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### Channeling mobility across a segregated Johannesburg

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# MOBILITY MAKES STATES

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Migration and Power in Africa

Edited by

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and

Joel Quirk

PENN

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS

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## Chapter 5

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# Channeling Mobility Across a Segregated Johannesburg

Darshan Vigneswaran

Planned segregation is one of the main ways states in Africa have channeled mobility. Colonial African states used considerable energy to control the movements of “native” peoples both to and within cities. While many forms of cross-border movement were rarely enumerated and frequently unregulated,<sup>1</sup> the movement of black populations (and sometimes Indian, Arab, and Chinese populations) into and within urban areas was often regarded as deeply problematic and threatening. Colonial states routinely segregated settlements to appease settlers’ fears of miscegenation, respond to pseudoscientific theories of disease management, and assuage security paranoia. In the process, these governments developed a range of regulatory mechanisms, including arrests, raids, detentions, demolitions, and mass removals to halt, limit, and channel “native” movement to the city.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, I explore the evolution of this form of state channeling of human mobility in the postcolonial era. Racial segregation policies and laws largely died out with the collapse of European empires because postcolonial governments in Africa were largely nationalist in orientation and, therefore, abjured state-planned and -enforced racial and ethnic segregation. There have been cases where governments have staged antimigration crackdowns or slum clearances in an effort to illustrate their abiding capacity to confront seemingly chaotic processes of urban development and change,<sup>3</sup> but these are now widely regarded as exceptions, not the rule. The sort of politically mandated and totalizing segregation program that was

taken to its illogical extremes in Apartheid South Africa has become, it would seem, largely a thing of the past. In this sense, South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 represented a belated return of the continent to an international community that, particularly since the desegregation movement in the southern United States in the 1960s, has largely upheld the idea that, within state borders, systematic controls on movement of people should be abjured.

Did the end of Apartheid spell the end of a period in which the state in Africa engendered and enforced urban population divides? Much of the literature would lead us to support this conclusion. Patterns of residential segregation are seen as either mere hangovers from the past or the product of housing-market dynamics and ethnic chauvinism. The "politics" of segregation—let alone the concept of "the state"—rarely feature in these studies. Departing from this position, this study seeks to explore the role that state officials in Africa continue to play in engendering and enforcing urban population divides. While state agents are no longer empowered by laws and policies to channel populations to designated areas, they may shape where people move in public space in a variety of more subtle and informal ways.

This divisive brand of governance is evident in the activities of those groups that exercise the core responsibility of the "state" vis-à-vis legitimate violence. The state-funded police—usually in conjunction with a range of semipublic and private security actors—possess the resources to halt, arrest, and remove people from public spaces. While these actors are no longer mandated to evict unwanted outsiders from "group areas," they often police spaces in ways that (a) inform population groups when they are "in the right place" or "out of place" and (b) discourage these groups from moving out of their designated zones.

The background for this observation is the recognition that the police have a long history of involvement in urban segregation in Africa and elsewhere. Much of the everyday practice of public order policing (as opposed to investigative, bureaucratic, and operational work) is not the exercise of violence per se, but (a) the observation of and encounters with civilians moving through public spaces and (b) the determination of who "belongs" in what place by means of profiling and interrogation.<sup>4</sup> Invariably, this practice is strongly influenced by deep social norms and criteria that criminalize particular groups and identities and identify certain groups and individuals as "outsiders" in particular parts of the city. Police stops are often

carefully coded territorial messages, designed to inform certain categories of ostensibly free civilians that they are “out of place.” This type of police territoriality has been most commonly identified in the literature on racial profiling. For Albert Meehan and Michael Ponder, “racial profiling is inextricably tied not only to race, but to officers’ conceptions of place, of what should typically occur in an area and who belongs, as well as where they belong.”<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I want to suggest that this type of informal policing of segregation partly helps explain why, despite the decline of segregation policies and laws, cities in Africa continue to be deeply divided. Urban populations cannot be easily sorted into designated areas through violence alone. Governing institutions must first differentiate the populations that they confront into insider and outsider groups and encourage these various groups to accept and adopt specific notions of legitimate residence and occupation. As John Torpey argues in his account of the development of the modern passport, this involves the “embrace” of the population by the state apparatus.<sup>6</sup> In the early twentieth century, governments sorted the world’s population into national, territorial groups by using the passport to register mobile groups, separate them into national groupings, and encourage them to abide by state laws regarding who belonged where. Given that the police in African cities lack passports that clearly identify who belongs where, how do they engage in this population-sorting exercise?

### **South Africa: Segregation and Securitization After Apartheid**

This chapter seeks answers to this question through an in-depth case study of inner-city Johannesburg. Johannesburg is an ideal site to study continuities in state-enforced segregation in Africa. When the African National Congress (ANC) assumed power in 1994, it announced an intention to desegregate South African cities. However, since 1996, the government has emphasized infrastructural investment, service delivery, and improvement in personal living conditions in previously disadvantaged areas, but not active desegregation.<sup>7</sup> As a result, South African cities remain deeply segregated fifteen years after the formal end of Apartheid.<sup>8</sup>

As race has declined as a legitimator of social segregation, a language of crime control has risen in its place. South Africa has a very high level of violent crime. South Africa’s homicide rate ranks seventh on the list of

reporting countries, at 36.5 per 100,000 population for the period 2003–2008.<sup>9</sup> These crime rates have reinvigorated old patterns of securitized segregation and given birth to new forms of spatial exclusion.<sup>10</sup> After a brief flirtation with a human rights-oriented policy,<sup>11</sup> the South African Police Force has redeployed the spatially oriented approaches to public order policing that were the hallmarks of the Apartheid era. The police use a range of enforcement powers mandated to them under immigration, traffic, vagrancy, trespass, trade, and alcohol consumption laws to restrict movement across the urban landscape.<sup>12</sup>

The police are not alone on this “beat.”<sup>13</sup> South Africa has witnessed a dramatic growth in the private security industry. In 2007, the industry was worth approximately R14 billion, employing a total of 300,000 active security officers, outnumbering the police by approximately two to one.<sup>14</sup> These figures do not include the vast array of private investments in insurance, high walls, electronic security and surveillance systems, anti-hi-jack systems, vehicle tracking devices, firearms, and self-defense training. This increased investment in private security is changing the morphology of South African cities. Inner-city zones have been increasingly commandeered by privatized development corporations who explicitly promote the removal of poor people as a development ideal.<sup>15</sup> On the urban fringe, we see the rise of gated communities, either through the new construction of private walled developments or through the ad hoc and often illegal process of “boom-gating” previously open suburbs.<sup>16</sup> Poorer South Africans are also privatizing security, albeit in different ways. There are a range of non-state groups, ranging from community policing forums, to self-defense communities, to run-of-the-mill vigilantes who provide protection for poorer communities in townships and inner-city ghettos. Spatial claiming and ethnic closure are often the *raison d'être* of such groups, as has often been witnessed over the past five years, with the rising incidence of vigilante and mob attacks on foreign nationals and other South Africans who are seen as outsiders.<sup>17</sup>

Segregation in South Africa has never been a static geographical phenomenon. It is a social structure that must be consistently enforced and reconstituted. In a contemporary context, this is partially to do with the historical legacies of Apartheid. Apartheid was a system based on complete racial residential segregation, but partial racial *integration* of the urban economy. Put in its most simple terms, black South Africans constituted an essential labor supply for a largely white-owned economy. Black South



Africans (with the exception of domestic workers) commuted from their residences in black townships to white urban and suburban areas to work and then commuted back again at nightfall, after which they were not permitted to walk the streets of white areas without a valid permit. This commuter lifestyle has remained a pervasive feature of all South African cities and in particular of black South African life in cities like Johannesburg. The majority of the black population travel long distances and long periods to and from work, consistently coursing through white areas, traveling across public spaces and into private domains of white and wealthy populations.<sup>18</sup> This litany of minor territorial incursions and transgressions consistently poses questions for belonging and association in everyday life. Who has a right to be and remain in particular areas and for how long? How are people to be treated when they move out of their areas into other residential and commercial domains? Which actors have the authority to determine these issues? Apartheid's laws answered these questions with finality and in elaborate legal code, defining who was a first-class citizen in what area, when and where people could move, and who had responsibility for enforcement. In the post-Apartheid era, these issues are more open in that there are no strict segregation laws. Nonetheless, a broad range of actors compete to fill the void to decide these issues, and in so doing define the new contours of control.

### **Hillbrow, Johannesburg: Boundary Contestation and Transformation**

These dynamics of contestation and change are strongly evident in inner-city Johannesburg. Taking figures from the census of 2001, the dissimilarity index rates the highveld cities of Johannesburg (85.7) and Pretoria (82.7) as significantly less segregated than their coastal counterparts of Durban (89.6) and Cape Town (91.3).<sup>19</sup> Crucially, segregation in Johannesburg is absolute in some areas but more "gray" in others. While the former township areas remain uniformly black, other parts of the city are more mixed, and patterns of segregation are still being determined and negotiated.<sup>20</sup> The precinct of Hillbrow, where this study is based, is precisely this sort of area. Hillbrow *precinct* partially covers eight neighborhoods: Berea, Braamfontein, Joubert Park, Killarney, Parktown, Riviera, WITS University, and—somewhat confusingly—the smaller *neighborhood* of Hillbrow. While the

Hillbrow precinct was historically designated a “whites only” area under the Group Areas Act, the proportion of black residents began to increase in the 1970s. In the 2001 census, 90 percent of the population identified as black African, colored, Indian, or Asian.

Despite these overall changes, racial divides are being reproduced across Hillbrow precinct—between a uniformly black southern area and a more mixed population in the north—and these new contours are shaped and buttressed by the topography and built environment. The suburbs of Berea, Braamfontein, Hillbrow, Joubert Park, and WITS University to the south are both high up and high rise. They are situated on top of one of the two geological ridges that dominate the Johannesburg landscape, and they contain a large number of skyscraper residential complexes. Change in racial demography has been rapid in the south.<sup>21</sup> For example, take the *neighborhood* of Hillbrow. The 1970 census recorded only a small minority of residents in the judicial area of Hillbrow as black (9 percent).<sup>22</sup> By 1993, black African residents were in the majority (62 percent).<sup>23</sup> In the 2001 census, the population was uniformly (99 percent) black African. The picture looks significantly different in the low-density, single-occupier, valley suburbs of Killarney, Parktown, and Riviera to the north. These suburbs have significantly lower proportions of black Africans. In 2001, black Africans were still in the minority in Killarney and Riviera.

Stark and visible divides between the northern and southern parts of the precinct hide a complex and increasingly contested landscape. Take, for example, recent shifts in conventional correlations between race and class. Across all of South Africa, race is strongly correlated with educational achievement and occupation, with black Africans tending to have less education and fewer jobs while being more working class. In Hillbrow precinct, these patterns are being challenged in at least two ways. First, black students are now able to attend WITS University, on the western side of the precinct. As a result, the southern suburbs of WITS University campus and Braamfontein both have high proportions of unemployed black African residents but also possess high proportions of residents with tertiary qualifications. Another important factor has been the opening up of employment and residential opportunities for black South Africans around Johannesburg General Hospital in Parktown and the private hospitals of Parklane, Brenthurst, and the Donald Gordon Medical Centre. Following the traditional occupational patterns of Apartheid, the majority of the black population resident in the suburbs of the North are employed in the domestic

services (domestic work, security and office work). However, census 2001 figures show that a quarter (28.5 percent) of the black African population of Parktown are health professionals.

Alongside these significant changes in the precinct's demographic makeup, we have seen the emergence of a new way of talking about crime. Hillbrow has become renowned as the center of criminality in Johannesburg and regarded as representative of all the problematic dynamics driving South Africa's high-crime rates. Indeed, Hillbrow has often been regarded as the national icon of criminality. Newspaper reports emphasize other precincts' rising levels of "dangerousness" by giving them the moniker of this most infamous precinct. For example, Sea Point in the Western Cape has been dubbed "Hillbrow by the sea." Quigney in the Eastern Cape was labeled the "Hillbrow of East London." Sunnyside in Pretoria was called "Hillbrow No. 2."<sup>24</sup> The story of the demise of the once highly prized high-rise apartment complexes and the entertainment precinct that lie at the heart of Hillbrow suburb has become one of the ways in which Jo'burgers narrate and lament the advent and expansion of the city's crime and grime dilemma. This story about Hillbrow is not simply a contrived representation of black in-migration as criminalization. Hillbrow precinct does have a high crime rate and high rates of violent crime. However, as one might expect, the narrative is partially independent from changes in crime statistics. Hillbrow's crime rate peaked in 2001 and has subsequently steadily declined, but these changes are not reflected in destigmatization of the suburb or increased willingness on the part of the broader public to visit or commute through the area.

Residents of the suburb experience and relate to these security questions in a more intimate and specific way. In the southern high-rise suburbs, residents have sought to establish a number of self-help security schemes. These range from formal involvement in community policing forums to street patrol committees to employment of security agencies that aim to take back control of the high-rise buildings that have become both derelict and home to a range of criminal activities, from off-license "shebeen" bars to brothels, drug dens, and headquarters for armed gangs.<sup>25</sup> In the wealthy northern suburbs of the precinct, security is also privatized. However, reflecting the housing stock and the increased wealth of its residents, it is also more individualized. Residents of large single-stand homes have built high walls with electric fencing, security cameras, and guard dogs, and they deploy security companies who provide personal guards and armed

response vehicles. Meanwhile, the up-market apartment complexes in these northern suburbs are “gated” with strictly regulated vehicular and pedestrian entry points.

The Hillbrow police must work across these racial and class divides and either with or against these patterns of securitization. In some respects this has involved mere redeployment of Apartheid era tactics. In the past, Johannesburg police possessed a single, catch-all response to crime: identify people—primarily black African people—who are “out of place,” arrest them, and send them back where they “belong.” During our research with the Hillbrow police, this study discovered similar patterns of policing on both sides of the ridge. To the north, police officers spend their time assisting security guards to locate black and lower-class pedestrians who appear “out of place” walking the leafy suburbs that have been specifically designed for exclusively vehicular traffic. To the south, the Hillbrow station has focused its attention on the black African immigrant community, squatters, and homeless people, using a series of heavy-handed tactics to remove them from the area, in the hope that crime rates might subside. So, in some respects, the story of policing and segregation is a simple matter of “old habits die hard” or, as I have argued elsewhere, of the police finding new targets for their old policing strategies.<sup>26</sup>

Yet forced removal strategies, the deliberate and violent territorial policing of space, is only part—one particularly obvious part—of police involvement in the enforcement of emerging contours of segregation. The police are also consistently involved, in more subtle ways, in a broader process of conveying the meaning of territorial spaces to civilian populations. More specifically, the violence that the police wield is consistently evoked to dramatize and display the consequences of spatial transgression across the geographic ridge that divides the precinct into north and south. In order to unpack this claim, the chapter will now move away from broad generalizations of precinct demography and crime patterns and attempt to look at how the police encounter “out of place” people on either side of the precinct. Here, I draw on an extensive period of ethnographic field research with police officers at the Hillbrow Police Station from 2009 to 2012. This research involved spending time at the charge office in the station, riding along in the back of patrol vehicles, observing interactions with members of the public, and using these observations as the basis for more extended conversations and interviews about policing practice with individual officers. From this research, I have selected two “ethnographic moments” that



appear emblematic of everyday police interactions on either side of the ridge to develop my central argument.

### **Dealing with the Displaced 1: The Problem of the Black Itinerant**

The first case involves a motorcycle accident near one of Johannesburg's most fashionable malls in Killarney: a neighborhood on the northern side of the ridge. On the morning of the incident, I was working with a group of four twenty-something black African male constables. At the beginning of the shift, we patrolled the neighborhoods to the south of the ridge. There, the officers were boisterous, exchanging stories about their sexual exploits of the previous night, and waving at pedestrian colleagues and friends. They had not been involved in any "police work" as such. After two hours or so, we crossed the ridge through Houghton and into Killarney. The officers spotted a traffic accident (see figure).

A motorcycle courier was lying on his back, clutching his leg, while trying to rest his head awkwardly on his helmet. A civilian motorist was parked directly behind him.

The four constables got out of the vehicle and approached the scene. Officers 1 & 2 interviewed the motorist and the rider. They quickly determined that the motorist had not hit the rider but had merely stopped to call an ambulance. They also surmised that the rider's leg was seriously injured. With this cleared up, Officers 3 & 4 headed into a nearby mall. The motorist also left. However, Officers 1 & 2 didn't check with the motorist whether an ambulance was coming or which ambulance provider he had called.

A possible cause of the accident soon became evident. A construction company, working on a new addition to the mall, had opened a large gash in the road in order to repair the power lines underneath, but had failed to deploy any protective coverings that would allow cars and bikes to safely cross the gash.

After a couple of minutes, a tow-truck driver arrived. He asked the officers whether an ambulance was coming. Officer 1 said yes, but he couldn't say which company was sending the ambulance or when they might come. Five minutes passed.

The tow-truck driver began to get impatient and decided to call another ambulance service. In the meantime, the rider started to wiggle around, to see if he could find a more comfortable resting place. Officer 1 was chatting with the tow-truck driver, and didn't notice the rider's movements. I began to worry about his condition. From my little first-aid knowledge, I knew that, in order to minimize the risk of spinal injury, the rider should try to keep still.

As we waited for a second ambulance, two workers from the construction company arrived and began to inspect the scene, taking photos from various angles. This new scene attracted a secondary crowd of onlookers: passing drivers peering out of car windows and pedestrians staring at the rider. Several workers from the mall took up vantage positions along railings of the multiple-story car park opposite us.

Then the rider's boss called on the rider's cell phone and he passed the phone to me. I explained that his rider had had an accident. The boss asked whether he had hit a pot-hole or whether it was his own fault. I told him that the ambulance was on its way and he promised to send someone down to collect the bike.

Then the construction workers began to take command of the scene, asking the officers questions and, despite having not seen the

accident, reciting a story of the accident out loud: that the rider had tried to "cut the corner" behind a traffic cone and in so doing had ridden across the gash and fallen over.

I asked Officer 1, "Should we take some photos in case the rider might want to make a claim of some sort?" He smiled in reply: "This is an *accident* not an *incident* so we don't need to open a docket." About five minutes after the tow-truck driver had called, an ambulance arrived. Another five minutes passed and the ambulance workers had comforted and immobilized the rider, diagnosed a broken leg, removed his shoes with a pair of scissors, placed the shoe on his chest, placed him on a stretcher, obtained payment approval from his boss, taken photos of the scene, carried his stretcher to the ambulance and left.

After the ambulance left, Officers 3 & 4 returned with a 2 litre bottle of coke. The construction workers then began to make adjustments to the scene, laying the protective covers over the gash, moving the warning traffic cones, moving the bike off the road and taking more photos. Officer 3 opened the courier box but when its contents began spilling out he quickly shut it again. He looked embarrassed. All the officers then crossed the road back to their vehicle where they would share the drink, gossip in the sunshine and wait for the rider's boss to arrive. About 1-1/2 hours later a new tow-truck driver, sent by the rider's boss, arrived for the motorbike. Officer 3 informed the new tow-truck driver that no one had tampered with the bike or opened the courier box. At this point, Officer 4 informed me that the construction workers might be worried that the rider's boss will want to sue.

This is a typically Johannesburg tale of public sector incompetence, private sector professionalism, and the dubious levels of humanity shown to the members of its black working-class population. Our four constables lost control of the scene, allowing the construction company to erase evidence of its liability. The rider received good health care. However, his personal dignity and rights to potential compensation were ignored or sidelined in various ways.

The reasons he was treated in this way have a great deal to do with the location where the accident occurred. When our officers moved over the ridge into Killarney, they understood, at least implicitly, that they were

moving into a dense matrix of private interests, where the police are considerably less responsible for—and capable of exerting—command. The gregarious attitude they had displayed all morning in the southern neighborhoods was not evident in their rather obsequious handling of the scene in Killarney. Instead, they took a back seat. While the officers took over the scene from the motorist on arrival, they perhaps never envisaged holding on to this role for very long. When the tow-truck driver arrived, the constables happily relinquished their concern for the rider and only hung around for a couple of hours to ensure that the property of the courier company, the motorbike, was secured. In this respect, they became little more than security guards, rather than the embodiment of law and order.

Perhaps more poignantly, despite the fact that our officers and the rider were all black and that the rider was an elderly man and in pain, the officers did not attend to him. They did not seek to ensure that his legal interests, in the form of an evidence trail, were protected. They did not attempt to ensure that his personal health was protected. They did not even attempt to provide him with comfort, taking care of cool drinks for themselves instead. This may be because our four officers were uncaring yahoos, but it may also have to do with the fact that, again, they felt as though Killarney was not only out of their zone of responsibility but also a zone of survival for anyone coming north over the ridge. Here it is workers for themselves, and they must each work out their position vis-à-vis the corporate matrix of interests on their own. Here, it is significant that many other pedestrians also did nothing for the rider. The only person to talk to him was a black female domestic worker of about the same age who moved into his line of sight and asked, “Are you ok?” He answered, “No, I’m in a lot of pain.” At this, she winced and continued walking toward the mall.

So, while our rider was surrounded by people on that pavement, in certain respects, he was also very alone, and he was alone in a very specific way, in that some of the ties of race, community, and ethnicity that we might expect to reach out to him had been suspended. Instead, he was left to a regime of accident management that had sprung into action around him. This regime was privately run and profit oriented. The tow-truck drivers were looking for a fare. The ambulance drivers were looking to see that their fees were covered. The courier company boss wanted to know if his bike was working. The construction workers were erasing the possibility of a potentially expensive lawsuit.



Within this matrix of responsibility, the driver's accident was rendered as a problem, but a particularly "bare," in the sense used by Agamben,<sup>27</sup> sort of problem. He was not primarily a problem with family. While several people mentioned the problem of finding his boss, who would be responsible for his bills, no one talked about contacting next of kin who might want to know what had happened to a father or a husband. He was not a problem with human emotions or dignity. Even the professional caregivers, the ambulance drivers who did such an expert job attending the scene, deploying all the techniques of eye contact, physical contact, and a calm and clear voice, regarded the rider as an abstract task. So, when they cut off his shoe in order to reposition his foot in a brace, they placed the remnants of the shoe on his chest, so that the property remained connected to the problem. Finally, he was not a problem with rights. So, when the construction company workers came over to the scene, they probably would not have predicted that the rider might sue. However, they probably did anticipate that his boss might want to recover his medical expenses. Thus they set about erasing any possibility that the rider might seek some compensation for the suffering he was very palpably experiencing—and by setting the accident up as the fault of the rider, possibly also opening a pathway for further recriminations when he eventually returned to work.

If the rider had experienced the same problems on the other side of the ridge, in the neighborhoods of Hillbrow or Berea, it is unlikely that he would have received "better" health care. However, it is likely that he would have been the subject of a qualitatively different form of accident response. There are numerous private security companies in the southern suburbs, but they confine themselves largely to their designated properties and do not concern themselves with random accidents in public spaces. So, it is unlikely that we would have seen this regime of private interests reach out to envelop the rider, removing him from the hands of the constabulary and objectifying him as a starkly depersonalized profit-loss problem.

A more likely scenario is that the police would have had to take control. It is precisely because of his physical location that the rider was clearly and convincingly informed that he was not at home.<sup>28</sup> While there was no identifiable actor assuming the figure of decision-maker or sovereign in this process, there was a decision-making process in action: "What should we do about the rider who, in falling off his bike, has become a problem that is 'out of place'?" While there was no formal process to making this decision, there were a clearly defined set of roles, and each of the actors knew what role they were expected to play.

It might be tempting here to regard the police as superfluous: *mere* security guards for the rider's bike. However, it is important that we do not miss the way their unique function, as actors capable of deploying violence, was carefully deployed within this broader matrix of acting agencies to allow all the *relevant* interests, meaning those of the business community, to be secured. Despite Killarney's diverse range of security companies deployed to protect private spaces, there was no specific company or service for the specific need the rider had created: that of a deserted bike on the road. In this sense, the police and their capacity for swift reaction to unprotected property in *public* space were vital, concluding the problem that would otherwise have been left ongoing or incomplete.

This story of policing in the privatized environment of the northern mall vividly illustrates the themes that have been developed in the literature on privatization and securitization. The agents of the formal "state" appear as the handmaiden of an autonomous and untrammelled capitalism, who do the job of objectifying the rider and communicating his status as an "out of place" problem in the vicinity of a northern mall. In the face of this matrix of corporate interests, our four police officers are reduced to playing very minor roles in the governance of the flow of populations, becoming mere supports for the various economic interests at play. This account demonstrates how such dynamics not only reduce the seemingly powerful agents of the state to minor players in the practice of governing mobility but can cut through seemingly powerful bonds of race. In the face of this power structure, none of the black workers—including the police officers—dares intervene on the rider's behalf.

### **Dealing with the Displaced 2: The Problem of the White Pioneer**

The same set of issues assumes a slightly different cast when brought into conversation with dynamics on the other side of the ridge, where the conditions are in some ways reversed. When white South Africans—or for that matter, any nonblack Jo'burgers—venture into Hillbrow or Berea, they also find themselves being typecast, othered, and objectified, however, in a different relationship to the constabulary. To illustrate this point, I will reflect on another drive through Hillbrow precinct. On this morning, I had been placed with Inspector Masinga, the sector manager for Berea. The neighborhood of Berea is often seen as the "little brother" suburb to Hillbrow,

similar in terms of having high rises and high crime but not quite as iconic and not quite as dangerous. This is somewhat strange given that Hillbrow's most infamous building, Ponte Tower, is actually located in Berea, and Hillbrow's most infamous crime problem, West African drug trafficking, is also concentrated in a particular quarter of Berea.

Inspector Masinga used to live in Hillbrow and had been working at the station for over a decade. He is a fairly reserved man, thin, average height, and heading into his mid-forties. He had seen the precinct go through its crime spike in the early years of the millennium and wished that people from the outside recognized that crime stats had been going down in the precinct for the last few years. In stark contrast to the tour with the young men, on this patrol with Masinga, we were repeatedly drawn into "real" police work. Somewhat more bizarrely, given that Berea's population is uniformly black, the main protagonists in the events on this day were white people moving through or living in the suburb:

After an hour of circling around the streets of Berea, Masinga pulled to a stop at the edge of the Joe Slovo Freeway, which many commuters use to skirt around the precinct. He lit up a cigarette and rested against his car door. As we chatted, a car accident took place on the freeway below. A middle-aged white male driving a BMW had rear-ended an older white male in a Toyota. Both drivers got out of their vehicles and walked towards one another. Mr. BMW started screaming "fuck" and "poes." A truck drove past, obscuring our view. By the time it had passed, the scene had changed. Mr. Toyota was on his arse looking a bit dazed and Mr. BMW was back at his car, remonstrating at the guy he had just floored.

Masinga yelled out "Stop it!" and continued smoking. Traffic began to build up behind the BMW. Other cars beeped at the drivers to hurry up. A truck driver came to a halt in front of the Toyota and the truckie got out and started telling off Mr. Toyota.

Sensing trouble, Masinga put out his cigarette and made his way down onto the road. Suddenly, he looked like a different person, shoulders set, chest puffed up, voice loud and distinct. He told the truck driver to "fuck off" back to his truck. At this point Mr. BMW came back for more in a flailing, I'm-gonna-look-like-I'm-trying-to-smash-you-while-secretly-hoping-that-this-cop-intervenens kind of way. Masinga stopped Mr. BMW and asked him to inspect his

vehicle. Not a scratch. Both drivers quickly headed back to their cars.

When Masinga got back to the squad car he complained: "These old guys, they just want to fight. You ask them if they want to go to the station and open a docket they say no. They just want to fight, fight, fight, fight."

He turned the car around and headed back towards the heart of the precinct, and in the direction of Berea's drug-dealing hotspot. Suddenly Masinga began speeding up. I thought he was responding to a callout, but he was actually trying to evade one.

There was a white man standing on the road directly in front of us, next to his mini-Cooper, flagging us down. He was pretty gaunt and wearing track suit pants. If I had seen this guy in my home town in Australia, I would have surmised that he was looking to score heroin.

Masinga said, "No baba, no baba, don't stop me now." But he did, and Mr. Mini-Cooper got his story out in a hurry. Apparently he had just had his cell phone stolen and the guy who stole it was somewhere nearby. At this point, a young black man, sharply dressed with a Sopiatown style chapeau, black skivvy, and brown leather jacket appeared at the window and pointed illustratively behind us, suggesting that was where the thief had gone.

Masinga offered to call another vehicle, gesturing at me and saying that he's busy, but eventually he agreed to help out. Mr. Mini-Cooper came around to my side of the car as if to get in, but Masinga pulled quickly into a u-turn so now we were heading back towards where the thief was supposed to be. Mr. Mini-Cooper came to the door again but Masinga said, "Run ahead and I'll follow."

We drove for two blocks, with Mr. Mini-Cooper struggling to keep up, running along the road next to us. As we travelled Masinga began a slightly grumpy rendition of events:

"You see these white guys come here for drugs and then they get robbed, and now they call us. What else is he here for but drugs? And then they get robbed. It is only because we were passing by that we've been called on. It's coincidence. They must use that 10111 number, but they don't think to do that."

Spotting nothing, we turned around again and drove back towards the Mini-Cooper, leaving Mr. Mini Cooper flailing at us to

return. We came to a stop next to Mr. Sophiatown who had a measured exchange with Masinga, explaining that there is a guy who does petty-theft in this area but he's long gone and nobody knows where he lives.

Masinga drove and continued his tour. As we prepared to head back to the station, he drove through the northeastern section of Berea, which, unlike the high-rises elsewhere, is mostly made up of free-standing, single-storied houses. We cruised past a portly white man who, much like all the drug dealers we've been prowling past all day, was standing still, back up against the wall, seemingly looking out into space. Masinga says, "Oops, I'm glad that guy didn't see me." Seeing that I was baffled he explained: "You see that old white guy, yoh, if he catches you he will want to talk and talk."

But the man had spotted us and we pulled up in front of him. He introduced himself as Henry and a member of Masinga's Community Sector Crime Forum. The two of them launched into a discussion about the "sector profile": a document prepared every so often outlining crime trends in the suburb. Apparently the secretary of the policing forum wanted to get his hands on the sector profile and Henry was lobbying Masinga to hand it over.

Masinga would not concede. He said, "I'm responsible for the sector profile. I'm the sector manager and these documents must be kept in a filing cabinet in my office. When the national office people come to the station they will want to come and see the sector profile and use it in their reports." Henry capitulated: "You see, Inspector Masinga, I've tried to tell these people that the community forum is under the SAPS [South African Police Service]. There's no point having two heads and one head trying to tell the other what to do. The citizens are there to help the police. Not tell them what to do."

Masinga: "The sector profile is *my baby*."

Henry got the message and then spent another five minutes conveying his support.

In some respects, Masinga's tour is a relatively simple tale of an older officer doing his best to avoid work. Masinga had been on the beat in this precinct for a long time, and he knew how to shield himself from the never-ending demands on his time. To do this, he used a subtle blend of confidence games, misdirection, and threats. So, he called Mr. BMW's bluff,

seeing if he was prepared to take his fight to the precinct and turn it into a war of words and paper. He expected Mr. Mini-Cooper to get the police on the phone instead of calling on the first squad car he saw to help—a telling assumption given that the latter had just lost his mobile phone. He told Henry to back off and leave the sector plan to the real cops.

These are classic games police officers play. Officers who are adept enough and committed enough can spend their entire career avoiding the substantive work of policing and being largely left alone, so long as they do not overstep the bounds from mere bureaucratic obfuscation into sheer corruption and contempt-filled sloth. In this respect, Masinga's problem is really that he is conscientious. Even though he had sorted out a nice morning's ride with a gullible researcher and had nothing much else to do, civilians in Berea kept calling him for help, and his policeman's sense of duty keeps saying "yes," or at least "maybe."

But there is something more to Masinga's practiced attempt to create this work bubble. This lies in the racial and spatial dynamics of these three encounters with white men who are "out-of-place" south of the ridge. Here, well before Masinga encountered each incident, he had cast each of these characters as a specific type of problem: Mr. BMW was the road-raging prima donna, Mr. Mini-Cooper was the drug-addled schemer, and Henry was the busy-body community organizer. Masinga used each of these stereotypes to determine what his largely precoded responses to their complaints might be: talking sense, leaving the scene, or asserting himself. In some respects, this is concerning but, at the same time, perfectly pragmatic. In the first two scenarios, Masinga had to make a decision, in a short space of time, that might have compelled him, a lone officer with an incompetent ride-along partner, to put himself at personal risk. In the last scenario, he was acting less on stereotypes and more on lengthy experience of Henry and his equally lengthy complaints. So, these coded ritual responses were exactly the sort of approach we should expect from Masinga, who fell back on these experientially developed tactics as part of his practiced method of surviving on the streets.

Masinga's stereotypes were also not based on thin air or mere rumor. They reproduce a scene that plays out almost every day in the Client Service Centre at Hillbrow Police Station. This game invariably involves white complainants from the valley entering the center, insisting on their rights, and expecting to be greeted by incompetence, while the mostly black constables roll their eyes, joke in Nguni languages (which the clients cannot

understand), and think up ways to prove the complainants right. Invariably, the complainants leave with their arms in the air, having confirmed their worst expectations, and anticipating a cleansing bitch session with their friends about the problems of democratic transition. Meanwhile, the constables joke and moan about the different ways white complainants make extra work for the police. This is not an ordinary issue of service delivery but a strong declaration of the dramatic shift in power relations that has taken place over the last two decades. For those white Johannesburg residents that have not given up entirely on the new regime, the police represent both utter disappointment and a beacon of hope, an institution around which they have rallied as a potential source of protection and a vehicle of political influence. When the police at the station rebuff their appeals, this represents for many the final straw and a powerful signal that they do not have a legitimate voice in the new democracy.

Masinga is somewhat different to the officers back at the station, though, in that he retains his clients' respect. He does not simply send messages to the men he meets on the street that they are out of place. He does so in a way that continually reinforces his position of authority. More interesting than the stylized fashion in which Masinga refuses to help each man is the way he simultaneously maintains a decorous relationship with each party, while maneuvering himself into a position of rectitude, integrity, and authority. So he went and inspected Mr. BMW's car knowing that this would lead to the latter's capitulation and retreat. He went briefly on the wild goose chase with Mr. Mini-Cooper but forced the latter to stay on the street. With Henry, whom he knew better, Masinga was more forceful, claiming the sector profile as "his baby" and forcing Henry to stand down and convey support. In each of these interactions, Masinga gained a little victory, without ever having to show his cards. The snide comments, complaints, and petty dismissals about each "client" came out in the margins, in his summary comments, which he would ordinarily keep to himself, but in this case was handing on to me.

This set of subtle tricks and power by-plays have few linkages to the former Apartheid regime (which, of course, had its fair share of double-speak and propaganda) and more closely resemble the techniques of black resistance against this high modernist monstrosity of a state. Robbed of the capacity to confront white people directly in public, some vocal South Africans found respite in the discourse of black pride. Others sought recourse in a litany of minor oppositions, workplace shenanigans, under-the-breath

rebukes, and “innocent” forms of mimicry of the oppressor. In Masinga’s case, we see this same tradition woven into the practices of a much more powerful figure: that of the senior officer on patrol, combined with his hard earned *nous*. So, Masinga is able to puff out his chest and separate the white men on the freeway, pull a u-turn and leave the white addict to run like a fool in the street, and cruise by his white neighborhood busy-body’s house and remind him who is boss.

The type of magic Masinga weaves around these remaining white residents in Hillbrow is at the same time similar to and starkly different from the all-consuming, profit-driven machine that enveloped our bike rider to the south. It communicates difference, typecasts outsiders, and explains who belongs where. Yet, it is more akin to the bureaucratic maze Josef K. wakes up in, in Kafka’s *The Trial* than the humanity-stripping state of exception described by Agamben.<sup>29</sup> Correspondingly, the nature of anomie experienced by the remnants of the white population of Hillbrow is qualitatively different from that experienced by our rider: more blinding frustration and disorientation, than utter powerlessness and dislocation.

What unites both these examples is that in each case the police are part of a process of channeling the population into their “own areas,” sifting through the various groups and informing them when they are out of place. However, they do so in a way that is rather uncharacteristic of those who wield the violent authority of the state. In both cases, we see how the representatives of various institutions of governance—both private and public—problematize the presence of the outsider group and set in train a series of administrative processes to communicate this problematic status. Crucially, however, in neither example are the instruments of violence used to displace the outside group physically. Instead, the police officers’ capacity to use—and the imminent threat of—violence is woven into a range of more subtle techniques of rule that simultaneously bring the “outsiders” into a process of governance while clarifying their status as foreign and unwelcome. In the first case, a range of private interests envelop the motorcycle rider in an accident-response procedure while stripping him of his rights and dignity. In the second case, Masinga offers his protection to the white men on his beat while ensuring that they will ultimately be dissatisfied by the process. In this respect, the type of state power on display is akin to what John Torpey describes as a state that embraces its subject population to differentiate between those who belong and those who do not—in this case, demonstrating who has police protection and who does not.



### Concluding Remarks

This chapter has demonstrated how the state continues to contribute to processes of urban division in Africa in the aftermath of state-planned segregation programs. This may not simply be a matter of the withdrawal of the state from urban planning and development processes or “failure” of the state to promote social and ethnic integration. Nor is it necessarily a matter of policy makers using the instruments of violence to separate population groups spatially. Rather, this study has pointed to a somewhat more subtle relationship between political institutions and processes of social segregation. I have argued that the representatives of the state help channel the movement of people in and out of public spaces in ways that both signal which groups belong in what places and encourage population groups to conform with this demographic topography. In this particular case, it helps us understand why, despite the delegitimation of segregation in South African public law and discourse, state actors continue to help reproduce the geodemographic divides that riddle cities like Johannesburg.

More broadly, the case study helps us develop the central point of this volume: that mobility makes states. In this case, the state is clearly not merely a “preventer” of mobility between the various parts of the city. Rather, it appears as an actor engaged in the more variegated task of channeling population groups into and out of their designated areas. Crucially, the type of channeling that we see varies across space. On the north side of the ridge, state power seemed significantly disaggregated among the various actors that contributed to the governance of the bike accident problem. On the south side, the state was more concentrated in the figure of Masinga, who brought its active judicious power to bear on the situations he enacted and concluded. Demonstrating one of our central points regarding moving concentrations of state power, the channeling processes I have described are not uniformly determined by top-down processes of policy making and law but change rapidly as state agents move across the landscape and confront different social and political orders as they go.

## Chapter 5. Channeling Mobility Across a Segregated Johannesburg

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3. Jonathan Klaaren and Jaya Ramji, "Inside Illegality: Migration Policing in South Africa After Apartheid," *Africa Today* 48, 3 (2001): 35–47; K. M. Otiso, "Forced Evictions in Kenyan Cities," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 23, 3 (2002): 252–67; Deborah Potts, "‘Restoring Order’? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32, 2 (2006): 273–91; Marshall Van Valen, "Continuity and Change in Migratory Flows in Gabon," in *In Search of Solutions: Methods, Movements and Undocumented Migrants in Africa*, ed. Darshan Vigneswaran and Joel Quirk (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2006).
4. Steven Kelly Herbert, "Territoriality and the Police," *Professional Geographer* 49, 1 (1997): 86–94; Steven Kelly Herbert, *Policing Space: Territoriality and the Los Angeles Police Department* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
5. Albert J. Meehan and Michael C. Ponder, "Race and Place: The Ecology of Racial Profiling African American Motorists," *Justice Quarterly* 19, 3 (2002): 402.
6. John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

7. Ivan Turok, "Persistent Polarisation Post-Apartheid? Progress Towards Urban Integration in Cape Town," *Urban Studies* 38, 13 (2001): 2349–77.
8. A. J. Christopher, "The Slow Pace of Desegregation in South African Cities, 1996–2001," *Urban Studies* 42, 12 (2005): 2305–20; see below for updated figures.
9. UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Homicide Statistics, Criminal Justice Sources (2003–2008). The countries with higher rates were Honduras (60.9), Jamaica (59.5), Guatemala (45.2), Trinidad and Tobago (39.7), Colombia (38.8), and Lesotho (36.7). Using public health sources, South Africa reports the highest murder rate of all reporting countries (68.0). Crime and policing now rank among the top four issues for South African voters, along with unemployment, job creation, and poverty. Norbert Kersting, "Voting Behaviour in the 2009 South African Election," *Africa Spectrum* 44, 2 (2009): 125–33. There remains a racial division in these numbers, with voters favoring the Democratic Alliance (a party formed out of the remnants of the National Party) rating crime and policing much higher on their agenda than ANC voters.
10. T. R. Samara, "Order and Security in the City: Producing Race and Policing Neoliberal Spaces in South Africa," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, 4 (2010): 637–55; Darshan Vigneswaran, "The Contours of Disorder: Crime Maps and Territorial Policing in South Africa," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, 1 (2014): 91–107; Martin J. Murray, *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg, Politics, History, and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).
11. Julia Hornberger, *Policing and Human Rights: The Meaning of Violence and Justice in the Everyday Policing of Johannesburg* (London: Routledge, 2011).
12. Darshan Vigneswaran, "Taking Out the Trash: A Garbage Can Model of Immigration Policing," in *Exorcising the Demon Within: Xenophobia, Violence and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa*, ed. Loren Landau (Johannesburg: WITS University Press, 2011).
13. Despite the ANC "get tough on crime" rhetoric, government investment in crime prevention has actually declined in recent years. In 2004–2009 the police force/population ratio declined gradually (from .34 to .28), while the portion of the overall budget devoted to policing fell marginally (from 6.7 to 6.4 percent). The UNODC reports a 6.2 percent drop in police personnel per population level between 1995 and 2002: Stefan Harrendorf, Markku Heiskanen, and Steven Malby, *International Statistics on Crime and Justice* (European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations; HEUNI, 2010).
14. Raenette Taljaard, "Private and Public Security in South Africa," in *The Private Security Sector in Africa*, ed. Sabelo Gumede, 69–98, ISS Monographs 146 (Pretoria: ISS, 2008).
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17. Loren B. Landau, ed., *Exorcising the Demons Within: Xenophobia, Violence, and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2011).

18. The white population also commutes but almost never in and through black former township areas.

19. A widely accepted index of segregation, where 100 represents total separation of white and black residents and 0 represents even distribution across all census tracts

20. While the broad contours of residential patterns have remained the same, some areas have seen dramatic transformation in racial and class composition, Brij Maharaj and Jannil Mpungose, “The Erosion of Residential Segregation in South Africa: The Graying of Albert Park in Durban,” *Geoforum* 25, 1 (1994): 19–32; Daniel Schensul, “From Resources to Power: The State and Spatial Change in Post-Apartheid Durban, South Africa,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, 3–4 (2008): 290–313.

21. All the southern suburbs now contain significantly higher proportions of black Africans than the Johannesburg average of 74 percent.

22. Alan Morris, *Bleakness and Light: Inner-City Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999) 6.

23. *Ibid.*, 53.

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

25. Vigneswaran, “The Contours of Disorder.”

26. Vigneswaran, “Taking Out the Trash.”

27. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, Einaudi Contemporanea 38 (Torino: Einaudi, 1995).

28. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

29. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).