

PRODUCING PRIVATIZATION,
RE-ARTICULATING GENDER, RACE, CLASS AND SPACE

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ABSTRACT

Moving away from approaches that cast privatization as a policy that impacts on social relations, this paper conceives privatization as a socio-spatial process. It develops a feminist historical materialist method to theorize the forms taken by waste management privatization in Johannesburg. Privatization is revealed as a material and ideological process which dialectically shaped, and was shaped by, the articulation of race, class and gender at the interrelated scales of the nation, the city and particular places within the city. Focusing on how privatization is produced in and through spatialized social relations illuminates avenues for struggle hidden from view in both aspatial, ideal-type feminist political economy analyses as well as approaches inattentive to the mutually constituting nature of gender, race and class.

KEYWORDS

Privatization; feminist method; gender, race and class; South Africa

“The purpose of theorizing...is to enable us to grasp, understand, and explain – to produce a more adequate knowledge of the historical world and its processes; and thereby to inform our practice so that we may transform it” (Hall, 1988, 36)

Over the past several decades feminist theorists have developed important insights into the intimate relationship between neoliberalism, privatization and exploitative gender relations. In her groundbreaking study Diane Elson (Elson, 1991) established that structural adjustment policies enforced in third world countries are “male biased” as they rely on the exploitation of unpaid female labour and often do not achieve their own objectives due to their failure to acknowledge gendered divisions of labour in the household, community and labour market. In more recent studies of transformations in advanced capitalist economies a range of scholars argue that that the realignment of the boundary between the public and the private is fundamental to neoliberal state restructuring (Bakker, 2003, Brodie, 1994, Fudge and Cossman, 2002). As the public/private boundary is constituted by, and constitutive of unequal gender relations (Pateman, 1988) it is forwarded that privatization and the neoliberal state are profoundly gendered (Brodie, 1994). Drawing on R.W. Connell’s (1987) argument that every state order rests on a gender order¹ these scholars conclude that the shift from the welfare state to neoliberalism requires a transformation in the gender order which is both material and ideological – material because it erodes the family wage model and dramatically alters the gendered terms on which citizens access rights from the state, and ideological because the development of new understandings of gender are integral to the forging of a new common sense that facilitates and normalizes these transformations. This new gender

order entails both an erosion and intensification of gender, as the conditions of some men and women converge, whilst simultaneously differences between women increase (Bakker, 2003, Brodie, 2003). Although the relationship between race, gender and class is not adequately theorized, it is noted that race and class influence how the boundaries between the public and private are redrawn and how different women are affected by privatization (Bakker and Gill, 2003, Brodie, 1994, Brodie, 1997, Fudge and Cossman, 2002).

This literature provides critical openings to explore the ways in which privatization, neoliberalism and exploitative social relations produce one another. However, its ability to do so is limited by its inattention to issues related to the production of space and its general method of analysis. Writing in isolation from geographic debates these scholars take space as neutral and passive, and there is no acknowledgement of the Lefebvrian (1991) insight that privatization, space and social relations may play a role in producing each other. Their method of analysis either remains at the level abstract theorization or at most focuses on the content of policies, and does not meaningfully engage with concrete instances of privatization. The concept of gender order therefore serves as a Weberian ideal type that homogenizes social relations across space. As the gender order is seen to be the outcome of the ways in which policies are framed there is little sense of how it can be disrupted or transformed other than through policy changes.

In order to develop more nuanced insights into how exploitative social relations and privatization dialectically produce one another it is, therefore, necessary to employ a more processual, grounded and geographical method. In “Ontology, Method and Hypotheses” Bakker and Gill (2003) outline some key aspects of a non-economistic

feminist historical materialist method for analysis of privatization and neo-liberalism. This paper builds on their insights by more explicitly developing the fundamental elements of such a method, foregrounding the mutually constituting nature of gender, race and class, and establishing the need to incorporate a theorization of the production of space. It moves beyond Bakker and Gill's abstract theorizing regarding method and uses the method developed to theorize the privatization of waste management in Johannesburg, South Africa as part of the *iGoli 2002* municipal restructuring process. Rather than simply providing yet another example of how privatization deepens gender inequality and transforms an ideal-type gender order the paper demonstrates the ability of this feminist historical materialist method to generate new theoretical insights regarding the nature of privatization as a social process. It is argued that these insights can only be developed by engaging in detailed analysis of the production of a specific, concrete instance of privatization.

Although *iGoli 2002* simply mandated the conversion of the city's waste management departments into a private company, empirical research revealed that privatization had taken multiple and varied forms in different parts of the city. The paper takes this differentiated concrete reality as the end-point as opposed to the starting point of analysis, and interrogates the social processes through which it was produced. This approach reveals that the privatization of waste in Johannesburg is a material and ideological process which was shaped and formed by the articulation of race, class and gender at the interrelated scales of the nation, the city and particular places within the city, and which dialectically transformed these social relations and the places and scales which they helped to constitute. As the hegemonic normalization of these changes needed to be

constantly produced the analysis reveals that privatization was inherently ideologically and materially unstable and open to contestation. A processual theorization of privatization therefore illuminates avenues for struggle which are hidden from view in aspatial, ideal-type feminist political economy analyses.

The stakes in developing and adopting this method are therefore political as well as theoretical. SAMWU and IMATU, the two major municipal unions in Johannesburg adamantly opposed *iGoli 2002* in bargaining meetings and backed this up with a number of strike actions. Throughout their mobilization they focused on the content of the plan and its adoption in virtually unchanged form was a major defeat. Since then the unions have engaged in little action against *iGoli 2002*. This can partially be attributed to the SAMWU local's hesitancy to oppose the ANC, which governs the Johannesburg Council and with whom it is in alliance. However, it also stems from the unions' implicit theorization of anti-privatization struggle which focused on preventing the implementation of the plan. A more processual approach rooted in an understanding of how the privatization envisioned in the plan is actually produced opens up new sites, scales and forms of struggle which could be employed to undermine *iGoli 2002's* reproduction, even whilst it remains official Council policy. For example, as will be elaborated below, an appreciation of the role that a national bargaining council outside of the municipal sector, a provincial government poverty alleviation programme, and the actions of ward councilors played in creating the particular forms taken by the privatization of waste in different parts of Johannesburg identifies new and important targets for union engagement at scales above and below that of the municipality. Insight into how privatization is produced differently in different parts of the city emphasizes the

need to move away from uniform campaign strategies. Perhaps most significantly, the acknowledgement that privatization is predicated on a material and ideological re-articulation of race, gender, class and space foregrounds the need to identify and mobilize around the particular interests and contested constructions of different types of African men and women workers. Strategies and tactics that see gender as irrelevant or of secondary importance, such as those currently employed by the unions (and Johannesburg-based social movements), are unlikely to succeed. This method similarly reveals the inadequacy of theoretical approaches dominant in South Africa (and elsewhere) which continue to falsely separate out gender from race and class and ignore its centrality to social processes.

In order to develop these arguments the paper begins by providing an overview of the complex form taken by waste management privatization in Johannesburg. It then develops a method adequate for the task of theorizing how this concrete form of privatization was produced. The next section employs this method to explore and theorize the privatization of waste management in Johannesburg. The paper concludes by highlighting the implications for theory and practice which arise from this approach.

THE COMPLEX FORM OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PRIVATIZATION IN JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg's *iGoli 2002* plan is widely acknowledged as the most radical instance of municipal privatization and market-oriented restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa. The profoundly undemocratic process through which the plan was developed and adopted has been documented by Barchiesi (2001), Beall et. al. (2002) and

the Johannesburg Council itself (City of Johannesburg Council, 2001). Despite numerous strikes and strong opposition from unions and social movements the plan was endorsed by Council and came into effect on January 1, 2001.

iGoli 2002 implants market logic into the heart of the municipality. According to the plan, “[t]he challenge is to transform the current bureaucracy into a business approach because the city is a ‘big business’” (Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 1999, 6). As part of *iGoli 2002* Council was hollowed out to a rudimentary skeleton. A minimal number of Council functions were identified as “core administration” and kept in-house. This administration was marketized, with some parts acting as clients and others as contractors. A number of council departments, such as the gas works, were identified as non-core and sold to the private sector. The remainder were transformed into either utilities, agencies or corporatised entities (UACs). The UACs are private companies with the city as sole shareholder. They are differentiated from one another on the basis of their ability to generate profit, with utilities deemed capable of being financially self-sufficient and profitable (Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 1999, 20).

Waste management was targeted for transformation into a utility. On January 1, 2001 the Johannesburg Council created the largest private waste management company in Africa when it converted its waste management departments into a company called Pikitup (www.pikitup.co.za). The municipality contracted Pikitup to provide all waste management services for which it bore constitutional and legislative responsibility.² However, research conducted in five of Pikitup’s eleven depots in 2002 and 2003 revealed that in each depot area a complex and unique configuration of actors was

providing waste management services that were the formal responsibility of Pikitup (see Table 1 for detailed information on the depot areas and associated service providers).

Table 1 – Pikitup Depot Areas

Depot	Description of Area	Municipal Waste Management Service Providers
Selby	Central business district and inner city	Pikitup, 3 third party contractors, 3 CIDs
Norwood	Wealthy, formerly white suburbs such as Houghton and Norwood	Pikitup, 4 third party contractors, 1 CID in the Rosebank business area
Zondi and Central Camp Satellite	African township of Soweto	Pikitup, 8 third party contractors including black economic empowerment companies, Zivuseni Provincial Public Works Programme, volunteer initiatives
Avalon and Poortjie Satellite	African informal settlement of Orange Farm, coloured township of el Dorado Park, Indian township of Lenasia	Pikitup, 9 third party contractors including black economic empowerment companies, volunteer initiatives in the townships and informal settlement
Marlboro	Wealthy, formerly white suburbs such as Sandton, African township of Alexandra	Pikitup, 7 third party contractors including black economic empowerment companies in Alexandra township, 1 CID in the Sandton business district, volunteer initiatives in the townships

Pikitup was the main provider of waste management services in each depot area. However, each depot subcontracted other private companies (known as third party contractors) to provide trucks and drivers as well as temporary workers. Some depots also subcontracted private companies to provide collection and street cleaning services. Black owned companies were only contracted to provide services in African informal settlements and townships as part of “black economic empowerment” initiatives. Utilization of third party contractors was extensive, accounting for between 17.6% and 41.8% of depot budgets.

Additionally in each area providers neither contracted nor paid by Pikitup also provided street cleaning services, even though Pikitup was contracted to do this. In formerly white business districts these initiatives took the form of city improvement districts (CIDs) funded by local businesses. By contrast in the townships volunteer campaigns co-ordinated by ANC ward councilors and in the case of Soweto, a provincial poverty alleviation project called Zivuseni cleaned the streets.

The question therefore arises as to how to engage theoretically with the concrete reality of these differentiated forms of privatization. As Marx and Engels argue starting our theorization from the empirically observed leads to a “chaotic conception of the whole”, as rather than being an ontological given, the concrete is, “the synthesis of many definitions, thus representing the unity of diverse aspects. It appears therefore in reasoning as a summing up, a result, and not a starting-point...” (Marx and Engels, 1976, 141). We are, therefore, forced, “always to ask the question of every “thing” or “event” that we encounter: by what process was it constituted and how is it situated?” (Harvey, 1996, 50). We must also simultaneously seek to, “understand the ways in which different

parts of an organic whole relate to one another,” or “inneract” with each other (Ollman, 1976, 16-17). Rather than taking these existing forms of privatization of waste in Johannesburg as a given, the foundational research questions pertain to how and why privatization came to take the particular complex form observed and how it was maintained and reproduced. In order to answer these questions it is necessary to develop a method adequate to this task.

A NON-ECONOMISTIC FEMINIST HISTORICAL MATERIALIST METHOD

Within a non-economistic historical materialist approach three inner-related elements are central to analyzing the processes underpinning particular instances of privatization. These include analysis of social relations, ideology, and the production of space.

Marx establishes that nothing is objectively or naturally given. Everything, including privatization, is constituted through social relations and “[t]he relation is the irreducible minimum for all units in Marx’s conception of social reality” (Ollman, 1976, 14). In classical Marxist literature class relations are presumed to be of over-riding importance. However, as black feminists have established race, class and gender are formed in relation to one another (Combahee River Collective, 2000, Davis, 1983) and the processes of class formation are inherently raced and gendered (Hall, 1980, Scott, 1988). It is difficult (indeed impossible) to separate out race, class and gender as they are lived simultaneously (Combahee River Collective, 2000, 267).

Through his useful concept of “articulation” Stuart Hall reminds us that the specific ways in which race and class (and though not mentioned by Hall, gender) are articulated change and transform over time. Rather than assuming these relations and their relevance

to particular processes, historical materialist analysis must interrogate the “concrete historical ‘work’” that race, gender and class and their specific configuration perform in each conjuncture (Hall, 1980, Hall, 1985). Arguably we must also interrogate the ways in which this specific articulation transforms the content and meaning of race, class and gender. Any exploration of privatization must, therefore, examine whether and how the particular articulation of race, class and gender shape the form and nature of concrete processes of privatization and how privatization transforms this articulation.

Attention to the content and meaning of race, class and gender highlights the crucial role that ideology plays in producing, maintaining and destabilizing material processes. As Meikins Wood (1996) observes, economistic approaches which cast the superstructure as a mere effect of a discrete, material base are rooted in a fundamental misreading of Marx, as the separation of base and superstructure exists only at the level of appearances. The material and the ideological should rather be seen as different moments or aspects of a complex unity (Marx and Engels, 1976).

Building on Marx and Engels’ insight that every ruling class must represent its interests as the common interest Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony to explore how this is done. Rather than being confined to the realm of ideas hegemony is “lived, habitual social practice”. It is relational and must be constantly produced (Eagleton, 1991, 115). As such it is an “unstable equilibrium” constantly open to contestation (Hall 1980, 52). Analysis which seeks to understand how a concrete instance of privatization was formed must therefore interrogate the contested processes through which it is normalized. Such an approach opens up key avenues for understanding slippages, gaps and openings through which it can be challenged and potentially displaced.

The final element crucial for an historical materialist analysis that can help to illuminate privatization as a complex social process is attention to how privatization is rooted in and related to the production of space. Building on Marx's argument that nothing lies outside of the social, Lefebvre (1991) argues that space too is comprised of social relations. Massey (1994) highlights that as space is social and comprised of social relations it is necessarily gendered. Gender assumes different meaning and content in different places, and these different genderings become constitutive of the places themselves. Although Massey does not foreground race within her analysis her approach highlights the importance of interrogating how the production of space articulates with gender, race and class in the processes which produce privatization.

In doing so it is important to be clear on how space is delineated and defined for the purposes of the particular study of privatization being pursued. Although research focuses on a particular place delineated for the purpose of a particular analysis it must not be limited to analyzing social relations contained within that place as each place, "includes relations which stretch beyond – the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside" (Massey, 1994, 5). It is, therefore, necessary to explore how processes at other scales are present within, and influence those in the place being studied. As Gillian Hart's method of relational comparison makes clear, it is also essential that such a study explore how the form taken by privatization in one place is inner-related to the form taken by privatization in other, connected places as, "it is through clarifying how these relations are produced and changed in practice that close study of a particular part can illuminate the whole" (Hart, 2002, 13-14). By analyzing the related processes through which multiple forms of waste management privatization

emerged within different parts of Johannesburg the remaining sections of this paper therefore seek to develop a more complex understanding of privatization within Johannesburg.

PRODUCING WASTE MANAGEMENT PRIVATIZATION IN JOHANNESBURG

It is crucially important to locate any analysis of waste management privatization in Johannesburg within historical perspective. The utilization of third party contractors was not a Pikitup innovation. Rather, the Pikitup depots inherited most of the contracts from the municipal waste management departments, which started subcontracting private companies in the 1980s (Barchiesi, 2001, 36). The primary attraction of third party contractors was that they were excluded from the effective scope of coverage of the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC) and so could pay workers lower wages and benefits than the municipality and Pikitup³.

Most workers doing collection work for private companies were covered by the Road Freight Bargaining Council (RFBC), whose 2003 agreements provided minimum wages 59% those of the SALGBC.⁴ The vast majority of third party contractors were established, white-owned companies, some with links to multinationals. However, in the early 1990s service delivery in the informal settlement of Orange Farm was contracted to the “Entrepreneur Development Programme” of Billy Hattingh and Associates.⁵ As part of this programme locally based entrepreneurs were contracted to service different parts of Orange Farm. Each entrepreneur was to drive the collection truck him or herself and hire workers to do loading and streetcleaning. Couched in the language of black economic empowerment this model capitalized on a provision of the RFBC agreement

that exempted workers employed by owner-drivers from coverage. A similar initiative was pursued in Alexandra township (although in Alexandra some contracts went to larger companies who were technically required to comply with the RFBC agreement), and in Soweto owner-drivers were contracted to provide trucks and drivers. As a result, most of the African workers employed by these “empowerment” projects were not eligible for the minimums and protections of the RFBC agreement. That the contracts with black companies were limited to townships underlined the spatially delimited notion of empowerment during this period.⁶ The construction of townships as places for the creation of a black entrepreneurial class resulted in the production of spatialized differences in rights and benefits between African workers employed by different kinds of companies. The reproduction of township spaces, a black entrepreneurial class, and a disenfranchised group of African workers were therefore intimately bound up in one another as part of this particular form of privatization.

By contrast, street cleaning workers were not covered by any bargaining council, regardless of which kinds of companies they were employed by or which part of the city they worked in. As there is no minimum wage legislation in South Africa, in the almost complete absence of unionization amongst these workers⁷ third party contractors could unilaterally determine their wages.

The absence of a national bargaining council for streetcleaning workers and the selective coverage of collection workers based on the clauses of the national RFBC agreements therefore created the conditions which allowed third party contractors to undercut municipal/Pikitup wages. The policies and practices of national institutions

therefore had profound implications for privatizing strategies within Johannesburg as they created the incentive for using third party contractors.

The differential coverage by bargaining council agreements was rooted in the production and institutionalisation of racialized gender relations within the waste management labour market and national bargaining processes. In order to trace back these influences it is necessary to explore the production of both the waste management labour force in Johannesburg and the labour market institutions which oversee conditions of employment in the sector.

Gendered and Racialized Production of the Labour Force

As in many other apartheid-era urban areas Johannesburg's waste management labour force initially had been comprised of contract male migrant workers from the homelands working on renewable, yearly contracts. Chiefs in different areas were contracted to provide workers for specific types of work, thus replicating the apartheid segregation of different groups into homelands in the urban workplace and extending the power of chiefs into urban areas. The contract migrant labour system therefore played an important role in producing the homelands as supposed places of origin to which African workers were tied whilst working in the city. In Johannesburg waste management workers were drawn from the amaBhaca group (Interview, P. Mashishi, 11/09/2003; Interview, J. Mawbey, 03/05/2004). Persaud argues that the forging of a labour force is intimately bound up with constructions of race, ethnicity, gender and colonial practices (Persaud, 2003, 13) and indeed the association of waste management work with the amaBhaca became foundational to how both were defined. To this day when people in Johannesburg

refer derisively to waste management workers they call them amaBhaca, even though the majority of waste management workers now come from other ethnic groups.⁸

The range of people employed in waste management expanded after a 1980 strike when large numbers of workers were dismissed and replaced by African migrant workers from other ethnic groups as well as locally based Africans. The formal demise of influx control in 1986 further facilitated a shift towards employing locally-based workers (Interview, P. Mashishi, 11/09/2003; Interview, J. Mawbey, 03/05/2004). Given the racist construction of the apartheid labour market (Webster, 1985) it was virtually unquestionable that the workers employed to fill these low-skilled, devalued, “dirty” jobs would be African.

However, these shifts away from a clear association between place, ethnicity and work opened the way for the employment of African women already residing in Johannesburg in the previously all-male waste management sector. Since the 1980s feminist scholarship has shown how ideological constructions of the supposedly natural characteristics of “third world” and “racial-ethnic” women have dialectically shaped and been shaped by the kinds of jobs for which they are hired (Fernández-Kelly, 1983, Mies, 1986, Mohanty, 1997, Nakano Glenn, 1991, Salzinger, 2003, Wright, 2006). Similarly, African women’s entry into Johannesburg’s waste management sector was brokered on highly gendered and racialized terms linked to their presumed role in the household. One veteran woman explained how she came to work as a street cleaner:

They said they’re hiring ladies for cleansing [street cleaning] because the ladies can clean the house, they can look after the kids, do the washing, cleaning and everything.

Now the men, they didn't sweep properly... (Interview, IMATU Selby Shopstewards, 29/01/2003).

As a result of this association of sweeping with African women's 'natural talents' African women were hired exclusively to work in street cleaning. Even in 2003 100% of women employed by the third party contractors and 93% of women employed by Pikitup worked in street cleaning. Only 1% of women Pikitup workers were employed in collection.

Jenson (1989) argues that jobs themselves, and the value attached to them, are gendered. The entry of African women into street cleaning resulted in a feminization of this section of the waste management sector. Although a significant number of African men continued to work in this section in both Pikitup and the third party contractors many (especially in Pikitup) were old or unwell and had been deemed incapable of doing the "manly" work of loading. The relatively recent association of street cleaning and femininity had become so entrenched and naturalized that many of the men street cleaning workers interviewed felt emasculated by doing this work. Concurring with his colleagues that even though he swept at work he would never sweep at home one man reported that he did not tell his wife what he did so as not to compromise the status attached to having a secure job and income (Focus Group, Norwood Men Pikitup workers, 03/12/2002).

However, the linking of particular notions of African femininity and street cleaning was not uncontested. The literature on the mutually constituting nature of gender, race, ethnicity and work tends to focus exclusively on management's construction of workers (see for example Mies, 1986, Mohanty, 1997, Salzinger, 2003). In an important step

away from this top-down analysis Wright (2006) emphasizes that women do not simply assume the identities produced for them by management. In Pikitup and the third party contractors although many women workers interviewed thought that collection work was too difficult and heavy others disagreed:

No it's not heavy. It's right. I liked it, and I wanted to leave this job and work in loading, but they said no, it's a men's job. So just because it's December [a time of high absenteeism] I would be working in a truck. They would not tell you that it's a men's job, they would tell you that they have labour shortage (Focus Group, Avalon Women Pikitup Workers, 12/12/2002).

Workers were therefore aware that management chose strategically when to invoke, and when to ignore gender ideologies.

Although many women rejected their confinement to street cleaning this did not necessarily lead to a transformation in the division of labour. The primary problem was management's attachment to racialised and gendered constructions of their abilities and proper roles. However, they were hindered in transforming management's attitude by lack of solidarity from other women workers who acquiesced to and were even actively supportive of these constructions, as well as their male counterparts who overwhelmingly expressed deeply conservative notions regarding gender. In focus groups men workers repeatedly invoked arguments regarding women's supposed physical weakness, African women's traditional responsibility for sweeping the kraal in rural areas, and even the assumed hazards associated with pregnancy to argue that African women were incapable of doing the "man's work" of loading or driving trucks. For them it was self-evident that "there are jobs which one can see are for a male person, and can be dangerous to a

female...” and that “[i]f a woman is a general worker she should clean, pick up papers and not load” (Focus Group, Zondi Central Camp Pikitup Men Workers, 28/11/2003). Neither of the main unions in the sector (both of which had heavily male dominated leadership) had prioritised challenging the gender division of labour.

Although the hegemonic construction of the proper roles for African women workers was unstable and far from all-encompassing, in the absence of concerted action to overturn the gender division of labour it was secured and re-produced for at least two decades. The ghettoization of African women to street cleaning was not unique to Johannesburg.⁹ Although the social processes leading to this gender division of labour within each particular place must be understood as unique the analytic of relational comparison suggests that these processes were inner-related to each other and shaped by ideological constructions of gender, race and work that were held at scales broader than each municipality.

This particular articulation of race, gender, class and work played an important role in the forging of uneven coverage of workers by bargaining councils. In South Africa collective bargaining is arranged sectorally. Having been excluded from the municipal sector, coverage of workers employed by private waste management companies hinged on the level of organisation and institutional representation in the private sectors where they were located. Since its inception, the South African trade union movement has been male-dominated and preoccupied with the interests of male workers in key sectors of the economy. Women workers, the issues that confront them and typically female jobs have been largely ignored and marginalised (COSATU National Gender Committee, 1992, Orr, 1999, Tshoedi and Hlela, 2006). Revenue-generating collection work by private

companies is covered by a bargaining council as it fits within the broader scope of an established, financially lucrative, predominantly male sector of the economy, in which both unions and employer organisations have long been organised. Street cleaning by private companies, on the other hand is a relatively new phenomenon which does not fit neatly into any established sector. In terms of skills and activities it bears strongest relation to the contract cleaning sector and the domestic work sector. However, neither of these highly feminized sectors is covered by a bargaining council, and each has been deemed sufficiently unorganised and unprotected to warrant a ministerial determination on minimum wages.¹⁰ Gendered assumptions by unions regarding who constitutes a unionizable worker, and what constitutes a sector worth organizing have played an important role in creating the wage disparities which encourage Pikitup to contract private companies to deliver waste management services.

With street cleaners not employed by Pikitup excluded from all national bargaining council agreements gender, race, class and space were rearticulated in interesting ways in the street cleaning initiatives by providers not contracted by Pikitup. As noted above these included city improvement districts (CIDs) in formerly white business areas, volunteer campaigns in the townships, and the Zivuseni poverty alleviation project in Soweto. These initiatives had all emerged in response to a deterioration in the quality of street cleaning services that started in the era of the municipality and was exacerbated by Pikitup's corporate strategy.¹¹ However, the specific form and nature of each was strongly linked to the ways in which class, race, gender and space were articulated within particular parts of the city.

In the business areas of formerly white, bourgeois suburbs and the downtown area businesses felt that dirty streets and high crime levels were bad for business. In the mid-1990s they therefore began forming and financing CIDs that cleaned the streets and provided private security guards in specified areas. Due to their preoccupation with levels of crime the CIDs not only employed African male security guards, but also hired an almost exclusively African male street cleaning labour force, whom they dressed in military-style uniforms which were indistinguishable from those of the security guards, save for the colour. The workers were clear that this was to create the image of a stronger security presence in the area by making, “people think that we are security” (Focus Group, PPS Men Workers: 27/11/2002). Street cleaning workers were instructed to assist with security work by reporting on criminal activity. Some had even helped to catch criminals. The workers argued that this was unfair, as they were paid less than security guards, who were never required to sweep (Focus Group, RBMD Men Workers, 26/11/2002).

The desire to recreate the business areas as safe, crime-free spaces led the CIDs to re-gender street cleaning work in bourgeois areas to capitalize on the association of masculinity and security. After several decades in which street cleaning had become associated with constructions of African femininity, in the business districts it was re-masculinized. Although as street cleaning workers these men were not covered by any bargaining council agreements they were employed by private companies and benefited from the protections of South Africa’s labour laws.

By contrast, in working class townships strategies to augment service delivery deepened the association of African women with unpaid and poorly paid street cleaning

work. The townships lacked concentrations of businesses like those in the CID areas capable of financing additional street cleaning services. Within the context of deep structural unemployment township residents already had high levels of default on service payments and were unable to contribute financially to schemes to compensate for poor service delivery. The Zivuseni project filled the gap by substantially lowering labour costs, and transferring financial responsibility to the Provincial government. The volunteer initiatives further reduced costs by getting residents to provide unpaid labour.

Zivuseni was established by the Gauteng provincial government in April 2002. It sought to alleviate poverty by providing short term work opportunities for the poor and unemployed, promoting self reliance, and building local capacity through skills development (Mthombeni, 2003, 1-3). One Zivuseni project employed local residents on three-month contracts to do street cleaning work in the African township of Soweto. Due to the high incidence of poverty in female-headed households Zivuseni had a target of 50% female employment (Mthombeni, 2003, 3). However, a relatively large number of men withdrew from the waste management project. Women workers attributed this to their unwillingness to do such dirty, “female” work for low wages (Focus Group, Women on Zivuseni Project, 06/11/2002). As a result, sixty-nine percent of the workers were female (Mthombeni, 2003, 3). Most of the men who remained were doing “more manly” loading work (Focus Group with Men on Zivuseni Project, 6/11/2002). In this instance, whilst management did not explicitly evoke ideologies associating African women and street cleaning the ideologies of the workers themselves contributed to the production of a predominantly female labour force.

Zivuseni overcame the problem of limited community-based financial resources to finance service delivery by displacing financial responsibility to the provincial government. The project's viability was enhanced by its ability to limit workers' wages, expectations of long-term employment and ability to mobilize by rendering them "beneficiaries" ineligible for the full protection of labour law. Miraftab argues that discursively framing workers on waste management campaigns in Cape Town, "as *campaign members*, rather than *employees* removed any pressure to assess the payments that...workers received...by the criteria of fair labour compensation. Instead, the remuneration of workers in community-based schemes...was validated as the government's support of their campaign participation, job training and acquisition of new skills" (Miraftab, 2004, 889). The importance of this discursive work was also evident in the case of Zivuseni. Project documentation referred to the workers as "beneficiaries" and in an interview the project manager was at pains to correct each and every instance where they were referred to as workers (Interview, L. Musame, 23/07/2003).

However, it is critical to note that the discourse of this provincial project carried weight because of the ways in which it was embedded in national legislation that cast these workers outside of the full protection of the labour law. The Ministerial Determination for Special Public Works Programmes (Republic of South Africa, 2002a) and Code of Good Practice for Employment and Conditions of Work for Special Public Works Programmes (Republic of South Africa, 2002b) exempted workers on special public works programmes such as Zivuseni from key provisions of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act: these workers are limited to a maximum of twenty-four months employment on special public works programmes, do not qualify for unemployment

insurance and are not eligible for retrenchment packages if their contracts are terminated for operational reasons. Although technically they are allowed to unionize, a senior Zivuseni manager noted that this would accomplish little as management would not be willing to negotiate wages for three-month periods (Interview, L. Musame, 23/07/2003). The truncated period of employment would also make it exceptionally difficult for the workers to unionize.

The volunteers who were co-ordinated by ANC ward councillors in the townships had even less status and security than the Zivuseni “beneficiaries”. Many of these volunteers had worked five days a week for several years for no pay. As they were not technically employed they did not qualify for coverage by labour laws. Long-term volunteer initiatives comprised primarily or exclusively of women have been documented in a number of South African cities (Miraftab, 2004, Samson, 2003). Miraftab (2004) argues that in the case of Cape Town municipal officials invoked a discourse of “municipal housekeeping” to naturalize the exploitation of women’s free labour as part of volunteer campaigns. Discussions with volunteers from Orange Farm revealed that this type of discourse was successful in mobilizing women as it resonated with their desire to ensure the removal of illegal dumping sites that caused health hazards for their children. Rather than being simply interpolated into a discourse advanced by officials, women’s own sense of their gendered responsibilities led them to proactively choose to participate in the volunteer initiatives.

A number of men also volunteered in Johannesburg. More than patriarchal gendered discourses and ideologies were therefore at play in mobilizing volunteer labour. The ANC councillors promoted volunteerism as a form of active citizenship and revolutionary

commitment. This framing of volunteerism was officially endorsed by the ANC when it declared 2002 the “year of the volunteer” and launched the Letsema campaign. The National Executive of the party motivated support for Letsema by arguing that apartheid was defeated by legions of “volunteers” and called on South Africans to volunteer and “become their own liberators” by helping to eradicate poverty (NEC, 2002). Given enduring commitment to the ANC and the struggle for transformation this discourse resonated with many volunteers and their participation was at least partially attributable to their commitment to these broader goals. But like their counterparts in Sol Plaatje (Samson 2003) and Cape Town (Miraftab 2004), a key motivation was the hope that they would curry favour with the councilor and hopefully be prioritized if and when paid work became available. Orange Farm volunteers reported that they had been promised by the councilor that when the existing contract with the black entrepreneurs expired the current workers would be fired and they would be given the jobs. A complex combination of material conditions and ideologies therefore underpinned the unpaid participation of mixed-gender, but primarily women African community members in the volunteer campaigns.

An appreciation of this type of complexity is important when analyzing how these forms of privatization were produced and identifying both potential points of slippage and contestation and the elements which undermine the realization of this potential. The successful implementation of the CIDs, Zivuseni and the volunteer initiatives were each predicated on the forging of an association between particular places and workers with different kinds of rights – African male, privately employed street-cleaning workers and business districts as sparkling, safe, spaces for consumerism on the one hand; and African

female beneficiaries and volunteers and townships as places of self-improvement and revolutionary commitment on the other. If these specific associations were erased, then it would be exceedingly difficult to justify the differing terms and conditions of employment associated with these different forms of privatization.

Many CID, Zivuseni and volunteer workers saw through these ideological constructions. A CID worker captured the feeling of many saying, “I can say that I feel like I am working for the municipality even though I am not getting paid by the municipality. But the job is the same and I help them a lot” (Focus Group with RBMD Men Workers, 26/11/2002). As Zivuseni workers were based at the Pikitup depot they were acutely aware of the significantly higher wages paid to Pikitup workers. They argued that Pikitup should hire them directly as they were already doing Pikitup’s work (Focus Group with Men on Zivseni Project, 6/11/2002, Focus Group with Women on Zivseni Project, 6/11/2002). Volunteers in Orange Farm demonstrated that they identified themselves as workers by showing up in full force at a workshop that was specifically aimed at workers employed by the Billy Hattingh/Tedcor subcontract and participating for a period of time in joint mobilizing with these, the very workers whose jobs they had been promised.

However, this awareness sat alongside recognition that few if any other options existed. Zivuseni workers who were interviewed in the last week of their employment were thankful for the payments that they had received and were distraught at the prospect of losing this income. When asked what they would do when the project ended, one male Zivuseni worker responded by saying, “That question is very [hurting]. It’s hurting. Because [we are going to do] nothing. No income, no what. It’s back to starvation.

Simple as ABC” (Focus Group with Men on Zivuseni Project, 6/11/2002). Harsh material conditions of structural unemployment bolstered appreciation for wages received (or hoped for in the case of the volunteers) as well as other positive benefits derived from participation in these initiatives to ensure the reproduction of these distinct forms of privatization within different places in the city.

ARTICULATING FORMS OF PRIVATIZATION

Other than Zivuseni and some of the CIDs, the other forms of privatized service provision all predated Pikitup. This fact is important for several related reasons. The first is that whilst there was strong union opposition to *iGoli 2002* substantial privatization had already occurred in the waste management sector. Interviews with union representatives revealed that they had been largely unaware of this and none of the union demands related to *iGoli 2002* included a reversal of pre-existing forms of privatization. By engaging with *iGoli 2002* as a novel policy the unions limited their ability to contest lived practices of privatization already in place.

The second point, which has significant bearing on the theorization of privatization as a dynamic social process as opposed to a fixed policy implemented top-down is that these forms of privatization were *articulated into* Pikitup’s corporate strategy. This was done at the levels of both formal policy (in the case of third party contractors) and informal practice (in the cases of the CIDs, Zivuseni and the volunteer initiatives).

Pikitup was aware that by subcontracting service provision it was able to significantly lower wages and the costs of service provision. As a result the Three Year Business Plan adopted in 2003 committed Pikitup to conducting “cost/benefit analysis” of in-house

versus subcontracted provision and to contracting third party contractors (Pikitup, 2003, 14) in pursuit of cost reduction (Contract Management Unit, 2003, 5.12). The business plan prioritised granting contracts to black companies to promote black empowerment and, “ensure that Pikitup maintains a positive Corporate Image whilst focusing on its core competencies” (Pikitup, 2003, 19), core competencies which clearly did not include providing services to impoverished black residential areas with high levels of non-payment for services.

Pikitup’s business plans made no mention of CIDs, Zivuseni or volunteer initiatives. However, management was aware of these initiatives and capitalized on them to help achieve the goal of decreasing expenditure on non-revenue generating street-cleaning services. For example, once a CID was established Pikitup could virtually halt provision of street cleaning services in that area. Management at Norwood depot noted that as a result of the CID, “we now have more people to deploy outside and there’s an area that we don’t deploy anyone. For us we have saved our nine people” (Interview, M. Letsela, 15/10/2002). With Zivuseni this link was more formalized. Pikitup had recommended Soweto as the project site and Zondi depot supervised and deployed the workers. Although the volunteer initiatives had started independently Pikitup developed the concept of “Eco-munities” to formalise these activities and harness benefits for the company. The long-term goal was to establish eco-munities in each ward committee responsible for systematically cleaning the environment (Venter, 2002, 14). Pikitup would assist the Eco-munities to form themselves as non-profit companies so they could raise funds to finance their activities (Interview, L. Venter, 11/02/2003). Residents could then continue to volunteer their services for free or pay themselves if they raised

sufficient funds.¹² The seemingly independent manifestations of privatization in Johannesburg were therefore inner-connected and formed a complex, dynamic, integrated whole which was profoundly rooted in the production and (re)articulation of race, gender, class and space within the city.

CONCLUSION

Theory, method and politics are inextricably linked and “innerconnected”. The utilization of a non-economistic feminist historical materialist method which moves from the abstract to the concrete, focuses on the spatialised social processes through which the concrete is produced and is attentive to the centrality of contested hegemonic processes within this facilitates the development of new theorizations of the nature of privatization and provides insight into how it can be contested and challenged. Employing this method allows us to move away from an “impact model” approach (Hart, 2002, 12) that sees neoliberalism and privatization as pre-formed policies which are implemented uniformly across passive space and simply impact on social relations and spatial divisions. It also challenges increasingly popular Foucaultian governmentality approaches such as those advocated by Nikolas Rose (1999) which take a purely top-down approach, focusing on neoliberalism (or advanced liberalism) as a rationality of rule without interrogating the contested processes through which neoliberal policies are developed, implemented and challenged. Instead it reveals that privatization of waste in Johannesburg was a material and ideological process which was shaped and formed by the articulation of race, class and gender at the interrelated scales of the nation, the city and particular places within the city, and which dialectically transformed these social relations and the places and scales

which they helped to constitute. By focusing on how race, gender, class and space are constituted in relation to one another this approach helps to expose how privatization deepened exploitative relations whilst simultaneously transforming their particular content and articulation. As such it moves beyond analyses which posit that privatization results in either a straightforward perpetuation of apartheid social relations or a shift from race to class apartheid.

As the hegemonic normalization of these changes in spatialised social relations must be constantly (re)produced privatization is inherently unstable due to potential contestation not only of policies of cost recovery, but also of gendered, racialised and spatialized constructions of workers. The self-identification of volunteers, Zivuseni beneficiaries and workers employed by third party contractors and CIDs as workers doing the same work as Pikitup employees opens the space for new and powerful forms of solidarity and collective action against privatization. Due to structural unemployment and their desperate need for income (or in the case of the volunteers the hope of a wage) it was difficult for them to organize and engage in sustained action. Material conditions can, therefore, be a powerful force limiting the ability to realize the hegemonic instabilities inherent within processes of privatization. However, these slippages and openings provide opportunities for unions and social movements to shift their strategies and tactics onto new terrain. To date the unions have done little to organize workers employed by third party contractors, and have not even attempted to organize and represent volunteers and Zivuseni workers. They have also not included demands related to this refracturing of the labour market in their antiprivatization campaigns and neither of the municipal unions have engaged with the RFBC or the Ministerial Determination or

Code of Conduct. Neither the unions nor social movements have foregrounded the centrality of exploitative gender relations to processes of privatization. Focusing on how privatization is predicated on the acceptance of/acquiescence to new exploitative roles and self-definitions by African, working class women in the townships could encourage them to value and support forms of contestation and struggle which they currently fail to recognize, and to better engage with and address the needs of African working class women, who already comprise the main social constituency of the social movements. This could result in the formulation of new and different demands and more innovative and effective forms of organizing. It could also play an important part in transforming the male-biased nature of these movements and unions themselves (Beall, 2005, Hassim, 2005, Pointer, 2004, Orr, 1999, Tshoaedi and Hlela, 2006).

ENDNOTES

1. The gender order is comprised of the gender division of labour, the structure of power, and the structure of cathexis or desire (Connell, 1987).
2. Pikitup also competes with other private companies to provide lucrative commercial services such as medical, hazardous and bulk disposal. Whilst currently Pikitup operates only within Johannesburg long-term plans include expansion across Africa (Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 2002).
3. Although technically Pikitup was not bound by the SALGBC agreements as it is a private company, during the negotiations around *iGoli 2002* the municipality agreed that it would abide by them.
4. Although interviews with workers revealed that many employers were violating both the RFBC agreements and labour laws and workers were being underpaid and denied benefits thus creating an even greater differential with Pikitup workers.
5. Billy Hattingh and Associates now trades as TEDCOR.
6. During the time that the research was being conducted Phambili-Wasteman, a black owned company which had merged with a multinational was aggressively pursuing large-scale contracts in other parts of the municipality and the country.
7. Survey results in the five depots found that whilst 97% of Pikitup employees were unionized, only 8% of workers employed by third party contractors were members of unions.

8. Beall notes a similar mutually reinforcing devaluation of ethnicity and waste management work in South Asia BEALL, J. (1997) Thoughts on Poverty from a South Asian Rubbish Dump: Gender, Inequality and Household Waste. *IDS Bulletin*, 28, 73-90.
9. A preliminary research trip to 8 municipalities across the country, in-depth research in three others SAMSON, M. (2003) *Dumping on Women: Gender and Privatisation of Waste Management*, Johannesburg, SAMWU and the Municipal Services Project, SAMSON, M. (2004) Organising Workers in the Informal Economy: A Case Study of the Municipal Waste Management Industry in South Africa. *IFP/SEED Working Paper No. 66*. Geneva, ILO., as well as a national SAMWU workshop with women waste management workers from every province confirmed that the ghettoization of women workers in street cleaning was the norm throughout South Africa.
10. Although the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union had recently made inroads in organizing contract cleaning workers the union had not prioritised organizing street cleaning workers and was hesitant to do so as it felt this encroached on SAMWU's turf, and conflicted with the COSATU federation's position on poaching (Interview A. Ramakgolo, 11/9/2003).
11. As a utility Pikitup was expected to be financially self-sustaining and generate a profit. It's corporate strategy therefore focused on maximizing income from revenue-generating collection services and minimizing expenditure on non-revenue generating street cleaning services. Although the Provision of Sale precluded it from retrenching workers for the first three years Pikitup maintained

a hiring freeze that had been initiated by the Council during the financial crisis of 1997. High rates of natural attrition were therefore rapidly depleting the labour force. The company explicitly identified this as an important way to reduce expenditure on salaries and wages PIKITUP (2002) Pikitup Johannesburg Business Plan, Financial Year 2002/2003. Johannesburg, Pikitup.. The prioritisation of revenue-generating services meant that virtually the entire labour shortage was absorbed by street cleaning as in order to maintain service levels in collection management filled vacancies with male street cleaning workers. These significant reductions in street cleaning staff fundamentally compromised service delivery.

12. Although not mentioned in the Pikitup documents, residents in wealthier areas could presumably form residential CIDs and employ others to do the dirty work for them. The city is now actively promoting the concept of residential CIDs.

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