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The Social Production and Construction
of an Urban Place in Soweto, Johannesburg (South Africa)

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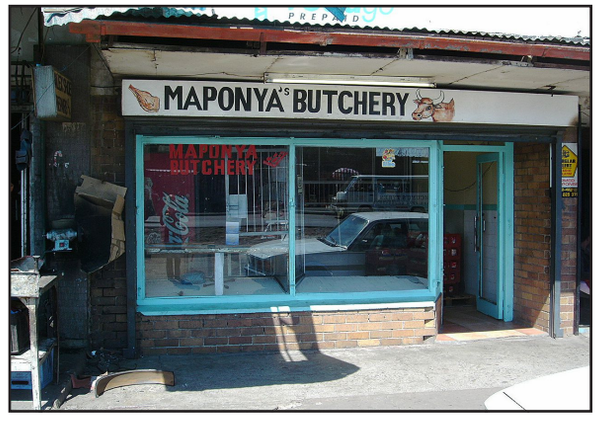

Maponya's in Transition

The Social Production and Construction of an Urban Place in Soweto, Johannesburg (South Africa)

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Maponya's in Transition

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Vorwort des Herausgebers

Frau Schaumburgs Magisterarbeit, betreut von Professor Michael Bollig, beschäftigt sich mit der komplexen Thematik urbaner Sozialorganisation und Identität in Südafrika. Dieser eminent wichtige Zusammenhang – immerhin gilt in Südafrika mehr als die Hälfte der Bevölkerung als Städter – ist für die Ethnologie ein schwierig zu bearbeitender Gegenstandsbereich, kann sie doch nicht auf Standardverfahren wie teilnehmende Beobachtung und nur begrenzt auf die dichte Beschreibung sozialer Interaktionen setzen. Die urbane Ethnologie hat lange um adäquate Erhebungseinheiten gerungen: deutlich abgetrennte oder doch abtrennbare räumliche Einheiten, die die Ethnographie ruraler Gemeinschaften mitprägten, gab es hier nicht. Räumlich begrenzte Erhebungseinheiten, die sich auf Straßenzüge oder Viertel bezogen, schienen lange Zeit ein probates Mittel, Erhebungseinheiten einzugrenzen. Die Fokussierung auf soziale Netzwerke und urbane Identitäten eröffneten andere mögliche Wege. Katrin Schaumburg schlägt mit ihrer Magisterarbeit einen weiteren innovativen Weg ein: sie schreibt die Ethnographie eines Ortes bzw. eines Platzes in Soweto/Johannesburg. Sie orientiert sich dabei an den theoretischen Arbeiten Marc Augés sowie an den ethnographischen Arbeiten Setha Lows. Im Fokus des Interesses steht die soziale Produktion und soziale Konstruktion eines urbanen Ortes. Wie wurde dieser Ort planerisch und architektonisch gestaltet und welche Bedeutung wurde ihm durch Akteure gegeben? Schaumburgs Arbeit beruht auf einer dreimonatigen Feldarbeit in einem Township Johannesburgs, Soweto. Soweto ist für sich genommen bereits eine Millionenstadt, die unverrückbar mit den stadtplanerischen Vorstellungen des Apartheidsstaates verknüpft ist. Aufgrund der extrem hohen Kriminalitätsrate sind sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Arbeiten in diesem Kontext keineswegs einfach und die Tatsache, dass Frau Schaumburg hier eine auf Teilnahme basierende Forschung durchgeführt hat, ist bereits eine erwähnenswerte Tatsache. In ihrer Arbeit hat sie sich in ethnographischer Kleinarbeit mittels qualitativer Verfahren mit dem Platz und seinen Akteuren auseinandergesetzt.

Michael J. Casimir

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

1. Introduction

Urban public space provides rich material for ethnographic analysis and cultural interpretation. Nevertheless, it was neglected as a subject of study until the 1980s because the "social messages" (Low 2000: 47) of public space were said to be so complex that an ethnographer would not be capable of studying that kind of space holistically.

It is clear why urban public space is said to be more complex compared to private space; as people in public have to face other people with backgrounds different from their own. They have to share the same space as they carry out their actions, and thus they create a heterogeneous and multifaceted environment – especially with regard to urban terrain. How people deal with the challenges of public space varies from culture to culture and is also dependent on the historical period in question.

But however culturally different urban public places might be used and viewed, they do have some attributes in common: "[They] are [all] expressions of human endeavors; artifacts of the social world are accommodated, communicated, and interpreted in the confines of this designed environment" (Low 2000: 47). Speaking of public places in cities or urban areas, always means speaking about a man-made environment and its relation to the people who produce, maintain, and live in it. They are forums where political, economic, and social interests compete, and where these interests are carried out and discussed, either verbally and/or non-verbally.

In general, everyday life in urban public space is managed by state-run municipalities and is consequently always affected by collisions between governmental regulations and civic society. However, a great part of life in the public sphere is structured and maintained only by the people who live a life of their own, as they oppose or abide by the rules made by the administrators. Hence, to study an urban public place means to take all actors into account because "urban public space reflects the cultural order [...] through a complex culture-making process in which cultural representations are produced, manipulated, and understood by designers, politicians, users, and commentators within changing historical, economic, and sociopolitical contexts" (Low 2000: 50).

Public places, which include communal meeting points as well as locations of contestation over the distribution of power, have recently been a prominent anthropological research topic. While works of other disciplines such as environmental psychology, sociology, geography, architecture, or urban planning "were either behavioral, describing the numbers and kinds of people who used the space; or architectural, describing, the physical

characteristics and architectural history of the built environment" (Low 2000: 38), the latest anthropological ethnographies of public places (Karrer 1995; Pradelle 1996; Wildner 2003), as well as this work, try to integrate a multitude of approaches. Place ethnographies go beyond the study of architecture or spatial behavior. They deal with everything that plays part in the use of space and focus on a place's meaning and the symbols attached to a site.

To position this work in the broad field of urban anthropology and place studies chapter 2 gives a very brief historical overview of urban research, focusing on anthropological studies in urban South Africa. Regarding place studies worldwide, this work stands out from the majority of them. Most of the time, previous anthropologists focused on *plazas* or marketplaces, places that were made and planned to serve as public meeting points. The object of this work, a public place named Maponya's in Soweto, Johannesburg, is a place that evolved over time into a kind of communal center, even though it was never planned to be one. This development or transition is the initial point for this study. It will provide insight into: how Sowetan visitors from the retail hub Maponya's are influenced by spatial structures, how they use and experience the place, and what their spatial behavior tells us about their daily life. I will focus on the exertion of power and control, on collective behavior, and on the subjective experiences and memories concerning Maponya's. All in all, theoretical assumptions about the relation between physical environment and human beings are the basis for this analysis. The relevant implications about the interplay of place and culture will therefore be discussed in chapter 3.

This ethnographic study draws on a phenomenological approach to spatial everyday experiences with a methodological focus on interviews and observation. The research was conducted during August and September 2007 in the Sowetan locations of Meadowlands (Zone 4 and 5), Dube, Orlando East, and Orlando West. It should be noted that the relatively short research period of approximately seven weeks and the particularities of the urban and Sowetan field only allowed a focus on the aforementioned aspects. Methodological, challenges, and problems, many of them linked to the nature of urban research sites, hindered substantial fieldwork and are further addressed in chapter 4. This section also includes a personal reflection on myself as an anthropologist in the township, and it presents the methodological framework for my research in Soweto.

Then, chapter 5 deals with the empirical material that was collected during the research period and is therefore the main part of this work. This section draws upon the methodological framework structured by Setha Low in her works on social production and

social construction. The focal points of this chapter are on one hand, the historical, economic, and political developments at Maponya's, and on the other hand collective action, contestations over power, memories, and symbolic meanings - social aspects which were communicated by the place's users.

Last, the conclusion in chapter 6 sums up the findings and stresses the importance of place and daily life studies.

2. Overview of Urban Anthropology

In order to position this work within the broad field of urban anthropology, I must give a brief overview of the development of the relatively young discipline[1] by paying special attention to the anthropological study of South African cities and their townships.

Although the phrase "urban anthropology" did not appear in print until 1963, the first urban research by anthropologists had already taken place in the 1930s, a time theoretically influenced by the social anthropology of Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, and the Chicago School of Sociology. Ellen Hellmann was one of the pioneers in the urban field. She conducted research in a South African urban slum named Rooiyard with the aim of finding out what urbanization meant to the slum inhabitants. She was ahead of her time with her ethnographic work on African urbanity, since her other fellow anthropologists at the British Manchester School didn't discover industrialization in the Central and Southern African copper belt regions as a valuable research subjective until the 1950s. In the meantime, the Chicago School, which primarily focused on U.S. cities, predominantly dealt with issues of urbanity, urbanization, migration, segregation, and urban ethnicity.

Altogether, the numerous ethnographic papers and books that were written since the 1930s contributed to the establishment of urban anthropology as a distinct discipline in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, disputes about its independence and methods have persisted until today; especially since anthropologists universally began to follow their traditional subjects (tribal and peasant peoples) to growing cities, where they tried to apply their methodologies and theories to urban villages (the spatial congregations of migrants in the city) after the Second World War. Debates about the impossibility of capturing social life in a city holistically, brought urban anthropology to a standstill in the 1980s; however, afterwards, the studies of urban anthropologists shifted and concentrated more on the linkages among communities, rather than on the study of locally isolated groups like those that had been done before. The complexity and differentiation of the cities also contributed to an expansion in the subjective matters of urban anthropology to include "virtually every dimension of urban life - from individual life stories to city neighborhoods and institutions (e.g., hospitals, schools, jails) to linkages among places and populations of different scales within the overall urban system" (Kemper 1996: 1341).

[1] The information of this historical overview of urban anthropology basically draws upon three works (Antweiler 2006; Kemper 1996; Sanjek 1996).

Today, the predominant theme of urban anthropological works and essays concerning South Africa appears to be the transformation from the racially segregated city during Apartheid to the post-Apartheid city where segregational schemes had been resolved (Gaule 2005; Miraftab 2007). Metropolises like Johannesburg and Cape Town experienced notable changes in the demography of their inner cities. This development brought along a number of interesting sociological and anthropological phenomena. This work focuses on another part of South Africa's urban fabric, the townships. These are predominantly located on the outskirts of cities, and after 1994, they had not experienced as much change as their "mother cities" and subsequently had been ignored. Writers have given little attention to the changes that post-Apartheid brought, and still brings to the inhabitants of these townships and their "locations". Instead, recent anthropological studies that focus, for example, on postliberation Soweto tend to concentrate on medical, above all HIV/Aids-related issues (Kristensen 2006; Nachega et al. 2004), sexuality, gender and violence (Donald 1998; Donham 1998; Wojcicki 2002; Wood 2007). These works are often interconnected and articulate a negative image of the township. Even though researchers appreciably focused on more than just political and racial issues after the end of Apartheid, only very few ethnographies of everyday life in Soweto exist (Mbembe et al. 2004: 499). This study will attempt to fill that gap and give insight into how daily public life at a certain spot in the township environment evolved over decades.

3 Theoretical Perspective on Space and Place

After having positioned this work in the urban anthropological field, chapter 3 continues with the theoretical background by shedding light on the principal assumptions about space, place, and culture.

3.1 Disambiguation of Terms Space and Place

The terms space and place have been used in the sciences with extensive, but often ambiguous definitions. In general, space has been frequently employed as a rather abstract, atmospheric, infinite entity; while place has often been defined as a smaller category within space, which has appeared to be more comprehensible and interrelated with human beings (Casey 1996; Tuan 1977). Examples mentioned in academic writings as "places" are of differing scale, and these range from certain places in a house to whole dwellings, neighborhoods, public places in villages, and even an entire city.

Since the terms space and place have such a large number of meanings, I will neither explore nor explain how they are used and employed by different theorists, but only define in which sense they are used here by referring to some guiding definitions.

Although space will not play a major role in this work, I will use it as a provisional, theoretical term. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that space has an overall standing implication, in that every physical surrounding stands in a relationship with its inhabitants. Space, thus:

> is understood as a purposeful configuration of physical objects. Insofar as such configurations are created to serve the purposes of human beings, they are products of social activities. And as their perception, interpretation, and practical use are intrinsically related to human activities, there can be no conception of space, in the social sciences, which does not take into account its social nature (Hamm 1990: 10f).

Space is more than "physical objects"; it stands in correlation with human actors who perceive, interpret, and use their environments, therefore it is social.

One of the guiding theorists concerning the social nature of space is Henri Lefebvre (original title: *La Production de l'Espace*; 1974). In opposition to the mathematical and geographical approach to space, Lefebvre suggests that space is not a thing, but a concept which facilitates an analysis of society (Lefebvre 1991: 11). As an "outcome of past actions" (Lefebvre 1991: 73), social space is created by people in an ongoing process. The physical surroundings of human beings are thus unsocial in the first place, but by producing space people fill their environment with life so that "space is never empty: it

always embodies a meaning" (Lefebvre 1991: 154). Lefebvre favors the understanding of space as a figurative institution, in which people can live together and define themselves and their environment, as opposed to the prevailing view that space should be reduced to its physical nature only. "Social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act" (Lefebvre 1991: 33). In sum, "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 1991: 26).

In contrast to space, place is a more graspable entity. It is generally, and also in the context of this work, tied to a real physical location. Hence, the aforementioned theoretical implications about the social quality of space can be applied to places because the environment and its inhabitants are always intertwined. In other words, "places emerge in a social context and through social relations, they are geographically located and at the same time related to their social, economic, cultural etc. surroundings" (Gustafson 2001: 6). On the one hand, a place is regionally bound, but on the other hand it is more than just a physical environment. Places are qualitatively dynamic according to the changes that happen around and within them. As opposed to the merely theoretical notion of space, place can be studied because every place is a unique, "idiological" (Casey 1996: 26) entity which carries its own characteristics.

Low and Altman point out another important feature of place when they state that "place [...] refers to space that has been given meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes" (Low and Altman 1992: 5). The special interest in the agency of human beings and their subjective experiences with the place in question play a major role in the social sciences. How and why are people related to places? The following subsections give further insight into the most frequently used continuative concepts in how places intertwine with the cultural and social life of individuals and groups. This includes, most significantly, place attachment, place identity, and a sense of place. Furthermore, I will elaborate further on the aspect of memory and place.

3.2 Place and Culture

Still, concepts that treat the relationship between human beings and spatial settings are not well defined and used rather loosely by different authors. Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on only the few key thinkers that define one of the implications considered here. However, it is obvious that these theoretical constructs need to be defined more clearly, since they overlap each other by definition.

Low and Altman speak of a concept named place attachment, and Low defines it as “the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual’s and group’s understanding of, and relation to the environment” (1992: 165). By living, being born, working, and the other activities in space, people attach involuntarily meaning to their environments. These meanings are not inherent to places, but are created by social actors. Low and Altman write, “One of the hallmarks of place attachment [...] is that affect, emotion and feeling are central to the concept” (1992: 4). Emotional embeddedness into places may include positive aspects like security and well-being which are felt at certain places, as well as negative associations like disturbing memories linked to a specific site. Besides emotional attachment, other factors of "cognition (thought, knowledge, and belief) and practice (action and behavior)" (Low and Altman 1992: 4f) play a role in the bonding between people and their physical environment. Individuals as well as collectives and even larger ethnic groups attach themselves to places to locate themselves in the global context, as well as to exercise control or to appropriate a certain territory. Hence, it is not the place itself that permeates the attachment, but merely the ideas, people, meanings, experiences, and general culture that it signifies. Thus, “Places are, therefore, repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached” (Low and Altman 1992: 7). Some examples that show how these relationships tie people to places include: genealogical reasons, like heritage and history; cosmological or religious bonds, which often refer to sacred or secular places; economic ties through ownership and politics; and narrative engagements through story-telling and place naming (Low 1992: 166). Furthermore, place attachment is a dynamic relationship because environments, like the psychological or sociocultural position of the individual or group in time and space, change. Therefore, the emotions, cognitions, and practices concerning places are adapted to these developments (Low and Altman 1992: 8f).

It is assumed that place attachment also plays a major role in the self-esteem, self-pride, and identity of an individual or group (Low and Altman 1992: 10f). This is why the concept of place attachment can easily be confused with the idea of place identity, also sometimes referred to as insidedness (Hummon 1992: 258). The analysis of how people identify themselves with places is based upon "how [the] biographical experience with[in] a locale transform[s] the local landscape into a symbolic extension of the self by imbuing it with the personal meanings of life experiences" (Hummon 1992: 258). Thus, people not

only attach themselves to places, but they become part of the self and thus contribute to the identity of people. Proshansky et al. (1983) assume that because places serve as the daily grounds for human interaction, a place becomes part of an individual's

> memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being. At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties (1983: 59).

It is because of the previously mentioned aspects that studies of place-people-relations should always consider past reminiscences and how they are perceived by the inhabitants. The experiences an individual or a group has can be good as well as bad, and may include positive or negative memories, interpretations, and imaginations. Additionally, the perception of surroundings is not only self-made, but also influenced by other persons or the public's attitude (Proshansky 1983: 60); so that the built environment serves as a nonverbal medium shared among a group of people in order to communicate social aspects like moral reputation or social rank (cf. meaning of built environment, Rapoport 1982), and as a means of identification. In this way, places become idiolocal, and as such they are an identity marker for individuals or groups.

Closely related to, as Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) state, and even encompassing the aforementioned concepts is the idea of a sense of place, or rootedness (Tuan 1980). The authors argue that numerous variables like place attachment, place identity, and insideness can be subsumed under the general concept of a sense of place. This highly holistic concept provides insight into the attitude towards, or even generally, "the meaning attached to a spatial setting" (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001: 233). Since they argue that this "attitude" consists of affective, cognitive, and conative elements, and that one's sense of place is not imbued in the physical setting itself, but "resides in human interpretations" (2001: 233) of it, it is hard to clarify the difference between sense of place and Low and Altman's concept of place attachment.

All the same, the three aforementioned concepts - place attachment, place identity, and sense of place rest their emphasis on the meaning of built environment and how experiences in time and space influence the meaning that people attach to places. They all elaborate on the relationship between the physical environment and individuals or groups, they share the opinion that both can not be fully studied without recognition of the other, and they plead for an interpretative approach. To put it in a nutshell, since human beings

are “ineluctably place-bound” (Casey 1996: 19), and place only exists through the lives of people (Casey 1996: 27), Low subsumes the precedent implications by using the term “spatialization of culture.” By spatialization she means the “locat[ion], both physically and conceptually, [of] social relations and social practice in social space” (Low, 1999: 111). Place can thus be studied as a “representation of local[ized] culture” (ibid.).

3.3 Place and Memory

The connection between place and memory plays a central role in the spatialization of culture and especially in this work. Generally it is assumed that places not only evoke but also keep thoughts and memories (Casey 1996: 25). There are no places without history since all places are inevitably connected with human memory. However, there exist two different kinds of places that concern memory: one are memorial sites (*Erinnerungsorte* or *Lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora)), which are built and planned to remind people of historical events; then there are sites that do not directly display history. Since the place examined in this work concerns a place of the latter quality, the following comments pertain only to physical settings that do not intentionally show signs of a historical past.

Admittedly, memories are inscribed in any environment that has been populated or visited by a human being. People who are deeply attached to a certain physical setting (and express a feeling of *Heimat*) might have more subjectively important memories about the place than a visitor or passerby. However, even though some people might connect more memories to a certain place than others and even though memories are of subjective quality, they are also social to a high degree, since they “become life-giving metaphors of history,” constructed “to fulfill its most important tasks in society” (Eriksen 1997: 131). This could be done, for example to strengthen a group’s identity, and thus create “feelings of continuity and belonging” (ibid.).

Bélanger, in reference to David Harvey, states that urbanites, especially in the “chaotic world of shrinking time horizons, unprecedented geographical mobility, and endlessly differentiated cultural forms” (2002: 75), use memories as representations of the past and as a comforting means to locate themselves in time and space. This behavior contributes not only to an individual feeling of convenience, but also provides a basis for a collective memory on which a collective identity can depend. If there is a strong interest in, or a felt need for creating a collective identity for a certain group like, for instance, in a differentiated urban setting or in an historically disrupted nation, place in combination with memory can serve as a means to achieve that goal. In this case, historical events which

played a significant role in the past of a certain group or nation can be localized and are "typically rendered in ideology [...] in the form of nostalgic discourses, images, or renovated heritage areas" (Bélanger 2002: 74). This "objectification" and "commodification" (Colvin 2000) of memories can have an effect on the content and structure of storytelling for people who narrate their stories about a place in history. Their narratives are likely to be standardized, and thus shaped by the ideological background and common sense.

However strong and cyclopedic the preceding assumptions concerning place and culture are, there are critics (Augé 1995; Relph 1976; Tuan 1980) who believe that it is generally unlikely that inhabitants of urban, predominantly western structures develop any feeling of belonging or attachment. Relph (1976), for instance, argues that modern urban environments lack signs of the diversity of cultures although they accommodate a variety of them. In other words, cities have universally become meaningless, monotonous, and deprived of significant places by a homogenization of cultures observable through a "virtual absence of adaptation to local conditions" (Relph 1976: 79). Theorists that speak of placelessness (Relph 1976) or non-places (Augé 1995) argue that modern urban spaces "provid[e] possibilities only for commonplace and mediocre experiences" (Relph 1976: 79), and thus lack meaning and significance.

The work of French anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) will be further elaborated on in the next chapter. His critical point of view will add to an understanding of the qualities that he and his fellow academics ascribe to modern urban sites, and will help to discuss the studied area in Soweto.

3.4 Urban Places as Non-Places

The anthropologist Marc Augé offers a unique description of two fields of anthropological research in his book *Non-places – Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995). Although this work will focus on only one of the two types of place Augé defines, both have to be explained first. The second type of place will be applied in chapter 5.3 to the Sowetan field.

Augé draws a distinct line between what he calls anthropological place and non-place. The former represents an "indigenous" space which was discovered by those who claim it as their own, and since has been inherited over several generations within the boundaries of one social group (Augé 1995: 42f). Due to these strong historical bonds, myths about the origin of the place exist, and are shared and maintained as common knowledge within the

group and through reaffirming actions like rituals. Furthermore, the group which occupies the space can easily be identified because it cultivated the soil for centuries, defended it against intruders, and traced its origin through the space that it filled with meaning (ibid.: 52).

The conception of an "inside" and an "outside" strengthens the group's identity and reflects the relations it has with other groups. Interrelations between the individual inhabitants of a place also correspond to the occupied environment. Even more, Augé argues that the spatial arrangements of an anthropological place represent the whole social system of a group. "The layout of the house, the rules of residence, the zoning of the village, placement of altars, configuration of public open spaces, land distribution, correspond for every individual to a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social" (ibid.: 52f).

Furthermore, Augé identifies three main characteristics which can be applied to any anthropological place: history, identity, and relations. These are the main features that make a place the traditional field of ethnological research. This is when Augé starts to philosophize about "modern" places and their characteristics. Especially in contemporary times, where mobility and individualization are the driving forces of life, Augé argues, anthropological places tend to vanish, and new fields of ethnological research emerge as a result of what Augé calls supermodernity: non-places.

Referring to his definition of a place as an anthropological place, he concludes that "if a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (ibid.: 77f). The assumption that places exist that do not reflect the three main characteristics which can be applied to anthropological places might seem irritating, especially since chapters 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 all postulate that the anthropologist's study should always take the place's references to communal and individual identities, as well as relations into account. In any case, it also must be historically contextualized.

Augé does not neglect these three factors and he proposes that anthropological places and non-places are rather the opposing polarities of a continuum, meaning "the first is never completely erased, [and] the second never totally completed" (ibid.: 79). Ergo, non-places do inhabit the characteristics of anthropological places, but cannot be found in their purest form; meaning without any notion of history, identity, or relation. Following Augé's argumentation, the prototype of non-place lacks these three features, but instead I would

suggest that they change their qualities. I would like to clarify Augé's definition of non-places in the following paragraph.

First of all, non-places are products of supermodernity, "which stems simultaneously from the three figures of excess: overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, and the individualization of references" (ibid.: 109). Augé fails to define the term supermodernity, but describes the circumstances that it produces. He argues that it creates:

> A world where people are born in the clinic and die in the hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions [...]; where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce; a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the meeting, the temporary and ephemeral (ibid.: 78).

Thus, supermodernity is a capitalistic orientated space in time without recognition of the past and little consideration for the future. It produces places like retail stores, hotels, highways, and airports, and all of these are only a few examples of what Augé calls non-places. The most obvious characteristic these places share is a state of transit.

At this point it is remarkable that Augé refers to Michel de Certeau's analysis of place and space, as this analysis can be seen as determining the distinction between place and non-place. De Certeau's use of space is at first rather abstract. He uses the term for an area, a distance between two objects as well as for a timespan. It approaches what Augé calls non-place when De Certeau speaks of space as a "journey" (ibid.: 84) or a "frequentation of places" (ibid.: 85). Space can thus be circumscribed as something which is constantly in flux, and it incessantly provides new impressions for the person in space. Angé states:

> This plurality of places, the demands it makes on the powers of observation and description (the impossibility of seeing everything or saying everything) and the resulting feeling of 'disorientation' (but only a temporary one [...]), causes a break or discontinuity between the spectator-traveller and the space of the landscape he is contemplating or rushing through. This prevents him from perceiving it as a place, from being fully present in it (ibid.: 84f).

In other words, the traveler is always cautiously awaiting a new sight without being able to relate to the place he is currently visiting.

Augé takes this idea of a journey further by stating that non-places are highly frequented environments "we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket, or sitting in an airport lounge waiting for the next flight" (ibid.: 96). Commuters in a non-place are not determined to stay, and are therefore not likely to establish a deep attachment to the place.

Augé concludes that an inhabitant of a non-place can only be lost in time and space since there is no historical or relational bond between himself and the space he finds himself in. Entering a non-place, he is able to lay down his identity in favor of a short-term identity shared by all the people who move in that space. This identity helps to facilitate the relations between the individuals. These relations only last for a specific amount of time and pass as soon as the individual leaves the spot, as in, for example, the relationship between a seller and a customer. Augé also speaks of the roles that the individual plays in order to integrate himself in the environment (ibid.: 103). After dispersal from an interaction facilitated through a short-term relation, the individual will again be on his own. "As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality" (ibid.: 94). In non-places, identity and relations, which Augé pointed out to be two characteristics of anthropological places, are only short-termed necessities and they are reduced to a minimum instead of being established for a lifetime. The absence of relations and identity creates "spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future" (ibid.: 87).

Here, Augé points out another consequence of non-places being places of transit because they "do not integrate the earlier places" (ibid.: 78). Augé argues that non-places have the status of "places of memory" instead of places of living history (ibid.: 78). While "the inhabitant of an anthropological place does not make history[,] he lives in it" (1995: 55), the inhabitant of a non-place may know about the history of the space that he is moving in and may be able to recall certain events that happened in the past, but this person does not reflect or reaffirm them through particular action. To speak clearly, while anthropological places are literally legitimated by their history, events that happened in the past of non-places are not perceived as essential constituents of daily life.

All of the factors mentioned above make communication in non-places difficult, or at least likely to be minimal. While inhabitants of anthropological places do not need to talk about the rules and regulations which facilitate their lives because they were born into their environments, commuters in non-places have to rely on signs instead of spoken language. This is because, "the link between individuals and their surroundings in the space of non-place is established through the mediation of words, or even texts" (ibid.: 94).

Entering a non-place, the commuter finds a number of prescriptions, prohibitions, and instructions mediated "by the innumerable 'supports' (signboards, screens, posters) that

form an integral part of the contemporary landscape" (ibid.: 96). All in all, non-places are ahistorical places of solitude created for commercial activities, not for society.

It should be noted that Augé preferentially analyzes non-places in France like the metro, and he focuses mainly on the industrial western world, thereby neglecting that urbanity and modernity are not exclusive features of western cultures. He ignores the urbanization and globalization processes that also occur in underdeveloped and emerging countries, which can not be excluded from "supermodernity". In chapter 5.3, I will again refer to Augé's concept of non-places and explore if his ideas can be applied to my study of a place in South Africa.

4 Methodology for an Ethnography of an Urban Place

Since urban anthropology is a relatively young discipline in the anthropological sciences, the researcher does not have an established methodology for urban fieldwork at his or her disposal, and therefore he or she often has to rely on existing sociological or, rather, explorative designs.

Classic anthropological tools often prove themselves to be difficult when they are applied to the urban field. Nevertheless, techniques like conducting interviews or participant observation are in various forms part of almost every urban and rural fieldwork, even though they differ in realization according to the particularities of their respective fields. Therefore, they are often enhanced by urban fieldworkers using other methods (see Dürr 2002, Wildner 2003). Also classical network analysis fell behind in urban anthropology over the years in favor of less strict research designs, including, for example the analysis of certain events, conflicts, and other situations (see Cohen 1993); although these are often not used as sternly as the extended case method (Antweiler 2004). Urban anthropologists use all kinds of data, including artistic works like graffiti, placards, literature, or music, and these are consulted to interpret urban culture. Another common tool is the analysis of life stories, diaries, and various media reports (Finnegan 1998).

Yet, it has not been proven which methods are best applied to research situations in cities. On one hand, this factor can be seen as an opportunity to implement new tools, rather than just inheriting methodologies from the already established, static frameworks for rural areas that in the end might not fit properly. Urban anthropology could thus prove its distinctiveness as an independent discipline by building a reliable methodology on its own. On the other hand, the absence of a complete toolbox can as well be regarded as a disadvantage since there are still a lot of traps that have yet to be discovered.

Another divergent factor between rural and urban fieldwork is how to approach the field and how to choose the topic of research. Classic rural ethnographic work draws upon the principle of concentrating and describing a certain ethnic group. The urban situation impedes the straight choice of one group of people or one research issue because of the complexity and heterogeneity of lifestyles and values that occur in urban space (Antweiler 2004: 289). Picking only one group which can be separated from others by features like residence, ethnicity, religious beliefs, political opinions, occupation, or primary relationships (categorization by Eames and Goods 1977) leads to a narrow, only partial view of the city.

Therefore, another approach is to draw a spatial line and concentrate on certain places instead of approaching urbanity via a particular group of people. Setha Low, for example, chose a plaza in San José, Costa Rica, as her research site and wrote an ethnography of the place treating it as a social space (Low 1999). The advantage of this approach is that only a part of a city is studied (which can afterwards be contextualized with the whole society or city), in contrast to macroethnographies that quite impossibly try to describe a city in its entirety.

For my research in Soweto I employed a mixture of Setha Low's approach (see chapter 4.1) and my own contributions, most of them due to particular circumstances in the field (see chapter 4.3). The latter part will also contain a discussion of the problems I faced during the research relating to the general particularities of urban fieldwork. These have also been mentioned by other anthropologists, and the most paramount problem among them is the need to adjust the principle of participant observation (see chapter 4.2).

4.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Production and Social Construction

The American anthropologist Setha Low formulated a concept for urban fieldwork on culturally significant places (1999; 1996) which is presented in this chapter.

Low conducted research on two different plazas in San José, the capital city of Costa Rica, one of them architecturally representing Costa Rica's Spanish colonial history and the other a "contemporary plaza" (1999: 119) designed to be "an emblem of the 'new Costa Rican culture'" (1999: 119). Although differing in terms of architecture, design, as well as in the composition of users, the social life at the two places seems to be similar at first glance. Each plaza serves as a meeting point for various types of people, but through intensive fieldwork, Low revealed that the two plazas vary in the spatial experiences the users undergo, and in terms of the subscribed meanings and images attached to each of the two places. Due to the nature of Low's plazas she pays special attention to topics like social control, conflict, and the exchanges that take place there. Furthermore, Low provides insight into how both places are controlled and maintained by the disputing groups. Those kinds of plazas she calls "contested space."

For her research Low needed "tools for understanding how public space in urban society becomes semiotically encoded and interpreted reality" (Low 1996: 861). She divided her framework into two distinct parts: one, which treated the material setting and the factors that had an impact on the building process, and the other dealt with the symbols and meanings ascribed to this place as seen through the actions of the inhabitants or visitors.

Low calls the first part social production, which should not be confused with the meaning it is connected to by other theorists, for example by Lefebvre (1991).[2] In this work, the term is not only defined by the architecture, design, and historical development of the built environment existent at the place in question, but also regards the cultural circumstances that influence it. Low asserts:

> The social production of space includes all those factors - social, economic, ideological, and technological - whose intended goal is the physical creation of the material setting. The materialist emphasis of the term social production is useful in defining the historical emergence and political and economic formation of urban space (Low 1999: 112).

Some of the questions that should be answered by the study of the social production of a place should be: who was participating in the creation of the built environment? When, and why? What were the guidelines and objectives during the process? How did the place develop over time? This part of Low's concept is more concerned with the physical and visual aspects of place and how they can be explained by considering the cultural and historical background.

> The term social construction may then be conveniently reserved for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict and control. Thus, the social construction of space is the actual transformation of space - through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the setting - into scenes that convey symbolic meaning (Low 1999: 112).

Social construction thus focuses on the influence the inhabitant exerts on the material which surrounds him or her. At the same time, Low makes the point that not only does the built environment influence the way an individual lives, but it gives individuals or the society an inherent power to impropriate their environment, even though most of the time they were not a part of the actual construction process.

Because of this, Low further accentuates the role of "social agents" (1999: 112) in ethnographic work. The users of public space shall not be seen as passive passengers, but as social agents who actively make the place part of their daily life by attaching personal meanings and realities to their environment. Hence, the ethnographer must also take experiential and commemorative narratives into account which have their origins in a

[2] Nevertheless, Low's use of the term comes close to Henri Lefebvre's idea of the production of space as he states that "spaces are products of an activity which involves the economic and technical realms but which extends well beyond them, for these are also political products, and strategic spaces" (Lefebvre 1991: 84). However, as a Marxist orientated social scientist, Lefebvre puts his emphasis on the reproduction of capitalism by the means of social production and thus goes beyond Low's definition. In the following the phrase "social production" will be used exclusively as Low interprets it.

place's past. Although the material construction of sites is often documented in books, maps, plans, or photos, and thus can be studied easily by an ethnographer, the images that occur in an individual's mind can be different from what the historical facts show. The predominance of certain historical events that disproportionately occupy the memories of the residents of a certain site is ethnographically interesting because these events might give insight into the relationships between individuals and places.

The leading question that guides us in the process of studying the social construction of a place is how that place is perceived by users and nonusers alike. Who does what and why? What do they think about the place? Which memories, images, and experiences are attached to the specific site?

The two methodological approaches, social production and social construction, not only focus on different domains, but also reflect two distinct modes of interpreting culture. On the one hand there is the materialist approach, and on the other a phenomenological interpretation of action and personal accounts. Thereby Low combines more than one theoretical approach in order to suit the research of a differentiated urban space. By analyzing socially producing as well as socially constructing elements of space, she seeks to "understand the causal relationships between economy, society, and culture on the one hand, and the urban environment on the other." Together these constitute "a kind of ecology," a system of comprised aspects for spatialized culture (Low 2000: 36).

Her actual research methods basically comprise of observation, interviews, and the content analysis of field notes, maps, design guidelines, media reports, and historical documents. For my own research methodology, which will be documented in the following subsections, I tried to employ as many of these methods as possible and enhanced them with my own ideas. In one example, I used photos as virtual stimuli, while I interviewed and took walks with informants.

Low only briefly mentions her concern that the generally fundamental method of participant observation may not be as suitable for the urban field as for rural fieldwork (Low 1999: 115p).[3] Since other urban anthropologists, myself included, experienced the same problem I will address this issue in the following section.

[3] That is the reason why she used three observational strategies (time/place sampling, documentation of activities, interaction with people), instead of calling her approach "participant observation".

4.2 Participant Observation as a Problem

The principle of participant observation can be traced back to Bronislaw Malinowski's earliest researches on the Trobriand Islands, and have since been regarded as the highest maxim for any anthropologist conducting fieldwork.

> For anthropologists and social scientists, participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture (DeWalt 2002: 1).

Living with the research participants is regarded to be one of the essential parts of participant observations, and is necessary so that the ethnographer becomes a member of the community he studies.

The situation of urban environments, however, does not always allow the participants to host another person in their household. This is often due to spatial or financial restrictions. The consequence is a daily journey by the ethnographer to the participant or his or her research site. Also, because life in a city is much more divided between public space and the private sphere, the ethnographer finds it difficult to take part in the daily activities of the people. The participant's urban employer would not appreciate an anthropological observer at the workplace, while fieldwork in rural environments often allows personal observation during the whole day. In a rural environment research could be conducted while the participants plowed the fields, as well as while they were at home in a more intimate atmosphere. The urban ethnographer is therefore excluded from the private as well as the working domain.

Additionally, contemporary industrial cities are characterized by a high rate of complexity and cultural pluralism. The large number of subcultures with respect to class, ethnicity, occupation, religion, and other aspects, who are comprised in living space provide a less manageable field of research than a village.

To observe the city as a whole and to take part in all of the present activities to gain insight into every aspect of urban life is a difficult task. These factors made Basham state that "the city makes the holistic tradition of participant-observation impossible" (1978: 300). Therefore, this study was done mainly with "casual observation" (Whiteford 1980: 352), rather than participant observation. For hours I sat down on the stairs in front of a store on the research site and just watched the scene, making notes and drawing little sketches. I also bought groceries at the big supermarket, took taxis on the spot, and purchased little items from the street vendors. But is this procedure an original participant observation? Being a stranger among other strangers makes it difficult to become part of a community,

if a sense of community exists at all. Besides becoming part of the scene at the research spot I did my best to integrate myself in the urban neighborhood. I visited church services, attended local security meetings, and just walked around trying to become more familiar with the community. This helped me to see the place in question in a wider context, and my visits to neighboring houses gave me a deeper insight into the private lives of the urban residents.

In sum, the urban anthropologist meets limits in the principle of participant observation because of an unmanageable field size, the importance of privacy in the city, and the general anonymity among urbanites. Along the way, I discovered that the township of Soweto holds a number of additional particularities for the ethnographer, upon which I will elaborate on in the next chapter.

4.3 Particularities of Urban Fieldwork in Soweto

As mentioned before, ethnographic fieldwork in rural and urban areas differ greatly from each other. Fortunately most of the prominent problems stated by other urban anthropologists (cf. Antweiler 2004; Gmelch and Zenner 1980: 311ff) did not manifest themselves for me. Other urban anthropologists often mentioned the huge amount of time they spent traveling to informants who lived in remote parts of the city, a problem that I did not have to deal with. Other obstacles urban anthropologists have to face are: the difficulties of not being able to live with the urban community as easily as in rural societies, the personal approach of urbanites, and the gain of trust in a generally anonymous field.

I had the privilege to reside with an elderly, well respected lady in Meadowlands, Zone 4, which was a 20 minute walk from the research site. Because of earlier stays with her in Soweto in 2001 and 2003, I was able to settle in very quickly; I already had a social network, including valuable participants from the first day on. Notwithstanding, Soweto is not comparable to any other town or urban environment, and provides typical township circumstances which hinder urban research in a particular way.

In the following I will mention two aspects of the fieldwork which had remarkable impacts on the working process and the results of the underlying study, namely my position in Sowetan society and the restricted mobility within that society.

A lot of limitations concerning the practical fieldwork are due to my personal role in the field. As a young white woman in an almost exclusively black neighborhood,[4] the interests of the Sowetan residents as well as the answers I received to my questions were biased by predominantly racial issues. Conversations were shaped by my exotic status in an area which was formerly restricted to blacks by law. Even though I was a "permanent" resident in Meadowlands, Zone 4, I was told stories which were assumed to be interesting for whites. I did not get "insider" information which was reserved for black or "coloured" persons. I never became a full member of the community presumably because Sowetan history has been strongly affected by racial segregation, therefore the residents perceive whites as outside of their own group. Additionally, residents of Soweto are vulnerable and sensitive to outsiders who do not come as tourists and leave after a few hours. Inhabitants who were not aware that I was a long-term visitor and therefore assumed that I was an ignorant tourist, kept cajoling me with comments that stated Soweto was beautiful, secure, and a very pleasant place to stay. The fact that almost all my neighbors expressed the wish to move somewhere else because they did not believe the positive attributes listed above existed, proves the dubiousness of the statements that were said to me when they assumed I was a tourist. On other occasions, I was sometimes misunderstood to be a journalist or an exchange student, the latter being the majority of the tiny white minority living in Soweto.

Foreign vendors, who pursued informal street trade and often did not possess a valid work permit or an identity document, were reluctant to give personal information because they were afraid of the probable consequences they might have had to bear if I was a plainclothes policewoman investigating their status. People who did not know how to categorize my person kept their distance and treated me like a tourist, rather than let me come close by divulging their personal opinions on certain issues.

The various roles that were misattributed to me, especially during the first period of fieldwork, produced answers that included a lot of Anti-Apartheid ideology, common knowledge, and at times, presumably false information. Time was needed to get to the crucial point that led to a personal relationship. However, as time went by I gained the

[4] In the context of this work black is understood as a term for a group of South Africans who identify themselves as blacks but who were according to their dark skin color also classified as and named blacks by the Apartheid government. Nevertheless, the use of Apartheid terminology should not be understood as an intercession for the legitimacy of such categorizations.

respect and trust of the inhabitants, especially the key informants to whom I frequently spoke.

Mobility of the Ethnographer

Living in Meadowlands also meant to adopt a lifestyle like the one the majority of the neighborhood pursued. This included not possessing a car, but instead using the local minibus taxis or walking. Both ways of getting around required knowledge of either the operation of the taxi business or the local surroundings, including an awareness of the areas to avoid because of the high possibility of criminal assault. Also both, taking taxis and walking, must be carried out with guidance of a local, because traveling without one was not manageable or too dangerous in the first place.

Adapting to the existent lifestyle also meant staying inside the yard after sunset which came around six o'clock in the evening during the fieldwork period (winter time). During night time it was not recommended to walk in the streets of Zone 4 because of the high crime rate, so interviews had to be conducted between around nine o'clock in the morning and five o'clock in the late afternoon.

On the one hand, being dependent on public transportation, a limited amount of hours to meet research participants and observe the field, and relying on different people to accompany me to various places during the first weeks gave me insight into the lifestyle that most of the Sowetans from the focus area had. Additionally, I was respected for doing without the conveniences of suburban life which were inevitably linked to a "white" lifestyle. The trust and respect I thereby gained, and the people that accompanied me or whom I met on the minibus taxis helped to quickly expand my circle of participants. And the timely expansion of the research area is often a problem for urban anthropologists (Antweiler 2004).

On the other hand, the high degree of mobile and temporal dependencies restricted the possibilities of research, since I was not able to observe the research site during the night or evening. Furthermore, I had to talk to most of the informants on the site, and so I could not meet them in more intimate circumstances, such as, before or after work.

All factors considered, Meadowlands and the adjoining areas provide circumstances which are hardly comparable to any other urban area apart from other similar townships that were constructed during Apartheid. My personal role in the field as well as temporal and local

restrictions led to limitations regarding the fieldwork, but I attracted interest, and after a while gained trust and respect, which is not a matter of course for many urban ethnographers.

4.4 Interviews

Interviews were the major method used to gain information about the place in question. The conversations generally started with unassigned questions about the place and how the interviewee liked the place. Later on, the questions got more personal and in-depth.

To cite participants in my analysis in chapter 5, I will use pseudonyms for most of the informants I talked to. I will also use certain shortcuts to clarify the source of the quoted information. The abbreviation VR is derived from verbatim report, and refers to conversations that were not recorded but written down from memory afterwards.

Most of these statements came from informal conversations that were not initially or specifically on the research topic; rather they occurred during everyday talks, especially while the participant and I walked and chatted. This way of collecting information dominated the first stage of research while the subject was still being explored. The often unconstrained atmosphere provided a good basis for spontaneous, unplanned aspects.

The second stage of research was characterized by recorded interviews to which I will refer to as RI. Citations with this abbreviation represent basically two types of conversations: formal interviews with officials, and unstructured interviews with vendors. The main difference between these two types is not the structure of the questions, but the spatial circumstances they took place in. While city officials like town planners or policemen could be met inside offices in a formal way and therefore sought an intimate, silent space with little disruption, street vendors had to be talked to in the midst of a noisy, busy intersection while doing their jobs. Those interviews were often interrupted by customers, curious passersby, events, or they were just hampered by the traffic noise. Additionally, most of the street traders did not speak English. I therefore asked an interview-experienced psychology graduate, Makhanana Mawila, a friend from the township Tembisa, Johannesburg, to assist me by interpreting.

5 Maponya's in Soweto

After having elaborated on theoretical and anthropological assumptions about the interplay of culture and (urban) place, and having discussed the methodological approach and practices of the fieldwork underlying the study, this chapter analyzes the data that was collected.

Before focusing on certain aspects, I will first briefly describe the place in order to give a general overview.

The place of interest in this thesis is an area in Dube, Soweto, which by the first glance of an outsider cannot be identified as "Maponya's." There is no sign which displays the name. A visitor might hardly recognize the uniqueness of the place, and might not assume that this intersection itself bears a name. Strangers and especially younger passersby perceive the spot as nothing special, and for Dakalo T., a matriculant from an adjacent area, it is "just like any other place in Soweto" (VR). Despite the ascribed unspectacular quality, I chose the place to be the research site because during the first weeks in the field Maponya's turned out to be a significant place in the daily life of the people living in the area around it.

However, the boundaries of Maponya's were never clearly articulated by the participants and can hardly be defined. Maponya's is merely an unofficial name for a non-defined arena. The borders of the place referred to as Maponya's are rather indicated by passage from one domain to another ("different people, different ideas, different activities, different land uses" (Low 2000: 154)). In other words, while Maponya's is constantly in transit and characterized by commerce, the surrounding areas serve as residential sites with dwellings. The actual research site does not involve the adjacent residential parts of Soweto, and neither site has a specific borderline. Yet, Maponya's can be best described as a public space that includes a crossroads, an appendant curbside, shops, open spaces between streets and housing, and finally, the people who use the spot in different ways (for a map, see figure 1).

The name of the place derives from the surname of a businessman, Richard John Maponya, who opened the first shop at the spot in 1952 and in the 1960s established Soweto's first large supermarket ("Maponya Discount Supermarket") on Mahalafele Road. This space is now rented out to Shoprite, a large South African supermarket chain. His story is said to extend beyond other businessmen's vitae because he was the first to resist the prohibitions against black entrepreneurship and commerce in Soweto, which were regulated by the

Apartheid government. Today's residents of this particular area, and even beyond, refer to the place as "Maponya's".

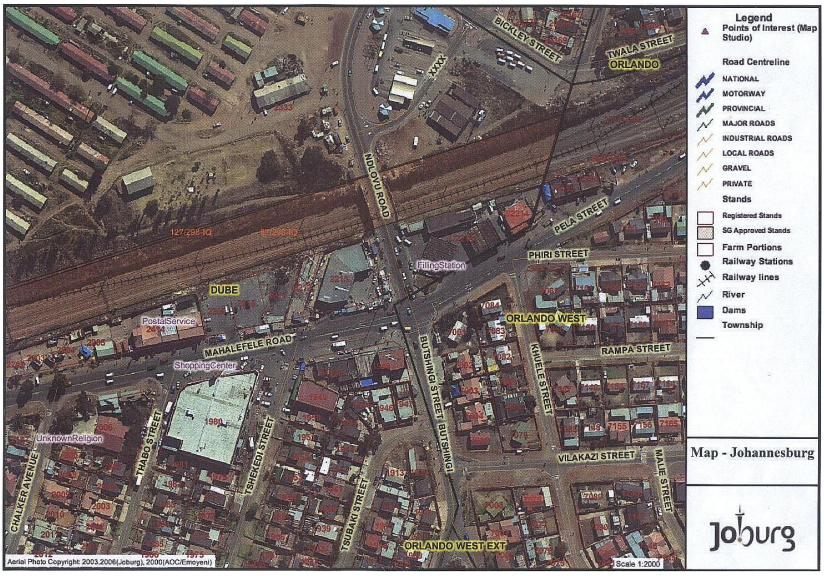

Figure 1: Aerial view of the Maponya's area.

The place in question is located on Dube's northeastern boarders, in the north adjoining railway tracks which demarcate Maponya's from the hostels that flank the southern side of Zone 5, Meadowlands. The eastern edge of the area abuts the reputable section of Orlando West. The site consists above all of an intersection that includes Pela/Mahalafele Road (at the intersection, Pela Street, coming from the northeast, becomes Mahalafele Road), one of the two main arteries leading out of Soweto. The traffic on the crossroad is extraordinarily busy since Maponya's is an important thoroughfare for the minibus taxi industry. The well-conditioned streets that characterize the crossroads lead to Johannesburg and to several locations in Soweto, and as such they are favored by the taxi associations as daily routes. Notorious for their rude manner while driving, the taxi drivers add a lot to the already chaotic road traffic. A resident of an adjacent area complained:

> You wonder why not many people are dying because of these taxis moving fast there. It's amazing. They are chasing cents. They are chasing profits. Those taxis have absolutely no respect to law. [Some of them] pass red robots [...]. There are taxis around there to Rockville, Zola, Bara ... It's chaos! (RI, Abe M., 17.09.07)

Generally speaking the traffic at Maponya's is poorly regulated and pedestrians cross the roads anywhere, only a few of whom pay attention to the traffic lights that supply the site with a minimum of road security.

On the southern side of Mahalafele Road you find a number of shops which are all located in a stretched one-storied building. It contains a butchery, a pharmacy, a fish&chips shop, a shop for electronic devices, and two temporarily unoccupied stores. In front of these little enterprises, of which almost everyone bears "Maponya's" in its name, some women have installed small sales booths, and these can be found all over Maponya's, especially alongside the streets. On the northern side of Mahalafele Road a bigger accumulation of stands surround a short-term parking lot. Together with the informal trading stalls, bigger retail stores and well-known franchises, such as the drugstore PEP and the supermarket Shoprite have established a business area where daily needs can be purchased. While the chain stores sell branded products, the street sellers often specialize in certain categories of goods. These may include: cheap Chinese hardware, inexpensive jewellery, fruits and vegetables, fresh meat, or people use their stalls to braid hair; at these stalls, all the hairstyle varieties are displayed on cardboard.

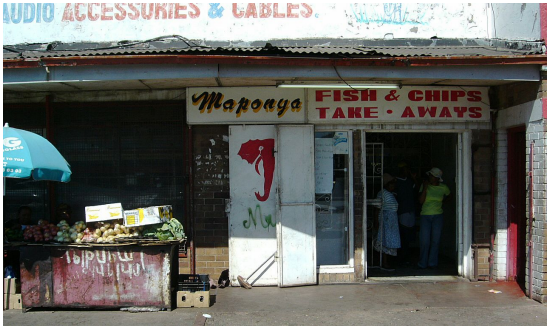

Figure 2: Maponya Fish&Chips shop on Mahalafele Road.

Because of it's commercial area and busy intersection, initially Maponya's seems chaotic and unstructured. The permanent hooting of taxis, and the regular noise of traffic and street sales add to the disturbing character of the place. One former resident with whom I took a walk even said that "this place is uncivilized" (VR, Akani M.), after she observed a drunkard publicly relieving himself on the sidewalk.

The preceding description of Maponya's is an overview of the outside appearance of the site as a stranger or Augé's traveler would probably describe the place. The following chapters help to give insight into how Maponya's is perceived by the Sowetan residents and how it developed over time - features which are not visually observable. The following

analysis of qualitative data and historical accounts is structured by Setha Low's methodological approach as presented in chapter 4.1. Accordingly, chapter 5.1 deals with the historical background and the economic and social changes that could be observed during the last decades. After having explored the social production of Maponya's in this respect, chapter 5.2 sheds light on the social construction by elaborating on topics like the relations, actions, memories, and images that concern the place. In 5.3, reference is made to Augé's image of a modern urban site by asking the question whether Maponya's falls into the category of non-places.

5.1 Social Production

Soweto has a relatively short history since it was established only in the 1950s and was not officially named until 1963; therefore the emergence of the township is well documented and often discussed.[5] The historical development of the place Maponya's can only be passed down orally since the municipality burned all written information after the end of Apartheid for nebulous reasons (personal information by George T., former municipality official in Orlando East). However, since there was only one design pattern for the whole township of Soweto, the emergence of the physical setting of Maponya's can, and must be seen in the context of the establishment of the entire city of Soweto.

Chapter 5.1.1 sheds light on the ideological factors that had an influence on the physics of Soweto and the Dube area, and it refers briefly to the wider consequences that Apartheid urban planning's strategies had on the residents. Chapter 5.1.2 then focuses on the actual research site, and it reflects upon the economic and social changes that occurred over time, which had effects upon Maponya's.

5.1.1 Historical Emergence of Soweto and the Dube Area

Soweto was planned to be a dormitory for black workers who migrated to the city to serve "white" Johannesburg, which itself started as a mining camp in the year 1886 when South Africa's main gold vein was discovered in the Witwatersrand region. As a response to the constantly growing influx of black mine and industrial workers from the late 19th century up, and two severe epidemics (1904 bubonic plague, 1918 flu), the City Council of Johannesburg reallocated more and more blacks to so-called townships on the outskirts of the city. An example of which is the former Western Native Township. While the primary

[5] Nevertheless, Soweto's development will not be described in detail, but the cornerstones will be drafted and special attention will be given to aspects which had an impact on Maponya's. For further literature on Soweto's formation see Carr 1990, Mandy 1984, Lewis 1969.

concern during the first decades of the century was to create sanitary living conditions for the urban poor, the planning schemes undertaken between the 1930s and 1950s resolutely contributed to the political and moral norms of racial segregation that formed the basis of the Apartheid era (Robinson 1992: 294f).

Due to the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, passed in 1923, the municipalities were advised to provide housing for blacks who lived and were employed in their area of authority. In 1930 the City Council acquired 1,300 *morgen* of land on the farm of Klipspruit No.8, approximately ten kilometers to the south-west of Johannesburg. This area was to become Orlando, the first part of Soweto, and was planned to accommodate 80,000 "Bantus." Although the Council held a competition over the design of the township, it resulted in a merely monotonous accumulation of homogenous houses which were built up from the early 1930s (Lewis 1969: 6).[6] Of all the fast growing locations which were to become Soweto, only Pimville and Orlando were equipped with the minimum necessities for social and cultural life (above all clinics, sports clubs, police stations, and post offices). These spatial concentrations of the black labor force were meant to serve certain goals of the government, and as a result urban planning became an instrument of the Apartheid policy. This was aggravated further after 1948 when the National Party took over the leadership of the country. In general, the design and architecture of Soweto were planned to maintain power and spatial control over the black labor force and their everyday life. Three of the main means of control are further explained in the following.

First, Soweto was only accessible via two main roads and one railway line (both passing Maponya's) which made it an enclosed space and thus easily controlled by the police force. The straight streets facilitated troop movements intended to break violent resistance.

Second, the spatial arrangements of the streets in linear checker-board patterns and the introduction of spartan, identically built houses (matchbox houses, the main architecture of housing in Zone 5, Meadowlands and also in some parts of Dube) bestowed a general uniformity upon Soweto. The township was not meant to be a permanent, but only a temporary residential site for workers who were supposed to return to their "homelands" after their working contracts expired. The design of the township was intended so that blacks would not be attracted by the site, and thus discouraged to move to the city.

[6] To give a numerical indication of the actual size of Soweto, by 1935 3,000 of these houses were built to accommodate 18,000 people in Orlando (Lewis 1969: 6). By the end of 1953 the total number of houses was 17,765. Additionally hostel accommodation was provided for 10,537 migrant workers (Lewis 1969: 9).

Third, the general lack of infrastructural amenities like electricity and proper sewage systems led to unhygienic and unworthy circumstances for the black urban population, and it stimulated the further deprivation of the blacks' identity (Gorodnov 1983:63f).

In 1963 a black South African novelist described the socio-psychological situation of the Sowetans; he wrote:

> A new factor becomes observable in the locations [townships] - the systematic crushing of individuality. The locations are not designed as residential areas for human beings with different temperaments and preferences; they are meant to be reservoirs of labour in which the enlargement of the personality will be kept to a minimum. [...] the hut in which the university lecturer lives is like that of his neighbour, the grave-digger (Ngubane 1963: 124).

All in all, strategies of Apartheid urban planning like regional segregation and enclosure, architectural monotony, and lack of infrastructure led to a psychological degradation of the urban blacks, and this fueled resistance movements (Gorodnov 1983: 64).

Dube, the part of Soweto on the borders of which the research site is located, has been in existence since 1945, but began expanding in the mid-1950s during the removals of Sophiatown, a settlement which was situated at the western part of Johannesburg City.[7] Dube had always been very distinctive from the other Sowetan areas. In 1983, but also applicable to earlier times, Gorodnov wrote that the demographic composition of Dube "is inhabited by the elite of Soweto: shopkeepers, small businessmen, teachers, priests, police sergeants, medical nurses, factory workers with permanent jobs and receiving relatively good pay, and clerks" (1983:70). Also the preservation of a black elite was part of the segregative scheme followed by the Apartheid government. The distinction between the bourgeoisie and urban under-classes, two groups defined by social and economic status, served as a means to break the united front against Apartheid whenever resistance mounted in the townships (Gorodnov 1983: 70f).

A third group of residents in the Dube area, besides the average township dwellers and those who were better off in Dube, were male migrant workers, predominantly from Kwa Zulu Natal, who lived in the so-called hostels erected in 1955 along the railroads. The buildings resemble single-storey barracks and in 1977, for example, they housed 6,272 men (Gorodnov 1983: 74) in insufficient circumstances. By then the hostels were encircled by barbed wire to segregate them physically from the township residents, and this helped

[7] In 1955 the Minister of Native Affairs, H. F. Verwoerd, resolved to remove all blacks and "coloureds" from Sophiatown and resettle them in Meadowlands and Diepkloof, the first being an adjoining area to Dube. Inhabitants of Sophiatown who were privileged to own their houses were able to use that capital to rent small pieces of land in Dube which they preferred over the other areas and where they were able to build own houses that were different from the average matchbox design.

the government create not only a physical but also a psychological barrier between these groups. Hostels were regarded as "little pieces of rural South Africa transplanted into the city" (Sunday Times, 5.9.1976). And while the majority of the black urbanites had mostly adopted to an urban lifestyle by 1960 (Mandy 1984: 184), the hostel dwellers' intended temporary stay in the city brought about a reluctant attitude to urban life (Gorodnov 1983: 77). In 1976 when riots against the Apartheid regime reached a peak level, the difference between the residential groups in Dube and in other parts of Soweto became obvious and resulted in inner-Sowetan animosities (see chapter 5.2.3 (Maponya's in History)).

Generally speaking, since the Sowetans themselves had never been part of the official building processes that defined the townscape of their residential site, the black urban population was led to a psychological deprivation determined partly by their physical environment (e.g. lethargy by physical monotony, immobility by enclosure), and partly by its indirect outcomes (a.o. loss of identity, intergroup rivalries). Additionally, with the end of Apartheid in 1994, the architecture and basic structures of Soweto predominantly stayed the same. Even though individuals with good incomes enlarged their houses and gave their homes' outward appearances, especially in Dube, individualistic designs, and although there is a general trend to renovate and beautify the township, the overall picture of the physical setting which was created during Apartheid remains.

Even though these socio-historical accounts refer to the disempowering forces of architectural and design patterns, the agency of the black population should not be underestimated. However over-directed and controlled a space might be, inherent cultural processes and the everyday use of public spaces can defy control in various ways. The intersection of Maponya's was not planned to develop into a commercial area or set the stage for black economic endeavor. Nevertheless, by individual and persistent entrepreneurial efforts like that of Richard Maponya, and because of developments within the Sowetan community that could not be fully controlled by the police and state, Maponya's developed from a bare intersection to a retail nexus, and as such it has long been a center for social life (see chapter 5.2.4).

5.1.2 Economic and Social Changes and Their Impact on Maponya's

As a matter of course Maponya's emergence was not exclusively influenced by ideological urban planning, but it also must be put into context with global and regional developments like migration processes and the opening of the market.

Besides the inner South African urbanization process that brought along a number of consequences for Sowetan society, which included, among others, high rates of crime and unemployment, prostitution, alcoholism, and the alienation of individuals from their families as well as from rural life (Gorodnov 1983: 83), people from other African countries migrated to South Africa to supply the industries with sufficient labor. Because of South Africa's economic preeminence on the African continent, it has always been a popular destination for migrants from neighboring states. However, in the context of this work, the first mentionable influx happened during the 1980s. Similarly, the abolition of Apartheid in 1994 resulted in the growing migration of Africans not only from adjacent countries like Mozambique and Botswana, but this time also from Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Morris 1998: 1119). They came to the "new" South Africa seeking education, employment, or simply just prosperity. Since South Africa's labor market could not afford such large numbers of workers, foreigners often resorted to illegal businesses or informal trading (Morris 1998).

At Maponya's, these immigrants supplemented an already flourishing informal business that started around 1980 and they also formed a new group of residents in the township (see chapter 5.2.1.). During that time the curbside filled with little stalls and sometimes even hindered traffic. At one point, presumably in the early 1980s, the traffic police (Metro Police) could not tolerate the spread of vendors anymore and decided to take over control by "chasing them away" (RI, Suzan M., 31.08.07). The owner of the corner premises on the northern side of Mahalafele Road, Suzan M., was asked by a group of vendors to offer them protection, because whilst they paid her rental fees they could not be sent away by the police. Suzan M. agreed upon a monthly rent of R100 (in contrast, the average profit of Sonia, a young hair dresser at Maponya's, is approximately R4,000 a month). In 1985 she erected a fence to install a barrier between the street and her property, and also to regulate the physical chaos that marked the outward appearance of the space. Since then the vendors on her premises had been under her protection and the place evolved into a kind of marketplace as well as an economic center within Soweto.

The democratic liberation not only meant an influx of foreigners to Soweto, but it also allowed market access for bigger shop chains like Shoprite, PEP, and Hungry Lion (a fast food take-away outlet located in the building of Shoprite). In 2001, Richard Maponya gave up his supermarket and started to rent the premises out to Shoprite. As stated by many street traders, the opening of the Sowetan markets to big franchises had a positive influence on the informal businesses because the customers of the bigger stores bought

small items from the street vendors which they forgot to buy inside the shop. Or they simply just spend the change they receive after they pay in the supermarket and exchange the loose cash for goods they purchase on the street. Unlike the hawkers, the operators of the smaller shops, which are located in the formal buildings, complain about the new economic competition they have to face (see chapter 5.2.3 (In Remembrance of Better Times)). Until the Sowetan market began to attract franchises, the only competition was between small local retailers, among whom a friendly and supporting atmosphere existed (Charles M., RI, 06.09.07).

Economic and social challenges like migration processes and the opening of the Sowetan market for franchises had an impact on how Maponya's was and is used, as well as how it is perceived today.

While the description of the social production focused on the historical building process of Soweto and Maponya's, the exploration of the social construction will be more actor-based and include an intensive evaluation of the results of my fieldwork. The following chapter shows how the material setting is constructed through social action, it bears reference to the utilization of the place during present and past times, and treats memories of the past as well as the symbolic meaning of Maponya's.

5.2 Social Construction

The following section is concerned with the social construction of Maponya's. The leading questions in this chapter are:

- Who are the social agents at Maponya's, and what do they do?
- How are they related to each other?
- Which values are transported by their actions and statements?
- How do Sowetan residents perceive Maponya's' past and present?

The overall standing aim is to find out what Maponya's means to the people and thus give information about the relationship between place and Sowetan culture or, sometimes more appropriate, Sowetan society. The theoretical implications of chapter 3 will thereby help in the analysis of the material.

A prominent start for any casual conversation about the place began with the question of how people liked Maponya's. Often the answers were dominated by boredom and emotional distance. Sonia, a woman who plaits hair on the spot, revealed that "we cannot

complain about the place because it puts food on our table" (RI, 20.08.07). Besides the traders at Maponya's, you find the daily commuters who are on their way to work or school, and who eventually change taxis at the intersection. Others are residents of adjacent neighborhoods who take advantage of the physical proximity to their homes to do their grocery shopping at Shoprite and buy small items from the street vendors. For most of the people I met and talked to about Maponya's, the place is just the arena for their daily routine.

On the question of how to describe Maponya's and what happens there on an average day, the answer is usually given without hesitation as if it was obvious. Sipho's answer, a 24-year-old photographer at nearby Hector Peterson Memorial, illustrates the main characteristics of Maponya's to a Sowetan resident:

> I think it's crowded, you know what I mean, and obviously crowds gather around businesses. Everybody wants to make a living. You find people selling this, selling that. Where there is crowd there's bound to be a business. And to an extent [...] safety is compromised because most of the time when there are crowds mostly it's not really safe. But all in all I think it's a good place (RI, 21.08.07).

His description is not very passionate, rather rational, although it is terminated by his statement expressing that the place is not that bad after all. Interviewees regularly reacted with surprise when asked about Maponya's since it is "just a business spot," and they did not understand what could be interesting about an intersection and some shops. Maponya's is, as Sipho's answer only exemplifies, cognitively linked to attributes like commerce, traffic, and masses of people, rather than to leisure or more pleasant activities.

Because of these general connotations, the following two chapters will predominantly deal with matters that touch upon the business and daily activities that are performed at Maponya's; whereas, the third and the fourth subsections concern the memories and symbolic meanings conveyed by the place.

5.2.1 Contested Space

Since it is perceived as a business and workplace, Maponya's is not a highly respected site. On one hand business stands for employment and prosperity, but on the other hand business as it is facilitated at Maponya's is not highly valued.

Most of the street vendors once passed Maponya's and recognized it as "a place where business is easy and possible" (RI, Walter D., a vendor himself, 21.08.07). Then they came

and just occupied a place either by putting a table or installing a little shack, the latter being predominantly shoemakers who lock up some of their equipment overnight.

For some vendors Maponya's is a place which is used to supply oneself with the necessary money to survive - like Queen who came to Soweto because she did not find work in Limpopo (a South African province) and now sells fruit on a small table right on the opposite side of Shoprite. She said "we depend on this because we have children [...]. The place is okay but if I get a job I will go and work" (RI, 13.08.07). Her statement implies that she does not regard her work as a valid job, and that she does not take pride in what she does for a living. Her street trading is just an emergency solution until she finds more formal employment.

For others, Maponya's provides a business area where anyone who wants can make some extra money. Walter D., for instance, owns a little tuck shop in the hostel buildings which is doing well, but when he realized that people prefer to buy small items on the street over queuing in the supermarket, he decided to place a little table between two shoemakers and from then on sold cigarettes and matches to passersby. His tuck shop is now managed by his employee.

Eventually, it is precisely the uncontrolled informal sector which is a thorn in most of the Sowetan residents' sides. One feature of Maponya's is the constant filthiness of the place, and this is blamed on the street vendors. Since street trade is an activity which is performed in public space it plays a major role in shaping the place's image and its outward appearance. "Sometimes they make the place look horrible" (Charles M., RI, 06.09.07). The only toilet facility is an old unhygienic sanitary room at the bus station in Zone 5 that supplies the hawkers with running water. Also, the garbage at Maponya's is not accumulated collectively, but just thrown onto the ground.

Another issue connected to the informal businesses is the high rate of foreigners among the vendors selling at stalls on the sidewalk. They are predominantly migrants from neighboring African countries like Mozambique, Zambia, and recently in increasing numbers have come from Zimbabwe. Being the owner of the fenced-in premises, Suzan M. knows about the illegal status and missing work permits of most of the vendors and therefore encourages their economic endeavors in the informal sector "so that they can make a living" (RI,31.08.07). It is especially the foreigners who occupy these stalls that are treated with contempt, as Suzan explains: "I'll tell you why which is actually sad. South Africans are very choosy [...] and lazy at the same time. In the sense that they look down

upon the work that these ladies are doing. They [the South Africans] would rather go and work for somebody else instead of do something for themselves" (RI, 31.08.07).

Tumelo N., a local clerk at NAFCOC (the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce), gives another explanation as to why Sowetans are not satisfied with the numerous foreign vendors at Maponya's. He claims that "the problem is our economic system. I'm not saying that these people from other countries don't have a right to run businesses [...]. But at the same time you cannot have a situation whereby a place which was supposed to be fully utilized [...] by locals is then taken over by foreigners" (RI, 10.09.07).

Besides the anxiety that the migrants from other African countries are exploiting South Africa's economic opportunities, Charles M., a former resident and businessman at Maponya's, realizes two social consequences of the high influx of foreign workers, namely crime and drug dealing. Charles M. asserted, "It is the foreigners who brought us a little bit of a problem. We never used to have this problem of drugs. [...] And even the crime, it's not the people of our country that are doing the crime. But they [the foreigners] come across, they do all the dirty work and they give the country that name" (RI, 06.09.07).

The informal sector is thus seen as responsible for a certain percentage of the crime (the other part being blamed on young or unemployed people from the neighborhood) and filthiness at Maponya's.

The merchants, in contrast, state that the owner of the premises or the government should provide them with sanitary facilities, which would help keep the place clean. Regarding crime, Sonia, the hair dresser, told me that "the owner[s] of the big stores around here they come and accuse us because they claim the *tsotsis*[8] are our customers", not mentioning that the street hawkers themselves are sometimes accused as thieves. Sonia is not very happy with the situation at her work place, but realizes that "even if we would like to move, we don't have a choice" (RI, 20.08.07).

An open fight between Sowetans and migrants from other African countries was not observable. The accusations from each side are not revealed publicly, and the foreigners feel they are tolerated but not accepted.

An increase in xenophobia is also observed in other parts of the country. After and during the liberation movement, migration got less controllable and led many Africans to South Africa from countries further north like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria (for figures see Morris 1998: 1119). African foreigners are mainly blamed for the lack of

[8] *Tsotsi* being the common word for thief in township lingo.

order and progress in the post-Apartheid society, among others "the persistence of unemployment, poverty, crime and poor material conditions" (Morris 1998: 1125). The recent Zimbabwean economic crisis boosted the influx of impoverished migrants seeking work and shelter in the northeastern urban areas of South Africa, which again increased xenophobia at Maponya's, and which culminated in a series of violent attacks against foreigners in townships all over South Africa in 2008.

In sum, the informal sector is said to give Maponya's its unstructured, chaotic, and filthy image. The vendors are not respected because of their jobs and their nationalities, and additionally blamed for appropriating and exploiting a place which should be used economically by South Africans, according to the perceptions of the interviewed Sowetans. For them, Maponya's and its omnipresent hawkers represent the failure of Soweto's predicted economic success, which seems to flourish in only a few parts of the township and in which only the luckiest have a share.[9]

Here, Maponya's serves as an arena for contesting groups. Sowetans fear that they will lose control over "their" territory because the foreign street hawkers are believed to flood into, and thus appropriate the place. Although the emotional attachment to Maponya's does not appear to be strong (a perception gathered from the comments that were articulated about the place), the inhabitants reveal a sense of place when it comes to the importance of exerting power over it. It is thus not "to place qua place" (Low and Altman 1992: 7) that the Sowetans are attached. The importance of Maponya's reveals itself only when the Sowetans' entitlement to call this public place their own is challenged by another group, in this case the "foreigners".

5.2.2 Collective Action

As much contestation within the space of Maponya's is found, certain groups of persons cling together in different support structures. First, I address the support structure established by the informal vendors group, and second I will shed light on a self-organized community patrol that aims for security on the spot.

[9] These findings can not be further elaborated on because their analysis would lead to an extension in spatial scale which is beyond the place of Maponya's. The Sowetan economic boost, the predominant topic in the media concerning the township, is a relevant factor for the individual, but pertains to the whole of Soweto. So as to not lose focus on Maponya's, this aspect of research has been withdrawn from this work.

Presumably as a result of their marginalization (see chapter 5.2.1), the street vendors developed "a kind of community in the sense that they live together" (RI, Suzan M., 31.08.07). By "living together" Suzan means supporting each other socially and financially, but also dealing with the conflicts that arise from working together. Mary M., who was the first to start selling on the spot around 1980, took over the role of the supervisor of the group of vendors who occupy the stalls on Suzan M.'s premises. She was the spokesperson who pleaded for the monthly rent to pay to Suzan so that the traffic police would not chase them away. She testified that:

> The Metro Police[10] send us notice and told us we should move on a specific date. But it was difficult for us to do so because we had no other place to go. So we asked to meet with the owner of the place and discussed the issue. And then she agreed so we could stay. [...] She put up the fence so that the place can be more safe and so we could be a bit more far away from the main street (RI, Mary M., 20.08.07).

As a result of the responsible position Mary took, Suzan also assigned her to collect the rental fee of R100 due monthly and to hand it over to her afterwards. Additionally, Mary acts like a mediator. For instance, if the hairdressers quarrel over regular customers (which "are actually the difficult ones" (RI, Suzan M., 31.08.07)), or one fruit seller argues with another one about the position of his/her stall, Mary is called to arbitrate. In the latter case, Mary drew a line with paint between the two parties and told them they were not allowed to cross that line or expand their spaces. Arguments about the use of space within the boundaries of the fenced in ground are normally dealt with by irenical discussions.

The peaceful cooperation amongst the street vendors on Suzan M.'s premises are further strengthened by saving syndicates in South Africa called *stokvels*[11]. A stokvel is "a type of credit union in which a group of people enter into an agreement to contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool weekly, fortnightly or monthly" (Mboweni 1990: 1). Various kinds of needs are catered to, the most favored are wedding and burial societies (also called *makgotla*, a Tswana word for social gatherings) which are mainly paid on a regular basis and disbursed on occasion to cover high wedding and funeral costs. Another

[10] The Metropolitan Police Departments were not established until April 2001 (Newman 2006). Here, Mary M. is referring to SAPS (South African Police Service) and meaning the traffic law department.

[11] The term "stokvel" derives from the English word "stock-fairs" which in the nineteenth century were rotating cattle auctions among the English settlers in the Eastern Cape. These events also served as an arena for Black farmers and workers to gamble with their resources and "exchange ideas" (Mboweni 1990: 4). With the migration from the Cape to Johannesburg during the gold rush, the black workers brought the system of stokvels along to the growing urban areas in the Northeast.

prominent organization of stokvels relies on a rotating scheme and contributions are always paid to one beneficiary at a time that can choose how to invest the amount of money at his/her disposal. Stokvels are therefore a quick way to accumulate a huge amount of interest-free capital and are based on formal reciprocity. Names like Itireleng ('do things for yourself') or Masibambane ('let us join hands together') emphasize the social elements and the moral characters of stokvels that go beyond financial benefits (Mboweni 1990: 19) because they enhance communal cohesion.

Figure 3: One of the key informants at Maponya's next to her stall.

At Maponya's, Mary M. keeps a list of all the merchants who take part in the syndicate. Almost all of the approximately twenty stall occupants on Suzan M.'s premises take advantage of this opportunity. Each month every person gives R100 to the one beneficiary whose turn it is. These high amounts of money are used, for example, to buy furniture, fridges, and "some are even able to pay [for] a house" (RI, Mary M., 20.08.07). Furthermore, the commitments that they agreed upon strengthen the community spirit among the vendors (who are mainly women - also a common characteristic for stokvels).

The peaceful settlement of conflicts and the financial support system lead to a friendly atmosphere amongst the vendors. Even the street traders who are not located within the fenced area, and are therefore not part of the stokvel, feel a certain bond between the people. Although Walter D., who occupies a stall opposite Shoprite, does not know every person by name, he "recognize[s] their faces because I [he] see[s] them every day and I [he] know[s] who occupies a specific spot" (RI, 21.08.07). He confirmed that "people (meaning the street vendors) are very close here" (ibid.).[12]

[12] It should be noted that the aspect of social cohesion among the foreign vendors and especially their organization scheme of the financial syndicate deserve more attention than is presented in this chapter. The language barriers between me and the participants did not allow any further insight though. The little information I got is thankfully due to five short days with the interpreter Makhanana Mawila.

Overall, Soweto is known for its high rate of crime. Mainly it is the responsibility of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to deal with this problem. Places like Maponya's are places of high monetary circulation, and as such are the targets for criminal occurrences like pick pocketing, robbery, and break-ins, and therefore need special attention.

Joe M. is a so-called Community Development Worker, who has been socially employed by the police station in Orlando East since March 2007. Before that he was unemployed, but had always been concerned about the crime that happened on his doorstep. He stated, "If this area is full of crime, at the end of the day it affects my wife, my children, [and] my friends. It's in our best interest" (RI, Joe M. 29.08.07). That is the reason why he came up with the idea of a community safety control service because he also observed that the residents had little trust in the police. As a Community Development Worker he is responsible for analyzing the social structure and environment of certain areas (including Maponya's) and their impact on crime. He also mobilizes and organizes the community patrol groups and executes conflict resolution and mediation on the spot.

Joe M. points out why a community member like himself is more useful to combat local crime than a police officer who does not live in the township, or in any other parts of Soweto:

> It takes him [the policeman] time to know how many streets do we have or who's the robber. But I grew up in the area. I know the *shebeens* (township pubs) there, I know who's who, who's a gangster, who's not a gangster. [...] And people would also have confidence in me. You know, I go to shebeens with them and they would tip me [give me a hint] and say 'this house is in drugs, man' and 'this is the one who robs at Maponya's'. And then I know that man and I can go and talk to his parents. 'This young boy is giving problems here.' And then we sort it out (RI, 29.08.07).

Besides the conversations with parents of troublesome children, the community patrol "profiled those kids and found out where they are coming from and actually chased some of them [away when they are] from areas we don't know [or if] they can't provide ID" (RI, Joe M., 29.08.07). Other means of lowering crime include guarding parked cars and patrolling the area. Groups of volunteers guide people who commute to work in the early morning hours to Dube and Phefeni railway stations with torches, and some even carry bats.

Since the community patrol started to operate early in 2007, crime rates at Maponya's reportedly went down.[13] Therefore the police incorporated the existing idea in its program and is now supporting the groups with material donations and skill enhancement training.
The collective action of creating a community patrol shows that the inhabitants of the Maponya's area are concerned with the image and safety of the place. Instead of avoiding the intersection of Maponya's and handing it over to others like criminal youngsters or uninformed policemen, they took action and tried to regain control over "their" territory. Their efforts are not only for the practical sake of their own safety, but they also give them positive feelings about the place they live in. Both knowledge of and pride in the place play a major role for the identity of the residents and this lets them coact.

The last chapters have shown that Maponya's is a contested space within Soweto where the group of township residents only tolerates an informal economy. It also serves as the scene for a dispute about the control over space. The manner of utilization of the place (street vending versus formal business) thus reflects a wider social structure of the place. According to these spatial uses and behavioral patterns, people gather with others and identify themselves as a group within the space. These observations lead to the intermediate conclusion that Maponya's gives the residents opportunities to unite individuals in support structures like financial syndicates or community patrols; however, these groupings are in constant dispute with others at the same time.

5.2.3 Place of Memory

The following two chapters not only deal with narrated reminiscences that resonate with the ethnographic and historical analyses of the preceding chapters, but they also provide insight into individual accounts of history and personal lives. The collected narratives recall Maponya's past, and by doing so add subjective imagination and meaning to the historical facts of its physical production and development.[14] Although the place's physical attributes show no visual signs of the historical events that took place at Maponya's, the past is vivid in the memories of the residents and this implicates an emotional attachment to the site.
When asked about historical events that had an impact on Maponya's, elderly residents predominantly referred to one specific episode in the past – the famous school uprisings of

[13] No official statistics could be collected for the Maponya's area.
[14] Most of the interviews regarding individual memory were held at the spot or through means of photographic pictures in order to provide virtual stimuli to ease the remembrance process.

1976. Furthermore they often mentioned the ongoing violent riots of hostel dwellers, of which the first one happened at Dube in 1955. These occasions have a physical link to Maponya's since the students' and the hostel dwellers' rallies both passed Pela/Mahalafele Road and actually took place there.[15]

It should be briefly noted how important history is for the Sowetans' identity. As shown in previous chapters, Soweto's population can not be subsumed as one social group, due to among other factors, cultural, social, and economic differences. Nevertheless, the collective identity of Soweto's inhabitants, as they present themselves to the outside, draws upon history during Apartheid and thus "causes feelings of continuity and belonging" (Eriksen 1997: 131). Historical events that gave rise to the democratic revolution like the students' uprisings reveal a strong sense of unity and they disregard individual factors like social status or cultural traits. However, in contrast to permanent residents of adjacent areas of Maponya's, recently arrived vendors or young residents don't know anything about the history of the place and some of them "have no interest" (VR) as Zandile, a hair dresser, declared. Statements like these are remarkable exceptions among the Sowetans since the historically important resistance against Apartheid is the most prominent attribute linked to Soweto, and is therefore a strong factor for the collective identity and nation building process (Eriksen 1997: 131f). Memories associated with the liberation movement and riots are discussed in the paragraph 'Maponya's in History'.

The chapter 'In Remembrance of Better Times' employs stories that are linked to positive memories. Those need a lot more inquiry on behalf of the ethnographer in comparison to the narratives of memories concerning the negative events because of the status of Soweto as a motor for the democratization process in South Africa as stressed in any conversation with the residents. The struggles against and during Apartheid are the focal point for any interest regarding the township, and they produce strong feelings of pride among the residents. Correspondingly, the narratives about Maponya's during times of struggle contain a lot of common anti-Apartheid ideology and are frequently mixed up with it, while the accounts of positive memories tend to be more personal and relatively free of ideology.

[15] In this chapter I will not elaborate on detailed recollections and descriptions of the historical events in question, but focus on the aspects of memory that tell something about the relation between Maponya's' users and the place.

With its physical proximity to the memorial site of Hector Peterson in Orlando East, Maponya's' history can not be separated from the students' riots, especially the famous day of June 16th, 1976. On that day scholars demonstrated against Afrikaans as the major educational medium and were gunned down by police forces.[16]

I met Suzan M. in her car, parked next to the fence of her premises looking down Pela Road, which directly leads to the memorial site in Orlando West (approximately 600m down the road), and she told me about her memories of that day:

> On the day of June 76, I remember I was still at work [in Johannesburg] and then everybody at around eleven was saying that they are shooting people, especially school kids. So when we got here, it was chaos. It was actually very difficult to get off the [train] station to go home. And then we joined the other kids and we were running around... you know, that type of thing (RI, 31.08.07).

Suzan said that she and her classmates joined other scholars from Orlando High School and walked down Pela/Mahalafele Road to the Regina Mundi Church where most of the rallies were held. She also remembered that the 16th of June 1976 was "very very rowdy". A few minutes later she answered the question of what Maponya's looked like that day in a totally different manner: "When I came back from work, there were no people. It was very quiet, it was very electric, it was very tense" (RI, 31.08.07). How can Suzan recall the same day in two different ways? It may be assumed that Suzan adopted details from the numerous narratives that are told about the day, confusing them with her own personal experiences. It is mainly important for witnesses of June 16th to pass down the message of the students and to illustrate the severe situation they were in, rather than give an accurate description of their personal memories. This attitude eases the handling of experience and it is a common phenomenon that "complex lived histories are transformed into melodrama through an emphasis on seemingly universal themes of human feeling, triumph, tragedy, and struggle" (Bélanger 2002: 74).[17]

[16] During 1974 Minister of Bantu Affairs M.C. Botha implemented Afrikaans as the educational language for mathematics and social studies up from Standard Five. Among the black population his decision led to protest, for practical and ideological reasons. First, there were not enough teachers able to give instructions in Afrikaans and secondly, Afrikaans was regarded the language of the oppressors. The dissatisfaction with the whole system of Bantu education and a number of other reasons (see Mandy 1984: 200f) resulted in the uprisings of June 16th, 1976, in which 15 people died, among them famous 12-year-old Hector Peterson. For further information on the students' protests, see Brooks 1980, Hlongwane 2006, Ndlovu 1998.

[17] This behavior is in strong relation to the concept of "heritage" in contrast to "history": "Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error" (David Lowenthal (1998), as quoted in Saunders 2007: 194), but contributes, like memories, to the collective identity and strengthens societal ties.

Suzan now lives in a suburb of Johannesburg, but reveals a strong connection with Maponya's, which is not only a place where she spent a lot of time during childhood. The place attachment is also based on historical events at Maponya's that played a major role in her life and had an influence on her "attitude towards life" (RI, 31.08.07).

The uprisings of the school children can be contextualized with the riots of the Dube hostel dwellers. The earliest (around 1955) and the latest (the last in July 2007) demonstrations by hostel residents are due to failed infrastructural and communal service deliveries and were thus targeted towards the government. But during the fight against Afrikaans as the educational language in 1976, and in the following years the issue of "stay-aways" fueled a conflict between hostel dwellers and township populations. As a demonstration means the students called out on so-called "stay-aways," where all the residents of Soweto were appealed to lay down their work duties in order to harm the main industries. The hostel dwellers of Dube, who were bribed by police, were mainly male migrant workers from Kwa Zulu Natal and thus ethnically different from the majority of the township residents. Suzan M., herself a student fighter, explains that, "the impression they [the hostel dwellers] were given was that we are not serious. So, [the police] would actually give them food and then by so doing turning them against us" (RI, 31.08.07). The consequence was a period of violent fighting between the migrant workers and the township population. Maponya's formed the front line between the hostels and the location Dube at the southern side of the railways. During the violent riots the shops were closed and Mahalafele Street was very quiet:

> During those riot days it used to affect the business around here because they were fighting resistance. [...] Through this formation of Inkatha Freedom Party who wanted to rule South Africa, there wasn't free movement. It was them the other side, with the Inkatha, and, we, the location, the ANC, on this side. So it was two blocks against one another. This place served as a buffer zone between the hostels and the location (Henrik M., RI, 21.08.07).

Thus, Maponya's served as the physical setting for two rival parties who carried out a battle of political as well as spatial conquest. They both tried through violent means to control the space. For Maponya's this meant being an arena for many armed fights like one which Suzan witnessed from the shop her family was running:

> I remember one time, I think it was on a Sunday. The guys from the hostel were from a rally. So a fight broke out. We had a roller door and we had to close it. Then we saw through the windows, there was a guy who was actually running back into the township because these guys were chasing him. They had a machete. We were inside the shop and could actually see they were hitting this guy with this thing. And when he got there (pointing to a corner) he fell

> and then he couldn't come in [the shop]. That's how bad it was. It was terrible. But somehow we managed. But even today, [...] if somebody were to say 'go into the hostel', people are very scared (RI, 31.08.07).

The adversarial and traumatic relationship between township residents and hostel dwellers hardened over the decades so that the distinction led to a perception of "we" and "they." A resident remarked, "Obviously there is a clash of cultures. The way we do things in the township is different. And they have their way to do things" (Joe M., RI, 29.08.07). The identities of these two groups are thus primarily defined by spatial and residential boundaries: one group lives in the hostels, the other group lives in the township. However obvious and simple this distinction might appear, the clear differentiation and rivalry between these two groups was established, or at the very least, enforced by Apartheid spatial strategies that planned to segregate people into groups dependent on their differing cultural and socio-economic attributes in order to prevent united resistance. In this case, space served as a political means to establish two rival groups that only on the surface found their main distinction in residence. Maponya's in turn was the setting for expressing these place identities in the form of violent struggles.

Even still, the Dube hostel dwellers demand service delivery from the government as they did in July 2007 during the research period. Even though their usurping protests are not aimed at the rest of the township population, shops at Maponya's are closed during their rallies and people prefer to stay inside their homes to avoid encounters with the often violent protesters.

In Remembrance of Better Times

Besides the memories concerning events that happened during the fight against Apartheid, the ethnographic material that was collected shows that residents remember a time in Sowetan history which is not seen in the context of Apartheid and which is liked even better than the present situation. These perceptions draw a totally different picture in comparison to the negatively connoted memories and to how Maponya's is perceived today.

Joe M., a resident from Orlando East blames a lot of the economic challenges that South Africa has to face on globalization processes. Walking down memory lane, Joe recalls

what Maponya's was like before the big food chains were set up and how he spent leisure time at Maponya's:[18]

> I remember my wife, my girlfriend some years back, and me, we used to take a stroll or a taxi to Maponya's to go and buy that Big Daddy chicken.[19] You'll find all the lovers standing there, romantically looking at each other in the eye and drain that chicken there and so on. So, these days are gone because of (he moans in disappointment) the days of Nando's and McDonald's (RI, 29.08.07).

Although Joe's description sounds rather lyrical, other residents also remembered Maponya's as a center where the Sowetan community met and spent its leisure time. Richard Maponya himself said "it was the place to go [...] It was very attractive. They buy. After buying, then they start talking. You know when friends meet they would talk about their private life and so on. So they would just hang around" (RI, 06.09.07).

Figure 4: A restored photograph of Maponya's in the 1950s.

Also, crime is said to having been lower at that time. Even if Richard Maponya is still aware that he was struggling because of the Apartheid laws that tried to prohibit any endeavors of black businessmen, he remembers a feeling of community at Maponya's and seems to forget about the sorrows he had while he talks about the cohesion and friendliness of the past. He told me, for instance, that a mother of a child could come at any time of night and ask him for milk for her baby. He would give it to her for free that night, but she would come the following day and pay anyway. He said that trust and honesty were values that were held in higher-esteem. He stated, "People were good and bring the money. Well, today it's a different world. People just want to rob, most unfortunately" (RI, 06.09.07).

[18] Whenever asked for an accurate indication of dates or years, the informants seldom gave precise specifications when referring to the "pleasant" times. It can be assumed that a period of approximately ten to twenty years during early Apartheid, and thus during the early years of Soweto is what most of them meant.
[19] Big Daddy's was the name of the little chicken *braai* (barbecue) of Suzan M.'s father where today PEP is located.

Presumably it was not the people themselves who changed their attitude, but the political and economic circumstances that aggravated the difficult living conditions in Soweto and at Maponya's. This in turn also led to a change in values, from honesty and trust to crime and anonymity.

Henrik M., who runs a butchery on Mahalafele Road, observed the differences between business now and then:

> Things have changed, you see. During this time, at night, there used to be a lot of activity. Things like stokvels,[20] have people coming from different places, coming to buy meat here. So now things have taken a turn. Now you have places like Rosebank, the Rock, Wandies, where there is fun. That is why. And there is not much movement now at night [...] unlike before when people were locked in in Soweto. Before, entertainment was here. Everything was here (RI, 21.08.07).

It is surprising to hear that Henrik M. speaks of the time he remembers as a kind of confinement ("people were locked in") in a positive way as if there was a time during early Apartheid which is valued more highly than the democratic freedoms of the present.

It is however a common phenomenon that after the democratization of South Africa in 1994 citizens quickly lost the ecstatic hopes that the end of Apartheid would bring prosperity to the poor and equality to non-whites. The disappointment of people who lived and struggled during Apartheid led to disillusionment, so that "the stories and memories reveal a painful historical irony: older people participated in a political struggle for freedom but things have not turned out in the way that they hoped" (Van Dongen 2005: 531). What remains is a disappointment in the contemporary situation, and nostalgia for the times that preceded the main anti-Apartheid struggles, and these offer space for pleasant and sometimes glorifying memories like the ones told about Maponya's.

Another possible explanation for the good memories of early Apartheid in Soweto is that the oppression which was exerted during the early years was not perceived as harsh as when the struggle against the political system became more drastic. Soweto as a kind of "home," as it was often referred to by interviewees, "needs" a pleasant side which makes it likeable. If the present as well as the struggles during Apartheid can not serve as a positive aspect of the collective place-identity, another time must be found when life in Soweto was better. In this case, "past struggles and differences in perspective [are] ignored or re-articulated in comforting sepia tones that locate them as part of the 'good old days'" (Bélanger 2002: 74).

[20] Here, 'stokvel' refers to the parties that saving associations held once in a while.

5.2.4 Symbolic Meaning

The pleasant memories treated in the last chapter refer to a time before economic and political struggles, and some are closely connected to the person who lends his name to the place. Richard Maponya, as described in chapter 5.1, was the first black businessman in Soweto, and he opened a small shop at the intersection in 1952 of what is called Maponya's today.

Full of pride, Richard Maponya told me about his many fights with the municipality of Johannesburg which by then not only prohibited blacks to do business, but which after the authorities had given in also kept controlling who sold what and when and for how much money. Through price control and control certificates, Richard Maponya felt oppressed many times, but succeeded, as he told me, because of "strong will and persistence" (RI, 06.09.07). In the 1960s he opened a large supermarket and established his good reputation. His story is widely known and so influential that the place still bears his name. People told me that he was the one who brought economic development to Soweto.

But what did it mean to the residents to not have to take a journey to town anymore to meet their daily needs? Joe M. remembers:

> The only shops that we knew were shops in town. The only shop that we had [in the township] was the small Fish&Chips shop at the corner where you buy your bread, your chips, and your milk. But going to a shop with aisles and you are picking your own food and paying at the till there and so on, it was a wonderful thing to have in the township. We never knew those things. Just to be able to go with a trolley in the township (RI, 29.08.07).

The residents realized that not only did they have a new opportunity at their doorsteps, but they also hoped that Soweto would become part of the growing national economy.[21] Having a big retail store meant that development and modernity was approaching the people. "It was fashionable to have a plastic bag from Maponya, you know. It was a status symbol" (RI, Joe M., 29.08.07).

Joe M. mentions additionally that the establishment of a supermarket in Soweto not only meant an achievement on the communal level, but it also tells a personal story of "black" success:

> I would say Maponya's is the center of the heart of Soweto because [...] it's one of the places, you know, we started to grow as a person from your four-

[21] Apparently Soweto was recognized as a potential factor in South Africa's economy only recently. Since the spending power of Sowetan residents was estimated to amount to R5-billion annually, "Business Booms in Soweto" (Mail&Guardian 27.09.07). These findings may lead to misunderstandings since economic growth is measured by the construction of new shopping malls in Protea, Jabulani, and Pimville. Small retailers like at Maponya's fear and will presumably lose customers to the large retail centers which offer products for discount prices.

> roomed [matchbox house] and from your simple life, getting a little bit sophisticated. And obviously going to something bigger. [...] Maponya has proved that, yes, if you have the cash and finance you'll be able to sustain that kind of a business (RI, Joe M., 29.08.07).

Richard Maponya is regarded as the pioneer of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Movement and serves as a symbol for black economic advancement. However, it is merely the name and the person, but not actually the place that bears the symbolic meaning of "black" success. Richard Maponya himself uses his name and its symbolic meaning as a brand name; and in September 2007 he opened a R650 million Shopping Mall in Jabulani, Soweto that in reference to the place Maponya's is already called "the new Maponya's."

At the "old" Maponya's he gave in to globalizing forces and rented his supermarket premises out to the big franchise Shoprite. He himself moved to Sandton, Johannesburg's suburb for the upper class, leaving Maponya's behind in a desolate and uncontrolled condition.

This might be the reason why Tumelo N., a clerk at the local office of NAFCOC at Dube, questions if the success story of Richard Maponya inspires Sowetan residents to develop ambition for their personal future, or if it just expresses pride in someone else that was black and made it to the top. Tumelo N. asserted that,

> at the end of the day, they don't draw inspirations from that. We really need role models. I don't say Maponya is not a role model. He is. The elderly people I've come across, they have told me good stories about that Mr. Maponya. [...] So, people tell you the story of Maponya, but in themselves they don't see the potential (RI, 10.09.07).

Whether or not Sowetans gain personal empowerment from the story of Richard Maponya can not be answered. But in general, the name of Mr. Maponya stands for success and prosperity and bears the symbolic meaning of Black Economic Empowerment. The starting place of his career, the place Maponya's, does not show any signs of personal or communal empowerment, but rather the negative effects of an opened market and a certain degree of abandonment and chaos. Only few personal memories and the names of some shops like "Maponya's fish&chips" bear witness to the positive aspects of this place's past.

5.3 Is Maponya's a Non-Place?

Before chapter 6 presents a résumé of the precedent findings, I allude to the topic of non-places which was briefly explained in chapter 3.4 by means of Marc Augé's work *Non-Places - Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995). To put it in a nutshell, he argues that urban public spaces are likely to lack sustaining social relations, support loss of identity, and they do not show signs of historical connections. In contrast to the typical site of ethnographic research ("anthropological place") which can be attributed to only one permanent group of residents and is therefore highly social, urban places ("non-places") are affected by a high rate of mobility, consumption, exchange, and solitude among the users. They communicate with each other and with the environment through signs and screens; therefore they tend to be travelers on their own territory without any personal place attachment.

Many visual characteristics support a classification of Maponya's as a non-place. Regarding the hectic atmosphere of unregulated road traffic and the rapidly changing composition and high fluctuation of users and cars on the spot, one is likely to see the similarity between an urban space like Maponya's and the highways and airports Augé uses as examples of non-places. People either pass the space or stay only for a few minutes to purchase goods. Most of them are on their way somewhere else and have no interest in having a little chat with the vendors or other strangers. Signs like the display of possible hairstyles by the hairdresser, or the many advertisements that are placed on huge boards and all over the fence that surround Suzan M.'s premises promote services and products silently. And that is where Augé failed to go further in his analysis. He only describes the superficial aspects of places, but fails to "address the relations between the material and the social construction of places and non-places" (Merriman, 2004: 151). Instead of an objective "self-analysis" he could have employed a similar methodology as presented in this study to include the inhabitants of the non-places and their relation to each other and the studied area. By doing so at Maponya's, certain social structures can be revealed that would not have emerged solely by observation. In the following, I once again call attention to the three characteristics of anthropological places that, Augé argues, are absent at non-places. These are: relations, identity and history.

The saving association and the social cohesion among the vendors clearly demonstrate that relations can exist in, and even emerge from urban public spaces. These relations might pass if the group of street traders disperses one day, and this not only illustrates that relations in urban places might only be temporary alliances, but it also shows that relations

in a heterogeneous field are possible. That is why I suggested in chapter 3.4 to think of changed relations rather than absent relations. The kind of relations that develop in an urban business area like Maponya's, therefore have merely monofunctional qualities like sustaining a business alliance, a good salesman-client relationship, or even extrafamilial social ties like friendships. Relations such as a familial bond between generations with all its ascribed responsibilities, rights, and feelings would not emerge in a public arena.

Wherever individuals interact with others, a social situation arises and therefore an absence of relations is not observable at Maponya's or any other urban place. Even the rivalries among certain public space users imply that people form alliances with others to act against another group which would not be possible without cooperation and a minimum of trust. Additionally the clear distinction between foreigners and locals at Maponya's shows a certain degree of communal identity among each group.

The individual however, as Augé argues, loses his or her identity in favor of "the more active pleasure of role-playing" (1995: 103). Because of the anonymity of a non-place, the inhabitant degenerates into a faceless human being who acts only on behalf of role prescriptions such as that of "the client" or "the consumer." Maponya's is, as stated by the users, a business spot used predominantly to purchase or sell goods and to pass through. In this sense it is comparable to airports or supermarkets that represent spaces of supermodernity.

Also the low degree of place attachment that is found in its extreme among temporary and young users of the place back Augé's assumption. However, the more often I visited the place the more personal the conversations became, which led to deeper relationships that developed beyond just salesman-customer contact. Strangers to the side, however, can choose to maintain their anonymity.

History plays an important role for every Sowetan citizen since it reminds them of the struggle against Apartheid which was fought in the name of the underprivileged blacks. In the case of Maponya's however, memories of better times also exist when sociopolitical and economic challenges were not perceived as harshly as afterwards. Narratives about the past, however positive or negative, are not reaffirmed through particular actions or displayed by objects at Maponya's. The place as it is today has the appearance of being exempt from history. Strangers, newcomers, and young people would not assume that violent riots took place on Mahalafele Road, or that the place evolved from a pleasant community spot to what it is today, a business area and taxi thoroughfare.

Presumably it is due to Augé's focus on the industrialized west that his categorizations of anthropological places and non-places seem to be very narrow and ethnocentric. He neglects the fact that urbanization and technology do in fact also play a role in developing countries. Nevertheless urban public spaces are planned and used differently around the world depending on the socio-economic, political, and cultural background of the sites. While some urban places are designed to be recreational sites or market places and used as such (like Setha Low's plazas), others emerge by the social actions of inhabitants and develop in an unplanned direction (like Maponya's).

Furthermore, Augé's reflections on anthropological and non-places are rather a theoretical construct than an applicable model as Augé indirectly points out himself by remarking that a non-place is an ideal prototype which is "never totally completed" (Augé 1995: 79). Augé is right in referring to the differences between rural and urban spaces as sites of anthropological fieldwork, but the question of whether Maponya's is anthropological or merely a non-place can not be answered. It holds features of non-places, namely its external appearance and the absence of rituals that reaffirm history, but at the same time the aforementioned relations and a certain notion of a place-identity evoked by spatial actions support a characterization of it as an anthropological place. The overall problem of Augé's concept is the omission of the social actions that happen in every urban place.

6 Conclusion

This last chapter provides an overview of the aspects that were studied at Maponya's and a conclusion of what can be assumed about the relation between inhabitants and the place.

In order to study the development of the public space of Maponya's, I first looked into the social production process of the place. All in all, Maponya's as a part of the dormitory of Soweto was initially not designed to evolve into a commercial area. "That place was never meant to be what it is today" (RI, urban planner and Orlando East resident Abe M., 17.09.07). No one envisaged long-term economic activity and growth in Soweto. The architecture and ideological urban planning were meant to deter blacks from urban life so they would not get comfortable and become permanent residents in the urban environment. However, cultural processes within the township overbore the intention of spatial enclosure and the omnipresent power of the Apartheid government. Other social and economic processes like the influx of foreigners, the rapid increase of informal business, and the opening of the Sowetan market to chain stores further contributed to the development of Maponya's despite the initial intentions. However, the physical setting, as well as the external social and economic impact plays a role in the status and social life at Maponya's.

Second, I explored aspects which reveal insight into the emic perspective by exploring the social construction of the place via an analysis of fieldwork data. It became obvious that the effects of substantial urban planning strategies which were implemented during Apartheid were still vivid in the users' attitude towards Maponya's. In talking about their daily venue for different routine activities like selling different products or services, changing taxis at the spot, and purchasing goods, they revealed a strong emotional distance to the place. Languidness, indifference, and even disgust, made clear that Maponya's is still not a place-to-be, but it is perceived to be a bare necessity with which to satisfy basic needs or to earn a living. This initially implies that the users of the place are not very attached to it. But through further investigation, Maponya's revealed itself to play an important role for: (1) aspects of identity, in the sense of appropriation and defense of "their", the residents' space; (2) social networks, in the form of financial support systems and for a certain degree of social cohesion within groups; and (3) collective action, in this case concerning crime prevention and mitigation.

The importance of Maponya's for the residents of adjacent areas were further disclosed when participants talked about their memories of the past. The place is linked to both positive and negative memories. It once served as a communal meeting point in the early

years of Apartheid as well as an arena for violent fights, such as the uprising of June 1976, or during the recurring riots of hostel dwellers. Both kinds of recollections employ typical aspects of the notion of memory. They are not always concordant with historical facts, but they construe the past in a manner that it serves the purpose of dealing with it. This relation between memory, place, and people shows a deep emotional embeddedness into the place and points out the role that Maponya's plays in individual and the collective identity.

The symbolic meaning of the place and its name, as a last aspect of the analysis of the fieldwork data, illustrated the transition of the place on a rather abstract level. Maponya's once was linked to community life, but lost its collective character completely. Today, Maponya's represents the difficulties of contemporary township life, in which the biggest hardships are keeping pace with economic changes and dealing with the challenges of democratic and liberal urban life.

To sum up the findings, Maponya's went from a pleasant communal meeting spot which was overdirected by Apartheid urban planning, to an arena for violent fights over political issues, to an uncontrolled, self-adjusting commercial area which is not contested publicly, but which can be seen as symptomatic of the many uncertainties Sowetans have to face in the "new" South Africa.

In general, the analysis shows that Maponya's had always been a contested space. If it was not the township population versus the state, it was the township population versus the hostel dwellers, or the township population versus the foreigners. Maponya's has thus always been in a state of a contestation over power of space. Setha Low, the guiding author for this study, says in regard to this kind of place that "contested spaces give material expression to and act as loci for creating and promulgating, countering and negotiating dominant cultural themes that find expression in myriad aspects of social life" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 245).

After referring to the ethnographic place studies of Setha Low on whose methodology this work was modeled, one has to admit that the research would have been methodologically and practically "easier" if a plaza would have been chosen comparable to Setha Low's Parque Central and Plaza de la Cultura in San José. Plazas are public spaces that are designed and planned to accommodate different people and are meant to serve the leisure and recreational activities of the users.

The research site at Maponya's though is a business spot where people tend to rush through in a hurry on their way to their actual destination, and where salesmen do their business, either legally or illegally, having neither the time nor the will to speak about the

place or their life. Soweto lacks plazas and in general lacks recreational sites. This is on the one hand due to Apartheid urban planning which was not meant to cater to the pleasant sides of life, and on the other hand globalizing economic forces that tend to create spaces aimed at economic profits and efficiency rather than enhancing the social life quality of the township's population. Concerning anthropological research aims, this means that "the linkage between public space and the globalizing political economy deserves closer scrutiny because societal mobilization about public space influences the shape of civil society and, by extension, democratic participation" (Low 2000: 238). Thus places like Maponya's, which are "settings for everyday urban life where daily interactions, economic exchanges, and informal conversations occur, creating a socially meaningful place" (Low 2000: 33), shape the urban experience of Sowetan residents. Public spaces reflect and have an impact on the whole society, especially in countries that happen to be democratizing like South Africa, and therefore need special attention in anthropological research.

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