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Dala what you must

Tracing Vernacular Practices of Togetherness within Families and Neighbourhoods in Cape Town

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Dala what you must: Tracing Vernacular Practices of Togetherness within Families and Neighbourhoods in Cape Town.

Cara Mazetti Claassen

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Science and Law

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes an alternative theorisation of urban togetherness. Located in a Southern city, Cape Town, one marked, fundamentally, by historic and on-going structures of separation, it explores how togetherness might be approached through how people always already practice togetherness through familiarity despite difference. It also pays attention to how urban togetherness is enacted both in physical and digital public spaces. More specifically, the dissertation traces vernacular practices of togetherness performed by Coloured people in Cape Town, practices which emerge as responses to the demands of everyday life as people *dala* (do) what they must to get by. While 'Coloured' is a pejorative, racial slur in many parts of the world, in South Africa it is an official, although contested, category used to describe a group of people whose history and presence evades simple binary categorisation. It embodies a complex entanglement of difference and familiarity woven together as a creole identity. Coloured peoples' vernacular practices of togetherness are explored through two entry points, each resembling varying degrees of urban familiarity: the family and the neighbourhood. Methodologically, the dissertation draws on 12 months of *in situ* and remote fieldwork, including face-to-face family interviews and observations of WhatsApp based neighbourhood mutual aid groups formed in response to COVID-19. Findings from this research coalesce three insights. First, togetherness within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town is an embodied practice, a 'doing' (*dala*) learnt through repetition. Second, this embodiment is conditioned both by physical *and* virtual spaces: togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through digital spaces. Finally, the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidence themselves as inherently ambivalent. Cities, thus, are as much about the always already small acts of practicing unity, harmony, and hope as they are problems of rupture, conflict, and trouble.

For Cape Town, and all the people who live and have lived there together.

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In the days when the going got tough it helped to remind myself that I was being paid to answer a question for three years; a great gift I was afforded through the generous funding from the University of Bristol and the Post Graduate Teaching Assistant studentship. I feel grateful to have been a part of the School of Geographical Sciences for three and a half wonderful years and would like to thank its members for being fantastic colleagues. In particular, I would like to thank Julie Mcleavy and Negar Elodie Behzadi who examined my progression report and provided invaluable input into the development of the project; Owen Crankshaw who was kind enough to listen to me waffle on about my ideas in the early days and encouraged me to try to 'make a splash' with my research; as well as Rachel Flecker, Merle Patchett and Ed Atkins who mentored and managed me in my role as a teaching assistant and had to put up with endless emails from me as I insisted on doing things differently.

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Finally, to the people whose lives, stories, neighbourhoods, and city this research is based on. Thank you for sharing your time with me, and for trusting me with your stories, your memories, and thoughts. This work is dedicated to you.

Covid Statement

I, like many other PhD students, had to reconfigure my doctoral research in response to COVID-19 for both practical and analytical reasons. When the pandemic emerged in 2020, I was in the 18th month of my PhD. I had developed a research design geared at studying urban togetherness in Cape Town through the lens of family by drawing on ethnographic methods including interviews with families in the city. When the pandemic began, I had completed a first round of interview-based fieldwork in Cape Town in January 2020, and I was due to conduct a second round in May 2020. Having established contact with a handful of families in January 2020 and interviewed one or two members from each, I hoped to return to Cape Town in May, both to conduct interviews with other members of these families and to establish connections with more families. I had also made arrangements to live in one of the neighbourhoods I was working in to deepen the ethnographic quality of the research.

The lockdowns and travel bans introduced in South Africa and England made this kind of fieldwork impossible and I was forced to reconsider the design of the research for practical reasons. I was not able to get to Cape Town to interview families. Moreover, recruiting and interviewing families remotely proved difficult as people were pre-occupied with the urgency and intensity of the pandemic. However, practical challenges aside, the pandemic also posed an analytical opportunity – to observe togetherness in crisis and through apartness. All around me people were experimenting with the practice of being together apart through various communication technologies. In Cape Town, my field site, this took the form of a mutual aid efforts organised through WhatsApp groups under the umbrella of a collective called Cape Town Together. With no way to continue the *in situ* fieldwork and family interviews I had initiated, I adapted my research design to study togetherness in Cape Town both through the lens of family (through the family interviews I had already conducted) and the lens of the neighbourhood (by means of observing the togetherness performed within these emergent mutual aid WhatsApp groups). The result is that the research suffers from the loss of deeper exploration into the practices of togetherness performed within the physical and face-to-face embodied contexts of family life, but it benefits from the addition of perspectives on togetherness through the lens of neighbourhoods and digital gathering.

Author’s Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Cara Mazetti Claassen DATE: 25 March 2022

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CAN	Community Action Network
CT	Cape Town
CTT	Cape Town Together
DA	Democratic Alliance
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
PAGAD	People Against Gangsterism and Drugs
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting commission
SAPS	South African Police Service
UK	United Kingdom

Glossary

Bantu	The several hundred indigenous languages spoken in central and southern Africa
Brasse	Brothers (in Kaaps)
Dala	Do or make (in Kaaps and isiXhosa)
Eish	Expression of resignation, annoyance, surprise, or uncertainty
Gatvol	Fed up
ǁHui !Gaeb	Cape Town (in Nama)
Kaaps	Cape
Kanala	Please (in Kaaps)
Shukran	Thank you (in Arabic)
Ubuntu	Interconnectedness/interdependence

Study Site: Cape Town's Central and Eastern Suburbs

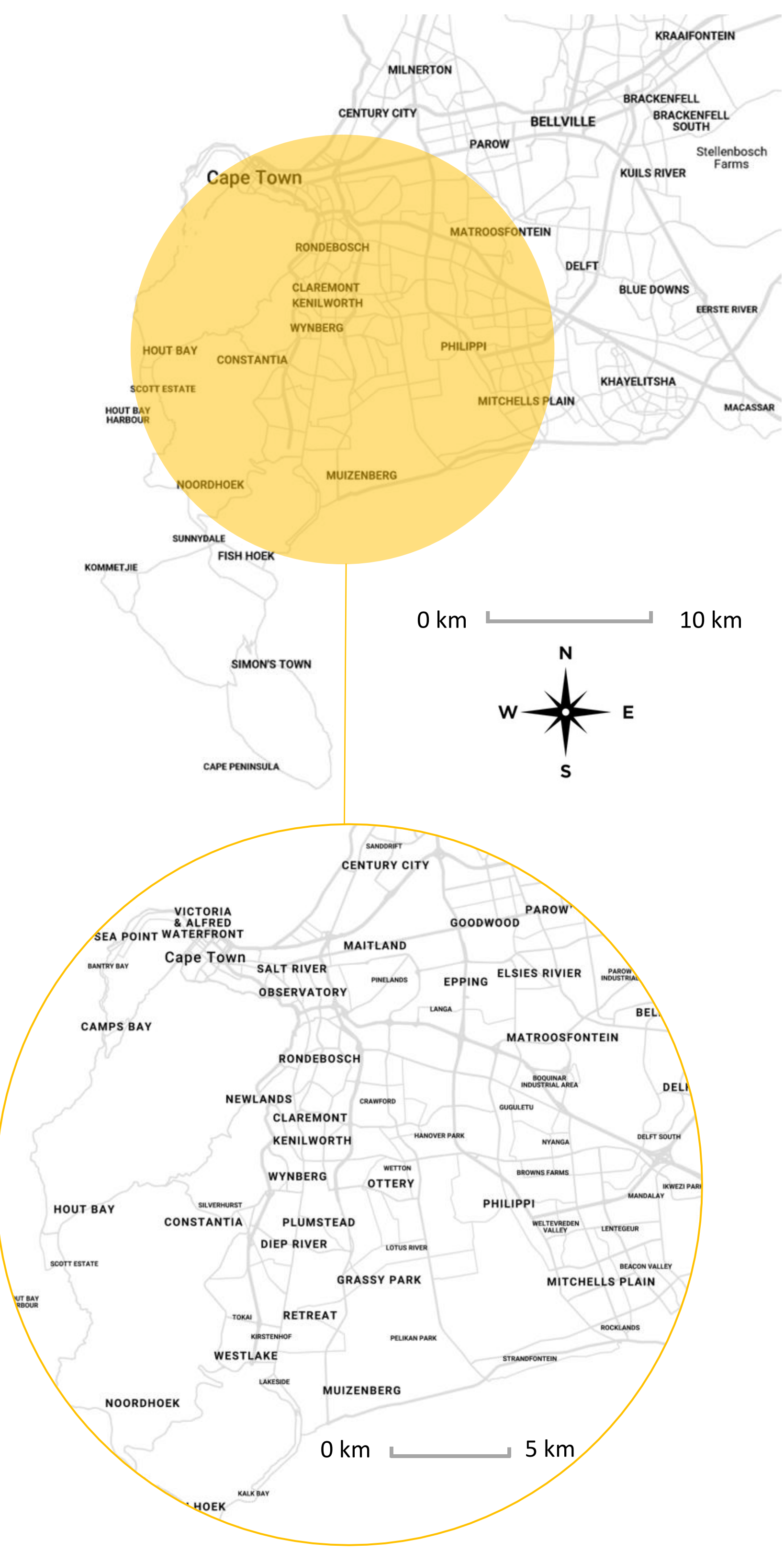

Figure 1: Neighbourhoods included in study site: Bo-Kaap, District Six, Kensington, Athlone, Retreat, Mitchells Plain, Hanover Park, Lavender Hill and Muizenberg (AfriGIS 2021)

Prologue: What's 'Together' About That?

Figure 2: 'Together Never Tasted So Good' Whiteladies Road, Bristol (Photo by the author, 2020).

On the 16th of March 2020 I shared a post on Facebook containing an excerpt from South African president Cyril Ramaphosa's address to the nation on the COVID-19 pandemic. It read:

> If we act swiftly, with purpose and collectively we can limit the effects of the coronavirus on our people and our country. Although we may be limiting physical contact, this [pandemic] has the potential to bring us closer together. We are responding as a united nation to a common threat. This national emergency demands cooperation, collaboration, and common action. More than that, it requires solidarity, understanding and compassion.

Listening to the live stream of his speech from Bristol in the UK, I was saddened to consider what the pandemic could mean for South Africa – a country with an already overburdened health care system and a large portion of the population who would not have the social protection, financial security, or material privileges to make social-distancing manageable or self-isolation possible. But at the same time, I was moved to hear the president use the word 'together' – the focus of my doctoral research. As soon as I heard it, I scrambled to find the recording function on my phone, field diary at the ready.

Ramaphosa was not the only one to invoke a sentiment of 'togetherness' when urging compliance with restrictions on gathering in the face of COVID-19. Ironically, at a time when people were cut off from one another, public communication from all corners of the world appeared to have one thing in common – an emphasis on togetherness. Suddenly the word 'together' was everywhere. It was in shop windows and on street corners encouraging people to wear masks and keep apart from one another. A sign on a building in Bristol read: 'Together, we've got this. Bristol's safely reopening. Help us keep it open by washing your hands, wearing a face covering, and keeping a safe distance from other shoppers. #BristolTogether.' A poster in a coffee shop just up the road from my office implored customers not to stand too closely together by explaining: 'We stand together by standing apart.' Another, chalked on a blackboard in a bakery in a town nearby, read: 'Let's all stand together, but not like we did before. Please follow the arrows and don't touch the doors.' The word 'together' also made its way onto shopping trolleys and card scanners encouraging people to donate to those in need. A sign on a supermarket trolley in Cape Town read: 'Together we will make a difference. Please place your donation of non-perishable groceries like long life milk, canned food, and toiletries in the trolley.' It seemed that the idea of togetherness was being used encourage social responsibility. At the same time, people were also encouraged to separate themselves from one another physically.

Apparently, togetherness was good for business too. In 2020 'togetherness' made its way into the communications of several companies. Facebook added a new 'reaction' to their collection to allow people to 'feel more connected' introducing it with the words 'Even Apart, We're in This Together.' Similarly, WhatsApp (owned by Facebook) partnered with the World Health Organisation to deliver a new 'Together at Home' sticker pack to 'boost COVID-19 messaging.' Togetherness also featured in Airbnb's 2020 communications on their app where it read 'We may be apart, but we'll get through this together.' Likewise, a customer email from my South African bank Capitec announced: 'We're better together, so help us share the hope. We will get through this together.' My favourite, however, was a board outside a frozen food shop in Bristol which read: 'Together never tasted so good' above an image of a cheesecake (Figure 2).

Not all were charmed by the lure of what sceptics might call 'togetherness washing.' In response to my post about Ramaphosa's reassurance that COVID-19 had the potential to bring people closer together, a friend (I will call her Robyn) commented: 'What is "together" about the fact that universities are closing, and many at-risk students don't have anywhere to quarantine?' In other words, how can we speak about togetherness when it also involves different and unequal experiences and hardships? How can we call something togetherness when it might involve apartness? Referring to the experience of students in South Africa who come from poor backgrounds and for whom university accommodation may be the only alternative to the cramped living conditions of their families, she referenced one of the many paradoxes of the COVID-19 pandemic in which collective action for collective interest comes with often unequally distributed individual costs. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic affects all people, but it does not affect all people equally. We may experience the pandemic together, but we are often apart in our experience of it.

Robyn's protest recognises that the kind of togetherness which the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded from people over and over again does not conform to popular understandings of togetherness. In popular imagination togetherness is synonymous with equality, solidarity, and kindness. Inequality, suffering, and conflict are seen as contrary to togetherness. Togetherness is also generally imagined as being internally consistent; it is understood as the total absence of separateness and division. I challenge these understandings of togetherness in my exploration of how people live together in cities. In doing so I trace the evidence for an understanding of togetherness as something which must be practiced, something conditioned by the materialities of physical and virtual space, and something inherently ambivalent which can therefore accommodate the contradictions wrought on the world by the COVID-19

pandemic. These contradictions, although magnified by the global public health crisis of COVID-19, are part of what it means to be human and what it means to be modern.

In *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* Marshall Berman (1983:13) writes about the contradictions and paradoxes embedded in the experience of modernity:

> To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. [...] [Modernity] is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, ''all that is solid melts into air.''

Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the city. The city is a paradox machine. Being together apart, and apart together, is precisely the paradox that public life in modern cities presents urbanites with, and with which it demands they grapple. Cities can be environments of community, civic behaviour, happiness, and well-being, and at the same time they can be 'polluted, unhealthy, tiring, overwhelming, confusing, and alienating' (Amin 2006:1011). They can be places of 'mutuality, friendship, pleasure and sociality' (Thrift 2005) as well as poor living conditions, crime, exclusion and loneliness (Amin 2006). In other words, the paradox the city offers is this: in the city people are more or less geographically together or 'thrown together' as geographer Doreen Massey (2005) would put it. And yet people do not always *feel* together – socially, culturally, economically, or politically. As Nigel Thrift (2005:140) writes:

> Cities bring people and things together in manifold combinations. Indeed, that is probably the most basic definition of a city that is possible. But it is not the case that these combinations sit comfortably with one another. Indeed, they often sit very uncomfortably together. Many key urban experiences are the result of juxtapositions which are, in some sense, dysfunctional, which jar and scrape and rend.

Understanding how people negotiate the many comforting and discomforting combinations in which cities throw them together is key to understanding how people also navigate the 'paradoxical unity', the 'unity of disunity' (Berman 1983:13), of modern life. This is the overarching research question with which this dissertation grapples, not 'How *should* or *could* people live together in the city?' but 'How *do* people *already* somehow live together in the city in multiple, ambivalent, occasionally fraught, and other times delightful ways?' This is a

question which was pushed into the forefront of my mind by my observations of the COVID-19 pandemic which I mention above but which began germinating several years prior.

In 2016 I had the fortune of living in Sheffield in the north of England where I was exposed to several projects designed to bring different people in the city together in ways that were more intentional than the fleeting everyday chance encounters of urban life. At the time I was working with Studio Polpo (a Sheffield-based social enterprise architecture practice) to launch a residential Community Land Trust in the city where people could live together in a more affordable and democratic way. When I joined, I learnt of the studio's experiments with something called OPERA: Open Public Experimental Residential Activity. OPERA involved the installation of temporary eating, living, and sleeping facilities in vacant or underused buildings where people were invited to cook together, share a meal, and stay the night. The idea was to bring people together to create dialogue about housing and empty buildings, but also about shared living. Down the road from Studio Polpo was Foodhall, a pay-as-you-feel inner city café using surplus food to 'bring everyone together' and tackle 'social isolation, social inequality, and food waste in the same mouthful!' as their website proudly reads.

Exposure to these initiatives got me asking what it would be like to try something similar in Cape Town, my home city, where the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, and the realities of inequality and crime (both experienced and perceived) work together to drive social distance between people while simultaneously reinforcing a yearning for togetherness deferred by the disappointments of democracy. This was a selfish quest. I was born in Cape Town in 1993 on the cusp of democracy in South Africa and understanding how people might achieve togetherness after decades of apartness is central to my own salvation just as it is to South Africa's. The generation born in South Africa after democracy in 1994 is referred to as 'born free'. As someone born in 1993, I was born almost free. Nevertheless, my life is bound up in anxious anticipation for togetherness in South Africa and recovery from apartheid.

Initially I had hoped to reproduce in Cape Town the experiments in living and eating together in the city that I had seen in Sheffield. The process of thinking through the practical and ethical considerations for doing so, however, led me to a what I now consider a more fundamental question: 'Are people in Cape Town somehow *already* practicing togetherness in the city in spite of the divisions wrought by the decades under colonialism and apartheid, and if so, how?' I followed a scholarship to Bristol to ask this question which I had not seen reflected in dominant writings on South Africa which have, for the most part, been engaged in asking the related but distinct question of the extent to which divisions still persist in the country.

In asking a different question of a South African city, I was led to a different way of thinking about urban togetherness in South Africa as something which must be practiced, something conditioned by the materialities of physical and virtual space, and something inherently ambivalent, performed through relations of unity, harmony, and hope as well as rupture, conflict, and trouble. In framing togetherness this way, I offer a means by which to recalibrate expectations of collective life in the city. I offer a framework for approaching urban togetherness which is tethered neither to blissful aspirations of collective harmony nor to pessimistic predictions of inevitable discord but seeks out, instead, a middle ground with and through the inherently ambivalent experience of coexistence in the city of Cape Town.

1. Introduction

Figure 3: Togetherness Mural - Kings Road, London (Photo by the author, 2021)

An Overview

The togetherness of modern city life, with its ceaseless opportunities for both interaction and withdrawal, has long troubled urban theorists and remains central to contemporary urban studies (Fincher, Iveson, Leitner and Preston 2019:9). From early 20th century efforts by scholars like Georg Simmel (1903), Robert Park (1916) and Louis Wirth (1928) who sought to explain constitutive tensions of spatial proximity and social division, to more contemporary theorisations through encounter (Wilson 2016), cosmopolitanism (Vertovec and Cohen 2002a), conviviality (Gilroy 2015), and 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005), the question of how people live together, and the challenge of how they might best live together in cities, continues to be central to understanding modern urban life today, perhaps, more than ever.

Increasing urbanisation and expanding global mobility mean that city processes are throwing more and more people together. At the same time, the rise of remote communication technologies means that people come together and separate online regardless of where they are in the city, or indeed, the world. Theorising these processes has frequently taken three forms. First, a focus on the Global North often reads urban togetherness as a problem created by migration which introduces difference into cities. Togetherness consequently becomes framed, second, as a question of how urbanites negotiate ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious differences. And third, attention is predominantly given to the physicality of public space, with comparatively little attention given to how new digital interfaces increasingly constitute public gathering. In all three approaches togetherness is articulated through the dilemma of difference as its framing grammar.

This dissertation contributes an alternative theorisation of urban togetherness. Located in a Southern city, Cape Town, one marked by historic and on-going structures of separation, it explores how togetherness might be approached not through difference alone but through difference *and* familiarity by tracing how people practice urban togetherness in spite of difference through two constellations of familiarity – the family and the neighbourhood. This dissertation also pays attention to how urban togetherness is enacted both in physical and digital public spaces.

As a site of enduring engagement with the question of what it means to live together with difference *and* familiarity pivoting on questions of race, religion, class and language, Cape Town as a post-apartheid settler colonial city offers not only an example of the challenges posed by - and conflict associated with - difference and division, but also provides new insights into the progressive possibilities of familiarity as a way through which to understand practices of togetherness in addition to difference. In writing from and about Cape Town I explore both

that which is unique to this city, and that which might help scholars understand how togetherness is practiced and experienced in cities elsewhere.

While Cape Town shares with other South African cities its legacy of apartheid still evident in its segregated urban form and stark socio-economic inequalities, what makes it unique is that it has historically been defined by a demographic group of people who embody, perhaps more so than any other group, the kind of ambivalent togetherness with which this research is concerned. Historically, this group has been categorised under the term 'Coloured'. 'Coloured' is one of four official racial categories used by the apartheid government along with 'Black African[1]', 'Indian/Asian' and 'White' to classify people. In South Africa today 'Coloured' refers to persons grouped together in the past for sharing mixed ancestry combining indigenous, colonial and slave heritages which first coalesced in Cape Town (Adhikari 2009; Leggett 2004). 'Coloured' thus holds a particular meaning in South Africa in that it refers to a person of mixed racial ancestry dating back to the origins of the city of Cape Town rather than a person who is Black, as it does in other parts of the world where 'Coloured' is a pejorative, racial slur (Adhikari 2009:xi).

According to historian Vivian Bickford-Smith (2012:138) the term 'Coloured' emerged in Cape Town in the 19th century when the Cape was a British colony and was initially used both by European settlers to describe all people who were not European (including indigenous people, Black people from other parts of Africa, slaves and people of mixed parentage born in the colony) and by people who used the term to distinguish themselves from European settlers and native Africans. This latter group included Muslim slaves from South East Asia and their descendants who became known as 'Malays' as well as people who adopted the Christianity of the settlers (Ibid) and represented a heterogenous labouring class who over time developed a shared identity defined by a common socio-economic status given their incorporation into the lower ranks of Cape colonial society and a religious split between Islam and Christianity which still persists (Adhikari 2009:xi).

In 1950 the apartheid government formalised racial categories in South Africa under the Population Registration Act and 'Coloured' became one of four distinct groups into which South Africans were divided (Adhikari 2009). The group referred to as 'Coloured' in Cape Town today remains divided between people whose families subscribe to Islam (sometimes referred to as 'Cape Malay' – a nod to their ancestors who arrived in Cape Town as slaves from South East Asia) and people whose families subscribe to Christianity (sometimes referred to as 'Cape Coloureds' – indicating those families whose ancestors adopted the religion of the settlers and their missionaries). In South Africa, 'Colouredness' has therefore

[1] Hereafter referred to as 'Black' for brevity.

always represented an identity which is both imposed *and* claimed. As a result, it remains a term embraced by some and contested by others as people continue to grapple with its historic complexity and ambiguity (Erasmus 2017; Leggett 2004:21; Wicomb 1998).

On the one hand, 'Coloured' is understood by some as a product of European racist ideology used to classify and control people by enforcing race-based categories and segregation policies (Adhikari 2009:xi) which defined coloured people in a doubly negative manner as those who were not only 'in-between White and Black', but both non-White and non-Black (Erasmus 2017; Western 1996:9). As a result, there have been calls for different ways in which Coloured identity might find expression, particularly since the early 1990s when apartheid came to an end. As Adhikari (2009:xviii) explains:

> Within South Africa's Coloured community there is a tentativeness about whether members should express their identity as Black, as African, as South African, as Coloured, as Khoisan or as descendants of slaves, or whether they should make a stand on the principle of non-racism – or what combination of these forms of self-understanding are pertinent in what contexts.

'Khoisan' (also referred to as the Khoesan) is an example of another label with a somewhat fluid and changing expression. Khoisan denotes the grouping of two indigenous communities, known separately as the Khoi (also referred to as the Khoekhoen and Khoikhoi) and San people. As du Plessis (2019:1-2) explains, the Khoi (from the word for 'person' in the Nama and Kora languages) were mobile herders of the old Cape[2] and the Gariep[3], while the San (at times referred to as 'Bushmen') were smaller communities who survived almost exclusively by hunting and gathering. For some, Khoisan is a useful grouping of the collective first nation's peoples in South Africa, while for others blurring the differences which make these Khoi and San communities distinct is seen as hurtful and offensive.

On the other hand, there are those people who claim and embrace Colouredness as an anchor for historical and cultural belonging, and others yet who express affiliations both with Coloured- and other heritages. For example, in the translated excerpts below Kyle[4] (Interview, 25

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[2] 'Old Cape' refers to the province now known as the Western Cape.
[3] The Gariep river has been known by different names (including *!Garib, !Kai Garib*, and *Groote Rivier)* but is now most commonly known as the Orange River. It is the longest river in South Africa and extends from Namibia to Lesotho, cutting across South Africa and flowing through the Northern Cape, Free State and Eastern Cape provinces).
[4] I preserve participants' anonymity and privacy by changing their identifying details and assigning them pseudonyms except where I cite public figures who are on the public record. Where pseudonyms have been used, they reflect names common among Coloured Capetonians. Without mentioning actual names, I nevertheless want to express appreciation to everyone who has spoken with me, given of their time and energy, and made this work possible.

November 2019) explains how he claims his indigenous heritage while identifying with what he calls a 'Coloured community' around him in Mitchells Plain on the Cape Flats. Kyle also explains how 'everyone has their own names' with which they are comfortable being identified illustrating the multiple allegiances to identity, heritage and belonging that people claim. At the end of the excerpt, Kyle mentions the common phrase 'my Coloured *brasse'* meaning 'my Coloured brothers' which infers a sense of belonging pivoting on the shared identity of Colouredness, contested as it is, explaining how something is lost when rephrased as 'My brown brothers'.

> *Some people don't like to be called Coloured. Like … ek sal se: 'Ek is 'n Khoisan and I live in a Coloured community.' Ek sien nie fout om Coloured te wees nie although they call it a derogatory term, Coloured.*
>
> *We are all coming from here, on the Cape Flats. So, everybody got their own names what they want to be called or how they want to be called. It's just different people is comfortable with different names.*
>
> *You understand what I'm saying now? We say: 'My Coloured brasse'. Hoe gaan ek nou se: 'My bruin brasse'? So, all the slang - dit kom van ons af.*
>
> Some people don't like to be called Coloured. Like… I would say: 'I am a Khoisan and I live in a Coloured community.' I don't see an issue with being Coloured, although they call it a derogatory term, Coloured.
>
> We are all coming from here, on the Cape Flats. So, everybody has their own names for what they want to be called. It's just that different people are comfortable with different names.[5]
>
> Do you understand what I'm saying now? We say: 'My Coloured brothers.' How could I now say: 'My brown brothers'? So, all the slang – it comes from us.

Kyle's words illustrate how people have different relationships to the idea of 'Colouredness.' For some it is implicit to who they are, for others it is experienced as something imposed, while others claim it proudly, and for others yet it is a non-issue. The multiplicity and complexity of

[5] Language is a part of identity expression. To relay as much of the meaning expressed by the speaker, when quoting participants I include their original phrasing first, and then add my translation. This is done partly to represent what was actually said but also to speak to the varied ways in which people use language to construct meaning, perform identity and create connection through conversation. Here I have translated Kyle's speech which combines English, Afrikaans and Kaaps. Hereafter, all translations from Afrikaans or Kaaps to English are my own (unless otherwise stated).

identity which Kyle's explanation speaks to is not something I attempt to resolve in this dissertation. As a White South African it is certainly not my place to do so. Instead, I write from and with the complexity and multiplicity with which the people represented in this research have articulated their identities to me. I take my cue from them. I use the terms 'Coloured' and 'Coloured community' as they do, acknowledging that these are words used to refer to a group of people who share an association with an identity imposed on all and claimed by some without dismissing the other ways in which people articulate their identity. I capitalise 'Coloured' (as I do other racial terms) in order to signify its continued official status as a race category in South Africa. In doing so I take my cue from South African scholar Zimitri Erasmus (2017:147) who argues that simply writing 'Coloured' as a descriptive term 'erases its history, its contestation and its official status.' What connects the people represented in this research is membership to a particular experience of togetherness in South Africa determined by being legally categorised as Coloured. In using this term, I acknowledge the ways in which people are multiple, and in doing so how togetherness too is multiple and ambivalent – a viewpoint made possible by working from and with Cape Town.

The research question introduced in the prologue: 'Are people in Cape Town somehow already practicing togetherness in the city in spite of the spatial and social divisions wrought by the decades under colonialism and apartheid?' is a question of whether there is justification for understanding South Africa through something other than a metanarrative of apartness or indeed race. Conventional approaches to this question have sought out evidence of racial integration. This dissertation, on the other hand, goes looking for evidence of togetherness elsewhere, and in the folds of social fabric that make Cape Town what it is – Coloured families and neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats – it finds evidence of practices of togetherness which exist alongside apartheid's legacy of difference and division.

This dissertation argues, therefore, that there are grounds on which to understand South Africa through something other than a metanarrative of apartness or indeed race not because apartness and race are not relevant to social processes in the country but because there are other factors shaping social processes which are exposed when enquiry is expanded from a narrow focus on apartness to a focus on ambivalent togetherness (the coexistence of apartness with togetherness) which is enabled by paying attention to the practices of a group defined neither as Black nor White but which occupies instead an ambivalent middle space, in other words Coloured People.

That the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town represent a chapter of the broader South African story worth telling, not only for its own sake but for advancing an understanding of South Africa and urban togetherness more

broadly is the bold claim this dissertation makes. It is a claim which speaks to Wicomb's (1998:105) argument that the experience of 'multiple belongings' and participation in multiple 'micro-communities whose interests conflict and overlap' which defines the experience of Colouredness might provide an alternative mode of practicing cultural life in South Africa as well as to Nuttall's (2004:736) suggestion that 'it might be argued that a new method of reading South Africa relies on the history of the Cape.'

To advance an additional method of reading South Africa this dissertation uses two constellations of familiarity (the family and the neighbourhood) to trace the vernacular practices of togetherness performed by a group that is racially constructed but goes beyond its racial construction by practicing togetherness through multiple 'belongings' and 'micro-communities whose interests conflict and overlap' in everyday life in Cape Town (Wicomb 1998:105). Although instances of racial division and integration emerge, they are not the focus of the research. My intention here is by no means to imply that race is not fundamentally important to the question of togetherness in South Africa, but rather to explore whether there are additional lenses through which to study togetherness which may provide insights into how people live together in South African cities hitherto obscured by a near exclusive focus on race.

Methodologically, this dissertation draws on 12 months of *in situ* and remote fieldwork, including face-to-face family interviews and observations of WhatsApp based neighbourhood mutual aid groups called Community Action Networks (CANs) formed in response to COVID-19 as part of a collective called 'Cape Town Together.' The research findings coalesce three insights. First, togetherness is neither an innate, so-called 'natural' condition, nor is it an undisputed endpoint of political and social striving; it is a fraught, ongoing practice, a 'doing' (*dala*), learnt through repetition and attentive to the conditions of its own constitution. *Dala* is a colloquial term which forms part of the Kaaps (from *Kaapse Afrikaans* or Cape Afrikaans) dialect spoken by some Coloured people in Cape Town. Perhaps borrowed from its use in isiXhosa to describe 'bringing into existence', in Kaaps its usage is fluid and can be applied in different contexts. However, its most common application is perhaps in the vernacular Kaaps expression '*dala* what you must' meaning 'do what you need to.' Here *dala* is used both to infer action and to infer necessity.

Second, practices of togetherness are conditioned both by physical *and* virtual spaces: togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats (referring to the low-lying neighbourhoods southeast of the city centre to which Coloured people were forcibly relocated during apartheid), and the remoteness of engagement through the digital spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups. Third, the

practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidence themselves as inherently ambivalent. Cities, thus, are as much about the small acts of unity, harmony, and hope as they are about the challenges of rupture, conflict, and trouble. Moreover, I argue that it is precisely this potential for ambivalence which characterises urban togetherness, defines its transformative potential, and motivates the necessity of practicing togetherness.

This research is entangled with personal motivations. I was born in Cape Town. I spent the first 12 years of my life living between a farm and several small towns outside the Cape Town area and moved to the city for secondary and tertiary education. I lived in Cape Town for nearly a decade before moving North to Johannesburg, and then abroad to live and study in England where I find myself now. Identity politics surrounding race, language, age, gender, and sexuality carry significance in South Africa. In short, one's identity matters and, more often than not, it impacts the dynamics of social interactions. I am of Italian, and colonial Dutch descent. This is evident in my middle name 'Mazetti' (my mother's last name) and my last name 'Claassen' (also my father's last name) which incidentally is also a common Coloured last name in South Africa and in Cape Town, albeit with differing spellings. But I am not Coloured. Neither are my parents or grandparents. They are White. And because of this they were considered by the apartheid government to be 'first class' citizens, a position which came at the expense of Coloured people, considered 'second class' citizens as well as Indian, Asian, and Black people who were all afforded varied unequal citizenship status under apartheid's racial hierarchy.

Although apartheid with its 'enforced geographies of separation' (Steyn and Ballard 2013:1) was abolished in 1994, the year after I was born, rendering all South Africans equal under the law of the new, democratic South Africa, in almost every way I am still a first class citizen. I am privileged because of the colour of my skin and the unfair advantages it has afforded me and my ancestors before me relative to Black, Coloured and/or Indian/Asian people sometimes referred to as 'previously disadvantaged' - many of whom are, in reality, still disadvantaged because of the interplay of history and the colour of their skin and the unequal opportunities that has- and continues to- afford them.

In conducting this research in the homes and digital neighbourhood spaces of Coloured Capetonians, I have asked people who hold memories and stories of a time when people who looked like me barred them from sharing 'their' neighbourhoods, buses, beaches, and benches to open their lives to me, to sit and speak with me, and to answer my questions about what life in Cape Town was like for them in the past and what it is like now. As the words of Ronelda

Kamfer's poem below read, I have asked participants to sit at a table with the descendent of their forefathers' enemy, to 'nod and say hello', to 'laugh and eat together' with me.

Waar ek staan [6]
- Ronelda Kamfer

Nou sit ek om 'n tafel
met my voorvaders se vyande
Ek knik en groet bedagsaam
maar
êrens diep binne my
weet ek waar ek staan

My hart en kop is oop
en soos goed opgevoede mense
lag en eet ons saam
maar
êrens diep binne my
weet ek waar ek staan

Where I stand
- Ronelda Kamfer

Now I sit at a table
with my forefather's enemies
I nod and say hello
but
deep inside
I know where I stand

My heart and head are open
and like well brought up folks
we laugh and eat together
but
somewhere deep inside me
I know where I stand

The question I ask with this dissertation - 'Are people in Cape Town somehow already practicing togetherness in the city in spite of the spatial and social divisions wrought by the decades under colonialism and apartheid?' - is as much a personal one as it is an intellectual one, and I bring to it a genuine, selfish, and anxious desire for an answer. Cape Town is not merely a field site and a case study. It is also a city I have called home for a long time. But, as Godbole (in Lunn 2014:86) writes '"home" is a complex concept.' Through the fieldwork which informs this research I occupied the positions of both insider and an outsider: fellow Capetonian and someone of a different racial, cultural, religious, and, in some cases, economic background. All of this I bring to my research – to my subjective assumptions about reality, my questions, my analysis, and my engagement with participants. And it demands a

[6] Translation read by Ronelda Kamfer on *Writing a New South Africa, Cape Town: Place and Contested Space* a documentary by the British Broadcasting Corporation (The BBC 2015)

reflexive and careful approach and renders my findings necessarily partial (Becker, Boonzaier and Owen 2005; Bourke, Butcher, Chisonga, Clarke, Davies and Thorn 2009; Rose 1997).

Introducing Togetherness

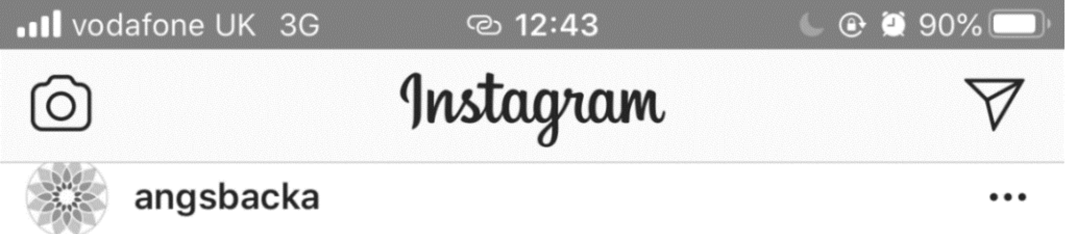

Figure 4: Togetherness - The Pleasant Feeling (Screenshot of Instagram post by the author, 2020)

I use the concept of togetherness as a centrepiece for studying and understanding social life in the city. Like community, togetherness works as a short-hand for what it means to be human, to be social and to be urban (Neal, Bennett, Cochrane and Mohan 2019:72). Moreover Simmel

(1949:255) explains that 'in many, perhaps in all, European languages, the word "society" (Gesellschaft) indicates literally "togetherness."' In his piece 'Togetherness: Intersubjectivity Revisited' Italian philosopher and psychotherapist Manu Bazzano (2014:209) provides a definition of togetherness which draws on its Germanic origin in which it means 'to gather.' He explains that togetherness 'indicates the gathering into proximity, companionship, and shared endeavour of individual components, without relegating aloneness and uniqueness to the background' (Ibid). There are two aspects of this definition which I would like to draw attention to as they underpin fundamental distinctions with which togetherness is regarded in this research. The first is the capacity and potential for apartness (indicated by the words 'aloneness' and 'uniqueness') within togetherness. This leads onto the second, and perhaps most important aspect of togetherness for this research: its apparent paradoxicality and inherent ambivalence – suggested by the seemingly contradictory existence of apartness within togetherness. This treatment of togetherness departs from its uses in popular discourse which almost always includes a positive inflection. For example, the togetherness referenced in the COVID-19 communications which I mention in the prologue to this dissertation is largely intended to signal solidarity and camaraderie. Togetherness is often understood the way Ängsbacka (see Figure 4 above) interprets it as 'The pleasant feeling of being united with other people in friendship and understanding.'

The version of togetherness I employ in this dissertation deviates from this rosy imagination of the concept and finds footing instead in the ambivalent articulations of togetherness shared by Bazzano (2014:209) for whom to be together in the world is to be in a state of both relation and separation. By conceptualising togetherness as ambivalent, this research offers a different way of imagining what togetherness could look like in cities; one that like Bazzano's (2014:203) definition 'appreciates the realities of conflict and disparity alongside mutuality, and the dimensions of solitude and autonomy alongside relatedness.' Support for this approach to conceptualising togetherness can be found in Thrift's (2005) writing on the fraughtness of cities. In his piece 'But Malice Aforethought: Cities and The Natural History of Hatred' Thrift (2005:139) writes:

> …achieving sociality does not mean that everything has to be rosy: sociality is not the same as liking. In particular, it seems likely that from an early age interactional intelligence, at least in Western cultures, is also premised on exclusion and even aggression.

A further deviation from popular applications of togetherness is that I distinguish between experiences and practices of togetherness. By experiences of togetherness, I refer to the largely inescapable state of *being* together in the world. This is the condition of modern, and

certainly urban, life where people are always, in some sense, together either physically through proximity or virtually through connectivity or indeed both. This is wat makes the quip 'We're all in this together' popularised by the COVID era somewhat of an ontological given, and it is what Massey (2005) would call 'throwntogetherness' – the kind of togetherness people find themselves part of in spite of any effort on their part. The experience of togetherness is a constant such that apartness in absolute terms becomes an illusion. The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us just how 'together' people are. It revealed how difficult it is to achieve and maintain distance on narrow sidewalks and grocery store aisles, between households and friendship groups, and simultaneously how possible it is to 'connect' with colleagues, friends, family and strangers over virtual meeting platforms and social media if one has the means to do so.

By practices of togetherness, on the other hand, I refer to the acts and habits involved in *becoming* together. Practices of togetherness can be formal or informal, organised or spontaneous - a community meeting or a chat with a stranger on a bus, a march, or a stampede, collectively keeping a prescribed two-meter distance in a line or crowding around a busker to listen to their music. The practice of togetherness is wrapped up in the experience of urban life. However, experiences and practices of togetherness although differentiated are not mutually exclusive. When practiced, togetherness is also experienced, but togetherness can be experienced without deliberate practice. Practices and experiences of togetherness intersect to create complex and at times paradoxical configurations of social life. Just as one may find divorce, death, and estrangement in a family, so too may one find oneself alone in a crowd in the city. One can 'be' together without 'becoming' together; proximity does not guarantee any relational primacy (Amin 2007; Massey 2005).

In speaking to the COVID-19 zeitgeist in which 'togetherness' was invoked everywhere from corporate messaging to frozen food advertisements, I use the concept of togetherness (in its form as an experience and as a practice) as an anchor for understanding and studying social life in the city in three ways. First, I regard the experience of togetherness as a reality of urban life, and I use this ontological position as a starting point for my research. Second, I use the practice of togetherness as an epistemological framework for building knowledge about social life in the city. In other words, I trace urbanites' practices of togetherness to understand how people navigate the togetherness of cities. And third, I use the practice of togetherness as a methodology - by which I mean that I use the ways in which people practice togetherness through gathering and conversing in physical and digital spaces as a means with which to engage participants and understand their broader practices of togetherness.

The approach to togetherness employed in this research departs both from the popular theorisation of togetherness through a grammar of difference and the more local, South African, interpretation of togetherness as synonymous with integration and therefore anathema to apartness or segregation. It is an approach which begins with familiarity *and* difference by exploring urban togetherness through the lenses of family and neighbourhood – both constellations of familiarity in the city. Although difference and apartness are very much present within families and neighbourhoods as they are in cities, working through a grammar of familiarity *and* difference offers something that working through a grammar of difference does not only does not: it highlights the ways in which people rehearse and learn the practice of togetherness through familiarity even in contexts of difference and division.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is comprised of eight substantive chapters. Having introduced the focus, parameters and rationale of the dissertation and my positionality as a 'citizen anthropologist' (Cheater 1987) writing about my home city, a in **Chapter One** (Introduction), **Chapter Two** (Theorising Togetherness) illustrates how togetherness has historically been theorised through the dilemma of difference both in and out of South Africa and makes the case for familiarity as an additional lens through which to view togetherness and make sense of its inherent ambivalence. It does so by using South Africa as an example of a context in which difference has long provided an obvious entry point for observing social relations, particularly in urban settings where difference is most concentrated, and in which familiarity may offer insights hidden by an exclusive focus on difference. The first part of the chapter illustrates how and why international scholarly engagement with the question of how people live together in cities typically frames togetherness as a question of how urbanites negotiate difference and focusses on the ways in which urbanites avoid or engage with difference in the physical public spaces in the city without much consideration for the role played by digital public spaces. The second half of the chapter puts this body of international scholarship into dialogue with South African scholarship on togetherness. It explains that where scholarship on the Global North is concerned with difference introduced into cities through processes of migration such that togetherness becomes a question of how people do or might relate to foreign Others, in South Africa (where apartheid crystalised logics of difference based on race) togetherness is largely understood as a question of racial integration between South Africans. It is against this backdrop that I advocate an approach to urban togetherness through attentiveness to relations of familiarity *and* difference which reveals urban togetherness as inherently ambivalent.

Chapter Three (Cape Town: Where Clouds Gather Together) borrows its name from the Nama word for Cape Town ǁ*Hui !Gaeb* which translates to 'the place where clouds gather together' as they can be seen to do when the 'South-Easter' wind blows and forms a tablecloth of cloud over the city's iconic Table Mountain. Chapter Three introduces Cape Town as the research site for this dissertation and attempts to convey some sense of the place and society that Cape Town is as an ambivalent, multiple, and contested city and home to a group of people whose lives in the city can similarly be approached through the lenses of multiplicity, ambivalence, and contest. On the one hand I strive to locate this research and its entry points of family and neighbourhood in their immediate spatial and social context. And, on the other hand, I attempt to reiterate why, through a focus on Coloured people, Cape Town is a useful case for studying urban togetherness through familiarity in a way that does not shy away from the challenges associated with life together in a settler colonial city but nevertheless lends

itself to three insights which I develop in the empirical chapters five, six and seven. These are, first, the potential of repeated practice in shaping repertoires for togetherness, second, the importance of physical *and* digital spaces in conditioning these repertoires and, third, the salience of ambivalence as a characteristic of experiences and practices of togetherness.

Chapter Four (Togetherness as Method) outlines the ways in which the methodology used in this dissertation unfolded as I responded to the requirements of the question of how Coloured people practice togetherness through family and neighbourhood in Cape Town while navigating the ethical questions posed by traditional and digital qualitative research and the practical constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. What emerged is a hybrid methodology shaped by two key approaches. First, it is heavily place-based in that it treats Cape Town, the site in which this research is located, as significant. Second, it combines traditional *in situ* ethnographic methods of family interviews and time spent in Cape Town during two two-month-long field trips with six months of virtual presence and observation on five neighbourhood WhatsApp groups during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic to explore the practice of togetherness through the entry points of family and neighbourhood.

In the three chapters that follow I present the findings from this research. I begin with **Chapter Five** (*Dala* what you must: Togetherness as Practice) where I draw on practice theory to frame togetherness as a practice and explore the ways in which togetherness is learnt through 'mind-body' activities when people do *(dala)* what they must to get by in the city. This chapter considers the ways in which togetherness is practiced and learnt through the routines demanded by the everyday life of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. Here I explain how togetherness is motivated by necessity produced from familial obligations. In other words, it is peoples' familiar relations through the family and neighbourhood which both demand togetherness and provide opportunities for its rehearsal.

The following chapter, **Chapter Six** (The Spaces of Togetherness), considers the physical places of the city as well as the digital places of neighbourhood mutual aid WhatsApp groups (CANs) as materialities which enable and mediate repertoires of togetherness in Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. This chapter explains how togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through the digital spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups. In the third empirical chapter**, Chapter Seven** (Togetherness as an Ambivalent Practice), I build on practice theory by discussing a quality of togetherness as a practice not yet accommodated within the existing remit of practice theory. This is the idea of togetherness

as an ambivalent practice, one that manifests in both hopeful and troubling ways and involve both unity and rupture as well as harmony and conflict.

Chapter Eight (Integration and Conclusion) uses the idea of ‘integration’ to bring the preceding chapters together into a distillation of this dissertation’s approach to understanding togetherness. I use this chapter to bring together the various parts that have made up this dissertation by reflecting on what I have learnt about combining traditional qualitative methods with experimental digital methods to study social processes of togetherness in Cape Town, on what this approach has taught me about togetherness and how my findings relate to other scholarship on togetherness, and ultimately by reflecting on what I have learnt about myself as a ‘citizen anthropologist’ (Cheater 1987) researching my home city.

2. Theorising Togetherness

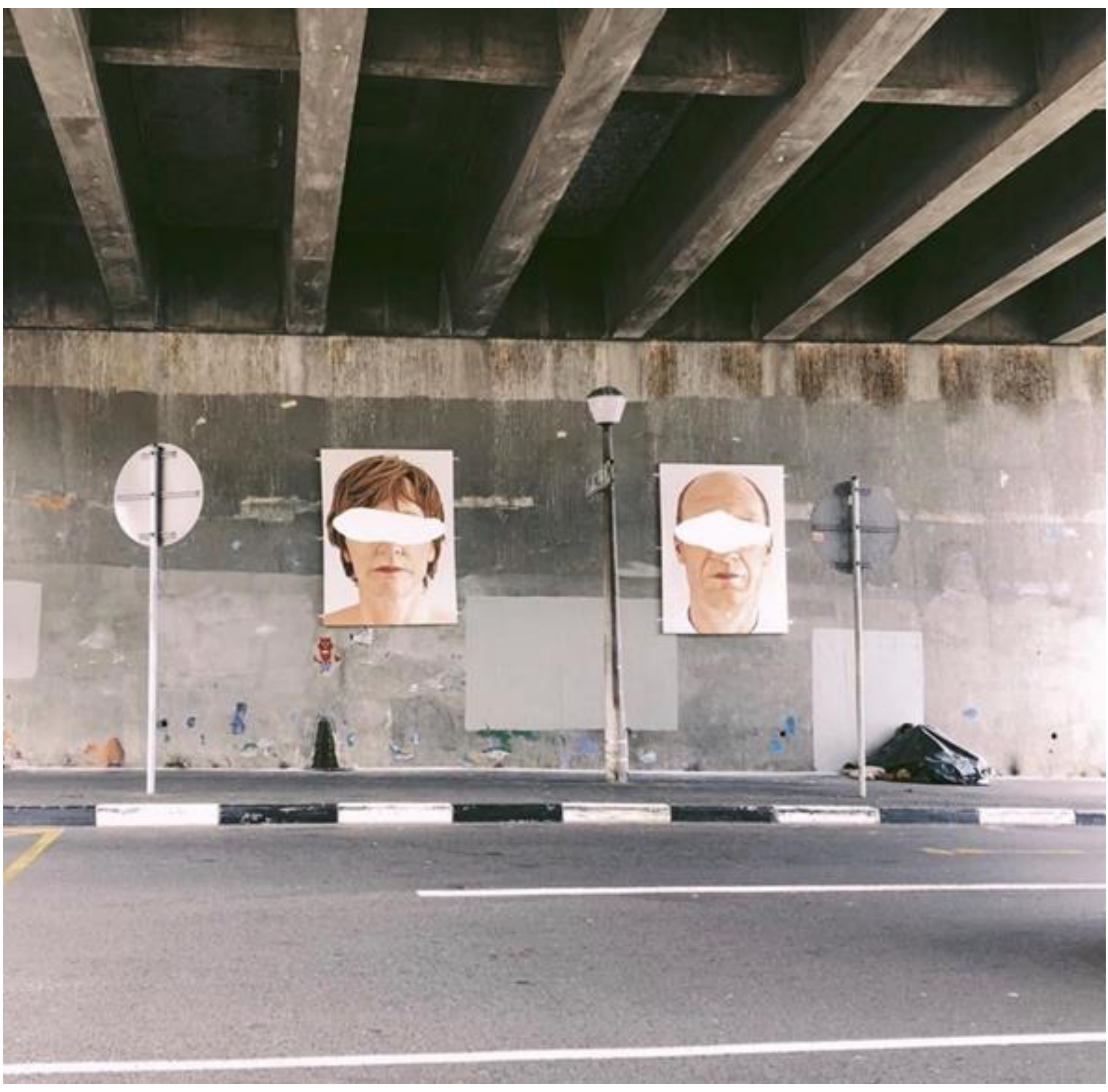

Figure 5: Portraits of White people with gazes obscured hang above a person sleeping under black plastic - Gardens, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2019)

Introduction

In this chapter I illustrate how togetherness has historically been theorised through the dilemma of difference both in and out of South Africa and I make the case for familiarity as an additional lens through which to view togetherness and make sense of its inherent ambivalence. My suggestion is not that difference be replaced with familiarity as a way of understanding social processes in the city. Rather I suggest that when attempting to understand how, when, where and why urbanites come together and separate in the city scholars might look at the ways in which people are simultaneously connected and separated through chosen and imposed allegiances to multiple affiliations and how urbanites negotiate this 'unity of disunity' (Berman 1983:13), this ambivalent togetherness, defined as much by relations of unity, hope, harmony and familiarity as it is by relations of crupture, trouble, conflict and difference.

Attentiveness to the ambivalence of togetherness has been somewhat lost in scholarship on cities in South Africa and elsewhere in attempts to grapple with the ever present, ever pressing 'dilemma of difference'. In other words, the relative erasure of familiarity as a way of thinking about how people live together in cities can be put down to the reality that much suffering has been experienced in cities under the name of difference, and so unfamiliarity and otherness have demanded urgent attention, scholarly and otherwise. Perhaps no better example of the salience of difference exists than South Africa where an entire poltical system was created to keep people apart, particularly in the places they would otherwise come together most – cities. As a result, South Africa, and South African cities – often imagined as 'paradigms of urban division and exclusion' (Pieterse 2009:1) – have largely been read through the lens of difference defined by otherness and unfamiliarity.

This chapter traces scholarly engagement with the question of how people live together in cities both in South Africa and elsewhere and shows how efforts to theorise togetherness have taken three dominant forms. First, in scholarship from the Global North there is a tendency to frame togetherness through the dilemma of difference produced by transnational migration which introduces otherness into cities (van Leeuwen 2010). Second, togetherness then becomes a question of how urbanites negotiate ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious differences 'thrown together' in the city (Massey 2005). In South Africa where historical processes of slavery, colonialism, and racism have produced an endemic imagination of difference defined primarly through race, togetherness is framed as a question of racial integration particularly between White and Black South Africans. And third, in both South African- and international- scholarship on togetherness attention is predominantly given to the

physicality of public urban spaces with comparatively little attention paid to how digital spaces increasingly accommodate togetherness. In all three approaches, however, togetherness is articulated almost exclusively through the dilemma of difference.

In these scholarly engagements with togetherness what is meant by difference is largely implied. Yet, when unpacked, difference can reveal multiple meanings, and it is not always apparent when invoked in scholarship on togetherness which is intended. Difference is typically used to imply both that which is other and that which is unfamiliar. Yet notions of sameness and otherness or familiarity and unfamiliarity can be configured in ways that suggest that what it means to be different is not always straightforward. For example, while otherness can be unfamiliar, as in the case of a stranger, it can also be very familiar, as in the case of family. A different person can simply be an other (another) person, not me but you and yet familiar all the same. One's child, parent, or sibling is a different person despite them being familiar (and indeed familial). On the other hand, through shared spaces, knowledges, histories, interests, or experiences, people who are unfamiliar to one another (strangers) can share known and unknown similarities in addition to their multiple disparities. The point I try to make here is that familiarity and unfamiliarity can intersect in ways such that difference does not always preclude familiarity. This is not a new idea. In her book *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt (1998:52) describes the coexistence of relatedness and separateness that defines what it means to live together: 'To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.'

It is against this backdrop that I position an alternative theorisation of ambivalent togetherness which uses familiarity (invoked both on- and offline) as its organising grammar and argue that answers to the question of how people live together in cities can be found by observing encounters with familiarity in addition to encounters with difference. Through this framing I resurrect long established tropes of the city employed by scholars such as Jane Jacobs (1961), Richard Sennett (1999; 2001) and Ash Amin (2006; 2007; 2008) which recognise the city's capacity for connection alongside its capacity for alienation and have been cast aside in readings of the city through a lens of difference and division, especially in places like South Africa where racial difference formed the basis of institutionalised division under apartheid.

The Dilemma of Difference

The 'dilemma of difference' can be traced back to some of the earliest attempts to grapple with what Massey (2005) later called the 'throwntogetherness' of cities. According to Simmel (1903:11-12) and later Wirth (1938:12) both writing at the beginning of the 20th century, the difference between cities and other forms of co-dwelling like villages is size, density and difference itself. In 'Metropolis and Mental Life', Simmel (1903:12) describes the cities of the 20th century as places of 'pronounced differences', 'fluctuations' and 'discontinuities' which could be 'grasped at a single glance'. To cope with the constantly changing conditions of life in the city, to cope with difference in other words, Simmel (1903:14) suggests that the urbanite develops a blasé urban persona. It has to be so Simmel (1903:15) argued, for if the urbanite were to engage people in the city in the way they engage people in a village they 'would fall into an unthinkable mental condition'. In other words, it would be exhausting. This necessary 'ethic of indifference', to use Fran Tonkiss' (2003) term introduced a century later, is aided by the 'money economy' of the modern city in which many social interactions are reduced to impersonal and anonymous commercial exchanges (Simmel 1903:12). Writing in the 21st century Valentine (2015:153) echoes the salience of difference as cities' defining feature in arguing that 'diversity is the reality of the contemporary multicultural city.

Subsequently the question of how people live together in cities has been variously theorised by the literature on encounter which looks at moments of coming together in difference; the literature on cosmopolitanism which, according to Jazeel (2011:76), 'has become something of a synonym for living together'; and the literature on conviviality rooted in the Latin words for 'live' and 'with' (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014:341) which, through Gilroy's (2005:xv) positioning, is centrally concerned with 'processes of cohabitation and interaction' that have made 'multiculture' (or difference) an 'ordinary feature of social life.' Each of these three theoretical traditions has primarily been concerned with describing the dynamics or transformative potential not only of physical proximity, but interaction between, strangers in cities, often in northern contexts, and has thus been used to think about how urbanites either do or should negotiate difference introduced into cities by historical and contemporary processes of transnational migration.

The geographies of encounter literature emerged in response to social and political debates regarding integration and hostility between existing and newly arriving groups in migrant-receiving cities in Europe and explores how difference is constructed and negotiated within moments of togetherness through spatial proximity between nationals and migrants perceived as Other (Wilson 2017a:454). The scholarship on encounter represents a renewed critical

engagement with Gordon Allport's (1979) contact theory which posits that interaction between members of different groups reduces intergroup prejudice when various optimal conditions are present. Seeking a more complex and critical approach than that offered by Allport, geographers use encounter to think about the power and politics of difference introduced into cities through processes of transnational migration and explore the transformative potential of being physically together in difference for mediating fear, prejudice and intolerance (Wilson 2017a:451).

So central is difference to how togetherness is understood in the geographies of encounter tradition that Helen Wilson (2017a:464), a contemporary scholar within the field, defines encounter firmly within the remit of difference by characterising encounters as moments of togetherness where difference is inherently noteworthy. Similarly, Fincher et al (2019:19) define encounters as 'observable moments of interaction and "being together in difference". Consequently, studies of urban encounter (see for example Ahmed 2000; Amin 2013; Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen 2006) focus on the figure of the 'Other' or 'stranger' and explore how certain bodies come to be identified as both different and unfamiliar in moments of togetherness where a lack of commonality and familiarity is assumed (Valentine 2008; Wilson 2017a).

What has received considerably less attention in the scholarship on encounter beyond the work of Maria Rovisco (2010) and Helen Wilson (2017a), however, is the figure of the friend, neighbour, acquaintance, or even the familiar Other and the ways in which other bodies might come to be identified as common or familiar. Rovisco (2010:1015) argues that a great deal of scholarship on encounter 'loses sight of those affiliations which challenge commonly imagined borders between groups.' As a result, grammars of difference crystallize logics of familiar versus Other and us versus them (Wilson 2017a:452). These binary distinctions render invisible the messy and fine intersections that might cut across borders (Rovisco, 2010: 1024).

The research represented in this dissertation builds on the geographies of encounter literature by considering the figure of the Other in relation to the figure of the relative, the neighbour and the fellow 'city-zen' (van Leeuwen 2010) as it traces the practices of togetherness enacted within families and neighbourhoods in physical and digital spaces of gathering in Cape Town. In doing so this dissertation shows how, on occasion, familiarity and unfamiliarity intersect in exchanges between familiar Others and associated strangers necessitated both by the realities of life on the Cape Flats and the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic. In paying attention to constellations of familiarity without obscuring the presence of difference I expose a kind of ambivalent togetherness defined through relations of familiarity as well as difference

and attempt to make visible the messy and fine intersections that cut across borders between family and Others or neighbours and strangers (Rovisco, 2010: 1024).

Inherent to framings within the literature on encounter of the city as a 'difference machine' (Isin 2002) is both a tendency to look only at the moment of the encounter while ignoring the result of such moments as well as an assertion that the result is always only difference. Findings presented in Chapter Five (*Dala* what you must: Togetherness as Practice) show that the result of at least some encounters is the familiarity which stems from the commonality of a shared experience. This finding challenges the assertion that encounters always only produce difference. In scripting familiarity into the urban encounter, this research re-centres familiarity in the discourse on what happens when people come together and encounter each other in the city. By discussing the various ways in which Coloured people practice togetherness through constellations of familiarity represented by the family and the neighbourhood, this dissertation illustrates how encounters can also be produced through familiarity. In other words, this dissertation's findings frame encounters as moments of being together where difference *and* familiarity might be equally noteworthy, and thus characterise the city as a place of difference *and* familiarity.

Where the literature on encounter describes and problematizes what happens when urbanites negotiate the challenge of difference in the concrete corners of the city, cosmopolitanism offers a framework for how urbanites might manage difference by subscribing to a world citizenship based on the inherent worthiness and dignity of all individuals irrespective of their place of birth rather than a nation-based notion of belonging, identity and citizenship (Barney 2015; Jazeel 2011; Vertovec and Cohen 2002a; 2002b). As suggested by its name, cosmopolitanism appeals to an inclination to look beyond the local towards the scale of the cosmos (Jazeel 2011:76). According to cosmopolitanism, the primary barrier to urban togetherness is a mode of belonging which rests on an attachment to the nation state and positions people who do not share that attachment as different. Through processes of transnational migration, the city throws people with diffuse attachments to nation and state together and unless transcended such attachments anchor urbanites in difference and threaten notions of togetherness. (Budianta 2016; Nail 2015; Nyamnjoh 2007; Riccio and Brambilla 2010; Rossi and Vanolo 2011; Yeoh 2004; Yeoh 2013).

Cosmopolitanism's solution to overcoming the divisiveness of cross-national difference is subscribing to a cosmic commonality founded on the idea of a shared global humanity (van Leeuwen 2010; Vertovec and Cohen 2002b:1). Such a disposition is thought to be nurtured by either going out into the world through travel and cultivating a 'world citizenship' or having the world come to you by living in a city, being exposed to difference through migratory flows

and cultivating a 'world *city*-zenship' (van Leeuwen 2010:634; Vertovec and Cohen 2002b:3). The very thing then that is the source of dissonance –having to live with difference in the city–, is also the source of salvation – living together with difference in the city (Rossi and Vanolo 2011).

The question critics ask (see for example Valentine 2008; 2013) of the literature on cosmopolitanism is how city life and cosmopolitan dispositions are causally related, how physical proximity leads to relational primacy. The parial answer this research offers is 'practice'. In chapters six (*Dala* what you must: Togetherness as practice) and seven (The Spaces of Togetherness) I argue that repeated practices of togetherness with others across divergent and intersecting affiliations in the physical spaces of the city as well as digital spaces of public life online slowly train urbanites in the craft of living together with familiarity and difference. As I argue in Chapter Seven (Togetherness as an Ambivalent Practice), the repertoires of togetherness which emerge as a result of practice are necessarily partial and fraught, by no means cosmic, and defined by trouble, rupture, and conflict, as much as they are by hope, unity, and harmony. The findings which I present in these chapters from my research with families and neighbourhoods who share an affiliation with the Cape Flats while diverging over other affiliations evidence sustained practices of togetherness necessitated by the demands of everyday life on the Cape Flats which produce a mastery of ambivalent togetherness.

In Chapter Five (*Dala* what you must: Togetherness as practice) this focus on practice brings practice theory into conversation with the theoretical tradition of conviviality as advanced by Amin through his attention to 'habit' and 'bodily training' as the mechanisms by which conviviality is produced. In 'Land of Strangers' Amin (2013:4) writes:

> Conviviality is not the product of civic virtue or interpersonal recognition, but a habit of negotiating multiplicity and the company of unknown others as a kind of bodily training. The difference of others is noted, sometimes not liked, but usually sublimated to the discipline of collaborative effort (Sennett 2012) or relational practices out of which are forged new shared identities (Grosz 2011).

Amin (2013:4) characterises 'daily urban life in the multiethnic and multicultural city with its public and shared spaces of work, play, transport, and rest' as the studio in which this bodily training is conducted. According to Amin (Ibid), it is through repeated rehearsals of co-presence, co-dwelling, and shared labour, that difference is negotiated, and a kind of conviviality is produced in which 'strangers mingle or communicate with a degree of disinterest

in each other, loyal to themselves, particular goals, and intimate others in and beyond that space, trained in the manners of sharing space or habits of collective endeavour'.

This dissertation builds on the mechanisms of conviviality as articulated by Amin (Ibid) by considering in Chapter Six (The Spaces of Togetherness) the ways in which digital spaces of gathering, organising, and chatting also constitute 'studios' for developing embodied habits of togetherness. Moreover, the repertoire of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidences a kind of ambivalent conviviality which varies from that described by Amin (Ibid). It is not a mode of 'living with' mastered by 'civic disinterest' (Ibid) or what Tonkiss (2003) calls an 'ethic of indifference'. It is a mode of 'living with' produced by mutual necessity in which people communicate with a degree of *interest* in one another loyal to their *shared* goals of doing (*dala-ing)* what they must, looking after themselves *and* their families and communities out of necessity. And, it is nevertheless still an ambivalent mode of living together defined by practices of aid *and* disagreement rendered invisible by conventional approaches to understanding South Africa by tracing only the salience of difference as a defining feature of social processes.

In the section that follows I explain why in South Africa difference (imagined primarily through the juxtaposition of Black against White) has long provided an obvious entry point for observing social processes, particularly in urban settings where it is most concentrated, *and* in which familiarity observed from the inbetween space occupied by Coloured people may offer insights hidden by an exclusive focus on difference. I begin by introducing apartheid and its use of racial difference as a mechanism for negating spatial and social togetherness. I then explain how, as a result, scholarship on social conditions of urban life in South Africa is largely articulated through a metanarrative of difference and apartness. Finally, I introduce a counter current in urban South African scholarship organised around proposing and using different entry points through which to make sense of the ambivalent moment in which the country finds itself poised between continuing legacies of apartness and both new and old practices of familiarity. It is within this strand of scholarship which I situate this work as a response to shifting currents within the scholarship on urban togetherness in South Africa.

Counter Currents: Examples from South Africa

In South Africa internal racial differences existing between native, settler colonial, and creole populations provided the grounds for one of humanity's greatest experiments in state-

sanctioned division. This is apartheid, a project led by South Africa's National Party from 1948 to 1994 to construct separate nations from four racial categories: White, Black African, Indian/Asian and Coloured (Ballard 2004b). Each so-called sub-nationality was afforded tiered and unequal citizenship status with White people assigned 'first-class' status, and Indian/Asian, Coloured, and Black people assigned descending degrees of citizenship respectively (Posel 2001). Citizen status determined not only what civil rights groups were afforded, but also what spaces and places they could occupy and where and how they could move (Pirie 1992). This was particularly prevalent in South Africa's urban areas where, given the relatively high population density, the chance for interracial mixing was the greatest (Christopher 2001b; Lemon 1991; Maylam 1990; Western 1996).

The apartheid city was designed, organised and built to enforce apartness (Maylam 1990; Western 1996). Families were forced to maintain racial separateness and interracial marriage was banned under the Immorality Act of 1957. Socialising and sharing private and public infrastructures and spaces such as benches, train carriages, parks, and beaches with people from other racial groups was not permitted (Nahnsen 2006). Neighbourhoods were zoned and reserved for designated racial groups (Maylam 1990). White suburbs were centralised along with wealth, resources and infrastructure while Indian/Asian, Coloured and Black suburbs were kept geographically and otherwise peripheral – subject to inferior infrastructure and services under the apartheid policy of 'separate development' (Berrisford 2011:249). Similarly, institutions such as places of worship, schools and hospitals were all racially designated.

Although apartheid was formally dismantled in 1993 and democracy ushered in with the first democratic elections in 1994 (where the African National Congress and president Nelson Mandela were voted into power) race has remained a strong determinant of what opportunities someone is afforded in South Africa, as well as their socio-economic status, their likeliness to own property, their social network, which languages they speak, and where they live (Ballantine 2004:106). In other words, while the physical and legal boundaries separating spaces and people have been removed, many social and spatial divisions persist, enforcing a sense of self in relation to others based on historical legacies of separation (Ballantine 2004:106; Christopher 2001b; Oldfield 2004:190; Schuermans 2016). This is the dilemma of difference as it manifests in South Africa.

For all these reasons the question of how people live together in cities in post-apartheid South Africa has largely been interpreted as a question of racial integration to which the answer given has been evidence of persistent divisions (social, spatial, and otherwise) with near exclusive focus on integration of White people with Black people. This narrative is extensively charted in the work of scholars such as Alexander (1986; 2006), Christopher (2001b), Turok

(2001), Harris (2003), Walker (2005), Lemanski (2006a; 2010; 2006d), Lemon and Battersby-Lennard (2009), Miraftab (2012), McEwen and Steyn (2013) and Steyn and Ballard (2013). A related but separate body of scholarship on the extent of 'togetherness' in post-apartheid South Africa examines the pervasiveness of fear which conflates 'otherness' with danger and undermines integration and with it, togetherness, in two ways: by fuelling race-based prejudice and by motivating further segregation both in private and public spaces (Baghel 2010; Dirsuweit 2002; Harris 2003; Lemanski 2004; Lemanski 2006b; Spinks 2001).

Several scholars (see for example Baghel 2010; Landman and Schonteich 2002; Lemanski 2006b; Lemanski 2006c; Lemanski, Landman and Durington 2008; Lemanski and Oldfield 2009; McEwen and Steyn 2013; Muyeba and Seekings 2011) explain how experiences and perceptions of crime both fuel racial stereotyping and othering. Others (see Ballard 2004a; Dirsuweit and Wafer 2006; Dirsuweit and Wafer 2016; Landman and Schonteich 2002; Lemanski et al 2008; Lemanski and Oldfield 2009; Schuermans 2013; Schuermans 2016) trace what Ballard (2004b:59) terms 'semigration', the partial emigration by White people through practices of isolation from- and exclusion of- Others without leaving the borders of South Africa, evidenced in the retreat by White people into enclaves of homogenous comfort and fortification such as gated communities and leisure estates as well as the avoidance of proximity with Otherness in public spaces (Battersby 2004; Dixon and Durrheim 2004; Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009; Lemon and Battersby-Lennard 2009; Tredoux and Dixon 2009; Walker 2005). As a result of such observations, racial difference, division, and ensuing race-based fears and tensions remain the organising grammars through which much social research on how people live together in South African cities is articulated (Oldfield 2004; Parnell and Mabin 1995). This mode of scholarship largely mitigates against a focus on togetherness. Instead, the post-apartheid urban landscape is cast and recast as a site of enduring alienation, particularly along the lines of race (Ibid).

There exists, however, a counter current of scholarship which has, since the introduction of democracy in the 1990s, called for alternative readings of South African cities which pay attention to the diffuse ways in which people both remain alienated and come together in the 'new' South Africa and points to processes of integration, mixing, desegregation, mobility and a general mixing up of once ubiquitous apartheid lines of partition (Bass, Erwin, Kinners and Maré 2012; Crankshaw 2017; Nuttall 2004; Parnell and Mabin 1995). This alternative current of scholarship supports a reading of contemporary South Africa through ambivalence characterised both by enduring alienation and emergent togetherness and is comprised both of empirical work which analyses patterns of interracial contact and racial desegregation in post-apartheid South Africa, and more conceptual work which considers the potential of moving beyond the 'apartheid optic' (Nuttall 2004:732) from an epistemological perspective.

For example, empirical research by Crankshaw (2017) and Foster and Wale (2017) evidences reconciliation and social relationships across race in post-apartheid South Africa, while further research documents residential desegregation in various urban settings across the country, including Johannesburg (Crankshaw 2008; Selzer and Heller 2010), Durban (Schensul and Heller 2011), Cape Town (Crankshaw 2012; Myburgh 1996; Saff 1998) and Pretoria (Horn and Ngcobo 2003). Work by scholars such as Nuttall (2004), Bass (2011), Bickford-Smith (1995; 1998; 2009; 2017) and Erasmus (2017) on the other hands calls for alternative readings of contemporary South Africa by questioning the assumption that nothing or little has changed since the end of apartheid upon which many analyses of post-apartheid South Africa are based.

In her paper 'City Forms and Writing the 'Now' in South Africa'*,* Nuttall (2004:731) argues that the assumption that little has changed since the end of apartheid is a different point from one that stresses that many of the inequalities of the past remain in place while also acknowledging that much has changed. It is on these grounds that Nuttall (2004) argues that ways of reading social life in South Africa which take into account new emerging configurations of social life are needed. Similarly, Bass (2011:126) makes the point that, notwithstanding the importance of difference in post-apartheid South Africa, there is also a need for studies of affinities and how they are made in order to add to the limited readings of complex and ambivalent intimacies across race and class which, as Nuttall (2004:735) argues, 'have long characterised a deeply segregated society' in South Africa. Herein lies the crux of the contribution this dissertation hopes to make to urban theory on togetherness from the vantage point of South Africa, and more specifically, Cape Town.

Recognising how togetherness has historically been theorised through the dilemma of difference within various scholarly traditions both in and out of South Africa, this dissertation explores configurations of social life through difference *and* familiarity in an area of Cape Town which reveals complex and ambivalent intimacies and affinities, perhaps not across race, but certainly across class and religion which are nevertheless underrepresented in readings on South Africa. The complex and ambivalent intimacies and affinities visible in the everyday practices of togetherness in Coloured families and neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats offer valuable insights into togetherness as ambivalent, as conditioned both by physical *and* virtual spaces, and as learnt and mastered through practice.

To develop the understanding of togetherness as ambivalent I draw on the idea of conviviality as conceived through the work of Paul Gilroy (2004:xi) in his book *After Empire: Melancholia or Conviviality?* Through conviviality Gilroy (Ibid) advocates a way to think about living together which does not wait for the 'triumph of tolerance', but instead offers a way of imagining living

together as a messy and agonstic sociality produced by and through different groups 'sharing a dwelling space and becoming present to each other such that their differences (racial or otherwise) eventually become ordinary, banal, and unremarkable'.

Influenced by Chantal Mouffe's (2000) work on 'agonistic citizenship', Gilroy's (2004) conceptualisation of conviviality emphasizes the ways in which multicultural populations (such as South Africa) manage processes of cohabitation through, at times, fraught and ambivalent modes of living together. Stemming from work on liberal democracies, agonistic citizenship refers to a mode of living together founded on disagreement as much as consensus (Mouffe 2000:13). Agonistic citizenship recognises that human relations 'whether individual or those between different social groups, are inevitably characterized by antagonistic elements' (van Leeuwen 2010:636) and aims to accommodate the ambivalent reality of living together in modern cities (Mouffe 2000:13).

Throug agonism, the conviviality literature challenges nostalgic notions of cohesion and togetherness which demand sameness, integration and often assimilation. Recognising a sense of the agonism involved in living together in cities allows for a moving beyond blissful aspirations of collective harmony or pessimistic predictions of inevitable discord to something inbetwen and attentive to the inherently ambivalent experience of coexistence in modern cities (Amin and Thrift 2002:4). Agonism is therefore touted as a less demanding framework for imagining togetherness than cosmopolitanism with its appeal to a celebration of shared humanity, but more demanding than the blasé urban persona or an ethic of indifference by described scholars such as Simmel (1903) and later Tonkiss (2003).

Through Gilroy's (2006:40) work conviviality recognises that in cities, where different groups dwel in close proximity to one other, 'differentiation can be combined with a large measure of overlapping.' In other words, Gilroy (1987) pays attention to the ways in which everyday interactions in cities shape and express commonality or familiarity in addition to difference as urbanites develop shared connections which cut across the boundaries of kin, nation, race, religion and class. This appreciation of 'overlapping', commonality or familiarity as a possible outcome of social interaction in cities is what sets the scholarship on conviviality apart from the majority of scholarship on encounter which, as I mentioned previously, tends to focus on difference as the primary product of urban life worth studying. Gilroy's attention to 'overlapping' also provides the grounds on which I build the case for exploring practices of ambivalent togetherness in Cape Town through familiarity in addition to difference. Through my work with Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town I show how people are already engaged in building and performing togetherness even in contexts like the COVID-19 pandemic where separation further exacerbates division. This research reveals conflict, trouble and rupture

between people who are familiar at the same time as harmony, hope and unity between people who are effectively strangers and share only the basic commonality of a shared association with Colouredness (whether claimed or imposed), some direct or distant relationship to the Cape Flats or otherwise the shared experience of a pandemic. With this I challenge the assumption that difference precludes togetherness while commonality or familiarity assures it.

Conclusion

This chapter made the case for theorising togetherness as ambivalent by enlisting both familiarity and difference as lenses through which to observe social processes. It did so by using South Africa as an example of a context in which difference has long provided an obvious entry point for observing social relations, particularly in urban settings where it is most concentrated, and in which familiarity may offer insights hidden by an exclusive focus on difference. The first part of the chapter was dedicated to illustrating how and why international scholarly engagement with the question of how people live together in cities, articulated aprticularly through the literature on encounter and to a lesser extent cosmopolitanism, typically frames togetherness as a question of how urbanites negotiate difference and focusses on the ways in which urbanites avoid or engage with difference in the physical public spaces in the city without much consideration for the role played by digital public spaces.

The second half of the chapter put this body of international scholarship into dialogue with South African scholarship on togetherness explaining that where scholarship on the North is concerned with difference introduced into cities through processes of migration such that togetherness becomes a question of people how do or might relate to foreign Others, in South Africa where apartheid crystalised logics of difference based on race, togetherness is largely understood as a question of racial integration between South Africans. In this section of the chapter, I locate my framing of togetherness as ambivalent within an emerging current of scholarship committed to recognising the ambivalence of the present moment in South Africa as it finds itself characterised both by enduring alienation and emergent togetherness. I contribute to this counter current of South African scholarship with empirical research from Cape Town which uses an exploration of the South, the creole, the digital and the pandemic to speak back to Northern scholarship on urban togetherness.

3. Cape Town: Where Clouds Gather Together

Figure 6: Where Clouds Gather Together - Woodstock, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2019)

One day I learnt this place is called *||Huri #Oaxa* because *||Huri* means the sea. When I look with my eyes over the ocean I only see mountains and 'they rising out of the ocean' is what they say. *||Hui!Gaeb,* it means the clouds is gathering with the mountains. *Camissa,* it means the sweet water. This is the place of the sweet water. So, when the clouds gather together it makes a city water. The city water filters in the mountain. The mountain filters it and make it come sweet. *Ja*… So, this the day I learn where I'm really from (Stanley, Interview, 7 January 2020).

Introduction

In *Cape Town - a City Imagined* Damon Galgut (2006:12) writes:

> You ask me to tell you about Cape Town. But although I would like to talk about it with detachment, with an objective and knowledgeable distance, I find I can't. For me that detachment, that distance, would be fake. My life is so bound up with this city that any separation from it is impossible. All I can give you is my limited and loaded perspective: my own version of Cape Town. Which is made mostly of ignorance.

This too I do here. Through a semi-autobiographical account of the place and people that make up Cape Town, interwoven with excerpts of writing from others as well as empirical findings, this chapter describes Cape Town as an ambivalent, multiple, and contested city. It also introduces the people who have long called this city home and discusses the histories and contemporalities of Coloured people in Cape Town through the lenses of ambivalence, multiplicity, and contest.

Coloured people have historically made up the largest portion of the city's inhabitants. Granted, this has started to change. The decades following apartheid have brought a shift in the city's population largely as a result of in-migration of Black South Africans from other parts of the country (OECD 2008; Small 2017). Nevertheless, what makes Cape Town unique in its regional context is that it remains the only city on the African continent to have historically been characterised by the demographic dominance of Coloured people with far smaller populations of Black and White people (OECD, 2008:54). In 1911 Coloured people, whose heritage coalesces in Cape Town, made up 48% of the city's population, and in 2001, nearly a century later, it remained at just over 50% (OECD, 2008:54). According to the latest figures collected in 2016, Coloured people represent 39.9% of the city's represent, while Black people represent 42.6%, making them the city's new largest demographic group (Small 2017). It is for this reason that one cannot make sense of Cape Town without also paying attention to the lived experiences of Coloured people. So bound up with the city are the identities of the people who have, for the past few centuries, called it home.

This chapter serves two purposes. On the one hand it grounds this research on togetherness and its entry points of family and neighbourhood in their immediate spatial and social context, and on the other hand, it serves to illustrate why, through a focus on Coloured people, Cape Town is a useful case for studying urban togetherness through familiarity in a way that does not shy away from the challenges associated with life together in a settler colonial city but nevertheless lends itself to the insights which I develop later in the empirical Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Place

I am a relative newcomer to Cape Town. I was born in the city in 1993 on the eve of democratic change but grew up in the countryside about three hours North of the city. My mother rented a cottage on a farm tucked away in the Witzenberg valley. We shared the farm with two Afrikaans-speaking Coloured families who had, for generations, worked as labourers picking the peaches and pears grown by the White, Afrikaans Conradie family who owned the farm. My earliest memories of Cape Town are from the late 90s when I would occasionally travel in from the Witzenberg region with my mother in her VW City Golf to visit my sister who studied at the Cape Technicon and to stop by 'the mall' – that bastion of 20th century suburban development that has so gripped the imaginaries of urban developers in South Africa wanting to provide securitised chain store retail (with parking!) to the middle classes. These trips were special occasions to visit people and stores we did not have out in the countryside. Spending much of these outings inside the maze of shops, artificial light, and fast-food outlets that constitute a mall, I saw little of the city apart from glimpses of the large beige houses and apartment blocks with their mowed lawns and hydrangeas that made up much of the leafy, middle class White suburbs in the nineties and, of course, Table Mountain, visible almost anywhere in the city.

It was not until 2007 that I actually lived in Cape Town as a boarder attending high school in Rondebosch – a residential suburb 'on the slopes of Table Mountain, neath the shades of Devil's Peak' as our school song told. As the song reminded pupils (through rather too cheery verses) Rondebosch had once been a garden of the Cape Colony established by the Dutch in 1652. Today it is a suburb made up of Cape Dutch houses, model C[7] (former, government funded Whites-only) schools like mine, student housing, 1970s flats on small roads lined with oak trees supposedly planted by Simon van der Stel (the first Governor of the Dutch Cape Colony) and a strip of shopping centres, fast food outlets and bars.

In the five years of living in Cape Town during my secondary schooling, I still saw little of the city. As boarders in an all-girls school, we were not allowed out much - presumably for fear that we might do something unbecoming to 'young ladies' like talk to boys or smoke. On weekdays we were allowed to walk in pairs to the nearby Silwood shopping centre. On Fridays we were allowed to cross the train track over to Rondebosh main road. And on weekends,

[7] Model C schools are dually funded, in part by the state and in part by school fees. They emerged in 1993 after the state cut subsidies to public schools which were reserved for White learners only. To compensate for these cuts, most of these schools chose to raise additional funds by charging parents school fees. 'Model-C' has become synonymous with 'formerly White' (Erasmus 2017:150).

with special permission, we were allowed to visit Cavendish Square, a mall in the adjacent suburb of Claremont that (as I learnt in an interview) now stands on the land that had, during apartheid, been forcibly taken from the Coloured family who lived and farmed there. Despite the efforts of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 which aimed to return land rights to people dispossessed of them as a result of racially discriminatory practices such as forced removals and the government's promises of land reform, like many others, this family has not succeeded in winning the court battles to be compensated for the land that was taken away from them without compensation.

In *Cape Town Calling: From Mandela to Theroux on the Mother City,* South African poet and academic Gabeba Baderoon reflects on the painful shared memories of Cavendish Square and Claremont by the Coloured families who were forcibly moved from the neighbourhood during apartheid.

> My mother's family used to live in Claremont in the narrow house just behind what is now the curved glass and brick Cavendish square. When you walked in the front door of their house you could see down a long passage right into the garden in the back…Their neighbourhood was abolished when it was declared 'white' in 1968. My mother and her family were removed from the area and sent down Old Lansdowne Road to build only the 2nd house in a wild place named Pinati Estate. I was born a year later, so I knew the square as a white mall where eventually we would go to watch movies, but sometimes when she picked us up at Cavendish square, I have seen my mother cried quietly in the parking lot (Baderoon in Fox 2007:125)

On our outings to 'Cavendish' some forty years on, my fellow boarders and I were under strict instructions to walk along the roadside where we would be visible and not to take shortcuts down poorly visible alleyways or side roads (which we did anyway). We were not to hop in a minibus taxi that would hurtle down Rondebosch main road to Claremont in a fraction of the time it would take us to walk (which we did anyway). And, under no circumstances were we to ever enter or cross the grassy Rondebosch common – a large piece of open land that adjacent to our school. This we never did. Of the ghost stories that were passed down from one generation to the next in our boarding school, the one of the girl who had snuck out one night and been attacked on the common before crawling back into her bed was the scariest and haunted all of us. It kept us off the grass.

During my time as a boarder just about all that I could see of the city were the east-facing slopes of Table Mountain and the ivy-greened stone walls and red-roofed buildings of the University of Cape Town built on the land apparently bequeathed by Cecil John Rhodes (British mining magnate, politician, committed imperialist, and Prime Minister of the Cape

Colony from 1890 to 1896) alongside the memorial he erected in his honour. Not the modest type. Later, as a university student I would occasionally sit on the steps where the Rhodes statue stood before its removal under the #RhodesMustFall movement and look out over the city's South-eastern sprawl along its primary artery – the N2. Here I could finally see the Cape Flats and imagine the city's expanse and its disparity – the visible division between the leafy, developed, formerly White-only neighbourhoods hugging the mountain and the sandy expanse of townships and informal settlements reserved for Black and Coloured people during apartheid stretching East.

I tell these autobiographical tales of the city from the vantage point of my teenage self, living in the sanctum of boarding school in the suburbs, to elucidate a handful of the many aspects of Cape Town. One of them is that it is a city steeped in colonial and apartheid history. A palimpsest, Cape Town has been written over and over with centuries of stories and memories, evidence of which can still be traced in the spatial organisation of the city, the shadow of its statues, the shades of its oak trees and the names of its buildings, bridges, and roads. Some of these stories are about the city's colonial and apartheid histories, while other stories tell of its mountain and coastline, of surfing and hiking. Others tell of gangsterism (Bähre 2010; Dixon and Johns 2001; Jensen 2010; Maringira 2020; Oppelt 2021; Pillay 2002; Pinnock 2016; Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton 1997), violence and crime (Brown-Luthango 2016; Charman and Piper 2012; Dixon and Johns 2001; Lambrechts 2012; Leggett 2004; Lemanski 2004; Lemanski 2006b; Piper and Wheeler 2016; Samara 2011; Van Der Spuy 2021), while others yet are stories of visitors, sport, and wine (Bickford-Smith 2009; George 2010; Prayag 2010).

Cape Town sits at the Southern tip of Africa, nestled between the Indian and Atlantic oceans. Home to roughly 4.2 million people, it is South Africa's second biggest city (Western Cape Government 2017:iii). It is also South Africa's oldest city and the nation's legislative capital.[8] Beyond these few particulars, most of the city is up for debate. As Watson (2006:5) explains, 'there is a sense in which Cape Town is now an entity about which one knows only that it can never be known – or never in its entirety.' No moment has better illustrated this for me than when I met a man from Bonteheuwel (a suburb of the Cape Flats) in Bristol where I now live in the UK. 'Where in Cape Town are you from?' he asked. 'Well, I've spent a long time living in Rondebosch' I replied. 'That's not Cape Town' he retorted. Cape Town is multiple. It exceeds, always exceeds.

[8] In South Africa, the usual functions of a national capital city are divided across three cities: Cape Town (the legislative capital), Pretoria (the executive capital) and Bloemfontein (the judicial capital) (Mabin 2011)

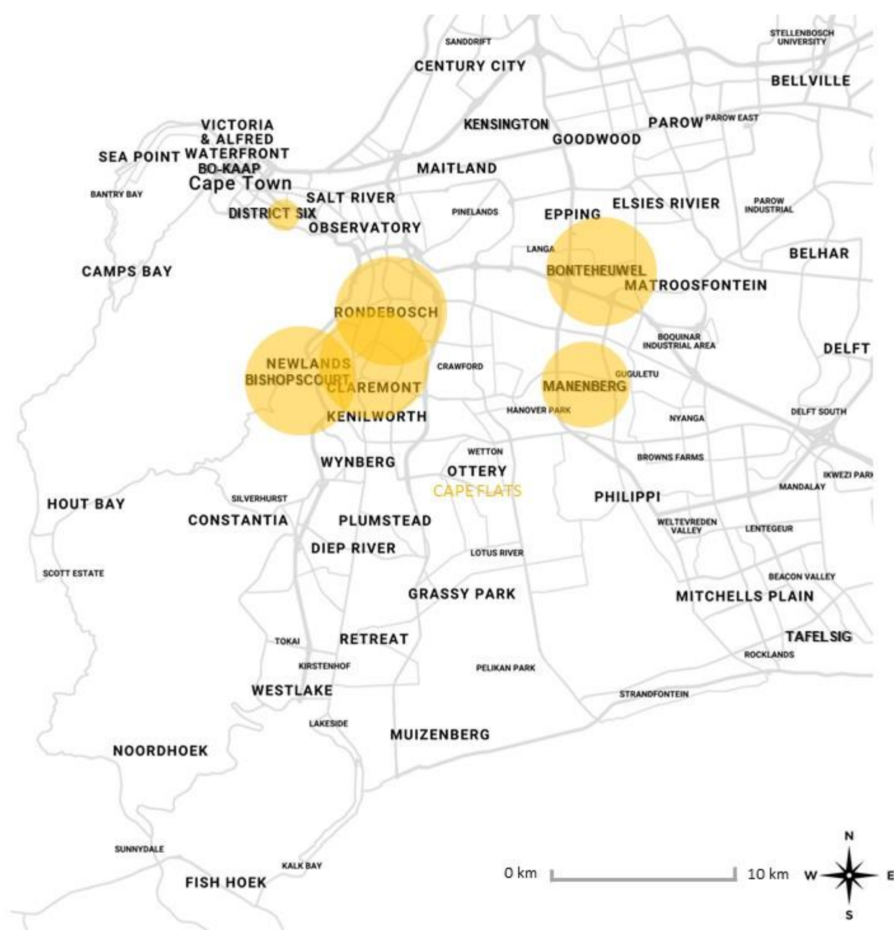

Figure 7: Location of neighbourhoods mentioned in this chapter (AfriGIS 2021)

Multiple

There is no one Cape Town. Watson (2006:3) explains:

> In the past it has been common to hear that Cape Town comprises a tale of two cities only. There is the city of the privileged, their rose and vanilla mansions hugging those contours of privilege close to the city's mountain chain, its forest slopes and better beaches. On the other hand, there sprawls the immense city of the dispossessed and the deprived, the apartheid dormitory towns and squatter camps, steadily filling up the wasteland found between the city's mountain backbone and the barrier range of the Hottentots Holland. So staggering is the distance between the extremes of wealth and poverty in the city, so dramatic the abyss dug by these extremes, that one might be forgiven for believing this tale of two cities to be the only truth about the place.

Cape Town is not singular, but neither can it be divided into two neat halves. In reflecting on the many titles Cape Town inhabits we might echo Amin and Thrift's (2002:30) words when they say:

> …cities cannot be reduced to one. They are truly multiple. They exceed, always exceed. Cities are machines of consumption? Yes, but never just that. Cities are artefacts of the state? Yes, but never just that. Cities are generators of patriarchy? Yes, but never just that.

Likewise, Cape Town is an attractive tourist destination. Yes. But never just that. Cape Town is South Africa's legislative capital, the first city in the world to nearly run out of water, the 'rape capital' of the world, an ex-colony, and a post-apartheid city. Yes, but never just that. Cape Town exceeds. It always exceeds. There is no single, dominant story about Cape Town to tell, because the city is always changing. Even at its origin there were the Khoi and the San in the place 'where clouds gather together' and then the Portuguese in the Cape of Storms or Cape of Good Hope, the Dutch East India Company officials in the refreshment station, the slaves from other parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, and the British, each with their own histories, each adding their own strata of meaning to the palimpsest of Cape Town. Since, its versions have multiplied further and today 'its ways are many, its realities multiple, often contradictory when not wildly incongruent' (Watson 2006:5). It is a city always in the process of 'regenerating itself, passing through phases of Dutch and British colonial control and postcolonial reclamation' (Pirie 2007:126). As a result, 'Capetonians live in a profuse world' (Watson 2006:5). Through its multiplicity, Cape Town is also an ambivalent city – simultaneously the Cape of Hope and the Cape of Storms.

Ambivalent

> This [Cape Town] is the place formed by the entanglements of reality and imagination, the meeting of inner and outer weathers. As with any city that has been truly lived in, loved, and at times suffered, it is a space Coloured by memory, ambivalences, disaffections, obsessions (Watson 2006:9).

Cape Town is and has always been an ambivalent place – 'a city between' – between two oceans, between East and West, between Africa and Europe, a city where four million people straddle 'abundance and scarcity, vulnerability and violence, insecurity and belonging' (Trotter 2019:11). Ambivalence is at the heart of some of the very first attempts to name the tip of the continent on which Cape Town perches. From its earliest representations in language, the Cape has been described in both positive and negative extremes as a place of danger and as a place of beauty and hope (Fox 2007:11). These are the contradictory claims of its dual nicknames - Cape of Storms and Cape of Good Hope (Fox 2007:12). This duality harks back, as legend goes, to Bartolomeu Dias (the first Portuguese navigator to round the Southern tip of Africa) who first nicknamed the Cape *Cabo das Tormentos* in the 1400s to be later changed to *Cabo da Boa Esperanca* by King Jao II in the hope that this was better branding for explorers, colonisers, and settlers alike. Going by the city's long history of slavery and colonialism it seems, unfortunately, that he was right.

According to several accounts (see for example Bickford-Smith 1995; Fox 2007; Western 1996:3), before the institution of apartheid in 1948, Cape Town was by far the least racially segregated and most integrated, liberal and tolerant city in southern Africa, and perhaps even in all of sub-Saharan Africa - a ' Tavern of the Seas', a meeting-place of nations (Fox 2007:13; Jeppie 1999). 'Apartheid was not inevitable' Western (1996:xxvi) insists. However, half a century later Houssay-Holzschuch's and Teppo's (2009:354) descriptions of a 'starkly polarised city' divided between 'affluent suburbs [with] prosperous economic centres' and the under-resourced 'wind-swept, flood-prone, sand plains' of the Cape Flats on the city's periphery persist despite evidence of integration. Over time the city has ebbed and flowed between colonisation and cosmopolitanism, apartheid and unity. In some ways the present contrasts the past, and in others it resembles it. In some ways none of the 'old myths of this city seem halfway adequate to represent its present realities' (Watson 2006:5) and in others the dialectic between the two contending titles – Cape of Storms and Cape of Good Hope – remains just as relevant in today's city 'whose promise is limitless, and whose socio-political storms act as a sea anchor' (Fox 2007:11) as they were when Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Southern tip of Africa in the 1400s.

According to Galgut (2006) this ambivalence can be found not only in the city's nicknames or its reputations, but in its aesthetic and the way it juggles what novelist J.M. Coetzee (2000:12) calls its 'prodigal beauty' with its apparent tackiness. Galgut (2006:14) argues that on the one hand 'the idea of beauty, the ephemeral, abstract – has always been connected with Cape Town', referring not to the brick and mortar of the city, but its natural backdrop of 'sea and sky and mountain.' 'But' he cautions, 'if there is an essential quality to Cape Town, it doesn't lie in either its beauty or its tackiness, but in the tension between the two (Ibid). There is always the promise and then the denial of that promise (Galgut 2006:16). Here Galgut (Ibid) echoes Fox (2007:12) who writes: 'the very name "Good Hope" implies a condition of becoming, not of being… a paradise deferred.'

Figure 8: Empty bus stop on vacant land near Kensington, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2019)

'But it is undeniable that there was long a species of vacancy about the place, an underbelly of melancholy to it, no matter how copiously and cheerfully sunlight might pour down upon it' (Watson 2006:8).

Contested

A city that is multiple and ambivalent is, of course, also contested. Cape Town has long been a site of contest and conflict over space. One of the greatest conflicts over space in the city's history started with the apartheid-era forced removals of Black and Coloured people from designated 'Whites-only' suburbs, and the infamous raising of the neighbourhood District Six under the guises of slum clearance (Beyers 2009; Ernsten 2015; Field 2019; Hart 1988; Jeppie 1999). District Six, a neighbourhood adjacent to Cape Town's central business district had until 1966 been a low-income and racially diverse neighbourhood where most people were classified as Coloured. In 1966, under the Group Areas Act, it was declared a 'Whites-only' area, which led to the forced removal of most of its approximately 60 000 inhabitants to the Cape Flats in several phases up until 1982 and the eventual demolition of houses, shops and roads in the neighbourhood (Christopher 2001a; Christopher 2001b; Hart 1988). This left the stretch of land in the inner city which had previously been home to thousands of families largely vacant (see Figure 9).

It remained that way for several decades, subject to ongoing land claims processes as part of the Land Restitution Programme under the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 until very recently when in 108 claimants won a settlement allowing them to return to the site to live in housing that has been built on the land after five decades of struggle (Beyers 2009). Of the tens and thousands of people who lost their homes and/or land during apartheid, these efforts represent a drop in the ocean. The slow pace of progress remains painful and disappointing to many families who had hoped for justice as soon as apartheid ended (Beyers 2009; Ernsten 2015; Field 2019; McEachern 1998). For example, in an interview (9 January 2020) Kim shared with me her family's experience and the pain and disappointment they felt:

> They were chased off and treated like animals, and their kids were treated like animals, and they're living in poverty now. He [Kim's father] barely even talks to me about it because it is so painful. I think obviously just not like about the money and the land, but just more like feeling a little betrayed; like these were the people [referring to the new government under the ANC] that were supposed to liberate us and help us and equalise what happened. So, I think obviously a lot of South Africans feel like: 'Okay

what happened to the Mandela dream, of everyone getting a house? And what happened to the ANC's[9] promise of land redistribution?'

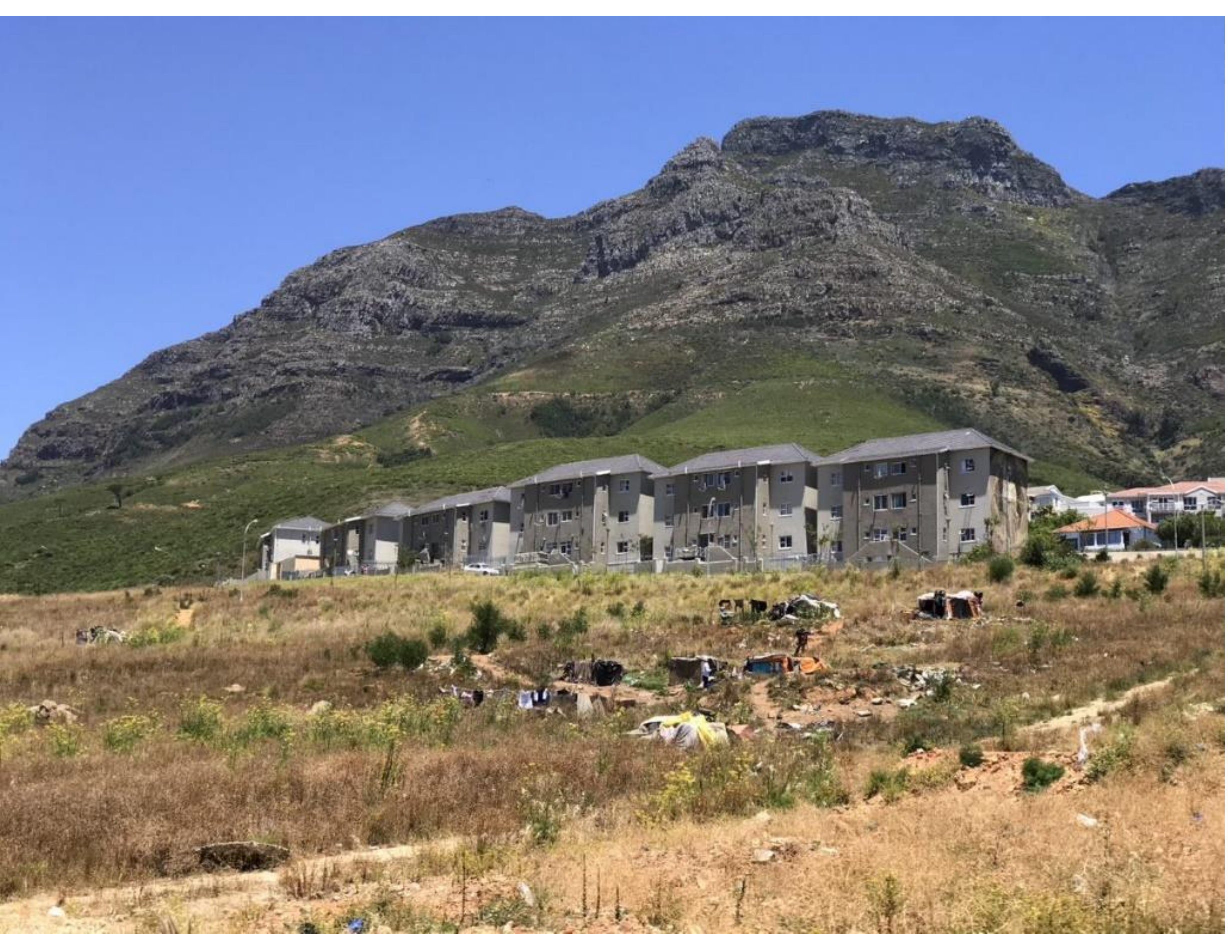

Figure 9: The land where District Six once stood (Photo by the author, 2020)

District Six is not the only vacant piece of land over which there is conflict in the city. Many of the empty strips of land in the city are remnants of apartheid-era 'buffer zones' between racial groups and are subject to 'infill' by people building informal housing because of a shortage of affordable and social housing in the city (Western 1996:xxxv). To some these land occupations resemble spatial reform and survival, to others like, The City of Cape Town local government, it resembles 'unlawful land invasion' (Ibid). It is not only the permanent and semi-permanent structures of shacks and tents which The City demolishes and removes on a regular basis, but also the belongings and bodies of homeless people, looking for a place to shelter overnight

[9] The African National Congress is South Africa's ruling party voted into power in South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994.

in the city (Du Plessis 2005; Levenson 2021a; Levenson 2021b; Miraftab 2006; Miraftab and Wills 2005; Oldfield and Stokke 2006; Strauss and Liebenberg 2014). They too form part of the ongoing conflict over space in the city. However, push-back against the emergence of new informal communities has not just come from the city government. In wealthy areas it has, in some instances, taken the familiar form of NIMBYism (an acronym for the phrase 'not in my backyard') manifesting in calls to the police to have homeless people removed from neighbourhoods, or legal action to stop affordable housing developments in affluent areas for fear that it would drive down property prices (Lemanski and Saff 2010; Saff 1996; Saff 2001; Saff 2005; Spinks 2001). For example, in one in interview a participant described to me how, in her street, there is an ongoing battle between the homeless people attempting to sleep on the street's verges and the homeowners' landscaping efforts directed at making this more difficult to do.

In poorer areas, conflict over space and economic opportunities has at times manifested in xenophobia and violence against foreign nationals from other African countries seen to be 'stealing' jobs from local people (Charman and Piper 2012; Dodson 2010; Dodson and Oelofse 2000; Steenkamp 2009). Recently, the *Gatvol* (fed up) Capetonian group which self-defines as 'Pro Minority Rights (White, Indian and Coloured) - with a STRONG emphasis on the so-called Coloured community' (Gatvol 2021) has emerged with a campaign of 'Pro Cape Independence' under which it brings up an old calls for 'Khoisan independence' and the secession of the Western Cape province (where Cape Town is situated) from the rest of the country in order to protect the province's wealth, resources, and opportunities (Abrahams 1994; Hendricks 2004).

Speaking in support of *Gatvol*, one participant explained the movement's cause to me in an interview:

> *Ja*, they [*Gatvol*] want to take the whole Western Cape the whole Northern Cape and parts of Eastern Cape that belongs to the Khoisan. We [*Gatvol* supports] want to secession that and then we become the Cape of Good Hope. So, they want to break away from South Africa because they feel that Cape Town has got everything they need. It's got airports, it's got seaports. We've got Table Mountain. We got… uh it's a city that can live on its own. You don't need anything and it's really true. Parts of Northern Cape, parts of Eastern Cape… What other places are there? The Northwest. They live on the money and the tourism's money, and the economy from the Western Cape. That is why they want to bring a succession. You all do your thing on your own because you all come from the Eastern Cape and destroy our stuff. So *ja*. It's a big thing coming. So *ja*. It's a big thing.

> That's why we are having this drought because it's a problem we can't ignore – people that's coming from out of Western Cape. So now our infrastructure starts giving in. Our roads is giving in. Our schools are overloaded. Our water is drying up. People coming from other places come living in Western Cape. It is like America. The people is just coming in, and that's why the Khoi-San is so serious. They believe and it's very hard. We need to send people back to where they came from. So *ja*. We as Coloured people; we really *gatvol* [fed up]. So, now the Blacks is in power and we again at the bottom. You understand my point? (Kyle, Interview, 25 November 2019).

Finally, there is the conflict over space that emerges in the turf wars of gangs in the city as rival groups compete to control particular spatial domains in the city (Bähre 2010; Jensen 2006; Jensen 2010; Jeppie 1999; Maringira 2020; Pillay 2002; Pinnock 2016; Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton 1997) and in the longstanding opposing efforts to 'reclaim' spaces by neighbourhood, religious, civic and vigilante crime-fighting groups such as People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Dixon and Johns 2001; Gottschalk 2005; Jeppie 1999; Monaghan 2004; Pillay 2002).

This is the Cape Town in which my research is situated – a multiple, ambivalent, and contested city. All of the above makes it a fitting city to refract through a lens of togetherness, which highlights the pervasiveness of such ambivalences, entanglements, and transversalities. In the section that follows I shift focus from place to people and introduce the people who sit at the heart of this research – Coloured Capetonians.

People

Ons Komvandaan
Diana Ferrus

Was dit my ma se ma, se ma, se ma, se ma
of
haar pa se pa, se pa, se pa, se pa
in boeie,
Vasgemaak
en diep onder
in 'n skip gegooi,
en nagte lank en dagte lank
gevoel het hoe waters hard
aan hulle ore slaan?
Wat was hul gedagtes?
Het hulle gehuil?
Het hulle gevrees?
Het hulle gebid
Vir die dood om te kom?

Was dit my ma se ma, se ma, se ma, se ma
of
haar pa se pa, se pa, se pa, se pa?

En toe hulle hier land,
ver van familieband –
wat was hulle gedagtes?
Het hulle verlang?
Het hulle getreur?
of
het hulle aanvaar?

Was dit my ma se ma, se ma, se ma, se ma
of
haar pa se pa, se pa, se pa, se pa?

No is ons Januarie, Februarie, Maart en April,
Fortuin, Arendse, Fransman en Gabier.
Maar iewers, lank gelede,
baie ver van hier
het ons ons feeste
onder n ander naam gevier!

We Come from There
Diana Ferrus

Was it my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother
or
my father's father's father's father's father
in shackles
chained
and thrown deep
in the belly of a ship
nights long and days long
feeling how the waters
hit hard against the ores?
What were their thoughts?
Did they cry?
Did they fear?
Did they pray
for death to come?

Was it my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother
or
my father's father's father's father's father?

And when they landed here
far from family bond –
what were their thoughts?
Did they long?
Did they weep?
or
did they accept?

Was it my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother
or
my father's father's father's father's father

Now its January, February, March and April,
Gabier, Arendse, Fransman en Fortuin.
But somewhere, long ago,
very far from here
we celebrated our feasts
under a different name

Multiple

Cape Town is often thought to have its origins in the arrival of the Dutch in 1652. Of course, Cape Town or *//Hui! Gaeb*, 'the place where clouds gather together' as it is known to the indigenous Khoi people existed before then. Before it became a settlement created by the Dutch East India Company in the mid-seventeenth century to serve as a way station between Europe and the East, the land around Table Mountain was used as hunting and foraging ground by the local Khoi and San people (Bickford-Smith 2012:137). Nevertheless, in time the settlement developed into a colony complete with Dutch settlers (many of whom were Protestant Calvinists), imported slaves from South East Asia (many of whom were Muslim) and subjugated Khoi people (Bickford-Smith 2012:45). In her poem *Ons Komvandaan* (We Come from There) Diana Ferrus, South African writer, poet, and storyteller of mixed indigenous and slave ancestry, traces one of Coloured people's multiple histories - the arrival of slaves to the Cape colony by ship.

> Was it my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother
> or
> my father's father's father's father's father
> in shackles
> chained
> and thrown deep
> in the belly of a ship
> nights long and days long
> feeling how the waters
> hit hard against the ores?

According to Bickford-Smith (2012:138), as mentioned in the Introduction, by the middle of the 19th century the term 'Coloured' had emerged in the colony and was used by two groups of people. The first group were 'people who thought of themselves as white or European' who used the term either to 'describe all blacks or, more narrowly, just those who were not Bantu-speaking[10] 'Natives' or 'Africans' (Bickford-Smith 2012:138). The second group were people who used the term to 'describe themselves and to distinguish themselves from both whites and Bantu-speaking natives (Africans)' (Ibid). This latter group included both Muslim slaves and their descendants who became known as 'Malays' as well as the people who adopted the Christianity of the settlers (Bickford-Smith 2012:138). Afrikaans and its vernacular Kaaps

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[10] 'Bantu' refers several hundred indigenous languages spoken in central and southern Africa.

evolved in this community as creole languages which combined Dutch with the indigenous languages spoken by the Khoi and the San people as well as the languages which came off the slave ships including Malay Portuguese, a trading language used from Madagascar to China (Bickford-Smith 2012:139; Jeppie 1999:3).

As Adhikari (2009:xi) explains, although the process of social mixing and creolisation that would ultimately produce Coloured identity dates back to the time of Dutch colonialism beginning in the mid-17th century, it was after the emancipation of the Khoi and San in 1828 and slaves in 1834 that the multiple heterogenous labouring classes in Cape Town began integrating at a faster pace and developing a 'collective identity based on a common socio-economic status and a shared culture derived from their incorporation into the lower ranks of Cape colonial society.'

'Creole' and its derivative 'creolisation' are fluid terms which have meant different things in different times and places (Almeida and Corkill 2015:157). The word 'creole' is most commonly used in a linguistic sense and refers to vernacular forms of language (like Afrikaans and Kaaps) created in colonies through the mixing of colonists' and colonised people's languages to produce local languages and dialects (Almeida and Corkill 2015; Erasmus 2011; Hall 2015a). It has also been used to describe 'second-generation persons born outside their 'continent of origin' (Murdoch 2015:59) and, together with creolisation, has, at times, been treated in essentialist racial theory as synonymous with racial miscegenation (Strauss 2009). However, the term 'creole' is also used in a different sense by scholars such as Glissant (1997) to describe the product of entanglement of 'different cultures forced into cohabitation in the colonial context' (Hall 2015b:15). In Glissant's (1997) work, creolisation refers to the processes of cultural mixing, exchange, transformation and production which arise from the entanglement of different cultures in the same place, primarily in the contexts of slavery, colonisation, and the plantation societies. It is this understanding of creolisation which is inferred when describing processes of Coloured identity production in this dissertation.

'Coloured' was one name given to and adopted by the creole labouring class in early Cape Town (Adhikari 2009). Other names included 'half-castes, bastards, Cape Boys, off-whites,' but Coloured is the name that ultimately stuck (Ibid). In the verses below Ferrus sketches some of common names found within the family trees of the people now called 'Coloured.' She lists names of months which were given as surnames to arriving slaves depending on the month in which they arrived by ship to the Cape.

Was it my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother
or
my father's father's father's father's father

Now its January, February, March and April,
Gabier, Arendse, Fransman and Fortuin.
But somewhere, long ago,
very far from here
we celebrated our feasts
under a different name

Ambivalent and Contested

By formalising racial categories under the Population Registration Act of 1950 and insisting on dividing South Africans into distinct groups, apartheid cemented Colouredness as a distinct racial classification and socio-economic identity (Adhikari 2009). Suddenly it meant something different racially, but also socially and economically, to be Coloured as opposed to Black, White, or Indian/Asian (Ibid). Racial separateness was further enforced through space in Cape Town under the Group Areas act of 1950 which evicted hundreds and thousands of Coloured and Black people from their homes in the mixed central suburbs of the city and relocated them to racially designated suburbs on the city's periphery (Adhikari 2009:xii; Steinberg 2004:103).

In pre-removals Cape Town people from different ethnic backgrounds lived more or less interspersed in the city (Beyers 2009:79; Steinberg 2004:100). Removals dismantled this residential integration and the social bonds it enabled (Jeppie 1999:10; Trotter 2009:55). The site most strongly associated with the bond-breaking displacement of forced removals is District Six (Wicomb 1998). As a result, District Six is of particular symbolic significance for older generations of Coloured people in Cape Town (Beyers 2009:79; Wicomb 1998). As Western (1996:146) argues 'if there has been any place, any space that Coloureds have looked upon as 'our territory', it is – or was – District Six.'

Attachments to District Six are, however, shifting. Whereas District Six is perhaps the principal imagined site of historical Coloured life in Cape Town for many, the Cape Flats is the largest contemporary site of Coloured life and culture in the city, particularly for younger generations who were born there and who have no memory of a life lived in District Six. Explaining the

shifting symbolic connection of Coloured people to District Six, Liam (Interview, 25 November 2019) explained: 'This is where we came from, but the younger generation do not share the connection to the area that their parents' generation do.' Testifying to this Shelly, who was born after the end of apartheid, told me that she visited the District Six museum for the first time in her mid-twenties. Although she had not felt compelled to go their sooner, she understands its importance for her grandparents' and parents' generation: 'It's a place to go to when there is no place to go to. It is a place for victims to tell stories and preserve memories' (Shelly, Interview, 10 January 2020). While places like District Six are central to Coloured families' shared histories, the Cape Flats is central to people's present lives and how they imagine themselves and understand each other. Almost all the families I spoke with shared some connection to the Cape Flats by either living there now, having lived there in the past, or having family who has lived there. Coloured Capetonians' collective connections to place in the city which transcend time and space is something I unpack in Chapter Six (The Spaces of Togetherness) where I explain how togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement from places like District Six under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through the digital spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups.

Like Cape Town, the Cape Flats is an ambivalent place. As research participants told me, it tends to be described in largely negative terms as a windswept terrain of council housing estates and informal settlements riddled with gangsterism, crime and drugs (Beyers 2009:90). As Kyle (Interview, 25 November 2019) explained: 'You must remember, they call the Cape Flats '*Die Gat'* [The Hole]. So, our people are in a hole.' Certainly, gang violence remains a part of life in the Cape Flats more so than it does elsewhere in the city. Below is a stream of messages which appeared on a CAN WhatsApp group chat for one of the neighbourhoods I worked with in April 2020.

> Shots fired.
>
> Main rd.
>
> Copy
>
> Where is that?
>
> Near the old age home
>
> Near us
>
> Yes

> Lord please protect the innocent.
>
> It's drive by
>
> Send the police
>
> Someone has been shot
>
> This brings up old wounds for our family. We lost two this way.
>
> Two shot in the back and one in the leg. The community picked them up and took them to hospital. All innocent.

Though distressing, messages like these are not out of the ordinary in the Cape Flats. In an interview on a separate occasion, one of my participants read aloud messages as they appeared on the Neighbourhood Watch WhatsApp group for her area (Sharron, Interview, 21 November 2019). The messages reported gun shots and warned neighbours to get off the streets and go indoors. Speaking of the reality of crime and gangsterism in her neighbourhood Sharron explained:

> They shoot at each other at the corner. They're always sitting there waiting. They put guns against your car windows or knives against your sides for your phone. 'Give me your phone' is all you will hear them say. You drive in a car, but you still feel unsafe. How is that? They also steal groceries to sell on for money to get their fix.
>
> Sometimes you get out the taxi because they're shooting the taxi driver, or the taxi driver is shooting someone, and you have to run. Or sometimes someone will just snatch your groceries from you. That's why few people use plastic shopping bags. They prefer backpacks or cotton bags you can run with.

Sharron told me then that she is only safe in her house behind her Vibracrete (concrete) wall. For this reason, she avoids walking around when she can. She has not seen her friends in the area in ages because there is nowhere to be together safely and moving around from house to house is not wise. 'Where are the police?' I asked. Sharron explained that they were there but 'they do nothing, they just sit in their satellite cubicle at the corner where the shootings happen, but if you go to them for help, they tell you that that's not what they're there for.' Unlike Sharon, Kyle (Interview, 25 November 2019), who lives in a different neighbourhood, does not trust the sanctity of his home:

> *'Nee, hulle sal in breek by 'n plek. 'n Druggie, of 'n tikkop, of 'n gangster sal in breek by 'n plek while you in the house. You know mos? And there is so many ways to break in. Hulle raak gewoond aan jou hond.*

> *Sommige kom pee voor jou deur en die hond raak gewoond aan hulle reuk. There's a lot, a lot, a lot, of ways. Some will just stroll down your road. Some hang on the corner and watch the time when you go to work.*
>
> No, they will break in at a place. A drug addict or a meth head will break into a place while you are in the house. You know? And there is so many ways to break in. They become familiar with your dog.
>
> Some urinate outside your door and the dog becomes used to their smell. There's a lot, a lot, a lot, of ways. Some will just stroll down your road. Some hang on the corner and watch the time when you go to work.

Stories such as these permeate popular perceptions of the Cape Flats. In an interview Liam explained how views of the Cape Flats and Coloured people are reflected in the State's engagement with the area. Whereas other parts of Cape Town including predominantly Black townships have benefitted from redevelopment and investment as tourist destinations, many of my participants felt the Cape Flats have not been so lucky. In our interview Liam reminded me how in 2010 when South Africa hosted the World Cup, instead of redeveloping the football stadium in Athlone, a predominantly Coloured neighbourhood on the Cape Flats with a strong football fan base, the City decided to build a stadium in Green Point, an affluent suburb on the Atlantic seaboard. Shelly shared Liam's sentiments in saying: 'the State and City actively work to deny and exclude us and make us invisible.' Speaking about how the Cape Flats are not part of any tourist routes in Cape Town, Liam went on to say: 'They [tourists] are afraid that they going to die. How must that make you feel as somebody from those areas you know?'

And yet, crime, drugs and gangs are not all there is to the Cape Flats. The Cape Flats, like the rest of Cape Town, is a site of multiplicity and ambivalence. To view it in narrow terms as a gangland, is to ignore the diversity, vibrancy, and vitality of this large stretch of land which is home to hundreds and thousands of people. In our interview Liam lamented that he had noticed a tendency by the State to perceive all Coloured people as gangsters which ignores the ways in which the Cape Flats is a diverse community made up of 'doctors, lawyers, artists, and athletes and not only gangsters' (Liam Interview, 25 November). Likewise, in our interview, Kyle sketched the ways in which like many places, Cape Flats neighbourhoods such as his (Mitchells Plain) are sites of conflict coexisting alongside care.

> Mitchells Plain's neighbours are some of the neighbours who care the most for each other. I feel that we are a community on our road. There by us the people stand together. We have a WhatsApp group to warn or check up on each other.

> So ja, we get along fine in our road, certain times not. Sometimes [there is] an argument and fights, and if you want to involve yourself you have to carry the consequences. But we do have a neighbourhood watch […] and we walk on our own free will. There are women as well in some neighbourhoods. There are neighbourhood watches just with women and the women will wake up early and walk to the bus stops where they will go and stand and watch. Bear in mind they don't get paid for this. And that is really amazing to me, that people make sacrifices to keep other people safe, because these people are tired.

As both Liam and Shelly reminded me, the Cape Flats as the contemporary home to Coloured people in Cape Town is a relatively new settlement. 'The Cape Flats didn't exist in 1950 at all. It was just dunes and foliage everywhere and the government then decided "Okay, no look with the Group Areas Act lets kick Coloured people out there"' (Liam, Interview, 25 November 2019). Having been uprooted from neighbourhoods such as District Six which were rich in collective history and memory, the task has fallen on Coloured people who live on the Cape Flats to make it a home, to build it into a place rich with cultural significance and a place the Coloured community can take pride in once more. Liam, who has taken it upon himself to cultivate a sense of pride in the Cape Flats, explained that 'The kids need to be proud of something and say: 'I come from Manenberg, do you know why because there's a plant here that you can't find anywhere else in the world' (Liam, Interview, 25 November 2019). Other participants explained how street artists from the Cape Flats work with groups and institutions such as orphanages, women's homes, and minstrel troupes to gather stories people would like to tell about Cape Town and to depict them on the walls of public spaces. Such practices represent an important part of contemporary placemaking on the Cape Flats because, as Liam explained, 'the understanding is that 90% of the people who live on the Cape Flats can't leave. Where are they going to go?' (Liam, Interview, 25 November 2019).

While District Six was somewhere Coloured people were forced to move from, the Cape Flats is somewhere many are now forced to stay, unable to move because of financial means or social pressure to uplift their communities. Recounting a conversation he had with a friend, Kyle explained the social pressure to stay in the Cape Flats and not to leave even when you can afford to.

> He said to me 'How are you going to make an impact if you live in another place?' Then I said 'Yoh, you're making me feel bad now.' Because, everybody wants to do better for themselves but how are you going to make an impact if you live far? How are you going to make an impact in Mitchells Plain? That's why in Mitchells Plain [there] is a lot of well-off people in big houses – because people stay.

The anecdotes of Shelly, Liam and Kyle shared here form part of a challenge to readings of the Cape Flats as a homogenous collection of working-class neighbourhoods defined only by gangsterism, drugs and socio-economic difficulty. They illustrate the multiple, intricate and ambivalent relationships between people and place that exists for the Coloured community in Cape Town. Both the experiences of displacement from neighbourhoods like District Six and the re-placement into the Cape Flats bind Coloured identities to place in Cape Town.

It is not only the physical space of the Cape Flats that Coloured people inhabit which is multiple, ambivalent, and contested but also the social space Coloured people inhabit in South Africa. To be Coloured in South Africa is to occupy an inherently ambivalent and contested space in the social strata of the nation. As Western (1996:9) explains, Colouredness, as an official racial category in South Africa was originally defined in a 'doubly negative sense' as being neither Black nor White. This has contributed a historic sense of ambivalence to the experience of being Coloured in South Africa (Ahluwalia and Zegeye 2003:261; Farred 2001:182-183). This experience of in-betweenness has been coupled with marginality. As the common refrain goes, not only are Coloured people neither White nor Black, but the experience of many is also one of being not White enough during apartheid nor Black enough after apartheid (Adhikari 2004; Adhikari 2005; Adhikari 2006; Leggett 2004). The suggestion here is that first Coloured people were marginalised in the old South Africa which privileged White people, and now Coloured people are marginalised in the new South Africa which appears to privilege Black people under its 'decisive Africanist approach asserting African hegemony in a diverse nation' (African National Congress discussion policy document 'Building the Foundation for a Better Life' 1997 as quoted in Baines 1998:4; see also Blaser 2004:179). Erasmus (2001:13) speaks to this experience of ambivalence and marginality in her recognition that, as a Coloured person growing up in apartheid, she 'was not only not white, but less than white; also, that she was not only not black, but that she was better than black.' Here Erasmus eludes to a complex identity construction which combines an in-between position in the racial hierarchy between black and white coupled with a shame of 'illegitimacy and lack of authenticity' (Hendricks 2005:118).

In our interview, Stanley explained why, given this ambivalent positioning, people categorised as Coloured struggle to feel included in the ANC's vision for South Africa, which defines belonging to the nation through being African. It is for this reason that some people, like Stanley, prefer to claim their South Africanness by expressing their identity as being Khoi or San, in other words as being indigenous to South Africa and with it, Africa.

> They [Coloured people] feel inferior to other Black African people, you see? But as for us [Khoi people] they [Black African people] don't look at us as anything. They call

us Coloureds, you see. Now for me I can never be part of Africa if I am going to be a Coloured. That is why I must decolonise myself from being Coloured. I am a Khoi. *Ja*. Meaning the people's people.

So, I can't even classify myself as an African because I am so saddened, because if I speak in Afrikaans and then you going to ask me: '*Wat is jou nasionaliteit*?' [What is your nationality?]

I will say: '*Nee, ek is 'n Afrikaner*' [No, I am an Afrikaner][11].

Jy se: 'Nee, jy is nie 'n boer nie, jy is nie 'n Whitey nie. Hoe kan jy 'n boer is? [You say, 'No, you are not a boer – colloquial term for someone who is Afrikaans – you are a not a Whitey – colloquial term for White person. How can you be a boer?].

If I speak in English, they will ask me: 'No, what is my nationality?' I say: 'No I am African', but they say: 'No, you not Black - how can you be African?'

So, we are struggling with those kinds of dilemmas, with colour. Because you see in Khoi we say: 'No, we don't talk about colour.' We talk about the people, because Khoi is people and there is no colour talking there. You see?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to convey some sense of the place and society that Cape Town is as an ambivalent, multiple, and contested city and home to a group of people whose lives in the city can similarly be approached through the lenses of multiplicity, ambivalence, and contest. The intention here was twofold. On the one hand I wanted to further locate this research and its entry points of family and neighbourhood in their immediate spatial and social context. And on the other hand, I wanted to illustrate why, through a focus on Coloured people, Cape Town is a useful case for studying urban togetherness through familiarity in a way that does not shy away from the challenges associated with life together in a settler colonial city but nevertheless lends itself to three insights which I develop in the empirical chapters five, six and seven. These are, first, the potential of repeated practice in shaping repertoires for togetherness, second, the importance of physical and digital spaces in conditioning these

[11] Here Stanley uses a play on the word 'Afrikaner' which today means 'someone who is Afrikaans' but is commonly believed to have originated from a Dutch settler in South African claiming to be 'an African.'

repertoires and, third, the salience of ambivalence as a characteristic of practices of togetherness. Before discussing these three insights and the research that supports them, I first present the methodology underpinning this research in the chapter that follows.

4. Togetherness as Method

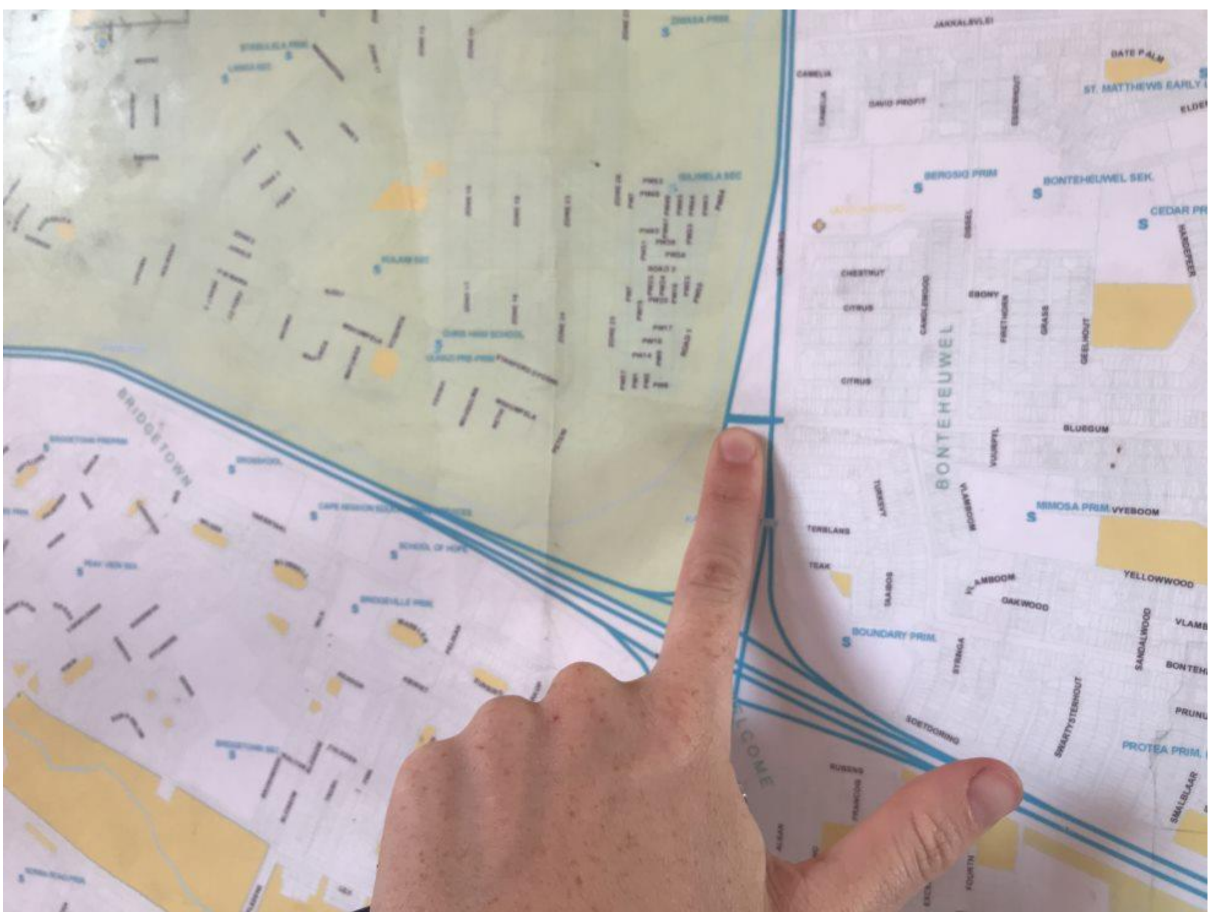

Figure 10: I point to the bridge between Bonteheuwel (a predominantly Coloured neighbourhood) and Langa (a predominantly Black neighbourhood) as a participant explains its significance in an interview. (Photo by the author, 2019)

What the map cuts up, the story cuts across (de Certeau 1988:135).

Introduction

This chapter introduces the methods used to explore practices of togetherness through the entry points of family and neighbourhood in Cape Town. Traditional *in situ* qualitative methods of family interviews and time spent in Cape Town during two three-month-long field trips (November 2019 to January 2020 and December 2020 to February 2021) were combined with six months of virtual presence and observation on five neighbourhood WhatsApp CAN groups in Athlone, Hanover Park, Retreat, Mitchells Plain Southwest (Rocklands, Pelikan Park, and Lotus River) and Mitchells Plain Southeast (Tafelsig) indicated on the map that follows (Figure 11). Together these methods contribute a hybrid physical-digital methodology which is necessarily place-based and treats the site in which this research is located (Cape Town) as significant while acknowledging the ability of place to extend beyond the boundaries of physical space into digital space such as neighbourhood WhatsApp groups. Taking my cue from other geographers working in Southern and African contexts (Duminy, Andreasen, Lerise, Odendaal and Watson 2014) I treat Cape Town as more than just a 'destination for theory or interesting empirical examples' (Mosselson 2017:1281). Instead, I treat Cape Town as an 'ordinary' place (Robinson 2013) from which to speak back to urban theory on togetherness. With this heavily place-based approach I explore both that which is unique about Cape Town and that which might help scholars understand how togetherness is practiced and experienced in all cities (Leitner and Sheppard 2016:233).

The reason behind this hybrid physical-digital model is largely a pragmatic one. I, like many other PhD students, had to reconfigure my research methods in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic emerged in March 2020 in the 18th month of my PhD, after I had completed a first round of interview-based fieldwork in Cape Town in January 2020 and before I was due to conduct a second round in May 2020. Responding to the pandemic, on the 15th of March 2020, South Africa's president Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and introduced one of the world's strictest lockdowns which included local and international travel bans, curfews, mandatory mask-wearing, a ban on alcohol and cigarettes, closure of schools and non-essential businesses as well as testing and tracing (Karim 2020; Ramaphosa 2020a; Ramaphosa 2020b). Bio-medical responses were accompanied by efforts across government and civil society to respond to the non-medical socio-economic risks of COVID-19, namely food-, water- and economic insecurity caused by the months-long lockdown. By May 2020, Cape Town was South Africa's COVID-19 hotspot accounting for more than 60% of South African cases (Cowan 2020).

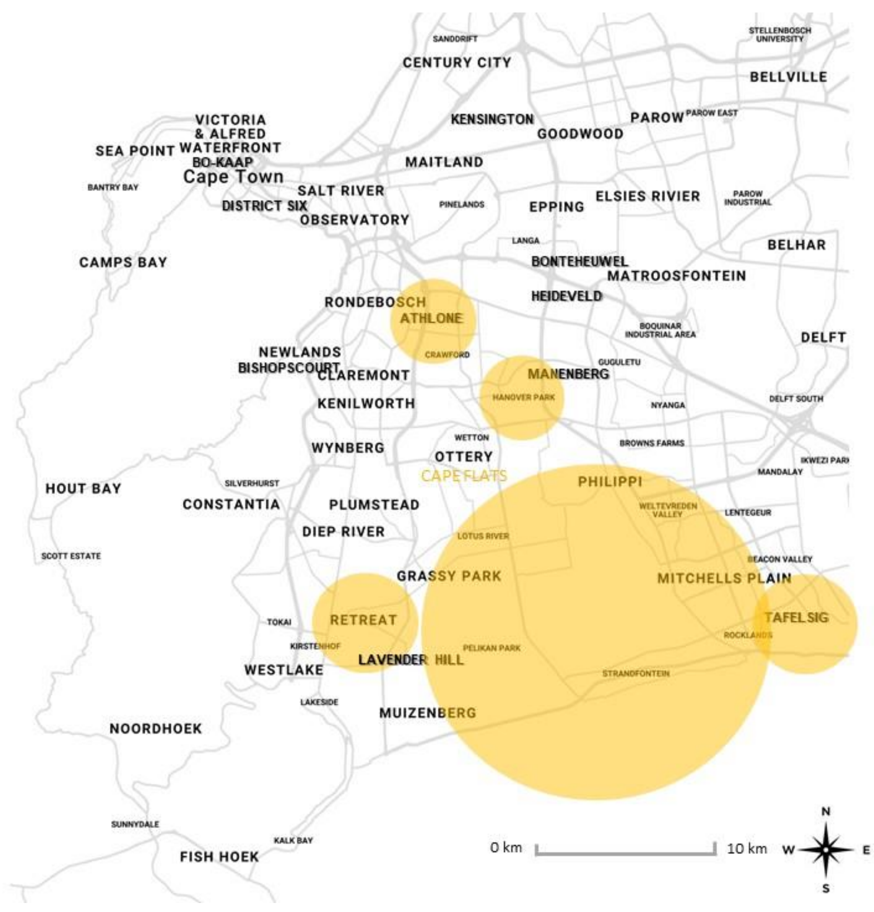

Figure 11: Location of Community Action Networks included in this study (AfriGIS 2021)

Emerging in my field site as it did everywhere else, COVID-19 presented both constraints and opportunities for my research. On the one hand, I was forced to find alternatives to the *in situ* ethnographic method of in-person interviews I had been using to engage Coloured families. On the other hand, I was presented with the opportunity to observe how a global pandemic shapes practices of togetherness. One of the ways it did this was through encouraging digital modes of coming together online to offer mutual aid and support, which is precisely what happened in Cape Town.

On the 17th of March 2020, a public Facebook group called Cape Town Together (CTT) emerged. It described itself as a 'rapid community response to COVID-19' (Cape Town Together 2020b:4). This vanguard collective relied on self-organised efforts to take local action and share resources through neighbourhood-based CANs across the city (Cape Town Together 2020a). Each CAN, comprised of interested individuals, ward councillors, representatives of community-based organisations, churches, mosques, civic associations, and so on, was organised through a WhatsApp group and was also connected to the broader CTT network which aimed to support these locally led neighbourhood initiatives (Parnell and Mazetti Claassen 2020:72). CANs responded to the non-medical impacts of the pandemic through a number of efforts differing from neighbourhood to neighbourhood (Ibid). They established local community kitchens and distributed food parcels and other essentials such as face masks and hand-sanitiser (Ibid). They shared information about the virus alongside advice on good hygiene practices (Ibid). They launched fundraising campaigns, and performed neighbourhood mapping exercises to identify who needed help in the city (Cape Town Together 2020a). Towards the middle of 2020 there were 140 CANs operating in the city through the efforts of over 2000 people (Cape Town Together 2020a). CANs represented neighbourhood-based practices of togetherness at a scale I had not witnessed in Cape Town before. The pandemic had initiated a new and different way of being a community and an alternative infrastructure for community connectivity.

CANs presented five distinct research opportunities for this dissertation. First, through operating out of WhatsApp groups, they offered a window into emergent practices of togetherness which were not constrained by physical proximity. From a research perspective, this meant that I could be a part of what was happening on the ground in Cape Town from my home in Bristol. Second, it meant that I could expand my study of togetherness in the city from a focus only on families, to a focus on the settings in which they are located – neighbourhoods. Third, CANs provided an information-rich opportunity to reach a more diverse group of people who I would have otherwise struggled to identify and contact (Franz, Marsh, Chen and Teo 2019). Fourth, working with CANs allowed me to explore the ways in which togetherness combines notions of both proximity and distance, as well as the ways in which the city can be read from near and far (Hall 2012:9). In her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other,* Sherry Turkle (2011:1) writes that 'technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacies', but that paradoxically our networked lives allow us to 'hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other.' The final opportunity presented by the CAN WhatsApp groups is that, as spaces of digital gathering, they enabled a type of paradoxical and ambivalent togetherness which this dissertation is particularly interested in theorising.

In the sections that follow, I first discuss family and neighbourhood as two illustrative entry points for studying togetherness through the lens of familiarity, and I contextualise each within the setting of the Cape Flats. I then move on to discuss the approaches taken to data collection and analysis for each entry point explaining how interviews were used as the primary method for studying togetherness through the entry point of family, whereas observation of CAN WhatsApp groups was used as the primary method for studying togetherness through the entry point of neighbourhood. Here I also discuss several ethical considerations relevant to the methods used.

Entry Points

Family

'Family' represents the primary configuration in most people's lives through which togetherness is imagined, practiced, and experienced. For many, it is synonymous with kinship, belonging, closeness, and connection – all of which are typically associated with togetherness, but for most, family has at some point also been associated with rejection, death, divorce, or estrangement – all of which are typically associated with apartness. 'Family' thus represents a form of ambivalent togetherness. Similarly, family is the training ground for practices of togetherness with and through ambivalence. In families people learn to support children, cooperate with parents, care for grandparents, and share with siblings, but they also learn how to trick siblings, rebel against parents, and mourn grandparents. Through family, people learn about unity as much as they learn about rupture, about harmony as much as they learn about conflict. It is for these reasons that 'family' provides a useful entry point through which to understand ambivalent togetherness in the city.

'Family' also provides a framework in which people imagine themselves together with strangers. This emerged on several occasions during my fieldwork. For example, speaking in a neighbourhood-based mutual aid WhatsApp group, one person considered their neighbourhood as a family saying: 'The strength of this family is the spirit of oneness we have, and at the end we will stand victorious as family' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 15/05/2020). Another combined the concept of family and interdependence in celebrating the sense of belonging they felt towards their neighbourhood: 'I feel highly blessed to be part of the Ubuntu family' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/05/2020). *Ubuntu*, stemming from the Nguni word for personhood or humanness (Green 2020:127), is a southern African

principle of interconnectedness and is commonly translated as 'I am because you are' (Escobar 2020:40).

Scott, Treas and Richards (2004:xvi) explain that families contain individuals interlinked with members of other families, institutions and groups such as churches, mosques, schools, committees, neighbourhood watches, and mutual aid groups. The 'sense' of family can thus extend beyond homes to neighbourhoods and even to larger imagined groups. For example, reflecting on how language and familial terms are used to recognise broader togetherness, one interview participant explained:

> In the Coloured community we call each other aunty and uncle. It is a sign of respect and also it means that we are a community that we recognise that we are all a family. That is why in African communities they say *mama* [mother] and *sisi* [sister], *ja*. (Kim, Interview, 9 January 2020).

Naturally, a great diversity of family forms exists. 'Family' is a much-debated term and grouping (Crow and MaClean, Preface, in Scott et al 2004:79). In this dissertation, a family is loosely understood as a collection of people considered by each other to be – and treated as – relatives, regardless of their biological relations. I work with people who define themselves and each other as members of a family and share a personal history (Gilgun 1992:23). Families are often at least partially co-located with homes which Blunt and Dowling (2006:3) similarly describe as ambivalent spaces of 'belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear.' Nevertheless, I choose the term family over both home and household because I am particularly interested in accessing inter-personal, inter-generational perspectives which I argue are better accommodated within the concept of family which can be conceptualised across people and generations, as opposed to households or homes, which contain an element of being static, limited to a house in a given period of time and place. I draw on Jane Ribbens Mcarthy's (2012) framing of 'family' in her piece 'The Powerful Relational Language of 'Family': Togetherness, Belonging And Personhood.' McCarthy (2012:76) explains that in 'accounts of everyday lives […] we can see how issues of individuality and togetherness, separation and connection, weave backwards and forwards through variable family meanings.'

Amin and Thrift (2002:18) explain that the city is often imagined as stopping at the doorstep of the home making the family a relatively unexplored domain in urban geography. This research contributes to efforts geared at scripting a focus on family into the urban geography tradition by illustrating how working with families enables researchers to draw on intergenerational stories and memories to understand how experiences of the city have evolved over time and how working with families reveals the private-public-, civic-domestic-,

and individual-collective entanglements which are often hidden from the 'street view' of public life in the city. As McCarthy (2012:85) puts it:

> 'Family' is able to pull many disparate relational experiences together– including the possibility of family culture in its own right, the significance of time past and future, and the sense of being part of something bigger – in a way other terms are unable to do.

Neighbourhood

Where the family provides an entry point into the private realm of urban life, the neighbourhood takes us onto the doorstep and out into the street. It takes us into the public realm where we might witness the civic and collective experiences and practices of city life. More than a century ago, Park (1916:580) argued that 'proximity and neighbourly contact are the basis for the simplest and most elementary form of association with which we have to do in the organization of city life.' I borrow and adapt Amin's (2002) concept of 'micro-publics' to differentiate the neighbourhood from the larger city as a realm of public life. For Amin (2002:969), micro-publics include the ordinary and shared spaces of human contact such as schools, places of worship, libraries, youth centres, sports clubs, and other spaces of local association. These are the kinds of local social spaces in which individuals regularly come into contact, and are often found within neighbourhoods (Hall 2012). Amin (2002) qualifies that these ordinary micro-publics are not simply spaces of passing and fleeting encounter, but of participation. They require a level of individual investment to sustain membership which is more commonplace at the neighbourhood scale in the frequently visited local places of familiarity than at the city scale. The neighbourhood mediates and bridges peoples' and families' relationship with the city. In other words, neighbourhoods provide a local context from which to experience the public dimensions of urban life.

'It takes a neighbourhood to raise a child' are the words which appeared on a CAN WhatsApp group chat the day a small boy was killed on a street in the crossfire of a gang shooting during my fieldwork. All day long, messages poured into the chat as an entire neighbourhood mourned the loss of a child they knew. A feeling of responsibility for his life went beyond the boundaries of his family and extended to all the adults who lived near him. According to my participants, in the Coloured community in Cape Town, it is common to care for other people's children, to feed whichever small mouths are around at mealtime, or to reprimand anyone who is caught misbehaving. In these ways family relations spill out of the home and onto the street and family and neighbourhood as constellations of familiarity interact with one another.

Data Collection, Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Interviewing Families

Over the course of two field trips to Cape Town (November 2019 to January 2020 and December 2020 to February 2021), I conducted 17 interviews with members of 10 Coloured families in which several generations had lived in the city. The families I worked with all shared some association to predominantly Coloured neighbourhoods in Cape Town including Bo-Kaap, Kensington, Maitland, Lavender Hill, Mitchells Plain, Athlone, Heideveld and Phillipi (illustrated in Figure 12 which follows) by living there in the present or having lived there in the past. Barring Bo-Kaap, Kensington and Muizenberg, these neighbourhoods are located in the Cape Flats – the large, low-lying stretch of land South-East of the city to which many Coloured families were forcibly removed during apartheid. Muizenberg, where three participants lived, was the only neighbourhood which is mixed rather than predominantly Coloured. At the last count only 18% of Muizenberg was Coloured (Strategic Development Information and GIS 2013).

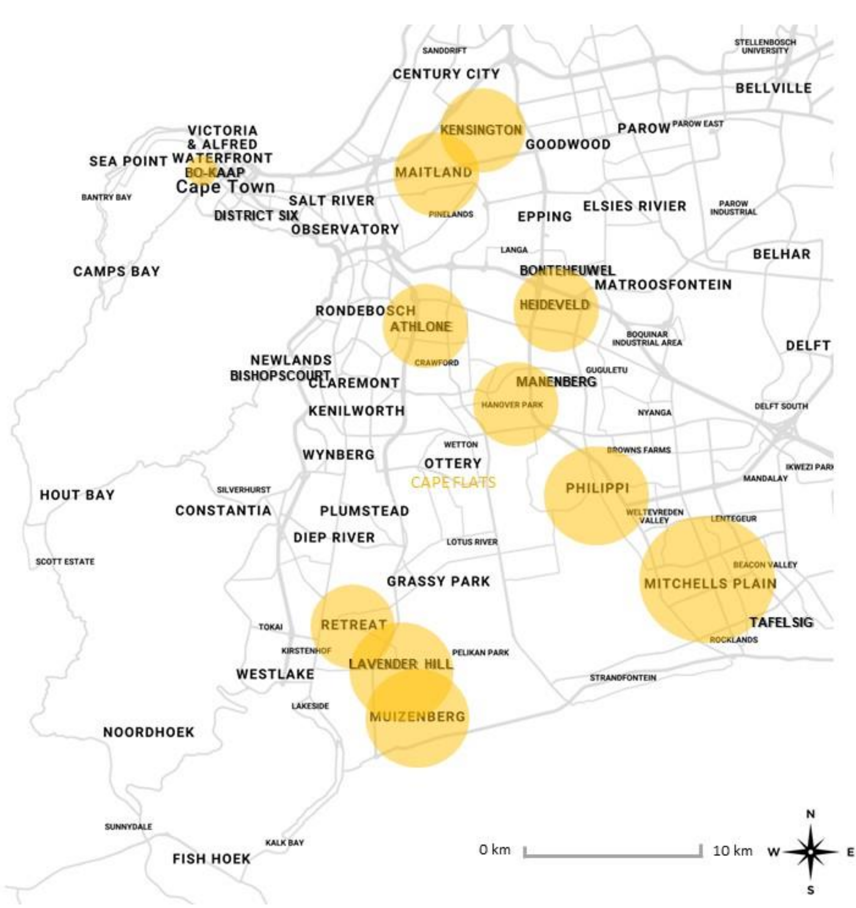

Figure 12: Distribution of neighbourhoods in which participants have lived (AfriGIS 2021)

Participants for family interviews were recruited the way one meets anyone in a city. Some were introduced to me by others. Some found me, hearing about my work and then getting in touch. Others I came across during my time spent in Cape Town. Interviews were conducted in person, typically in cafés around the city suggested by participants (see the map that follows in Figure 13 for the locations of these cafés).

To sit at a table and speak over a meal or a cup of coffee is a practice of togetherness. It is perhaps one people learn to do first and most in families. When I initially set out to conduct interviews with families, I imagined holding them in participants' homes – a site strongly associated with the family. But when asking participants to suggest a convenient place to meet, a local café close to home or work was suggested for all but one interview. In hindsight, this makes sense. While the home may be the terrain of the family, the café or coffee shop provides a crossover between private and public life where people can gather as strangers, sit around a table, share a meal, and talk in a contained and safe but neutral and shared space. Cafés are public-private spaces in which people can mimic some of the daily rituals of domesticity with strangers (at least those of sufficient economic means to afford to frequent cafes).

The value of cafés as small 'congenial social spaces' (Hall 2012:103) which facilitate the kind 'instant togetherness' sought by qualitative interviews is traced in the work of Hall (2012) whose book *City, Street, Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary* also explores the public realm of a local café on Walworth road in London, as well as Rykwert (2013) who makes the case for small 'semi-public, semi-private spaces of meeting' in facilitating sharing and trust in his book *The Seduction of Place: The History and Future of Cities*'. The value of tables, a key infrastructure of cafés, as objects which simultaneously relate and separate (Arendt 1998) is referenced in the work of Goldfarb (2007) in his book *The Politics of Small Things* where he describes how 'friendship rituals' were developed around the kitchen table Eastern bloc during the Soviet period.

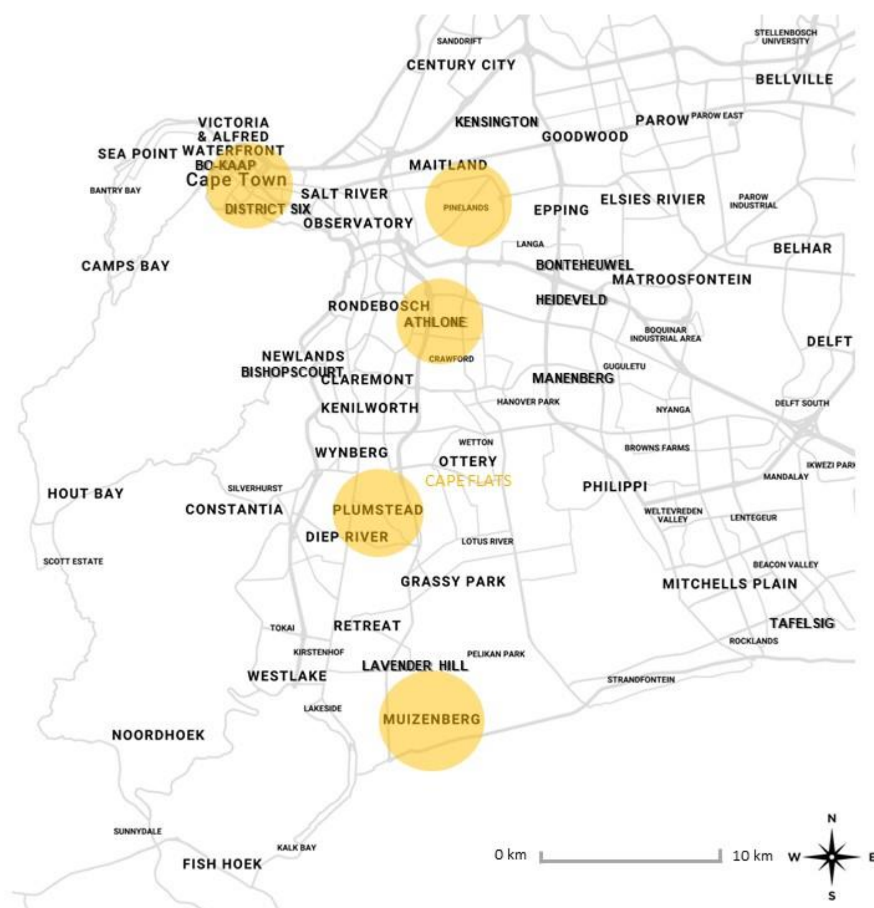

Figure 13: Locations of Cafés where I met with participants (AfriGIS 2021)

The interviews I conducted typically lasted several hours and were only partially structured. I led with just two questions about (1) family histories and life stories in Cape Town and (2) experiences and practices of togetherness in the city. Each interview started with the question: 'Can you tell me about how your family came to be in Cape Town?' What followed was in most cases a two-to-four-hour conversation about a family and an individual's relationship with the city over several generations. Interviewees told me about where their parents were born, what work they did; where they were born; how their families moved (and for most, were forcibly moved) around the city. They spoke to me about where they had worked, where in the city they went and where they avoided. They told me about the people they spend their time with; the houses and neighbourhoods they have lived in, the crime in the area, the people on their streets, and their interactions with their neighbours. They spoke to me about things that happen in their communities. In other words, interviews were filled with 'table talk' of the ordinary everyday ways in which people live in the city, experience- and practice togetherness.

To paraphrase Robert Coles in his foreword for John Western's book *Outcast Cape Town* (1996), as a cultural geographer conducting these interviews I was interested in the contours and the complexities of the human landscape, and in particular the South African and the

Capetonian one. 'Who lives where and why? Who lives how and why? Who started living here and ended up living there, and again why?' (Coles inWestern 1996:x). There were elements of sociology, history, anthropology, and geography at play.

In many interviews participants and I alternated between English and Afrikaans, expressing ourselves in whichever one best fit what we were trying to say. This is common practice in Cape Town. Many Coloured people in Cape Town use English and Afrikaans or Kaaps when speaking, in doing so blurring and challenging some of the boundaries of language and culture (Van der Waal 2012:457). Language, in South Africa, is both political and personal. Speaking on the importance of language in South Africa, Jeppie (1999:3) writes that 'language is not merely a medium of communication; it is inscribed with cultural history and meaning'. English is one of the dominant languages in the country. It is the language of business, of education, of websites, and street signs, but it is also the language of colonialism, and it is the mother tongue of half of the White population many of whom, like me, speak none of the African languages spoken in the country. English is the language of privilege. The world abound it is the language that says: 'I don't need to speak another language.'

Afrikaans, on the other hand, is a creole language native to South Africa, and indeed to Cape Town (Bickford-Smith 2012:139; Jeppie 1999:3). It is a language that is yoked together from many others. Finding its origin in the Cape, it mixes the Dutch that came off the settler ships of the Dutch East India Company together with the Malay Portuguese that came off the slave ships from Southeast Asia and the indigenous languages spoken in the hinterland by the Khoi and the San people. For example, the Afrikaans word for kitchen (*kombuis)* is understood to relate to the Dutch word for galley, a kitchen on a ship, rather than the Dutch word for kitchen which is *keuken.* The common Afrikaans word for many *(baie)* is believed to relate to the old Malay word for many - *banyak. Eina* (Afrikaans for 'ouch') is apparently derived from the Nama expression for pain expressed phonetically through the sounds *é* and *ná*.

Afrikaans is also the language of the National Party – the engineers of apartheid and recent enforcers of White supremacy, and so it comes with its own baggage and ambiguity (Jeppie 1999:3; Wicomb 1998). Although rooted in the Cape, not all Capetonians (Coloured or otherwise) speak it. One participant explained how, although her Coloured father grew up speaking Afrikaans, he raised his children not to, given its association with apartheid.

> I think in a way it was kind of like this tainted language of oppression, like… it represents that type of thing. So, I remember being very Afrikaans resistant. And there is also this whole shame around Coloured accents
> and like Coloured Afrikaans [Kaaps] and stuff. And I think that my dad, I feel like he

> intentionally tried not to pass on the accent, because there is so much prejudice (Kim, Interview, 9 January 2020).

Sharron also preferred English and has raised her children to speak English too. When I asked her why, she responded with: 'It's more upper class, don't you think?' This was not an act of snobbery on her part but rather a reflection on the social status associated with English as opposed to Kaaps - the Afrikaans dialect spoken in Cape Town by many Coloured people including those who live in Sharon's neighbourhood on the Cape Flats. Kaaps carries a stereotype for many of being a 'lower', comical vernacular form of pure or *suiwer* Afrikaans of textbooks, newspapers and Riaan Cruywagen, a South African television news reader who has presented the Afrikaans news on the television every weeknight since 1975 – the kind of Afrikaans I was taught at school, the Afrikaans of White Afrikaners (Jeppie 1999:3; Wicomb 1998). Again, Kim's reflections on how Kaaps was perceived in her family are perhaps illustrative here:

> As soon as you phone somebody and you start talking to them in a super Coloured accent, they are like: 'How can I get off this phone call? How can I not give this person the job?' you know? 'Can I give them a tea lady position?' *Ja.* So, I think he [her father] very much tried to like … no Afrikaans, no Coloured accent. And today people are always like to me: 'You have this really strange like South African accent and we don't know how to place you.' And I think it was in a way intentional [laughter]. Uhm *ja*, and it is so funny because now that I am older, I have realised that the Coloured Afrikaans [Kaaps] is the original Afrikaans. Yes, because all those words that sound like they are slang, those were the real words (Kim, Interview, 9 January 2020).

Both Sharon and Kim's reflections point to the ongoing entanglements of language, race, class and opportunity in South Africa and to the ways in which English can be perceived as the more economically and socially valuable language in Cape Town (Van der Waal 2012:457). In recent years, however, there has been a significant pushback against the shame attached to both Afrikaans and Kaaps – the related tongues of oppressor and oppressed. Afrikaans and Kaaps are both being claimed and reclaimed as part of the ongoing processes of claiming and reclaiming Afrikaans White and Coloured cultural identities in South Africa.

I mention all of this here because language plays an important role in any spoken exchange, especially in interviews (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson and Deeg 2010). Qualitative research such as mine seeks to study meanings in subjective experiences. This is facilitated through language (Ibid). Understanding and meaning become coproduced through language in a two-way process where language is used to express meaning and also influence how meaning is constructed (Ibid). For this reason, a lot is wrapped up in communicating across cultures where

different languages are used, or the same language is used differently (as was the case in my interviews). To converse is to relate, and to express oneself in a way that another can understand (to 'speak their language') is to practice togetherness. This occurred during my interviews. A participant would say something in Afrikaans, Kaaps or Nama and pause to check – 'Do you know what that means?' and then let me in on the meaning if I did not. In other instances, participants would explain something to me, and by means of conveying that I understood, I would offer the colloquial term for what was being said if I thought I knew it. 'That's it!' they would say, or 'No, no, no, that's something else' and they would correct me.

This is a mode of conversing which people use all the time. This kind of back-and-forth process of meaning making and sharing is integral to 'good' qualitative research which aims 'to reduce the distance between the meanings as experienced by participants and the meanings as interpreted in the findings' (Polkinghorne 2007). Van Nes et al (2010) go a step further and argue that findings should also be communicated so that the audience of the research understands the meaning as close to how it was expressed by participants as possible. It is for this reason that I transcribed and thematically coded interviews (using NVivo, a qualitative software used to code and store data) in their source language, and that I directly quote participants whenever possible, and when doing so present words in the language and phrasing they appeared in while accompanying them with a translation which carries the meaning I interpreted from what was said (Lunn 2014:55; Squires 2009).

Twyman et al (1999) call the technique of analysing interviews in the lingual and cultural context in which they were conducted 'transculturation.' Using this technique is as much about representation and validity as it is about ethics. It was important to me, as it is to many other ethnographers including Twyman et al (1999), Lunn (2014), Wasserfall (1993), that I represented voices from the field as accurately as possible. It is for this reason that participants were anonymised using pseudonyms and asked to consent to participating in- and being represented in- this research. Anonymity allowed me to represent voices from the field as I captured them while protecting the privacy of participants. Participants were also provided with information sheets introducing the scope of the project and the terms of involvement. An English and Afrikaans copy can be found in Appendix A.

Just like conversations between families occur within the context of dynamic relationships which need to be fostered, so do interviews within qualitative research. The practices of relationship-building within the context of qualitative research (just like friendship or work) follow the rituals of familiarity learnt through family: establishing trust, staying in touch, and attuning to the rhythms of the other person's life (Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien 2010; Lunn 2014; Sampson 2004). However, there is an important distinction to be made here. Although

research relationships can mimic the kind of relating learnt within families or other constellations of familiarity like friendship or work, participating in research represents an enormous amount of generosity of time and energy on the part of the participant (Levac et al 2010; Lunn 2014; Sampson 2004). Research relationships are born neither out of the duty of family ties nor the reciprocity and mutual benefit of friendship or work, they come from the charity and sometimes curiosity of willing participants (Shurmer-Smith 2001). Something for which I am deeply grateful.

What I have described here is an intimate methodology designed so that I could about practices of togetherness by practicing togetherness – both in the immediate context of the interview, but also in the broader sense of the research relationship. The approach to interviewing outlined here was designed to allow a fair amount of flexibility for a working relationship with participants to emerge organically, and for participants to have agency in deciding what and when to share with me, and how to communicate their experiences and practices of togetherness with me. Somekh and Lewin (2005:18) argue that what is practically possible can often shape qualitative work which is a constant and iterative process of decision-making requiring openness to changes in research design throughout the project.

What was physically possible in terms of this research changed within the first half of 2020 as the world got to grips with the COVID-19 pandemic and put in place measures such as bans on international travel to curb its spread. Having met 10 families and conducted a modest number of initial interviews during my first field trip between November and January 2020, I was eager to return to Cape Town to ramp up interviewing on the 14th of May 2020. By the end of March both the UK and South Africa were in lockdown with travel in and out of both countries limited to repatriation. What was practically possible in terms of field work had dramatically changed and I needed to rethink my research design. I considered the possibility of continuing the family interviews and simply shifting them online, but as Cape Town grappled with this new crisis it was a struggle to get in touch with my existing participants, let alone to recruit new families. People were emotionally preoccupied with survival and adaptation. No one wanted to talk about my research on togetherness. Everyone was too busy *doing* togetherness. One of the spaces in which people were practicing togetherness in Cape Town was neighbourhood CAN groups created under the umbrella of the Cape Town Together campaign.

Observing Neighbourhood WhatsApp Groups

When Cape Town Together started and CANs were popping up all over the city, I was tremendously curious and excited about what these groups represented and, not yet knowing how I might use the data, in early April of 2020 I joined 77 CAN WhatsApp groups through their public links (which at the time represented all the groups in the city and caused 24/7 messaging traffic on my phone). Following this, I selected several groups to contact which represented majority Coloured neighbourhoods in Cape Town, had more than 20 members and thus appeared to be reasonably active, and were not represented by other larger CANs. This initial shortlist included: Athlone CAN, Hanover Park CAN, KenFac (Kensington and Facteton) CAN, Goodwood CAN, Mitchells Plain Southwest CAN, Mitchells Plain Southeast CAN, and Greater Retreat CAN. After the long process of designing an ethical approach to using these groups as a source of data, I contacted the administrators (admins) of these groups who I had identified as gate keepers. I introduced my research to them and asked for permission to stay in the groups as a 'shadowing' observer to document, as one might at a townhall meeting, the proceedings of the group discussions, and to observe what could be learnt about how their members had worked together to respond to the pandemic in their neighbourhoods. The admins were also invited to contribute to the shaping of the research (ASA 2011:2-7). See Appendix B for the participant invitation and information materials which were sent to the admins via WhatsApp. Five groups agreed to participate in the research. They include Athlone CAN, Hanover Park CAN, Mithchells Plain Southwest CAN, Mitchells Plain Southeast CAN and Greater Retreat CAN.

Following this initial engagement with CAN admins, I remained in the groups as a passive member observing interactions between users without participating in the discussions (Franz et al 2019). Discussions were exported using WhatsApp's chat export feature which allowed me to email myself the discussions as text attachments to be securely stored in password-protected files online (Bursztyn and Birnbaum 2019:486). After a period of six months, culminating at the end of July 2020, the process of data collection was concluded. The data was then analysed and thematically coded through NVivo alongside the data from the family interviews.

In addition to the 24/7 nature of WhatsApp groups and the volume of data this generates (Barbosa and Milan 2019), the primary challenge associated with studying these CAN WhatsApp groups was developing a research methodology which responded to the ethical issues related to using private messaging data within the context of a global pandemic. It is

worth noting that just as the coronavirus was novel, so too were many of the research methodologies which emerged to study the numerous aspects of the pandemic. Precedents that could otherwise be turned to for best practice were limited. In the case of my research, I found only five other studies (Barbosa and Milan 2019; Bursztyn and Birnbaum 2019; Caetano, de Oliveira, Lima, Marques-Neto, Magno, Meira and Almeida 2018; Garimella and Tyson 2018; Resende, Melo, Reis, Vasconcelos, Almeida and Benevenuto 2019; Rosenfeld, Sina, Sarne, Avidov and Kraus 2018) that used user-generated WhatsApp group data, and only one (Barbosa and Milan 2019) that reflected on the ethical implications of digital ethnographies that study the interactions on WhatsApp group conversations. None reflected experiences of using data generated from community WhatsApp groups within the context of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet this was the context in which I was collecting data. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in which I was conducting my fieldwork there was an affective atmosphere of extreme fear, uncertainty, concern and, in many instances, desperation. Cape Town, a city with significant underlying health risks associated with high levels of diabetes, HIV AIDS, and tuberculosis was for many weeks the South African hotspot of COVID-19 (Cowan 2020). Things were made worse by very high levels of social, economic and health vulnerabilities and a state with limited resources (Parnell and Mazetti Claassen 2020:70). Many individuals living in the city (particularly in the neighbourhoods I worked with) were unemployed, earning low wages, depending on small state grants, and/or had their income disrupted by lockdown which curtailed many people's ability to earn a living (Davis 2020).

The somewhat custom-built ethical framework that I developed for this dissertation was governed by the imperative to do no harm and the related principles of anonymity, privacy, choice and informed consent (Willis 2019:2). The application of these principles to private messaging app data was, however, not straightforward. Anonymity and privacy were the most straightforward principles to uphold. The following measures were put in place to do so based on best-practice guidelines for social-media-based research (ASA 2011:1-2). Exported group discussion text files were cleaned of identifying data including names and mobile phone numbers. In this way contributions to group discussions were anonymised. When used, direct quotations have been paraphrased in a way that retains meaning but prohibits tracing the source via direct quotations using a search engine. Data was securely stored and protected from unauthorised access. No third-party tools were used for data extraction thus preventing third parties from gaining access to the data as well as participants' personal information.

Informed consent and choice are more complicated principles to uphold when it comes to social media-based methods and WhatsApp group discussions. The multi-layered challenge

posed by WhatsApp group chats is: (1) how to get informed consent from group members numbering up to 256 (the WhatsApp group threshold) when those group members are capable of joining and leaving groups without the researcher noticing; (2) how to ensure that all members present in the group at any given point in time are also making a free and informed choice to participate in the research in the context of fluid membership (Barbosa and Milan 2019:50); and (3) how to do so without being invasive by disrupting the group discussion and drawing attention away from group activities and towards the research (Ibid). As Barbosa and Milan (2019:50), who reflect on the use of data from a political WhatsApp group in Brazil, explain: 'the fluidity of belonging and participation in a chat app creates a situation [where] it is not really possible to inform every group participant about the ongoing observation, let alone [to] remind each of it.'

According to the Association for Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth's (2011:1-2) ethical guidelines, participants should be made aware of the presence and purpose of the researcher whenever reasonably practical. Further, according to the Economic and Social Research Council's (2015) framework for research ethics, this is not practical or meaningful when observing crowd behaviour. The question then arises over whether WhatsApp groups constitute digital crowds and whether it is necessary to obtain informed consent from all members of public WhatsApp groups. According to Townsend and Wallace (2016:10) and Murthy (2008:840) the need for consent depends partially on whether the social media data is private or public, which 'further depends on whether or not the social media user can reasonably expect to be observed by strangers or not.' According to Willis (2019:4) observation without consent is 'only acceptable in situations where those observed would expect to be observed by strangers' as they would in a crowd, for example. However, as Murthy (2008:840) explains, even in offline spaces, the divide between public and private is not always clear, even less so in online environments.

WhatsApp is considered a semi-public platform (Ibid). On the one hand, WhatsApp is thought of as a channel for private communication – a perspective arguably bolstered by the recent introduction of end-to-end encryption to discussions on the application (Barbosa and Milan 2019:50). On the other hand, WhatsApp accommodates 'open' groups which can be joined by anyone through public links (Cruz and Harindranath 2020). After much consideration, I decided to treat the CAN WhatsApp groups as more public than private for two reasons. First, as previously mentioned, the groups could be joined through a public link, were not password protected, and did not require private invitations for participation (Townsend and Wallace 2016:10). Second, given that the CAN WhatsApp groups were designed to facilitate communication between people in the city who are not already in contact (strangers, in other

words) I felt that it was reasonable to assume that members expect their messages to be read by strangers.

Instead of forging ahead without any consent, however, I heeded the advice of Townsend and Wallace (2016:10), as well as Franz et al (2019) and worked through the group admins. I worked from the assumption that group admins were likely to understand the social dynamics of the neighbourhoods they represented and were thus well-placed to advise me on what an appropriate approach might be. The five WhatsApp CAN groups I worked with were those in which admins expressed enthusiasm about my research and were comfortable with me passively observing group discussions I would in a physical neighbourhood meeting. However, as Barbosa and Milan (2019:54) argue: 'consent in ethnographic research is a process, not a one-off event, due to its long-term and open-ended qualities' and with this in mind I worked to build relationships of trust with the CAN WhatsApp group admins and members so that consent could be maintained over time (ASA 2011; Iphofen 2013).

Finally, with regards to vulnerable participants (which is another important ethical consideration), although I had no reason to expect, from my engagement with the groups, that active group members included young or vulnerable people, I took the following two precautions in an effort to rule out the use of data from or of vulnerable adults and children. First, exported files did not include photographs, thus I did not collect any photographs which may contain children, such as community kitchens and resource deliveries. Second, I made the decision that in the event that I suspected that data originated from young or vulnerable individuals, I would remove the data from the research. Fortunately, this did not happen (Townsend and Wallace 2016:11).

Conclusion

Tim Ingold (2000: 155) speaks of learning as 'wayfinding.' In this chapter I have outlined the ways in which my methodology unfolded as I found my way through the research process, responding to the requirements of the question on how Coloured people practice togetherness through family and neighbourhood in Cape Town while navigating the ethical questions posed by qualitative research and the practical constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What emerged is a hybrid methodology which combined traditional *in situ* and digital ethnographic methods to explore the practice of togetherness through two entry points (the

family and the neighbourhood). Although discussed separately in this chapter to reflect on the rationale behind using each entry point, practices of togetherness performed through family and neighbourhood converge and overlap. These entry points are thus thought of as existing in relation to one another. The organising principle in this research is therefore relation rather than scale. Not only are family and neighbourhood productive for tracing togetherness through differing degrees of familiarity but they also draw attention to some of the intimate geographies of urban life which have, at times, been scripted out of urban geographical scholarship. For example, Wirth (1938:20-21) writes:

> The distinctive features of the urban mode of life have often been described sociologically as consisting of the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of bonds of kinship, and the declining social significance of the family, the disappearance of the neighborhood, and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity.

Drawing on Calhoun and Sennett (2007), Hall (2012:13) explains that the achievement of ethnographic research is to compel and to claim through writing 'how culture lives in practice', and in the three empirical chapters that follow I present the research findings on how togetherness is practiced within Coloured neighbourhoods and families. I begin with a chapter on togetherness as practice which draws on practice theory and discusses the ways in which togetherness is learnt through 'mind-body' activities when people do (*dala)* what they must to get by in the city. This chapter considers the ways in which togetherness is practiced and learnt through the routines demanded by the everyday life of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the city. Here necessity is born out of familiarity. In other words, it is peoples' familiar relations through family and neighbourhood which both demand togetherness and provide opportunities for its rehearsal.

The following chapter (The Spaces of Togetherness) considers the physical places of the city as well as the digital places of neighbourhood mutual aid WhatsApp groups (CANs) as materialities which enable and mediate repertoires of togetherness in Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. In the final empirical chapter (Togetherness as an Ambivalent Practice) I build on practice theory by discussing ambivalence as a quality of togetherness as a practice not yet accommodated within the existing remit of practice theory. This is the idea of togetherness as an ambivalent practice - one that can manifest in both hopeful and troubling ways and involve both unity and rupture as well as harmony and conflict.

5. *Dala* what you must: Togetherness as Practice

Figure 14: Tactics for Togetherness by Ian Nesbitt - Studio Polpo, Sheffield (Photo by the author, 2021)

Introduction

> Familiarity is a form of solidarity that can only emerge from being and doing, as it is a belonging that is associative – with people, with places and with senses (Hall 2012:129).

Applying a practice theory framework to the togetherness performed by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the city of Cape Town, this chapter discusses the ways in which togetherness is learnt through what I call 'mind-body' activities which emerge when people do what they must to get by in Cape Town. The chapter considers the ways in which togetherness is practiced through the routines demanded by the everyday life of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the city which produce particular repertoires of togetherness such that necessity is born out of familiarity. In other words, it is peoples' familiar relations with one another (through the constellations of family and neighbourhood) that demand togetherness, but also provide opportunities for its rehearsal.

This chapter uses a subaltern and creole expression of practice (*dala*) to speak back to Northern theories of togetherness. Doing so re-centres familiarity in the discourse on what happens when people come together and encounter each other in the city. It also suggests that encounters can gradually produce familiarity (as an alternative product to difference) when people learn to be together through practice, and, in doing so co-create a commonality of shared experience and/or new-found understanding. This chapter's use of *dala* as a lens into understand togetherness illustrates urbanites' capacity to learn, adapt and transform civic practices and in doing so themselves (and vice versa) and frames the social conditions of urban life as iterative rather than linear or stagnant.

To make this argument, the chapter begins with a discussion of practice theory paying close attention to its use in framing and understanding togetherness as a practice - something which can, and indeed must, be practiced in order to be mastered. It then moves on to discuss how togetherness revealed itself as a practice through my research with Coloured families and neighbourhoods. Here I discuss six features which characterise practices of togetherness performed by Coloured Capetonians. First, religion (particularly Islam and Christianity) and spirituality more generally offer blueprints for both a commitment to- and practice of-togetherness among Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. Second, practicing togetherness requires a degree of effort which varies depending on whether people are practicing togetherness with familiar or unfamiliar others. Third, people develop tactics for practicing togetherness which are informed by local sensibilities and often shaped by everyday

diplomacy. Fourth, practicing togetherness involves habit and routine which produces an embodied form of learning. Fifth, power plays a part in conditioning practices of togetherness. And finally, within the context of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town, the affective atmospheres of necessity motivate practices of togetherness.

A Theory of Practice

Practice theory denotes a body of ideas which supposes that something called 'practice' is central to social life (Hui, Schatzki and Shove 2017:1). It emerged in the 1970s out of the philosophical work of Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and German philosopher Martin Heidegger and has been further developed by a range of scholars including, most notably, Pierre Bourdieu (1972,1977), Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984), Lave (1991) Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2017), Andreas Reckwitz (2002), Allision Hui (2017) and Elizabeth Shove (2012, 2017). Today there exists a variety of theoretical positions gathered under the practice banner (Shove, Pantzar and Watson 2012:5). I draw on Reckwitz' (2002) piece 'Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing' to introduce the underpinnings of practice theory here.

Broadly speaking, practice theory is a cultural theory but is distinguished from other cultural theories in terms of where it locates 'the social' (Reckwitz 2002b:244). Where other cultural theories variously locate the social in minds, texts and interactions, practice theory locates it in practices (Watson 2017:169). To elaborate, cultural theory which locates the social in the mind – referred to as 'culturalist mentalism' by Reckwitz (2002b:247) – holds that knowledge and meaning structures which dwell inside people's heads are the loci of the social. Here there is a dualistic inside-outside distinction between mind and body (Reckwitz 2002b:251). While social behaviour might be tied to bodily acts, in these instances the body is still, nevertheless, carrying out what the mind has consciously or unconsciously prescribed (Reckwitz 2002b:251).

Cultural theory which locates the social in discourses or texts – referred to as 'culturalist textualism' by Reckwitz (2002b:248) – holds that the social resides instead in all things symbolic represented in signs, discourses and texts. These symbolic structures are not located 'inside' the mind (Reckwitz 2002b:248). In contrast to cultural mentalism, the social is thought to reside somewhere outside of both the mind and the body (Reckwitz 2002b:250). Finally, cultural theory which locates the social in interactions – what Reckwitz (2002b:249) calls 'culturalist antisubjectivism' – holds that the social emerges instead through spoken exchanges between people. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas' (1988) articulation, Reckwitz (2002b:252) understands culturalist antisubjectivism to see the mind as a product of social

interactions. In other words, social meaning moves ‘from outside to inside’ (Reckwitz 2002b:252). The important point here, however, is that the mind and social interactions are understood as two separate realms which share a causal relationship where social interactions shape the mind.

Practice theory is distinct from these three classes of cultural theory (culturalist mentalism, textualism and antisubjectivism) in that it does not rest on a distinction between ‘inside’ (the mind) and ‘outside’ (the body or the interactions between bodies). Instead it sees what one might call related and interdependent ‘mind-body’ patterns as necessary components of practices and therefore also of the social (Reckwitz 2002b:252). For practice theory, then, all social relations are constituted and reproduced through practice (Reckwitz 2002b:245; Watson 2017:169) such that the social is made up of different complexes of social practices (Reckwitz 2002b:257).

To understand what a practice is, it is useful to draw on the distinction made in the German language between *praxis* and *praktik.* In one sense practice as *praxis* describes ‘the whole of human action’ as distinguished from theory or thinking (Reckwitz 2002b:249-250). However, in another sense as *praktik* it describes a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements interconnected to one other which are variously called blocks, nexuses, or assemblages (Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Giddens 1984a; Giddens 1984b; McFarlane 2011a; Reckwitz 2002b). These elements include forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities (including know-how, states of emotion and motivation) as well as materialities and infrastructures of practice (Reckwitz 2002b:249-250). This is the form of practice which practice theory is concerned with.

From this definition of *praktik* three elements can be isolated which allow for a conceptualisation of togetherness as a practice according to practice theory. They are (1) mind-body activities that combine bodily and mental activities, (2) materialities of practice, and (3) routine. These interdependent elements of practice form what Reckwitz (2002b) calls a ‘block’, what Giddens (1984b:2) and Hui et al (2017) call a ‘nexus’ and what McFarlane (2011b) calls an ‘assemblage.’ All practices constitute blocks, nexuses, or assemblages of routinized mind-body activities and materialities such that the practice depends both on the existence and specific interconnectedness of particular routinized mind-body activities and materialities, and cannot be reduced to a single one of these elements, not the routine, the mind-body activities, or the materialities which constitute it (Reckwitz 2002b:255).

Moreover, practice theory regards the mind and body as interdependent entities through which practice is both performed and learnt (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:12). In other words, practices are cognitively learnt through the repeated performance of bodily activities. The individual learns through doing, through practicing. Practices are therefore simultaneously sets of routinized bodily performances and sets of routinized mental activities - ways of perceiving the world and of knowing how to do something (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:14; Reckwitz 2002b:251). Practice, in other words, involves embodied learning – an idea explored by several scholars and central to my understanding of togetherness as a practice that is learnt through doing. For starters, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962:206) explains that human perception (our capacity for understanding and learning) is intrinsically embodied and that we are 'in the world through our body, and […] perceive that world within our body.' Similarly, Reckwitz (2002b:251) explains that 'when we learn a practice, we learn to be bodies in a certain way' which goes beyond merely using our bodies in a certain way. Through learning a practice we do not only learn a way of doing, but also a way of being (Reckwitz 2002b:251).

Moreover, people transform themselves through their engagement in a practice as they learn the skills and the knowledge required of acceptable participation (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:9). As a result of this transformation people become able to adjust and improve their participation in the context of not just one practice but related practices in a process of learning (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:11). In this way people become increasingly competent in related sets of practices (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:11) and are also able to transform the practices themselves. Neither the practitioner nor the practice is static in other words. Each is transformed by the other. The individual is transformed through participating in a practice, and the practice is transformed through- and by- the individuals who participate in it (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:11).

Practices can transcend the individual and become shared and thus social practices. This can happen in two ways. Firstly, as Gherardi (2017:42) explains, the embodiment of practice is 'bidirectional in that the body is sentient and sensible. It has the capacity to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, to touch and be touched, to speak and to be spoken to.' This bidirectionality allows practice to be relational, and, therefore social. Secondly, mind-body activities are not confined to the individual (Reckwitz 2002b:253). Though the individual is a carrier of a practice, practices can be understood and reproduced 'beyond the limits of space, time, and single individuals' (Reckwitz 2002b:253).

In the following section I apply this understanding of practice as social routinized mind-body activities which involve embodied learning to togetherness and the practices of togetherness performed by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. I discuss the ways in which people learn to be together by practicing togetherness through mind-body activities which produces embodied learning, and how routinised practices of togetherness in families and neighbourhoods produce repertoires of togetherness in the city.

Practicing Togetherness in Cape Town

As previously mentioned in Chapter Two (Theorising Togetherness) Amin (2013:4) argues that people's ability to live together with strangers is 'not the product of civic virtue or interpersonal recognition, but a habit of negotiating multiplicity and the company of unknown others as a kind of bodily training' – what Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Reckwitz (2002a; 2002b; 2007; 2016) would call embodied learning. To understand what embodied learning looks like when it comes to togetherness, it is worthwhile to briefly revisit what is meant by togetherness. In Chapter One (Introduction) I introduced Bazzono's (2014:209) understanding of togetherness as the 'gathering into proximity, companionship, and shared endeavour of individual components, without relegating aloneness and uniqueness to the background.' I further distinguished between the related seemingly passive state of being together and the active practice of becoming together which intersect to create complex, paradoxical, and ambivalent configurations of social life like feeling alone in a crowd in the city, for example. Togetherness, then, is not restricted to only hopeful experiences and practices of care, generosity, or charity that occur in moments of gathering but can equally manifest in troubling experiences and practices of conflict, competition, or violence which can similarly involve closeness.

The idea of togetherness as something which requires practice emerged during one of my first family interviews. I was sat at a coffee shop in Cape Town interviewing Ihsaan - husband, father, head of his family, and active member in his mosque and community. As I listened to Ihsaan telling me about his life growing up in Cape Town I was struck by the sheer amount of 'hopeful' togetherness of the kind typically associated with the word (akin to care, generosity, charity) present in Ihsaan's life. He grew up in the Bo-Kaap, the Malay quarter in the Cape Town city centre before moving to one of the Northern suburbs of Cape Town when his parents pre-empted the apartheid era forced removals which would have displaced them to the Cape Flats and would have torn them away from their local mosque and the community which had evolved around it.

Although Ihsaan grew up under a system of apartness, togetherness had always been an undeniable part of his life. In our interview he shared with me his memories of neighbourhood sports played on the streets of the racially mixed pre-removals Bo Kaap where Black and White households were woven into the spatial tapestry of a predominantly Muslim and Coloured neighbourhood; his founding of a youth organisation as a 21 year old to do social work in his community; the bi-annual food fair he co-organises through his mosque to raise money for the local school; the senior citizens forum run by his wife and their monthly meetings in the library; and the swimming classes and breakfasts she arranges for local women and the food drives their Mosque runs to supply groceries to other neighbourhoods in need. When I asked Ihsaan what drove him and his wife to do so much for other people, he put it down to his faith and the principle of giving to others what you would like for yourself, a universal, interfaith maxim also known as the 'golden rule.'

This interview represented a profound turning point in my thinking about togetherness as a practice. Up until then I had unconsciously thought of togetherness as a mental process, something one wraps one's head around first and then acts upon once one has the steps figured out intellectually. This is not dissimilar to philosopher-politician Michael Ignatieff's (1986) understanding of cooperation as an ethical disposition or a state-of-mind which resides inside the individual. My conversation with Ihsaan showed that he was adept at togetherness precisely because he had so much experience in it. This suggested that at least some, if not all, of the 'figuring out' came from doing. In other words, togetherness needed to be practiced.

This is what Richard Sennett (2012:6,233) suggests in his book *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* when he writes, counter to Ignatieff, that cooperation emerges from 'practical activity' and '[f]or all the virtues of in direction and silence, the nub of cooperation is active participation rather than passive presence.' This thinking is in line with the work of scholars of phenomenology (the philosophy of experience) such as Tim Ingold (2002) and Pau Obrador Pons (2003:49) which suggests that the experience of being in the world is 'mainly practical not cognitive', 'an everyday skilful, embodied coping or engagement with the environment' (McFarlane, 2011:21).

Blueprints for Togetherness: Religion, Spirituality and Faith

The 'golden rule' also emerged as a blueprint for practicing togetherness on WhatsApp CAN groups. With respect to neighbourly love and giving, one participant wrote on a CAN WhatsApp group chat: 'Indeed so, a standing principal in Islam 'Love for (give

for) thy neighbour what ye love for yourself' 🙏🤲💖😊' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 25/07/2020). Similarly, another wrote of the assistance given to people queuing to withdraw their social grants from local automated teller machines by providing hand sanitiser and ensuring that no robberies took place: 'We do it for the love of our community. *Alhamdulillah* [praise be to Allah] and *shukran* [thanks] to you as well. Allah reward you all 🤲🤲🤲' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/06/2020). Finally, in an effort to encourage CAN group members to share information on how to apply for social grants to those who might need it another wrote: 'Please apply and please forward to all your family and friends. Remember this is also part of a *Sadaqah*. *Shukran* 🙏🏼🙏🏼🙏🏼' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 01/06/2020).

Perhaps all of these displays of hopeful togetherness are captured in the idea of *Sadaqah* – a voluntary act of charity that is performed without expecting anything in return (Dasar and Sujimon 2018:90). While key to Islam, the principle of collective care for the sake of it, giving without expecting anything in return, is found in almost all major religions and is a useful motivator for the kind of hopeful togetherness which manifests in kindness, compassion, and generosity. For example, in messages on different neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups three participants similarly spoke to the idea of serving and loving their communities with reference to God through Christianity.

> I have back pains every night but God is so merciful coz when I mention it to Him, He really, seriously takes it away and gives me hope for another day. I am honoured to be of service to my community I do it willingly and with a grateful heart that I can walk and talk and have the use of all my limbs and organs. So, I put it to good use in my community just as God wants me to (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 11/04/2020).

> I cannot wait to meet you to love. I love what I'm doing, and I always say it doesn't come from me it comes from GOD 🙏🏾 🙌🏾🙏🏾 (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/04/2020).

> I want to salute you all. It's indeed so good to see how a group of ladies and gentlemen is so willing to serve a community with the most needed and that is called a meal. It lets me think of the scripture that says, 'Go and feed My flock.' That is exactly what you guys are doing. Remember nothing passes by unseen. May you all have a good night's rest to be full of strength for tomorrow's task. God bless you all 🙏🙏 (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 15/05/2020).

Similarly, in an interview (15 January 2020), Chloe, who is an active member of her church explained how she derived her sense of social responsibility (articulated with the words 'I have

to do more for the people around me so the people who come after me don't have to go through the same thing') from the example set by her grandmother, an 'upright, beautiful, Christian woman' who lived out the teachings of Christianity by feeding hungry people and raising neglected children as her own. The practice of doing so is common for Coloured Capetonians, Chloe explained. 'That's how things are in the Cape Flats. It's normal to look after other people's kids.' Here '*dala* what you must' is evident both in Chloe's and her grandmother's response to the needs of their neighbourhood and church communities, and in the fulfilment of their sense of duty as Christians.

However, togetherness was not only evident in the religious practices of the Muslim and Christian families and neighbourhoods I worked with, but also in the practices of participants who distanced themselves from the idea of religion. One such participant was Stanley who explained: 'My blood is in your blood. Your blood is in my blood. We are one blood.' As we sat at his kitchen table conducting our interview there was a knock on the door. Stanley opened it and greeted the two young men who stood outside. Before entering one of the young men spoke the words:

> Glorify Him and the herb. Sitting upon the golden throne rise I and I from the slumber. Bless I and I blessed day. Sun that shines, wind that blows away, gather I and I together like He gather the clouds together. So, I may glorify Him for this blessed day. To do the works of the Most High, it is an honour and a privilege. Bless I and I with life's dream, with food, glory, and shelter. Glorify Him all the days of I and I life, Haile Selassie I Jah.

…to which Stanley responded:

> Jah Rastafari blessed love I. Good and pleasure to the ears. Glory to the One. Glory to the sound. Glory to the power. Glory to the One seated upon the throne - Most High. Guide the I and I. Bless and sanctify. Bless this day, which is not known to the I and I, which is known to the Most High, that we will trust and be steadfast to the Most High, and mostly what He teach I and I. Come inside.

Here togetherness is referenced in this exchange both in the words 'gather I and I together like He gather the clouds together' and the expression 'I and I' referring to the oneness, the unity or togetherness between God (Jah) and all human beings, although Stanley cautioned against viewing his spiritual path as a religion.

> I am not religious because it is still no religion. You see, even though they say Rastafarianism we don't practice Rastafarianism. There is no such thing as Rastafarianism. Myself as a Rasta, I praise Rastafari. So, there is no Rastafarianism involved. Rastafarianism would be related to the 'isms' and 'schisms' of the colonialism, you see? So, through that I have learnt about Rastafari and, then I realised that Rastafari is a God of Africa; is the God direct of himself and the light of the world.

Nevertheless, organised religion and spirituality are powerful vehicles for togetherness because they are powerful socio-cultural agents (Levine 1986). As Levine (1986:432-433) explains, religion unites its adherents and forces social cohesion through its interpretation and practice regarding the otherworldly and, in doing so, offers paths to social cohesion, harmony, and solidarity. Religion motivates people to practice togetherness. It necessitates (and in doing so) legitimises practices of togetherness. It creates rituals, opportunities, and spaces for practicing togetherness. And, it provides people with a mode of relating to one another. The same could be said for the spiritual paths of those who, like Stanley, call themselves '*Rastas.'*

In the message that follows one participant legitimised their call for unity and togetherness in their neighbourhood CAN by appealing to Allah rather than appealing directly to members of their CAN.

> *Salaam.* Hope you all are good. I just wanna say that Allah must unite our hearts and put luv between us. We all work well together. The community needs us and we need to fulfil our duty by serving the people. So, let's stand together and make our neighbourhood a better place for all. May Allah guide and protect us all. We need to make food very soon. I luv you all (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/05/2020).

Practices of togetherness were also evident in spaces where neither religion nor spirituality were invoked. My fieldwork revealed many of the acts of service, generosity, aid, and connection people engage with in their lives in the city even in the absence of the motivation, legitimacy, and rituals offered by religious and spiritual communities. People sing together, paint murals together, raise money together, play music together, walk together, run together, play sport together, knit together, cook together, eat together and care for children together. People have daily, weekly, monthly, yearly traditions which they share with their friends, their families, but also frequently with strangers in the city. All of this was already happening before the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the pandemic intensified need across the city and so assistance followed suit as people did what they had to.

The Labour of Love: Effort and Learning involved in Practicing Togetherness

During the pandemic, families and neighbourhoods became connected to others through the Cape Town Together network which strengthened previously tenuous links between strangers in the city. As one participant observed on their neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group: 'The CAN threads everyone together for the first time in forever' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/06/2020). While Cape Town Together and its CANs created a network which 'threaded' individuals, families, and neighbourhoods together across the city, it was up to individuals, families, and neighbourhoods to maintain these ties. Fincher et al (2019:47) write that 'the making of everyday equalities, and indeed the development of habits [of everyday equalities], is hard work— it involves labour, learning, and care.' This was evident in the hard work and emotional labour hinted at in the messages posted on a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group in May 2020.

> *Shukran* all and thank you to the team and those who assisted in any way on the ground and contributed in any way. Today we broke ourselves in order to mend others. There are always challenges but it's real. We laugh, we *skell* [shout], but importantly we care (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 01/05/2020).

Another participant likened the work of practicing togetherness involved in attending the memorial service of a three-year old child who was shot to bridge building. In a message on their neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group, they wrote:

> Good morning all the CAN family. I will attend the memorial service of the late child. This is a good opportunity to add bricks to build bridges of care, love, and support. Have a blessed day🙏✝ (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/06/2020).

I would like to extend this metaphor of 'bridge building' to the practice of togetherness and the mind-body labour required in forging connections, crossing boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and traveling actual and perceptual distances with others (Hall 2012:6). Hall (2012:18) argues that the prevalence of differences in cities create boundaries between comfortable familiarity and uncomfortable unfamiliarity which the urbanite must constantly negotiate. As a result, urbanites require particular repertoires of togetherness to 'traverse and participate in different spaces of the city' (Ibid). Togetherness always involves some form of bridge crossing. Depending on whether this is done to meet a familiar or unfamiliar other, bridge crossing requires a different degree of effort, practice, and learning (Ibid). The more familiar someone is, the less socio-cultural distance there is to bridge in practicing togetherness with them. This is not the same as saying that practicing togetherness with

people who are familiar to one is always easy and never requires work. On the contrary, most people need only think of their families to appreciate how practices of togetherness with parents, children or siblings can be familiar, routine, and still be challenging but, on the whole, it is a practice people are well-versed in.

From a practice theory perspective, people learn the skills and the knowledge required of acceptable participation in certain relationships (friendly, familial, and/or professional) through their engagement in the practices of being parents, siblings, friends, colleagues and so on (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017; Hui et al 2017; Reckwitz 2002b; Reckwitz 2007; Shove et al 2012). Through repeated relating people routinize bodily and cognitive behaviour adapted to these relationships (Ibid). This is not to say anything of the quality of this practice of togetherness. The most dysfunctional practices of togetherness are often the most ingrained forms of relating in familiar settings. Nevertheless, the fact that they are ingrained means that they are routinized and habitualised and thus require less mind-body labour. The familiarity of the other person means that there is less distance to bridge when it comes to practicing togetherness with them.

Conversely, the more unfamiliar people are to one another the more socio-cultural distance there is to bridge to connect with them. This often requires a great deal of mind-body labour especially when one is out of the practice of engaging with strangers. Part of the emotional labour in such situations is managing uncomfortable feelings which may emerge when people encounter strangers – something which is well documented by the literature on encounter (see Ahmed 2000; Ahmed 2013; Darling and Wilson 2016; Fincher et al 2019; Leitner 2012; Schuermans 2013; Schuermans 2016; Schuermans 2017; Wilson 2011; Wilson 2013; Wilson 2014; Wilson 2016; Wilson 2017a; Wilson 2017b).

The flip side to this is that just as one can be versed in the practices of togetherness, so too can one be versed in the practices of atomised living, cut off from interactions with others – both familiar and unfamiliar. Modern life in the city is full of routines for atomised living: texting rather than calling, using a supermarket's self-checkout till rather than a till operated by a person, listening to music or podcasts on public transport instead of taking in the sounds of other people. The list goes on. From a practice theory perspective people learn through practices such as these both to *use* their bodies and to *be* bodies in a way that inhibits practices of togetherness with strangers (Reckwitz 2002b:251). People learn a way of doing, and also of being which helps them to avoid other people (Reckwitz 2002b:251). How this is overcome is a key question for modern life. For example, Hall (2012:5) writes: 'A question for our urban age is what the forms of work and associated modes of public contact are that permit

learning within cities that are highly varied and rapidly changing.' In other words, what explains the mechanisms by which people manage to practice togetherness in cities in spite of potentially atomising temptations and effects of modern urban life?

Tactics for Togetherness: Local Sensibilities and Everyday Diplomacy

From the perspective of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town the answer to Hall's question is the development of local sensibilities and tactics for togetherness. I borrow the notion of 'local sensibilities' from Hall (2012:105) who uses it to emphasise the kind of social solidarity that develops when there is a sharing of expertise and value. Local sensibilities and tactics also speak to what de Certeau (1988:30) calls the 'everyday art of making do.' This is *'dala* what you must' in action. A playful example of such making do is a message that was posted on a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group chat in April of 2020. In response to someone explaining that they had managed to increase the servings at their community kitchen from 70 to 100 by cutting up pieces of chicken to make it go further someone wrote: 'For a *laaaaang sous* ['long' sauce], we use enough onions, but of course you know that...🤪😉.' *Lang sous* is a Kaaps expression used to describe the tactic of making food go further to ensure that everyone who is hungry has something to eat. I first heard the term when speaking to a man running a community kitchen in Cape Town serving three meals a day. 'We never send someone away without food' he told me. 'How do you manage that?' I asked wondering how a kitchen run on food donations manages to always feed hundreds of people a day. 'We make a *lang sous*', he told me.

Another form of local sensibility and 'making do' is what Sennett (2012:221) calls 'everyday diplomacy.' Sennett (Ibid) explains that everyday diplomacy is 'one way people deal with people they don't understand, can't relate to or are in conflict with' (Ibid). To practice togetherness in such moments, people 'use minimal force; create social space through coded gestures; [and] make sophisticated repairs which acknowledge trauma' (Ibid). Everyday diplomacy was regularly used to manage confusion, uncertainty, and conflict in the CANs I observed as can be seen in the exchange that follows where group members grappled with whether to keep community kitchens open during a flare-up of gang violence and shootings in the area.

Participant 1: Can I also please ask everyone to shut down your feeding points ending today and nobody feeds over this weekend. We CANNOT put innocent kids at risk while they come to our feeding points.

Participant 2: I respect your concerns but as leaders we have been facing gang violence all our lives in and around our neighbourhood for over 40yrs (as strange as strange as it sounds). We are used to this. We know how to get our way around all these concerns you are pointing out. We salute you for it, but I'm quite sure (and others in these gang ridden areas will agree with me) we are surviving in spite of the gun violence. They can't stop us from doing what we need to do. Hope you understand where I come from.

Participant 3: I understand and can relate to what you are saying but bear in mind this time around there are quite a few different gangs that have emerged out of an established gang, more dangerous en *genadeloos* [unmerciful]. *Hulle ken nie tronk nie* [they don’t know jail]. And now with COVID-19 courts just postpone, or the gangsters are put out on bail. Look how many prisoners have been pardoned. (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/06/2020).

Embodied Learning: Routine and Habit

People learn local sensibilities, tactics, and everyday diplomacy ‘not through formal training but through gradually developing a sense of how things work and change’ (McFarlane, 2011:3). This process produces embodied learning. By repeatedly performing togetherness through actions, language, gestures, and bodies people’s minds are able to conceptualise what tactics for togetherness and everyday diplomacy looks, feels, and sounds like. The more such practices are routinized, the easier they are to perform. For practice theory, then, the nature of the social consists in routinization. As Reckwitz (2002b:250) explains ‘social practices are routines - routines of moving the body, of understanding and wanting, of using things, and of relating to others.’ Through routine the individual becomes a carrier of habitualised bodily behaviour and ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring (Reckwitz 2002b:250). In other words, mental and corporeal routines become coupled together in mind-body activities (Reckwitz 2002b:257).

Moreover, in practice theory the notion of routine is tied to that of habit, particularly through the influence of Bourdieu's (1977) work on 'habitus' which explores how people learn local sensibilities, tactics and dispositions over time which are 'particular [...] to their environment, thereby enabling and inhibiting different kinds of learning and action' (McFarlane 2011b:22; Pred 1981:8). Routine and habit are powerful forces when it comes to learning practices such as togetherness because repeated mind-body activities evolve into default modes of being and doing which require less and less mental and emotional labour (Bourdieu 1977). Everyday life is full of routines and habits such as daily commutes to and from work, weekly religious worship, monthly visits to the post office to collect social grants and annual festivals and celebrations marking significant events in a family, neighbourhood or city's calendar (Amin 2013:4; Fincher et al 2019:21). It is for this reason that Pred (1981:6) makes the point that '[a]n interest in practice is an interest in everyday life.'

Routines habitualise the urbanite in practices of togetherness with varying degrees of intensity. Some routines promote togetherness through repeated or consistent engagement with a fairly stable group of people such as family members, neighbours, classmates, and colleagues (Fincher et al 2019:21; Wilson 2017a:463). Other routines involve brief, one-off interactions with people who then become partially familiar through regular brief encounters with taxi drivers, shop keepers, or fellow church or mosque congregants, for example (Ibid). Yet other routines may involve little more than momentary copresence with ever changing groups of strangers like those at a crowded train platform or taxi rank at peak hour (Ibid). Nevertheless, all normalise the company of strangers to some degree and train urbanites in the habit of sharing space and collective endeavour (Amin 2013:4). From these routines local sensibilities and tactics for togetherness such as everyday diplomacy emerge aided by the infrastructures of togetherness like neighbourhood WhatsApp groups (Amin 2013:4; Dewsbury and Bissell 2015:21).

My work with Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town suggests that the routines of togetherness practiced through the constellation of family can shape other, less sustained, routines of togetherness. For example, Liam (Interview, 25 November 2019) described the 'values of District Six' as 'your child is my child and everybody's child also, so I'm gonna monitor you, uhm… because I care you know?' Here, the practice of care and indeed perhaps surveillance that emerges within the constellation of the family goes beyond the edges of family to shape a repertoire of togetherness practiced not only in the historic Coloured neighbourhood of District Six before it was demolished, but also in Coloured neighbourhoods across the Cape Flats to which families were moved out of District Six.

Familial terms were also used to communicate togetherness with strangers as is seen in some of the posts to neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups which I share here:

> Good day family (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 24/04/2020).
>
> As I said the strength of this family is the spirit of oneness we have and at the end we will stand victorious family (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 15/05/2020).
>
> Highly blessed to be part of this *ubuntu* family (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/05/2020).
>
> All strength to all our Muslim brothers and sisters. May you stand strong in this most trying time going through Ramadan. Many blessings (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 24/04/2020).

Habits and routines are not, however, always stable (Ahmed 2002:562; Dewsbury and Bissell 2015:24; Reckwitz 2002b:255; Wilson 2017a:463). Repetition can produce change. Further, mind-body behaviour evolves through practice which can both affirm and disrupt (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:11; Sennett 2012:88). Moments of togetherness with strangers (encounters, in other words) regardless of how brief can also accumulate and in doing so gradually shift mind-body activities and relations between strangers over time in varied ways (Wilson 2017a:463). Urbanites do not arrive at one way of being together in the city and stay that way. Instead, '[e]ach urban moment can spark performative improvisations' write Amin and Thrift (2002:4). Improvisation is the practice of '*dala* what you must.' It is the practice of making do and coping, often in the face of crisis (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:11). Hall (2012:21) argues that improvisation is 'not only a means of survival but often also a precursor for innovation' - for finding new repertoires of being and becoming together born out of necessity, as in the case of a global pandemic.

In their book *Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19* Jetten, Reicher, Haslam and Cruwys (2020:86) write that togetherness in the form of solidarity can arise spontaneously in the context of a crisis and mobilise social support. This is put down to a shared experience of risk and danger which reaffirms and strengthens practices of care embedded in existing networks and routines of support and reciprocity and/or disrupts certain practices of routinised and habitualised individuality and anonimity. In Cape Town this manifested in the form of the Cape Town Together movement and its associated CANs which saw individuals, families and neighbourhoods across the city come together in solidarity to mobilise, take action, and share

resources in support of one another. In testimony to the significance of COVID-19 as a learning opportunity for the city, the Zeits MOCAA gallery in Cape Town in 2020 invited visitors the complete the sentence: 'To Live a More Fulfilling Life, I Still Hope….' In response someone wrote: '…we will learn from this experience and grow closer together.'

The repertoires of togetherness that emerged in response to COVID-19 under the banner of Cape Town Together evolved and changed in both small and significant ways over time as people responded to various constraints on togetherness. For example, in one neighbourhood a decision was made by the CAN leadership a few weeks after its creation to restrict the type and frequency of posts on the group in order to limit the mobile data required to engage in the group. Participants were told not to 'post any videos and pictures of their feeding schemes as it depletes the already limited resources of the NGOs' referring to mobile data, which is relatively expensive in South Africa (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 27/04/2020). Later, participants were informed that 'engagement and information posting' would be limited from 24 hours a day to a 3-hour daily window as 'data costs are still high' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 03/05/2020). Compliance with this low bandwidth mode of relating was encouraged with the warning that failure to comply would result in permanent removal from the group. And so, a new term of engagement was introduced aimed at conditioning practices of togetherness on the WhatsApp group platform.

Terms of engagement and codes of conduct allow for patterns, predictability, and control. They determine what counts as 'good' practice. They emerge and evolve through practice and in doing so shape routines and give way to new repertoires of togetherness. Each neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group had its own evolving terms of engagement. I have listed two above which emerged in response to data costs as a constraint. Others which emerged over time included limiting who was allowed to post on the group by limiting posting to single representatives of local community organisations rather than letting all participants of the group post in order to minimise 'noise'; controlling the tone of discussions by prohibiting 'derogatory statements, personal attacks negative comments, attacks toward any person/ persons or organizations'; and prescribing how posts were to be formatted and presented (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 28/04/2020). In the excerpts that follow are the terms of engagement regularly shared by one WhatsApp CAN group aimed at facilitating 'good team culture' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 21/04/2020).

> ✨This group is one of the nerve centres of our Community Action Network, bringing together different people linked in some way to our neighbourhood!

💪 We can use it as a powerful tool to get accurate information, raise issues in our community, share ideas and initiatives and get the support we need!

😳 But, it can also become overwhelming at times! So here are some ideas to help build a good team culture👇

👉 Put a title on your comment so we know what it's about. Some common titles are Question, Request, Suggestion, Update, Fact-Check etc

👉 Always Sign off your comment with you name so we can get to know who we are talking to!

👉 If you share something from another group as an update then please add a comment before or after explaining why it's useful. Let's take care and have a conversation not use the group as a noticeboard.

👉 If you can support someone or know the answer to a question and it would be useful for everyone to know then please reply in the group.

👉 On some questions it might be useful to for more than one person to reply especially where there isn't one answer or experience. Please *reply* to the original question so everyone knows you commenting on that thread otherwise it can get confusing.

👉 But, if it's something not many people need to know then privately message people back. You can reply with a ✋ so everybody knows you've got this and it doesn't feel like questions are unanswered.

👉 For those who can't keep track during, the day we provide a summary of the day when closing the group at night.

Conditioning Togetherness: The Role of Power

A factor in the evolution of repertoires of togetherness is power. Local sensibilities, tactics and diplomacies are mediated by power while embodied learning is influenced by the people who exert power over a practice. WhatsApp CAN groups offer a rich example of this. All WhatsApp groups require at least one admin. Initially the admin is the person who created the group, but admins can appoint other admins too. Admins also have the power to add and remove group members, to restrict messages posted on the group, to create and revoke links to join the group, to edit and restrict the information section for the group and to delete the group. In other words, admins control and curate the digital 'space' of the WhatsApp group. To be a group admin is to occupy a position of power. Although the practice of togetherness that occurs through a WhatsApp group is shaped by all participants, influence is skewed to the admins who hold the most power in the space as dictated by the functionality of the WhatsApp technology.

Power was wielded in the WhatsApp groups I observed in a number of ways. For starters, admins set the terms of engagement on groups. An example of this is the message that follows which was routinely posted on a CAN WhatsApp group in order to remind participants what the purpose and rules of the group were:

> The CAN is born out of the need to approach a coordinated response to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
> PURPOSE:
> Its purpose is to bring leaders/partners together to support the most vulnerable in response to the pandemic COVID-19. The project aims to mitigate the spread and relax the movement of the most vulnerable etc.
> RULES:
> No Political News or Views
> No Religious News of Views
> No Crime Reporting
> No pics or Videos unless cleared with admin
> (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 21/04/2020).

Admins also controlled when discussions were opened and closed. For example, on occasion a message would appear saying that an admin had 'changed this group's settings to allow only admins to send messages to this group.' This was typically done at night in groups with heavy messaging traffic in order to give admins a break from responding to incoming

messages. In other instances, messaging was only allowed during particular windows during the day to limit the mobile data consumed by the group as is explained in the message that follows:

> As previously posted on the group, the group will be open for engagement and information posting during 3-6pm daily. I have been kindly reminded by the exco of our CAN that we are effectively circumventing that key point by leaving the group open for discussions during the day. This is resulting in people leaving the group as data costs are still high. If there is an urgent message which needs to be posted to the group, please send it to any of the admins and it will gladly be posted during the blocked timeframes (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 03/05/2020).

Admins also occasionally removed participants who did not abide by the spoken or unspoken rules of group. A common example is when a participant would join a group to advertise a crypto currency scheme only to be promptly removed from the group.

Participant 1: Choose a sure and trusted 💯 way of living today by investing and earning from the most trusted crypto currency mining/trading company.
Join Millions of happy investors earning profitably from Bitcoin mining/trading.
Become a beneficiary of this long-term opportunity which has and is still making Billionaires.
Interested and wondering how to invest?
Ask me.
Text me via WhatsApp for more info on how to begin.
(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 21/05/2020).

Participant 2: What rubbish is this now? Admin, please remove this (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 21/05/2020).

Admin: Please remove this post
I will block and remove you from the group if you don't.
Admin removed P56 Crypto (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 21/05/2020).

In some instances, admins also deleted messages deemed as 'fake news.' The most common examples of these were scams disguised as social grant applications as shown in the exchange that follows.

Participant 1: FG has finally approved and have started giving out free R3500 Relief Funds to each citizen😍
Below is how to claim and get your credit Instantly as I have just did
Note: You can only claim and get credited once and it's also limited so get your now Instantly.

Participant 2: Is this for real... Legit... Scary giving bank details to a scheme I don't know.

Admin: Definitely fake news, there's no such thing, sorry guys.
This message was deleted (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 22/06/2020).

Alkemeyer and Buschmann (2017:13) explain that 'power relations and normative orders unfolding in praxis define conditions of learning' which explains why learning togetherness (like learning any other practice) is associated with conflicts and disagreements. This is because the established members of a community of practice (such as WhatsApp group admins, community leaders, religious leaders, or elders in a family) are 'at once forced to impart their knowledge to novices and obliged to maintain their positions of power which are based on this knowledge' (Ibid). Just like young members of a family, 'novices' in any community of practice including a neighbourhood mutual aid group occasionally try to do things differently in order to gain independence and to claim originality for themselves (Ibid). Understood in this way, learning the practice of togetherness involves both imitating established behaviour and an active negotiation of and grappling with interests, interpretations, and knowledge (Ibid).

Motivation: Affective Atmospheres of Necessity

Just as learning and practicing togetherness is mediated by power relations, so too is it mediated by affective atmospheres. Reckwitz (2016:116) writes that '[i]f we want to understand how practices work, we have to understand their specific affects, the affects which

are built into the practices.' From a practice theory perspective, affects are properties of the specific mood of a practice (Reckwitz 2016:119). Key here is that unlike emotions or feelings, affects are not merely 'interior properties of individuals, only accessible to an introspection plumbing the depths of the psyche' (Ibid), they are inherently social and relational (Deleuze and Guattari 1988). Within a practice people can be affected by other people, by things, and ideas in various ways (Reckwitz 2016:120). Reckwitz (Ibid) explains that '[a]ffectivity is therefore always a relation between different entities.'

Affectivity matters for the practice of togetherness because it comes into play in motivation – the affective incentive to participate in the practice of togetherness (Reckwitz 2016:120). This motivation can be a hopeful desire for connection, solidarity, or care, a defensive incentive to avoid displeasure (such as conflict, animosity, exclusion or isolation), or a combination of the two (Reckwitz 2016:120). Alkemeyer and Buschmann (2017:10) make the point that learning requires motivation and action from participants who must be 'amenable to being taken in by or to engage with' a practice. The possible failure to practice togetherness, then, is not only a matter of lacking the necessary capabilities or materialities, but also of lacking the necessary motivation (Reckwitz 2016:120). How is this motivation cultivated? Nyamnjoh and Brudvig (2014:342, 350) suggest that conviviality (the ability to live with others) emerges through the formation of alliances which are, in turn, crafted out of dynamics of mutual need and the prospects of mutual gain. Similarly, my work with Coloured families and neighbourhoods points to the power of necessity produced both through the intersecting medical, economic, and social crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also through the realities of poverty, precarity and violence which form part of everyday life on the Cape Flats and demand that people '*dala* what they must' to get by.

The affective mood of necessity in Cape Town, intensified by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, motivated people to start CANs in their neighbourhoods. In many instances this act of togetherness emerged through a collective recognition of the need to prepare and share food among communities where people had lost their incomes due to COVID-19 and faced food insecurity. As one person explained 'We started our CAN group with 8 volunteers. We signed up with Cape Town Together and were introduced to one another via WhatsApp as we live in the same area. We started a small kitchen with 2 pots and fed about 100 people' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 13/05/2020). Another group described themselves as 'a group of people who work nonstop to find food for the most vulnerable in [their] communities' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 07/04/2020). Such mobilising in response to people's basic needs for survival represents '*dala* what you must' in its most basic form and it created an affective mood of togetherness both through the shared experience of crisis but also through

the possibility of the shared experience of care. It was the latter affective impact of the pandemic which grew CANs from eight or so volunteers (as mentioned in the example above) to hundreds with people joining on a daily basis with introductions such as this: 'Hello everyone, […]🙋🏽‍♀️ I asked to be added to this group so I can be part of supporting the community, especially those in need right now. I can be good help in coming up with creative solutions.' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 26/04/2020). The result was an emergent community of practice in togetherness brought into being by the COVID-19 pandemic which amplified the existing atmosphere of necessity in Cape Town, particularly in areas of high deprivation like the Cape Flats and created something which people could come together over.

Conclusion

This chapter made the case for understanding togetherness as a practice - something that can and must be practiced in order to be learnt not only through mental, but also bodily training. It drew on practice theory and the work of Reckwitz in particular. Empirically, it explored how togetherness revealed itself as a practice within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town during my fieldwork and discussed six features which characterise the practice of togetherness performed by Coloured Capetonians.

First, it showed how the religious and spiritual paths of Islam, Christianity and Rastafarianism variously necessitate and facilitate practices of togetherness within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town by prescribing and creating rituals, opportunities, and spaces for practicing togetherness and providing adherents with a mode of relating to one another which signals togetherness. Second, practicing togetherness involves labour which varies in intensity depending on whether togetherness is being practiced with familiar or unfamiliar others. Third, through practice people develop tactics for togetherness, such as everyday diplomacy, which are informed by local sensibilities. Fourth, people learn such tactics for togetherness not through formalised training but by slowly and gradually developing a sense of how togetherness works which produces routinised and habitualised repertoires of togetherness. Routines lead to habits of togetherness which are not static but evolve and change in response to influence (or power) and necessity. This culminates in the final two features of togetherness which are power and affectivity.

This chapter's exploration of togetherness as a practice speaks back to Northern theories of togetherness especially as articulated through the theoretical tradition of encounter in two

ways. First, it re-centres familiarity in the discourse on what happens when people come together and encounter each other in the city, which typically frames encounter as a meeting of difference implied as the absence of familiarity. By discussing the various ways in which Coloured people practice togetherness through the constellations of familiarity represented by the family and the neighbourhood, this chapter illustrated how encounters can also be produced through familiarity. Second, the idea that practices evolve challenges an assumption apparently inherent scholarship which looks only at the moment of encounter and suggests that encounters might disrupt difference (see for example Rovisco 2010; Wilson 2017a) but does not explore what the resultant product is. As mentioned in Chapter Two (Theorising Togetherness), Wilson (2017a:456) argues that 'encounters do not simply take place at the border but are rather central to the making and unmaking of them.' This chapter explored what results from a border which has been 'unmade' and suggested that encounters with difference can gradually produce familiarity when people learn to be together, and in doing so co-create a commonality of shared experience and/or new-found understanding at the very least.

The following chapter 'The Spaces of Togetherness' considers the physical places of the city as well as the digital places of neighbourhood mutual aid WhatsApp groups (CANs) as materialities which enable and mediate repertoires of togetherness in Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. In the final empirical chapter 'Togetherness as an Ambivalent Practice' I build on practice theory by discussing ambivalence as a quality of togetherness not yet accommodated within the existing remit of practice theory. I explain how practices of togetherness manifest in both hopeful and troubling ways and involve both unity and rupture as well as harmony and conflict. This final chapter answers the question: 'What kind of practice is togetherness?'

6. The Spaces of Togetherness

Figure 15: Ubuntu Cafe - Langa, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2019)

Introduction

In popular discourse the terms space and place are used, often interchangeably, to refer to region, location, area, or landscape – all geographic locales of varying sizes and configurations. But, in human geography, they are attributed greater significance, representing in many ways the intellectual foundation of the discipline which, as Hubbard and Kitchin (2010:7) argue, is 'united primarily by its insistence on "grounding" analyses of social, economic and political phenomena in their appropriate geographical context.' For some time human geographers have grappled with the meaning of- and relationship between- the terms, understandings of which remain diffuse. Crang and Thrift (2000:1) suggest that '[s]pace is the everywhere of modern thought' and perhaps the closest we can get to grasping an understanding of space that unites the diverse debates and theorisations of the concept in geography is an understanding of space as the realm in which relationships between things play out, whether this realm is imagined as the earth's surface (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010) or a sphere much less absolute (Massey 1999; 2005). Place, on the other hand has emerged, through the influential work of Lefebvre (1991), as a particular unit or form of space which is created through the lived experiences of people and their acts of naming, expressions of attachment, and performances of particular activities associated with particular spaces (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010:6). Massey (2005:149) writes that '[p]laces pose in particular form the question of our living together', our 'throwntogetherness.' It is here where my interest in space and place lies; in the practices that answer the question 'how do we live together in the spaces of cities?'

In 'Social Justice and the City', Harvey (2010:13) argues that '[human] practice resolves the conceptualisation of space.' He explains that '[t]he question "what is space?" ought to be replaced by the question "how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?' (Ibid). Accordingly, this chapter considers how vernacular practices of togetherness performed by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town as people '*dala* what they must' relate to both the past and present material spaces of neighbourhoods and the virtual spaces of neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups. The chapter begins with a discussion of the co-constitutive relationship between practice and place before moving on to discuss how the practices of togetherness within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the Cape Flats can be located in three spatiotemporal zones: (1) the 'then and there' of the pre-removals Coloured neighbourhoods of the past, (2) the 'here and now' of contemporary life on the Cape Flats, and (3) the 'there and now' of the virtual neighbourhood spaces created by CAN WhatsApp groups across the Cape Flats.

The findings I present here point to the ways in which social interactions between families, neighbours and strangers in the city are entangled with the physical and digital spaces which play host to them, as well as the ways in which practices of togetherness can take diverse forms across different time-spaces. Togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town and what it means to '*dala* what you must' is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through the digital space of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups for crime reporting and (more recently) organising against the threat of COVID-19. At the same time, both the physical and digital locations of neighbourhoods are, in turn, shaped by the practices of togetherness contained in them.

The Co-constitutive Relationship between Practice and Place

From the perspective of practice theory and the work of Hui et al (2017), Shove et al (2012) and Reckwitz (2002b) practices are understood as composed not only of particular mind-body activities (as discussed in the previous chapter), but also of corresponding infrastructures, materialities, or artefacts which enable them to be performed. In other words, performing a practice involves thinking and behaving in a certain way in addition to using or relating to a space, object or technology in a certain way (Reckwitz 2002b:252). Recognition of the relationship between human activity and material environment is not, however, restricted to scholars of practice theory. As Amin (2008:5) explains, urbanists have long held the view that the formation of public culture is shaped by the dynamics of public space. City streets, parks and squares are often cited as the ambivalent yet potent locales of encounters with strangers, building of civic culture, political deliberation, and agonistic struggle (Ibid).

This is the 'throwntogetherness' of cities of which Massey (2005) speaks - the chance of space which might place a person next to an unexpected stranger or neighbour. Massey (2005:8) explains that our 'ways of being in the world' are in part modes of coping with the challenges that space throws up - like the contemporality of others found particularly in cities. Similarly, Harvey (2010:310) argues that in the city 'people fashion [their] sensibilities, extract [their] sense of wants and needs, and locate [their] aspirations with respect to [the] geographical environment.' This urbanist perspective chimes with practice theory in the sense that both insist that space and place, along with technology, infrastructure, objects, and artefacts should be seen as intrinsic parts of human being and becoming, and social life (Amin 2008:8). From

this understanding, togetherness arises in the embodied experience of space where practices are produced through the interaction between mind-body activities, place, and the necessary corresponding objects, technologies, or infrastructures - whether that be food, mobile phones, data, or airtime.

Equally, several scholars (such as Lefebvre, Massey, Harvey, Soja and Reckwitz) make the point that just as the performance of practice relies on space as a necessary material ingredient, the production of space relies on the routines and rhythms of being and becoming that 'confirm and naturalise the existence of certain spaces' (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010:7). In *For Space* Massey (2005:9) introduces three propositions for understanding space, the first of which is that space is a product of 'interrelations', of interactions. The second is that these interrelations, 'relations between', which produce space are necessarily embedded in material practices such that space is always in the process of being made; never finished or closed (Ibid). And, the third is that places are 'formed through a myriad of practices of quotidian negotiation and contestation' (Ibid). This understanding of space as produced through social practices has been developed both by Lefebvre (1991:191) in his work on the *Production of Space* in which he makes the case for 'social space' as both a 'field of action' and 'a basis of action', and Soja (1980:208) writes similarly in 'The Social-Spatial Dialectic' that space is a 'social product.' It is also central to the mechanics of practice theory as developed by Reckwitz (2012:252) which holds that practices produce their respective spaces in a process of 'spatialisation.' Through spatialisation space becomes simultaneously material and cultural (Ibid). Similarly, in his work on 'more-than-social movements' and experimental practice Dimitris Papadopoulos (2018:19) writes that both the social and the material are rewoven through the development of new practices, knowledges and technologies. The result is a two-way process where, through practices, places are shaped by people and people are shaped by places by way of what Massey (Ibid) calls the 'practising of place' - 'the negotiation of intersecting trajectories.'

From these perspectives, urban togetherness is seen not only as the interconnectedness between people but also between people and the physical and digital spaces they occupy. This way of seeing togetherness is about recognising the co-constitutive relationship between the social and the spatial (between practice and place) in which social relationships and interactions are partially shaped by people's relationships to the spaces in which they occur, and people's relationships to the spaces they inhabit, as partially shaped by their relationships and interactions with people in them (Holloway, Rice and Valentine 2003:252; Massey 2005:10). This understanding of the entanglement between social and spatial relations is captured in Amin's (2015:246) words when he writes: 'Bodies animate space, and space

animates bodies'. Such is the argument of relational geographies (see for example Amin 2015; Amin and Thrift 2002; Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Anderson 2012; Farías 2011; Harvey 2004; Massey 2005; Massey, Allen and Pile 1999; McFarlane 2011a; Thrift 1996) which emphasize the interdependence and co-constitution of entities such as people and places arguing that 'there is no such thing as space outside of the processes that define it' (Harvey 2004:4).

What emerges is an understanding of place (particularly urban place) as 'an arena where negotiation is forced upon us' to use Massey's (2005:154) phrasing. 'Challenge' is key to Massey's understanding of space produced through throwntogetherness. For example, she writes: (2005:140) 'what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres).' This is a line of thinking I build on throughout this chapter in the lead up to the final empirical chapter which is dedicated to discussing 'togetherness' as an inherently ambivalent and therefore challenging spatial practice, combining both the delight and challenge of being throwntogether in the city and demanding negotiation. Through my work with neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups, I also explore the unavoidable challenge of negotiating not only the 'here and now' and 'then and there' of neighbourhood spaces such as streets, community kitchens or mosques of the present and past, but also the 'there and now' of digital neighbourhood spaces created by CAN WhatsApp groups.

Here I draw on the work of Berger and Luckman (1966) and Zhao (2006) to discern between three different spatiotemporal (space-time) zones which shape everyday life. In *Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* Berger and Luckmann (1966:36) make the point that '[t]he reality of everyday life is organized around the "here" of [one's] body and the "now" of [one's] present' but that '[t]he reality of everyday life is not, however, exhausted by these immediate presences, but embraces phenomena that are not present "here and now".' They explain that everyday life is experienced through 'differing degrees of closeness and remoteness, both spatially and temporally' (Ibid). In other words, the spatiotemporal structure of everyday life extends from 'here' (that which is nearby) to 'there' (that which is far away) and 'now' (that which is at present) to 'then' (that which is in the past). Through these spatiotemporalities Berger and Luckman offer two 'zones of everyday life', the 'here and now' and the 'then and there' existing on a spatiotemporal continuum connecting many 'intermediate areas'. Writing 40 years later, Zhao (2006) considers the role of the internet in reconfiguring the zones around which everyday life is organised by creating a third spatiotemporal zone —the zone of the 'there and now'— that which is simultaneously immediate and somehow removed and which organises everyday life around the 'here' of the

body and the ‘there’ of ‘reach’ mediated through the internet and communication technologies (Zhao 2006:460).

The ability to inhabit different spatial temporal zones such as ‘then and there’, ‘here and now’, and ‘there and now’ can be linked to the experience of being urban. Writing more than a century ago, Simmel (1903:17) described the emerging ‘metropolitan type’ as someone with an identity that does ‘not end with the limits of his physical body or with the area to which his physical activity is immediately confined, but embraces, rather, the totality of meaningful effects which emanates from him temporally and spatially.’ With this in mind, the following section traces the practices of togetherness within urban Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the Cape Flats across three spatiotemporal zones: (1) the ‘then and there’ of the pre-removals Coloured neighbourhoods of the past, (2) the ‘here and now’ of contemporary life on the Cape Flats, and (3) the ‘there and now’ of the virtual neighbourhood spaces created by CAN WhatsApp groups across the Cape Flats.

Locating Practices of Togetherness within Coloured Families and Neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats

Figure 16: "No Matter Where We Are, We Are Here" - District Six Museum, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2019)

Then and There

Keith and Pile (1993:3) write that '[s]pace may be the template from which the secrets of reality are to be read.' Similarly, in his book *Outcast Cape Town* Western (1996:4) writes: 'Recognising the dialectic of person and place is essential to an appreciation of the texture of life in Cape Town today.'[12] However, echoing many of the sentiments regarding the diffuse spatiotemporalities that shape 'the everyday' as described by Berger and Luckman in 1966 and Zhao in 2006, Harvey (2004:4) makes the case for a 'relational view of space' and argues that it is not possible to disentangle space from time. He explains that '[a]n event or a thing at a point in space cannot be understood by appeals to what exists only at that point.' Instead, an event or a thing is affected by disparate influences 'over space in the past, present and future' (Ibid). Both space and time are closely linked to the reality of what it means to be Coloured in Cape Town. Speaking of Coloured people's emotional connection to place in Cape Town in our interview, Shelly (Interview, 10 January 2020) explained that '[a] place becomes meaningful when we connect to it emotionally' describing the mechanism by which the connection of Coloured people to place in Cape Town traverses time extending beyond the present-day reality of life on the Cape Flats of so many Coloured families to memories of the Coloured neighbourhoods of the past before they were emptied of their occupants or demolished. These are the local spaces of the past and present – zones of familiarity and everyday life 'then' and 'now' (Hall 2012:130).

Coloured people navigate these local worlds of the past and present through togetherness with families, neighbours and familiar Others sustained by everyday practices in ordinary spaces – both physical (homes, streets, schools, mosques, churches, and community kitchens) and virtual (neighbourhood WhatsApp groups). Within these everyday familiar spaces social life emerges through the practice, routinisation and habitualisation of togetherness (Hall 2012:99).

Accordingly, the subsequent section uses Harvey's (2004) notion of relational space in its attempt to make sense of how the practice of togetherness of Coloured families and

[12] Others who have written about place and identity in South Africa include Steyn and Ballard (2013) in their piece 'Diversity and small town spaces in post-apartheid South Africa: An introduction' and Durrheim and Dixon (2005; 2010) in their pieces on 'Studying talk and embodied practices: toward a psychology of materiality of "race relations"' and 'The role of place and metaphor in racial exclusion: South Africa's beaches as sites of shifting racialization.'

neighbourhoods in Cape Town are influenced by the 'then and there' of the city's past. Here I draw on the memories of place and space in Cape Town shared by participants through two constellations of familiarity – namely the family and the neighbourhood. What emerges from these memories are two ambivalent place-based themes which preside over the practices of togetherness by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town: nostalgia - a longing for a lost place (a home) or a lost time (the past) (Hofer 1688) and pain. Johannes Hofer, who coined the term 'nostalgia', combined the Greek words, *Nostos* (return to home) and *Algia* (painful longing) to capture the essence of the condition. Where nostalgia relates to the pain emerging from a lost home or time (a lost then and there), pain can relate more directly to the present home and time.

The presence of shared nostalgia for pre-removals Cape Town within the Coloured community in Cape Town is well documented in South African scholarship (see for example Bickford-Smith 1998; Conradie 2017; Field 2019; Jackson 2003; Trotter 2009; Wale 2020). As the story goes, Coloured Capetonians who lived in places like District Six prior to removals between 1957 and 1985 share a longing for the 'then and there' of their former homes and communities in the Cape Peninsula which both binds them together and presides over how they relate to the 'here and now' of their contemporary lives on the Cape Flats (Trotter 2009:49). This longing is described as a shared nostalgia for the safe, peaceful settings of the pre-removals Coloured neighbourhoods in the city where 'people had nothing but they were all together' (Field 2019:38) and offers a stark contrast to the 'poverty-stricken, violent ganglands across the Cape Flats' (Field 2019:38). In their book *Cocoon Communities: Togetherness in the 21st Century* Korpela and Dervin (2013:50) write that 'communal togetherness culminates when someone leaves', explaining that in many ways, leaving strengthens ties by making them visible. The substantial impact of forced removals on consolidating communal consciousness among Coloured people features noticeably in the literature referenced in this section.

Nostalgia is coupled with pain in Coloured neighbourhoods' and families' relation to the 'then and there' of pre-removals Cape Town. Whereas nostalgia stems from the positive attributes of a place and time lost, made all the more rosy in contrast to the 'here and now' of the present, pain stems from the violence of this loss forced upon a community. Invoking this sense of force and violence, Liam (25 November 2019) described in an interview how, through forced removals, the apartheid regime 'broke' the sense of community existing within pre-removals Coloured families and neighbourhoods.

> …there are people living in Ocean View. What a joke in the title because it's behind a mountain, you know? Lavender Hill, I found out my grandmother used to live in

> Summer Hill Lane next to Lavender Hill Lane and she told me Lavender Hill was named after Lavender Hill Street. Same with Hanover Park. That is named after Hanover Street. It was so well orchestrated by the Apartheid regime to literally break us as a people. I think that the one thing that Apartheid got right (unfortunately) is that it broke that sense of community. They broke that spirit completely.

In *The Number* Jonny Steinberg (2004:103) explains how this happened as he writes that through forced removals members of extended families and communities who had previously lived close to one another were displaced to different parts of the Cape Flats so that suddenly people 'shared cramped streets with strangers rather than kin.' To add insult to injury these streets were often tactlessly and cruelly named after the streets people had previously called home before the they were emptied by removals and demolition. For example, explaining how Hanover Park was named after the old Hanover Street of District Six Richard Rive (1987:62) writes in his book *Buckingham Palace, District Six*:

> Many were forced to move to small matchbox houses in large matchbox townships which with brutal and tactless irony were given names by the authorities such as Hanover Park and Lavender Hill to remind us of the past they had taken away from us. There was one essential difference between the old places and the new ones. District Six had a soul. Its centre held together till it was torn apart. Stained and tarnished as it was, it had a soul that held together. The new matchbox conglomerates on the desolate Cape Flats had no soul. The houses were soulless units piled together to form a disparate community that lacked cohesion.

Frankish and Bradbury (2012) as well as Wale (2020) explain how removees who have now spent decades living on the Cape Flats lament the 'here and now' of the Cape Flats saturated with what Field (2019:38) describes as 'narratives of broken families damaged by domestic and gang violence, sexual abuse, drugs, and other vicissitudes of working-class life'. Removees share nostalgic memories as they reminisce about the comparative kinship, safety and peace of their former streets and neighbourhoods in places like District Six but while also often omitting the racism, segregation and any other unpleasantness that may have existed (Bickford-Smith 1998:58). Coloured removee families' and neighbourhoods' practices of togetherness are shaped by the 'then and there' spaces they had been removed from remembered and reconstructed precisely through the longed-for practices of togetherness apparently absent from the Cape Flats. Trotter (2009:55) explains that it is this nostalgia that united first generation Cape Flats residents as they 'grieved and gossiped together, commiserated and consoled one another, railed against apartheid and complained about the

shabby housing'. Commemorating their destroyed communities and sharing with one another memories of their cherished pasts allowed them to forge new communities on the Cape Flats.

However, in my research this particular narrative of nostalgia for the 'then and there' of pre-removals Cape Town only emerged in two interviews. The first was my interview with Ihsaan who shared with me his upbringing in the Bo-Kaap Malay quarter recalling only positive memories of neighbourhood sports played on the streets and the tolerance and safety that existed amongst the racially mixed families who lived there. The second was my interview with Liam who was born in the Cape Flats and spoke of care of others as a value inherited from District Six as a place where 'your child is my child, and everybody's child.' That nostalgia for the 'then and there' of pre-removals Cape Town was limited to only two conversations in my fieldwork is likely because the majority of the people I spoke with were born in the Cape Flats rather than in pre-removals Cape Town and so do not have direct experience of a 'lost home.'

Two other participants did share nostalgia for the 'lost time' of the Cape Flats of their youth. For example, in the message that follows (posted on a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group chat) one member praised another for the service they continue to offer to elderly people in the neighbourhood, sharing memories of this work dating back to their youth on the Cape Flats.

> 🙏🙏🙏🤲 Pleasure aunty. After you left my mom told me how you used to make jokes in the train when you took our elderly out on a day trip. And they laughed at you. When you mentioned the tracksuits, I remembered when I was young, my friend's mom said: 'I'm going to the club' and you guys was by Heideveld community centre and sometimes she would go to Manenberg community centre and myself and friend would run around to the community centre to see what's happening. Our elderly would do some knitting, there was biscuits and tea, and they were relaxed, chatting. Awesome work you do for our Elders. Thank you 🤗🤗🤗 (WhatsApp CAN group chat, 06/05/2020).

The second expression of nostalgia for the 'lost time' of the Cape Flats of 'then and there' emerged through a lengthy 'chain mail' type message which was posted on another neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group in which the speaker reminisces about the street in which they grew up on and ways of being on the Cape Flats experienced by their generation. The message is full of rich detail of place seen through 'then and there' which offers a contrast to the narrative of crime, soullessness and poverty typically associated with the Cape Flats. It is also evidence of an attempt to connect with others through a shared connection to the 'then and there' of the Cape Flats via the mechanism of forwarding a message. For these reasons I include it in its entirety here.

I grew up in Beethoven Street, Steenberg, Cape Town, South Africa and I walked to primary and high school regardless of the weather and dinner time was at 6.00pm and bed was 7.30pm.
Eating out at a restaurant was a huge deal, that only really happened when it was a birthday or a very special occasion.
Fast food was Friday night fish ’n chips night and having a bottle of Coke from the cafe was a real treat.
You took your school clothes off as soon as you got home and put on your ‘home’ clothes. There was no taking or picking you up in the car, you caught a public bus, you walked or rode your bike! You got home did your chores and your homework before dinner.
Our house phone had a cord attached, so there was no such things as private conversations or mobile phones!
We didn’t have DSTV, Neon, Light Box or Netflix, we had only a radio, and listened to stories like 'The Creaking Door', 'Squad Cars', 'Taxi', Top 20 and sports over weekends only.
We played hopscotch, hide and seek, soccer, skateboarded, marbles and sun tanned by the pool. Suntan lotion was only used when at the beach on holiday.
Staying in the house was a punishment and the only thing we knew about "bored" was --- "You better find something to do before I find it for you!"
We played music via a record or tape player.
We went to the corner cafe for bread and milk and a chappie[13] was 1/2 cent.
We ate what mom made for dinner or we ate nothing at all, and if we didn’t eat our vegetables there was no ice cream or pudding.
Bottled water was a luxury we didn't know, we drank from the tap and the hosepipe.
We read cartoons on Sunday mornings in the newspaper and rode our bikes for hours and ran around the neighbourhood. We bought ice cream from the 'ice cream man.’
We weren't afraid of anything. We played till dark. Sunset was our alarm when the streetlights came on.
Day or night, street football barefoot was a daily thing and played seriously. We lay on the warm tar roads for fun.

[13] A ‘chappie’ is a small square bubble-gum sweet popularised in South Africa in part because shopkeepers once used them instead of coins to give change to customers and because of the inclusion of "Did you know" trivia on the inside of the wrappers.

> If someone had a fight, that's what it was, 1 on 1 and we were friends again a week later, if not sooner.
> We watched our mouths around our elders because all our aunts, uncles, grandpas, grandmas, and our parents' best friends were extensions of our parents, and you didn't want them telling your parents if you misbehaved! Or they would give you something to cry about.
> We respected the Police, Firemen, Ambulance workers, Teachers, Doctors and Nurses.
> We never answered back.... ever!!
> Wooden spoons, hairbrushes, tomato box sides and feather dusters were the cane of choice and we got detention at school for not doing homework, being late to class or being naughty.
> These were the good days. So many kids today will never know how it feels to be a real kid 😁
> Copy and paste if you were in this generation.
>
> (CAN WhatsApp group, 23/07/2020)

Two people responded to this message with one saying: ‘Yes those were the days. Wow 😂’ and the other: ‘For me too. Just not the radio. I was born into TVs. 1979.’ And then the conversation was interrupted with a ‘breaking news’ announcement that the president would address the nation that evening on ‘developments in South Africa’s risk-adjusted strategy to manage the spread of COVID-19’ and the reverted back to the logistics and challenges of the neighbourhood’s community kitchens and feeding schemes.

Aside from these expressions of nostalgia, the overriding sentiment of the ‘then and there’ of the Cape Flats was one of pain. A reason for this was offered by Shelly who explained in an interview that while the ‘older generation’ long for neighbourhoods like District Six where they had lived before the removals, the ‘new generation’ do not share this connection to this ‘then and there’ place. Instead, they feel a connection to the ‘here and now’ of the Cape Flats. This is an ambivalent attachment, shaped in part by a sense of pride that stems from collective belonging as well as what Shelly described as ‘sadness when you realise it has never been upgraded.’ Here, the fact that the Cape Flats of the ‘here and now’ still so closely resembles the Cape Flats of the ‘then and there’ is an indicator of neglect by City authorities and a source of disappointment and pain, rather than nostalgia. Shelly’s insight is echoed in Becker’s (2017:253) work which describes how younger people who have grown up on the Cape Flats after the end of apartheid do not share their grandparents’ nostalgic longing for life in the pre-removals inner city suburbs but have instead built social networks within the Cape Flats.

Another way in which people's collective relationship to place extends beyond the here and now is through shared memories and histories. People's relationships to space are multi-temporal extending from the past into the future, encompassing memories and aspirations. For example, my interview with Stanley (Interview, 7 January 2020) highlighted how both individual and collective national heritages may be traced and claimed through pathways in and out of the city. During our conversation he told me about the annual 'Liberation Walk of Life' through parts of South Africa which he leads for Khoi people to retrace their roots and connect to their indigenous heritage. The walk starts in Cape Town and ends in Elim, nearly 750 kilometres away in the Northern Cape of South Africa – a place of historical and cultural significance for Khoi people. The route taken follows the national highway, the N2, out of the city and heads North. The section of the road which leads in and out of Cape Town is called Settlers Way, but for Stanley the route holds other historical and cultural importance for Khoi people, referred to as 'Bushmen', as he explained in the extract quoted here:

> So that is the road they call the N2 today which they also call Settlers Way. It is the *eland* [antelope native to South Africa] way because it was the *eland* migration route. And, then the Bushman just followed the route because they know that route already, ancient of days, you see, which today the call the Settler's Way, the N2.

Here and Now

The 'here and the now' of the Cape Flats is a spatiotemporal zone of necessity. Here economic precarity and poverty, gangsterism, crime and violence, underdevelopment, and state neglect work together to create conditions which demand that residents *dala* what they must in order to get by. This is not to say these realities define the Cape Flats in its entirety. To view it in such narrow terms would be to ignore the diversity, vibrancy, and vitality of this large stretch of land which is home to hundreds and thousands of people - 'doctors, lawyers, artists, and athletes and not only gangsters' as Liam stressed to me in our interview (25 November 2019). Nevertheless, precarity and poverty, gangsterism, crime and violence, underdevelopment, and state neglect are realities of life on the Cape Flats which many people are forced to navigate on a daily basis. In an interview Kyle (25 November 2019) described everyday life on the Cape Flats as a struggle for survival. He described the financial challenges for those living in economic precarity or poverty on the Cape Flats.

> It's like: "Hey, there's one unit of electricity left. I don't have data. There isn't food." That's the daily pressure of surviving on the Cape Flats. We survive. I always tell people: "We don't live; we survive".

Similarly, a member of a CAN neighbourhood WhatsApp group described how gangsterism, violence and crime are realities they have learnt to survive with and work around in order to keep 'doing what [they] need to do' (which in this case was running community food kitchens to feed people during the COVID-19 pandemic).

> […] we have been facing gang violence all our lives in and around our neighbourhood for over 40yrs. As strange as it sounds, we are used to this. I'm quite sure (and others in these gang-ridden areas will agree with me) we are surviving in spite of the gun violence. They [gangsters] can't stop us from doing what we need to do (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/06/2020) 14.

This quote along with the attention crime and gangsterism on the Cape Flats receives in public discourse, national news, and WhatsApp group conversations – not to mention its impact on people's lives (Trotter 2009:58) – highlights the extent to which 'vice and violence' are serious issues for people living on the Cape Flats where robbery, car hijacking, kidnapping, assault, murder and rape are risks of everyday life (Ibid). Liam (interview, 25 November 2019) lamented the State's repeated neglect of the Cape Flats while other parts of Cape Town benefit from redevelopment and investment referencing how in 2010 (when South Africa hosted the World Cup) instead of redeveloping the football stadium in Athlone, a predominantly Coloured neighbourhood with a strong football fan base, the City decided to build a stadium in Green Point, an affluent suburb on the Atlantic seaboard, while Shelly spoke of state neglect saying: 'the State and City actively work to deny and exclude us and make us invisible.'

Out of this environment of necessity two vernacular practices of togetherness emerge in response to the demands of everyday life on the Cape Town. The first is a form of fraught but significant neighbourly solidarity produced as a product of people living in close proximity to one another on the Cape Flats as a hangover of apartheid city planning. The second is collective care ambivalently expressed through attempts at vigilance, surveillance, and control in response to crime and violence on the Cape Flats.

In testimony to fraught but significant neighbourly solidarity manifest both in care and control, in the excerpts that follow Kyle (25 November 2019) explained that, by virtue of the small houses packed in closely to one another, neighbours on the Cape Flats simply have had to find ways to live together in order to adapt to the challenges of proximity such as conflict.

[14] In order to protect the speaker's anonymity their identification has been omitted and their comment paraphrased so that it cannot be traced.

> So now we live in a hole. We were moved. We were evicted in the apartheid time out of Bishopscourt – all of those places. And we were thrown here. So, here in Mitchells Plain the roads are very narrow. The houses are on top of each other. So, it was strategically designed for you to try and cope in that small space. It is inevitable for you to have an argument with your neighbour.
>
> Mitchells Plain's neighbours are some of the neighbours who care most for each other. The reason for this is that the houses are small. So, here where I live you can't ignore your neighbour and you need to try and live in harmony. Every day you have to behave yourself- if you party late, if you fight, or whatever.

Similarly, in the message below posted to a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group another resident of the Cape Flats described their awareness of —and inability to ignore— the goings on in their neighbours' homes and their efforts to 'do what they can' (*dala* what they must) and act on their knowledge of the dangers facing people and children inside their homes as well as outside on the street in the absence of sufficient action by the state.

> Good morning, all. I'm very sad with you all for what's happening in our areas at the moment, and I just want to share my experience with you. I'm living at the same address for the last 48 years. Families were killed next to me, but before it happened, I informed the police of what's happening in this house. No help came out to put a stop to it. I was on the phone with the police one day while the gangsters were shooting at our neighbour. They said they didn't know when the law enforcement could make a turn. Just on Saturday night at about 2 am I phoned the police again and told them about a house party - playing loud music and selling alcohol. At 4:30 am nothing had changed. I have, over the years, sent kids off the road if they're outside their houses in the dark. I do what I can but it's getting worse. It's up to the parents. This group needs to stand together and protest and make the gang leaders, police, and government aware that we are sick and tired of this kind of life in our areas (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/06/2020).

This message evidences both a solidarity produced through residential proximity, and a vigilant effort at 'monitoring' and reporting her neighbours' risky behaviour as an expression of care and concern. Through her work on neighbourhood watch WhatsApp groups, Dixon (2018:494) explains that 'discourse about neighbourhood watches often includes notions of neighbourhood vigilance as a dimension of community cohesion, even neighbourliness.' Here Dixon describes the coexistence of vigilance, community cohesion and neighbourliness

enacted through the neighbourhood watch group to which Kyle (Interview, 25 November 2019) and his neighbours belong as described by him in the excerpt that follows:

> I feel that we are a community in the street. There by us people stand together. We have a WhatsApp group to warn each other [about crime or danger] and to check up on one another.
> It is literally just for our street. I think there's about 20 houses in our street. And then we have another WhatsApp group for the whole neighbourhood because of that, you know, "he's noisy" or "he's a troublemaker"
> So that is how we get along.

This environment of necessity produces vernacular and ambivalent affective relations of fear, despair, solidarity, and responsibility which unify Cape Flats residents in the shared experience of being 'in this together' where 'this' is the 'here and now' of the Cape Flats. At times, this takes the form of situated togetherness practiced through the shared occupation of physical spaces. At other times it takes the form of remote togetherness practiced instead through co-location in shared digital spaces such as WhatsApp groups. O'Hara, Massimi, Harper, Rubens and Morris (2014:1132) argue that to understand why communications technologies (such as WhatsApp) are used, it is necessary to understand why people use them which has to do with the desire to make and sustain bonds. This is evident in the lives of Coloured people living on the Cape Flats where the risk involved in being together in a physical public realm pushes people towards a digital public realm. What is significant here is that the practice of being and becoming together does not cease, it simply changes places.

In the following section I consider how neighbourhood mutual aid CAN WhatsApp groups constitute virtual public spaces in which people come together. CAN WhatsApp groups represent a third spatiotemporal zone in which togetherness on the Cape Flats can be located – the zone of 'there and now.' I use the word 'virtual' to describe the form of the space co-constructed within neighbourhood WhatsApp groups and to distinguish it from the so-called 'actual' space of physical neighbourhoods. In doing so, my intention is by no means to imply that WhatsApp neighbourhood space is a false, illusory, or imaginary space, or that it is any less real than 'actual' neighbourhood space. Instead, I draw on Lévy's (1998:16) thinking on virtuality and suggest that togetherness in the virtual space of WhatsApp neighbourhood groups is a 'powerful mode of being that expands the process of creation, opens up the future, [and] injects a core of meaning beneath the platitude of immediate physical presence.'

There and Now

In *For Space* Massey (2005:91) writes that '[s]pace is more than distance. It is the sphere of open-ended configurations within multiplicities.' Given this, she explains, the question then is 'what kinds of multiplicities and relations will be co-constructed within the new kinds of spatial configurations offered by communication technologies?' (Ibid). This section responds to Massey's question by drawing on the work of Dixon (2018) who shows in her paper 'Stranger-Ness and Belonging in a Neighbourhood WhatsApp Group', how relations of togetherness are co-constructed in the 'there and now' spatiotemporal configurations offered by neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, in addition to the 'then and there' space-time of pre-removals neighbourhoods of the past, and the 'here and now' space-time of neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats.

Amin (2015:245,246) explains that technology 'which has always structured the built environment' is now itself becoming an 'intimate, habitable space' and that 'civic orientations are formed in the intersection between situated and virtual dwelling.' Similarly, O'Hara et al (2014:1133) argue that exchanges on a communication technology like WhatsApp represent the 'comings and goings of people's everyday activities and, in this way, can be seen as constituting a kind of "digital dwelling"' – a 'being with' in addition to a 'communicating with.' Dwelling, they explain (Ibid), does not simply refer to a place but to a 'doing' and therefore needs to be seen as 'constituted by things done and felt, endlessly in the moment-by-moment of togetherness and directionality' (Ibid). In other words, dwelling (virtual, digital, or otherwise) is a product of the practice of togetherness. On WhatsApp groups neighbours 'share information, seek advice from each other, ask favours or share jokes' (Dixon 2018:496), they leverage and appropriate the opportunities and limitations of the technology in artful ways (O'Hara et al 2014:1133) making the dwelling 'there and now' part of the fabric of everyday life in the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood WhatsApp groups provide what Dixon (2018:493) calls an 'affective mooring' - 'a sense of being held in a community through feelings of collective presence and care.' The processes of dwelling, sharing, and communicating on neighbourhood WhatsApp groups enable particular attachments to both people and place. My research suggests that in a neighbourhood setting, care is often ambivalently practiced, manifesting in some instances as kindness and generosity and in others as surveillance and control. Here I return once again to the quote from an interview with Liam (25 November 2019) mentioned previously where he described the 'values of District Six' as 'your child is my child and everybody's child also, so I'm *gonna* monitor you uhm because I care you know?' This melding of 'being held', 'collective

presence' and 'care' which are central to Dixon's notion of 'mooring' emerged in the CAN neighbourhood WhatsApp groups which I observed on several occasions. For example, in a message to their neighbourhood CAN group a community leader and group admin implored other members of the CAN to keep up the work and sponsorship of the CAN even as lockdown restrictions began to ease in South Africa writing:

> We need to carry each other💋. Your sponsorships and donations managed to carry us from before lockdown level 5. Now we need you to dig deep again. Our work is far from over. The most vulnerable needs us more than ever to support and carry them through the gruelling harshness of a cold, cold winter - breeding ground for Covid-19! (CAN WhatsApp group, 6 June 2020).

For Dixon (2018:494) this sense of 'mooring' or 'being held in collective presence and care' is togetherness. She (Ibid) explains that mooring stabilises communities by creating a feeling of 'collective presence and being "in this together".' In testimony to this idea, the requests for neighbours to continue 'carrying' one another cited above were signed off with the words 'We are in this together🙏' (CAN WhatsApp group, 6 June 2020). This notion of togetherness was frequently invoked in the CAN WhatsApp groups with which I worked. I provide an indication of this togetherness-signalling in the extracts that follow.

We are all in this together.
Yes, we are all in this together and have a common purpose to serve and assist where we can.
We are in this together, the police is not our enemy.
We can work together to achieve something great.
This is not a time to stand back and watch. We are all in this together.
CAN groups and churches are working together to serve homeless people.
These initiatives are meant to work together.
I call upon the leaders of the communities to try and stand together as one.
We should work together as leaders.
We need to find solutions and work together.
I thought as a community we can come together.
Get together family and friends. Club together.
Let's put the politics aside and let us stand together.
Please let's do this together.
No prob we are all in it together 💖✊✊✊
Let's work together to get ourselves unified and let bring this community together.

This is not about a single organization or individual, this is about the greater community being supported and assisted as far as possible. We are in this TOGETHER.

Thank you for your hard work and for helping in keeping things together.

Together you can reset the narrative. The CAN threads everyone together for the first time in forever.

Together we can make a difference, together we will walk out on the other side of COVID-19!

We are here because we seek the greater good above our own plans and agendas.

TOGETHER

We are all human together ... Humanity has no boundaries. Love it.

Let's stand together here for gun-free and safer communities.

As I always say we're in it TOGETHER !!!✊✊✊

We all work well together. So let stand together a make a better place for all.

We are here together as a collective team for the wellbeing of the communities that we represent.

We will be the blueprint of how people can get out better together, shaped by a crisis so deep that the rest of the nation can learn from us.

We are looking forward to walk out together with you on the other side of lockdown.

We are in this together... We will get through this together... We will walk out on the other side of Lockdown together🙏

MUSLIMS & CHRISTIANS TOGETHER

We are in this together 🙏

Being together as a neighbourhood is variously articulated as community or neighbourliness. Writing on Mitchells Plain (on the Cape Flats) and Khayelitsha, two neighbourhoods on Cape Town's periphery, Brown-Luthango (2019:38) describes neighbourliness as stemming from the motivation to act collectively in order to achieve certain community goals such as maintaining order and safety within the neighbourhood. More specifically, in her paper 'Is Social Cohesion Relevant to a City in the Global South? A Case Study of Khayelitsha Township' Vanessa Barolsky (2016:17) argues that in the context of violent and low-income neighbourhoods in South Africa (such as those on the Cape Flats), neighbourliness refers collectively overcoming the 'challenges that concern surviving poverty and immediate defence of life against imminent violence.' In other words, neighbourliness is synonymous with '*dala* what you must.'

Sharing emotions like concern, sadness, despair, fear, relief, or joy is thus part of how togetherness is enacted in the context of neighbourliness. This was evidenced on the CAN WhatsApp groups I worked with where a sense of 'being with' or 'being together' was articulated as a shared concern about poverty as is illustrated in the quote that follows.

> I'm with you. I have a huge concern for the community living in Cathkin Village. 105 families resides in this informal settlement. They're without water, electricity and toilets for the past two years. They are under threat of being evicted at the end of June. There's a dire need for assistance outside of just feeding etc (CAN WhatsApp group, 19 April 2020).

On a different occasion, a member of a CAN group posted a picture of an elderly person's home which had been invaded and turned upside down by police who were searching for a criminal. It created a ripple of shared sadness and despair over the group as one person remarked: 'This is sad and so inhumane (CAN WhatsApp group, 16 April 2020) to which another responded: 'Sad indeed yet nothing will come of it' (Ibid). This sentiment was shared by another who wrote: 'That is so true, it just gets overlooked and when the people retaliate, they go to jail. So unfair, and it's happening all over the world. People in power is getting away with murder 🙁😔 (Ibid). Here shared concerns and emotions produced a type of affinity which reinforced the 'affective mooring' (Dixon 2018:493) of the WhatsApp group; that 'sense of being held in a community through feelings of collective presence and care' which people experienced through the 'there and now' space of their WhatsApp neighbourhood groups. In his book *Becoming Virtual: Reality in the Digital Age* Lévy (1998:29) explains that such affinities provide the basis for community through 'telematic communications systems' like WhatsApp such that geography is 'no longer a starting point or constraint.'

Togetherness is not only enacted in WhatsApp neighbourhood groups through explicit practices of necessity-driven care and shared emotions as people '*dala* what they must' as described above, but also in the more prosaic goings-on in WhatsApp groups as people merely *dala* what they do: greeting, chatting and exchanging information (O'Hara et al 2014:1131). All of this, O'Hara et al (2014:1131) and Dixon (2018:496) write, makes up the 'felt-life' of everyday existence with others in the 'there and now' space-time of WhatsApp neighbourhood groups. The continuous conversational style of WhatsApp combined with features like 'online' status, 'last seen online' and message notification ticks also represent a kind of presence for users (Dixon 2018:496; O'Hara et al 2014:1134).

At the start of the twentieth century Park (1916:580) made the point that '[p]roximity and neighbourly contact are the basis for the simplest and most elementary form of association with which we have to do in the organization of city life.' The introduction of communication technologies means that proximity is no longer necessary for association in the city. Instead, neighbourly contact can be maintained in the 'there and now' spaces of WhatsApp neighbourhood groups just as easily as in the 'here and now' spaces of the street. On the Cape Flats, both the physical and virtual spaces of neighbourhood streets and WhatsApp groups with their particular dimensions of familiarity, intimacy, and sensibility sustain social solidarities in response to everyday necessity as people do or *dala* what they must to survive together. These physical and virtual spaces resemble Amin's (2002) 'micro-publics' - local 'social spaces in which individuals regularly come into contact' (Hall 2012:6) which are not only spaces of passing and fleeting encounter, but of participation. They require investment to sustain membership (Ibid) which is more commonplace at the neighbourhood scale (in frequently visited 'local' places of familiarity) than at the broader city scale.

Neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, however, are not bound by the kind of physical proximity referred to by Park (1916:580) and perhaps implied by Amin (2002). Instead, they offer an insight into how togetherness can be practiced through familiarity even in spaces such as the Cape Flats where the physical public realm is constrained by factors such as violence, making it risky to co-occupy. For example, in an interview Sharon (14 November 2019) explained how she does everything she can to minimise the time spent outside in her neighbourhood (Lavender Hill) and as a result has not seen her neighbours in person for ages. At the same time, she has long been an active member of the neighbourhood watch WhatsApp group for her area (even before the arrival of COVID-19 and the introduction of the CAN groups). As Jeppie (1999:12) explains neighbourhood watch groups have existed within Coloured neighbourhoods in Cape Town for many decades before making their way onto WhatsApp. They emerged in middle-class Coloured neighbourhoods in the 1980s formed by residents to monitor crime and perform policing tasks that the police were either unwilling or incapable of carrying out themselves (like protesting against the presence of drug peddlers also called merchants) (Ibid). Neighbourhood watch groups within Coloured neighbourhoods in Cape Town, explains Jeppie (Ibid) 'have long brought people together across religions, generations and families.'

The shift gathering and organising from physical to virtual spaces challenges traditional understandings of togetherness as a function of situated human encounter, which, as Frow (1997:77) argued in 1997 in his book *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity*, do not acknowledge 'the ways in which virtual or highly mediated social

relations [can] construct a familiar sociality.' Similarly, Dixon (2018:497) explains that understandings of togetherness which link social closeness and geographic closeness have been radically disrupted by communication technologies such as WhatsApp. Previously, face-to-face interaction in physical space was the only means of gaining 'direct' access to the sights and sounds of each other's behaviours (Meyrowitz 1986:35). Social technologies such as WhatsApp have changed this. The digital spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups allow people to interact in real-time at a distance so that everyday reality is no longer confined solely to the zones of 'here and now' and 'there and then' (Berger and Luckmann 1966) but also to what Zhao (2006:458) calls the zone of 'there and now' enabled by the advent of the internet, which has also created 'a new mode of communication—the electronic text chat, and a new social gathering place—the online public domain.'

From a practice theory perspective, Papadopoulos (2018:19) argues that in life there is a 'reweaving of the social and the material through the development of new practices, knowledges, and technologies.' In other words, practices and their materialities (like technologies) become part of life by changing it (Ibid). Similarly, this section has attempted to illustrate how just as the conditions of 'real life' physical neighbourhood spaces of familiarity on the Cape Flats shape the conditions of virtual neighbourhood WhatsApp group spaces of familiarity, the 'then and there' of virtual neighbourhood WhatsApp group spaces shapes the conditions of the 'here and now' of physical neighbourhood spaces on the Cape Flats. In the absence of town squares, townhall meetings or chatting on the street, neighbourhood watch and CAN WhatsApp groups have emerged in the Cape Flats as digital spaces for strangers to come together through the familiarity of sharing a neighbourhood. At the same time neighbourhood watch and CAN WhatsApp groups are used to manage what goes on in the physical neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats whether that be in the form of policing or providing mutual aid.

Conclusion

Gherardi (2017:43) writes that practices can be considered both 'embodied and emplaced'. Where the previous chapter was dedicated to discussing togetherness as an embodied practice, this chapter discussed it as an emplaced practice – located in, and conditioned by, physical and digital neighbourhood spaces of the past and present. Having explained how place is integral to practice from the perspective of practice theory scholars and geographers alike, this chapter went on to discuss how practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in the Cape Flats are located in three spatiotemporal zones: (1)

the ‘then and there’ of the pre-removals Coloured neighbourhoods of the past, (2) the ‘here and now’ of contemporary life on the Cape Flats, and (3) the ‘there and now’ of the virtual neighbourhood spaces created by CAN WhatsApp groups across the Cape Flats. The findings shared suggest that practices of togetherness shape and are shaped by physical and digital spaces which play host to them. Togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town and what it means to ‘*dala* what you must’ is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life on the Cape Flats and the remoteness of engagement through the digital space of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups for crime reporting and (more recently) organising against the threat of COVID-19. At the same time, both the physical and digital locations of neighbourhoods are in turn shaped by the practices of togetherness contained in them.

Furthermore, tracing how Coloured people on the Cape Flats ‘*dala* what they must’ in and through the constellations of family and neighbourhood has revealed how a collective repertoire of togetherness has emerged on the Cape Flats in the absence of safe and open public spaces because of necessity. This is a significant finding given that so much of the literature on social life in South Africa (see for example Clack, Dixon and Tredoux 2005; Dixon and Durrheim 2004; Durrheim and Dixon 2005; Durrheim and Dixon 2010; Schuermans 2016; Tredoux and Dixon 2009) discusses urban space as a substrate for separation given the country’s legacy of apartheid with its ‘enforced geographies of separation’ (Steyn and Ballard, 2013:1).

My work with Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town suggests, in contrast, that the physical and digital spaces of urban life in South Africa *also* serve as platforms for practicing togetherness as practices of togetherness with family, neighbours and strangers arise in part through individuals’ relationships to the material and digital spaces of neighbourhoods and neighbourhood WhatsApp groups in spite of persistent geographies of separation. The togetherness emergent here is not just the tolerant acceptance of others, but an ambivalent form of sociality which simultaneously stems from- and produces- relations of familiarity. It is this ambivalent nature of togetherness which the following and final empirical chapter discusses.

7. Togetherness as an Ambivalent Practice

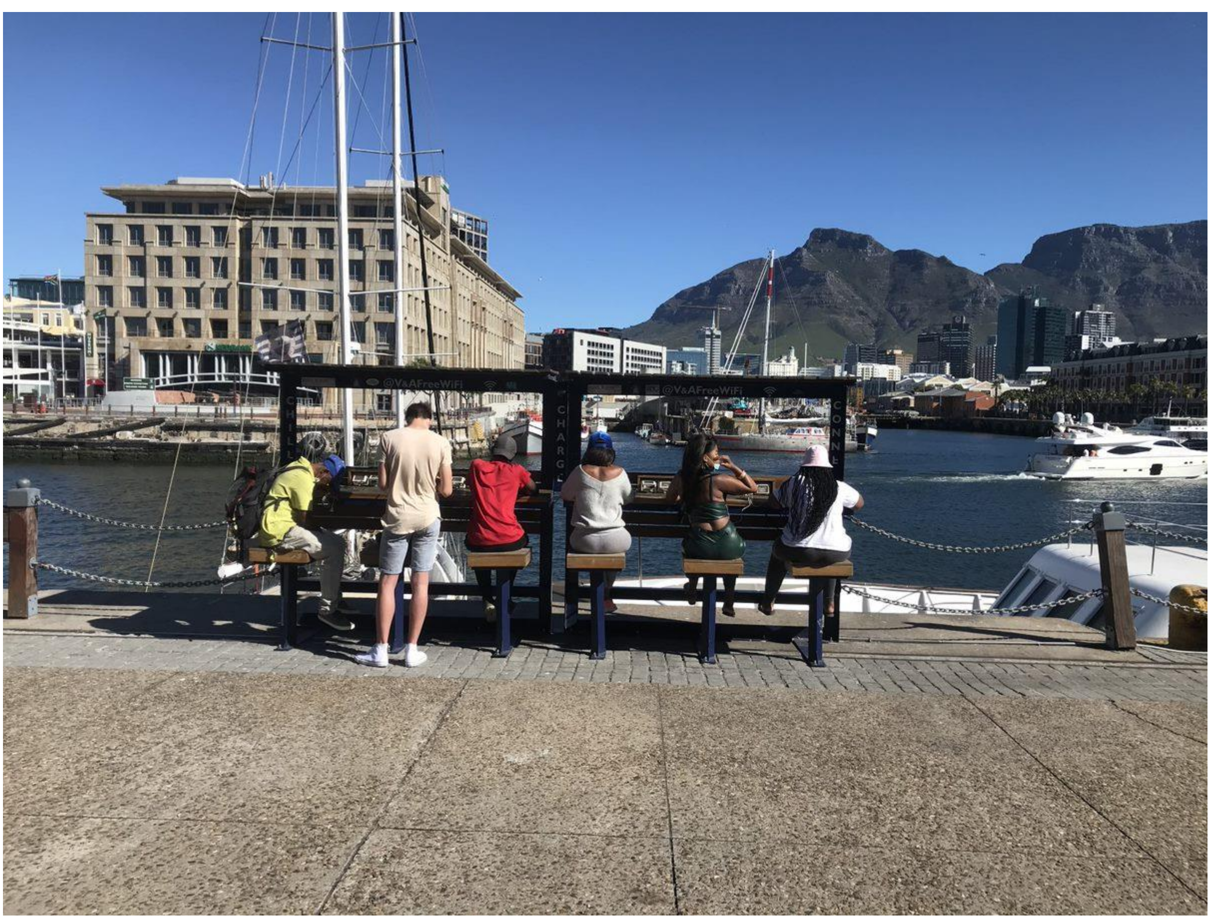

Figure 17: Apart Together - Mobile Phone Charging Station at the V&A Waterfront, Cape Town (Photo by the author, 2021)

> Contradictory desires mark the intimacy of daily life: people want to be both overwhelmed and omnipotent, caring, and aggressive, known and incognito (Berlant 2004b, 5)

> The differences, difficulties, and contradictions I sense in myself (as I sense them in you) permit us to be together. We are as different from each other as we are divided within ourselves: let's talk (Sennett 2012:126)

Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters I have signposted instances in which togetherness has emerged as an ambivalent practice, often imbued with simultaneous and contradictory expressions of unity and rupture, harmony and conflict, and ultimately hope and trouble. In the chapter that follows, I attempt to draw together all of these disparate instances to build a consolidated case for understanding togetherness as an ambivalent practice through the lived experiences of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. With this perspective from the South I build on the work of Gilroy (2004) articulated in his book *After Empire: Melancholia or Conviviality?* Influenced by Mouffe's (2000) work on agonism, Gilroy (2004:xi)) advocates a way to think about living together which does not wait for the 'triumph of tolerance', but illuminatesthe ways in which multicultural populations manage processes of cohabitation through messy, paradoxical, and precarious modes of living together.

This chapter argues that ambivalence both characterises urban togetherness and defines its transformative potential on the grounds that learning to navigate the potential of unity and rupture, harmony and conflict, or hope and trouble in any given social encounter in the city is an integral part of mastering the practice of urban togetherness. This argument is delivered over three sections which illustrate how urban togetherness manifests in Coloured Capetonians' lives in three apparently contradictory ways through hope and trouble, unity and rupture, and harmony and conflict. In each section I illustrate how urban togetherness is characterised by these ambivalent qualities and how this ambivalence is negotiated by Coloured families and neighbourhoods as people develop repertoires of togetherness.

The relevance of this final empirical chapter lies in the suggestion that recognising the inherent ambivalence within practices of togetherness creates fertile ground from which to recalibrate expectations of collective life in the city and to find creative ways to negotiate the apparent contradictions and paradoxes of living together rather than to resist them. Such resistance is futile according to Massey (2005:141) who argues that through a relational understanding of space (such as that provided in the previous chapter) '[t]here can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation.' It demands that people 'confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity' (Ibid). Similarly in *Writing on Cities* Lefebvre (1996:147) writes that social needs are inherently '[o]pposed and complimentary' and simultaneously include:

> …the need for security and opening, the need for certainty and adventure, that of organization of work and of play, the needs for the predictable and the unpredictable, of similarity and difference, of isolation and encounter, exchange and investments, of

independence (even solitude) and communication, of immediate and long-term prospects.

In the same vein Mouffe (2000:11) argues that pluralist democratic politics consists precisely in 'pragmatic, precarious and necessarily unstable forms of negotiating' these contradictions and paradoxes.

Recognising the ubiquity of ambivalence represents a necessary step towards learning how to navigate the contradictions of collective life in the city (Ibid). It is these contradictions, according to Sennett (2012:126) (quoted above), that represents the bedrock to commonality. Learning to negotiate ambivalent experiences of hope and trouble, unity and rupture, and harmony and conflict is central to what it means to '*dala* what you must' in a South African city. South Africa, writes Crain Soudien (2017:xii), 'is a place of contradiction.' Christopher Colvin (2003:4) echoes Soudien's sentiment when he writes: '[i]n South Africa the language of crisis competes with the language of recovery. Deep optimism and pessimism, often found in the same person, seem to shape-shift into each other.' All of this was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic which brought competing narratives of crisis and recovery, optimism, and pessimism to the fore. Moreover, beyond its local relevance, learning to negotiate the ambivalence of collective life in the city holds potential for developing a kind of urban ethics of togetherness relevant to diverse urban settings.

Hope and Trouble

Togetherness is often imagined as being synonymous with care, compassion, and support. Fincher et al (2019:50) argue that feminist political theorists and feminist geographers emphasise care and caring as key elements of being together in difference as equals. For example, Tronto (2013:29) stresses that care is central to democracy and that an ethic of caring for others is fundamental to realising equality across difference. Care for others along with practices of support, compassion, and generosity played a key role in many communities' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and was regularly encouraged in South Africa (and elsewhere like the UK) through expressions of being 'in this [pandemic] together.' Jetten et al (2020:51) explain that the arrival of the pandemic, a widespread social stressor, led to an 'elevated concern for the well-being of one's fellow citizens' in many parts of the world and certainly much of the engagement I witnessed on neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups during the height of the pandemic in 2020 could be described as expressions of care, compassion, and support articulated in messages like 'I am with you' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 19/04/2020); 'You made us proud tonight. You were so great🥰🙏🙏' (CAN

WhatsApp Group Discussion, 14/04/2020); ‘Love you all and love the work you do and your commitment’ (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/05/2020), ‘You have my support post COVID 19 (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/04/2020) and ‘🙏🙏🤲 May the two of you be blessed always. 🥰🥰’ (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 03/05/2020).

Perhaps the best illustration of ‘togetherness in difference as equals’ through care is a message that was sent on a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group chat urging members of who were running feeding stations to assess whether foreigners from countries like Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in predominantly Coloured neighbourhoods were also managing to receive food and not being excluded. The message read:

> Can I ask our feeding stations to look at how our foreign brothers and sisters are attending the feeding points? I'd like to ensure that we look after them as well. Can I ask that we take extra care to relay to everyone that we don’t discriminate against any person, both locals and foreign nationals, also on religious and social differences. We are not concerned where they come from, where they prey, or what they look like, if they're hungry we feed them. Whatever it takes, we need to lead by example and promote unity in our diversity (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 26/05/2020).

This sentiment was endorsed by numerous messages of support evidencing cosmopolitan sentiments of shared humanity with one member replying: ‘Absolutely agree’, and another: ‘Unity has no boundaries or limits nor determination of colour, creed, custom and culture. Love is action regardless and another: We are all human together. Humanity has no boundaries (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 26/05/2020). These cosmopolitan expressions of care, compassion and support are overwhelmingly hopeful manifestations of togetherness, and they were matched by equally hopeful expressions of gratitude as seen in the extracts that follow.

> Thank you. I appreciate what you are doing. I see you my sister (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 19/04/2020).
>
> Thank you for the difference you make. Hopefully, I will meet you soon (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/04/2020).
>
> Thank you for being a blessing to our community (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 24/04/2020).

> Thanks for believing in us as community and all the love and care. *Shukran* [(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 25/04/2020.)
>
> Thanks for fighting for us, I really appreciate you and all you do (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 27/04/2020).
>
> Thanks to those that have assisted with donations. We are thankful for your kindness which enables us to make a difference in the lives of others (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 30/04/2020).
>
> Team THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart for going out of your way to check up on my 86 year old mom (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/05/2020).
>
> All of you make it possible to feed our communities with love (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 07/05/2020).
>
> Thank you very much to everyone for your hard work and dedication to serving our community. It's not always easy, but one thing is certain, it's worth it every day (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 14/05/2020).
>
> I would like to give a special *shukran* ❤️ for all the donations to the family in crisis who lost everything yesterday. I really appreciate what you did ❤️❤️❤️ (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 22/05/2020).

Amongst these outpourings of care, compassion, support, and gratitude, however, there were also many messages of frustration, despair, and disagreement. Expressions of these sentiments point to the ways in which togetherness can also be troubling. One message in particular captured some of the trouble with togetherness. Life in the city typically constitutes a shared adventure in everyday ambivalence, but the COVID-19 pandemic magnified this. In their book *Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19* Jetten et al (2020:84) explain that '[p]andemics inspire the most remarkable acts of unity and compassion' but can also lead to 'appalling acts of division and brutality.' In the message to a neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group below, one resident reflected on the ambivalence of togetherness manifest in the hopeful and troubling aspects of doing community care work.

> COVID-19 has brought out the worst in some, but also the very best in other people. So many times the very community members who are being served by us repay us with the worst possible insults and aggressive behaviour as a thank you. Many times we are on the brink of giving up because of the rudeness, the entitlement, the 'must have' attitude of some (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 25/06/2020).

Just like the shared experience of a global pandemic may have bridged social gaps and strengthened social bonds in some instances, it also strained pre-existing tears in the social tapestry of Cape Town. The kind of anti-social behaviour the speaker outlines above existed in the city (as it did elsewhere) long before the arrival of the pandemic. For example, in an interview (9 January 2020) Kim described how during apartheid her mother's neighbour reported the interracial nature of her parents' relationship which led to a violent visit from a police officer and later the family's retreat into exile abroad. It was not only the neighbour next door who reacted in this troubling way, but also her mother's friends and family who disowned her. Emboldened by the segregation implemented by the apartheid regime, the family and friends of Kim's mother enforced segregation in their private lives, in doing so breaking the togetherness created through friendship and familial bonds and mirroring what was happening on a public and state level during apartheid.

Many years later Kim's father recounted the experience to her, remembering how one of her mother's best friends had used the line 'elephants and giraffes don't mate' to justify their judgement of their friend's relationship across racial lines. This example is full of the complexities of togetherness. For starters, there is the notion that intimate togetherness should be limited to people who are viewed as racially similar - the cornerstone for prejudice underpinning the apartheid regime and its laws to stop interracial relationships, and precisely the kind of thinking that goes against the very heart of efforts to create inclusive societies and cities today but still manages to find a foothold in the crevices of prejudice around the world. Then there is the fact that this judgement came from a friend, showing just how troubling relations of friendship can be. The upshot here is that togetherness can be both hopeful *and* troubling in its ambivalence. Recognising this means recognising that it may not be enough to simply strive for togetherness, just as it may not be enough to look to friendship or families as examples of togetherness to emulate. When wanting to facilitate togetherness anywhere, it is necessary to pay attention to precisely the kinds of togetherness that are desired.

It is not only at the friendship level where togetherness can disappoint, but at the family level too. Above I shared how Kim's mother's family disowned her for having a child with someone who was not White like them. Indeed, oftentimes family members can occupy supportive, care-

giving roles without succeeding in giving care or support. The same is true for any role of care or support at the neighbourhood or city level. Speaking about the challenges young people face growing up in the Cape Flats, Liam (25 November 2019) remarked:

> … with Maths, uhm, I mean with the STEM technology, not everyone is cut to do that and especially for the fact that those are subjects where you need to apply your mind you need to concentrate but I can't do that if my brother is on *Tik* [crystal meth] and he's stealing everything in the house and I have to worry "is he *gonna* steal my school shoes because he needs to get his next fix?"
>
> …it's this whole systematic problem that we have where the fathers are not there or the mothers are always drunk or the parents are always trying to make ends meet. The kids themselves don't get that comfort or that attention so who are they *gonna* turn to? The gangsters. Because the gangsters are giving them… they are fulfilling that need you know?

In this quote Liam (Ibid) illustrates how on the one hand togetherness can be absent in the places we associate with it (like families) and can emerge instead in troubling constellations of togetherness – gangs being a primary example here of groups which simultaneously offer loyalty and punishment, violence, and protection. Gangs cause much strife in neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats and offer a useful talking point for discussion around how familial repertoires for togetherness can seep into community life at the neighbourhood level in both hopeful and troubling ways. Speaking on the duty of care of parents, one resident broached a difficult subject on her neighbourhood's CAN WhatsApp group and encouraged her fellow neighbours to take responsibility as parents for the gangsterism in their area:

> I am going to say this with the greatest respect and love. We as parents need to open our eyes and see what is happening. That is someone's child that is running out there with a firearm, yet they as parent choose to stay quiet. Nothing is going to stop that child to turn on you if need be. Something to think about. Change needs to start at home (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/06/2020).

Two weeks prior another resident had similarly implored her neighbours to consider withholding food at a soup kitchen in order to take a stand against the recent rise in gang violence in the area and encourage other community members to speak out about what they knew about those involved in order to keep the larger community safe. In this example different togetherness impulses compete with one another. On the one hand there is the urge to protect 'someone's child that is running out there with a firearm', and on the other hand there is the urge to protect those who that child might turn their weapon on.

> *I agree. Ons moet nou begin piemp. I humbly say this: "Al is ons hoe gekoppel genoeg is genoeg". Mense het nou gesien wie goed is vir hulle. Ons wil nie kos weerhou nie, but we will have to make a statement. Laat die gemeenskap PIEMP waar is die guns en wie skiet. Anders gaan ons dood van hongerte, which is a reality. We need to speak out of one voice to completely stop gangsterism. We had a phenomenal response Monday evening in our flat when shootings took place directly in our flat. We came together as a collective and decided what was best for us as tenants. Let stand together here for gun free and safer communities. CAN dan nou so lekker saam gestaan vir Covid-19 [The CAN did such a good job of coming together in response to COVID-19]. I can tell you we have gain great respect by sharing guys.*
>
> I agree. We need to start speaking out. I humbly say this: "Despite how implicated[15] we are, enough is enough". People have seen who is good to them. We don't want to withhold food, but we will have to make a statement. Let the community speak out about where the guns are and who is shooting. Otherwise, we will die of starvation, which is a reality. We need to speak out of one voice to completely stop gangsterism. We had a phenomenal response Monday evening in our flat when shootings took place directly in our flat. We came together as a collective and decided what was best for us as tenants. Let stand together here for gun free and safer communities. The CAN has done such a good job of coming together in response to COVID-19. I can tell you we have gained great respect by sharing guys (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 05/06/2020).

Togetherness represents an assemblage of practices both hopeful and troubling and it is often difficult to separate hopeful from troubling practices of togetherness as they manifest through the constellations of family and neighbourhood. For example, reflecting on a day's running of a community kitchen, one resident commented on how struggle is bound up with joy in community work:

> *Shukran* all and thank you to the team, those who assisted in any way, on the grounds and contributing in any way, today we broke ourselves in order to mend others, always challenges but its real, we laugh, we *skel* [to shout or reprimand], but importantly we care (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 01/05/2020).

Nevertheless, viewing togetherness in all of its ambivalent complexity disrupts two commonly held assumptions about togetherness. First, that is synonymous with hope, and second that it precludes trouble. In this section I have tried to sketch some of the ways in which this is often

[15] The closest direct translation for *gekoppel* is connected or coupled, a fitting in the context of togetherness. However, in this context it suggests being involved or implicated.

not the case. In the section that follows, I delve a little deeper to look at how togetherness can also manifest both through unity and through rupture within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town.

Unity and Rupture

…there can be no togetherness without separateness (John Campbell 2013:1365)

I use this section to make the point, like Colin John Campbell, that apartness is a part of togetherness, and that togetherness is not a stable practice. Instead, it waivers. Within any constellation of togetherness, whether it be a family or neighbourhood, for example, there are divisions, breaking points, and ruptures. From a practice theory perspective, people are understood to be routinely engaged in making and breaking links of one kind or another (Shove et al 2012). In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* Turkle (2011:1) explains that '[o]ur networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other.' I mention this here because very often any kind of rupture is perceived as a threat to togetherness and so it is rallied against, especially in times of crisis when the importance of 'standing together as one' is stressed. For example, in a media briefing on COVID-19 in April 2020 Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, emphasized the importance of 'unity' and people 'working together' to fight the coronavirus while underlining the risks of division in the face of the pandemic.

> This virus is dangerous. It exploits cracks between us. Take as an example, ideology, or in one country it could be the differences along party lines. It exploits that. That's why I said we need national unity and whoever has whatever ideology – whether that person is from left or right or centre – they should work together to fight this virus to save these real people. If we don't do that, this virus will stay longer with us to kill more people and we will lose more precious lives (World Health Organisation 2020:np).

Similarly, discussions on neighbourhood CAN groups occasionally turned to the risks of individualistic behaviour in rallying calls for togetherness as participants invoked war-time-like rhetoric on numerous occasions during the height of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. I include two instances of this by way of example in the excerpts which follow.

> This is really NOT the time for free standing 'heroes' and 'island mentality', we will need each other NOW more than ever, let us make our spaces, faces and resources

> available. The best way to win any war, is a unified front, anyone who chooses to go out on their own not considering the increased risk factors, brings a higher possibility of the greater community suffering worse than if we approach everything in unity CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 24/05/2020).
>
> It's like the saying 'united we stand, divided we fall.' And actually, if we are divided on this issue dear friends, if any one organisation or entity tries to take this problem on, they will definitely fail. We all need each other to make this a success (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/06/2020).

This is not irrational or surprising behaviour. In *Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19* Jetten et al (2020:84) explain that people are more likely to help and empathise with others who are seen as ingroup members than those who are seen as outgroup members. They also explain that the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the groups to which people belong, the members of these groups, and the edges of different constellations of familiarity in peoples' lives such as family, neighbourhood, city, and country (Jetten et al 2020:49). With the arrival of the pandemic came greater attention to what being a member of these groups involves and how people should be (together) in each group: how best to look after one's family, how best to support one's neighbours, and what 'we' as a family, neighbourhood, CAN or city should and should not do.

The threat of unequivocally celebrating unity and shunning any threat of rupture is that it risks obscuring the complex ways in which unity and rupture or togetherness and apartness interact and relate to one another. In the remaining portion of this section, I offer a three-part response to the apparent fixation on the durability of togetherness. First, I argue that in certain instances unity necessarily implies a degree of rupture to define the edges of the constellation of familiarity whether that be the family or the neighbourhood. Second, I argue that disruptions to togetherness do not only occur at the edges of groups, but instead, constellations of togetherness can suffer internal ruptures as well and still self-sustain. Finally, I argue that in some instance ruptures emerge from an intention of care or are a necessary part of survival or healing. What is important then, is not that there is a fracture or tension, but *how* tensions and fractures are managed and lived in relation.

That togetherness often implies at least some degree of apartness is a well-documented phenomenon. Almost a hundred years ago Wirth (1928:289) made the point that '[t]he solidarity of the group, like the integrity of the individual, implies a measure at least of isolation from other groups and persons as a necessary condition of its existence.' Likewise, John

Campbell (2013:1365) explains that any affirmation of unity or wholeness 'tacitly refers to an outside that defines that unified whole as such' so that 'every gesture of inclusion is simultaneously a gesture of exclusion.' Dixon (2018:494) similarly argues that the 'process of collective holding and being is also premised on acts of alienation.' A gesture of exclusion or alienation routinely made to protect the integrity the neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups with which I worked was the removal of participants perceived to not comply with the appropriate practices of togetherness established in each group. Examples include the multiple occasions when someone would join a CAN WhatsApp group to punt a crypto currency scheme, only to be automatically reprimanded with a 'What rubbish is this now?' and swiftly removed by the group admin as was the case in the exchange which follows.

Speaker 1: Choose a sure and trusted 💯way of living today by investing and earning from the most trusted crypto currency mining/trading company.
Join Millions of happy investors earning profitably from Bitcoin mining/trading.
Become a beneficiary of this long-term opportunity which has and is still making Billionaires.
Interested and wondering how to invest?
Ask me.
Text me via WhatsApp for more info on how to begin.

Speaker 2: What rubbish is this now? Admin, please remove this.

Admin: Please remove this post.
I will block and remove you from the group if you don't.

Admin removed Speaker 1

A more complicated situation some CANs (particularly those in more affluent areas) grappled with was when someone from a different neighbourhood would join the group and send direct requests for personal assistance to the members of the group. Although CAN groups were set up with the intention of offering help to those in need, personal requests (particularly from people outside of the geographical boundary of a CAN) were somehow perceived as threatening to the integrity or mission of certain CANs. Below I have paraphrased a message which was sent on a CAN group detailing such an event. Again, in this situation a boundary was drawn around this neighbourhood leading to the exclusion of people from other areas

when their presence was perceived to be disruptive or distracting. It is worth mentioning here that in conducting this research I was myself, by design, a geographical outsider in all of the groups I worked with. But having negotiated my presence in the group, I was not perceived as disruptive in the way that requests for money or work were. This contrast in treatment suggests that the boundaries defining insiders from outsiders are not always clear and can instead be fairly opaque and constructed through unspoken rules or preferences and mediated by power and privilege.

> The CAN had a number of people join our WhatsApp group today from other neighbourhoods and post direct requests for assistance. This is a difficult issue, but we took a decision to remove these persons from the group and engage with them individually. This is the message we posted on the CAN afterwards:
>
> *'Hi everyone,*
>
> *You would've seen that we've had a number of requests for assistance today from people who are living in dire situations. The admins have engaged these individuals directly and subsequently removed them from this group – and will do so if there are similar occurrences in the future as the group isn't for direct requests.*
>
> *The CAN WhatsApp groups, including this one, are open to anyone to join. All you need to do is click on a link. However, they are meant to be for people who live in a particular area and are meant to enable people to initiate and coordinate action around the coronavirus.*
>
> *The CAN has a number of projects on the go, including the food drive at local supermarkets, mask-making, and a project which will be launched in the next few days to support families through the purchase of food parcels.*
>
> *We ask you to continue to support these and other initiatives.' (CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 06/04/2020).*

Disruptions to togetherness do not only occur at the edges of groups as suggested by these examples. Constellations of togetherness can instead suffer internal ruptures as well and still self-sustain. Few (if any) constellations of togetherness are entirely congruous. Again 'family' as an example of a constellation of familiarity is instructive here. Families can endure countless ruptures in the form of division, death, divorce or disagreement without ceasing to exist. So too can neighbourhoods. In most cases, ruptures such as arguments between neighbours do not stop people from being neighbours. The history of 'Colouredness' in Cape

Town provides a helpful illustration of how rupture often forms part of, rather than undermines, unity.

Colouredness evolved as a racial and cultural construct with the evolution of Cape Town as a city. Eventually it came to represent one of the categories into which the apartheid government sorted people thereby constituting a constellation of togetherness which the apartheid government appropriated in order to implement apartness. As with any social grouping, the combination of unity and rupture is thus integral to the makeup Colouredness as a racial and cultural construct which both unifies people under one banner and distinguishes them from another. This mix of unity and rupture does not only exist, however, to differentiate Colouredness from other racial-cultural groups in South Africa, and in doing so reinforce Colouredness as something distinct. Unity and rupture also combine to define Colouredness from within. By this I mean that Colouredness, again like any other social construct, is constantly updated by the process of people both identifying with and breaking from identifying with Colouredness. This is an ongoing process of unity and rupture which serves to constantly redefine and reproduce Colouredness as its own constellation of togetherness.

By way of example, I return to the conversations I had with Kyle (25 November 2019) and Stanley (7 January 2020) which illustrate this coexistence of unity with rupture which works to coproduce togetherness. In an illustration of rupture Kyle (Interview, 25 November 2019) explained how he noticed that ‘some people don’t like to be called Coloured.’ Stanley was one such person. In our interview Stanley explained that a unity with Colouredness necessarily implies a rupture from Africanness: ‘Now for me, I can never be part of Africa if I am going to be a Coloured. That is why I must decolonise myself from being Coloured. I am a Khoi. *Ja*. Meaning the people’s people’ (7 January 2020). Kyle (Interview, 25 November 2019), on the other hand, did not see any ‘fault’ with being Coloured although, he explained ‘they call it a derogatory term’. Nevertheless, like Stanley, he claims his indigenous heritage as ‘Khoisan’ while living in a Coloured community: ‘I am a Khoisan and I live in a Coloured community.’[16] Ultimately, Kyle (Ibid) explains: ‘everybody got their own names what they want to be called or how they want to be called. It’s just different people is comfortable with different names.’

Finally, practices of togetherness can take the shape of rupture just as they can take the shape of unity. As I mentioned in the Introduction, togetherness is often understood to be synonymous with unity. That is why togetherness is interpreted as the Ängsbacka centre interprets it (see Figure 4) as ‘[t]he pleasant feeling of being united with other people in friendship and understanding.’ Indeed, during my fieldwork ‘togetherness’ was often deliberately evoked through expressions of unity like: ‘Let's work together to get ourselves

[16] Quote translated from Afrikaans. See original wording on page 22.

unified and let bring this community together' (CAN WhatsApp group, 2 May 2020), 'We are here together as a collective team for the wellbeing of the communities that we represent' (CAN WhatsApp group, 12 April 2020), 'Yes, we are all in this together and have a common purpose ...' (CAN WhatsApp group, 6 April 2020), or the now old adage 'We are all in this together.'

But in other instances, rupture constitutes the practice of togetherness. For example, it was not uncommon during apartheid for Black, Coloured, Indian/Asian families to go into exile to escape persecution by the apartheid state. In instances like that the act of leaving home, and temporarily breaking away from South Africa was often a difficult, but necessary act of survival. In our interview (9 January 2020) Kim shared her family's experience of going into exile after a violent encounter between her mother and a police officer intent on punishing her mother for her interracial relationship and child.

> So, she [Kim's mother] just screamed and screamed and screamed and then they eventually left and then basically that day my mom and dad were like: "Okay we have to leave. We have to get out of here". So, they spoke to people they knew and found a family in Swaziland who were – how do you say – like an ally? You know they were like kind of on the radars of the families that would help South Africans get out.

In this example, Kim's family had to separate themselves from their home, friends, and family in South Africa in order to benefit from the togetherness extended by another family abroad. In another example, Kim explained how her Coloured relatives helped one of their kin to 'pass as White' in order to live a life with more freedoms, rights and opportunities.

> And we also had a thing where my granny had two sisters and the one was a lot darker and the one was a lot lighter. And so, the lighter one actually could pass as White and so she went off and married a White guy and had this White life. And, she had to sneak out to see my…her family, because if they found out that she was Coloured then her marriage would be illegal. And ja, so they cut… the family in a way kind of split and made everything secret to like help, her. And then I think another one of her sisters moved to Australia to escape and she stayed, so they kind of – it was a very – quite a – family story.

In a message on a neighbourhood CAN group in May 2020 one resident expressed dismay over the tension arising between two members of the group, saying: 'We can't become emotional, people. Where's the unity? 😩.' Here the implication seemed to be that unity should preclude agitation and that togetherness ought to somehow ensure harmony. My research on the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured neighbourhoods and families in Cape Town suggests that this is far from the case. Rather, it suggests that the more tightly knit the

togetherness, the more conflict there often is. For example, there is typically more agitation between family members than there is between strangers on the street, and yet there is potential for conflict anywhere people are. In other words, as Vertovec (2014: 351) notes, 'conviviality and conflict invariably intertwine.' In the section that follows, I attempt to make the case for seeing both harmony *and* conflict as integral elements of the practice of togetherness and illustrate some of the ways in which these seemingly paradoxical impulses work together.

Harmony and Conflict

From a practice theory perspective the 'multi-perspectivity, polyphony and differentiation present in all praxis' produces conflict (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:13). Put simply, different ways of doing things can produce conflict between people trying to do something together. This tension between colliding repertoires of practicing togetherness is often evidenced in expressions of imperatives like 'should' or 'must' as in the example of one neighbourhood CAN member telling others: 'You must work as a collective and not individuals. Then you will move forward in the right direction' (CAN WhatsApp Group, 19 April 2020) – the suggestion here being that their fellow CAN members were practicing togetherness incorrectly by practicing individualism instead.

The embodied learning of a practice such as togetherness (of which I spoke in Chapter Five – Dala what You Must: Togetherness as Practice) emerges as an outcome of a continuous process of attunement and 'self and other- positioning' through both harmony and conflict with the ever-present potential of 'failure' (Alkemeyer and Buschmann 2017:14). In some instances hopeful togetherness emerges, while in others troubling togetherness emerges, in some unity and in others rupture (Amin 2008:7). The outcome of practicing togetherness depends on a range of factors – social, spatial, and temporal – each of which shape the conditions for practice. In the section that follows I explain how intra-group conflict can emerge through aggression, while intra-group harmony can tactfully be restored through humour within the Coloured neighbourhood settings in which I worked. Ultimately, I illustrate how the negotiation of conflict in the physical 'here and now' spaces of neighbourhood streets and the virtual 'there and now' spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups constitutes a kind of 'agonistic citizenship' to use Mouffe's (2000) term.

Agonism is, according to van Leeuwen (2010:636), the recognition that '[h]uman relations, whether individual relations or those between different social groups, are inevitably

characterized by antagonistic elements.' John Campbell (2013:1364) asserts that 'one of the most unpleasant aspects of 'togetherness' is how conducive it can be to expressions of group-aggression.' Similarly, Fincher et al (2019) argue that 'to be together in difference as equals is not easy, nor is it free of conflict.' The pervasiveness of aggression in varied spaces of togetherness ranging from family dinner tables (Fincher et al 2019:51), to cities (Thrift 2005:134), democracies (Hall 2007:152) and international campaigns (Fincher et al 2019:51) is recognised by several scholars. For example, in 'But Malice Aforethought: Cities and The Natural History of Hatred' Nigel Thrift (2005:134) argues that 'a certain amount of dislike of one's fellow citizens is […] inescapable' and that the 'ubiquity of aggression is an inevitable by-product of living in cities.' Similarly, Hall (2007:152), explains that '[a]ny form of democratic life […] is a big, staged, continuous row.' Aggression, however, takes different forms. In some instances, it is indeed 'a big, staged, continuous row' and in others it is passive or even playful aggression that describes practices of togetherness in conflict.

For example, in our interview (25 November 2019), Kyle described some of the ways in which families in his neighbourhood negotiate the shared public space of neighbourhood streets in varying harmonious and conflicting ways. In the translated excerpt that follows Kyle (Ibid) describes how neighbouring parents have different responses to mediating potential inter-family conflict that arises from children being aggressive to one another while playing in the street. While certain parents, upon hearing that their child has been hurt by another, immediately confront the accused child's parents, others take a more diplomatic approach by first enquiring about what actually happened.

> *Like, sê nou ons speel nou in die straat. Jou kind klap my kind. Noy kom my kind: "Mamie, die een het my geklap". Nou is mos… maar dit hang mos nou van die person af. Sommige vroumense of mans gaan uitkom: "Hallo, jou kind het my kind gemoer en baklei". Sommige mense gaan uitkom en sê: "Luister, maar my kind sê vir my daai het gebeur. Okay, nou wat is die storie? Praat die waarheid."*
>
> Like, say for example, we are playing in the street; your child hits my child. So now my child comes to me: "Mommy, this one hit me". Now … well what happens next depends on the person. Some women or men will come out and say: "Listen, your child hit and fought with my child". Some people will come out and say: "Listen, my child told me that this happened, so now what is the story here? Tell the truth.

The key to a street getting along, Kyle (Ibid) explains is respect and communication. '*Krapperigheid',* which translates as 'scratchiness', emerges between neighbours when they

feel disrespected and disregarded by one another. The example he gives is of someone parking their car in the middle of the road and preventing others from using the road to get where they need to go. However, being respectful, Kyle's example suggests, is not only about how communal spaces like streets are used and shared, but also about how people communicate when conflict over behaviour in communal spaces inevitably arises. Kyle (Ibid) feels that on his street people respect one another because, while conflict does emerge, it is immediately resolved through discussion in the shared space of their WhatsApp group, whereas on other streets people may simply ignore each other.

> *Dan is daar sekere paaie en sekere mense wat in sekere paaie bly wat nou nie so goed gel nie. Die een het nie respek vir daai een nie. Wat is die woord se naam? Ja, die 'animosity' wat tussen mense kom. Hy park hier, dan park hy sommer in die pad. Daar begin die krapperigheid want hy't nie respek vir ander neighbours nie. En ons pad het rerig respek, want ons praat immediately oor die problem. Sommige sal sê: "Listen, ek gaan more werk man". Sommige mense gaan dit nie doen nie. Hulle is net rustig in hulle huis. Hulle gaan nie worry nie. Somtyds sal ons in die chat daaroor praat. En sommiges sal mekaar net ignore.*
>
> Then there are certain streets, certain people who live in certain streets, who don't gel too well. What's that word? Yes, the animosity that comes between people. He parks here, and then he just parks in the middle of the road, and then the scratchiness [conflict] begins because he doesn't have any respect for the other neighbours. Our street really has respect because we immediately talk to one another about the problem. Some will go and say: "Listen I have to go to work tomorrow man". Some people won't do that. They just sit quietly in their house. They won't worry. Sometimes we will talk about it on the [WhatsApp] chat. And some will just ignore each other.

In the exchange that follows, agonistic citizenship is put into practice as a neighbourhood CAN grapples with how to respond to recent gang violence in the neighbourhood where they had been running a community kitchen. With shootings posing a threat to the safety of the CAN volunteers running the feeding stations and the community members receiving the food the stakes of this conflict situation are high. The exchange illustrates antagonistic citizenship as it evidences attentive listening and active engagement with the ideas and values of fellow members of the neighbourhood CAN, passionate rejection of those ideas deemed worth rejecting, and advocacy for individual perspectives (van Leeuwen 2010:636). This is an approach to living together in the city which is, as advocates of agonism remind us, 'less

demanding than cosmopolitanism, but more demanding than urban indifference as described by Simmel and others' (van Leeuwen 2010:636).

Speaker 1: I now ask, are we as a community ready to listen, because the fact is, WE know these shooters, WE know their leaders, WE know where they are, yet WE choose to turn a blind eye and carry on as if it's not happening. Choosing rather to 'live with it.' I said this is similar to our neighbour hitting his wife for 20 years and no one saying anything, till the wife is killed, then we all have solutions. We are now at that place and at that space where WE have to come up with a concomitant solution as a collective.

Speaker 2: With respect to your request this is a replica to what has been the stance all these years. Same script different characters. It's up to government to bring these changes. Don't you think ppl are giving information but there is no one to act on it. Don't you think people become frustrated knowing they provided information to the police without it leading to any arrests? Do you not think people are frustrated? Everyone sees the criminals, it's just the police who can't see them. What more can the people do to ensure their safety? Their safety has been compromised many a time. Do you not think they are scared by now? What more must we do to live in a peaceful society? People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) has been formed. What more must we do to create a gang and drug free society? What more?

Speaker 3: *BRING VIR PAGAD IN!!!! Ons hanaha te lank en ons future leaders word koelbloedgi geskiet. Our government is failing us. They are divided en dink niks van ons op graondvlak nie. Look what happened last night. The thugs came just before we locked our gates (as agreed by tenants) and entered a house and shot that boy. We put safety measures in place. Did it help us? NO. Why do they have guns and we not? Gee vir ons ook guns. Ek se weer: Bring vir PAGAD in!!! And I thank you.*

Bring PAGAD in!!!! We have been faffing for too long and our future leaders are being shot coldblooded. Our government is failing us. They are divided and think nothing of us on the ground. *Look what happened last night.* The thugs came just before we locked our gates (as agreed by tenants) and entered a house and shot that boy. We put safety

measures in place. Did it help us? NO. Why do they have guns and we don't? Give us guns too. I say it again: Bing PAGAD in. And I thank you,

Speaker 1: Violence begets violence, we cannot respond in the same manner they conduct themselves or we are no better than the criminals and more people will die.

(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 16/06/2020).

Although not present in the examples above, humour also surfaced as a tactic for restoring harmony in instances of intragroup conflict. In the exchange that follows, members of a neighbourhood CAN argue over the perceived politicking performed by certain members of the CAN under the guise of community work during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020. Humour, it seems, has the power to change the tone of conflict from aggression to playfulness. This exchange captures many of the elements of conflict involved in a group setting: a cheeky, passive aggressive and antagonising trigger; a smirk at the trouble about to unfold; taking a stance and trying to enforce ground rules; an attempt to reason and mediate; someone walking out and a plea by a mediator for others to stay and uphold the unity of the collective in the face of potential rupture.

Speaker 1: I smell an EFF [17]attack ✊🏽✊🏽

Speaker 2: 😃😃😃

Speaker 3: Yesterday we agreed that we will keep politics out of it.

Speaker 4: This is not about politics. We are here to serve our community, so we are not doing this for politics. We have our own organisations and we will continue to serve them with our own donations.

Speaker 1: *Eish*[18] everyone has a political party whom they vote for. This is not even near our image as politicians so *kanala,*[19] *los die politics* [please, leave the politics] as we are here to serve.

[17] Economic Freedom Fighters – a political party in South Africa.

[18] The origin of this South African expression is not clear. It may have originated from a non-verbal utterance but is now used widely in South Africa to express a range of emotions including resignation, annoyance, surprise, and uncertainty.

[19] The simplest translation for *kanala* (also written as *kanalah)* is that it is the Malay word for please. Although *kanala* is often used in this way within Cape Town's Muslim or Malay community, it can also be extended to

Speaker 5: Left[20]

Speaker 6: Please don't even think of leaving the chat...*kanala*.

(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 20/04/2020).

The three smiling emoticons shared by Speaker 2 in an apparent expression of excitement or even glee at the provocation by Speaker 1 bring to mind a quote by Hazlitt (1823:305) from his essay 'On the Pleasure of Hating' which reads: 'there is a secret affinity, a hankering after evil in the human mind and […] it takes a perverse, but a fortunate delight in mischief, since it is a never-failing source of satisfaction.'

The true power of humour in mediating conflict and restoring harmony appears to rest in its capacity to serve as an antidote to fear and shame. Several scholars (Caldeira 2017; Fincher et al 2019; Hubbard 2003; Madge 1997; Pain 2000; Pain 2001; Pain and Smith 2016; Pain 1997; Tulumello 2015a; Tulumello 2015b; Valentine 1989; Valentine 2003) have documented the ability of fear to erode togetherness and drive practices of isolation and exclusion in urban settings. Fincher et al (2019) explain that fear mediates relationships between the 'psychic and the social, and the individual and the collective.' The inherent ambivalence of togetherness and its relationship to fear as a driver and inhibitor contributes to the emotional labour involved in the practice of togetherness and the skills required in developing repertoires of being and becoming together of which I spoke in Chapter Five (Dala what You Must: Togetherness as Practice) (Fincher et al 2019:49).

Fear has the capacity both to bring people together and to push people apart. People's fear of the impact of COVID-19 on their neighbours brought them together in neighbourhood WhatsApp CAN groups across Cape Town to organise food and other essential provision for community members in need. At the same time, fear of inadequacy or judgement manifest in shame can erode togetherness or drive apartness in the very places where fear of an external threat has brought people together. In the exchange below, one CAN member judges another for trying to profit from the pandemic by using their essential services permit (which would allow them to move around the city despite the curfew in place at the time) to deliver provisions

refer to helping or caring for someone or pleasing a friend. For example, *kanalawerk* (directly translated as caring work) is the word used to describe the work or craft done out of camaraderie to help someone. So widespread is the ethos of *kanala* within the Cape Malay/Muslim community, that at one point *Kanalahdorp* (the direct translation of which would be Care Town) was a nickname for District Six.

[20] Apparently fed up with this conversation, one member exited the neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp group in a digital gesture of walking away.

to the community. In turn, they are judged for being so judgemental. Both speakers agree that the other's actions will ultimately be judged by Allah implying cause for shame in the eyes of Allah.

Speaker 1: If anything needs to be delivered, I have a permit. At the moment I'm not working due to the lockdown so I'll deliver for a minimum fee.

Speaker 2: Are you charging to use your permit?
Eish people just know how to make money in a critical time like this, *haibo!*[21]

Speaker 1: I'm not charging to use my permit. I'm charging for my diesel. So quick to judge! But anyway Allah knows best hey.

Speaker 2: I'm not judging. It's the way you said it. *Ja,* Allah knows best

(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 14/04/2020).

In most instances where different repertoires for practicing togetherness collided and the potential for conflict emerged on neighbourhood CAN WhatsApp groups, shame was avoided and harmony restored through humour and the positive interpersonal relations it facilitated. In the exchange that follows, one member requested that deliveries and collections of provisions not be made in the evening when people might have personal commitments. The message ends with an implication that the group should be considerate of one another. It is primed with humour. The speaker admits that their personal commitments are simply to their television show. The result is that the request for greater consideration is well received and met with more humour rather than taken to be an accusation of inconsiderate behaviour.

Speaker 1: Can we please leave deliveries and collecting to tomorrow if possible?
We have families too that we need to be with.
Well, I have Grey's Anatomy.
But let's just be a wee bit considerate.

Speaker 2: Okay councillor. Stay blessed my dearest. I salute all our councillor. *Nie net julle sleeves is op gerol maar ook julle pyp* [Not only your sleeves are rolled up but also your trousers].

(CAN WhatsApp Group Discussion, 24/04/2020).

[21] A colloquialism used to express shock, disbelief, or judgement.

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to answer the question ‘What kind of practice is togetherness?’ by making the case for togetherness as an inherently ambivalent practice from the vantage point of the lives of Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. To do so I illustrated how togetherness manifests in Coloured Capetonians’ lives in three apparently contradictory ways through hope and trouble, unity and rupture, and harmony and conflict. Moreover, I argued that it is precisely this ambivalence which both characterises urban togetherness and defines its transformative potential. Through tracing how hopeful and troubling gestures of unity and rupture, and harmony and conflict were negotiated by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town, this chapter attempted to illustrate how people learn the skill of living with ambivalence as part of developing repertoires for practicing togetherness.

8. Integration and Conclusion

Figure 18: The Well-Worn Theatre Company perform 'Swarm Theory' at the Infecting the City Festival in Cape Town city centre (Photo by the author, 2019)

'Integration' refers to the process of bringing separate parts together to form a whole. It echoes something of how togetherness is interpreted in South Africa - as mending the apartness and segregation that has long plagued the country. This is a metanarrative that I have worked to augment with additional tales of connection and commonality found in the physical and digital spaces occupied by Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town, however fraught and ambivalent they may be. 'Integration' also describes my intent with this closing chapter where I yoke together the various parts that have made up this dissertation by reflecting on what I have learnt about combining traditional qualitative methods with experimental digital methods to study social processes of togetherness, on what this approach has taught me about togetherness and how my findings relate to other scholarship on togetherness, and ultimately by reflecting on what I have learnt about myself as a 'citizen anthropologist' (Cheater 1987) researching my home city.

The aim of this research was to advance a framework for understanding urban togetherness capable of offering an alternative both to the metanarrative of apartness in South Africa and to the ways in which urban togetherness tends to be theorised through difference in contemporary urban scholarship, particularly on places like South Africa where difference has provided the basis for centuries of divisive politics and legislation, and continues to be a salient issue around which conversations about transformation are premised. To develop this alternative, I approached the idea of urban togetherness through a different entry point, not difference but familiarity remaining attentive to the ways in which familiarity does not preclude difference just as difference does not preclude familiarity. This is a complex synchronicity which scholarship on social processes in South Africa and elsewhere tends to overlook as it charts the ubiquity only of difference evident both in the voids of urban segregation *and* in the intimacies of urban encounter.

In South Africa, the question of togetherness is typically interpreted as a question of racial integration evident in the meeting of opposites, in the mixing of Black and White. The groups that make up the middle seem to count less. By this I mean that there is a sense that until Black and White people are fully integrated apartness has not been overcome and togetherness has not been achieved. So, South Africa continues to be read through a metanarrative of apartness as scholars go searching for signs of integration and find it incomplete. The objective of this research was to explore whether there might be grounds on which to read South Africa through a different narrative not by charting instances of integration as yet undocumented but by looking for evidence of togetherness elsewhere. To do so I turned to a group historically defined and burdened by their simultaneous relatedness and separateness as 'in-between White and Black' and 'both non-White and non-Black' (Erasmus

2017; Western 1996:9) an inbetween status negotiated every day in Cape Town. By working through two constellations of familiarity in the city of Cape Town – Coloured families and neighbourhoods – I found evidence of practices of togetherness existing alongside apartheid's lasting legacy of difference and division. That these practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town matter not only for their own sake but for advancing an understanding of South Africa and urban togetherness more broadly is, as I mentioned in the Introduction, the bold claim this dissertation makes.

Coloured people's practices of togetherness in Cape Town matter because they represent a chapter of the South African story worth telling *and* because of the insights they provide into urban togetherness as something which requires practice, something which is conditioned by physical and digital spaces, and something inherently ambivalent. These three tenets of togetherness developed in the empirical chapters of this dissertation provide a way of recalibrating expectations of collective life in modern cities by offering a framework for approaching togetherness in the city which is tethered neither to blissful aspirations for collective harmony nor to pessimistic predictions of inevitable discord. It is a framework for approaching togetherness which seeks out, instead, a middle ground which acknowledges the coexistence of harmony and discord that describes the experience of living together in modern cities. Therefore, far from attempting to diminish the salience of difference, my attentiveness to familiarity observed through the entry points of families and neighbourhoods is a project in advancing an ambivalent reading of urban togetherness as defined simultaneously by relations of difference and familiarity.

Reflecting on Method

Methodologically, this dissertation drew on 12 months of *in situ* and remote fieldwork, including face-to-face family interviews and observations of WhatsApp based neighbourhood mutual aid groups (CANs) formed in response to COVID-19. This hybrid methodology emerged as a pragmatic approach in response to the constraints and opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic which made *in situ* fieldwork in South Africa impossible for several months and presented both advantages and disadvantages.

There were several practical and analytical benefits to combining in-person interviews conducted during fieldwork in Cape Town with remote observations of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups from Bristol to inform this research. Pragmatically, the addition of digital methods meant that when COVID-19 emerged in 2020 just before I was due to return to Cape

Town to conduct a second round of interview-based fieldwork I was able to adjust my research design to include remote digital methods which allowed me to keep the data collection process rolling. In other words, I could keep studying togetherness without being 'together' with my participants, an experience which revealed some of the paradoxes of togetherness which would later shape my analytical framing of togetherness as inherently paradoxical and ambivalent, least of all through the ability to be 'together apart' with research participants.

Analytically the inclusion of digital methods offered three advantages. First, it forced me to observe togetherness in a space I had previously ignored – neighbourhood WhatsApp groups – and revealed how urban togetherness is enacted in physical as well as digital spaces in the city. People in Cape Town had been gathering online long before COVID-19. 'Neighbourhood Watch' groups have long provided spaces in which people in Cape Town engage one another on the goings-on in their neighbourhoods. In many neighbourhoods these WhatsApp groups provide a space for the ambivalent togetherness of surveillance coupled with care that may otherwise have taken place on the street had people not been conditioned in meeting online out of convenience as well as a concern for safety.

Second, the inclusion of digital methods allowed me to capture the ways in which people's practices of togetherness in Cape Town were impacted by the shared experience of a global pandemic. While some people may have been inspired into new heights of altruism or may have found themselves participating in collective action for the first time, the overwhelming majority of the people I observed seemed to draw on existing repertoires of togetherness cultivated by living in a place (the Cape Flat) where mutual aid is a part of doing (*dala-ing)* what one must to get by and reinforced by religious scriptures. What was perhaps novel was, as one participant put it, the 'threading together' of previously disparate parts that the Community Action Network offered and the technology of WhatsApp enabled by being affordable and widely used.

The third analytical benefit of combining in-person family interviews with remote observations of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups is that the two methods complemented one another. What the one inhibited the other enabled. This complementarity also revealed the unique shortcomings of each method. The family interviews I conducted provided many rich and textured details about each of the individuals interviewed – what they looked like, how they spoke, what they wore, and in some instances where they lived – details which leant themselves to assumptions about people's gender, age, income, mother tongue and so on.

The written format of the neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, though in many ways less intimate than an interview, offered participants a greater degree of anonymity and privacy. The personal details I was privy to on WhatsApp groups were the mobile numbers associated with

each ‘contact’ on the group, their messages, and any details about themselves (names, jobs, age, gender, addresses) which they explicitly volunteered or had volunteered by others on their behalf. As a passive observer in these groups, I was at the mercy of what people wanted to reveal about themselves, less able than I was in interviews to ask specific questions or guide conversation. This meant that the assumptions I was able to make about the demographic profile of the people who participated in this research via WhatsApp were less informed than the assumptions I could make about the demographic profiles of the people I interviewed. This limited what I could then say about precisely whose practices of togetherness I witnessed and how practices of togetherness in neighbourhoods that make up the Cape Flats are structured along gender, age, and religious lines.

Finally, in WhatsApp groups the presence of the researcher is less obvious than in a one-to-one interview. This has its own benefits and drawbacks. The benefit is that in forgetting that a researcher is present or not being explicitly prompted by interview questions people may feel less observed in turn making observations more ‘authentic’ or ‘natural’. The drawbacks, on the other hand, are the ethical questions and challenges this obscured visibility raises. First, with the high rate at which people joined and left the CAN groups it was difficult to ensure that at any given moment members of the group were fully aware of my presence, identity and positionality as a researcher which was also partly obscured by the anonymity created by WhatsApp without constantly disrupting the flow of conversation by steering everyone’s focus away from the purpose of the group to my presence as researcher.

At the time I could not find a single case of anyone who had conducted qualitative research with an existing WhatsApp group established in the context of a humanitarian crisis (as the COVID-19 pandemic was for the people who the CANs on the Cape Fats were trying to help). Without any precedent to turn to and a commitment to the ethical principle of doing no harm, I deferred to the CAN WhatsApp admins to manage and negotiate my presence on their groups. The result was a solution which was simultaneously practical and compromised, and which points to the need for more scholarship on questions of ethics and researcher positionality in online spaces such as WhatsApp groups.

As methods, in-person interviews and WhatsApp group observations reveal and conceal different details and, in turn, allow for different assumptions to be made and conclusions to be drawn. The variability in the data provided by each method introduces a degree of ambiguity in what can be said about togetherness. The margin of error increases and it becomes more difficult to extract a cohesive narrative from the data. Despite this variance, three insights into togetherness were apparent across both sets of data. Below I reflect on what I learnt about togetherness as a practice, as conditioned by physical and digital spaces and as inherently

ambivalent. I also reflect on how these findings relate to the existing scholarship on togetherness both in and outside of South Africa explaining how 'ambivalent togetherness' as it is framed in this dissertation may entice new forms of enquiry into the urban.

Reflecting on Togetherness and Enticing New Forms of Enquiry into the Urban

Reflecting on Togetherness as a Practice

Togetherness within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town revealed itself as a practice, as a 'doing' (a *dala*), learnt through repetition and habitualisation which is motivated by necessity and, to a lesser extent, religious devotion. Here I refer to the necessity for people to come together and help one another to survive everyday life on the Cape Flats made all the more precarious in 2020 with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the devotion to religious practices which encouraged and routinised certain practices of togetherness. In both family interviews and WhatsApp observations people evidenced repertoires of togetherness which they had either learnt from their own experiences of responding to necessity in their communities or observed in the responses of others to necessity and then assimilated in a kind of training in '*dala* what you must'. A smaller, yet nevertheless significant, number of people, cited adherence to religious teachings which motivated and normalised their commitment to doing things for other people, especially people in need.

Whereas my interviews with families revealed the myriad ways in which all people practice togetherness ambivalently by looking after their neighbours *and* arguing over parking, for example, my observations of CAN WhatsApp groups revealed details about how togetherness comes to be organised at a collective level. Although many of the identifying details of participants were obscured by the anonymity offered by the WhatsApp technology, the introductory conversations I had with group admins about joining the groups as a researcher gave me insights into whom the CAN groups on the Cape Flats were organised by. The CANs I observed tended to be led by people who described themselves either as community leaders (these were typically women who ran charities or community kitchens) or faith leaders (these were typically men who served as pastors of churches or imams of mosques). The people acting as administrators of the CANs were already involved in practicing togetherness through their community- or faith-based- work prior to the pandemic and thus had pre-existing repertoires of togetherness which they appeared to apply and adapt to the novel context of need introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Membership of these groups appeared to be made up broadly by people who wanted to help others and had time or resources, however modest, to offer to the cause. This included people with established affiliations with community service in one form of another (community and faith group leaders, charity volunteers, people working in public-facing roles as social workers, teachers, nurses, police, or local ward councillors) and people with no apparent affiliation with community organisations but who were motivated by the urgency of the pandemic to '*dala* what they must' and get involved in whatever way they could whether it was preparing food for others or delivering supplies. Ward councillors were also present on several groups although party politics and political posturing was discouraged and received severe criticism when attempted. Although age-related information was not available on the groups unless people volunteered it which rarely happened, there did not appear to be a youth presence on the groups, with young and elderly people generally framed as recipients rather than purveyors of aid and assistance. Other groups described as being 'in need' of assistance included single parents, people suffering bereavement and people experiencing extreme poverty.

In CAN groups led by faith-based leaders it was evident not only that the relevant pastors and imams were trained in organising togetherness, but also that the people they led similarly were trained in practicing togetherness under this leadership. Both the leaders and the followers understood the rules of the practices of togetherness they were performing and performed their roles accordingly. People who were perceived not to be adhering to the rules or culture of the CAN groups were reprimanded or punished by being removed from the groups.

In addition to the people who joined the CAN groups to offer help were a minority who joined to request help. Together with people who would join, opportunistically, to punt a quick money-making scheme (often involving crypto currency) only to be promptly reprimanded and removed, those who joined the CAN groups to ask for money, airtime, food or work directly appeared to make up a much more transient class of membership, apparently not sticking around to become permanent members but leaving after being helped or dismissed, occasionally to join another group.

Reflecting on Togetherness as Conditioned by Physical and Digital Spaces

Togetherness also revealed itself as a practice which is conditioned by physical and digital spaces across different spatiotemporal zones. Togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods and what it means to '*dala* what you must' appears to be shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through digital spaces of

neighbourhood WhatsApp groups. Attentiveness to the ways in which physical and digital spaces both constitute arenas for togetherness is an insight omitted from much scholarship on togetherness in and out of South Africa and which was revealed to me through the experience of being forced online by COVID-19.

By paying attention to CAN WhatsApp groups because they emerged under the banner of Cape Town Together at a time when I was looking for ways in which to keep studying togetherness in Cape Town from Bristol, I was shown how collective repertoires of togetherness have emerged on the Cape Flats just as they did all over the city in the absence of safe and open public spaces as a result of necessity and people doing what they must to get by. With its focus on the segregated urban form of post-apartheid cities, much of the literature on social life in South African cities frames urban space as a substrate for continued separation. The finding that people create public spaces for gathering online in all parts of the city suggests, in contrast, that the physical and digital spaces of urban life in South Africa also serve as platforms for practicing togetherness in spite of persistent geographies of separation.

The togetherness emergent on WhatsApp CAN groups was not a uniformly harmonious, united, or hopeful togetherness but a challenging and ambivalent form of sociality collectively negotiated and renegotiated every day. It is a togetherness which emerged through the simultaneous coexistence of difference and familiarity as people, many of whom did not know each other, came together online because they had in common the neighbourhoods that they called home and the communities that they belonged to. It is a togetherness, which in turn, produced further relations of difference and familiarity as some people got to know one another while others did not, and some collaborated and others shared differing opinions. It is this complexity and duality which is typically scripted out of scholarly approaches to understanding urban togetherness which begin from difference and are not attentive to the ways in which difference may not always preclude familiarity and vice versa. Moreover, it is this ambivalent character of togetherness which is at the heart of the final argument made by this dissertation which asserts that the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidence themselves as inherently ambivalent.

Reflecting on Togetherness as Ambivalent

The benefit of using familiarity rather than difference as an entry point into studying togetherness by working through the constellations of family and neighbourhood (both defined as much by arguing as they are by getting along, as much by bonds as they are by fractures) in Cape Town is that it revealed the ambivalence of togetherness in the city. Togetherness in

Cape Town appeared to be as much about coming together to arrange the running of community kitchens and the distribution of food and other essentials as evidenced within CANs as it is about coming together under the banner of the '*Gatvol'* movement to lobby for the secession of Cape Town from the rest of the country. It appeared to be as much about referring to strangers as 'family' or 'team' as it appeared to be about telling someone that they are a bad Muslim and that 'Allah is watching'.

In other words, togetherness emerged in expressions of hope, unity, and harmony as much as it did in expressions of trouble, rupture, and conflict. Participants' negotiation of conflict in addition to harmony in the physical spaces of neighbourhood streets as well as the digital spaces of neighbourhood WhatsApp groups revealed how togetherness can manifest as 'agonistic citizenship' (Mouffe 2000). This finding is supported by Gilroy's (2004) conceptualisation of conviviality as a living together with- and through- agonism as well as Arendt's (1998) understanding of living together in the world as being simultaneously related and separated, and Berman's (1983:13) understanding of modernity as an experience in 'paradoxical unity', the 'unity of disunity' which Berman (1983:13).

Reflecting on Theory

This dissertation used a subaltern expression of practice (dala) to speak back to Northern theories of togetherness through an exploration of the South, the creole, the digital and the pandemic. The primary theoretical contribution made by this dissertation is to the scholarship on encounter. By discussing the various ways in which Coloured people practice togetherness through the constellations of familiarity represented by the family and the neighbourhood, this dissertation illustrated how encounters can be produced through familiarity in addition to difference both online and offline. In doing so, this research advocates for a scripting of familiarity into the discourse on what happens when people come together and encounter each other which typically frames such moments as meetings only of difference in physical spaces of gathering with little attention paid to the possibility of familiarity as a potential by-product of encounter and to how digital spaces such as neighbourhood WhatsApp groups might increasingly constitute alternative geographies of encounter. Moreover, practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidence the ways in which encounters online and offline are not only produced through relations of familiarity but can also produce familiarity when people learn to be together through practice, and, in doing so co-create a commonality of shared experience and/or new-found understanding.

Reflecting on being a 'Citizen Anthropologist'

As I mentioned in the prologue of this dissertation, as someone born in Cape Town in 1993 on the cusp of democracy in South Africa, understanding how South Africans might achieve togetherness after decades of apartness is a question of personal as well as intellectual importance for me. As a South African and a 'born (almost) free' I am hugely invested in South Africa's present and future. It is this investment which led me to question first what would happen if experiments in togetherness I had witnessed elsewhere were replicated in South Africa and later whether people in my home city were already practicing togetherness in spite of the spatial and social divisions wrought by the decades under colonialism and apartheid.

The answers I encountered through this research have not resolved the dismay I feel over the disappointments of democracy or the discomfort I feel over my role in apartheid's legacy as a White person. Instead, learning from the city I call home that togetherness must be practiced, that it is conditioned by the materialities of physical and virtual space, and that it is inherently ambivalent, has made clear the work that is required in training in togetherness as an active, embodied, and ongoing practice – work that applies to me just as it applies to all other South Africans. This realisation is as significant to me personally as it is to me intellectually. When I speak of recalibrating expectations of collective life in the city through this dissertation, I describe my own journey through the research having once also imagined togetherness as '[t]he pleasant feeling of being united with other people in friendship and understanding' as it is by the Ängsbacka centre (Figure 4, Introduction). Likewise, when I speak of this dissertation advancing a framework for approaching urban togetherness which is tethered neither to blissful aspirations of collective harmony nor to pessimistic predictions of inevitable discord but seeks out, instead, a middle ground with and through the inherently ambivalent experience of coexistence in the city of Cape Town I describe my own new-found relationship to togetherness as something which demands practice.

Conclusion

Located in a South African city marked, as are others, by historic and on-going structures of separation, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship on togetherness ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically. Ontologically, this research begins from the recognition of togetherness as a reality of urban life. In doing so it invokes traditions in urban scholarship which have sought to theorise the experience of co-dwelling offered by the city through encounter, cosmopolitanism, conviviality, and integration (in the case of South Africa).

Where this dissertation builds on these traditions, however, is in foregrounding the ambivalence inherent to the experience of togetherness offered by cities. While scholarship on the urban often acknowledges the ambivalence of co-dwelling in cities, ambivalence is rarely central to attempts to understand how, why, when and where people come together in cities in the way that it is in this dissertation. Through the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town this dissertation has evidenced how urban togetherness might be understood as a form of relation which encapsulates both practices and experiences of unity *and* rupture, harmony *and* conflict, hope *and* trouble, thus foregrounding the ambivalence of togetherness. Herein lies the epistemological contribution made by this research. My emphasis on the ambivalence of togetherness, and its being negotiated in part through- rather than being anathema to- apartness is also what sets this research apart from popular understandings of togetherness as synonymous with solidarity, unity, cohesion, and in the case of South Africa, integration.

I couple an ontological recognition of the ubiquity of togetherness in cities and an analytical framework for studying togetherness through ambivalence to a methodological approach which traces vernacular practices of togetherness in Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town. Specifically, I use the ways in which people practice togetherness through gathering and conversing in physical and digital spaces as a means with which to engage participants and understand their practices of togetherness. Herein lies my methodological contribution to urban scholarship where comparatively little attention has, until recently, been given to how digital interfaces, such as WhatsApp, increasingly constitute spaces of public gathering.

Supplementing the more traditional qualitative method of *in situ* interviews with data gathered from observing WhatsApp mutual aid groups did not only reveal how togetherness is practiced in physical and digital places of gathering. It also demonstrated how togetherness is practiced through familiarity even in spaces such as the Cape Flats which are typically read through the lenses of difference, division and deprivation and where everyday realities often make it risky to co-occupy physical space. It is against this insight that I challenge the popular and local South African interpretation of togetherness as synonymous with integration, and therefore anathema to apartness or segregation, and make the case for reading South African cities beyond the dilemma of difference.

The product of the ontological, epistemological, and methodical contributions outlined here is three insights into collective life in the city. First, togetherness within Coloured families and neighbourhoods in Cape Town is an embodied practice, a ‘doing’ (*dala*) learnt through repetition. Second, this embodiment is conditioned both by physical *and* virtual social spaces.

Togetherness amongst Coloured families and neighbourhoods is shaped by the historical processes of residential displacement under apartheid, the immediacy of life in the place that is the Cape Flats, and the remoteness of engagement through digital spaces of WhatsApp neighbourhood groups. Finally, the practices of togetherness performed within Coloured families and neighbourhoods evidence themselves as inherently ambivalent. Although these findings relate to practices of togetherness in contemporary Cape Town, it is my hope that this research may serve as a provocation for comparison with other sites and that this might lead to the identification of generalizable practices that may enable 'hopeful' repertoires of togetherness, because, to once more echo Ian Nesbitt, to challenge ever intensifying politics of isolation tactics for togetherness are increasingly needed.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets in English and Afrikaans

How do we live together in cities?

Invitation to Participate in Research Dissertation.

About the dissertation.

This dissertation is interested in studying the ways in which we live together in Cape Town. It forms part of a larger investigation into how people live together in cities globally. Cape Town has been selected as a case study given its history of separateness as a post-apartheid city. The dissertation seeks the insights of Capetonian residents who belong to families which were affected by forced removals under the Group Areas Act during apartheid and have multi-generational connections to Cape Town. We are interested in hearing from residents about your experiences of the city and how they have changed over time.

How to get involved.

You are invited to participate in an initial two-hour interview with the researcher with the potential for further follow-up interviews in the future. Interviews will take place in **Cape Town over the period of 13 November 2019 to 21 January 2020**. You may choose to involve multiple family members in the interview, or to participate individually and speak on behalf of your family. Interviews will involve discussions on residents' experiences of living in the city of Cape Town over time. You will have the choice of conducting the interviews in your homes or proposing an alternative meeting point which you prefer. Interviews will be scheduled at times which are convenient for you and your family. They can be conducted in English or Afrikaans, depending on your preference. Participation in this dissertation is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point without the need to provide a reason.

What is this research for?

This research is being conducted in support of a doctoral degree in Human Geography at the University of Bristol in England. Contributions shared by participants during interviews will be anonymised and will only be used for the purpose of this doctoral research dissertation. Participants' personal information and interview contributions will be stored securely and will not be shared with third parties. Participants will receive a summary of the interview findings after the research has been conducted and will be treated as research partners and are encouraged to contribute to the shaping of the research process and analysis.

Information about the researcher:
A South African myself, I was born in Cape Town, grew up in rural Western Cape and returned to Cape Town to complete my secondary and tertiary education. I have lived in the city for several years and recently moved to England to pursue this doctoral degree.

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Hoe woon ons saam in stede?

Uitnodiging vir deelname aan ‘n navorsingsprojek.

Oor die projek

Hierdie projek bestudeer die maniere waarop ons in Kaapstad saam woon. Dit vorm deel van ‘n breër ondersoek oor hoe mense wêreldwyd in stede saam woon. Kaapstad is gekies as ‘n gevallestudie weens die stad se geskiedenis van segregasie as gevolg van apartheid. Die projek benodig die insigte van inwoners van Kaapstad wat deel is van families wat hulself beskou, of voorheen geïdentifiseer is, as ‘kleurling’, en oor geslagte heen ‘n verbintenis met Kaapstad het. Ons stel belang in inwoners se ervaring van die stad, en hoe dit met tyd verander het.

Hoe om betrokke te raak

Jy word uitgenooi om deel te neem aan ‘n aanvanklike twee uur lange onderhoud met die navorser, met moontlike verdere onderhoude in die toekoms. Onderhoude sal **tussen 13 November 2019 en 21 Januarie 2020 in Kaapstad** plaasvind. Jy kan kies om alleen namens jou gesin te praat, of om saam met ander familielede deel te neem. Onderhoude sal inwoners se ervarings van die lewe in Kaapstad oor die jare bespreek. Dit is jou keuse om die onderhoud by jou huis of op ‘n ander plek van jou keuse te voer, op ‘n tyd wat gerieflik vir jou en jou gesin is. Die onderhoud kan in Engels of Afrikaans gevoer word. Deelname is heeltemal vrywillig en jy kan op enige tydstip onttrek sonder om ‘n rede te gee.

Waarvoor is hierdie navorsing?

Die navorsing is deel van ‘n doktorsgraad in Menslike Geografie by die Universiteit van Bristol in Engeland. Deelnemers se bydraes sal anoniem wees. Persoonlike inligting en onderhoude sal veilig gestoor word en sal nie met derde partye gedeel word nie. ‘n Opsomming van die bevindings van die onderhoude sal aan na afloop van die navorsing aan deelnemers gestuur word. Deelnemers word gesien as vennote in die navorsing en word aangemoedig om by te dra tot die rigting wat die projek neem.

Inligting oor die navorser:

Ek is ‘n Suid-Afrikaner wat in Kaapstad gebore is, in die Wes-Kaapse platteland grootgeword het, en toe teruggekom het Kaapstad toe vir my hoërskool- en universiteitsopvoeding. Ek het vir ‘n paar jaar in die stad gewoon en het onlangs na Engeland verhuis om hierdie doktorsgraad te doen.

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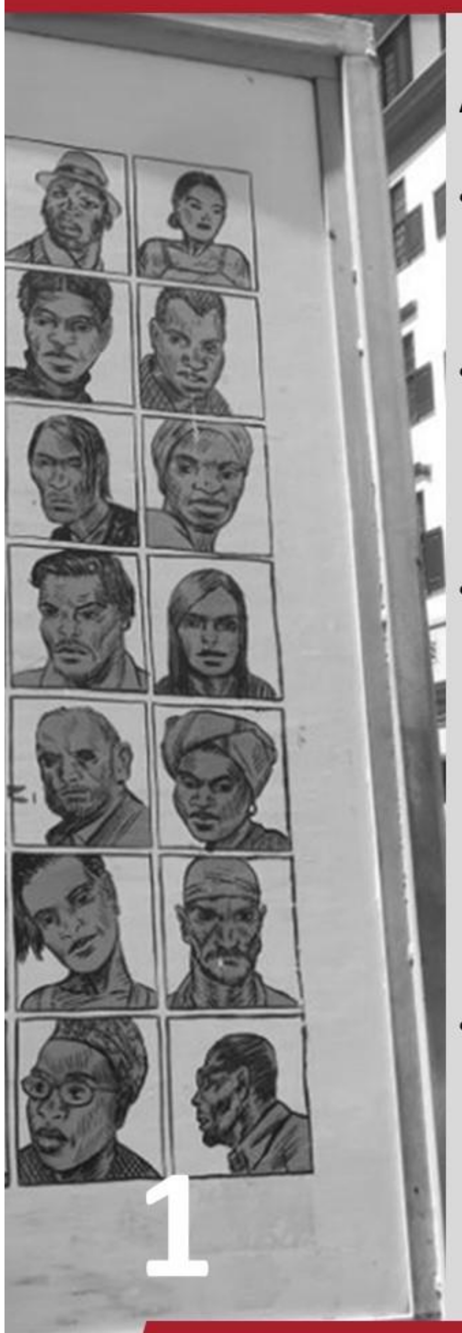
Appendix B: Participant Invitation and Information Materials for WhatsApp

How do residents practice 'togetherness' in Cape Town?

A doctoral research project at the University of Bristol



About the project

- This project examines the ways in which residents practice 'togetherness' in Cape Town.
- The research is being conducted in support of my doctoral degree in Human Geography at the University of Bristol.
- The project was launched in 2018 and since then I have worked with families across the city in order to learn about the ways in which people engage with their families, neighbourhoods, community organisations and religious groups.
- The project has evolved to focus on the ways in which residents come together within and across neighbourhoods in response to COVID-19.

Cape Town Together
Community Action Networks

University of BRISTOL

How do residents practice ‘togetherness’ in Cape Town?

A doctoral research project at the University of Bristol

About the Researcher

A South African myself, I was born in Cape Town, grew up in rural Western Cape and returned to Cape Town to complete my secondary and tertiary education. I have lived in the city for many years and recently moved to England to pursue this doctoral degree where I am supervised by the Prof. Susan Parnell and Dr. Mark Jackson.

2

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How do residents practice ‘togetherness’ in Cape Town?

A doctoral research project at the University of Bristol

Collaborating with the CAN

Objective: Learn from the CAN about the ways in which residents practice ‘togetherness’ within and across neighbourhoods in Cape Town in response to COVID-19.

Outcome: Document lessons learnt from the CAN about how residents work together in times of crisis to be shared with the CAN and used to inform doctoral research on ‘togetherness’ in Cape Town.

Method: Researcher to observe and study the CAN’s evolution, discussions and initiatives communicated on the CAN WhatsApp group as one might observe a townhall community meeting. In this way no active engagement from CAN members is required although it will be welcomed should it arise.

Cape Town Together
Community Action Networks

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How do residents practice 'togetherness' in Cape Town?

A doctoral research project at the University of Bristol

Ethical Research: Protecting participants

- **Anonymity & privacy:**
    - All responses on the CAN WhatsApp group chats will be anonymised.
    - All identifying data (including names, phone numbers, home addresses and photographs) will be removed from the data before analysis.
    - No identifying data will be retained by the researcher, published or shared with third parties.
    - When used direct quotations will be paraphrased to retain meaning but ensure that they cannot be traced back to their source.

- **Data protection & storage:**
    - Data will be securely stored in a password and firewall protected location, to which only the researcher will have access.

- **CAN involvement & input:**
    - CAN members are regarded as research partners in the project and are encouraged to contribute to the shaping of the research.
    - The research approach is designed to produce research that will be useful for the CAN. As such, CAN members are invited to request access to the research when it has been completed.
    - Participation in the project is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point without the need to provide a reason for doing so.

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Bristol.

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