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Searching for Reconciliation: Policing,
Injustice and Territoriality in Johannesburg



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Abstract

The police force is one of the main instruments that states use to address ethnic and cultural diversity. While migration scholars regard border controls as the archetypal means of dividing populations, the everyday police officer on his or her beat regularly and directly enforces spatial segregation and accentuates differences between community members. This paper studies this phenomenon by using the case study of Johannesburg, a place where segregational policing was taken to its illogical extreme. The paper specifically focuses on the manner in which the legacies of Apartheid are unravelling in the present, and the complex interplay between authoritarian policing traditions and democratic communal resistance. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork of the South African Police Services and Community Policing structures in the Johannesburg inner-city, the paper critically interrogates the dichotomy which tales of historical injustice often draw between oppressor and victim. Instead, honing in on the emergence of new vigilante policing practices, the paper shows how and why actors switch sides, forget past injustices and repeat the sins of the past.

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*Let me let you in on a little secret.
The patrolling officer on his beat is the
one true dictatorship in America.*

Det. James McNulty,
The Wire, Season 4, Episode 10

It's Saturday night, and I'm strolling through inner-city Johannesburg with Lucas Mohale and a group of 10-15 street patrollers. The patrollers are unarmed civilian volunteers who aim to combat crime by establishing a visible and physical presence on the streets of their precinct: Hillbrow. Their techniques are summed up by their rallying cry: 'stop and search each and every person'. As we walk, they illustrate their commitment to this code, fanning out across the sidewalks on either side of the street and subjecting many people to a full body-search. The patrollers are often physical with their 'suspects', turning them around, pushing them up against the wall and kicking their legs into a spread position.

Despite their mantra, in the bustle of a Saturday night, the street patrollers cannot possibly stop and search *each and every* person they encounter. So, I ask Lucas how he decides who to stop and who to let go. He tells me that he grew up under Apartheid and learnt by watching police officers enforce the pass laws. Later, he would elaborate:

Even during Apartheid, police officers ... they don't just stop anybody for ID books. They would mostly target on the youngsters.

Yeah I grew up in that era of Apartheid where a black man was treated as a non-existent obstacle but you would find some respecting officers, black and white, who would let the elder ones go, and the women. Some people were respected while some were not. And as cruel as they are they would give you a chance – if you are not involved in politics – to say your story. And if you are lucky you would skip.¹

Here, Lucas touched on a theme that has consistently resurfaced in my research on policing in South Africa: the linkages between contemporary enforcement practices and the policing methods of the past. The Apartheid police were responsible for enforcing the Group Areas Act of 1950, a law setting out the terms of racial segregation. The police became the most reviled officials of the Apartheid regime, because they used these laws as a pretext to harass, intimidate and demean non-whites.

Given this fact, I was surprised that Lucas had singled out the Apartheid-era police as his historical predecessors, and that he chose to represent them as rela-

1 Slang: 'go free'

tively reasonable and lenient. Like many South African activists, Lucas' political consciousness had been forged in confrontation with the pass law police. As a member of ACTSTOP in the 1980s, he had campaigned for his right, and those of fellow black tenants, to reside illegally in the then Whites Only neighbourhood of Hillbrow.² Perhaps more importantly, Lucas had been deeply affected by his (illegal) arrest for a pass law offence at the age of 14:

And the man said to me 'Get into the van'. He put me into the police van. I didn't even know which police station is he taking me to ... [because of] that thing, I had hate, a serious hate for white people. When I'm talking white people I'm talking white government, serious hate.

Yet, when I asked Lucas for his opinion on his fellow citizens today who did not allow the street patrollers to search them, his response was not empathetic. Instead, he explained that civil rights do not trump the need for collective security, or in his words, 'these people, they know their rights, but they know them in the wrong way.'

How does Lucas resolve, smooth over or avoid these seemingly pressing moral and political dilemmas? Why, taking a few steps back, would he and his other colleagues adopt a policing practice that so closely resembles the primary means of their own past oppression? What, if anything, can we learn from this case about the attempt to resolve historical wrongs? This paper attempts to address some of these questions through an intensive case study of policing in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study draws primarily upon notes written during 6 months of fieldwork at Hillbrow police station (Sep. 2009 – Feb. 2010), but is supported by a broader and ongoing comparative ethnography of six police stations in Gauteng province, where Johannesburg is located (Sep. 2008 – present).

The paper uses this case material to show how historical injustice and reconciliation are woven into the fabric of present-day, everyday life. In order to open out this question, I first engage critically with one prominent way in which historical injustices have been understood and addressed in South Africa. According to this definition, historical injustices consist of *those human rights violations or sets of violations that have occurred in the past*. The South African discourse on historical injustices (and arguably, that of recent sub-Saharan African conflicts) has tended to focus on

2 Hillbrow was then a trendy high-rise bohemian haven, and one of the first major sites of what South African researchers called 'greying' (desegregation). The struggle to desegregate this area would become one of the key instigators for the National Party's 1986 decision to radically alter the Group Areas Act and allow black South Africans to reside in formerly white areas.

those violations that are deemed to be particularly egregious in nature (assassination, torture, terrorism, *etc.*). South Africa has tended to address these injustices by i) adopting forms of prosecution, commemoration and redress to symbolically and materially resolve the specific injustices; ii) transforming laws to criminalise or sanction such violations of human rights (particularly if those injustices were state sanctioned or decriminalised); and iii) ensuring that contemporary actors, and particularly actors in the justice system, are empowered and compelled to act against subsequent violations that are similar in nature and/or scale. This understanding of historical injustice fits neatly with a staged theory of historical progress. Generally speaking, there has been a common tendency to simultaneously a) distance the 'new South Africa' from its past historical injustices by labelling Apartheid as 'backward'; b) promote the cause of new laws and constitutions, by labelling these as 'modern'; and c) denigrate acts which repeat the sins of the past by calling them 'backward' as well.

This manner of understanding and addressing historical injustice is practically and rhetorically useful, particularly for cases of what we might call 'egregious' forms of injustice: pre-meditated acts which conflict fundamentally with more recent ethical codes. However, this perspective can also create a number of problems. First, it muddles our sense of historical time. This is particularly the case for acts which fit under category c), which have the annoying feature of popping up outside of their designated period. While it is nice to be able to label certain categories of historical injustice 'backward', it also creates the uncomfortable question of how we explain the chronologically defiant re-emergence of the past in the present. This view is also limited by a tendency to define injustice in terms of an 'act' or series of 'acts'. When South Africans 're-enact' historical injustices, the actors themselves are often re-arranged into a new set of roles. How do we formulate an appropriate means of attributing responsibility for the emergence of historical injustices in the present, when former oppressors have become the victims, or *vice versa*? Finally, this scheme struggles to deal with seemingly petty and/or *ad hoc* abuses: harassment, verbal abuse, social ostracisation, *etc.* This point has less to do with the mechanics of historical change and historiography and more to do with the limitations of transformative institutions and processes (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights Commission, Department of Public Prosecutions, *etc.*). Put crudely, a society can only prosecute, commemorate and self-flagellate over so many past injustices. Furthermore, national and international reconciliation has been simplified by the act of reducing the conflict to a small number of hero-victims (Biko, Hani, Mandela,

Tutu, *etc.*) and villain-perpetrators (de Kock, De Klerk, Vlok, *etc.*). This avoids the difficult task of accepting that blame and pain may be attributed to classes, ethnic groups, and indeed society at large rather than a small set of individuals. Hence, despite the fact that it was often the minute, everyday and minor infractions that lay at the heart of Apartheid's unique recipe of oppression, these issues have often gone unnoticed in the broad political project to redress historical injustice.

For these reasons, the conventional South African perspective on transformation cannot, if you will forgive the pun, *do justice* to the Hillbrow street patrollers' stop-and-search practices. Such practices repeat unjust policing practices of the past, but tend to repeat one of the more 'petty' forms of past abuse. To confuse the situation, past victims emerge playing the role of contemporary oppressors. According to this view, the street patrollers should probably be seen as backward, irrelevant turn-coats. We should penalise them, marginalise them or render them as anomalies. While I do not want to rule out any of these options at this point, I believe that there is something else worth grappling with in the street patrollers' activities, which we can use to build the foundations of an alternative understanding of historical injustice and reconciliation.

This begins with the attempt to redefine our understanding of 'historical injustice'. Instead of seeing this term as a reference to an act, or series of acts which occurred in the past, I define historical injustice as *an enduring and ongoing outcome of unequal social structures*. In making this relatively straightforward move, I move our attention away from how we address specific cases of injustice, and towards the way in which injustices are reproduced over time and particularly across seemingly epochal moments of transformation in human rights and constitutional law (which the end of Apartheid undoubtedly was).

Of course, the observation that there have been important continuities across key thresholds in sub-Saharan African political history is now something of a truism. The end of formal empire in the 1960s and 1970s was soon followed by the realisation that sub-Saharan African states continued to be a) disadvantaged by the remnants of trans-continental dependency; b) limited by the bureaucratic and administrative tools left behind by former colonial masters; and c) enmeshed in the stultifying discourses of colonial statecraft. Nevertheless, the literature has struggled to find adequate tools to describe the changing character of one of the continent's most patented and ongoing sources of state sponsored injustice: state territoriality. By

‘territoriality’ I mean *the strategies that affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.*³

The literature tells us that post-colonial African territories look like sovereign, exclusive entities, but they do not act like them. Many African states possess contiguous lands, borders, and nationally circumscribed residency rights, but do not adopt conventional forms of territorial behaviour, farming out border regulation to quasi-criminal networks, focussing controls on internal rather than international movement, and enforcing movement laws in sporadic ‘crackdowns’ rather than regularised regulation and surveillance. These types of variations have provoked Achille Mbembe to compare African territoriality to a process of ‘zombification’, as unfamiliar forces function within the shell of a previously familiar entity.⁴

While these semi-playful analogies are helpful, particularly in destabilising our assumptions about what is really going on in Africa, they also feed into a long tradition of analysis which is focussed on trying to label what ideal territorial *model* African states might assume, instead of focussing on the territorial *strategies* African states tend to adopt. In this sense, they tend to reinforce one of the problematic assumptions about historical injustice that I problematised above: the staged theory of historical progress and/or change. As we all know, Apartheid is one of the most inhumane territorial strategies the world has seen. However, in order to understand how contemporary South Africans are undoing, resolving and repeating this monumental injustice, we need to do avoid premature assumptions about what new territorial form the post-Apartheid state has adopted or should adopt, and examine what is really going on, on the ground and in the streets.

In order to do this, I turn to political geography. The first point Political Geographers make is that state territorial strategies are commonly designed in *response* to particular, and often socially constructed, understandings of the way social space is differentiated into sets of ‘places’. The policy of Apartheid was built on a series of assumptions, mental maps and pejorative claims about relationships between the social and physical landscape. The terrain was not only divided into separate places that were designated for the habitation of certain categories (races) of people, these designations also helped officials to explain why certain forms of movement within and between these places ought to be controlled (to promote health, security, chastity, *etc*). The differentiated map left behind by the Apartheid regime has endured

3 This definition is adapted from Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, p. 19.

4 Achille Mbembe (1992) ‘The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarly in the Postcolony’, *Public Culture*, Spring: 1-30.

the end of Apartheid remarkably, and somewhat disappointingly, unscathed. However, particularly in places like Hillbrow, Johannesburg, new forms of differentiation have emerged. In this paper, I focus on how new anti-crime discourses have been interwoven with older anti-integration traditions to define Hillbrow as a particularly dangerous 'black' space. This helps us understand why the street patrollers, who, as residents of the suburb have been labelled 'black and dangerous' as well, seek to confront this model of differentiation in their policing practices, and to use confrontation as a means of continuing the liberation struggle. The street patrollers seek to continue a tradition of black pride that started in South African townships, and to fight outsiders' tendency to label everyone in their suburb as criminal rebels. They do so through symbolic and strategic acts of reclaiming and redefining their suburb as a realm of dignity and brotherhood.

The second point is that invariably territorial strategies must draw from the available 'territorial infrastructure'. In some respects, this point can be summed up as recognition that it is easier to stop people moving if a wall has already been built in their path. However, and perhaps more importantly, by using the term 'infrastructure', I am not only referring to the built environment, but to the communicative memes (gestures, signs, directions) and identifying protocols (ID cards, profiling norms, dress codes) that state officials use to tell when someone is – and show that they are – 'out of place'. While Apartheid-era segregation was a hated policy, it also developed and institutionalised a series of home-grown protocols for interactions between officials and civilians. While the new government has eschewed some of the more hated practices of the old, contemporary government officials have taken up and deployed much of the old infrastructure in their efforts to implement immigration, land, planning and policing policies. I show how, first the Hillbrow police, and then the street patrollers, have revived Apartheid era strategies in their efforts to combat crime. Importantly, I also show how, in addition to simply imposing themselves on their fellow citizens, and 'repeating the sins of the past', their stop and search procedure also contains an iterated act of reconciliation between state and society. The street patrollers and other Hillbrow civilians are both, at least, implicitly aware of the injustices and indignities contained in this policing procedure, and constantly seek to collectively resolve the tensions that it creates amongst them.

Apartheid: Tradition and Transformation

Segregation Structures and Township Resistance

Apartheid was a policy of political, social and geographical separation of the South African population along racial lines. This policy involved: a) the creation of multiple, racially and ethnically defined citizen groupings; b) the segmentation of national territory into areas designed for the exclusive habitation of these groups; c) the construction of a series of laws limiting the rights of people to move and reside outside of their designated areas; and d) the enforcement of these laws through a complex matrix of surveillance, arrests, detention, administrative fines, and removals. The police were responsible for enforcing these laws, particularly when enforcement called for violence.⁵ Police officers patrolled the streets to check passes and enforce curfews, and led raids to destroy informal settlements, clear re-zoned areas and search for illegal residents. They took suspected offenders into custody, and ‘deported’ non-residents to ‘homelands’⁶ and countries of origin.

The responsibility to police segregation was not an ‘added’ enforcement burden that was tacked on to the conventional functions of a domestic police service. Rather, it was the sharp edge of the authoritarian system. Segregation was both the core lens through which the South African police understood crime, and a method they used to prevent and respond to political insurrection. Black residential areas – or ‘black spots’, as their illegal versions were known – were often seen as the source of both criminals and terrorists. Meanwhile, crime and insecurity in white areas were perceived to be the product of infiltration from, or proximity to, a ‘black spot’. In white areas, the pass law police limited opportunities for criminal and terrorist activity by ensuring that only black workers were allowed in and that no black person stayed beyond curfew. In black areas, crime was understood to be the product of overpopulation and the flow of instigators to and from neighbouring states. The police dealt with these problems by making sporadic sorties into these areas to entrap or execute political leaders or find and remove black non-residents *en masse*. These two forms of policing were rarely executed in accordance with the law. Rather, police officers

5 The policies were ostensibly the domains of the Departments of Cooperation and Development, Internal Affairs, Housing and Land Affairs.

6 Apartheid was involved in the construction of ‘homeland’ areas and homeland states where black South Africans were legal residents and citizens. While this was purportedly a process of decolonization and recognition of indigenous sovereignty, in practice it led to the construction of several overpopulated artificial puppet states of the Apartheid regime.

and other security agencies more commonly used their prerogatives to police pass laws and raid black areas as a pretext to impose themselves on non-white populations.

The litany of abuses involved in this tradition of policing, and the manner in which black urbanism was effectively criminalised, shaped the tradition of anti-Apartheid resistance. The cruelties of the police were repeatedly portrayed in resistance culture. Perhaps the most obvious and easily related example of this (for non-South Africans) is the popular Steve Biko biography film *Cry Freedom*, which opens with a morning raid on a township involving pass inspections, the destruction of houses and several beatings. Given the repeated and dehumanising vilification and invasion of black townships, it is not surprising that 'reclaiming space' became a key feature of anti-Apartheid traditions of protest. *Toyi-toying* fused elements of traditional (Zimbabwean in origin) dance and non-violent ideas of protest in celebratory disruptions of workplaces and schools. Sometimes toyi-toying turned into a civic parade, designed to restore pride and ownership to places that were being denigrated and destroyed. Of course, resistance did not always come in the form of 'indigenous' or Black Nationalist rejections of European domination. Often, resistance in the townships, particularly amongst older generations, involved proving that black South Africans could aspire to and achieve European norms of civility. This might involve proving that one could keep a home in a 'proper' fashion, could entertain guests using the 'appropriate' forms of ritual courtesy, or could simply walk the streets with the air of a respectable gentleman or lady.

The Quiet Death of Apartheid

Surprisingly, the death of legal Apartheid in South Africa went largely unnoticed when the ruling National Party rescinded the core 'influx control' features of the Group Areas Act in 1986. In practice, the police could continue to use a whole host of immigration, housing, trading and vagrancy laws to monitor the movement of black residents. Furthermore, in 1986 they were also empowered, in conjunction with the army, with the legal instruments of the 'state of emergency', which dramatically increased their capacity to regulate the movement of (and to harass) black people for the next six years. When these facts are considered alongside the National Party's long tradition of offering token legal changes to satisfy international opinion, it becomes clear why government critics greeted the dropping of influx controls with scepticism. However, this does not change the fact that the Apartheid regime had scuppered the very law that had symbolised its *raison d'être* for half a century, and by

extension, that of the anti-Apartheid resistance (both local and global). Importantly, this legal change took place some four years before formal negotiations for a transition to democratic rule took place.

This 'quiet death' of Apartheid has had profound implications for the South African process of recognising and redressing its historical injustice. When the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) finally came to the table, influx control laws were no longer a major bone of their contention and did not constitute a rallying point for supporters of the two parties, with issues of the extension of citizenship and the vote taking centre stage. Since these abuses were not the definitive feature of late-Apartheid era policing, they took a back seat to the near civil war between the ANC and NP-supported Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in the former Transvaal and Kwa-Zulu, and were not highlighted to the degree one might have expected in the ensuing Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Furthermore, to some extent, the blanket forgiveness preached by national leaders on all sides of the conflict, covering all acts in the past, was extended to the day-to-day policing procedures, despite the fact that there has never been a major process of truth or reconciliation focussing specifically on such acts. Of course, this does not mean that these daily experiences of the authoritarian brunt of the state do not live on in individual and popular memory, but rather that they tend to lie more dormant, being more sporadically remembered. A good example of this dynamic is an incident in 2000 when police officers savaged several Mozambican 'illegal foreigners'⁷ in a 'training exercise' for their dogs. This event sparked a list of references to the similarities between present-day and historical forms of police abuse.⁸

The petty authoritarianism of the police was a focus of many early post-Apartheid reforms. The police were asked to implement a raft of new or radically revised laws, to redress the racial and gender biases in their human resource policies, and to adopt a 'Batho Pele' (People First) ethos in their interactions with civilians. A new human rights culture was introduced to the police both negatively, through a range of legal proscriptions and sanctions, and positively, through training and monitoring designed to inculcate a human rights culture amongst their ranks. These reforms wrought massive changes, but were quickly met by a reactionary groundswell, sustained by more recent socio-cultural developments.

7 This is the term used in the Immigration Act (n. 13 of 2002).

8 Xolani Tshabalala (2007) 'Memories from the Past': Immigrant and Immigration Policy Representations in the post-1994 South African Print Media, Honours Thesis, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand.

The most significant of such developments is the rise of anti-crime discourse. Over the past 15 years, crime has emerged as one of the most prominent issues on the national agenda. While this is not the place for an extensive review, the 2001 Institute for Security Studies' appraisal that South Africa has 'an extraordinary high level of violent crime' probably remains accurate.⁹ The failure of the ANC leadership to recognise the nature and magnitude of the problem has provided critics and opposition parties (some of whom are simply seeking to mobilise racial animosities) with a platform to advance their parties' agenda on anti-crime platforms. In this context, the window of 'human rights oriented' or 'people oriented' policing was quickly shut. By the turn of the millennium, these transformative discourses had yielded to a 'tough on crime' mantra. The election of ANC populist Jacob Zuma to the Presidency solidified these developments. Since his election he has appointed Bheki Cele as his Police Commissioner. Cele's first orders of business were to reinstitute a military-style rank structure in the police and establish greater freedoms for the use of firearms in the course of duty: the so-called 'shoot to kill' policy. While not all South Africans support the new ANC platform on criminal justice, the country has now moved definitively into a period in which all political parties must, at the very least, be seen to be actively developing effective means of directly tackling this issue.

*Reimagining Hillbrow*¹⁰

These broad changes in South Africa's political and policing landscape have played out in some fairly unique ways in the police precinct of Hillbrow, Johannesburg. The city of Johannesburg has been permanently scarred by Apartheid-era segregation, leaving deep fault-lines between, in particular, the areas of wealthy white habitation in the northwest quadrant, and the mixed and black underclass in the remainder, particularly in the satellite city of Soweto (short for South Western Township).¹¹ Hillbrow precinct sits in the inner city area astride the shifting boundaries between these zones. The precinct is the jurisdiction of the Hillbrow Police Station, and covers

9 (2001) South Africa: World crime capital?, *Nedbank ISS Crime Index*, 5 (1).

10 Much of what follows rests on a set of broad categorisations of Hillbrow that need to be supported by more in-depth statistical analysis and comparisons using census data, crime statistics and other survey material.

11 While desegregation has occurred in some neighbourhoods, much of the white population has also fled overseas or into gated communities, and genuine desegregation is usually class-specific and decidedly one way: middle class black people moving into former white areas.

several suburbs (Berea, Braamfontein, Hillbrow, Houghton, Joubert Park and Parktown). These suburbs vary significantly in terms of function (commercial and residential), housing stock (single stand, low-rise and high rise), class (lower, middle and upper) and racial composition (black, white and mixed). Furthermore, some of these suburbs have experienced dramatic changes on several fronts. For example, in the 1970s, the *suburb* of Hillbrow, which lies in the centre of the Hillbrow *precinct*, was an almost exclusively white middle to upper class suburb, possessing several of the nation's tallest and most exclusive residential towers. The suburb was renowned for its fashionable night spots and upwardly mobile residents. Whereas the neighbouring suburbs of Houghton and Parktown have remained white and wealthy, the suburb of Hillbrow has seen a radical transformation in racial and class composition. Hillbrow is now more exclusively black and middle to lower class. Similar transitions have taken place in Berea, Joubert Park and to a lesser extent Braamfontein. In a nation where the lines of racial segregation are stark and enduring, the inner city has seen the line – formerly a divide between the whole inner city and the township of Soweto – redrawn between the black and poorer suburbs on the 'ridge' and the white and extreme wealth located below.

Figure 1 Satellite map of Hillbrow precinct, indicating location of constituent suburbs and the 'ridge'



In recent years, Hillbrow (most commentators fail to make the distinction between suburb and precinct) has become the benchmark of extreme criminality in South Africa. The significance of crime rates in other high-crime precincts are consistently measured through comparison with Hillbrow. Reports also emphasise other precincts' rising levels of 'dangerousness' by giving them the moniker of the most infamous precinct, e.g. Sea Point in the Western Cape has been dubbed the 'Hillbrow by the sea'. Quigney in the Eastern Cape was labelled the 'Hillbrow of East London'. Sunnyside in Pretoria was called 'Hillbrow No. 2'.¹²

This reputation as a site of extreme criminality has undoubtedly been exaggerated by a representational politics of prejudice which draws heavily on old understandings of the linkage between mobility and crime. Over the past three decades, Hillbrow has simultaneously experienced the impacts of regime change and the end of state-imposed segregation, a radical shift in racial and class composition, and a dramatic rise in crime rates. There are no simple causal relationships linking these three processes. However, when one considers the direct correlation which was drawn between race and criminality under Apartheid, it is easy to see why many people, particularly the former white residents of these suburbs, assume that desegregation led directly to the increase in crime. This theme comes through in many of the 'eulogies of the suburb' that one hears in public forums and private testimony, which draw almost exclusively on white residents as their 'voice of experience'.¹³ Yet, black

12 To some extent, this reputation is warranted. The precinct has consistently featured in the provincial and national lists for reporting high levels of priority crimes. However, these figures need to be read against the fact that Hillbrow is one of the, if not the most, densely populated police precincts in South Africa. It contains large numbers of the nation's tallest residential buildings, many of which are over-occupied. Yet, the rankings are based on absolute numbers of reported crime, rather than the number of crimes per head of population and so may overstate the problem. Furthermore, while there is no reliable national measure of service levels, compared with some of the township precincts we studied in our comparative ethnography, service at Hillbrow's Client Service Centre is remarkably professional, which may result in higher reporting rates and raise the precinct's levels of reported crime.

13 While this is a particularly spurious technique, given the fact that the suburb has a long history of mixed settlement, black residents also voice romantic representations of the past. Take, for example, Koos van der Schyff's lament: 'I remember in the '70s when Hillbrow used to be likened to Hollywood. The place never went to sleep and everyone wanted to be a part of (it). Today, Hillbrow is ungovernable and the government is failing to restore the pride of what used to be our Hollywood.' Themba Sepotokele (2004) 'Hillbrow: inner city regeneration strategy aims to build a safer and better place', *The Star*, 19 July, p. 18.

South Africans have also often taken up the pseudo-criminological refrains of the former regime. Here, we can find useful examples in black journalists' accounts of their 'visits' to Hillbrow, which combine the performative sensationalism of wartime 'action' journalism with the delightful terror and authoritative taxonomy of game drive documentary.¹⁴ While horror at Hillbrow has been shared, in terms of racial politics, it also constitutes a sore spot in discourses of national reconciliation. How could the 'Rainbow Nation' admit that one of the first sites of desegregation had descended into chaos?

Enter the foreigners. Echoing, embellishing and concentrating a national xenophobic tendency to blame recent increases in crime on recent arrivals from other African countries, many South African citizens believe the rise of crime rates in Hillbrow is due to the fact that more recently arrived Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and, particularly, Nigerians have been importing new criminal networks, techniques and tendencies into the suburb. This helps everyone escape the need to blame white landlords for a long tradition of criminal neglect and black South Africans for being (embarrassingly for the new black elite) involved in crime.

Hillbrow's symbolic status made the suburb an obvious test case of the government's mettle in its fight against crime. In 2000, the Gauteng Police Commissioner launched Operation Crackdown (OC), a high-profile, high-visibility national policing operation. OC was intended to signal the government's new hard-line approach to crime through a series of interdepartmentally coordinated raids and cordon and search operations in precincts that were reporting high levels of criminal activity. In the words of the then Minister of Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, "[t]he police are going to where the criminals are, and acting before they have an opportunity to commit any crimes".¹⁵

If you are looking for would-be criminals, where else would you start but Hillbrow? Hundreds of police, Home Affairs and army officials, backed by air support, made thousands of arrests within the precinct over the course of a few days. While

14 Indeed, one black journalist spent an entire piece comparing a walk through the streets of Hillbrow with that quintessentially middle-class, South African experience: a game drive in Kruger National Park. Lucas Ledwaba (2004) 'A walk in the park', *This Day*, 2 April, p. 8. This piece had a tongue-in-cheek element but probably does not qualify as satire. For example, despite being a black journalist, the first thing that Khuthala Nandipha noticed in his 'first brush with Hillbrow' was 'the dense population of lower income blacks'. Khuthala Nandipha (2006) 'Night and day, anything goes in seedy Hillbrow' *City Press*, 21 May, p. 28.

15 Brian Stuart (2000) 'Gloves off approach to fight crime', *The Citizen*, 6 April, p. 4.

the government was keen to represent these tactics as a new way forward, clearly the choice of techniques resembled old ways of understanding and addressing criminal behaviour. Instead of isolating criminals from the population or investigating and tracing criminal suspects, the logic of crackdown was to understand crime as a phenomenon produced by migration and impute guilt by association to an area.

The legacies of Apartheid could not only be found in policy, but also in the ways that individual officers implemented strategic directives. The difference was that police officers now utilised the Immigration Act as their mandate to stop people and ask them for their documents, instead of the now-defunct Group Areas Act. OC was a dragnet, whereby large numbers of Hillbrow's resident population were temporarily arrested in the streets or in their homes and asked to produce documentation. The results of the operation speak for themselves. In Johannesburg in particular, the 'crackdown' primarily produced arrests of illegal immigrants.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the South African Human Rights Commission pilloried the prevalence of wrongful arrests and excessive force in the Hillbrow operations.

While OC in some senses represented a 'state of exception', the type of policing witnessed in this raid is far from exceptional.¹⁷ Rather, OC publicised and promoted a reactionary policing trend that had been gathering momentum in Hillbrow and nationwide over the course of the last decade. In some respects, observing the police return to old tricks to meet new problems is not all that surprising. This may merely be a reflection of the inherently difficult nature of police reform, difficulties that may not even be particularly intractable in South Africa. What is more intriguing about the Hillbrow case is the fact that *former anti-Apartheid activist civilians* have been getting in on the act. So, at this point, I turn to the street patrollers of Hillbrow to illustrate the ways in which they have taken up the anti-crime agenda and the old ways of addressing the problem.

16 Almost half (48 percent) of the arrests made as part of the operation in January 2002 were of suspected 'illegal foreigners'.

17 Loren Landau (2006) 'Immigration and the State of Exception: Security and Sovereignty in East and Southern Africa' in *Millennium*, 34(2), 325-48.

The Street Patrollers: Reaction and Reconciliation

Differentiating and Confronting the Danger

Concern about the levels of crime in Hillbrow is not simply a product of wealthy, white nostalgia and racism or black *nouveaux riche* self-loathing. The people who experience the brunt of crime in Hillbrow are the mostly lower class and poor residents who inhabit the suburb by day or visit it by night. The street patrollers are a group of approximately 100 civilian volunteers who come from this group.

The patrols are the initiative of Yoliswa. Yoliswa, a woman in her mid-30s, had become dissatisfied with the capacity of her station to address local crime problems. Over a period of several weeks in 2007, she had watched from her apartment as a young boy mugged several passers-by in Quartz st, Hillbrow. Too small to physically intimidate his victims, the boy simply approached them and stabbed them. The stabbings temporarily disabled his victims, allowing the boy to take their belongings and flee. Yoliswa had assisted some of these victims and reported the problem to the police. After they repeatedly failed to respond to her reports, she decided to establish a vigilante group that would, in her words 'beat up the criminals'. The officers at the station convinced her to partner with them instead, and form a civilian patrol. The station handed responsibility for the patrollers to Inspector Moroke, a middle-aged officer with over three decades experience at Hillbrow station and the then manager of Hillbrow sector. Yoliswa began to recruit volunteers, and Moroke provided monitoring, management and basic training (drills, procedure, protocols and self-defense).¹⁸

While it was no doubt useful for the police to prevent the rise of a vigilante group, it is not clear why civilians and police collectively opted for a *street patrol*. Hillbrow is a heavily policed precinct and the police already have a large and visible street presence. The station deploys over 500 members and reservists in over 100 vehicles across approximately 15 square kilometers.¹⁹ This force is complimented by hundreds

18 Given South Africa's ongoing difficulties with vigilantism, ensuring that this group formed under the station's control was a significant victory. The Provincial government chipped in with insurance and some further training. This policy had been pioneered by the then under the auspices of the MEC for Safety and Security, Firoz Cachalia. Some local businesses also sponsored reflective jackets and grocery vouchers to compensate volunteers.

19 As the statistical analysis and mapping improves, I'll be able to provide a more accurate gauge of concentrations.

of Metro police,²⁰ reservists,²¹ City of Johannesburg security officials²² and private security guards. Furthermore, Yoliswa and her compatriots did not want for means of appealing to, and even demanding, that this security force work for them. Yoliswa could have followed the complaints procedure at the station. More importantly, she could have called for more strategic changes through her Community Policing Forum. There, she could have directly asked the Sector Manager for Hillbrow to increase surveillance, or to simply pick up the boy and cart him off to Social Services.

I will argue that the decision to establish a street patrol involved a synthesis of two logics of action: strategic policing and symbolic protest. The patrollers developed a sense of the places where crime was concentrated and chose, in a style that recalls the protest movements of the past, to physically declare their ownership of these places. A thick description of the patrol protocols will help to illustrate this point.

On patrol days, 20-40 patrollers convene at the station between 18:00-20:00pm for a 4-6 hour patrol. They assemble in an abandoned room inside the station,²³ get dressed in reflective jackets and execute a military-style drill. At some point during this process, Moroke arrives and addresses the group on administrative issues, recent crime reports and the plan of action for the night's patrol. The plan usually consists of a list of designated suburbs where separate teams will patrol, and a time to convene at a pre-arranged site at the end of the patrol. After a short prayer, Moroke separates the patrollers into 2-3 teams of no less than 10 persons and appoints one individual to lead each team. At the end of parade the teams go their separate ways. Moroke provides monitoring and support by roaming between the teams and the station in a vehicle, but generally exerts limited direct oversight on tactics and procedure.

The teams patrol the precinct by travelling along routes determined by their team leaders. Unless they are specifically requested to, or suspect a criminal act is taking place in a private building, they remain in public areas: on the streets and in the parks. Each group gradually fans out, discussing options as they go, including whether they should 'jump' to cover the other side of the street, wait for colleagues, or split up and walk in the same direction along parallel streets. The patrollers walk at a fairly casual

20 Metro police undertake significant amounts of operational policing in the area, particularly where traders are operative and city bylaws need to be enforced.

21 What follows ought to be qualified by the fact that I have yet to watch the reservists in action.

22 Security officials deployed by the City of Johannesburg regularly patrol flagship public spaces such as the Quartz st.

23 This is curious given that the regular members and reservists assemble outside in the courtyard or in the basement.

pace, and are dressed in bright reflective jackets. From afar they resemble a flotilla of orange lanterns. So, while some people walking the suburbs at night, particularly the inebriated, might be surprised by the arrival of the patrol, anyone on the lookout could easily evade detection and capture. Recognising this, the senior members of the street patrollers all appear to concur that visible policing is not suited to generating many arrests. This, of course, leads to the question as to what the patrol is for?

The street patrollers are less clear on this issue, explaining their actions in terms of a vague sense that visible policing ‘makes the suburb safer’. But, safer for whom?²⁴ Many civilians regard the street patrollers more as an annoyance or even a threat than security. In this context, several street patrollers have used the ‘making the suburbs safe’ dictum in order to vilify civilians who refuse to cooperate, as if to say, they don’t know what’s good for them, or in Lucas’s words ‘they know their rights but in the wrong way’.

In this context, it is worth noting that despite the fact that visible policing does not produce unequivocally positive results, these patrols continue to attract a high level of interest and enthusiasm. While some patrollers hope that this voluntary work will help them start a career in the police or the security industry, many do not. Despite the long hours, limited compensation and risks of physical harm, they turn up at the proscribed times, sometimes immediately after finishing work, and walk the streets for up to 6 hours, with limited rests. I consider myself to be fairly fit, but at the end of a patrol my feet hurt and my muscles begin to cramp.

24 Several street patrollers explain the success of their activities by noting that crime has gone down since they began their operations. Sydney argues, for example, that while they do not catch criminals at night, they can disrupt criminal activities. While plausible, these effects have not been proven. Other patrollers will offer anecdotes which suggest that civilians in the neighborhood note how the presence of the street patrollers allows them to relax, so that now, for example, they can use their cell phones in public. Yet, some of the patrollers themselves are not satisfied with this strategy’s less tangible effect on crime, particularly those who are simply out to make an impact through violence. At parade one evening a younger male patroller told me ‘there will be no *Tsotsis* (thugs) in Hillbrow tonight, because we are going to clap (hit) them – you’ll see.’ These differences result in divergences from standard procedure as some patrollers seek to execute less visible operations whilst on visible patrols. On some occasions these patrollers consult with senior members and team leaders but since this often results in decisions to not deviate in approach, sometimes members carry out invisible operations on their own. These activities constitute a considerable source of annoyance for the other members of the group, as they lose numbers, and are compelled to provide support, involving them in more risky pursuits and violent arrests.

The street patrollers' continued involvement and effort becomes a little more understandable when we examine the spatially differentiated character of their patrols. The patrollers only operate in three of the precinct's six suburbs, covering the South-Eastern sectors of Berea, Hillbrow and Joubert Park. They avoid the North-Western sectors of Braamfontein, Houghton and Parktown. Furthermore, they tend to focus their attention on commercially zoned or mixed-use areas rather than pure residential zones.²⁵ These patrol routes can be explained as an attempt to engage critically with Hillbrow's label as a crime capital. Unlike Hillbrow Police Station officers, who mostly go home to other suburbs when they finish their shifts, the patrollers all live in Hillbrow. Hence, they frequently feel personally implicated when the suburb as a whole is labelled as 'criminal'.²⁶

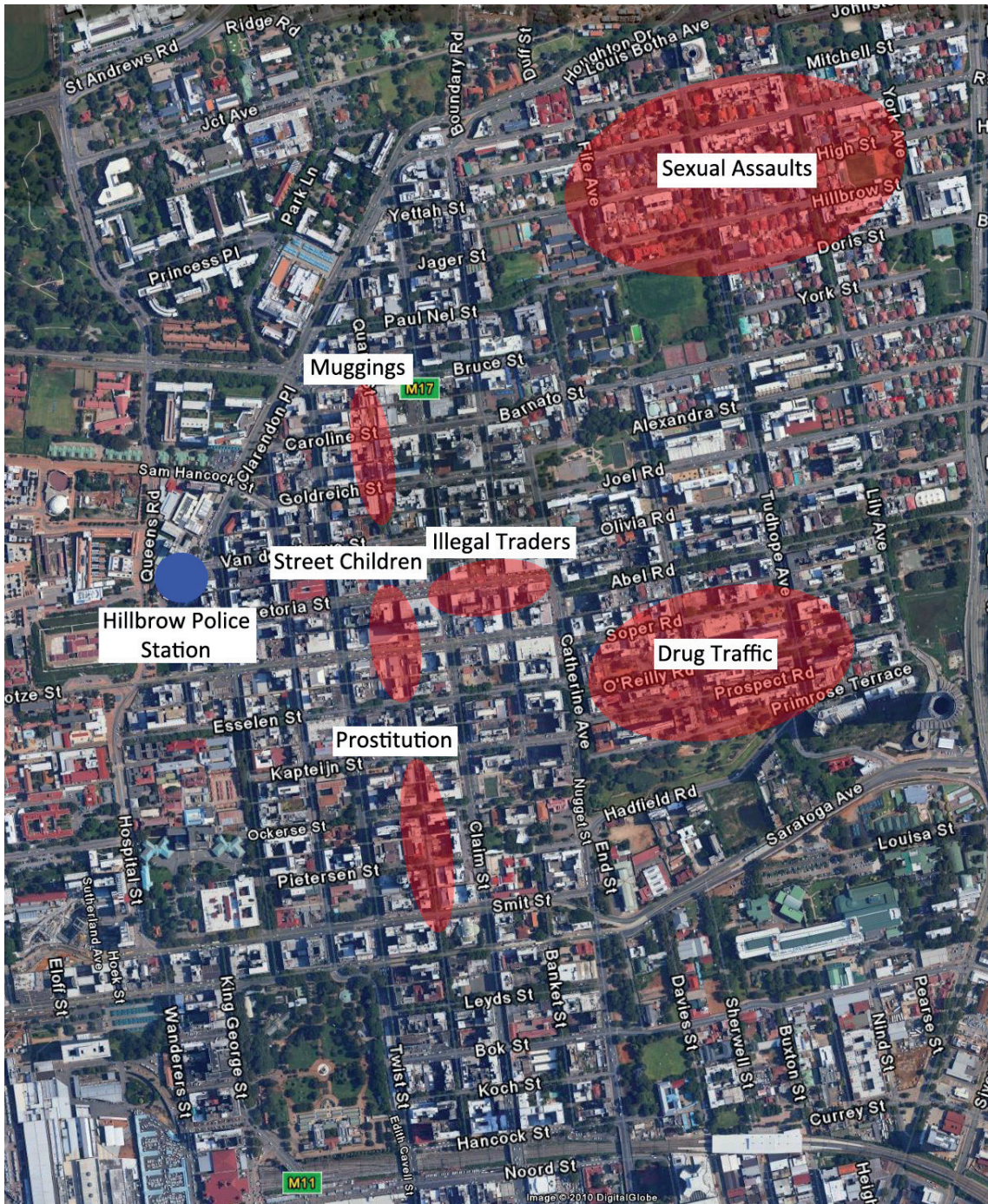
The residents have developed a more differentiated mental map of crime in their precinct than those produced by reporters from outside. These maps isolate the sources of infestation into several 'hot-spots' and, by implication, label the rest of the suburb 'clean'. The maps are not rejections of the broader discourse about Hillbrow, but rather applications and refinements of the same general themes or the translation of these images through the lens of an insider's knowledge. In part, information about hot-spots comes directly from the station. The intelligence officer identifies corners, streets and blocks where the incidence of priority crimes is particularly high. Mroke occasionally passes on relevant aspects of this information to the patrollers. Hence, you will find that police and street patrollers share common knowledge of a certain set of hot-spots, including the drug dealing hot-spot on the corners of Tudhope and Fife in Berea and the mugging hotspot on Quartz st. between Esselen and Kotze.

The street patrollers overlay this knowledge with their own hot-spot 'maps'. These maps depend less on statistics and more heavily on personal experiences and intuition. The hot-spots are not made up of discrete islands of concentrated criminal

25 While Houghton and Parktown are considered to be safer suburbs, with Braamfontein lying somewhere in-between, this two-fold selection strategy is not necessarily a response to crime patterns. For example, despite popular fears of car-jackings and smash-and-grabs in the suburb of Hillbrow, car thefts are more common in Braamfontein and Parktown, and Houghton, with its wealthy residents, has prolific smash and grab spots. Furthermore, while fights and violent attacks occur in the vicinity of the commercially zoned pubs and clubs, rapes and muggings are more likely to occur in the quieter, residentially zoned sections of the precinct.

26 Here, it is worth noting that Malumani is one of the few officers at Hillbrow station who also resides in the suburb.

activity which can be seen and drawn from above, but rather more graded zones of danger, generally emanating from an identifiable source of ‘heat’ such as a market, bar, brothel or abandoned building. These hotspots and their dangers are illustrated in the map below.



We can develop a sense of the street patrollers' graded maps of criminality by comparing their responses with the reactions of their fellow Johannesburg residents to Hillbrow's littering problem. Hillbrow has become infamous since the year 2000 for, amongst other things, raucous New Years Eve celebrations. The most popular anecdote describes a celebration ritual involving the repeated launching of objects, ranging in size and sordidness from used condoms to refrigerators, from the windows of high-rise apartments out onto the streets far below. The story picked up pace in the media, and while New Years eves in Hillbrow are no longer so violent, this image is now often related to tourists as anecdotal proof of the suburb's descent into decadence.

Most Johannesburg residents use their knowledge of this activity as yet another reason to avoid the suburb entirely. In contrast, since the patrollers experience Hillbrow's various forms of criminality on a day-to-day basis and in constant conversation with the police, their response is quite different. Instead of imagining the whole suburb erupting in one great explosion of high-flying debris, they have identified specific 'bad' buildings which they believe contain residents who are likely to hurl garbage onto the pavements below. They then estimate what might be a safe perimeter zone for walking around those buildings and caution others to respect those perimeters.

Of course, the patrol is not primarily about avoiding danger. The patrollers see their role as the direct confrontation of danger in the 'hot-spots'. Their patrols focus on the commercial and mixed use zones of the South-East because this is where the majority of their 'hot-spots', both the statistical and the empathetic, are located. By travelling on these routes, the street patrollers can more 'strategically' confront danger in Hillbrow. The patrollers seek to confront the hot-spots in one of two ways. First, they make symbolic displays of ownership within the hot-spots. The street patrollers aim to exert their presence in areas deemed to be dangerous and against the criminal elements located there, by regularly coursing through, or remaining in one area for an extended period of time. In some respects, these acts are brutal and physical, such as when a group of street patrollers responded to the report of a fight in a bar by rushing in, grabbing hold of some protagonists and beating and tasing them as they dragged them out into the street. At other times the displays are more exuberant, involving dancing, mock-fighting or, as in the following case, expressing the ecstasy of empowerment:

On Saturday night we're walking north along the Quartz st. market, an area that is renowned for muggings, particularly in the day-time when it is crowded by shoppers, traders and their wares. As we approach an intersection, an older female patroller overtakes me on my left. I don't pay her much attention because she has always tended to ignore me, and keeps to herself on patrol, smiling but rarely engaging in the banter and by-play. So I'm a little surprised when she exclaims, apparently with no provocation, raising her arm above her and bringing it down for emphasis 'the crime in Hillbrow is going to be way down tonight; the visibility is too much!' Lucas laughs in encouragement.

Finally, and more generally, the street patrol impacts upon one's security sensibilities in more subtle ways. Given Johannesburg's reputation for crime, residents commonly hold to the belief that their security situation worsens at night. People become more restricted in terms of the places where they go and are often anxious to get home or to another secure environment (mall, church, gym, *etc.*) before dark. This gives sunset a special poignancy in the rhythm of daily life, robbing this moment of its romance and infusing it with a sense of urgency and fear. In this respect, the entire suburb of Hillbrow ordinarily represents a place for outsiders like me to avoid at night, and enter with great caution as the sun is setting. Given this, I was particularly, albeit subsequently, surprised to note how during each patrol, I made several mental notes of the picturesque qualities of the setting sun in Hillbrow as it danced across the high-rise building facades. However, I did not note the passing of sunset as a security concern. This may be partly due to the fact that, by occupying myself in the unusually active and observational process of patrolling as night-time descends, I was also distracting myself from the habit of fixating on the potential implications of this change, instead experiencing the period as the seamless flow of life. It is plausible to suggest that this helps the street patrollers, many of whom ordinarily would fear to walk their streets at night, to cross this threshold as well.

The second way that the patrollers confront danger is by shepherding their fellow residents as the latter travel across the terrain of hot-spots. In some respects this is simply a matter of helping one's neighbours escape victimisation, as in the littering case above, where the patrollers warn other pedestrians to stay clear of prospective projectiles. For example, the patrollers might follow a drunken man as he distractedly walks down a quiet street attempting to send a text message on his phone. Here, the patrollers are providing a safety net by trying to ensure that the man does not get mugged. However, this paternalistic impulse runs deeper. The patrollers also seek to *save* their fellow citizens from the temptations of Hillbrow. Despite the strong Christian ethos within the group, this is rarely a matter of lecturing sex workers or paren-

ting street-kids, though some of the latter occurs. Rather, the street patrollers believe that they need to proactively intervene, even against the most innocuous activity, to rescue their fellow civilians from the seductive powers of Hillbrow's hot-spots. Here it is worth considering how various members of the police force in Hillbrow justify their harassment of 'loiterers':

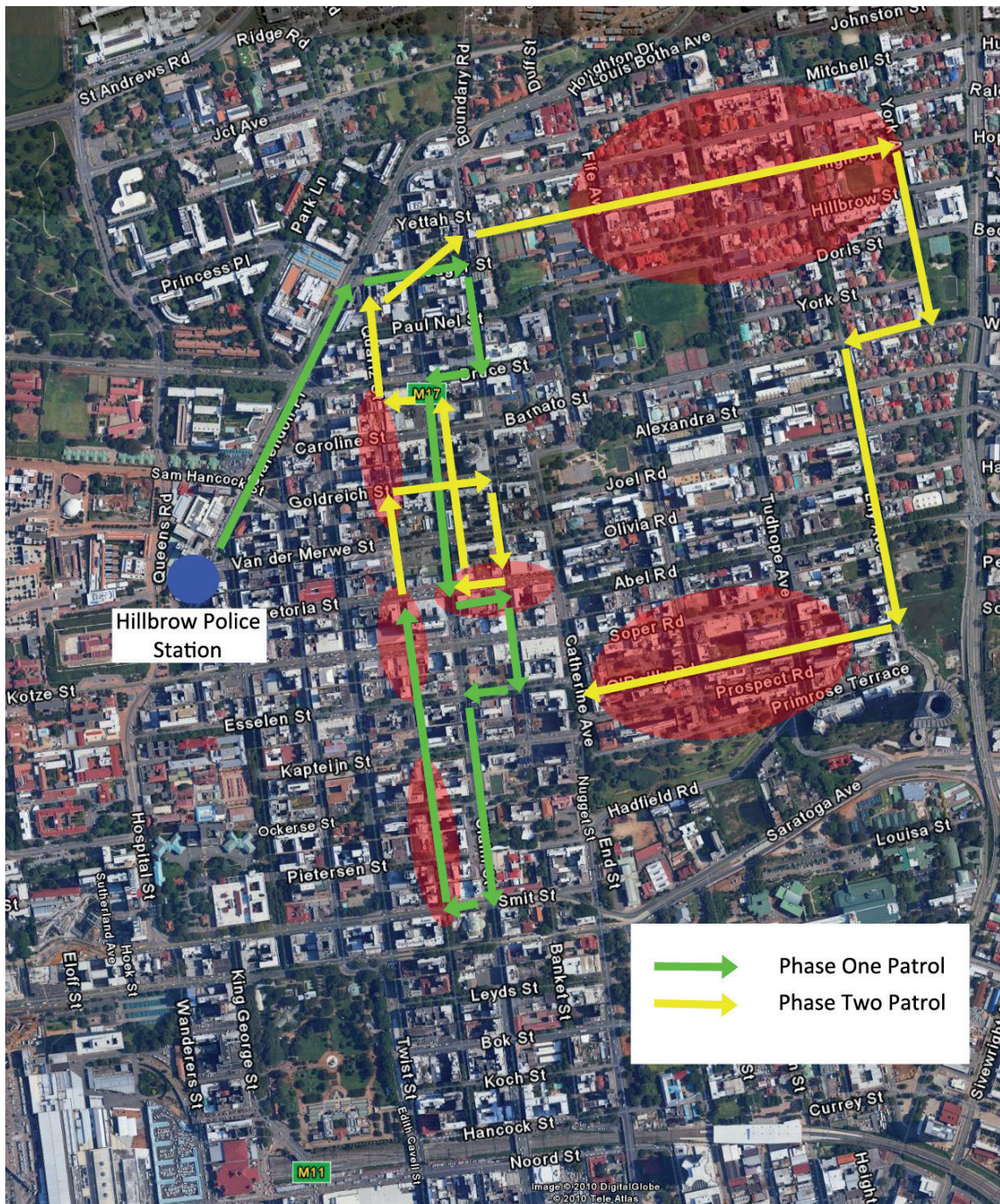
A few months ago I was driving around with Inspector Nqakula when he explained that the people who loiter in his suburb aren't loitering at all, 'they are loitering with intent!' This seemed to be a particularly effective way of implying that everyone in the neighbourhood was a criminal.

Months later I'm walking with Yoliswa on Twist st. as our discussion moves on to the same subject. Yoliswa helps to elaborate on Nqakula's point. She tells me that '[suspected loiterers] don't know what they are doing and where they are going' and it is a problem for people to simply be out on the street doing nothing. They may see someone who has shoes that they may want to steal and they will start to think that it is easy to get away with doing something like that. Almost on cue, she sees a young couple standing up against a wall and she stops and searches them.

As we cross over the road she expands on this theme by turning to the issue of alcohol. She explains that it is not good for a man to be out late at night because he is not setting a good example for his children when he comes home at 3am. If the street patrollers catch him and fine him for loitering this is a good thing because at least he is not going to have that 300 Rand to spend on alcohol that weekend. Because he is only going to spend that money on alcohol.

So, the street patrollers are not simply saving their fellow Hillbrow civilians from becoming victims of criminals in hot-spots, they are saving their fellow citizens from the crimes that the criminal hot-spots of Hillbrow might lead them to commit. When taken together, these maps and this need for confrontation help to explain why they choose to walk particular routes through their suburb, to the neglect of others. The close connection between the patrol routes and the hot spots is indicated in the map below.

This account not only explains what the street patrollers feel they are achieving on visible patrol, it also helps us to understand why they adopt the mantra of 'stop and search each and every person'. In the criminalised terrain of temptation that is Hillbrow, the unsuspecting pedestrian may wander into zones that may cause otherwise ordinary people to commit a crime. Hence, the patrollers stop everyone, in order to prevent the innocent from straying down the wrong path. This also explains what they are looking for when they conduct a search. Instead of searching pedestrians for drugs, contraband or evidence of some crime that they may be committing or have



committed, the visible patrollers are primarily concerned to find objects that this person might be tempted to use in the commission of crime in the future: guns, knives and other weapons. In the dangerous environment of Hillbrow, the street patrollers understand their fellow citizens' need to carry weaponry, but they feel it is their responsibility to protect them from getting into situations where they might use a weapon. Take for example, Yoliswa's defense of the stop-and-search procedure:

They are going to say to you that ‘I needed the knife to protect myself and my wife and baby and I’m on my way to the supermarket to buy some formula’. But then if someone comes to him with a gun, he is going to stab them. If someone comes to *me* with a gun *I’m* going to stab them, so really we are protecting them.

The process of relabelling and reclaiming space is the essence of the street patrollers’ territorial strategy. Engaging with the labels outsiders have attached to Hillbrow, and drawing on both the hardliner policing tactics of the Apartheid state and the celebratory tradition of anti-Apartheid protest, the street patrollers do not arrest many people, but feel as if they are both serving the community, and simultaneously rescuing themselves from the imputation of criminality that comes with being a Hillbrow resident. Of course, by putting themselves in the position of police officers; by taking up the responsibilities of the state; and by choosing to do so by confronting the population in areas that have been deemed to be bad, the street patrollers find themselves in a monumental existential dilemma, which I hinted at in the opening comments of this essay. How do they cope with the fact that their activist energies have led them to switch sides, to become part of the authoritarian governing structure which once treated them in a similarly demeaning way? The remainder of this paper will explain how the patrollers solve this problem, in conjunction with their fellow civilians, by searching for common dignity in an authoritarian recess.

Searching for Common Dignity

Hillbrow is a busy precinct, and in the commercial districts on Fridays and Saturdays pedestrian traffic remains heavy until midnight. This ‘ordinary’ pedestrian population is augmented by significant numbers of street traders, drug dealers, security guards and homeless persons.²⁷ Hence, with the exception of the occasional stroll through the quieter low-rise sections of Berea, the patrollers are consistently encountering civilians. They regularly stop and search many of these people but they tend to do so in fits and starts. Long periods in which the patrollers make observations of their surroundings, engage in idle chit chat and take little notice of passers-by are punctuated by shorter periods of frenzied activity when everyone on the street is subjected to a search.²⁸ These fluctuations in the searchers’ activity levels do not appear to be

27 There are also significant numbers of sex workers but the industry appears to function primarily indoors.

28 Searching activity also changes over the course of the patrol in response to the street patrollers’ energy and motivation levels with a distinct drop-off occurring as we near the

accounted for by the exercise of the type of individual discretion that Lucas hinted at in his comments at the start of this piece: of profiling potential criminals. The patrollers do not leave aside older people and women. Indeed, if any demographic group was least likely to be searched it was probably your most prototypically profiled group: larger numbers of young black men, particularly those that were seated or stationary and therefore clearly occupying territory.

The fluctuations in search activity seem to be better explained in terms of three separate dynamics occurring at a group level. The first has to do the factors outlined above, that the searchers increase their activity in the vicinity of the hot-spots and slacken off in other areas. The second has to do with the fact that it is easier to initiate a search in some situations than others. In part, the relative difficulty of initiating a search depends on the likelihood of resistance. When the patrollers approach a pedestrian, a small proportion of them are surprised or confused; do not recognise the street patrollers' authority; insist on their rights; or simply fear arrest. So, some people refuse to be searched. The street patrollers either avoid groups of civilians (particularly large groups of men) who could potentially offer significant resistance, or wait to ensure that they have a numerical majority to overpower or outmaneuver potential opposition.²⁹

However, resistance is less frequent than one might expect. Despite the patent illegality of the stop-and-search procedure, and the fact that the street patrollers are unarmed, the population of Hillbrow, and of Johannesburg more generally, seems peculiarly cooperative with these sorts of enforcement procedures. There simply does not seem to be the culture of insisting on rights or questioning authority that one may find in a country like the United States. This can be illustrated by a personal experience of mine in the nearby neighbourhood of Yeoville:

I was travelling in a vehicle late at night with a couple when we were stopped by police at a seemingly *ad hoc* road block. Gail, a colleague from the university, was driving and Derrick, a prominent Human Rights Lawyer, was in the passenger's seat. I was sitting directly behind Derrick on the backseat. One officer walked to the driver's window and began questioning Gail about her license. The other officer walked directly to my side of the car and knocked on the window and said 'I'm going to search you'. I paused, waiting for Derrick's cue and anticipating that he, one of the best positioned people in the

end of a shift. However, this factor does not seem to explain the continual rise and fall of activity levels throughout the course of the shift.

²⁹ When the street patrollers encounter unexpected resistance, they will usually engage in discussions and negotiations while they wait for colleagues to arrive at the scene to establish a numerical majority.

country to question the authority of the police to conduct such a search, would do so. To my surprise he immediately got out of the vehicle and placed his hands on the bonnet and allowed the officer to search him. I followed suit. Later, when I asked him about the incident and why he hadn't protested he told me that this was South Africa, and you don't question the police in such situations.

Building on the argument outlined above, I would suggest that the stop-and-search procedure is an accepted part of the territorial infrastructure in South Africa, which regularly involves the deployment of invasive procedures: road-blocks, cordon and search operations and raids. The moment these types of action end up in the courts, the police find themselves in trouble for violating rights. However, the same officers will usually resort to the same tactics soon thereafter because, generally speaking, South African citizens tend to oblige. This is evident in the average civilian's response to the street patrollers. Once it becomes clear that the street patrollers intend to search an individual or a group, civilians often present themselves in a fashion which will make the search easier, holding their arms outstretched or simply turning and walking up against the wall.

A street patrollers' strategy of initiating a search depends less on his/her desire to establish the legal authority or physical capacity to impose him/herself on a civilian, and more on a felt need to sustain collective dignity in the midst of a mutually demeaning ordeal. While their 'stop-and-search' tactics do not necessarily augur much direct resistance or confrontation, they certainly make the street patrollers an object of scorn and derision. Sometimes this emerges in the form of direct rebukes:

Early one evening, I was sitting in the *bakkie*³⁰ with Yoliswa and Moroke. Moroke pulled up alongside a group of Senegalese men to discuss the street patrollers' recent arrest of their friend for suspicion of theft. The grounds of suspicion were spurious at best: he had several packaged deodorant cans in his bag but was not carrying a receipt that might verify his story that the cans were a recent purchase. One man yelled out at the vehicle that 'the street patrollers are full of shit!' Yoliswa immediately got out of the car and started yelling in his face to tell him to show some respect. The street patrollers 'were simply trying to protect them'.

Usually the rebukes take the form of more subtle jibes. Later that same evening we passed a group of men in the market who responded to the arrival of the street patrollers by yelling out 'Pilice! Pilice!': a play on the words 'police' and 'pillis' (a herbal laxative). Yoliswa laughed heartily at this catcall, interpreting it positively

30 Pick-up truck.

as a reference to the fact that people run everywhere when the street patrollers arrive. However, in this case she chose to ignore the close linkage between this derogation and the Senegalese man's observation earlier in the evening; that the street patrollers are 'full of shit' (or the possibility that the street patrollers might figuratively 'give you the shits' (annoy you)).

In contrast with the earlier case, Yoliswa resisted the temptation to rise to the 'Pilice' remark and confront her team's mockers, letting them have their fun. Of course, the eternal curse of the prototypical 'do-gooder' is to never quite know when you are the butt of an 'in joke'. And on this level, the playful abuse from the peanut gallery is largely innocuous and simply playful. However, I would argue that it ought to be seen as a more poignant, preventative means of shoring up personal integrity. Hillbrow pedestrians deploy these harmless but haughty critiques of the street patrollers in the full knowledge that they are relatively powerless to refuse to be searched, should the street patrollers insist. By denigrating the street patrollers with these schoolyard labels, they compensate for the fact that the street patrollers are in fact the real bullies on this playground.

Of course, Yoliswa and the remainder of the street patrollers are also not fools. They know when they are being mocked. They are also no strangers to physical confrontation. Yet, by tolerating and taking a favourable spin on some of these abuses, they allow a temporary role reversal to take place. They use their tolerance of the peanut gallery in the way a monarch would use his or her largesse; humouring their fellow civilians so long as they do not become too direct and antagonistic, as in the case of our Senegalese man. In this way, both patrollers and civilians are able to have their way, even though the former are evidently marching through and disrupting the rhythm and ambience of a night on the town.

Crucially, this collective effort to make the patrols more palatable forms part of the search itself. The searches are usually fairly abrupt and discourteous affairs, lasting approximately 5-10 seconds. A search begins when the street patroller announces 'I'm going to search you' or more simply 'Street patrollers!' Sometimes they use body language, by standing in a person's path or walking up towards them with an open gait and pointing to the wall, or signalling that the person should turn around by holding their arm in front of them, pointing their index finger to the ground and rotating their wrist in a circle. This is done with minimum explanation or verbal nicety. However, the patrollers adopt some techniques to minimise adversarial interaction. For example, while the street patrollers are strategically averse to being outnumbered, individual patrollers often approach individuals within groups. Some-

times this may be a form of intimidation, whereby a street patroller makes a bee-line for the supposed 'leader' of a group in the expectation that the remaining group members will be covered into submission. However, this tactic is usually less aggressively deployed. Instead, such approaches can be likened to a situation which plays out at school dances all over the world. The brave (or simply unlucky) teenage boys and girls who are first to ask a partner to dance help out all of their colleagues, and level mountains of collective social angst, by creating a behavioural pathway for others to follow. When an individual searcher has searched one person, this not only provides an 'ice-breaker' for other patrollers to initiate searches, but for their matching pedestrians to concede gracefully to participate in a 'dance'.

The reason for all this delicate etiquette is the simple fact that a body search is an unavoidably traumatic invasion of personal space. The nature of the search varies according to the tenor of the initial exchange and the aggressiveness of the patroller.³¹ A laidback patroller will usually give a friendly civilian a few pats around the chest and pockets from before allowing him/her to proceed.³² In contrast, an aggressive patroller may push and shove a more recalcitrant civilian, kicking his or her legs apart, vigorously searching the person's entire body while making a point to include private parts, pockets and sensitive areas. The tendency for searches to become unnecessarily violent seems to be heightened by the patrollers' lack of experience and training. Patrollers' nervous energy and lack of technical proficiency often turn mere invasions of personal space into something closer to an assault. Anyone trying to proffer more serious resistance, either by fighting or fleeing, can expect to be beaten:

We are walking through the Quartz st. market when Lucas receives a call. He talks for a few seconds and then signals to the rest of the group that we have to move. Suddenly I find myself running through the market, trying to keep up with the rest of the group. When we reach the next intersection I see Jacob running after a guy in yellow to my right. The group descends on him and he doubles back and starts heading down the street to my left. Jacob does a quick step towards him and grabs him by his pants pocket, causing the guy to spiral out of balance and bounce off a tree. He hits the deck and then gets up, but by that time the group is upon him, smacking him hard on the head and the face so that you can hear the cracking sound from across the road. A couple of late arriving patrollers stick a boot in. The guy gives in. His face is bloodied and the group quickly hand-cuff

31 Occasionally, if someone appears to be genuinely confused, the patrollers may offer a more detailed explanation of who they are and what they are doing.

32 Such searches may also take place with the civilian and street patroller facing one another, breaking one of Malumani's defensive principles, but also making the procedure less intimidating for the civilian.

him. But they get the cuffs all wrong and push them in to a point that they are pinching in on the guy's wrists and he is in severe pain – I don't think this is intentional as they quickly struggle to loosen them but the patrollers also don't seem to really know how to use the cuffs and they fumble around with him for some time. Later, Lucas tells me that the 'suspect' was being arrested for urinating in public.

I'm not sure whether most civilians are aware of the street patrollers' proclivity to violent over-reaction. Nonetheless, they tend to respond in ways that do not escalate the potential for conflict. Instead, they seek to defend their personal integrity in other, more subtle ways. For example, they might try to minimise the degree to which they are interrupted by the search. They strike up conversations with associates or begin text messaging on their cell phones. They may also signal a premature end to the search by gradually moving their body out of a prone position and into a stance where they are ready to resume walking. While these tactics may disrupt the process of the search, the street patrollers do not tend to take umbrage at these forms of non-cooperation or aloofness. In part this has to do with their own nervousness and desire for the process to be over with. This also has to do with their own feelings of shame at their role in publicly humiliating their fellow residents. In this respect, it is worth noting that the street patrollers' disposition towards their 'captives' shifts rapidly once it is clear that the latter has acquiesced to be searched. In contrast to the abrupt entry and signalling process at the beginning, the street patrollers become conciliatory, conversational and tactile. They may smile at the civilians, exchange in hand-shakes and expressions of *sharp-sharp*³³, rest their hands on the civilians' shoulders or engage in small talk about the progress of the night so far or the night ahead. Despite the fact that there seems to be less need for an introduction once the search is underway, the patrollers also become more willing to explain who they are and what they are doing at this point. Importantly, while many civilians simply want to be on their way, they are not averse to engaging in this social cleansing and humanising exchange, and may break out of their mould of aloofness, as we see in the following case of a civilian who went out of his way to make contact with a patroller:

Claim st. is a busy one-way arterial road that taxi-drivers use to race from Hillbrow into the inner city. The pavements are narrow and it would be extremely dangerous to stumble out onto the road. So, when the street patrollers confront and search groups walking in the opposite direction up Claim st., it creates bottlenecks and the searches become less structured; more a process of collective milling about. Also, the members of each group tend to be carried along by the flow of bodies as the two groups make their way through

33 It's ok, everything is cool.

one another. In one such case a young man who had been talking on his cell phone was carried away by the traffic as soon as he had been perfunctorily searched. He hadn't even made eye contact with the patroller. As this occurred, he stopped talking on his phone, extended his right arm backwards and tapped his searcher on the shoulder, giving him the thumbs up and saying 'sharp'.

In this way, the street patrollers and their fellow civilians seek to develop coping strategies for a process that in the former's minds is utterly essential, but is particularly demeaning for the latter. No one regularly makes mention of, or appeal to historical precursors. Nevertheless, the acts of communion which take place at the conclusion of each search can be seen as simultaneously forgiving these abuses, even as they smooth out the social tensions to allow them to continue to take place. In this respect, what I have called the 'territorial infrastructure' of the state can play a part in an ongoing process of abuse and reconciliation. While it is far from clear if anything of substance, particularly the pain of historical experiences, are resolved in this process, it may get us closer to understanding the sorts of forgiveness that societies are genuinely capable of (and prone to) than previous conceptions have allowed.

Concluding Remarks

At this point, it is worth returning to the themes of historical injustice and territorial transformation with which we began. In my opening discussion I suggested that we needed a conception of historical injustice that could deal more effectively with the seemingly petty infractions that, while often not featuring the heroes and villains of history, or compelling us to engage in the bowels of human depravity and cruelty, often represent the more regularised experience of people living in authoritarian states, and in some ways, are the more intractable objects of political reform. I argued that if we examined the street patrollers' activities as instances of an enduring structure of territoriality, we might be able to work our way towards a different understanding of historical injustice, which would possibly allow us to address situations in which victims become perpetrators.

In the main part of this paper I have shown that state territorial strategies have lasting and sometimes unpredictable effects. I have demonstrated how a tradition of policing which was designed to keep black and white people apart has been forged into a technique used by Hillbrow's black residents to confront their own community,

while simultaneously saving it. Furthermore, I have shown how a tradition of protest based on the reclamation of space has been moulded into a weapon to confront a local paranoia about a suburb's criminal perversity. Crucially, a lot of the responses I have reviewed in this paper take place in the greater context of a nation that has chosen a particular form of national healing, which involves more or less blanket forgiveness for many past wrongs, but has left certain variations of these wrongs unmentioned. As to what we make of Lucas and the street patrollers' positioning vis-à-vis the historical injustices they have experienced and seem to recommit, I'm still undecided. However, I think by showing them as simultaneously part of broader processes of historical change and agents in the confrontation of grand and objectifying discourses of social power, at the very least we restore some sense of dignity and autonomy to the street patrols they are engaged in. This may be the first step towards some deeper reconsideration of how their fellow civilians respond to their presence and to the feeling of being searched.

