling that her Christian sisters were more restrained due to the influence of their church. In her opinion: "Christians are less involved in fighting."

The difference between Muslims and Christians in Tafelsig expresses itself not just in different religious values, but also in terms of a different engagement with religious institutions. The majority of residents surveyed identify themselves as Christians, and belong to one or other church. These churches are hierarchically structured, with numerous volunteer groups (such as prayer circles) constituting a community out of the church's membership. In early 2004, the Tafelsig AEC drew on this style of organisation as part of an organising drive, as teams visited households potentially facing eviction to provide moral encouragement. The Muslim residents had a much more individual relationship with their religious institutions – they reported visiting mosque for prayers, but didn't belong to any institutionalised religious community. As a result, on a day-to-day basis they do not encounter the disciplinary effect of such religious institutions.

In a case similar to Cecelia's, Siyaam Cassiem reported that her neighbours valued her ability to deal with state beaurocracy (for instance, the Council rent office). In this way, a sharp tongue, which might be a liability when trying to keep the peace with neighbours, can become an asset in the right circumstances!

Cecelia Davids' forcefulness also comes to bear in her relationship with gangsters in around Fakkie Street. Tafelsig is an area notorious for rampant gangsterism, and the headquarters of the Americans gang is just down the road from where Cecelia lives in Fakkie Street. Fuelled by poverty and desperation, alcoholism and drug abuse are rife. Gangs recruits come from teenage boys, and gang income comes from the lucrative drug trade, as well as local property crime such as robbery and muggings. In Fakkie Road, however, Cecelia confronted local gang leaders and established an agreement that local residents would not be victimised: "If there is a problem then we solve it. Sometimes there are people breaking into people's houses and then I want to know: 'What are you doing there?' … I know exactly who to talk to … When I go out my eyes are focussed on them [the gangsters], I know exactly who is robbing the people. … Before I got to the police, I tell them [the gangsters] exactly what we wanted. If we want the community to stand together the I tell them."
In return, the police would not be supplied with information on gang membership and activity. This attitude of condoning gangsterism is easy to understand when one considers that many residents have a negative perception of police due to the use of police to support evictions and service disconnections, and the high incidence of police brutality in the township.

The situation in Fakkie Street is in remarkable contrast to that in Mitchell's Heights. Mitchell's Heights is a much more recent development than the houses around Fakkie Street, only having been built some 7 years ago. Residents there perceived gangs as 'invading' their neighbourhood (Fakkie Street is a few hundred metres downhill from Mitchell's Heights), and organised a neighbourhood watch to patrol at night. The blurred line between youth culture and gangsterism is emphasised by the fact that one Mitchell's Heights resident talked about keeping her daughter indoors to ensure that she doesn't mingle on the street corners with "gangsters".

This brief summary of relationships in Tafelsig attempts to illustrate the multiplicity of relationships that residents are implicated in. This multiplicity of relationships acts to break down the notion of community as identical with a geographical neighbourhood. For instance, people often belong to churches that are outside of Tafelsig. Or they might not recognise the shebeen (illegal alcohol sellers that often also are drug merchants) next door as a neighbour (in a strange way these "unacceptable" neighbours simply vanish from the map of the neighbourhood). Extended family bonds stretch across the Cape Flats and beyond.

**Conclusion: strategies of life, strategies of resistance**

Life in Tafelsig is characterised by grinding poverty, with ill health and hunger due to poverty a common occurrence. Violent crime and the lack of access to the means to make a livelihood (a permanent job or other means of subsistence) further contribute to the precariousness of life in the township. As a response to precariousness, residents have evolved survival strategies that rely on careful management of the household economy, including managing relations between members of the household (who are most often family members) as well as the social management of credit (borrowing from neighbours and non-payment of debts to the Council).

Women, as "housewives", and "mothers", are historically responsible for the management of the household economy. In the context of rising unemployment, this role becomes increasingly important. The Unicity Council's attempts to force payment of services from 2000 onwards have drawn many of these women into a political struggle over service charges and arrears. Their involvement in this struggle is, however, mitigated by the need to manage a number of relationships, not just those that relate to geographic neighbours, in order to ensure the survival of the household. It is also mitigated by the fact that when the council, sheriffs and police back off, there are other pressing household concerns to take care of, which take time away from organising communities and activism, as Joyce Dampies describes: "The main problem is people just want to sit there. When there is a big problem and the council comes they want to jump up and down. That's the problem."

Many of the residents interviewed had been involved in the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign at some time or another, but mostly as supporters, not as activists. Even
those who did see themselves as activists were often drawn back into the private domestic sphere due to the constant need to work just to keep head above water.

In this environment, the continuity of the Tafelsig AEC relied on a few individuals who closely identified themselves with the Campaign (and in turn identified the Campaign with themselves). These individuals are mostly male activists who, without the time-consuming responsibilities within and 'geographic bond' to the household, are able to move about and organise across communities much more effectively. The 'affective relationships' these few individual activists are able to build and draw on from outside Tafelsig, also come to serve as a means of improving their 'credit rating' within Tafelsig. This is similarly described by Rebecca Pointer (2004) as being a basis for the shape of the leadership struggles in the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign: "The arrival of "outsiders" in Mandela Park, also served to entrench particular power structures, as the people that "outsiders" predominantly interacted with came to be seen as having more legitimacy."

While the resistance that sparked the Tafelsig Anti-Eviction Campaign was animated by the strategies of life that had been developed by Tafelsig residents, these strategies of life don't consistently transform into strategies of resistance. In the words of one activist, resistance is "organised by the sheriff", drawing on a reservoir of anger and solidarity that is embedded in the fabric of everyday life, but largely only drawn on in times of crisis. The same subjectivity that brings women into confrontation with the state, also confines them in the household and in their role as 'housewives' once the crisis is over.
Case study 3: Vrygrond

A long history

Vrygrond is an area of newly developed RDP houses and shacks, located in Cape Town. Before the development of housing in the area, Vrygrond had been an informal settlement since the 1930s, with the number of people living in the area increasing substantially from the 1960s, leading to the formal recognition of the settlement in 1970s. In the period from 1970 up until 1990, the residents fought against a series of forced removal initiatives that were undertaken under the broad umbrella of the Apartheid regime. As the density of development in the area increased, the so-called coloured townships of Lavender Hill, Steenberg, Seawinds and Coniston Park were built to the north and the north-west of Vrygrond, and the formerly white suburb of Marina da Gama was built to the west. The result of this development was that, by the early 1990s, Vrygrond was restricted into an area of about one square kilometre between Seawinds to the North, Drury Road and the Capricorn business development to the South, Marina da Gama to the West and the municipal dump and sewerage works to the East.

As Apartheid ended, the prospect of forced relocation faded. The post-1994 period saw the first housing development in Vrygrond, with different community structures (in particular, the local SANCO and ANC branches and some churches) coming together to form the Vrygrond Community Development Trust in 1996. This Trust worked with local NGOs (in particular the New World Foundation, a development organisation with vaguely religious links based in Lavender Hill) and government to promote housing development.

The process of housing development in the area was, however, marked by considerable conflict. One early source of conflict was the nature of housing delivery: under post-1994 national housing policy, the main vehicle for housing delivery to those in informal settlements is RDP housing. In this scheme, qualifying families (families who have never been allocated a house by government before, and who have dependent children) can access a one-off grant. In a scheme such as the Vrygrond one, this grant is then used to pay a building contractor to build a house. Because this is a small grant, the resulting houses are very small - typically a combined living area/kitchen with a single bedroom and a tiny toilet/shower. The indirect and profit-based nature of housing delivery often means that cheap, low quality building materials are used, and houses are sometimes handed over in an incomplete state (no ceilings, no electrical wiring, etc.).

Besides the conflict over the quality and number of houses and the nature of the development process, another area of conflict was the allocation of names on the waiting list for houses. In this regard, local political leaders often formed part of a patronage network, allocating spaces on the list in exchange for loyalty or even cash payments.

These sources of conflict led to considerable strife and division within the Vrygrond community, with 1999 seeing the assassination of three leaders of the local ANC branch, and many people involved in the development process receiving death threats.
It is with this in mind that the situation in June 2002 should be understood. At that time, the last of the houses in the housing development had been built, in an area known as "Phase 6". On the "road reserve" - the area of land people had been moved to while awaiting houses - there were about 80 shacks. When it became clear that the final houses would be allocated without their involvement (and in some cases allocated to people from outside of Vrygrond), the residents of these shacks, with the encouragement of some community actors, occupied the houses that had been built in Phase 6.

The Cape Town local government (in the form of the South Peninsula Administration) responded by delivering summonses for urgent eviction on some 145 household just before Christmas 2002, as described by Themba Menze: "On the 4th of December [2003] we were summoned. Then we were stressed because we didn't know what to do, so we ran to Yvonne Baard [a well-known social worker in the area]. And we called them [the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign] and then they promised us they would come to help us." This led to the involvement of activists from the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, and the formation of the Vrygrond Anti-Eviction Campaign in January of 2003.

Besides the Vrygrond Anti-Eviction Campaign, at the time of our research (April-June 2003), community organisations were almost non-existent in Vrygrond. The Vrygrond AEC was thus built through a process of organising from zero. It holds weekly meetings attended by between 30 and 100 residents. In March 2003, the Vrygrond Anti-Eviction Campaign spawned a related organisation, the Vrygrond Action Committee, to take up broader issues related to residents of Phase 6 and Vrygrond in general. In practice the Vrygrond Action Committee functions as a name under which some of the core activists of the Vrygrond AEC operate when they do not want to be associated with the antagonistic politics of the AEC.

Apart from the Vrygrond Anti-Eviction Campaign, our research has identified a number of self-help projects, including two sewing groups and a number of street cleaning committees. Also, there are a number of organisations tied to NGOs operating in the area, in particular the Vrygrond Community Development Trust and the Vrygrond People's Forum. Both organisations, despite their names, are led by non-residents. The only political party that seems to operate in Vrygrond is the African National Congress, and even this party does not hold regular meetings in the area.

**Isolation and fragmentation**

As the focus of this part of our study, we sought to uncover the social and economic landscape which Vrygronders interact with and occupy. We also tried to get to grips with the roles that different people play in the community, based on their own "self-definition" and the definitions or identities they ascribe to others in their community.

Our work in Vrygrond Phase 6 began with a clear incursion against the formal economic system already having taken place, i.e. the occupation of newly-built RDP houses in response to disputes over the allocation by the South Peninsula council of housing in the area. The activity of occupying RDP houses may be seen as "the
immediate use of accumulated wealth, outside and beyond the logic of the labor process" (Negri, p. 198).

In Vrygrond, however, this incursion is not articulated in terms of neo-liberal policies, the economic system or the legal system, but mostly in terms of the fact that housing allocation was riddled with corruption and also in terms of their 'historic entitlement' to houses due to having lived in the area for some time. One of the main ways this historic entitlement is articulated is through a myth or narrative that Count Labia, who once owned the land, left the land to the squatters of Vrygrond in his will. This myth does not only "express, but conditions" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 157); it determines intensive conditions of the system in conformity with thought and practice (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 157).

Having occupied the houses, a new history is opened, as Themba Menze (a Vrygrond resident and activist) said: "These are our houses. We will never, never go out of them." Pronouncements by state officials (such as the judgement of the Cape High Court in the eviction case) are read through the lens of this narrative, either confirming the resistance of the "Phase 6" residents or contributing to a sense of confrontation between the state and residents.

It was common for residents interviewed to talk about Vrygrond's existence "since 1929". Regarding the land that has been used to develop the Capricorn Business Park and the Pick 'n Pay shopping centre in the area, many Vrygronders feel that the land was theirs and they do not acknowledge the right of council to have sold this land off to developers. They are also unhappy that money from the sale of this land never reached Vrygronders, but some members of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust allegedly benefited personally from the sale of this land. The narrative of Vrygrond "since 1929" is one that interweaves the history of the township with a sense of historic injustice the demands action. Again quoting Themba: "If you go to Gugulethu, there are schools, but nothing is happening here. How can that be in a place born in 1929?"

Since 2002, action has followed upon action in "Phase 6". The original action in appropriating housing has gone on to inform issues such as access to water and electricity. Most households in Vrygrond Phase 6 do not have running water or electricity, because Cape Town Unicity Council refused to connect these services after the houses were occupied. Therefore, water is accessed by digging up water supply pipes and directly tapping into them, closing off the pipe with a twist of wire when not in use. Sewerage is handled through a system of bucket toilets, and disposed of in holes dug in the sandy soil. Light and heat is still mostly provided through candles, paraffin and wood burning, but Vrygronders have already begun a programme of demanding electricity from the Cape Town Unicity Council. Alongside the actions of those who occupied houses have been actions from other Vrygrond residents – in early 2004 (after the period of interviews in Vrygrond), a piece of vacant land in "Phase 6" was occupied by Vrygrond residents who had previously been staying in the "backyards" of houses through Vrygrond.

The process of RDP housing delivery operates within the neo-liberal paradigm. In contrast to council rental accommodation, RDP houses are developed on the basis of subsidies allocated to individual families. These subsidies are one-off payments, and
thus the house allocation is a one-off transaction, after which maintenance is assumed to be paid for by the new owner. Thus, RDP housing operates as a form of restitution for the historic injustices of Apartheid, rather than a permanent social safety net. Furthermore, houses are assumed to be "starter homes", and the process of developing these tiny dwellings into family homes is expected to occur through individual initiative.

The theoretical framework surrounding the RDP housing policy is thus clearly in step with the neo-liberal trend towards minimising the role of the state in service delivery. Secondly, the fact that responsibility for further development is left neither with the state nor with communal organisations, but rather rhetorically situated in the hands of individual homeowners, can itself be seen as an intervention on the terrain of subjectivity. A map of Vrygrond illustrates this fact in graphic detail: rows of streets with RDP houses are already on the map. Spaces for communal facilities remain blank, supposedly left open for later development. The flow job-wage-house-improvement finds for itself a geographical home. Other flows remain rootless.

As to Vrygrond residents' awareness of other township dwellers' response to neo-liberal policies: we found it striking how little people we interviewed knew about struggles outside of Vrygrond. The lack of access to media - people cannot afford newspapers, typically lack access to radio and TV, and the free community newspapers which exist in Cape Town are not distributed in Vrygrond - may explain some of this. Another factor is the low media profile of other social struggles. In general, however, the sense is that Vrygrond, in the minds of those interviewed, exists as an isolated terrain of struggle.

This isolation is also geographic. Public transport out of Vrygrond is expensive, and the cost of travelling to and from another township area is on the order of R20 - about 1/30th of a typical household's monthly income. This isolation may perhaps also be attributed to the lack of presence of community organisations. Such organisations could, through contacts beyond Vrygrond, serve as conduits for news and information. Despite the fact that Vrygrond is a largely ANC-voting area (to the extent that in the past other political parties have had difficulty campaigning in the area), the local ANC presence is weak, with no evidence of regular meetings. In the course of the struggle over the occupied houses, the Vrygrond Anti-Eviction Campaign has developed links with the umbrella Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign. That organisation is itself resource-starved, and does not have established capacity to spread news from one area to another besides through person-to-person contact.

It must also be noted that even Vrygrond residents' active in the Vrygrond AEC often do not see their involvement as that of "political activists", but rather as a response to a crisis in their lives. In the words of one resident: "When you are in a bad situation you always do your best, but when you are in a good situation you forget that."

When interviewing residents, those residents who have been at the forefront of the Vrygrond Action Committee most often broke this pattern of focus on the local. Godfrey Tromp, the person most often identified (incorrectly, since he holds no formal title) as the chairperson of the Vrygrond Action Committee, described himself when interviewed as "an activist". His activism in Vrygrond grew not only out of his
personal circumstances (as on of those who occupied land in 2002) but also out of his background as a trade unionist within CEPPAWU (the COSATU-affiliated chemical workers union). Indeed, he has continued to play a major role in the Vrygrond Action Committee even after the destruction of his shack by the council forced him to leave "Phase 6". Amongst activists, the role of the ANC as a training ground is apparent – most are current or previous ANC members, and sometimes previously held positions of responsibility on the committees of ANC structures. In the words of one activist, "I was born in the ANC". Politicisation received in the ANC translates into a greater awareness of state structures (e.g. the composition of local government) and struggles in other townships.

The role of formal political organisations should not, however, be interpreted simply in terms of greater political knowledge or "consciousness". Often the personal and the political blur as personal aspirations merge with larger political projects. As Themba explained: "I was born an ANC … I was born a slave. … When things came our way, when tables were turned, then nothing like we wanted happened. … I am still living like this and now I am almost going to die. Am I going to leave my kids to live like this? This is what I easily am afraid of, because I want to die a happy man." Political consciousness, and the narrative of the liberation struggle against Apartheid, interweave with the everyday relationships of family and everyday relationships.

Finally, a word needs to be said about the relationships that form the basis for Vrygrond township life. When examining these relationships, however, "what counts is not parental designations, nor racial or divine designations, but merely the use made of them" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.77). It is in these relationships that the flows of goods, energy and activity can be noted.

The flows that are immediately apparent in Vrygrond can be categorised as follows:

1) Neighbour networks act as vital resource sharing structures. People mentioned borrowing and lending candles, paraffin and food - all basic essentials of life.

2) When asked how they found work, most people mentioned the role of friendship networks.

3) When asked about the role of family, a number of people responded that they look to their families for "spiritual guidance". When asked, they clarified this by saying that their family (typically in the sense of extended family) provides guidance to them about the choices that they should make in their lives, on a "spiritual" as well as practical level. Further research is necessary to understand this role of family structures.

These relationships point to the fact that in the day-to-day life of Vrygronders, flows do not centre around state structures but around neighbourhood, friendship and family networks. It is these groups and relationships of those "residing in the same area, or in neighbouring areas" that "shape concrete reality" to a great extent (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 147).

As noted above, the confrontation between the state organisation of housing and the actions of the "Phase 6" residents also acts to structure this "concrete reality". Around the event of this confrontation, flows are re-engineered. The court case around evictions created a common purpose between residents that overlaid everyday reality. The residents of "Phase 6" came from different places – Steenberg, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Gugulethu, etc. – yet here in Vrygrond, in the face of the court case,
they all became "defendants". Yet none of the residents adopted the terminology of the courts in defining themselves, rather in their words they were people who suffered and people who struggled.

But people in Vrygrond also acknowledge the effect that "outside" activists have had on the shape of struggle in Vrygrond: "The first thing that Ashraf said, that Peter said, that Bin Laden said [Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign activists], the thing we are going to do now is not easy. We all need to unite. If we unite we will achieve everything."

The "unity" that activists (both those drawn from within Vrygrond and the organisers who came from "outside") sought in Vrygrond has been an ephemeral one. In the course of struggle, there has been unity between Vrygrond residents, but interviews showed that there was no "natural unity", no sense that the "community" maintained a large relevance for residents outside the context of struggle. Some residents expressed great bitterness, saying such things as "Vrygrond is a bad place" in response to the high level of crime that they experienced in the township. Other residents are not only perceived as a source of support, but also sometimes as threats, as in the case of the resident who related how she was robbed, and explained that she suspected a person living a few doors away of the crime.

The experience of life as a poor resident of Vrygrond obviously is also one of frustration. After explaining how he had learnt a bit of German from an employer, one resident related: "I am trying to get on with the world, but am denied to go where I can be, or reach, you know." This frustration is no doubt what fuels, to some extent, the high level of alcoholism reported in the area. Getting to grips with the subjectivity bred in Vrygrond also means getting to grips with the tension between residents who drink and those who don't.

In terms of received morality, drinking excessively is seen as a unjustifiable, but in the words of one resident who described themselves openly as "a dronkie" (a drunk), "people who go to church seven days a week are double weak than the drunks." Adherence to the morality of churchgoing was seen as hypocrisy, especially since it involved excluding "the people who are drinkers": "I will always drink. You can never be with people who are drinkers when you are not a drinker. You have to be like them, so that you can think like them while you know you are thinking better than them."

This final sentence expressed a common trait uncovered in Vrygrond: the feeling of being apart, navigating the relations between people while never being drawn in by them. In Vrygrond, one resident noted "there is no community, we still need to make a community". Here there is no readymade subject, no "member of the community" simply waiting to be mobilised. Themba Menze described his own relationship to other Vrygronders: "A lot of people look at me and they say never mind because he's got a big scar and he's always drunk. It's not just that. When you are nice the people are cooperating. When you are dirty the people are complaining. I really don't know whether they really want me..."
Conclusion

In Driftsands and Tafelsig people often talked of the sense of community that bound them together. While that sense of community expressed elsewhere sometimes serves to unite people, it also maintains the existing power relations and hierarchies of those communities. This sense is not apparent in Vrygrond, and it has led to some anxiety, both within the Vrygrond Action Committee, and structures of government. Under pressure from government departments such as the Department of Social Services, the VAC has tried to build a ‘unity’ amongst political actors in Vrygrond to allow there to be a single representative structure for the community. Here the reality of the community as a unit of government becomes apparent: the existence of community representatives also allows government to call on those representatives to police ‘their community’. Thus far, however, initiatives towards ‘political unity’ have failed.

Yet alongside the fragmentation and suspicion that was sometimes evident amongst Vrygrond residents there is a kind of canniness, a willingness to move with eyes open to all possibilities. In this regard, political activity in Vrygrond benefits from the lack of a community, in the sense that a community is a structure that has closed boundaries. This lack of closure allowed the rapid establishment of the Vrygrond Action Committee in “Phase 6”, and also allowed for a form of political practice based on a multitude of actors rather than a single authority. In the future the VAC and other political actors in Vrygrond will have to navigate the challenges of this reality, dealing with pressure to create a ‘representative image’ of Vrygrond at the same time as relating to the challenge of the de-facto independence of Vrygrond residents from their political control.
The Research Programme: Theoretical Underpinnings

The research programme we have initiated is centred around our observation of struggles within Cape Town over the last three years or so: one of the key things noticed in these struggles is the recurrence of seemingly spontaneous resistance to evictions and other attacks on the basic necessities of life in poor township communities. We call this resistance "seemingly spontaneous" because it has broken out in areas where no formal political or community organisations exist. Even where these organisations do exist, their role has often been to demobilise resistance, rather than intensifying and supporting it. The scale of this resistance - with dozens, or sometimes even hundreds, of residents challenging the power of the state to enforce evictions, service disconnections, etc. - suggests that something powerful is being tapped into here. This "something" is a form of non-state power, a power organised not by the organised institutions of the state, but organised along some other lines.

Those "other lines" are informal relationships - between neighbours, friends, within family groups, and along them flow various exchanges. The initial nature of those flows is often different to the use to which these channels are later put: sharing food and basic necessities with neighbours might establish channels that conduct flows of information and knowledge. In analysing these flows and channels we are not, however, trying to conduct some kind of survey of "informal organisation", as if these relationships, once enumerated, explain resistance. Instead, we hope to understand how those flows converge together to create specific power relations and to channel that power in new directions. Furthermore, we sought to understand both how these power relations are useful to resistance and how they are dangerous – ultimately hampering or blocking resistance. These power relations are expressed in terms of:

- what actions are valued in the community and who undertakes those actions;
- how and where decisions are made, who makes those decisions and who sees to it that those decisions are carried out; and
- who speaks on behalf of community members both in community meetings and outside the community.

A premise of our research programme is that initiative towards resistance is rooted in subjectivity. By subjectivity, here, we mean processes of collective self-identification, of notions and attitudes that are developed through everyday interaction. This category includes attitudes towards "good" or "bad" behaviour, expectations, aspirations, hopes, dreams, fears. In particular, we are studying the 'objective' practices of people and communities as an expression of subjectivity or subjectivities.

In discussing subjectivity we are trying to create "a narrative of community through which the multitude can be expressed" (Barchiesi, 2003). Here Franco Barchiesi points towards the possibility of multitude - a term borrowed from Negri that expresses collective creativity (or creative collectivity) which is never reduced to a single-minded "mass organisation", however "democratic". We are further attempting to provide a description of the terrain in which different communities and subjectivities exist and to highlight some of the dynamics that propel communities into particular courses of action. The "objective" relationships we are trying to unearth are powerful to the extent that they get filled not just with flows of things, but the flows of desire which "cut(s) across the interest of the dominated, exploited classes, and cause(s) flows to move that are capable of (...) setting continents ablaze."

(Deleuze and Guattari, p. 105.)
With regard to subjectivity, we would further argue that there is not one subjectivity, but a multiplication of subjectivities on both an individual and community level. It is not possible, in a study like this one, to uncover and discuss every single aspect of subjectivity. Therefore we have chosen to confine ourselves to a study of two kinds of subjectivity that emerged again and again in our interactions with communities and individuals in those communities. They are:

1) **Definitions of self that fall outside the capitalist realm of just "reproducing a worker", but which organise and structure individual, relationship and community practices and alliances in particular ways:**

These definitions of self act as social codes which quantify and qualify the roles individuals and groups are expected to play and, therefore, the flows of energy and activity within society. These encoded flows express the limits or boundaries of permissible activity: "a code determines the respective quality of the flows passing through the socius." (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 247.) In interpreting these relationships, we are not attempting to examine only a structure, "but a practice, a praxis, a method, and even a strategy." (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 147.)

These definitions of self are reflected in the histories, myths and narratives that people tell about themselves and their communities: "... what is called history is a dynamic and open social reality, in a state of functional disequilibrium, or an oscillating equilibrium, unstable and always compensated, comprising not only institutionalized conflicts but conflicts that generate changes, revolts, ruptures, and scissions (...) far distant from the stability, or even from the harmony, attributed to them in the name of a primacy or unanimous group." (Deleuze and Guattari, pp. 150-1.)

When examining these histories, the purpose is not simply to collect stories, but rather to uncover the themes that emerge when we examine a number of histories in relation to each other. We would argue that these histories are recordings of subjectivity; the emergent themes articulate particular intensities marked on individuals and communities. In other words, what kinds of information do people articulate as being significant in forming who they are and how their community exists? In the telling of narratives what particular issues are perceived to be important? These intensities are created not just out of personal, individual experiences of emotions such as happiness or stress, but also through interactions with others and the social field. These histories are "crisscrossed with axes and thresholds, with latitudes and longitudes and geodesic lines, traversed by gradients marking the transitions and the becomings, the destinations of the subject developing along these particular vectors." (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 19.)

2) **Incursions by communities and community members into 'the system' (i.e. formal economic and legal system):**

This includes such things as using workplace resources for personal or community gain and accessing resources such as water, electricity or housing by 'illegal' means - appropriation. Negri (1991) calls these appropriations - where "there is no longer an exchange between labor and capital" - 'self-valorisation': "when the working class no
longer valorizes for capital" (p. 196), but instead acts against capitalism's quantifying "axiomatic of the market" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 241) - the despotism of exchange.
In Conclusion

The three locations we studied – Driftsands, Tafelsig and Vrygrond – differed in a number of aspects in terms of the history of the community, the reason for its establishment, the different 'racial' categories residents were classified into under apartheid, the length of time residents had lived together, etc. The forms of subjectivity, the notions of community, and the uses to which these notions were put in terms of life strategies, correspondingly differed in the areas being studied.

In Driftsands, the notion of community is one that has arisen out of nearly two decades of violent struggle, first in Crossroads and then in the current location of Driftsands, next to the N2. The questions of who has a right to belong and who has a right to make decisions on behalf of the community have been hotly contested, often in the form of physical struggle between rival factions. The transition from the imposition of autocratic rule by the Apartheid government to engagement with the institutions of post-Apartheid democracy was instrumental in defusing the conflict within the community. After 1994, the residents of Driftsands experienced the process whereby they moved from being mere subjects of the Apartheid state to citizens of post-1994 democratic South Africa. With citizenship came a certain engagement with the state, and an expectation that certain rights would be fulfilled – the right to justice in the face of violence, and social rights such as the right to housing. Yet when the sheriffs and police arrived in 2002 to confiscate goods, a certain understanding of citizenship was betrayed.

Residents of Driftsands expressed their notions of community in terms of a series of promises – the promise of unity, the promise of consultation between all, the promise of having a voice and the promise of the rights of citizenship. Of all the townships being studied, Driftsands has benefit most smoothly from the development that accompanied the end of Apartheid, with the period since 1994 seeing a school, crèche and houses being built. Yet even here, residents seem, to some extent, to contest the citizenship that 1994 brought. For instance, by freely reconnecting water that had been disconnected in the period between 2000 and 2001, residents expressed an understanding of their rights that didn't look for its justification to courts of law and state institutions. The explosive actions of July 2002 suggest that the residents of Driftsands, while embracing their identity as citizens of the new democracy, are maybe not entirely happy citizens of the new order.

In contrast to Driftsands, Tafelsig was established during the Apartheid years, from about 1980 onwards. Its residents, classified as "Coloured" by the Apartheid government, enjoyed certain rights that were denied to the "African" residents of Driftsands. This doesn't mean, however, that they were wealthy – the residents of Tafelsig have always been poor people, relying to a large extent on services (and grants) subsidised by the state. In the context of this poverty, they have over the decades developed neighbourhood networks (established as each housing development was built) and life strategies that try and mitigate the poverty in which they live. These life strategies rely to a great extent on the labour and experience of women, the "mothers" and "housewives" of Tafelsig who are largely responsible for managing the domestic economy. The imposition of neo-liberal cost-recovery policies by the Cape Town Unicity from 2000 onwards threatened these life strategies, particularly the strategy of non-payment of bills.
Women were at the forefront of mobilisation against state attacks, but they seldom took on the role of full-time activists, leaving that role to (largely unemployed) men. The burden of "reproductive labour" in the townships falls unequally on women, and as a result they are drawn into a multiplicity of forms of "affective labour", managing the various relationships that are essential to the survival of the household. When the attacks from the state ended, so too did the mass involvement of women in political activity. When not "organised by the sheriff", Tafelsig seems to possess little political organisation at all.

Vrygrond as a township is considerably smaller than Tafelsig, yet the pattern of fragmentation by area is to some extent shared. In the period since housing construction started in 1998, six phases have been constructed, and people to some extent identify themselves with these geographic divisions. Other divisions, largely based on ethnicity and place of origin (Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Cape Town urban areas), run deeper, however. As a result, Vrygrond has much less of a "sense of community" than either Tafelsig or Driftsands. While, like in the other two areas, residents rely on neighbours for support, the divisions between different groups are marked, and generate a considerable amount of suspicion. The common purpose imposed on "Phase 6" by the fact that residents there "illegally" occupied houses, and the resultant court case, is unusual when considering Vrygrond as a whole. To some extent, however, the awareness of Vrygrond residents of the "lack of community" puts the process of how a community is constituted in the foreground, something that is lacking in the other townships studied.

All the townships studied did, however, have a few common elements. In all three areas, poverty was extreme, with high levels of unemployment. Where people did have jobs, the jobs were often uncertain and of short duration. As a result, life, for most people, is precarious, and good relations with neighbours can form a support structure to fall back on in hard times. As mentioned above, the construction of such good relations is often women's labour. This is a form of labour that is double invisible: on the one hand, it is not counted in the capitalist economy since it is done for free. On the other hand, it is made invisible by men – men often only listed other men when asked about events and actors in their local area. Maybe it is exactly the invisibility of this labour, and the social relations that it builds, that led to the Unicity underestimating the resistance it would receive from trying to impose neo-liberal policies on seeming "depoliticised" townships.

Having said that, it is however, clear that there is no repository of "community" or "resistance / insurgency" that somehow existed buried out of view in township subjectivity. In all cases being studied, "community" was a term that both included and excluded, a term that was at times crucial to residents' understanding of themselves, and at other times frustratingly powerless in speaking about township lives. Resistance – or as some commentators called it "insurgency" – was similarly not an absolute. At the same time as the imposition of punitive "cost recovery" policies on basic services sparked mass resistance, residents, especially those of townships (Driftsands and Vrygrond) without a history of access to basic services, also built institutions whose aim was to engage with, rather than oppose, initiatives of the state.
Our research has shown that the relation between the subjectivity of township residents and the political expression of residents' demands is not a one-sided one. On the one hand, as policymakers and bureaucrats have discovered, the residents of Cape Town's townships are a stubborn lot, who do not take the imposition of neo-liberal policies lightly. The outrage and solidarity that has greeted punitive expeditions from the side of the state travelled lightening-fast between neighbours and between townships from 2000 onwards. On the other hand, the identification with a particular geographic area, a particular set of neighbours, and a particular household acts to fragment solidarity and breed suspicion. In the context of grinding poverty, access to state resources is an everyday concern for townships residents, and that concern often transforms into allegations of corruption that might have more to do with perceived unfairness of resource allocation than any specific law-breaking.

The same people whose constant contact with neighbours provides an amazing network for transfer of information and 'intelligence' within the townships might at other times be forced into being insular by concerns within their local family that are not shared outside the household's walls.

It is because of the tendency towards turning inwards, focussing suspicion at local "problem neighbours" and posing problems only in the specific local form that they take, that the influence of "outside" contacts continues to be relevant. By saying this we are not agreeing either with those who see struggle as the result of 'outside agitators', nor with those who see the need for 'revolutionary consciousness' to be imported into township settings. No, the outsiders we are talking about are those who bring stories, experiences, ideas that allow those engaged in struggle in one location to see beyond the local features of their struggles (particular 'corrupt individuals' and particular local institutions) by drawing analogies with struggles in other locations and times.

In the course of this research, however, there were clear instances of notions of community and neighbour being used in an exclusionary way. These ranged from racism amongst some residents in Tafelsig, to the way in which certain "unacceptable" neighbours became invisible to the way Vrygrond residents complained about foreigners owning houses in the area. One might say in these instances (following Deleuze and Guattari) that the option remains open for life strategies of the poor to be neurotic, that is to seek stability by closing off possibilities. In this regard, Paulo Virno's warning is apt: "If we look carefully, we see that danger consists of a horrifying strategy of salvation" (Virno, p. 34).

As mentioned in the discussion of Vrygrond, the government's housing policy, despite protestations that they are "building neighbourhoods", tends to reinforce the atomisation of neighbourhoods into family units that are thrown back onto their own resources for survival. In Tafelsig, this tendency is visible in the charges that are imposed for use of the Community Centre – it now costs hundreds of rands to use the centre for an afternoon, as a result of the Unicity policy of making the Centre 'self-sustaining'. In Driftsands, the crèche that doubles as a community hall only exists due to the remarkable organisation of the Driftsands Residents Association. One aspect of the imposition of neo-liberal market discipline is that "common spaces" have to justify themselves in the language of the market. Almost all free space on the
Vrygrond plan is marked as being either for a crèche or a church – two forms of utilisation of space that rely on the financial support of their members.

Common spaces and transverse links – the stories and experiences that migrate between different locations – have been a vital part of the organising of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign. In examining the subjectivity that underlies the struggles that gave birth to the WC AEC it is clear why these features have played a vital role. Within the physical meeting halls, and by means of migration between townships, local experiences are transformed into a common struggle. What is seldom recognised, however, is the extent to which subjectivity also requires transformation – through a process of building relationships across perceived and geographic boundaries. This transformation of subjectivity, the building of trust and a new notion of being that includes being-together, is a form of affective labour. And, as is mentioned above, affective labour (traditionally "women's work") is often invisible labour within our society, a form of necessary work that is undervalued.

Defending common spaces, enabling migration between different areas and the affective labour of building the relationships that can inform a new subjectivity – these are all parts of the puzzle of moving from the existing resistance "organised by the sheriff" to a broader resistance that isn't merely against one injustice, one outrage, but is aimed against the system that perpetuates outrage after outrage day after day.

And thus in the end we wish to return to the beginning – what has inspired this paper has been the resistance against the imposition of neo-liberalism in Cape Town. To know the circumstances that determined that resistance is no small problem, and certainly not one reducible to the history of organisations. As participants in these struggles, we sought to go beyond "[c]urrent writing [that] points to the potential of these struggles, but does not expose how again and again spaces are closed down, organisation is centralised and hierarchy emerges in the new spaces as we create them. Without a coherent study of the operations of power in these struggles, we cannot begin to grapple with methods for shifting those power relations; we cannot confront what we refuse to see." (Pointer, 2004)

As activists, we have immersed ourselves in many different struggles across Cape Town. In this journey of immersion, questioning, reflection our own subjectivity and self-narratives have been interrogated often, over turned often. We came to this research project convinced that we would find at least some glimmer, some articulation of "insurgent subjectivity". Instead it seems that only a tangle of strings – poverty, suffering, debt, family relations, notions of citizenship and rights, generosity, fear, uncertainty, etc. – forms what we call 'solidarity'.

While, as Guerra Sociale (2000) put it, our own "solidarity is not with the misery, but with the vigor with which men and women do not put up with it."

As activists, this solidarity means immersing ourselves in struggles, but always honestly, always with open eyes. In that regard, this research is intended as a beginning, a sketch towards understanding the determinants of an insurgent attitude. Above all, this process is one we intend to share with others.
References


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