

**Sonic Apartheid:**

**Ecoracism, Apartheid Geographies, and Noise Pollution in Cape Town's Blikkiesdorp**

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WTKALE003

A minor dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Masters of Philosophy in Environmental Humanities

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2019

**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## **Abstract**

In *Sonic Apartheid: Ecoracism, Apartheid Geographies, and Noise Pollution in Cape Town's Blikkiesdorp*, Alexandra Downing Watkins begins a project of mapping geographies of dispossession and abandonment in Blikkiesdorp (Afrikaans for “Tin Can Town”), a Temporary Relocation Area on the margins of Cape Town created in 2007 following a wave of mass evictions for the 2010 World Cup. After being created as a “temporary” solution, Blikkiesdorp remained a site of abandonment where evicted peoples, refugees, and other “undesirables” were sent to live. Seven years later, the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company of South Africa signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to realign one of the airport’s runways, which would serve to relocate the community. Following the story of strategic organising by the Blikkiesdorp community to be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment that was being instrumentalized to further displace them, this work examines the community’s struggle against conditions of abandonment through complicating the division of humans and the environment. This project engages with the mechanics of bio-, necro-, and geontopower, in contemporary South African environmental governance as an afterlife of apartheid spatial planning. The project features environmental research that was completed in cooperation with community members who shared their experiential environmental knowledge through interviews and diary entries as well as compiling decibel readings of excessive noise pollution. This data along with noise pollution diaries, photographs, and interviews has been compiled and placed in a digital archive in the form of an open-source ArchGIS Story Map. Combining theory and research contributed by the Blikkiesdorp community with the contemporary theoretical language of new materialism and critical race theory, this work engages with the porosity of bodies, the co-imbrication of bodies and landscape, how the creation of an “alternative social project” can serve to disturb and resist evidence-based technoscience and processes of ecoracist governance.

## **Acknowledgements**

My deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Anna Selmeczi, for guiding me compassionately and backing me every step of the way. I could not have done it without you.

To my supervisor, Lesley Green, for encouraging me to ask the right questions.

To Bernadet De Kock for her time and patience, for sharing her knowledge and telling her story.

To Jerome Daniels for showing me through Blikkiesdorp and teaching me its history.

To my mother, Denise Watkins, for rooting for me from halfway across the world, always keeping the faith and remaining unwavering in her support.

To Codi Carelse, for being unequivocally patient and supportive, and for helping me cultivate a community in my research process.

And to Daniel Berti, for growing with me and always pushing me to be ethical in my relationships to others.

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## Introduction

“The Environmental Impact Assessment says that everything that is living is the environment. Now how can you exclude Blikkiesdorp from that Environmental Impact Assessment? If you exclude human beings, then what do you think of Blikkiesdorp? So, there is that trust line between the community and the city again. No trust anymore.”<sup>1</sup>

- Jerome Daniels

This work is an aggregation of stories told about the spaces of encounter between the audible and the invisible in Blikkiesdorp<sup>2</sup>, a Temporary Relocation Area created through processes of Late Liberal<sup>3</sup> governance of the environment and racialized bodies in Cape Town, South Africa. These processes of governance are something I will refer to in this piece as *sonic apartheid*. Attempting to communicate these encounters with the invisible has manifested in a series of strategically curated political discourses or those advocating for sufficient housing in the proposed housing scheme. This project, taken up by the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company of South Africa after their furtive attempt to relocate the Blikkiesdorp community in order to realign Cape Town International’s main airstrip. These discourses exist at the fulcrum of acceptable means of Late Liberal representation, and the continual analysis of truth within normative ways of validating knowledge. The aforesaid quote comes from Jerome Daniels, a community organizer and activist who initially challenged the processes of environmental governance that would serve to further displace the Blikkiesdorp community in order to move the Cape Town International Airstrip.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome Daniels in (2015). “*Is Blikkies Home*” [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

<sup>2</sup> Blikkiesdorp is formally named the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area. I refer to the space as its colloquial name, meaning “tin can town” in Afrikaans, to respect its local place-name. Though there are many “blikkiesdorps” in South Africa, this name carries its own significance in the local political discourse in Cape Town.

<sup>3</sup> Here, I use Elizabeth Povinelli’s concept of “Late Liberalism” to point to the difference between the governance of markets and what she calls the “governance of difference.” I believe that this is a more apt way of understanding the ways in which Blikkiesdorp residents relate to processes of power, as the very nature of its existence lies within structures of state-issued housing measures. I will elaborate this in later chapters.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Although the theoretical thrust of the thesis is interspliced throughout all three chapters, I offer here a road map of the subject matter of each chapter in order to differentiate their respective relevance to the main arguments. In Chapter I, the main focus is to elucidate the history and context of the various social actors, spaces, and events that created, surround and make up Blikkiesdorp. In addition to this, the first Chapter seeks to encourage the reader to complicate the perceived division between the human-inhabited urban space of Cape Town and the environment and to introduce the argument by Blikkiesdorp residents that they should be considered in processes of environmental governance that served to displace them. The above quote by Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee member Jerome Daniels acts as its own theoretical contribution, one that ignited this inquiry into governance of Life and Nonlife. This chapter is mainly set up to begin the process of dealing with the core thesis which focuses on “denaturalizing the dichotomy between human and non-human (or life and nonlife) and how these categories are created and maintained as sites to be governed” such that “the interconnectedness of these human-nonhuman sites renders Blikkiesdorp a space of encounter between the community and the effects of invasive and injurious forces – some tangible some not.” The concepts of “bio-, necro- and geontopower” are all introduced in this chapter to be further engaged with throughout the course of the thesis.

In Chapter II, the “case” of Blikkiesdorp is introduced in order to continue the process of unpacking such a large number of concepts, spaces and actors, giving the reader a heuristic means to interpret how these entities relate to and are governed. Chapter II features a section on “stakeholderism” that maps out the hierarchies implicit in modes of governance, and links them to the legal and material particularities of the “case” and how they are contextualised in the history of environmental governance in South Africa. I refer to the “case” of Blikkiesdorp using quotation marks to help the reader identify the intertwined actors, spaces and events, link them to the theory and evidence presented in the chapter, and guide them through the chronological unfolding of Blikkiesdorp’s convoluted history. Chapter III then attempts to bring the “case”

of Blikkiesdorp together with a diverse spectrum of contemporary theory – ranging from the contributions by critical Black geographers to the work of new materialist thinkers in conjunction with anecdotal and narrative-based contributions from community members read theoretically. The Chapter seeks to bring together a close reading of the political phenomena surrounding the “case” of Blikkiesdorp with broader experiential knowledge of the community. The GIS mapping project, screen-grabbed and referenced throughout the thesis, includes this community based environmental knowledge in order for the contributions to be understood in their spatial context. Ultimately, the thesis calls for further engagement with the project that is creating and cultivating knowledge with communities on the long-term. At its core, the thesis argues that, by complicating the division between humans and the environment, the Blikkiesdorp community has cultivated epistemologies that are informed by interactions and entanglements with the material world, and these ways of knowing can have massive implications on political, ethical, and epistemological theoretical initiatives that go beyond frameworks of the division between Life and Nonlife.

Jerome Daniels’ quote guides my research into the ways the Blikkiesdorp community tells their stories about experiences with sonic apartheid. In a personal interview, Jerome commented on the ways these political discourses emerged through the struggle against displacement:

No one actually knew they were being affected by noise or anything else before this whole thing happened. I never thought in my mind that I’m being affected by noise pollution until we went to the airport consultants that did the environmental impact assessment. When all this information came out then we had a better idea of what was going on and what is actually affecting us here.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 23, 2017.

The need to appeal to frameworks of liberal justice is itself a focus of this work - scientific evidence-based knowledge versus the claims of the community about their experiences that have come together to make their own epistemological futures. Appeals to the truth about noise pollution in Blikkiesdorp abound - is the exposure to excessive noise pollution really *that* harmful? Whose accounts of noise pollution do we believe? The Blikkiesdorp community interpret their experiences with noise among many other environmental hazards to locate and diagnose their own ailments through processes of experiential knowledge-making. Jo-Ann Cupido of the former Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee expresses her frustration with noise pollution in the documentary *Is Blikkies Home?*, saying that “we recently lost a person who died from this vibration where the electricity totally switched off and what happens is when a plane comes heavily down and your structure vibrates, the electricity box totally splits.”<sup>5</sup> Jerome noted that indeed, those living at the back of Blikkiesdorp, closer to the Cape Town International runway had experienced more extreme effects than others living closer to Symphony Way. He noted that, “hearing the noise from the planes is more like an echo - during the day there is a lot of noise going around so the only times you actually can tell you’re hearing the planes is at night when it’s quiet.”<sup>6</sup> Beginning to engage with the issues of truth, storytelling, and knowledge-making around experiences with noise pollution guides this work. The political discourse I follow is one of the community strategically aligning themselves with and within the material world to be considered in processes of Late Liberal environmental governance.

The processes of developing environmental knowledge in Blikkiesdorp have manifested as everyday practices - plugging up the edges of shacks to keep the elements out and vibration to a minimum. Saudiek Williams notes that,

Our house is very shaky - the zinc structure makes vibration and we try to stop it. The noise is every day and night. It

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<sup>5</sup> Jo-Ann Cupido in (2015). *“Is Blikkies Home”* [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

<sup>6</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 23, 2017.

has been here since we moved in 10 years ago. It affects our family and our community. My mother was a heart patient, my stepfather is an old man and on medication. Sometimes we all are shook if a car sounds loud or if aeroplanes are flying very low over our place, then the dogs are barking a lot and the cats get scared and hide. We can't watch television or movies, we can't play music, our structure is always shaking because of the vibration of cars and aeroplanes. It is becoming worse as more people move into Blikkiesdorp. More children, noises, cars and sounds, more aeroplanes and trucks affect us.<sup>7</sup>

Moneeb Miller notes in this noise pollution diary (translated from Afrikaans),

Ja, so now, (the noise), it is very bad, it is almost as if there is an aeroplane landing right overhead. The cups, plates and saucers make a noise. Sometimes, if the aeroplanes fly overhead quick enough, the crockery we have fall and break. Because the City made more place for more and more people. People have no respect. Sometimes they fight and they fall against your place or we can hear everything they say when they're shouting. Trucks and cars drive so quickly and they make our places move, and the stones hit against the plates (of the tin shacks.)<sup>8</sup>

Cheryl-Lynn Jafta tells about the effects of noise pollution on her health, saying that,

We hear noise every day and night. The cars are idling next to my home, people play loud music and my place vibrates with the bass. People shout at each other. Sometimes we are sleeping and wake up because of fightings outside. Aeroplanes fly almost on top of my place and its very scary.

I am a heart patient. Sometimes I'm very shaky and stressed out because I am on medication. I must take sleeping tablets if I want a proper sleep. The community complains but it's all on deaf ears. The city don't do anything. They want us to

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<sup>7</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, Moneeb. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 15, 2018.

be satisfied with noise and everything here. Where we used to live, it was not like this. There was noise of dogs and kids but not so bad like here in Blikkies. My house is shaky and vibrates if aeroplanes fly very low over my place.<sup>9</sup>

The constant process of patching and fixing structures, patching and fixing bodies, picking up broken plates and reconnecting electricity and plumbing have served to provide a day-to-day practice from which to continuously learn. Manoeuvring through this constant upkeep keeps the breakdown at bay - hearts and zinc sheets and eardrums and crockery needing to make it through the next little while. Sharing tips on how to keep roofs from leaking, keep houses insulated from sound and cold, and keep children healthy remains a full-time job in Blikkiesdorp. Everything must go on and everyone is obligated to participate in the project of making it so.

Public discourse on the goings-on in Blikkiesdorp has been focused on the shocking aspects of living there, and indeed, there are many. Conversations with community members often tilt towards the direction of the life-or-death situations they find themselves in rather than the everyday violence of constant repair - these stories are seen as too slow for a situation so dire. Talking about stones and sand blowing against your shack doesn't seem like the angle to take when advocating for a new house. Bernadet De Kock notes that "the politicians come during election season and the reporters come when there's a crisis."<sup>10</sup> In addition to questioning whether or not noise pollution was a big enough issue to do research on, most of those who I interviewed questioned how this research would help them. Would it get the houses built any faster or make any of the immediate threats of gang violence go away? When everyone wants to get out, and the space is meant to truly be temporary, examining Blikkiesdorp came with many contradictions. Producing a project out of a space that mainly represented a non-home to most of its inhabitants came across as counter-intuitive. Temporality and quasi-homelessness were ever-present realities for many of my

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<sup>9</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 30, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

participants, and those who had left Blikkiesdorp in the process recounted their experiences just from memory. One of my interviewees, Cheryl-Lynn, and her partner live in a backyard shack with their children after fleeing Blikkiesdorp for the adjacent township of Delft. “This house is pretty much the same as in Blikkies,” she told me when I went to visit,

the walls don’t touch the floor and its always cold and shakes in the wind and rain. The television connection is always being interrupted by vibrations that keep us up at night. We have to pay 500 rand to stay per month here and it’s almost impossible. The landlord is taking advantage of us because we are desperate. If we didn’t have to pay rent in Delft, it would have been better to live there - it is at least closer to schools and transport.<sup>11</sup>

Many interviewees said that if you can take what you want from Blikkies, there would be nothing keeping you there. Those other members of the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee who left citing racial violence have voiced their concerns only for the possibility of still keeping their names on the housing list, hoping to still be considered in the housing project that will relocate members of Blikkiesdorp and the surrounding informal settlements of Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm. Ground Up News’ Mary Ann Gontsana reported on the situation, saying,

Mayco Member for Human Settlements Malusi Booi told GroundUp: “The City’s Human Settlements Directorate has identified two sites along Symphony Way, which will be developed for state-subsidised Breaking New Ground (BNG) housing to enable the relocation of Blikkiesdorp residents, but given the scale of the development, this process will take a few years to be fully completed.

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<sup>11</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

... Booi said the City would comply with the court order which stated that “the applicants, who are already identified as possible beneficiaries of the proposed scheme at Symphony Way, are guaranteed their continued inclusion in the selection process”.

But, he said, specific dates for the construction and completion of the project were not available because environmental and town planning processes had to be completed.<sup>12</sup>

Jerome Daniels noted the ways in which the new steering committee held the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company of South Africa to the agreements for rehousing the Blikkiesdorp community after the disbanding of the original Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee, saying that,

What the community actually did with all these things (after the BJC disbanded) - wow it was a huge meeting here in Blikkies - people said ok now we want a new committee. They re-elected me as the chairperson. I didn't actually want to but I was there and they knew me. There was about one or two from the earlier BJC as well. There were familiar faces that the city knew, that ACSA knew, and that made a huge difference actually, because they couldn't now say this and this and this and this (changing the former agreements). If we weren't there they would have switched things up they would have changed their whole story.

They could have just turned people out and move the airstrip. It would cost them less but we were there so they couldn't do anything. It was like this whole mayor thing with Patricia De Lille being out and there's a new MAYCO member named Malusi Booi. He came here one day, had a big meeting here and then made up his own story, like he was talking about surrounding the policies of the City of Cape Town. But we said we made agreements about the policies surrounding this project. Now he comes again with policies, so then we take him back and say no, no, no. We don't care about your infighting with the DA, man. Agreements were made that time with De Lille and you have to honour them now. They were signed. If you play it like that then we can just as well say we're going to chuck that MOA between ACSA and the City away. Because the MOA is binding you to some things, binding us to some things and we made

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<sup>12</sup> Gontsana, Mary-Anne. “The Long Wait for New Housing for Blikkiesdorp Families.” GroundUp News, November 8, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/long-wait-new-housing-blikkiesdorp-families/>.

agreements inside that MOA - you were trying to only talk about people that qualify for (City issued) housing and we said no, it must be all Blikkiesdorp people. And now we believe that in the next five years, the airstrip will be realigned. The housing project must be done in the next three years.<sup>13</sup>

The struggle for sufficient and stable housing, employment, and decent schooling for children coincide with the processes of environmental decision-making for those who were moved to Blikkiesdorp. The issues that community members voiced in our interviews were always mentioned with the doubt that they would amount to anything useful. What would talking about environmental issues help in the times when homes were being petrol bombed and accused drug dealers were being stoned in the street? How does the slow hum of airport noise compare when casspirs<sup>14</sup> are rolling down the street?

The process of creating a project that centered these environmental issues and the community-based environmental knowledge that arose from them was a process of saying that it wasn't about any one thing, it was about everything. At the beginning of my research I found that asking questions that were heavily focused on what was deemed an environmental issue tended to tilt the answers in certain directions. After this, the guiding question when asking people about their experiences became, "what if everything mattered?" Blikkiesdorp is constantly straining against the assumption that their experience should be measured against rock bottom (homelessness, starvation, death), and the modes and levels of measuring suffering remain dictated by a persistent look to scientific reason. The constant effort to gauge the suffering of the bereft remains grid-locked in these assumptions, specifically the assumption that bodies and the

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<sup>13</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. December 10, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Casspirs are mine-resistant, ambush protected war vehicles used by the apartheid state. They remain in use in South Africa by hyper-militarized police and army as an emergency intervention measure against protesters and most recently during peak gang violence in the Cape Flats in 2019. I go further into their significance in Chapter III.

material world are in no way connected. As Sharad Chari notes in his piece, when talking to a community member in the “toxic valley of South Durban, that,

her appeals to God, population pressure, and family values may have been strategic, but they provided an opportunity for a sharp lambaste against the political inactivity of the men around her, as well as against the idioms of struggle through which politics had been conventionally construed. Ideas of purity and pollution pervade her comments, despite a lack of reference to oil refineries.<sup>15</sup>

Blikkiesdorp reminds us that, even for a short while, bodies cannot transcend landscape. If everything matters, we can hear stories of affliction and see the invisible effect of what sounds upon Blikkiesdorp, and begin to holistically understand how the community has come to thwart the constant barrage of violence.

## Method

The materialization of an “alternative social project”<sup>16</sup> was the central concern of my methodological process. Described by Povinelli as initiatives that “aggregate life diagonal to hegemonic ways of life,”<sup>17</sup> the alternative social project of gathering noise pollution data in Blikkiesdorp is an effort to engage critically with processes of environmental governance in a way that can “become more than merely persistence.”<sup>18</sup> Producing ecological knowledge with community members through empirical research processes of interviewing people<sup>19</sup> and asking community members to diarize their lived experiences of ecoracism in all

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<sup>15</sup> Chari, Sharad. *Detritus in Durban: Polluted Environs and the Biopolitics of Refusal* in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*. Edited by Ann Laura Stoler. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> The interviews I conducted were with current residents of Blikkiesdorp as well as with those who left Blikkiesdorp within the last few months. Those still living in Blikkiesdorp mostly walked out to the adjacent township of Delft to meet due to issues of their own safety. Interviewees that had since left were mostly living in backyard structures for which they paid rent as a reluctant alternative to enduring the conditions in Blikkiesdorp. I also conducted a phone interview with Alison Tilley, the former head of advocacy and special projects at the Open Democracy Advice Centre and one of the key contributors to the initial report by Right 2 Know on the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company South Africa.

its forms guides my analysis. Diaries included prompting questions about noise pollution related health issues such as hearing issues, heart issues, and stress, whether or not the noise pollution has gotten worse since living in Blikkiesdorp, how the noise affects housing structures and non-human animals, and the ways noise affects interviewees and their families emotionally. The diaries were written by hand by many interviewees, though we often correspond via whatsapp for follow-up questions and updates about living conditions. The theoretical makeup of the paper, in terms of the academic work that I engage with throughout, is included in dialogue with the interview-based local knowledge that I have included here. My framing of the research presented here, and what it can provide in terms of understanding the porosity of bodies and the material world, the blurry boundaries between these two interpretable entities and the subsequent governance on the basis of their perceived separation, can find resonance in the literature of the various scholars I draw upon in this work. The constellation of knowledge produced here is made up of stories. As community members tell their stories, “constantly retelling and rereading the space”,<sup>20</sup> in terms of their own experiences, the ecological knowledge of Blikkiesdorp has been subsequently created. Although more quantitative research in the form of sound decibel readings were completed by community members in order to further engage in a multiplicity of forms of knowledge production, my analysis does not rely on the viability of evidence-based scientific data to prove the hazardousness of environmental living conditions in Blikkiesdorp. Rejecting a top-down form of knowledge production, whether through evidence-based scientific knowledge or through legitimating the community’s experiential knowledge through the use of social science theory, is a core principle of the project. Though there is no way to fully eradicate the power dynamics present in the researcher/contributor relationship, I aimed to keep the interview processes as informal as possible and refrained from juxtaposing the community’s accounts against news articles, previous research done in the area, or political discourses on Blikkiesdorp. The processes of mapping and

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<sup>20</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

digitally archiving local epistemological knowledge is based around the process of providing a means of creating other processes of resisting abandonment and alternatives to being made to participate in representational democratic processes. Anna Selmeczi's work with the Abahlali baseMjondolo shack-dwellers movement examines the ways in which community members create epistemes as "professor(s) of (their) own suffering," noting that

With their experiences rendered as knowledge, the same authority enables the shack-dwellers to alter the material patterns of urban biopolitics. Under the banner of another often sounded motto of theirs – "Those who feel it, should lead it!" – they demand to be parties to every decision or plan that affects their homes.<sup>21</sup>

Jacob Bryant also notes the ways in which Abahlali's political narrative asserted the ways knowledge was produced in the settlement by painting banners reading "the University of Kennedy Road,"

declaring the settlements to be places of learning even as they are places of suffering, and their residents to be people worth listening to. When Bahlali speak of their movement, as often as anything else, they speak of it in terms of learning and, more subtly, of consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

Following the work of academics like Selmeczi and Povinelli, this research is focused on illustrating the ways in which the community has created expert knowledge through material interchange between their bodies and the surrounding landscape. This research aims to engage the community's expert knowledge and the theory has created, and to interweave it with pre-existing literature and research by other on-the-ground experts and academics in order to contribute to the articulation and materialization of alternative social projects(s).

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<sup>21</sup> Selmeczi, Anna. "Abahlali's Vocal Politics of Proximity: Speaking, Suffering and Political Subjectivization." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 47, no. 5 (October 2012): 498–515. doi:10.1177/0021909612452703.

<sup>22</sup> Bryant, Jacob. "Abahlali's Narrative." *Abahlali BaseMjondolo*, 21 Sept. 2007, <http://abahlali.org/node/2458/>.

My research process initially involved contacting some members of the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee (BJC) in 2017, a group of community organizers that dissolved in 2018 when some families left following the petrol bombings of homes and lethal stoning of suspected drug dealers in the area. Some members of the original BJC left with their families citing racial tension and threats of violence and sought shelter in Cape Town's Central Methodist Church.<sup>23</sup> I subsequently lost touch with most of the people I interviewed initially and as conflict in the area increased, many community members said that they preferred to walk out of Blikkiesdorp to meet me in Delft on the other side of Symphony Way. Some families moved into backyard spaces in Delft in order to get out of Blikkiesdorp and struggled to pay rent without sufficient means of income and similar housing conditions to those in Blikkiesdorp. In July 2019, the South African National Defence Force entered the Delft area as an emergency gang-related crime intervention,<sup>24</sup> which further made the ability for community members to move through the area without being profiled and regularly searched by army and police.<sup>25</sup> Much of our correspondence took place over text and Whatsapp and noise pollution diaries were handwritten by participants and collected with the help of Bernadet De Kock. Bernadet was one of the community members who occupied Symphony Way in 2007 and one of the first to move her family into Blikkiesdorp when it was first built. She has been a main contributor to this project and it could not have been completed without her time, emotional and intellectual labour.

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<sup>23</sup> Gontsana, Mary-Anne, and Ashraf Hendricks. "Residents Expelled from Blikkiesdorp amidst Racial Tensions." GroundUp News, October 11, 2018. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/blikkiesdorp/>.

<sup>24</sup> Brandt, Kevin . "Nothing Much Has Changed since SANDF Deployment, Say Delft Residents." Eyewitness News, September 13, 2019. <https://ewn.co.za/2019/09/13/nothing-much-has-changed-since-sandf-deployment-say-delft-residents>.

<sup>25</sup> "Mixed Reaction to Cape Flats Army Deployment." YouTube. SABC News, July 19, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDb9aoyFLsE>.



A painting of Blikkiesdorp in Bernadet De Kock's house in Delft

Decibel readings were completed by various community members during multiple times of the day and in various areas of Blikkiesdorp. The recordings were documented by community members by taking photos and video of the decibel reader with their smartphones. This data along with noise pollution diaries, photographs, and interviews has been compiled and placed in a digital archive in the form of an ArchGIS Story Map. The map also contains data from the original Environmental Impact Assessment conducted by SRK Consulting,<sup>26</sup> including the current noise contour of the Cape Town International airstrip, the new noise contour of the airstrip project that is meant to begin in 2020<sup>27</sup>, and the maximum decibel readings taken during the assessment. This data was compiled and placed onto an interactive GIS map by local non-profit civic technology lab Code4SA for the Open Democracy Advice Center so community members can

<sup>26</sup> Cape Town International Airport Runway Re-Alignment EIA. SRK Consulting, n.d. <https://www.srk.co.za/en/za-cape-town-international-airport-runway-re-alignment-eia>.

<sup>27</sup> De Villiers, James. "This Is What Cape Town Airport Will Look like in 2023 – after R7 Billion Goes into New Runways and Departure Lounges." Business Insider South Africa, February 6, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/cape-town-international-airport-r7-billion-expansion-2019-2>.

access information on how the new airstrip would affect where they live.<sup>28</sup> I used this open-source code<sup>29</sup> to create my own story map that would also include research conducted by community members along with their diaries of experiential and embodied environmental knowledge. This mapping project was created with the hope that it could grow to become useful beyond this thesis as a digital archive that would cultivate and aggregate locally-produced knowledge of the landscape. The continued impact of this knowledge on the long-term is a central focus of this research.

The map can be accessed here: <https://arcg.is/K404C>

### **Glossary of Terms:**

To ease the navigation of the complex set of actors and spaces cited in the thesis, please refer to the list below:

- Airports Company South Africa (ACSA): Received approval from the City of Cape Town to use the public land on which Blikkiesdorp was located to realign the Cape Town International airstrip. ACSA hired SRK Consulting to conduct the Environmental Impact Assessment that excluded Blikkiesdorp community members, giving the go-ahead for the airstrip realignment and the

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<sup>28</sup> “Cape Town Airport Noise Checker.” Code for South Africa. Accessed October 30, 2019. <http://airportnoise.code4sa.org/>.

<sup>29</sup> Code4SA. “Cape Town Airport Runway Noise Impact”. <https://github.com/Code4SA/cpt-noise>

subsequent displacement of the community. Though the original plan included an entirely new airstrip, activists from the community and local NGO's were able to ensure that there would be no new airstrip, only the realignment of the current one.

- Blikkiesdorp: Afrikaans for “Tin Can Town,” although there are many “blikkiesdorps” around the country, when used this name refers specifically to the space the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area.
- Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee (BJC): A committee created by the Blikkiesdorp community to respond to housing issues in the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area. Though the research completed in the thesis features members of the BJC from 2017 to 2019, there was a large rearrangement of members of the committee following political conflicts that arose in October 2018.
- Delft: The larger township area that surrounds Blikkiesdorp, spanning from Cape Town International Airport, Belhar, Blue Downs, and Site C, Khayelitsha.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): A process of deducing the environmental impacts that a development or project would have on a given space, including the socio-economic, cultural and human health impacts.
- Open Democracy Advice Centre (ODAC): One of the non-profit organisations who worked with Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee to the gain access to information and meetings regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment and Blikkiesdorp's proposed displacement, as well as actively cease the creation of a second runway (Phase 2 development) to instead opt to realign the current runway, and to secure a promise of new housing provided by the City of Cape Town for displaced Blikkiesdorp residents.
- The Right to Know Campaign (R2K): A non-profit organisation that originally pushed for the 2014 Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company South

Africa, which would serve to move the Blikkiesdorp community in order to expand the airport, be released to the public. They continued to draw attention to the issue alongside the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee, Open Democracy Advice Center, Legal Resources Centre and the Community Law Centre

- SRK Consulting: The international mining consulting firm hired by the Airports Company of South Africa to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment addressing the moving of the Cape Town International Airport airstrip.
- Symphony Way: A main road in Delft, running North to South through the township along the Eastern side of Cape Town International Airport.
- Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area: Created in response to the Symphony Way pavement dwellers movement (also known as the Delft-Symphony Anti-Eviction Campaign) that began in 2007 and went until 2009. Those occupying on Symphony Way were community members of the over 1500 families who were forcibly evicted from the N2 Gateway Housing project. In response to the occupation, the City of Cape Town created the Symphony Way Temporary Relocation Area (Blikkiesdorp) to house these families, originally situated East and directly adjacent to the Cape Town International Airport.

## **Chapter I: (Bio/Necro)political Struggle, Geontopower and “Capturing Science” in Blikkiesdorp**

Late Liberal capitalism has created a new means of “capturing science,”<sup>30</sup> an approach to ‘science’ based less on actual science than on the capture of scientific authority.<sup>31</sup> This, in turn, allows for a way of using evidence collected by private consulting firms to push through development projects and

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<sup>30</sup> Green, Lesley. Personal communication. 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Solomon, Nikiwe, Lesley Green, Jo Barnes, and Leslie Petrik. "Environmental management needs to be democratised." *Daily Maverick*, March 6, 2019. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-03-06-environmental-management-needs-to-be-democratised/>.

environmental policies that reflect the desires of political parties and ruling power structures. A good example of this is the Runway Realignment Environmental Impact Assessment, conducted by SRK Consulting, as it shows some of the ways in which scientific “evidence” is bound up in social and economic forces. The Memorandum of Understanding that was carried out between the Airports Company of South Africa (ACSA) and the City of Cape Town in 2014 reflects some of the ways in which these forces are able to utilise scientific means to create large-scale projects without consulting, or even informing, those affected.<sup>32</sup> In this chapter, I: 1) engage with the modern scientific episteme that places Blikkiesdorp outside of the realm of what is considered the “environment”; 2) point to the influence of historical geographies of racial segregation and ongoing settler-colonialism as informing ideologies of exclusion; 3) examine the political criteria for what constitutes a stakeholder in Late Liberal and neoliberal market-based environmental governance; and 4) move to denaturalise the captured science of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Examining Michel Foucault’s notion of “*biopolitics*”, Achille Mbembe’s “*necropolitics*”, and Elizabeth Povinelli’s “*geontopower*” and “*Late Liberalism*”, I look at how the Blikkiesdorp community has been subjected to what Rob Nixon calls the “*slow violence*”<sup>33</sup> of long-term exposure to excessive noise pollution. In a time that Povinelli calls “Late Liberalism,” an era “which can here be understood as the governance of social difference in the wake of the anticolonial movements and the emergence of new social movements”,<sup>34</sup> I aim to examine the ways what Blikkiesdorp has been made to straddle political assertions to be seen as “human” in human rights discourse and “environment” in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The intellectual contributions from community members highlight the ways in which this political journey has

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<sup>32</sup> Knoetze, Daneel. "Secrecy shrouds Blikkiesdorp relocation plans." *Ground Up*, September 25, 2014. [https://www.groundup.org.za/article/secrecy-shrouds-blikkiesdorp-relocation-plans\\_2278/](https://www.groundup.org.za/article/secrecy-shrouds-blikkiesdorp-relocation-plans_2278/).

<sup>33</sup> Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbsgw>.

<sup>34</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

been traversed, and how the knowledge produced along the way constitutes its own theoretical project.

### **Is Urban Cape Town the Environment?**

The guiding question of my research and dissertation engages with Jerome Daniels's question of why the community of Blikkiesdorp were not considered part of the environment in the Environmental Impact Assessment – a decision that led to the City of Cape Town giving ACSA permission to move the Cape Town International airstrip into the Blikkiesdorp area. Daniels engages with the community's exclusion in the documentary when asking why Blikkiesdorp was not included as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment<sup>35</sup> in the documentary *Is Blikkies Home?* I draw upon this sentiment by Jerome Daniels in order to address the ways in which Blikkiesdorp constitutes what Mariana Peterson calls “indefinite urbanism”, a term she uses to “attend to the porous boundaries between that which is hard and that which is airy, considering spaces shaped by atmospheric conditions and now invisible histories as a dimension of lived urbanism”.<sup>36</sup>

The struggle for the community to be considered in decisions relegated to the “airy” provides an important avenue into the internal environmental metabolism of urban space in Cape Town. The unique nature of Blikkiesdorp, a place where zinc shacks, marginalised bodies and airspace converge, is a site of encounter that exemplifies the hazy borders between what exists in the public imaginary as the environment and the urban, as well as between the body and the environment. Levi Bryant writes that “humans are objects among other objects, and that their capacities are shaped on a landscape of objects”,<sup>37</sup> exploring a blurring that is distinct but also related to the “airy” boundaries of Peterson's *indefinite urbanism*.<sup>38</sup> Bryant's exploration of object oriented ontology provides a metaphysical claim about the ways perception and sense regulates our knowledge of the world outside of us. He notes that, “ideology presents the structure and

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<sup>35</sup> Jerome Daniels in (2015). *"Is Blikkies Home"* [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

<sup>36</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>37</sup> Bryant, Levi. *The Democracy of Objects*. Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

organization of the social world as the inevitable and natural order of things, such that other arrangements are impossible."<sup>39</sup> If the airy spaces, zinc shacks, dust, bodies and landscape shape one another through an interplay of meshing, merging and clashing, how do we create a knowledge of this world outside? The discourse of whether or not the urban represents the environment is an important part of engaging with the material world as something outside of its symbolic significance. The world that is for people and the world outside or separate from that are acting upon one another in a multitude of ways. The ways the landscape and body act upon one another is in no way universal and the perceivability of these effects is maneuvered by a number of factors.

The Blikkiesdorp community's struggle to be considered part of the Environmental Impact Assessment has been well documented over the past few years. The Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee, in alliance with the Open Democracy Advice Centre, the Right 2 Know Campaign, the Legal Resources Centre and the Community Law Centre were able to gain access to meetings regarding their displacement, as well as actively cease the creation of a second runway (Phase 2 development) which would put various communities in the flight path of disproportionate amounts of noise pollution. A steering committee representing the Blikkiesdorp community has, in the meanwhile, agreed to a new housing project that will move the community further into Delft, though the process was not confirmed to be moving along until quite recently.<sup>40</sup> With the airstrip being projected for realignment in 2019,<sup>41</sup> and as the current project remains ongoing, the future of the community has been decided upon but could still be heavily affected by adverse factors. Additionally, while the housing project can offer more stable structures with concrete floors and walls to those who qualify for housing, the houses are projected to lie in the path of excessive noise

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<sup>39</sup> Bryant, Levi. *The Democracy of Objects*. Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Mlama, Sisonke. "Blikkiesdorp residents frustrated by delays in RDP housing development." *IOL*, June 21, 2018. <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/blikkiesdorp-residents-frustrated-by-delays-in-rdp-housing-development-15598710>.

<sup>41</sup> Brophy, Selene. "UPDATE: Cape Town's new runway approved." *News24*. Last modified February 1, 2018. <https://www.traveller24.com/News/Flights/update-cape-towns-new-runway-approved-20180201>.

pollution coming from the realigned airstrip.<sup>42</sup> Those who do not qualify<sup>43</sup> to be on the housing list will be offered site and service options where water and electricity are provided, but the top home structure will have to be assembled by the families themselves. As Jerome Daniels noted in my introduction, those who would be allocated to site-and-service areas do not want to disassemble and move “blikkies” – the future of their housing situation remains uncertain, however. Site and service housing originated as a neoliberal self-help housing plan promoted by the World Bank to deal with the poverty-fueled housing crises around the world.<sup>44</sup> The Blikkiesdorp project will provide families deemed non-eligible for city housing to be given the means to erect their own houses in an area nearby. In South Africa, this normally means the recrudescence of metal shack dwellings. Blikkiesdorp residents complain that the current shacks shake from wind and air

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<sup>42</sup> “How will Blikkiesdorp be affected by the new Airport?” Open Democracy Advice Center. Accessed October 28, 2019. <https://www.opendemocracy.org/za/index.php/blog/139-how-will-blikkiesdorp-be-affected-by-the-new-airport>.

<sup>43</sup> The Western Cape Government lists the requirements for the housing list as follows:

- You must have been on the municipal housing demand database for a minimum period of 10 years. (Proof of registration required.)
- Priority will be given to applicants over the age of 40 years and / or with special needs.
- You are married or living with a long-term partner / or you are single or divorced with others who rely on your income.
- You are a South African citizen or you have a permanent resident's permit.
- You are over 18 years of age or if under 18, married or divorced with others who rely on your income.
- Your monthly household income before deductions is less than R3 500.
- You or your partner have never received a subsidy from the government.
- You or your partner have never owned property.
- You and your family will live on the property bought with the subsidy.

“All You Need to Know about Housing Subsidies.” Department of Human Settlements, Western Cape Government, November 8, 2018. <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/all-you-need-know-about-housing-subsidies>.

<sup>44</sup> Marie Huchzermeyer’s work elaborates on this history of how site-and-service schemes were adopted and implemented in South Africa following the National Housing Forum of 1992 after a push by the Urban Foundation to “create... a standardised serviced site financed through a once off capital subsidy.” What followed was the creation of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) through a subsidy of R2 billion which began the implementation of serviced sites over the next four years. “How were the IDT sites and services projects received?... With regard to this debate, it is worth noting that the IDT (with the Development Bank of South Africa, DBSA) had an explicit strategy of influencing the future South African housing policy through this forum (Nuttall, 1997, p. 107). The IDT then responded to criticisms of its sites and services projects accordingly. One criticism, which it seemingly did not contest, was the allegation that the capital subsidy scheme had perpetuated the spatially segregated urban form (Nuttall, 1997, p. 196). This concern, though raised, was not resolved in the National Housing Forum debates. Analyses of the National Housing Forum activities (Adler & Oelofse, 1996; Lalloo, 1999) have associated the Forum's failure to address the spatial implications of the IDT's capital subsidy model with manipulation of the Forum's activities by the National Party government. It is argued that by allocating development funding to the Forum and requiring it to grapple with decisions about immediate implementation, the government distracted the Forum from the longer-term questions of urban spatial restructuring (Adler & Oelofse, 1996, p. 121; Lalloo, 1999, p. 40). The perpetuation of spatial segregation through a housing policy that is largely modelled on the IDT capital subsidy scheme remains a serious challenge to this day (Dewar, 1999; Citizen, 1999).”

Huchzermeyer, M. (2001). Housing for the poor? Negotiated housing policy in South Africa. *Habitat International*, 25(3), 303–331. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-3975\(00\)00037-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-3975(00)00037-0)

traffic, that the noise of the airplanes wakes them up at night, and that the cold and dust penetrate the zinc structures.<sup>45</sup> In an update released in November 2019, after the breaking-up of the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee, the airstrip project is going to be continued under a new steering committee.<sup>46</sup> ACSA's Diedre Davids commented to Ground Up:

“the City has established a Public Steering Committee in order to keep the community informed. Some weeks ago, we were in Freedom Farm providing them with an update on the housing development. Together with the team from the City we have been to all three communities to provide them with information.”<sup>47</sup>

The issues highlighted by NGOs and legal centres are primarily focused on how the conditions in Blikkiesdorp constitute a human rights issue in terms of urban planning and access to sufficient housing. In many ways, the tactics employed by these initiatives were successful in creating dialogue between the Blikkiesdorp community, the City of Cape Town and ACSA. However, my aim here is to engage with the future of the community by placing it in a larger context of struggle, specifically as regards porous bodies in an ever-expanding urban territory and the social crises and instability this cultivates.

The effects of long-term bodily harm in an industrial area constitute an environmental issue that goes beyond the idea that the body stands apart from the landscape.<sup>48</sup> Following Pamela Moss and Isabel Van Dyck's claim that the environment is a “socially negotiated space inclusive of its material aspects”<sup>49</sup>, I argue that Blikkiesdorp represents the interconnectedness of the body and the landscape / environment.

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<sup>45</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Gontsana, Mary-Anne. “The Long Wait for New Housing for Blikkiesdorp Families.” GroundUp News, November 8, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/long-wait-new-housing-blikkiesdorp-families/>.

<sup>47</sup> Gontsana, Mary-Anne. “The Long Wait for New Housing for Blikkiesdorp Families.” GroundUp News, November 8, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/long-wait-new-housing-blikkiesdorp-families/>.

<sup>48</sup> I intend to go further into the ideas of the porous body and experiential knowledge of noise pollution in my next chapter, “Noise and Transcorporeal Experiential Knowledge of ‘Sonic Apartheid’”.

<sup>49</sup> Moss, Pamela, and Isabel Dyck. “Inquiry into Environment and Body: Women, Work, and Chronic Illness.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 6 (December 1996): 737–53. doi:10.1068/d140737.

While I do not propose that we should use the concept of “environment” uncritically, I do hold that the notion of the environment as a negotiated and inconstant space is useful for thinking through what we call “urban” and what we deem “wild”. Denaturalising the dichotomy between human and non-human (or life and nonlife<sup>50</sup>) and how these categories are created and maintained as sites to be governed is a primary interest of this thesis. In line with this I argue that the interconnectedness of these human-nonhuman sites renders Blikkiesdorp a space of encounter between the community and the effects of invasive and injurious forces – some tangible and some not. Moreover, this land on the edge of the city represents a space that can be sensed as “the atmospheric”<sup>51</sup> – “as a logics of indeterminacy, as a physicality of the ephemeral, and as an entanglement of air-body-matter” – where noise, too, composes “an atmospheric that is at once perceived and delineated through technolegal regimes”.<sup>52</sup>

In Cape Town, with its history of access and proximity to “natural” spaces linked overtly to racial divides, it is not difficult to invoke the idea of the environment as nestled inside the urban. These environments take the form of zealously preserved colonial gardens, national parks and tourist-covered beaches that have since been interrogated for their accessibility to almost exclusively white and elite communities. The frustration with access to environmental spaces was articulated most recently in the 2018 #ReclaimClifton gathering,<sup>53</sup> where a sheep was slaughtered on the beach as an ancestral calling and protesters joined over the course of two days to reclaim the beach from its exclusion of black and brown people. As Sharad Chari notes in *State Racism and Biopolitical Struggle: The Evasive Commons in Twentieth-Century Durban, South Africa*, space in South Africa has been “forged through contradictory processes of racialized dispossession, segregation, and industrialization . . . the history of segregation and industrialization built the

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<sup>50</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>52</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>53</sup> “WATCH: Protesters #ReclaimClifton as Sheep Slaughtered on Beach.” News24, December 29, 2018.

<https://www.news24.com/Video/SouthAfrica/News/watch-protesters-reclaimclifton-as-sheep-slaughtered-on-beach-20181229>.

twin values of capital and state racism into the landscape”.<sup>54</sup> The struggle for the commons is evident in Cape Town – people and the landscape are intertwined in issues of housing, energy and water. Climate change has shown itself in the city in the form of a long-term water crisis.<sup>55</sup> The fight to be free from ecoracism has often manifested as a fight to be registered as “human” in a history of apartheid geographies that reserved such a category for mainly white male subjects. The fight to be recognised as an “environment” thus represents a new way of relating to power apparatuses that have maintained unclear criterion for those deemed valuable and free from suffering and those not.

Drawing on these ideas, I intend to explore the relationship between the Blikkiesdorp community and their physical, mental and spiritual environment<sup>56</sup> by drawing on Kathryn Yusoff’s concepts of *geologic life*,<sup>57</sup> and new/material feminist theories. Bozalek and Zembylas note in their work that “critical posthumanism, in particular, embraces a critical view of a disembedded liberal humanism, with its assumptions of a society with equally placed autonomous agents and rational scientific control over others.”<sup>58</sup> They also note that “new/feminist materialisms have expanded Haraway’s ideas on situated knowledges, critiquing universalist disembodied ‘God’s eye’ views of the world, paving the way for ethical accountability in local and grounded knowledges. Rather than seeing epistemology, ontology and ethics as separate, new materialisms consider them as co-imbricated and entangled.”<sup>59</sup> By embracing the idea that the concept of the human is contaminated, as well as engaging with the idea that boundaries such as “body” and

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<sup>54</sup> Sharad Chari; State Racism and Biopolitical Struggle: The Evasive Commons in Twentieth-Century Durban, South Africa. *Radical History Review* 1 October 2010; 2010 (108): 73–90. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-004>

<sup>55</sup>New, Mark. “Global Warming Has Raised Risk of More Severe Droughts in Cape Town.” IOL News, January 11, 2019. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/global-warming-has-raised-risk-of-more-severe-droughts-in-cape-town-18656511>.

<sup>56</sup> Castree, N. (1995), THE NATURE OF PRODUCED NATURE: MATERIALITY AND KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION IN MARXISM. *Antipode*, 27: 12-48. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.1995.tb00260.x

<sup>57</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Bozalek, Vivienne, and Michalinos Zembylas. “Critical Posthumanism, New Materialisms and the Affective Turn for Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-652>.

<sup>59</sup> Bozalek, Vivienne, and Michalinos Zembylas. “Critical Posthumanism, New Materialisms and the Affective Turn for Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-652>.

“environment” are actually highly fluid creates a theoretical engagement with “relational ontologies; a critique of dualisms; and engagements with matter and the non-human.”<sup>60</sup> In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Yusoff takes this idea further by proposing that racialised people have been ontologically situated in a position of non-subjecthood in the form of materiality. She uses the term “geologic life” to “signal the corporeality of geology as a material embodiment and a systematic framing of materiality that has geopolitical and biopolitical consequences for the possibilities of being and nonbeing.”<sup>61</sup> As low-income and isolated spaces on the outskirts become overcrowded due to rural poverty and climate-based migration and displacement, and as neoliberal capitalist political forces push for further privatisation, these crises form part of an entire network of material entities and flows that constitute the environment.

Without the assumed dualities of “human/nonhuman, body/mind, subject/object, nature/culture”<sup>62</sup> to employ in this thesis, I draw upon what community members have reported in their experiences with noise pollution and its effect on materialities, including zinc houses, non-human animals and the land itself. The efforts of the Blikkiesdorp community to contest the boundaries between “human” and “environment” represent how communities create ways of knowing that go against Western scientific epistemes. As Povinelli notes, “the attribution of an inability of various colonized people to differentiate the kinds of things that have agency, subjectivity, and intentionality of the sort that emerges with life has been the grounds of casting them into a premodern mentality and a postrecognition difference.”<sup>63</sup> Though I continue to explore the ways in which bio- and necropolitics can be useful for understanding how Blikkiesdorp was created and has since been maintained, I am putting forth a broadened sense of this form of power in its relationship to slow violence – including geological violence – with a critical eye on the ways in which the

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<sup>60</sup> Bozalek, Vivienne, and Michalinos Zembylas. “Critical Posthumanism, New Materialisms and the Affective Turn for Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-652>.

<sup>61</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> Barad, Karen. *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007.

<sup>63</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

biopolitical subject can be a “biontological enclosure of existence (to characterize all existents as endowed with the qualities associated with Life).”<sup>64</sup>

Blikkiesdorp residents have had a multifaceted and ever-changing relationship to their environment since the relocation area was built. Original Blikkiesdorp residents moved in after over 1,500 families were evicted from the N2 Gateway Housing Pilot Project in 2008. Many people stayed and occupied Symphony Way for up to 21 months after this eviction before moving into Blikkiesdorp structures. When the first phase of families moved into the metal structures there was no power and no running water. Bernadet De Kock, one of the original occupants of Blikkiesdorp and a sub-contractor who worked to create the space after the mass-eviction in 2007, speaks about the events surrounding the Symphony Way occupation in 2009:

The time when we ran out of the houses with others and we took our babies. We went to pick up some stones and they hit us. They shot rubber bullets. They didn't care if there were children and babies. People were so emotional that day because we really believed that these guys at anti-eviction was the chairman - we thought he would organize that these people wouldn't be evicted from their houses. The court said these people must move out. The police came and removed us from the houses. City people came, they were also involved. They came and removed our stuff. Only with little clothes we were stranded on the street. We took plastic and we made our own houses on the street. Many people did not have alternative places to go. We're going to go and squat on Symphony Road. We stayed there for almost a year.

We moved in while many people still occupied on Symphony Way. I had a structure there by the entrance. We went to go fight with the city for electricity – we, the community leaders at the time, went to Helen Zille to fight for electricity. It was dark in Blikkies and a lot of things could have happened. My husband had to go into the bush by the airport to fetch wood every morning, then we cooked on the fire, boiled water on the fire. Whatever we did we had to do outside and it was wintertime. Every morning, early morning you would see the people from Blikkies walking into the bush for firewood, then again in the afternoon they would go again to fetch wood for the nighttime. We would build fires, sit by

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<sup>64</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

the fires and talk about the trauma and the emotional things we experienced but we at least knew we had a roof over our heads.<sup>65</sup>



Fencing around Blikkiesdorp facing surrounding bush areas

Moss and Van Dyck chose the term “environment” rather than “place” because it “incorporates

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<sup>65</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

more widely the multiple positions individuals occupy in the various sets of relations they engage in and cautions against individualistic conceptions of place as in humanistic definitions.”<sup>66</sup> In Blikkiesdorp, these relations are marked by the ways in which the abandoned community and abandoned environment act upon one another. Abandonment constitutes a form of slow violence that is imparted on entities that are “designated expendable.”<sup>67</sup> Bodies have existed in Blikkiesdorp amidst a number of environmental and social concerns for over eleven years now. As Thom Davies notes, the abandoned have “become hazardous life; removed, encamped, numbered and regulated, set outside non-polluted spaces.”<sup>68</sup> While Late Liberal governance is characterised by the governance of difference, Povinelli notes its difference from Necropolitics as “industrialized European savagery in a history of African colonization, where colonists experimented with spectacles of irrational, excessive killing,” and sites a different space of abandonment created through geontopower being enacted on communities.

In most places, Late Liberal power does not exercise itself through the spectacular display of drawn and quartered bodies, nor through the biological racism of German National Socialism. Neoliberalism works by colonizing the field of value – reducing all social values to one market value – exhausting alternative social projects by denying them sustenance. When the state does kill it often does so through secret detention centers outside the reach of habeas corpus”<sup>69</sup>

Liberal modes of production, making live and letting die<sup>70</sup> can be seen in the refugee camps of Calais as described in the work of Davies, the informal settlement of Abahlali baseMjondolo described by Anna Selmeçzi, the migrant detention centers in the United States, and the Temporary Relocation Area of

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<sup>66</sup> Van Dyck and Moss in Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbsgw>.

<sup>68</sup> Davies, Thom. “Toxic Life? The Slow Violence of Refugee Abandonment.” *Toxic News*, November 4, 2015. <https://toxicnews.org/2015/11/04/toxic-life-the-slow-violence-of-refugee-abandonment/>.

<sup>69</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Foucault, Michel, 1926-1984. *The History of Sexuality*. New York :Pantheon Books, 1978.

Blikkiesdorp. De Kock explains some of the hardships experienced: “Life wasn’t easy on Symphony Street; no proper house, people started to put up shacks. It was the start of winter . . . wind was blowing heavily . . . rain was falling into the shacks and most people got sick . . . children ended up in the hospital with various symptoms of TB, chronic sickness like asthma, bronchitis, etc.”<sup>71</sup> The immediate concerns that were experienced during the Symphony Way occupation, such as contaminated water and insufficient sanitation, have evolved into concerns of the slow violence of abandonment – constant exposure to pollution from all directions, continued lack of sanitation, overcrowding and vulnerability to the elements. Immediate threats, such as gang violence, are cited as exemplars of the ways in which Blikkiesdorp remains in bio/necropolitical strife, though I would also like to point to the ways in which living in Blikkiesdorp represents an everyday experience with temporal suffering and slow violence, what Nixon calls “a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all”.<sup>72</sup>

Povinelli states that biopolitics literature is “concerned mostly with the problem of corporeality and is under-attentive to the problem of carnality, or the physical mattering that emerges in the cramped spaces between life and death.”<sup>73</sup> It is within this that we can witness resistance as “precarious survival”<sup>74</sup> in the face of abandonment. Knowing the limitations to understanding Blikkiesdorp in terms of bio- and necropolitics, what Rosi Braidotti calls “two sides of the same coin,”<sup>75</sup> helps to reveal the space as a site of multi-dimensional and intersecting existences that cannot be contained in terms of “life and non-life.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbsgw>.

<sup>73</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A., Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff. “An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 169–85. doi:10.1177/0263276417689900.

<sup>74</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A., Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff. “An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 169–85. doi:10.1177/0263276417689900.

<sup>75</sup> Braidotti, Rosi. “Biopower and Necropolitics/Biomacht Und Nekro-Politik. Überlegungen Zu Einer Ethik Der Nachhaltigkeit.” *Springerin, Hefte Fur Gegenwartskunst* 13, no. 2 (2007): 18–23.

[https://www.academia.edu/854914/\\_Bio\\_Power\\_and\\_Necro\\_Politics\\_](https://www.academia.edu/854914/_Bio_Power_and_Necro_Politics_).

<sup>76</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Interrogating these categories is important in understanding the ways in which entities are governed through processes of differentiation – as the lived environment and material landscape does not have a place within bio/necropolitical discourse, we can co-create other understandings of how power is enacted in Blikkiesdorp.

## **Processes of Environmental Governance and Spatiotemporal Cultivation of the Contested Environment of Blikkiesdorp**

The “Description of the Site and Environment” section of the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out by SRK Consulting notes that “the area surrounding the airport consists of mixed land use including residential, industrial and commercial use. Communities adjacent to the airport are highly marginalised with relatively low levels of income.”<sup>77</sup> These areas include the informal settlements of Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm, whose residents were promised spaces in the new housing project to assuage their displacement by the runway realignment.<sup>78</sup> The agreement arranged for Blikkiesdorp residents between ACSA and the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee allowed the final Environmental Impact Assessment to be sent through to Anton Bredell, the Western Cape Minister of Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning in exchange for construction training for 100 Blikkiesdorp residents<sup>79</sup> and promised job opportunities for the community in the light industrial area that will surround the area. However, the promise of over 2,000 homes has been met with little confidence given that only about 200 homes have been built despite Blikkiesdorp residents now exceeding 20,000 with Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm.

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<sup>77</sup> Executive Summary: Final Environmental Impact Report Cape Town International Airport Runway Realignment And Associated Infrastructure (2016, July). In *SRK Consulting*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul\\_2016/445354\\_CTIA\\_Runway\\_Realignment\\_Final\\_EIA\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul_2016/445354_CTIA_Runway_Realignment_Final_EIA_Report_Executive_Summary_July_2016.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> Furlong, Ashleigh. “City Offers Blikkiesdorp Residents Fraction of Houses Needed.” *GroundUp News*, December 13, 2016. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/city-offers-blikkiesdorp-residents-fraction-houses-needed/>.

<sup>79</sup> Ramphele, Lengwadishang. “Acса and CoCT Launch Skills Development Programme for Blikkiesdorp.” *CapeTalk*, September 29, 2017. <http://www.capetalk.co.za/articles/274397/acsa-and-coct-launch-skills-development-programme-for-blikkiesdorp>.

Residents also face many bureaucratic obstacles as many do not qualify for or lack the documentation to be registered on the housing database, resulting in their being offered site and service as an alternative. Jerome Daniels notes in the Open Democracy Advice Centers' 2015 documentary *Is Blikkiesdorp Home?*: “now they (the city) want to come and talk about people qualifying and people that don’t qualify. You knew in the first place you are putting people here that don’t qualify.”<sup>80</sup> As ACSA and the City formerly agreed to organise these site and service options for other members of the community, community members were further put into a state of uncertainty when many major players were compromised following the resignation of Cape Town’s mayor Patricia De Lille and the falling-out of the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee. Most community organising that has since occurred involves urging the politico-corporate agreement between ACSA and the City to retain their arrangement with the community.

More than half of Blikkiesdorp residents have been unemployed since being moved into the area. As Blikkiesdorp lies roughly 30 km from the city, many people complained of not being able to access sufficient transit to go to work in the city. This raises questions about the governmentally sanctioned stagnation of the Blikkies bodies. I hope to steer the conversation of how state power plays out in Blikkiesdorp away from framing the community simply as “the proletariat” and into the ways that the management of bodies and landscape has placed them in a state of expandability and superfluity. In many ways, workerist discourse does not fully engage with dominant racist and neo-colonial ideologies that maintain the spatial divides derived from the governance over Life and Nonlife. In the case of the Blikkiesdorp community, many of these people were purposefully removed from their economies when they were evicted from centres where they lived and worked, formally (as an actively executed eviction) or informally (by being priced out of their neighbourhoods through gentrification and/or development

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<sup>80</sup> (2015). *"Is Blikkies Home"* [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

projects). The reports that Blikkiesdorp is a “human dumping ground,”<sup>81</sup> a void zone, a “concentration camp,”<sup>82</sup> and a zone of non-existence. The land next to Cape Town International represents the rejected space that people beset by biopolitical non-viability could be sanctioned off to, where late liberal processes of letting die can transpire. Peterson writes in her piece “Atmospheric Sensibilities: Noise, Annoyance and Indefinite Urbanism”:

. . . around LAX (Los Angeles International Airport), sounds from the air shape the ground as a space of absence – rejected, abandoned, indeterminate, formless. Effects of airport noise on the ground are referred to as ‘land recycling’. Taking ‘transduction beyond the realm of the auditory’, land recycling is another ‘process of constituting, structuring, and modifying spatial and logical relations’, consisting of the ‘acquisition of incompatible property and conversion of that property to compatible land use’. Demolition and conversion to industrial use appear as ‘emptiness’. Hidden here (in plain sight) is the invisible, a seeming void effected through noise, or what Solà-Morales describes as *terrain vague*: ‘Unincorporated margins, interior islands void of activity, oversights, these areas are simply *un-inhabited, un-safe, un-productive*’.<sup>83</sup>

On this point, Lisa Isaacs from IOL News, notes: “under the agreement, more than 387,000 people may be subjected to noise that exceeds guidelines . . . but the runway realignment will increase the number of aircraft that can land and take off. It is also estimated that 950 job opportunities will be created.”<sup>84</sup> The housing project created by the Blikkiesdorp joint Committee, Patricia De Lille and ACSA was meant to train and employ 100 Blikkiesdorp residents to create their own housing, and while some have since graduated, the City issued a statement in 2018 that “poor contractor performance” had caused “indefinite delays.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Raghavan, Sudarsan. "South Africa's poor complain of evictions as country prepares to host World Cup." *Washington Post*, June 10, 2010. [http://o.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/worldcup/2012084369\\_soccersaf11.html](http://o.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/worldcup/2012084369_soccersaf11.html).

<sup>82</sup> Gerardy, Justine. "It's like a concentration camp!" *Main and Guardian*, June 7, 2010. <https://mg.co.za/article/2010-06-07-its-like-a-concentration-camp>.

<sup>83</sup> Peterson, M. (2017), Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>84</sup> Isaacs, Lisa. “3 000 Families Must Move.” IOL News, May 27, 2015. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/3-000-families-must-move-1864142>.

<sup>85</sup> Beukes, Soraya. “Promise of Right to Housing Remains Elusive in Democratic South Africa.” News24, November 27, 2018. <https://www.news24.com/Columnists/GuestColumn/promise-of-right-to-housing-remains-elusive-in-democratic-south-africa-20181127>.

The three housing projects are as follows: the Roosendal housing project (288 units) which was completed in August 2016; The Hague Delft Phase 1 housing project (1,012 units) which is currently underway but “delayed due to poor contractor performance which resulted in the City terminating their contract in September 2017”;<sup>86</sup> and The Hague Delft Phase 2 and Eindhoven housing projects (1,100 units) which have not as yet commenced. The number of bodies that will be affected by noise pollution from the realigned airstrip in the area so greatly exceeds the numbers of those who would “benefit” from it (the proposed 2000+ rehomed families and those given employment from the project) that the question arises: what bodies are “controlled”<sup>87</sup> and what bodies are put into a “state of injury”?<sup>88</sup> Qualifying Blikkiesdorp bodies are being biopolitically managed, but the majority of Blikkiesdorp and surrounding communities are left to experience a form of late liberal processes of “letting die” – being “dumped” in an area and subsequently being both displaced and charged with creating their own housing amidst the fetid effects of environmental pollution.

The racialisation of the Blikkiesdorp community is pivotal to understanding issues of subjectivation as regards those considered illegitimate and subsequently displaced, left to experience the perpetual and unrelenting violence of the void. For this reason, I argue that it is important to heed Jackie Wang’s warning of “recasting the participants as ‘the proletariat’” which she makes in reference to how “well-meaning” leftists began theorising around race riots that erupted in London in 2011.<sup>89</sup> Blikkiesdorp was designed with the tools created through years of apartheid geographies, and the ways in which Blikkies bodies are subjected to violence disputes the idea that this is merely an issue of an unemployed proletariat that has

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<sup>86</sup> Lali, Vincent. “Cold and Leaking Shacks: The Long Wait for Brick Houses for the People of Blikkiesdorp.” News24, June 30, 2018. <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/cold-and-leaking-shacks-the-long-wait-for-brick-houses-for-the-people-of-blikkiesdorp-20180630>.

<sup>87</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*, Pantheon Books, 1977.

<sup>88</sup> Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Wang, Jackie. *Against Innocence*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014.

been deemed superfluous. Rather, there is a space of abandonment where evicted Black and Coloured<sup>90</sup> South Africans, as well as non-South African refugees placed in the area following xenophobic attacks in 2008, are positioned to “let die”. Blikkiesdorp represents the creation of what Mbembe calls a “death-world”, which constitutes “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead”.<sup>91</sup> The effects of the “death-world” manifest in many different temporalities – ranging from the abruptness of gangster-targeted petrol bombings<sup>92</sup> to the slow violence of long-term decay brought on by conditions of abandonment. Anna Selmeczi, in her work with South Africa’s Abahlali Shack Dwellers Movement, examines the ways in which abandonment is systemic to how government nurtures some populations and washes its hands of others. Drawing on Arendt and Foucault, Selmeczi concedes that liberalism is the framework of biopolitical management by the state. The spatial development of Blikkiesdorp reflects the systemic racism of liberal abandonment that has been built into the landscape – as the community has been pushed out of sight they have been left to experience violence that can remain unimagined. Povinelli notes the ways in which these distinctions create an abandonment reserved for “Nonlife” – a slow decay that is marked occasionally by “experiential events” that

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<sup>90</sup> I choose here to make the distinction between Black and Coloured South Africans for two main reasons. The historical categorization dividing Black and Coloured South Africans during apartheid manifested itself in different spatial divides, different (though interlinked) relationships to displacement and state violence. These divides have been maintained and remain a major site of race-based tension in Blikkiesdorp. Sentiments surrounding Coloured abandonment grew after apartheid ended and a primarily Black South African government was instituted. Concerns around Blikkiesdorp becoming further inhabited by Xhosa families and speculations from Blikkiesdorp residents that corrupt government officials are giving houses to family members rather than Coloured families have made these tensions even greater in the past few years (see Mary-Anne Gontsana and Ashraf Hendricks’ Ground Up article titled “Residents expelled from Blikkiesdorp amidst racial tensions”). In my personal correspondences with self-identifying Coloured Blikkiesdorp residents there have been a number of feelings expressed that when Blikkiesdorp came into existence, it was a Coloured area, and Xhosa families have since invaded the space. The differentiation of these communities remains present in the public imaginary in South Africa and is palpable in apartheid geographies that currently exist. I will go further into the current issues surrounding the historical divide between Black and Coloured South Africans in my second chapter.

Gontsana, Mary-Anne, and Ashraf Hendricks. “Residents Expelled from Blikkiesdorp amidst Racial Tensions.” GroundUp News, October 11, 2018. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/blikkiesdorp/>.

<sup>91</sup> Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Mlamla, Sisonke. “Blikkiesdorp Sees a Petrol Bomb Attack, a Stoning, and 20 Homes Destroyed.” IOL News, October 8, 2018. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/blikkiesdorp-sees-a-petrol-bomb-attack-a-stoning-and-20-homes-destroyed-17390684>.

emerge from the rhythms in which human and nonhuman material composition and decomposition are ordinarily encountered. While Michel Serres may be right that in all systems noise and building coexist, in some systems, like Indigenous housing, all buildings threaten to become all noise. And this noise can become what life sounds like, more like a hum than an explosion, the sound of the ambient background.<sup>93</sup>

Serres, concerned with the metaphysical aspects of noise and processes of sensing rather than conceiving the material world, gives noise its own ontological propensities. While this project does not primarily deal with noise from a metaphysical standpoint, understanding noise as its own entity that is continually acting upon a “sonic terrain” is worth noting in its ability to describe the ways we connect “the transcendental to the material, the mental to corporeal.”<sup>94</sup> Serres explores noise in *Genesis*:

Background noise is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic. It is the residue and the cesspool of our messages. No life without heat, no matter, neither; no warmth without air, no logos without noise, either. Noise is the basic element of the software of all our logic, or it is to the logos what matter used to be to form.<sup>95</sup>

I would like to propose that this “hum” noted by Povinelli represents at least one form of the “slow violence” of abandonment, and that the sensing of noise in Blikkiesdorp constitutes a process of building knowledge around this violence. Drawing from Dayna Scott’s work around tracking pollution through the sensory experience of smell in First Nations communities, I would assert that the process of hearing the hum represents transcorporeal experiences between bodies and landscape. And while we do know the

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<sup>93</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Heinonen, Henrik. “My Dear, The Noise.” *Taideyliopiston Kuvataideakatemia – Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki*, 2017. [https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/217876/Heinonen\\_Henrik\\_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/217876/Heinonen_Henrik_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>95</sup> Serres, Michel. *Genesis*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.

sounds of Blikkiesdorp can sound like an electrical box exploding next to a vibrating shack,<sup>96</sup> we can also witness the ways it sounds like sand and rocks blowing against the side of a house, zinc sheets rattling from wind, and ambient industrial noise from the airstrip. For this reason, this work relies most heavily on accounts of noise pollution rather than the quantitative data of the decibel readings – the hum and the roar are of equal interest in this project. To hear the constant hum of Blikkiesdorp is to counter the “epistemologies of mastery”<sup>97</sup> of the Environmental Impact Assessment in order to sense, know, and remember the space of encounter between the racialized body and a landscape created and cultivated through colonial, apartheid, and Late Liberal processes.

Blikkiesdorp remains in a constant state of spatio-temporal limbo. For a project that was built as a six-month solution to the Cape Town housing crisis leading up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the question of whether or not Blikkiesdorp represents a permanent home to its residents remains unanswered. Chari notes that apartheid geographies historically casted “non-whites” as different kinds of temporary residents.”<sup>98</sup> Non-white Cape Town grew around the core of what was reserved for the colonisers, a rule that was preserved through multiple displacement tactics. Tactics of displacement through apartheid spatial ordering remain in the neocolonial blueprint of Cape Town’s landscape. The “beautification project”<sup>99</sup> of the N2 Gateway Houses led to violent mass evictions by a hyper-militarised police force – families were

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<sup>96</sup> (2015). *"Is Blikkies Home"* [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

<sup>97</sup> Scott, Dayna Nadine. "The Smell of Neglect: A Transcorporeal Feminism for Environmental Justice." *Sensing Law*, edited by Sheryl Hamilton, Diana Majury, Neil Sargeant and Dawn Moore, Routledge, 162-178.

<sup>98</sup> Sharad Chari; *State Racism and Biopolitical Struggle: The Evasive Commons in Twentieth-Century Durban, South Africa*. *Radical History Review* 1 October 2010; 2010 (108): 73–90. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-004>

<sup>99</sup> Caroline Newton outlines the reasons why the N2 Gateway project is referred to as a “beautification” project for the 2010 FIFA world Cup and the reasons why this area of Cape Town was chosen, saying that, “the main reason that is given to prioritise these areas is because apparently they are very deprived areas with high levels of unemployment, unsuitable living conditions, with poor connections to water, energy and sanitary facilities. But additionally the same government source states that: ‘This project is also prioritised by the City of Cape Town and other spheres in light of its high visibility on the gateway corridor linking Cape Town International Airport with the City’”.

Newton, Caroline. “The N2 Gateway Project in Cape Town: Relocation or Forced Removal?” *Sint-Lucas School of Architecture, Hogeschool Voor Wetenschap & Kunst Brussels and Ghent*, 2010.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6619/ac93d251047094db8c19895876276c458719.pdf>.

chased from their homes with rubber bullets in the name of fashioning Cape Town as a gleaming major world player. Blikkiesdorp was created with the idea that it would exist just long enough for the community to receive sufficient housing. This year it will have stood for 12 years. The power and violence of abandonment have been actively resisted by Blikkiesdorp residents since the beginning, which can be seen in their refusal to be ignored throughout the years. Saudiek Williams notes that, “We don’t have a future in Blikkiesdorp. The police are doing nothing but give problems, our government does nothing, our people get sick and some are dying of health problems. This place is now an evil place.”<sup>100</sup> Linking the violent eviction and displacement that created Blikkiesdorp back to historical processes of colonial and apartheid-era spatial ordering can broaden our understanding of why this story transpired the way it did.

Bozalek, Zembylas and Motala note these processes of violent forced removals of District Six communities in the 1970’s in their piece *A Pedagogy of Hauntology: Decolonizing the Curriculum With GIS*, their linkages to the mapping of race, and the ways that current GIS mapping projects can help us trace these processes of displacement and their “relationship to the present,” saying that,

Acts like the Natives Land Act 1913, the Native Trust and Land Act 1936, the Asiatic Land Tenure, and Indian Representation Act 1946 were precursors to the Group Areas Act 1950, The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 1951, and The Natives Resettlement 1954. These Acts, including the Group Areas Act were proposed, conceived and systematized by maps.

...the Model Apartheid City” provided guidelines on how to segregate cities and towns across the country. Note how the primary factor that determined location was race. White group areas were separated from all other group areas by means of barriers such as railway lines or industrial areas. The plan was effectively and violently implemented, and we are still haunted by this map today.<sup>101</sup>

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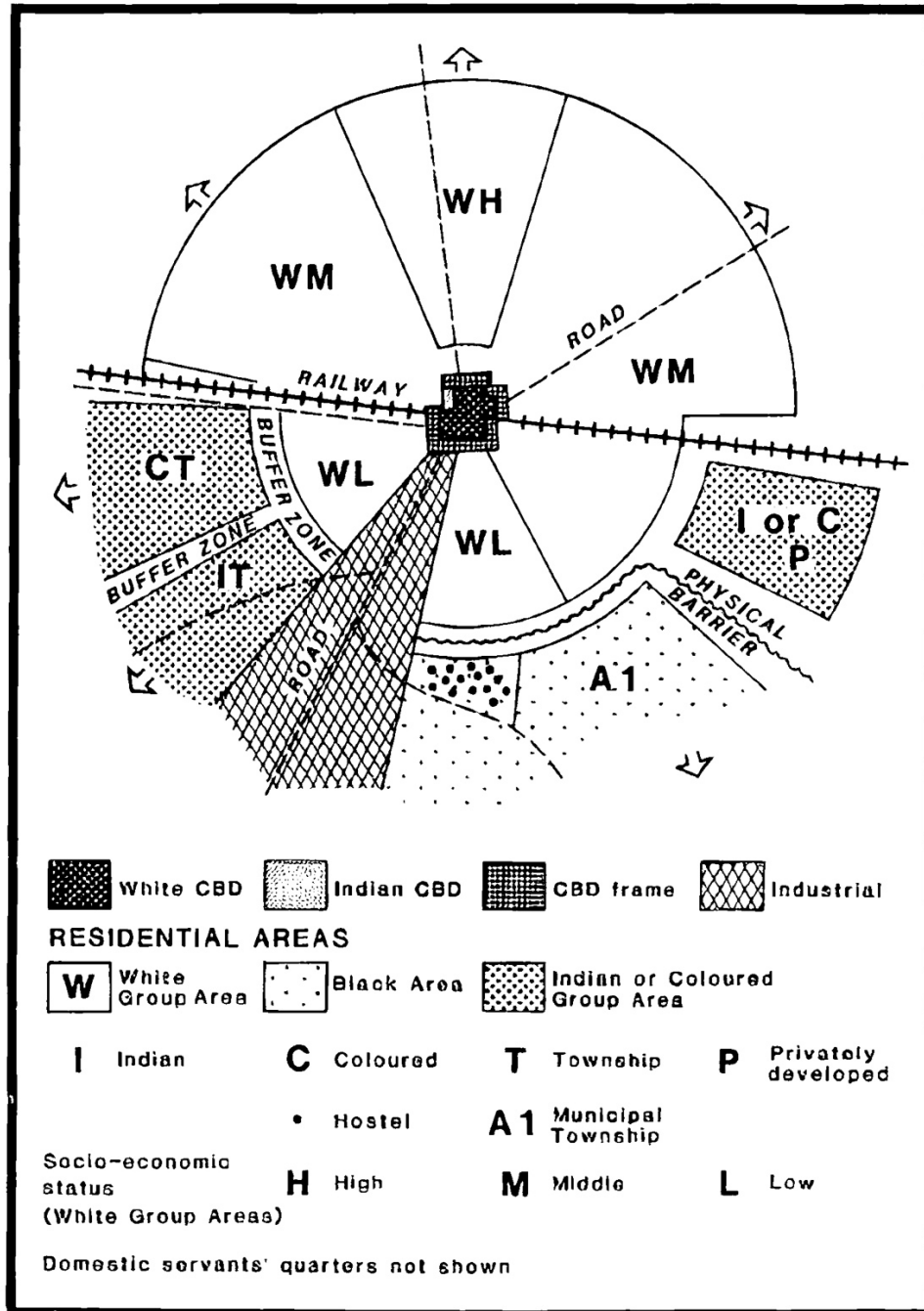
<sup>100</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> Zembylas, Michalinos, Vivienne Bozalek, and Siddique Motala. “A Pedagogy of Hauntology: Decolonizing the Curriculum With GIS.” *Capacious*. Open University of Cyprus, University of the Western Cape, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, January 4, 2020. <http://capaciousjournal.com/article/a-pedagogy-of-hauntology/?fbclid=IwAR1MSwL7MOeuW6dIOoNyuGGsm1qPhtqwNjJ8mTbs8OkHWkwliQ08Saspyqw>.

These histories, they argue, can be brought into the present by way of GIS mapping projects that track the materialities and affectivities of forced removals. Drawing from Barad's work, they note the ways cartographic projects can show that "hauntings" of history are "physical material-discursive marks sedimented on the land, as part of 'spacetime-mattering,' and which have potent affective force."<sup>102</sup> I will go on to engage more heavily with this important work and the ways we can create an "alternative social project" that maps histories of displacement and current experiential knowledge of ecoracism in Blikkiesdorp.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.



“The Model Apartheid City”<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Christopher, A.J. (1994). *The Atlas of Apartheid*. London: Routledge.

The Blikkiesdorp community is flooded with noise at all times of the day and night, an issue that is exacerbated by the zinc structures that form a thin barrier between people and their surroundings. Community members complain of loud auto traffic on Symphony Way, and wind that blows sand and stones onto the structures, and say that aeroplanes make their houses shake, cause the power to become faulty, and upset animals. “The cars wasn’t near to us but it felt like they were next to us”, affirms community member Domray Clemend, “the structures were so thin that when an aeroplane flew above us, our structures were really shaking. If the kids threw a small stone against your structure it sounded like a brick”.<sup>104</sup> Vibration causes other issues, notes De Kock, saying that “the community always complains about the loud sound over the vibration of their structures and the items like cups, glasses, etc. shaking from the sound of the aeroplane”.<sup>105</sup> Animals are affected as well, affirms Saudiek Williams, “if a car sounds loud or if aeroplanes are flying very low over our place, then the dogs are barking a lot and the cats get scared and hide”.<sup>106</sup> All of these things affect people’s physical and mental health, and while the noise pollution from the airstrip constitutes only one aspect of the many environmental issues, the community will continue to be affected by it in all likelihood for many years to come, even in the new housing project.

Davies’ article “Toxic Space and Time: Slow Violence, Necropolitics, and Petrochemical Pollution” offers a coupling of Nixon’s “slow violence” and Mbembe’s “necropolitics”, where he notes that “slow violence can be read as a form of late-modern necropolitics, where marginalized communities are exposed to the power of death-in-life”.<sup>107</sup> As current Blikkiesdorp residents have experienced such sudden tragedies as plane-related vibrations causing electrical boxes to explode and burn down shacks,<sup>108</sup> even those who

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<sup>104</sup> Clemend, Domray. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 8, 2018.

<sup>105</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

<sup>106</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Davies, T. (2018). Toxic Space and Time: Slow Violence, Necropolitics, and Petrochemical Pollution. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(6), 1537–1553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1470924>

<sup>108</sup> (2015). “Is Blikkies Home” [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

have moved out of the area still experience health effects, such as hypertension<sup>109</sup> and deafness brought about by living in a space rife with noise pollution. Jane Roberts of the BJC notes in *Is Blikkies Home*, “this means the noise level will increase to over 65db and it’s too high for *mense se oore* (people’s ears). Even this plan to move Blikkiesdorp back towards Symphony Way... we will still be in a noise zone. Think about the children that will be affected. Me myself, I am already deaf in one ear from the noise pollution.”<sup>110</sup> Devotion to globalisation and the rise of airport traffic in Cape Town<sup>111</sup> will, even after creating a large-scale initial displacement of the people of Blikkiesdorp, Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm, put marginalised township-based communities surrounding the airport at greater risk of the long-term effects of noise pollution. In Blikkiesdorp, the community-led fight for sufficient housing is resistant to environmental racism and bio/necropolitical exclusion – these methods of exclusion and control over the environment and body rely on principles of scientific management.

## Chapter II: The “Case” of Blikkiesdorp – Conditions of Late Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Stakeholderism in the “Axes of Crisis in the Governance of Difference and the Governance of

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<sup>109</sup> van Kempen, E. E., Kruize, H., Boshuizen, H. C., Ameling, C. B., Staatsen, B. A., & de Hollander, A. E. (2002). The association between noise exposure and blood pressure and ischemic heart disease: a meta-analysis. *Environmental health perspectives*, 110(3), 307–317. doi:10.1289/ehp.02110307

<sup>110</sup> Jane Roberts in (2015). *"Is Blikkies Home"* [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

<sup>111</sup> Jh, Van & Holdt, D. (2006). Environmental footprint of aircraft noise exposure at Cape Town International Airport. *South African Geographical Journal*. 88. 177-193. 10.1080/03736245.2006.9713860.

**Markets”<sup>112</sup>**

Referring to the events surrounding Blikkiesdorp’s displacement as a “case” can prove to be potentially problematic, as the ways that theorizing and evidence are so intertwined is one of the guiding tenets of this work. However, using the term “case” here acts as a heuristic tool with which we can examine this story in the midst of all of the factors at play. To begin dealing with this, I plan to outline the ways in which the “case” of Blikkiesdorp can be co-examined in the mechanization of both Late Liberal and neoliberal power, how the events that have transpired in Blikkiesdorp are persistent transfusions between the forces of state and market interests, and what this means for the community in their arrangements with both the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company of South Africa as stakeholders. Who will ultimately “solve” the case of Blikkiesdorp and whose promises will stand? While Povinelli writes that she does not “see the governance of difference and the governance of markets composed of the same logic or in a base super-structure relationship,” what would it mean to look at the ways both of these formations of power played out in Blikkiesdorp? In a country like South Africa, which has not fully affiliated itself with market fundamentalism, and clearly has not situated itself as a socialist state, what does this mean for “cases” like Blikkiesdorp, which are becoming more common as time passes? To be perfidiously “given” housing in the N2 Gateway housing project, subsequently violently evicted by the state, placed in insufficient housing on city land, further displaced in the name of corporate interests, and then “benevolently” offered land and training programs to build their own housing through cooperative efforts by the City of Cape Town and Airports Company South Africa, how can we seek to understand the forces of governance that have manipulated “the case”?

By acknowledging that the South African state does not constitute what we think of when thinking

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<sup>112</sup> Khalidi, Raja. “Elizabeth A. Povinelli’s Symphony of Late Liberalism in Palestine.” *e\_flux*, February 3, 2017. <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/elizabeth-a-povinellis-symphony-of-late-liberalism-in-palestine/6004>.

about other more explicitly neoliberal states (especially those in Africa following the Structural Readjustment Programs implemented by the IMP in the 1990's), we must first acknowledge that the forms of Late Liberal power Povinelli describes take effect in different contexts. Many of the qualities Povinelli describes, however, can be applied to what Povinelli notes that she uses the term Late Liberalism

to describe a topological twist in the governance of difference—the emergence of a new tactic of the liberal governance of difference around the late 1960s and early 1970s usually referred to as liberal forms of social and cultural recognition or state multiculturalism. We were not seeing a break or a rupture in liberalism but rather a re-alignment of a strategy of governing difference... Neither form of (neoliberal or late liberal) governance determinates the other, nor do either of these forms emerge simultaneously or homogeneously across the globe.<sup>113</sup>

She also notes that:

The postwar policies of multiculturalism and self-determination were ways to tame social movements. Nationalism ended up using the indigenous as a prop. But indigenous power over land went from being about self-determination to capital ownership. Aboriginal 'stake-holders' use mining royalties to buy white goods and pay fines. With the old social benefit regime withdrawn, indigenous owners have to grant concessions to mining companies on terms favorable to them.

Since the courts found that some indigenous people have a form of land ownership under colonial law, there is an incentive for Aboriginal people to constitute themselves as the kind of subjects that can be land owners. Here law interacts with the discipline of anthropology, which sets itself up in the business of providing rationales both for and against such land claims.<sup>114</sup>

Issues surrounding land ownership, sovereignty, Indigeneity all in terms of stakeholderism presents a conundrum in terms of how Blikkiesdorp community members (as well as those being removed from

<sup>113</sup> Khalidi, Raja. "Elizabeth A. Povinelli's Symphony of Late Liberalism in Palestine." *e\_flux*, February 3, 2017. <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/elizabeth-a-povinellis-symphony-of-late-liberalism-in-palestine/6004>.

<sup>114</sup> Wark, McKenzie. "Elizabeth Povinelli: When the Rocks Turn Their Backs on Us." Verso Books, February 12, 2019. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4236-elizabeth-povinelli-when-the-rocks-turn-their-backs-on-us>.

Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm). The extent to which South Africa's governance is neoliberal remains bound up in these cases – the amalgamation of people in the Blikkiesdorp community have no direct claim to liberal forms of genealogy-based Indigenous status and therefore cannot act within the kind of pseudo-subjecthood that comes with land sovereignty or even land ownership. Without the neoliberal claim to land or the Late Liberal multicultural recognition in the rainbow nation, the ability to act as stakeholder over the landscape or the housing on it was a flimsy grip at best. The struggle for other communities, “sovereign” or not, remains at this crossroads of neoliberal and Late Liberal discord – we see this in the resistance to mining in Xolobeni<sup>115</sup> and the struggle against development over Cape Town's largest aquifer in the Philippi Horticultural Area.<sup>116</sup> For the Blikkiesdorp community, the ability to advocate for housing came with the ability to withstand governance by refusing to go quietly.

In conditions of neoliberalism, the “science-for-hire”<sup>117</sup> of the Environmental Impact Assessment reflects forms of technoscientific governance and the ways in which these knowledge regimes quantify and capture noise. As Davies notes, “sources of environmental harm are often dispersed and entangled in a complex assemblage of corporate power, state authority, local regulations, and capitalist structures of accumulation”.<sup>118</sup> The complexities of the ways in which the Airports Company of South Africa, SRK Consulting and the City of Cape Town cooperated to conduct scientific evidence-gathering, then subsequently used it to draw up memorandums and push through housing policies, are an excellent example of this at play. The land is owned by the City of Cape Town and the airspace above is owned by the federal government, leaving the landless community of Blikkiesdorp to deal with these power structures when securing their futures. This puts them in a state of uncertainty about where they will go next and what the

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<sup>115</sup> Sole, Sam. “AMABHUNGANE: Xolobeni: The Mine, the Murder, the DG – and Many Unanswered Questions.” Daily Maverick. Accessed January 14, 2020. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-06-30-xolobeni-the-mine-the-murder-the-dg-and-many-unanswered-questions/>.

<sup>116</sup> Petzer, Brett. “Losing Farmland Is Forever.” OUR FUTURE CITIES, August 6, 2013. <http://futurecapetown.com/2013/08/losing-farmland-is-forever/>.

<sup>118</sup> Davies, T. (2018). *Toxic Space and Time: Slow Violence, Necropolitics, and Petrochemical Pollution*. Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 108(6), 1537–1553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1470924>

lifestyle quality of that place will be. Neither considered part of the environment to be protected, nor viable landowners to be considered, the Blikkiesdorp community remains in the throes of how Late Liberal capitalist policy and management act upon the material.

Reports on the new airstrip typically mention that communities residing under the new flightpath will be subjected to noise exceeding 65CNEL (community noise equivalent level.) The City of Cape Town Application for Development of Integrated Human Settlements notes that “the district plan takes note of the 65bda airport noise contour which is the limit to which residential use can be permitted. This condition must be resolved if the provision of housing adjacent to the airport is taken further”.<sup>119</sup> The CNEL is measured as the average sound level for a 24-hour period in a given area. CNEL is somewhat misleading, however, as it does not account for the sudden bursts of aircraft noise that would affect residents. The noise levels could significantly exceed the CNEL during a take-off or landing, as they currently do in the Blikkiesdorp area.<sup>120</sup> Residents already complain of being woken up by cargo aircraft that come in at 02h00, 03h15 and 04h00 – the flights land so close to the community that many wake up fearing that an aircraft will land directly on top of their structures. “If an aeroplane comes over then it’s scary because we don’t know if it will crash on our roof”,<sup>121</sup> says community member Saudiek Williams. Community member De Kock notes in her account of being woken up by aircraft that “it was never easy to stay in a place called Blikkiesdorp, we never know when the aeroplane can crush the top of our tin structures”.<sup>122</sup> Krasner notes other ways in which noise is scientifically quantified in her piece “How Loud is the Noise?”: single noise event levels and peak noise levels would better reflect the noise from takeoff and landing air traffic in the

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<sup>119</sup> “Symphony Way Housing Developments: Site B.” *City of Cape Town*, Headland Town Planners, [https://www.sescc.net/index.php?comp=download&top=download&file=Symphony Way Area B/Appendix K2 TOWN PLANNING MOTIVATION REPORT.pdf](https://www.sescc.net/index.php?comp=download&top=download&file=Symphony+Way+Area+B/Appendix+K2+TOWN+PLANNING+MOTIVATION+REPORT.pdf).

<sup>120</sup> Blikkiesdorp Decibel Readings. Extech S10 Personal Sound Decibel Reader. Daniels, J and Carelse, C. January 15, 2020.

<sup>121</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>122</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

## Blikkiesdorp area:

Single Noise Event Exposure Levels: Single Event Noise Exposure Levels, also expressed in dB, are calculated values. The energy from a noise event, like an aircraft overflight, is expressed as if it all occurred during a one-second long event. Since the sound energy of an aircraft overflight may last for 30-40 seconds, compressing it into just one second results in a calculated SNEEL value that is usually about 8-10 dB greater than the actual peak noise level.<sup>123</sup>

Peak Noise Levels: Peak noise levels, in decibels (dB) are what we hear. Peaks startle us, wake us, and register on the noise meters that some of us might use to determine the loudness of an airplane. Peak noise for an event, like a gunshot, may last for only a fraction of a second.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Kranser, L. (n.d.). How Loud is the Noise? . In *El Toro Info Site: Internet News and Information covering all Southern California commercial airports* . Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://archives.ocgov.com/eltoroairportorg/issues/noise\\_levels.htm](http://archives.ocgov.com/eltoroairportorg/issues/noise_levels.htm)

<sup>124</sup> Kranser, L. (n.d.). How Loud is the Noise? . In *El Toro Info Site: Internet News and Information covering all Southern California commercial airports* . Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://archives.ocgov.com/eltoroairportorg/issues/noise\\_levels.htm](http://archives.ocgov.com/eltoroairportorg/issues/noise_levels.htm)



Two SNEEL readings taken in Delft, adjacent to Blikkiesdorp and across the street from Rosendal Laerskool (Primary School) and Rainbow Primary School<sup>125</sup>

The emphasis on how long a noise needs to last to be an annoyance factor is highly political; if the amount of noise allowed on a flight path reflects the CNEL, how far-reaching could single noise event exposure levels and peak noise levels in the areas surrounding the air strip in other townships surrounding Blikkiesdorp, such as the community of Delft? What does the original placing of Blikkiesdorp by the City of Cape Town and the subsequent plan to move the airstrip say about the ways in which low-income, racialised

<sup>125</sup> These readings were taken as various different planes including, in the first image, a South African Airways Airbus A350-900 and the other an Air Zimbabwe Boeing 767-200 and Qatar Airways Airbus A350-900.  
Delft Decibel Readings. Extech S10 Personal Sound Decibel Reader. De Kock, B and Carelse, C. January 14, 2020.

communities are subjected to excess noise pollution? Who is allowed access to the science used to make these decisions and who is allowed to refute it? The process of taking decibel readings with community members was an illuminating process, not only because the levels of noise were decidedly above what we had expected, but also because we began, as different members of a team of researchers, to foreground our experiences with noise we would otherwise seek to ignore. By interrogating our own experiences with noise, how it made us feel at different times, and by communicating and interpreting these feelings, we began a collective process of giving materiality to noise. These varied accounts became articulated thoughts that have been documented through the corresponding GIS mapping project.

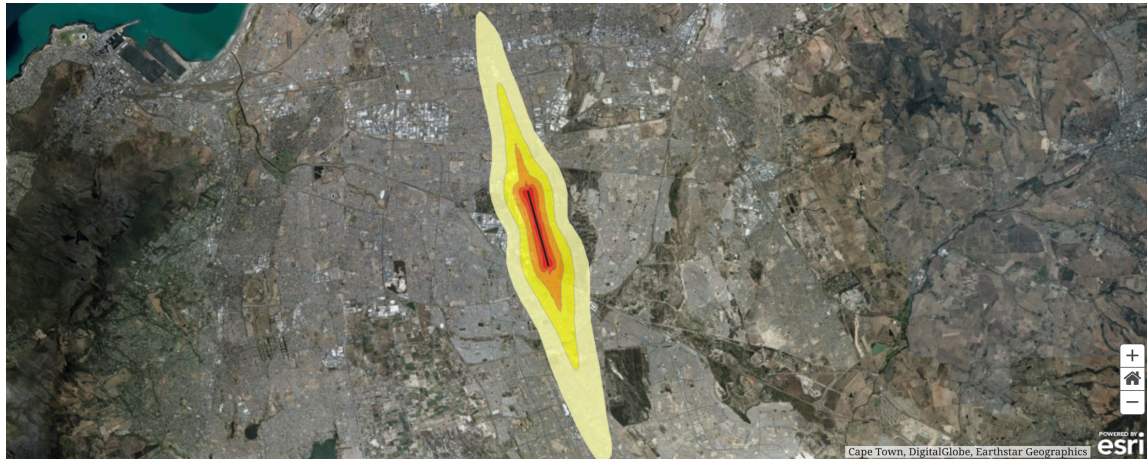
The Open Democracy Advice Centre notes that the proposed airstrip will create noise pollution which will “exceed international guidelines and will affect over 387,000 people and 177 schools”.<sup>126</sup> Being subjected to excess noise is distributed according to apartheid geographies that place industrial areas around racialised communities and vice versa, but the linkages to who has the means to complain about it is also linked to race and class. Peterson explores this in her “Atmospheric Sensibilities” piece where she calls for the interrogation of what she calls a “public ear” – a “general listener” that is created and cultivated by who complains about noise-related annoyance and who does not. She builds this idea on Arthur De Vany’s undated report for the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Noise Abatement and Control, where he notes in his conclusion that “it is not really likely that many high income, well-educated folk will live in high aircraft (or car or truck for the matter) exposure areas. However, it is likely that these people will have knowledge of how to complain”.<sup>127</sup> By completing decibel readings with community members, we sought to further give language to the ways experiential knowledge of noise pollution could be understood and articulated in political discourse. The screengrabs below include the Cape Town Runway

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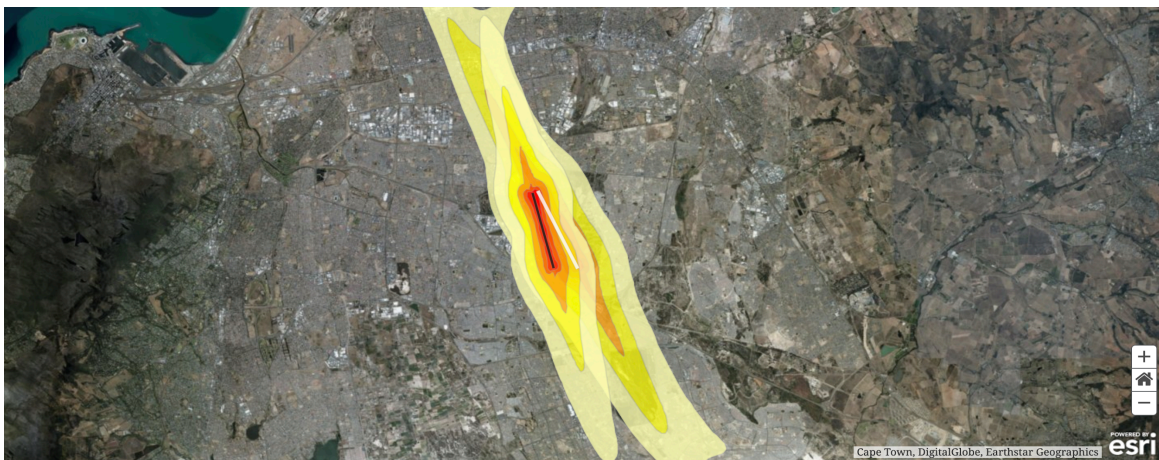
<sup>126</sup> “How will Blikkiesdorp be affected by the new Airport?” Open Democracy Advice Center. Accessed October 28, 2019. <https://www.opendemocracy.org.za/index.php/blog/139-how-will-blikkiesdorp-be-affected-by-the-new-airport>

<sup>127</sup> De Vany in Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

Noise Impact information for the former and proposed airstrip, as well as the maximum noise readings that show the ways that excessive noise has been recorded around Blikkiesdorp and surrounding areas.



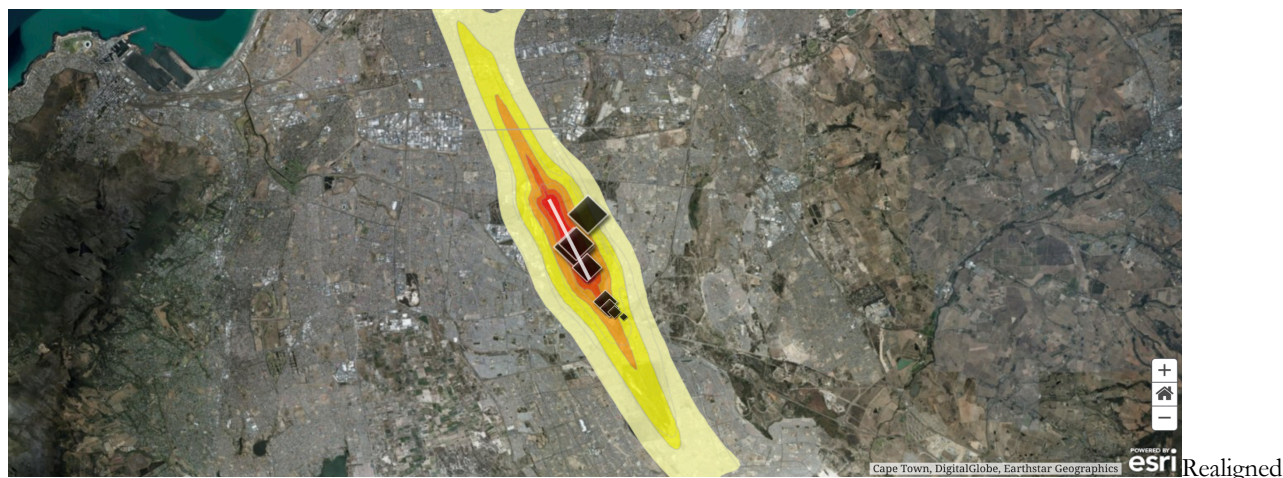
Current Airstrip and Noise Contour from Cape Town International Airport Runway<sup>128</sup>



Realigned Airstrip and Noise Contour from Cape Town International Airport<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Code4SA. “Cape Town Airport Runway Noise Impact”. <https://github.com/Code4SA/cpt-noise>

<sup>129</sup> Code4SA. “Cape Town Airport Runway Noise Impact”. <https://github.com/Code4SA/cpt-noise>



Airstrip, Noise Contour, and Maximum Noise Readings from Cape Town International Airport<sup>130</sup>

The Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee, with the help of the Right 2 Know Campaign, made space for their voices to be heard through a number of press releases and assertive measures to hold the City and ACSA accountable for being included in stakeholder conversations regarding airport development. Even when the community was included in the Open Day hosted by SRK Consulting in order to inform the community about Memorandum of Agreement, Vainola Makan notes that “the Open Day was disappointing. Community members felt that the process definitely did not feel ‘open’, as information was presented in very technical posters that they could not easily understand”.<sup>131</sup>

The inaccessibility of scientific information poses another problem for “subaltern”<sup>132</sup> communities – the 2015 Memorandum of Agreement between the city and ACSA was not released to the Blikkiesdorp community when it was updated. The Right to Know Campaign was working with the Blikkiesdorp Joint

<sup>130</sup> Code4SA. “Cape Town Airport Runway Noise Impact”. <https://github.com/Code4SA/cpt-noise>

<sup>131</sup> Makan, V. (2017). *From Information to Knowledge for Action in Blikkiesdorp BT - Forging Solidarity: Popular Education at Work* (A. von Kotze & S. Walters, eds.). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-923-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-923-2_9)

<sup>132</sup> I use this term hearkening to Gayatri Spivak in order to frame this dissertation within decolonial theory. As Spivak notes in her interview with Leon de Kock, “*subaltern* is not just a classy word for “oppressed,” for [the] Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now, who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern. . . .” Kock, L. de. (1992). Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa. *Ariel*, 23(3), 29–47.

Committee to have the document released after a final scoping report was published in June 2014 and the Environmental Impact Assessment was being carried out.<sup>133</sup> After learning about a public meeting held by SRK consulting, the community was notified that the Memorandum of Agreement had been updated and the runway realignment project was scheduled to go through. The project would “re-align the existing runway 220m to the east and rotate it counter-clockwise by 11.5 degrees, thereby unlocking the potential for optimal runway, terminal and apron development”.<sup>134</sup>

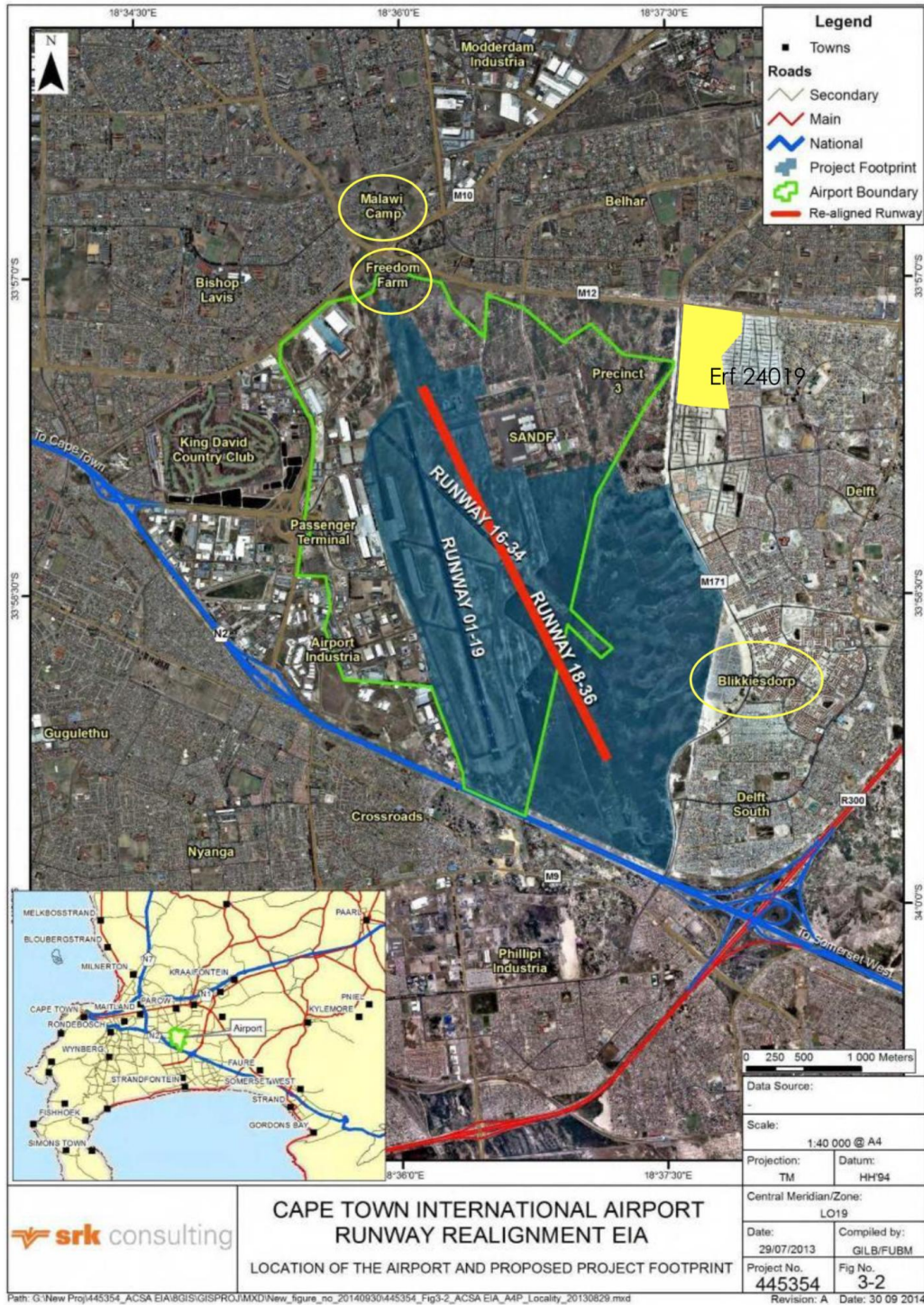
While the Environmental Impact Assessment acknowledged that the realignment of the runway would indeed be harmful to Blikkiesdorp, Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm, and that the communities must be rehoused, the Airports Company South Africa has no stake in how communities would be rehoused, putting this responsibility on the City of Cape Town. SRK’s Final Environmental Impact Report notes that “relevant local, provincial and national authorities, conservation bodies, local forums and surrounding landowners and occupants have been directly notified of the S&EIR process and all registered stakeholders have been notified of the release of the Final EIA Report for comment”.<sup>135</sup> The two intertwined positionalities of Blikkiesdorp as both a temporary and a non-land-owning community render it illegitimate in terms of who can exercise the property right of complaining about noise-pollution related “nuisance”.

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<sup>133</sup> Knoetze, Daneel. “Secrecy Shrouds Blikkiesdorp Relocation Plans.” GroundUp News, September 24, 2017. [https://www.groundup.org.za/article/secrecy-shrouds-blikkiesdorp-relocation-plans\\_2278/](https://www.groundup.org.za/article/secrecy-shrouds-blikkiesdorp-relocation-plans_2278/).

<sup>134</sup> “Draft Impact Assessment Report Amendment of Environmental Authorisation.” *Draft Impact Assessment Report Amendment of Environmental Authorisation*. Sharples Environmental Services, September 2018.

<sup>135</sup> Executive Summary: Final Environmental Impact Report Cape Town International Airport Runway Realignment And Associated Infrastructure (2016, July). In *SRK Consulting*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul\\_2016/445354\\_CTIA\\_Runway\\_Realignment\\_Final\\_EIA\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul_2016/445354_CTIA_Runway_Realignment_Final_EIA_Report_Executive_Summary_July_2016.pdf)



Location of Cape Town International Airport, showing the position of the Runway Re-Alignment<sup>136</sup>

<sup>136</sup> “Draft Impact Assessment Report Amendment of Environmental Authorisation.” *Draft Impact Assessment Report Amendment of Environmental Authorisation*. Sharples Environmental Services, September 2018.

The subjective nature of noise has historically only been deemed an “annoyance” issue for communities instead of a “nuisance” – these terms are differentiated on a precarious basis that largely stems from noise as an issue of human perception. Trying to quantify noise ultimately means that it must be objectified into something more tangible and spatially delineated, and the concept of airspace is constructed around these terms. Intangible noise represents something more multidimensional that has been governed by the limits of the ground below. South Africa’s Environmental Conservation Act 73 of 1989 delineates between what is called noise nuisance and noise disturbance. “Disturbing noise” exists in the realm of exceedingly high decibels that are heard over a shorter amount of time – this could be in terms of Single Noise Event Exposure Level or a Peak Noise Level. This noise, termed the “objective” one of the two, is typically mentioned in terms of people dealing with noisy neighbors throwing a party, an offence that can be dealt with by contacting the police service and an appeal to South Africa’s Municipal by-law which governs disturbing noise.<sup>137</sup> According to the City of Cape Town website, “a noise disturbance is measured to exceed the allowable legal noise limits. Noise is considered to exceed the ambient sound level by 7dBA – Western Cape Noise Control Regulations note that the ambient sound level is “the reading on an integrating impulse sound level meter taken at a measuring point in the absence of any alleged disturbing noise at the end of a total period of at least 10 minutes, after such meter has been put into operation”.<sup>138</sup> A decibel reading will need to be taken to enforce control”.<sup>139</sup> According to the Western Cape Noise Control Regulations, a “disturbing noise” also “exceeds the rating level 2 by 7dBA, exceeds the residual 3 noise level where the residual noise level is higher than the rating level, exceeds the residual noise level by 3 dBA where the residual noise level is lower than the rating level, and in the case of a low-frequency noise, exceeds the level

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<sup>137</sup> Brandt, Kevin. “Patricia De Lille Resigns as Cape Town Mayor and DA Member.” Eyewitness News, October 31, 2018. <https://ewn.co.za/2018/10/31/patricia-de-lille-announces-resignation-as-cape-town-mayor>.

<sup>138</sup> “Environment Conservation Act 1989.” Environmental Health Research Network. Last modified , 1989. [https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg\\_noise.pdf](https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg_noise.pdf).

<sup>139</sup> “Report Noise Pollution.” City of Cape Town Link. Accessed November 6, 2019. <http://www.capetown.gov.za/City-Connect/Report/Report-noise-pollution/Report-a-noise-disturbance>.

specified in Annex B of SANS 10103".<sup>140</sup> Noise Nuisance is understood to be subjective and is defined as "any noise that disturbs or impairs or may disturb or impair the convenience or peace of any person".<sup>141</sup>

### Stakeholderism and the "Right to Complain"

The Western Cape Noise Control Regulations, initially published in 1989 and revised in 2013, have a number of regulations that apply specifically to aircraft noise, stating that disturbing noise may not be "caused by any person, animal, machine, device, apparatus, vehicle, vessel or model aircraft, or any combination thereof".<sup>142</sup> These regulations also stress the necessity for developers to have an Environmental Impact Assessment conducted, noting that:

before changes are made to existing facilities or existing uses of land or buildings, or before new buildings are erected, in writing require that noise impact assessments or tests are conducted to the satisfaction of that local authority by the owner, developer, tenant or occupant of the facilities, land or buildings or that, for the purposes of regulation 3(b) or (c), reports or certificates in relation to the noise impact to the satisfaction of that local authority are submitted by the owner, developer, tenant or occupant to the local authority on written demand . . .<sup>143</sup>

The stakeholders of "owner, developer, tenant, and occupant", stand out in terms of who is allowed to participate in the democratic process of environmental governance. I would like to point to the ways in which all stakeholders are not created equal and, while the Blikkiesdorp community had a steering committee that acted as an agential liaison in this decision-making process, this only became the case after ACSA and the City of Cape Town were confronted for not including the community. The terms of stakeholder-ism in the case of Blikkies were withheld based on the community being labeled "temporary" –

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<sup>140</sup> "Environment Conservation Act 1989." Environmental Health Research Network. Last modified , 1989. [https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg\\_noise.pdf](https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg_noise.pdf).

<sup>141</sup> "Noise Pollution - What Is Legal and What Isn't?" News24, August 20, 2014. <https://www.news24.com/MyNews24/Noise-Pollution-What-is-legal-and-what-isnt-20140819>.

<sup>142</sup> "Environment Conservation Act 1989." Environmental Health Research Network. Last modified , 1989. [https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg\\_noise.pdf](https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg_noise.pdf).

<sup>143</sup> "Environment Conservation Act 1989." Environmental Health Research Network. Last modified , 1989. [https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg\\_noise.pdf](https://www.ehrn.co.za/download/reg_noise.pdf).

the natural environment itself not even being considered as a viable possibility for stakeholder status.

Environmental management practices are unique due to the fact that the effects of industrial development can be agreed upon by stakeholders (and, in the case of Blikkies, community-based stakeholder informants) but could still have extensive influence on future generations. As Mark S. Reed et.al note in their piece entitled “What makes stakeholder and public engagement in environmental management work?”:

outcomes from engagement are highly scale-dependent over space and time. Contextual values, such as preferences for one option or another, may change over short timescales, but the extent to which engagement (via deliberation) shapes the values of participants is highly dependent on the temporal scales over which engagement occurs. It is therefore necessary to match the length and frequency of engagement to the goals of the process, recognizing that changes in deeply held values (that may be at the root of a conflict) are likely to take longer than changes in preferences, which may be influenced over shorter timescales through deliberation.<sup>144</sup>

The ways in which the community was labeled by the city government within their terms effectively created a scenario where a corporate body was included and the affected community excluded. When the Blikkiesdorp steering committee became included in the airport realignment dialogue following the Memorandum of Understanding, they were included as liaisons to the community and were expected to speak to the community’s interests and concerns. While their concerns mostly included the importance of a housing project, the effects of ongoing exposure to environmental factors could continue to affect families in and around the area for generations to come.

The history of the stakeholder concept reflects the ways in which the neoliberal economy is shaped according to corporate management strategies. Andrew Ives engages with stakeholderism in his 2015 article, saying that

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<sup>144</sup> Reed, M. S., Vella, S. , Challies, E. , de Vente, J. , Frewer, L. , Hohenwallner-Ries, D. , Huber, T. , Neumann, R. K., Oughton, E. A., Sidoli del Ceno, J. and van Delden, H. (2018), A theory of participation: what makes stakeholder and public engagement in environmental management work?. *Restor Ecol*, 26: S7-S17. doi:10.1111/rec.12541

when the concept (of stakeholders) is used in the public sector, it reduces the importance of government as a decision-maker. Governments, mandated by the people through electoral processes, become just one actor in the decision-making process, rather than the essential dominant decider. Instead of seeing their role as that of representing the public interest, and of protecting that interest by imposing limits on the power of private factions, the language of *governance* puts government on equal footing with other actors. Instead of being subject to limits imposed by government, private factions thus become negotiating partners... governance is thus reduced to the role of managing conflict and organizing negotiation between stakeholders in a free market environment.<sup>145</sup>

While stakeholderism was employed in order to negate top-down governmental decision-making, this form of governance does not create a situation in which citizens are empowered to freely and democratically engage in these processes. Public participation in the decision to realign the runway was inaccessible to the community to begin with.<sup>146</sup> The community had to enlist the Right 2 Know Campaign in order to gain access to the documents containing the Memorandum of Agreement after stakeholder meetings were conducted without them.<sup>147</sup> Vainola Makan notes the ways the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee actively worked with Right 2 Know in “From Information to Knowledge for Action in Blikkiesdorp.” She writes:

In a strategy session with Right 2 Know, the Joint Committee decided to begin a process of engagement with all stakeholders, moving methodically up the decision-making ladder until they get answers from the city with respect to their future. This included meeting with the head of the Department of Human Settlements, ACSA, SRK and the City of Cape

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<sup>145</sup> Ives, Andrew, “Neoliberalism and the concept of governance: Renewing with an older liberal tradition to legitimate the power of capital “, *Mémoire(s), identité(s), marginalité(s) dans le monde occidental contemporain*. 14 | 2015, mis en ligne le 26 août 2015, consulté le 03 décembre 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/mimmoc/2263> ; DOI : 10.4000/mimmoc.2263

<sup>146</sup> “The nature and focus of public participation changed dramatically with the drafting of South Africa’s new constitution in 1996. The policy making process followed by the South African government has changed since 1994. Prior to the election of the first democratic government, policy making was a closed affair with very little, if any public participation. This has changed with the new South African Constitution, which asserts that South Africa is a representative and participatory democracy. The Constitution provides for public access to and involvement in the legislative process. Participation in the legislative process is open to all including the organised and powerful, the marginalised and unorganised. The legislative authority of the nine provinces in South Africa is vested in the provincial legislature of each province. Provincial governments are spheres of government, removed from the national government, and thus legislation and policies are more likely to directly affect the people of that particular province. It is therefore the responsibility of each provincial legislature to ensure that all the necessary steps are taken to ensure that public opinion is taken into account in decision-making.”

“Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector.” Legislative Sector South Africa, June 2013. <http://sals.gov.za/>.

<sup>147</sup> Sokanyile, Zenzile Khoisanda. “Outcry over New Airport Runway Plan.” IOL News, November 11, 2016. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/outcry-over-new-airport-runway-plan-1859582>.

Town. Right 2 Know was requested by the community to attend as observers in the meetings and to assist with press releases.<sup>148</sup>

The Blikkiesdorp Joint committee was able to be included in the process of environmental governance after going through a strenuous process of holding the government accountable for their exclusion. Finding a place to raise their concerns amidst the market-based actors was a process that took a number of years. SRK Consulting notes in their “Executive Summary: Final Environmental Impact Report” that their decision making processes would continue as follows: “Once stakeholders have commented on the information presented in the Final EIA Report, the Report along with any additional comments received will be submitted to DEA to inform their decision on whether or not the project can be authorised”.<sup>149</sup> The Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee fought to be a part of these stakeholder conversations and to have some input in their future, including where they would be rehoused and under what terms. All of the documentation surrounding the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out by SRK Consulting, including the summary, has been removed from their website after submitting it to the Department of Environmental Affairs. Environmental governance in the age of Late Liberal and neoliberalism clearly favours certain actors, creating unequal power relationships between those affected by development projects such as the realigned runway.

The Blikkiesdorp community’s struggle to be included as stakeholders as well as their struggle to be recognised as part of the “environment” could be seen as a flanking maneuverer to combat their exclusion from the decisions made between ACSA and the City of Cape Town. However, many of the ways in which

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<sup>148</sup> Makan, V. (2017). From Information to Knowledge for Action in Blikkiesdorp. In A. von Kotze & S. Walters (Eds.), *Forging Solidarity: Popular Education at Work* (pp. 95–104). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-923-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-923-2_9)

<sup>149</sup> Executive Summary: Final Environmental Impact Report Cape Town International Airport Runway Realignment And Associated Infrastructure (2016, July). In *SRK Consulting*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul\\_2016/445354\\_CTIA\\_Runway\\_Realignment\\_Final\\_EIA\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul_2016/445354_CTIA_Runway_Realignment_Final_EIA_Report_Executive_Summary_July_2016.pdf)

the community created processes of political organising that featured both issues in the discourse – a central concern that Chari calls “detritus” that in his work featured the “corporate and governmental dissimulation about the health effects of air pollution” in South Durban along with “other markers of degraded life and land- scape, as in the range of horror stories about sex, drugs, and crime that Jane Glover and several other residents have regaled me with.”<sup>150</sup> This “differentiated and fragmented contagion talk,”<sup>151</sup> speaks to the ways that categories of suffering are all encompassing and reconciled in Blikkiesdorp.

### **The History of South African Noise Regulation and Aircrafts from the Global North**

Noise measurement is based on what is audible to the human ear. The microphones we use are modeled as such, effectively acting as what Peterson deems an “incompletely anthropomorphic” eardrum.<sup>152</sup> Decibel readings, for this reason, will only reflect what can be heard, rather than what can be felt – the effects of noise on the nervous system are not accounted for. “There is sufficient scientific evidence that noise exposure can induce hearing impairment, hypertension and ischemic heart disease, annoyance, sleep disturbance, and decreased school performance”, though “for other effects such as changes in the immune system and birth defects, the evidence is limited,” note Passchier-Vermeer and Passicher in their study entitled “Noise Pollution and Public Health”.<sup>153</sup> Public health issues in low-income areas of South Africa are so vast and so palpable that it is difficult to understand most of these effects as a public health issue – if you are not able to point to an evident effect of noise pollution, the effect is as imperceptible as the cause. Peterson calls this the “oculocentricity of modernity”: if you cannot see it, it does not exist. She writes: “the invisibility of noise structures perception and casts an ontological quality of impermanence onto sound . . .

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<sup>150</sup> Chari, Sharad. *Detritus in Durban: Polluted Environs and the Biopolitics of Refusal in Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*. Edited by Ann Laura Stoler. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Kahn in Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>153</sup> Passchier-Vermeer, W, and WF Passchier. “Noise Exposure and Public Health.” *Environmental Health Perspective*, vol. 108, no. 1, Mar. 2000, doi:10.1289/ehp.00108s1123.

purportedly, it does not leave traces of its sounding”.<sup>154</sup> How do we conceive of the ways in which noise leaves traces of sounding on the body and the landscape? How does the Western scientific episteme dictate what we sense and how we sense it? Whose perception do we trust?

South Africa’s history of noise regulation follows in tandem with the progression of limiting aerodrome noise pollution in the so-called “Global North”. In 1974, the South African Bureau of Standards published a Code of Practice for “the determination and limitation of disturbance around the aerodrome due to the noise from airplanes”.<sup>155</sup> The next airspace noise pollution laws were undertaken after the end of apartheid. In 1998 a White Paper on National Policy on Airports and Airspace Management was put into place, noting that “in this document, a section is devoted to integrating the airport into its environment, and deals in general terms with the environmental impact of airports”.<sup>156</sup> This would be the first time that noise pollution would be considered an issue of environmental justice. In 1999 there was a White Paper completed by the South African government dealing specifically with aircraft noise and engine emissions. Paul Goldschlagg reports on the much more specific guidelines that framed how operations conducted in and around airspace were limited, saying:

In this policy, specific guidelines are laid down for aircraft and airport operations (curfews, noise abatement departure and arrival procedures, preferential runways, minimum noise routes, runway operations, etc.); noise modelling, monitoring and track keeping, and land-use planning. The policy also develops a South African position on the non-addition of Chapter 2 aircraft to the fleet, and a phase-out of Chapter 2 aircraft.<sup>157</sup>

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is “a United Nations organization (that) adopted

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<sup>154</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>155</sup> South African Bureau of Standards (1974) *Code of Practice for the Determination and Limitation of Disturbance Around an Aerodrome due to Noise from Aeroplanes*. Pretoria.

<sup>156</sup> Goldschlagg, P. (2002). Airport Noise and Environmental Justice in South Africa. *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, 11(1), 72-75.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

noise limit rules for certifying commercial aircraft”<sup>158</sup> in 1971; while the 1999 White Paper called for their phasing-out, Chapter 2 planes from the Global North continue to be sold to South African airlines. The ICAO headed up the categorisation of planes based on the levels of noise pollution they created. Non-noise certified aircraft based on the ICAO are planes produced before 1965, and these are disallowed from flying in any country. Chapter 2 aircraft according to Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 2 of Annex 16 are those planes that have had their noise emissions reduced by 10EPNdB (effective perceived noise level in decibels) compared to non-noise certified aircraft. In 1990, the ICAO moved to phase out Chapter 2 and non-noise certified aircraft. Many Global North companies agreed to the phase out these aircraft, including most European countries, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. as “Noise Restricted States” under the ICAO, all airlines must replace their Chapter 2 aircraft with Chapter 3 aircraft. Chapter 3 aircraft have another 10EPNdB reduction. Chapter 4 aircraft, a certification that has existed since 2006, including the airbus A380 and the Boeing 787, must be another 10 decibels quieter than Chapter 3 aircraft. By the end of apartheid, says Goldschlagg, “South Africa had not adopted a position on Chapter 2 aircraft and so South African airlines were free to source additional aircraft from the increasing supply of non-noise compliant aircraft. Foreign airlines had a ready market for their Chapter 2 aircraft, and many of these have been sold to South Africa”.<sup>159</sup> In 2009, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) was established. they describe themselves as “a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009)” and note that “in terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards”.<sup>160</sup> Their 2012 published plan for the phasing out of Chapter 2 planes notes that “the phases of

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> “Chapter 2 Noise Phase-Out News for Aircraft Immanent.” South African Civil Aviation Authority, 26 July 2012, <http://www.caa.co.za/Media%20Statements/2012/Chapter%202%20Noise%20Phase-Out%20Rules%20For%20Aircraft%20Imminent.pdf>

implementation may mean that the registration of additional Chapter 2 aircraft in South Africa will be prohibited; foreign airlines will not be allowed to operate additional Chapter 2 aircraft to South Africa as of a determined date; and the phase-out of Chapter 2 aircraft according to the following schedule, will start on dates to be determined”.<sup>161</sup> In 2014, the CAA noted that no new Chapter 2 aircraft will be introduced in South Africa. Along with shifting and increasing the noise footprint, the realigned airstrip will also create the means to land Chapter 4 aircraft, which includes the Airbus A350 and the Boeing 787 – much larger aircraft that would increase the aircraft landing and departures by 50%.<sup>162</sup>

The Final Environmental Impact Report from SRK Consulting states that “the re-aligned primary runway (Runway 18-36) will be 3,500 m in length and will be built to international specifications, allowing larger (Code F) aircraft to land at Cape Town International Airport”.<sup>163</sup> This category includes the Boeing 747-8 and the Airbus A380-800 – planes with wingspans of 65m but < 80m and main gear wheel spans of 14m but < 16 m.<sup>164</sup> While these aircraft are Chapter 4 aircraft, making them 10dB quieter on average than the older generation, significant issues remain in terms of when the aircraft will take off and land, and how the noise from these aircraft will continue to be monitored. The Boeing 787-8 has a takeoff noise contour between 83.8 and 85.2 dB SEL.<sup>165</sup> An Airbus A380, one of the aircrafts that the realigned airstrip boasts new

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<sup>161</sup> Gwebu, Phindiwe. *Chapter 2 Noise Phase-Out Rules for Aircraft Imminent*. South African Civil Aviation Authority, 26 July 2012, [http://www.caa.co.za/Media Statements/2012/Chapter 2 Noise Phase-Out Rules For Aircraft Imminent.pdf](http://www.caa.co.za/Media%20Statements/2012/Chapter%20Noise%20Phase-Out%20Rules%20For%20Aircraft%20Imminent.pdf).

<sup>162</sup> Petersen, Tanya. “Cape Town Airport to Receive R5.5bn Facelift.” *Weekend Argus*, 15 Apr. 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/cape-town-airport-to-receive-r55bn-facelift-14451928>.

<sup>163</sup> Executive Summary: Final Environmental Impact Report Cape Town International Airport Runway Realignment And Associated Infrastructure (2016, July). In *SRK Consulting*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from [http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul\\_2016/445354\\_CTIA\\_Runway\\_Realignment\\_Final\\_EIA\\_Report\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_July\\_2016.pdf](http://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/File/South-Africa/publicDocuments/CTIA/Jul_2016/445354_CTIA_Runway_Realignment_Final_EIA_Report_Executive_Summary_July_2016.pdf)

<sup>164</sup> ICAO Aerodrome Reference Code (n.d.). In *SKYbrary*. Retrieved October 10, 2017, from [https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/ICAO\\_Aerodrome\\_Reference\\_Code](https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/ICAO_Aerodrome_Reference_Code)

<sup>165</sup> “Noise Data for the First 17 Months of Boeing 787 Operations at Heathrow Airport.” *Heathrow Airport*, Civil Aviation Authority, 2012, [https://web.wip.heathrow.com/file\\_source/HeathrowNoise/Static/CAP1191-Boeing787-operations-Heathrow-airport.pdf](https://web.wip.heathrow.com/file_source/HeathrowNoise/Static/CAP1191-Boeing787-operations-Heathrow-airport.pdf).

access to,<sup>166</sup> takes little over a minute to take off.<sup>167</sup> While the overall issue surrounding noise contours exceeding 65dB CNEL remains, there are also significant reasons to be concerned about the ways in which an Airbus taking-off could constitute a “disturbing” noise. Dated Chapter 2 aircraft as well as new Chapter 4 aircraft taking off and landing at Cape Town International Airport could still constitute an annoyance issue, contributing to sleep disturbance, hypertension, and other health effects. Avisha Ramlall notes in her 2016 Environmental Law Dissertation, “A Critical Analysis of a Legal and Policy Framework Governing Aircraft Noise in South Africa”:

In this respect, it is important to note that aircraft noise decreases with increasing distance from the airport but for several reasons it is not a uniform reduction with increased distance. Firstly, along the flight paths into and out of the airport where aircraft will regularly fly, the noise impact will be greater than to the sides of these flight paths. Secondly, aircraft which are taking off are almost always noisier than landing aircraft because their engines are being operated at higher power settings.<sup>168</sup>

Peterson engages with the idea of how airspace and the areas below it make up an “elastic territory” that is created by a “legal landscape . . . structured by a confluence of nuisance and property law and often irreconcilable between the two”.<sup>169</sup> The area surrounding Cape Town international has been created by the environmental governance that favours market-actors over the communities affected by the noise. De Kock, who lived in Blikkiesdorp for over 10 years, notes how she and her family would endure being woken up by aircraft in the middle of the night: “we used to joke, oh here come the French people, there go the Swedes”.<sup>170</sup> “There’s a flight that comes in at 3am that wakes everyone up,” agrees Jerome Daniels.<sup>171</sup> Daily

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<sup>166</sup> “Cape Town's New Runway Approved.” *Traveller* 24, 1 Feb. 2018, <https://www.traveller24.com/News/Flights/update-cape-towns-new-runway-approved-20180201>.

<sup>167</sup> *Airbus A380 Take-off Time*. Khan Academy, <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/ap-physics-1/ap-one-dimensional-motion/motion-with-constant-acceleration/v/airbus-a380-take-off-time>.

<sup>168</sup> Ramlall, Avisha. “A Critical Analysis of the Legal and Policy Framework Governing Aircraft Noise in South Africa with Specific Reference to King Shaka International Airport.” *Masters in Environmental Law, University of KwaZulu-Natal*, Feb. 2016, [https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall\\_Avisha\\_2017.pdf](https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall_Avisha_2017.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>170</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

<sup>171</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa.

South African Airways flights SA6831 and SA 6834 arrive at 02:40 and depart again at 03:40 – both flights are conducted on a Boeing 737-300 Freighter, a Chapter 3 aircraft.<sup>172</sup> The Boeing 737 300-800 models are noted to be the loudest of all current aircraft groups.<sup>173</sup>

While newer Chapter 4 aircraft are significantly quieter, the issue of phasing out older generations of aircraft in order to reduce annoyance in surrounding communities remains. In addition to this, simply pushing the advancement of aircraft technologies and promising the phasing out of older aircraft does not constitute an approach that results from a democratic process of including community participation and an ear to the experiential knowledge of surrounding communities.

Avisha Ramlall notes the noise abatement procedures that the ACSA-owned King Shaka International Airport undertook in order to address noise complaints by surrounding community members. They are listed as follows:

- Prohibit intersection departures between 22h00-06h00 local time.
- Limit idle reverse thrust<sup>174</sup> between 22h00-06h00 local time (unless operationally required).
- Adoption of Noise Abatement Procedure (NAP) 1 for all departing jet aircraft.
- Banning of Chapter 2 aircrafts and implementation of curfews.
- Installation of noise monitoring system.
- Airlines and aircraft type are monitored continuously for any deviation from published Guidelines.
- Noise monitoring terminals have been erected at strategic locations.
- Formation of the Noise Committee to address aggrieved and affected person.

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<sup>172</sup> Dunholter, Paul. “Snohomish County Airport Commercial Service EA Noise Assessment - AEDT Noise Contour Update.” Snohomish County, Washington Gov, February 2, 2017.

<https://snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/41085/Noise-Contours-2-7-17?bidId=>.

<sup>173</sup> Zevitas, C.D., Spengler, J.D., Jones, B. *et al.* Assessment of noise in the airplane cabin environment. *J Expo Sci Environ Epidemiol* 28, 568–578 (2018) doi:10.1038/s41370-018-0027-z

<sup>174</sup> Idle reverse thrust is used for deceleration of the airplane. It primarily diverts a jet plane engine’s thrust in order to slow the airplane down after touch-down. “When reverse thrust is selected because the power needed is greater than idle, which is what they would have been in on touchdown, hence it sounds similar to the roar produced on takeoff,” but even when idling can cause disturbing noise.

“PPRuNe Forums.” Professional Pilots Rumor Networks. Accessed October 31, 2019. <https://www.pprune.org/passengers-slf-self-loading-freight/337394-reverse-thrust-vibrations-shudders-loud-noise-normal.html>.

- A noise complaints hotline, email address and help desk has been activated to deal with noise and environmental complaints.
- A register is retained to track all noise complaints.<sup>175</sup>

Through these processes, she notes, the aircraft noise complaints decreased from 95 in 2010/11 to 13 in 2013/14. Having ongoing community participation and adhering to the complaints clearly makes a difference to how these issues are dealt with. While ACSA has received very few formal noise complaints regarding Cape Town International in recent years (only 4 in 2011 and 1 in 2013),<sup>176</sup> the processes of community participation must be democratised to include the communities that do not have the outlets to complain as well as those who occupy “stakeholder” status only as “risk losers,” or those who have been adversely affected by an environmental risk decision. Looking at the long and arduous history of processes the Blikkiesdorp community had to endure to be considered just in terms of a rehousing project shows that environmental concerns have not been heard for many years now. The effects of more air traffic, a larger runway and wider noise contour, both outdated smaller aircraft and new larger aircraft, nighttime flight schedules, and a lack of ongoing community engagement to deal with noise complaints reflect the ways in which the Blikkiesdorp community will remain affected by this project. The community, although being moved into other areas surrounding the airport, will need to be continually involved in discussions about the effects of noise pollution in the areas they will continue to live.

The attitude that the community should simply be happy they have a “roof over their head” has been asserted by the city and echoed by the community. “Over the years the rain and sun makes the zinc thinner and the sound gets more effective and louder and the structures get colder,” notes community

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<sup>175</sup> Ramlall, Avisha. “A Critical Analysis of the Legal and Policy Framework Governing Aircraft Noise in South Africa with Specific Reference to King Shaka International Airport.” *Masters in Environmental Law, University of KwaZulu-Natal*, Feb. 2016, [https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall\\_Avisha\\_2017.pdf](https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall_Avisha_2017.pdf)

<sup>176</sup> Ramlall, Avisha. “A Critical Analysis of the Legal and Policy Framework Governing Aircraft Noise in South Africa with Specific Reference to King Shaka International Airport.” *Masters in Environmental Law, University of KwaZulu-Natal*, Feb. 2016, [https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall\\_Avisha\\_2017.pdf](https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/15028/Ramlall_Avisha_2017.pdf)

member Domray Clemends in his Noise Pollution Diary, “but the least we could do was to be grateful that we had roofs over our heads”.<sup>177</sup> The zinc houses are constantly decomposing and becoming more vulnerable to the elements of dust, wind and noise.

“Decomposition occurs in a system of concepts, materials, and forces that locks together human and nonhuman agencies and organisms”,<sup>178</sup> notes Povinelli when describing the rural ghettoisation of Indigenous housing in Australia.

The process of complaining is ultimately very complicated in Blikkiesdorp – academics, journalists, politicians, consulting-firm liaisons and others have heard these concerns but the general trust of the community has lapsed on many of these relationships. Responses to housing issues have placed the responsibility on community members to build their own housing, which has been lauded as “skills development project” that will make the “most vulnerable”<sup>179</sup> unemployed members eligible for employment in the field. Community members are more skeptical: “Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change,” says Cheryl-Lynn Jafta.<sup>180</sup>

One of the aims of this project is to aid the process of creating community-led environmental initiatives based on transcorporeal experiential knowledge and focusing on the multiplicity of the relationship to the landscape. state-led processes that engage a community for certain amounts of time, and only in terms of them as fixed “stakeholders” until a market-based agreement can be reached, speaks to the ways in which the democratic processes that focus primarily on the “legitimate” biological citizen have fallen

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<sup>177</sup> Clemend, Domray. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 8, 2018.

<sup>178</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>179</sup> “Blikkiesdorp Certificate Ceremony: Joint Statement by the City's Executive Mayor, Patricia De Lille, Airports Company South Africa, And False Bay College.” False Bay College. Media Office, City of Cape Town, December 2017. <http://www.falsebaycollege.co.za>.

<sup>180</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 30, 2018.

short. In their 2006 piece, “Environmental Footprint of Aircraft Noise Exposure at Cape Town International Airport”, J.H. Van Der Merwe and D.S. Von Holdt interrogate how the noise contours of Cape Town International should be looked at as a producer of excess noise pollution, noting the

development background of CTIA and its institutional noise control framework to demonstrate a growing concern with an under-researched environmental problem in the South African context. An international overview of proven noise effects on incompatible land use types and, especially, sensitive population has been documented to emphasize the seriousness of this phenomenon, the necessity to identify affected land entities and people, and the need to find planning solutions to it. It has demonstrated how GIS might be employed to practically identify a range of incompatible land uses on some 2,500 noise-affected formal erven within the 55 DNL contour at CTIA. Of these nearly 200 have been classified as ‘high priority cases’.<sup>181</sup>

Continuing to interrogate noise pollution issues surrounding Cape Town International Airport will be an ongoing process – after the airstrip is realigned and beyond. I would like to propose further engagement with the Blikkiesdorp community in their fight for sufficient housing and environmental conditions by creating an open-source GIS map with the data they themselves have contributed and collected. This follows the method in Adriana Petryna’s book, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*, where she engages with claiming “biological citizenship”<sup>182</sup> as a means for Ukrainians who suffered the effects of radiation pollution to gain compensation and resources and build political leverage against the state. What would it mean, however, to create a community-led project that maps the effects of noise pollution in Blikkiesdorp while keeping in mind the ways in which the biological subject, or the biological citizen, is a flawed concept? Building from the work of critical black theory and its interrogation of subjecthood, this project can continue to pay credence to the ways in which the Blikkiesdorp community’s struggle complicates the division between Life and Nonlife, creating its own theory that is neither reductionist or

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<sup>181</sup> Jh, Van & Holdt, D. (2006). Environmental footprint of aircraft noise exposure at Cape Town International Airport. *South African Geographical Journal*. 88. 177-193. 10.1080/03736245.2006.9713860.

<sup>182</sup> Petryna, Adriana. *Life Exposed Biological Citizens after Chernobyl ; with a New Introduction by the Author*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2013.

essentialist. Alexander Weheliye engages with the ways in which the human subject can be complicated without being completely scrapped, saying that:

Afro-diasporic thinking has not evinced the same sort of distrust and/or outright rejection of ‘man’ in its universalist, post-Enlightenment guise as Western antihumanist or posthumanist philosophies. Instead, black humanist discourses emphasize the historicity and mutability of the ‘human’ itself, gesturing toward different, catachrestic, conceptualizations of this category.<sup>183</sup>

My project focuses on a process of creating an accessible space where we can create, cultivate and maintain community-based environmental knowledge that takes a multifaceted look at the effects of noise pollution on the landscape of Blikkiesdorp. Mapping the environmental knowledge in Blikkiesdorp creates the possibility to advocate for the rights of people living there as well as the landscape itself. Making space for forms of environmental knowledge gathering that rejects the bio-centric subject goes against techno-scientific knowledge being upheld as the only important form of “evidence” considered in environmental governance procedures. Creating a database that displays a multiplicity of experiential knowledge of the Blikkiesdorp community could be used as a political tool in the fight for housing and future projects. This information will serve not only to inform communities about the ways in which they are able to voice their concerns and participate in environmental knowledge creation, but also create a basis of research that will serve to hold corporate and government actors accountable. Scott notes that “environmental justice struggles are increasingly contests waged over data and knowledge, involving claims of expertise and counter-expertise . . . reliance on formal science elevates the data generated by accredited knowledge professionals to a prime political position, leaving little or no room to the layperson”.<sup>184</sup> The Blikkiesdorp community has been resisting socio-economic forces throughout the years, calling on different initiatives to

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<sup>183</sup> Weheliye in Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>184</sup> Scott, Dayna Nadine. "The Smell of Neglect: A Transcorporeal Feminism for Environmental Justice." *Sensing Law*, edited by Sheryl Hamilton, Diana Majury, Neil Sargeant and Dawn Moore, Routledge, 162-178.

act in solidarity with them throughout this time. Creating another means for the community to refute the abandonment practices of Late Liberalism can constitute another means of resistance to governance over people and landscape.

### **Chapter III: Noise, Nonlife and Transcorporeal Experiential Knowledge of “Sonic Apartheid” in Blikkiesdorp**

In this chapter, I further explore what sonic apartheid sounds like in Blikkiesdorp and how that sounding breaches the material entities that are bodies, plants, animals, structures and land, drawing on new materialist feminist theory, critical race theory and black feminist geographies, especially Stacy Alaimo’s *Transcorporeality*, Elizabeth Povinelli’s *Geontology* and *Late Liberalism*, Kathryn Yusoff’s *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, and Alexander Weheliye’s *Habeas Viscus*. The theorists have been chosen for their interrogation of biopolitics, the Anthropocene and how the human subject figures in these in terms of current environmental humanities thinking. While the literature use was published quite recently, examining the ways in which concepts like biopolitics and the Anthropocene have *reified* a monolithic human subject based in Western ontologies rather than dismember it is something that comes from long histories of Black and Indigenous posthumanist thinking. Explaining her notion of geontology power, Povinelli notes that

the point of the concepts of geontology and geontopower is not to found a new ontology of objects, nor to establish a new metaphysics of power, nor to adjudicate the possibility or impossibility of the human ability to know the truth of the world of things. Rather they are concepts meant to help make visible the figural tactics of late liberalism as a longstanding biontological orientation and distribution of power crumbles, losing its efficacy as a self-evident backdrop to reason. And, more specifically, they are meant to illuminate the cramped space in which my Indigenous colleagues are forced to maneuver as they attempt to keep relevant their critical analytics and practices of existence.<sup>185</sup>

The struggle to be considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment in Blikkiesdorp offers an

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<sup>185</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

occurrence where we are able to interrogate the ways in which the division and governance of Life and Nonlife maintains spaces of abandonment. The main questions I ask are: 1) How do we make Blikkiesdorp liveable when both veins of rights – the rights given to biological subjects and those given to the non-human environment – have historically been denied here?; and 2) How do Late Liberal democratic processes keep places like Blikkiesdorp in a state of oppressive governance, slow violence and abandonment?

### **Blikkiesdorp as a Black Anthropocene**

If we begin to think of Blikkiesdorp in all of its facets – from flesh<sup>186</sup> to zinc – we can engage with what and who is deemed “nonlife” and how these create geographies of abandonment. Thinking of which racialised bodies are placed in the realm of the non-living can be traced back to the critical race and decolonial theorists. Engaging theories from thinkers like Achille Mbembe, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers and others, and applying these to the newly presented concept of the “Anthropocene” (coined by Paul Crutzen in 2000<sup>187</sup>) has created a new way of engaging with human geography that keeps a critical eye on the way race has formed the *anthropos* as we know it. Kathryn Yusoff presents a name for these racialised geographies in her 2018 book, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, saying

the proximity of black and brown bodies to harm in this intimacy with the inhuman is what I am calling Black Anthropocenes. It is an inhuman proximity organized by historical geographies of extraction, grammars of geology, imperial global geographies, and contemporary environmental racism. It is predicated on the presumed absorbent qualities of black and brown bodies to take up the body burdens of exposure to toxicities and to buffer the violence of the earth.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65-81. doi:10.2307/464747.

<sup>187</sup> Crutzen in Carrington, Damian. "The Anthropocene Epoch: Scientists Declare Dawn of Human-Influenced Age." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, August 29, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/29/declare-anthropocene-epoch-experts-urge-geological-congress-human-impact-earth>.

<sup>188</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Black geographer Katherine McKittrick also notes the ways in which racialised people have always been excluded from concepts of humanness in her work “Plantation Futures”:

And what of the worldview of those who occupy the wretched category – is this worldview also lifeless because the geographies surrounding the marginalized are rendered dead? How does the dehumanization and racial marking of some communities follow the colonial logic that the human in human geography is a direct reference to Man, who not only represents a full version of humanness (the *us*, in the *us and them*) but at the global level *naturally* inhabits the livable, wealthy, overdeveloped countries? In what ways does this colonial logic imply that Man’s human others (the *them* of the *us and them*) *naturally* occupy dead and dying regions as they are cast as the jobless underclasses whose members are made to function as our “waste products” in our contemporary global world?<sup>189</sup>

Beginning to understand the ways Blikkies bodies have been placed in areas so proximal to environmental hazard comes with understanding the ways these bodies have been historically classified as what Yusoff would call the “inhuman” – a material classification that Hartman calls the “fungibility of the captive body”.<sup>190</sup> The racial organisation enacted through colonisation and apartheid geographies is maintained in what is deemed the “post-apartheid” era through, for example, the precarious proximity of racialised bodies to mineral extraction, industrialisation, and its toxic aftermath.<sup>191</sup> History books and tours of Robben Island tell stories of the incalculable hours, weeks and days prisoners were made to work in quarries, much like the chain gangs of the American South. Resource extraction and South African mining – putting racialised bodies (deemed expendable and equally valuable to the minerals themselves) under the ground in order to accumulate resources – exemplifies why academics like Yusoff and Povinelli set their sights on the ways that these practices create formations of power. They argue that these formations of power can be understood as something different than a *biopolitics*, opting to examine the ways in which flesh has been ontologically

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<sup>189</sup> McKittrick, Katherine. (2013). *Plantation Futures*. Small Axe. 17. 1-15. 10.1215/07990537-2378892.

<sup>190</sup> Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>191</sup> Chari, Sharad. *Detritus in Durban: Polluted Environs and the Biopolitics of Refusal in Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*. Edited by Ann Laura Stoler. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

demoted to *geos*. The politics of who has been made to break rocks and go beneath the ground to retrieve them does not represent something that is by any means new to the epoch of the Anthropocene. Povinelli mentions in her interview with Yusoff that

geontopower does not come after or alongside the new geological and meteorological age of the human – Anthropocene and climate change – nor is it a new stage of late liberalism. The Anthropocene and climate change have certainly made geontopower visible to people who were previously unaffected by it – who shunted its deleterious effects elsewhere. But its operation has always been a quite apparent architecture of the late liberal governance of difference and markets in settler colonialisms.<sup>192</sup>

There are many examples of how such architectures of race have played out in South Africa. One is the “Durban System”<sup>193</sup>, explored by Chari in his work on the ways low-income Indian residents in South Durban were systematically placed in line of toxic waste from industrial areas. Another is the new Temporary Relocation Area that was created in Cape Town in August 2019 following the eviction of hundreds of farm workers from the Kraaifontein area. Located in Philippi, the space is feared to become another “dumping ground” like Blikkiesdorp.<sup>194</sup> These “material and conceptual architectures”<sup>195</sup> provide the theoretical basis for how those deemed “Nonlife” can be “dumped” in areas. Noting the ways in which the *bio* of biopolitics and *anthro* of Anthropocene can be reimagined to account for the ways Blikkiesdorp came to be and still exists. Jerome Daniels questioned this when saying: “the Environmental Impact Assessment says that everything living is the environment . . . now how can you exclude Blikkiesdorp?”<sup>196</sup> Yusoff calls for us to “think with the inhuman as an analytic with which to scrutinize the traffic between relations of race

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<sup>192</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A., Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff. “An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 169–85. doi:10.1177/0263276417689900.

<sup>193</sup> Chari, Sharad. “State racism and biopolitical struggle: The evasive commons in twentieth-century Durban, South Africa.” *Radical History Review* 2010, no. 108 (2010): 73–90.

<sup>194</sup> Lali, Vincent. “Court Orders Hundreds of Kraaifontein Farm Dwellers to Be Relocated to Philippi.” GroundUp News, August 23, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/court-upholds- eviction-and-orders-hundreds-kraaifontein-farm-dwellers-be-relocated-philippi/>.

<sup>195</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>196</sup> Daniels, Jerome in (2015). “*Is Blikkies Home*” [Online video]. Open Democracy Advice Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMrPyBEMipM>

and material economy and to think race as a material economy that itself emerges through the libidinal economy of geology”.<sup>197</sup> Asserting life as a political tool served to create a dialogue between the community, the City of Cape Town and the Airports Company of South Africa, but as plans have fallen apart, the blame always rests on the community itself – the Blikkiesdorp Joint Committee being “corrupt,” the “internal violence” of gang killings and racial tension, and what that leaves people unable to create and upkeep their own housing through the little resources given to them. The governance of Blikkiesdorp seems a constant interplay between what is considered living and what is considered non-living.

### **Another look at the Environmental Impact Assessment, Late Liberal Democratic Engagement and the Governance of Life and Nonlife**

Western settler-colonial classifications of existence guide the scientific evidence -based methodologies of research. The Environmental Impact Assessment carried out in Blikkiesdorp does not represent a flaw in a procedure that somehow managed to forget the community; rather, it represents one strategy in a system of governance that relies on the division between humans and the landscape. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and their more integrated approach, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), are carried out with these divisions in mind. SRK Consulting released a newsletter in 2007 regarding the “Value Added Through Understanding The Local Social Issues”<sup>198</sup> for clients seeking to implement mining projects in “developing countries”. The “big five” issues facing new mining projects were outlined as “Involuntary Resettlement, Indigenous Peoples, Artisanal Mining, Corporate Governance and Standards, and Corporate Social Investments”.<sup>199</sup> The newsletter notes that “resettlement is an emotional issue . . . when resettlement processes are badly managed, reputations can be

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<sup>197</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>198</sup> Matshikiza, Vuyo. “Value Added through Understanding the Local Social Issues.” SRK Consulting. Accessed November 30, 2019. <https://www.srk.com/en/newsletter/social-assessment-engagement-and-advice/value-added-through-understanding-local-social>.

<sup>199</sup> “Big Five - Tough Social Issues in Mining.” SRK Consulting. SRK Consulting’s International Newsletter, n.d. <https://www.srk.com/files/File/newsletters/SRKnews41-social-assessment-A4.pdf>.

severely damaged, and the process is difficult to reverse”, as well as urging that “Indigenous peoples have strong links with the natural environment, and especially with land”.<sup>200</sup> Encouraging community engagement in order to begin the process of environmental scoping (something that was carried out with the Blikkiesdorp community only after community pressure to release the MOU) is posed as an ethical commitment to public participation and democratic processes. Those who are able to come and raise concerns must do so to participate in the democratic process of community engagement. The Convention on Biological Diversity, created by the United Nations Environmental Project in 1988, cites one of the challenges of maintaining biodiversity when carrying out EIAs as “lack of meaningful public and stakeholder participation in environmental planning and management often linked to poverty, low levels of education, lack of awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues”.<sup>201</sup> The Blikkiesdorp community voicing concerns about their relocation and advocating for sufficient housing has, to date, not been treated with accountability measures that have benefited the community or the environment. When displacement or “involuntary resettlement processes”<sup>202</sup> occur, who is to blame? International consulting firms can point to “weak legislation” and “corrupt practices”<sup>203</sup> of governments in the Global South; local governments can point to racial tension, gang violence and lack of education in communities; but the project of democracy is what has failed Blikkiesdorp. Povinelli takes issue with the very basic structural hierarchy of entities in democratic processes of Late Liberalism, saying that

democracy is itself symptomatic of the problem – or the parliament of things is symptomatic. Before we have even gotten to things we have already decided that a certain mode of governance allows things to be themselves – to have a voice and a say in how they should be and be governed. A parliament. Perhaps before we ‘allow’ objects to be held

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<sup>200</sup> “Big Five - Tough Social Issues in Mining.” SRK Consulting. SRK Consulting’s International Newsletter, n.d. <https://www.srk.com/files/File/newsletters/SRKnews41-social-assessment-A4.pdf>.

<sup>201</sup> Biosafety Unit. “What’s the Problem?” Convention on Biological Diversity. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, May 18, 2007. <https://www.cbd.int/impact/problem.shtml>.

<sup>202</sup> “Big Five - Tough Social Issues in Mining.” SRK Consulting. SRK Consulting’s International Newsletter, n.d. <https://www.srk.com/files/File/newsletters/SRKnews41-social-assessment-A4.pdf>.

<sup>203</sup> “Big Five - Tough Social Issues in Mining.” SRK Consulting. SRK Consulting’s International Newsletter, n.d. <https://www.srk.com/files/File/newsletters/SRKnews41-social-assessment-A4.pdf>.

together through the forces of democracy – to be free through the discourses of parliamentary procedure – we might free ourselves from this idea that the autological subject is the internal truth of all subjects/objects.<sup>204</sup>

The failures of Late Liberal democracy give us the option to examine a way towards liberation that leads away from reifying the hierarchy of Life over Nonlife (a process that black and Indigenous thinkers note has always excluded racialized and Indigenous people) and creating a new network of relation. Yusoff notes that “the inhuman is a call across categories, material and symbolic, corporeal and incorporeal, intimacies cut across life and nonlife in the indifferent register of matter.”<sup>205</sup> Governance in Blikkiesdorp can be seen as the hierarchising of Life and Nonlife. While the struggle for abandoned communities to participate in representational democracy continues, through indubitably organized assertions of subjecthood and citizenship through strategic voting, participating in liaison projects with the city, and voicing their frustration in public forums, the assertion to be considered part of the environment shows ways in which those in Blikkiesdorp envisage themselves in this Life/Nonlife division. A general disillusionment with the democratic process, distrust of the government and active resistance through “perseverance, endurance, effort, and precarious survival, as opposed to biopolitically-engineered elimination”<sup>206</sup> guides the everyday lives of this community.

### **Race, Subjecthood and the Human: Complicating the Biopolitical Struggle**

The move away from using the language of biopower in Povinelli’s work represents a more pressing interrogation of whether or not this concept can be used when describing Blikkiesdorp. She notes that “it was never clear to me whether the concept of biopolitics was the concept that was needed to analyze the

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<sup>204</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A., Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff. “An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 169–85. doi:10.1177/0263276417689900.

<sup>205</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>206</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A., Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff. “An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 169–85. doi:10.1177/0263276417689900.

expression of liberal governance in the settler spaces”<sup>207</sup> and whether this concept remains applicable while overlapping with Indigenous thought. Even Necropolitics, developed to describe the colonial violence that Mbembe argues was the colonial precursor to the power over the *bios* that Foucault was describing – “the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations” – maintains the idea of an entity that was alive to be killed. Aside from criticisms that biopolitics is formulated around a subject that represents the European man, posed as the very idea of the Human, Povinelli goes on to embrace the idea that geontopolitics represents the ways in which settler late liberalism has enacted power over “the Other”, through the management of “Life and Nonlife”. Indigenous ways of knowing that were never composed of the subject/object divide or the hierarchising of human over environment, those that considered all entities as a network of beings, have existed since time immemorial. The Anthropocene, climate change, and the “end of the world” as we know it currently, have already been experienced by those colonised and enslaved as Yusoff also makes clear. I continue to engage with the ways in which Blikkiesdorp has been managed through biopolitical and necropolitical means because I believe it is still relevant to the ways in which the community is represented in the public discourse that is virtually inseparable from Blikkiesdorp itself. Imagining Blikkiesdorp does take place without those aspects that keep it in the news – overpopulation, poor sanitation, growth, displacement, the question of how long it will exist and who lives there. The ways these discursive formulations can be used strategically to create material change in Blikkiesdorp cannot be denied, though I do want to complicate them. Simultaneously, I want to be able to use new concepts around geontopower to reject liberal notions of agency that uphold humanness as the height of achievement. Complicating biopolitical discourse means taking into account the histories of racialisation of Blikkiesdorp. Alexander Weheliye points to the ways in which biopolitics does not fully account for the ways power has acted upon what he calls “racializing assemblages,” saying:

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<sup>207</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

since bare life and biopolitics discourse largely occludes race as a critical category of analysis, as do many other current articulations of critical theory, it cannot provide the methodological instruments for diagnosing the tight bonds between humanity and racializing assemblages in the modern era. The volatile rapport between race and the human is defined above all by two constellations: first, there exists no portion of the modern human that is not subject to racialization, which determines the hierarchical ordering of Homo Sapiens species into humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans; second, as a result, humanity has held a very different status for the traditions of the radically oppressed. Man will only be abolished “like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” if we disarticulate the modern human (Man) from its twin: racializing assemblages.”<sup>208</sup>

Yusoff’s work in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* engages this critical point of the divide between Life and Nonlife through racialisation:

Race and its marking through the geologic term of the inhuman upsets the supposed “natural” boundaries of matter in the classification of human/inhuman, estranging both these terms. Whereas we recognize geologic material practices (oil and mineral extraction) as explicitly tied up in the realm of the political, the declared innocence of acts of description and their historical inscriptions on bodies and geographies are left unexamined. Blackness opens up this “scene of subjection” (Hartman 1997) to its historical fault lines, but it also bears on those geoforces in the present, on the “now” of Blackness, and how Blackness is cast in the storms of environmental change. Corporeality is always established in the zone of territoriality as a form of territoriality over and through black subjects, from chattel slavery through ongoing environmental racism, wherein Blackness becomes what could be termed an ontology.<sup>209</sup>

If biopolitics cannot describe power as it is enacted on Nonlife – racialised people or the non-human world – the new language posed by these thinkers can be a launching point to begin thinking of how noise pollution sounds on Blikkiesdorp. What can be learnt from this community that was created from those deemed non-human to the extent that they could be “thrown away” onto a “human dumping ground” where they have been left to assert their position as “non-human environment” in order to be considered

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<sup>208</sup> Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

<sup>209</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

part of the conversation around their subsequent displacement from the area? what does this say about the linkages between land and people? Blikkiesdorp is a community created by displacement, marked by racialisation, and comprised of refugees from other African countries, Cape Malay and Xhosa communities. Looking at Blikkiesdorp as one of a Billion Black Anthropocenes is not meant to uphold a monolithic concept of Blackness as it exists in South Africa. The concept of Indigeneity in the Cape is immensely multifaceted; as everywhere, communities are a constellation of migration and contact. Colonial racial ordering and apartheid geographies, based on ideas of inherent purity, mark the ways in which communities have experienced oppressions throughout South Africa's history. What is now called "racial tension" has roots in the very "racializing assemblages" of apartheid that are still at play. "Rather than seeing Blackness as biopolitical, we might also see it as a geopolitical act in the division of flesh and earth through the grammar of the inhuman"<sup>210</sup> notes Yusoff. Creating ways of knowing in Blikkiesdorp that are formed through the experiential knowledge of the community means understanding the ways in which there is no one way that noise pollution sounds in the space. From the constant hum of airspace noise to the disturbing vibrations of zinc houses overhead, we have to rethink the ways in which the landscape and the material world of Blikkies is sounded upon. To understand the ways sound permeates structures, bodies and land, we must see all of these material entities as porous and entwined.

### **Emergency Intervention, "Racial Tension," and the Organisation of Matter in Cape Town**

Blikkiesdorp show ways in which the material moves both through space and through time. Drawing again from Barad's work, Bozalek, Zambylas and Motala explain the process of how District Six exists in the present, and how GIS mapping initiatives can help us understand the ways that matter moves

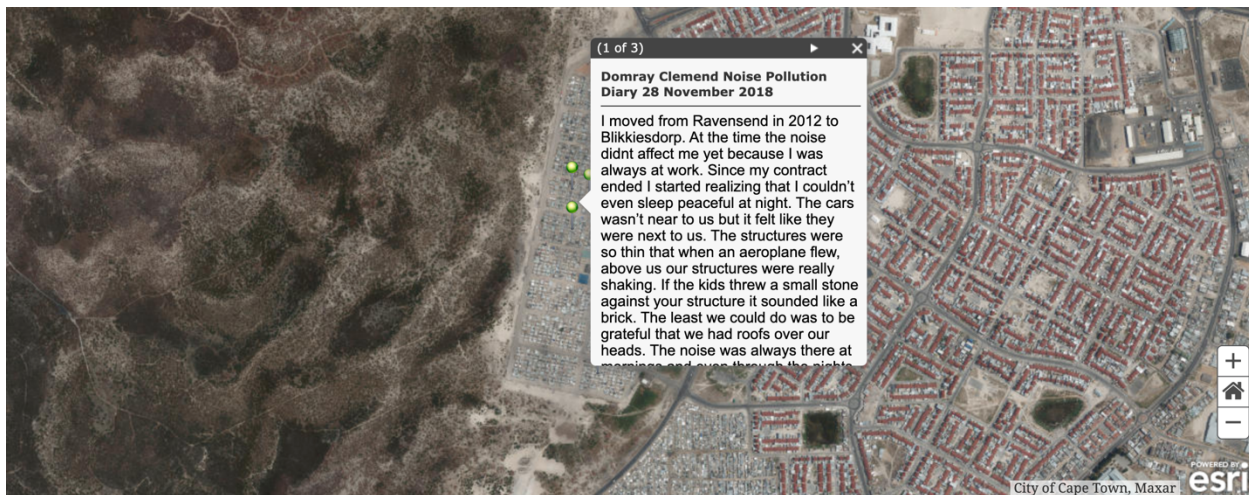
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<sup>210</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

through time in a “hauntological”<sup>211</sup> process:

through a temporal diffraction, where the past is not something which is left behind, but exists in the present— where temporalities are entangled and thickly threaded through one another. Temporal diffraction means that as a result of the energy-time indeterminacy principle, a given particle can be in a state of superposition at different times – thus one particle can materially co-exist in multiple spaces and times—here and there, and yesterday, today and tomorrow.

These techniques are used to animate and make visible the organized systemic violence perpetrated over an extended period through apartheid laws, which would otherwise be occluded. The geomatics mapping shows how apartheid laws and social structures continue to bleed into the presence of life on the CPUT campus. In this way, geomatics tools usefully reveal temporal diffraction.<sup>212</sup>



<sup>211</sup> Derrida, J., Kamuf, P., Magnus, B., & Cullenberg, S. (2006). *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?id=fA3v99fLNloC>

<sup>212</sup> Bozalek, Vivienne, and Michalinos Zembylas. “Critical Posthumanism, New Materialisms and the Affective Turn for Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-652>.



Accounts of experiential knowledge of noise pollution in Blikkiesdorp compiled in the GIS mapping project<sup>213</sup>

The process of creating a GIS project shows not only ways we can map displacement for archival purposes, but also to contribute to the “pedagogy of hauntology in order not only to recognize the affectivity and materiality of forced removals, but also to potentiate ways of taking responsibility for the living presence of apartheid ghosts,” as Bozalek and Zembylas seek to do in their work. By marking the stories of this (more recent) displacement, we can build this framework of knowledge to “animate occluded injustices of the past by means of a micro-instance of activism in the form of a storytelling intervention.”<sup>214</sup> While Blikkiesdorp will cease to exist as we know it, the remnants will remain dispersed spatially throughout the City but also will remain marked into the landscape. The racialised materiality of forced removal remains inscribed onto the landscape. How all of this “stuff” come to exist in a tiny space East of the airport, all these self-erected zinc shacks and thousands of people that so quickly came to exist on formerly vacant land, has guided the discourse around housing in Cape Town since the early stages of its construction. Temporary Relocation

<sup>213</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018 and Clemend, Domray. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 8, 2018.

<sup>214</sup> Bozalek, Vivienne, and Michalinos Zembylas. “Critical Posthumanism, New Materialisms and the Affective Turn for Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20853/30-3-652>.

Areas like Blikkiesdorp remain a constant worry for communities evicted off of private and government-owned property. Most recently a community evicted off the Klein Akker farmland in Kraaifontein, Western Cape, has sparked conversation of the creation of a new TRA called Kampies in Philippi outside of Cape Town. Wendy Pekeur of the Ubuntu Rural Womxn and Youth Movement is quoted in Ground Up, saying that “Kampies is another dumping site like Blikkiesdorp and Wolwerivier”.<sup>215</sup> The City is placing communities on land that effectively represents a deserted landscape outside of their networks, schools and communities, for them to use what little resources are provided by the City to create a makeshift campground and await further instructions. Complaints range from the fact that there is City -owned land next to the farm where communities could be rehoused, and that “the judgment doesn’t understand the reality confronting the people of Klein Akker Farm”, to the fact that relocation would “shift from a peaceful mixed race community to a more high risk and violent surrounding.”<sup>216</sup> Shelters made of zinc sheets, plastic and other bits of scrap follow displacements like this one – the creation of a whole new settlement out of nothing in a space that serves to overcrowd and wedge an entire community on the peripheries of the urban environment in Cape Town. Evictions like these normally end in promises to build housing that never culminate as bureaucratic responses pass blame to community members or neglectful subcontractors. Emergency interventions by the City, much like the one we are seeing now as the South African Army has been dispatched into the Cape Flats and Blikkiesdorp, come out of a concept of helping communities through increased surveillance and collaboration of a hyper-militarised police force and actual military, and scenes of casspirs rolling through the Flats hearken back to apartheid days.<sup>217</sup> “The casspir is not a tank designed to go into battle against other tanks. It is a tool of colonial domination designed to be used in

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<sup>215</sup> Lali, Vincent. “Court Orders Hundreds of Kraaifontein Farm Dwellers to Be Relocated to Philippi.” GroundUp News, August 23, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/court-upholds-eviction-and-orders-hundreds-kraaifontein-farm-dwellers-be-relocated-philippi/>.

<sup>216</sup> Lali, Vincent. “Court Orders Hundreds of Kraaifontein Farm Dwellers to Be Relocated to Philippi.” GroundUp News, August 23, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/court-upholds-eviction-and-orders-hundreds-kraaifontein-farm-dwellers-be-relocated-philippi/>.

<sup>217</sup> Greef, Kimon De. “As Gang Murders Surge, South Africa Sends Army to Cape Town, and the City Cheers.” The New York Times, August 13, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/africa/cape-town-crime-military.html>.

circumstances where access to military hardware is fundamentally unequal and where people, rather than rival armies, are the enemy”<sup>218</sup> notes a New Frame Editorial piece when speaking about the ways in which these vehicles remain a “hulking tool” of the current government. Povinelli goes into the ways in which the Australian government’s emergency interventions on Indigenous land camouflage forms of geontopower at work in Late Liberalism:

In light of statements that Indigenous lives already difficult to endure would be made more difficult, what makes the Intervention seem like a sensible good, a form of life enhancement rather than, say, state killing or neoliberal modes of making die? What discourses of social belonging and abandonment, caring and disregard made the emergency Intervention seem necessary, and by making it seem necessary, allowed the Howard and the subsequent Labour governments to create a narrative form that conjured away the social harms of the durative present? What does care consist of such that when a form of creating harm for others is thought of and experienced as a form of caring for others?<sup>219</sup>

Military intervention in the Cape Flats was reported to have been met with cheers<sup>220</sup> This may, however, be due to the fact that any appearance of service delivery in marginalised areas of Cape Town is initially received as a sign that change is coming, though many people quickly become disillusioned when these solutions turn out to be false promises or create even more violence. The Deployment of casspir army trucks by police and army forces has been noted by the shack-dwellers movement Abahlali baseMjondolo to be “reminiscent of apartheid”,<sup>221</sup> with police showboating, regular raids and increased surveillance creating an even more volatile situation. De Kock notes the following in a personal interview:

I asked them there (in Blikkies) if they have seen the army. They said yes. They’ve got a nerve, man. I was there by an

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<sup>218</sup> Eliseeva, Anastasya. “The Casspir Haunts Our Present.” New Frame, May 14, 2019. <https://www.newframe.com/casspir-haunts-our-present/>.

<sup>219</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>220</sup> Hendricks, Ashraf. “Cape Flats Residents Cheer Arrival of Army.” GroundUp News, July 26, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/army-makes-it-way-cape-flats/>.

<sup>221</sup> Hans, Bongani. “Buying Casspirs Is Reminiscent of Apartheid, Say Shack Dwellers.” IOL News, February 5, 2019. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/buying-casspirs-is-reminiscent-of-apartheid-say-shack-dwellers-19134890>.

old lady neighbor, then they come and walk like big bosses. I was standing with a g@tvol t-shirt on, then they came and they asked me about the violence. I said 'hey, you get paid to come here and you come to ask me – if it's your job to go seek and find the shooters why are you asking me? Do you think the people would be so stupid to give you information? They would be putting their lives in danger'. They told me no one would give information and I said 'you know why? Because these people are traumatised'.

One night they came with all the big army trucks (into Delft). The small little kids – they don't know what we know - they were excited. The army men were waving and I said 'sorry, are you waving at *me?*' They said mam why are you mad I said 'here you can do fokol'. You're only here to assist the police because they slaap hard they don't do any work for us. So what's the use? You now come show the army trucks to the kids. For me, it's just like in the apartheid years when we saw the casspirs and stuff. Now you're standing there and waiving – we're used to this type of life. You're wasting South Africa's money. If they gave the money to us we would know what to do and we would build our houses.<sup>222</sup>

The creation of differentiated racial communities during colonial times, and the subsequent management and spatial (dis)placement of these communities through the Group Areas Act seldom come up when reports are made about gang related violence, racial tension and xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Zachary Levinson explains these segregation measures and their effect on current housing issues in Cape Town, saying that

'African' was deployed by the apartheid state as a general descriptor for all speakers of Bantu languages; the so-called 'Colored' population, who predominantly speak a dialect of Afrikaans, were excluded from this category. The government strategically disaggregated 'African' into its constituent ethnicities, with each assigned its own Bantustan. In the case of Cape Town, isiXhosa-speaking residents were deported to either the Ciskei or the Transkei in the present day Eastern Cape. As mobility restrictions were lifted in 1986, black rural populations flowed into cities en masse – above all, in search of decent employment opportunities.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. September 09, 2019.

<sup>223</sup> Levenson, Zachary. 2018. "The Road to TRAs Is Paved with Good Intentions: Dispossession through Delivery in Post-Apartheid Cape Town." *Urban Studies* 55(14):3218-33.

The frustration is palpable when talking to Coloured people who have left Blikkies; the narrative of government corruption that favours Xhosa communities remains and fuels even more distrust in areas like Blikkiesdorp, as does the non-transparency in terms of the waiting list for subsidised housing. Tensions as a result of overcrowding manifest as concerns that the “Xhosas are taking over” an area that Coloured people had first come to live in, and that they are subsequently being “chased out”<sup>224</sup> from their homes. There are pervasive claims that housing that is meant for Coloured people who have been on the waiting list for over twenty years is being given to Xhosa people and their “families from the Eastern Cape”.<sup>225</sup> Levenson notes that:

It is not just the RDP house/backyarder couplet that complicates the spatial arrangement of the class structure here. The social background of the recipients of RDP houses is itself quite varied. In interviews conducted in settlements in South Africa’s three largest municipalities, I encountered numerous shack residents who claimed to have been on the housing list for thirty years, preceding the demise of apartheid by more than a decade.

While the veracity of these claims cannot be confirmed, just about anyone you talk to in a South African shantytown will scoff at the promise of an RDP home. One squatter in Mitchell’s Plain in the Cape Flats told me that she has been on the list for a dozen years, whereas her neighbor, a card-carrying ANC member, was given a house after a mere two.

I heard this type of story too many times to count. Suffice it to say then that the category “RDP residents” is a motley bunch, ranging from unemployed former shack dwellers to formally employed party cadre.<sup>226</sup>

Black and Coloured Communities have been abandoned by the government en masse across the country, with insufficient housing adversely affecting all marginalised people. The veracity of these narratives is not the main interest of those who remain frustrated about their quality of life and the housing crisis, and the ways in which Black and Coloured communities have been historically pitted against one another play out in

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<sup>224</sup> Williams, Saudiek. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 2, 2018.

<sup>225</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. September 09, 2019.

<sup>226</sup> Levenson, Zachary. “Social Movements in South Africa.” *Solidarity Social Movements in South Africa Comments*, 2012. <https://solidarity-us.org/atc/160/p3677/>.

the midst of country-wide xenophobic rhetoric that migrants are “taking jobs”<sup>227</sup> of unemployed South Africans. “They put us together so we will do the work of killing each other,” says De Kock,

the City held a meeting with our people and said it’s going to be hectic because Symphony is already here, now we must make space for Gympie street people, for Woodstock people, the Senegalese, the Somalians and the Pakistanis, the Nigerians - all evicted or having xenophobic violence. We can’t ignore that people come from other countries because there’s no space. We’re not there to decide. Where must they go? They’ve been brutally attacked so we must make space. We the people from Blikkies came and welcomed those people. Then gangs were formed, and then the drugs started. The people from Phase 1 (the first group to move into Blikkies) then you were a family, but then when you wanted to go around afterwards you had to be a 26 Number (from the Cape number gangs). The government doesn’t help, nothing has been done so we have stopped voting.<sup>228</sup>

Narratives of unfair treatment of Coloured people by the South African government are reified by the community along with claims of being disproportionately profiled as gangsters by the police and marked for large-scale incarceration (the incarceration rate of Coloured people was reported to be almost twice as high as that of “African” populations in 2007, despite making up less than 10% of the population).<sup>229</sup> Sean Jacobs and Zachary Levenson point to Huey P Newton’s term “reactionary nationalism” when describing the kinds of Coloured nationalism that have gained increasing momentum in the Cape following the creation of G@tvol Cape Town (“gatvol” meaning “fed up” in Afrikaans). They note that “it would be misguided to dismiss this politics as particularly Coloured. Instead, this brand of reactionary nationalism is of its time in South Africa. White identity politics is, as always, the most flagrant example in the Cape, from the barely veiled white supremacist claims of AfriForum (with its links to the alt-right in both Europe and the United States) to Helen Zille’s unabashed defense of colonialism”.<sup>230</sup> Cries for greater service delivery

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<sup>227</sup> Tolmay, Susan. “OPINIONISTA: Xenophobia in South Africa: What Happened to Ubuntu?” Daily Maverick. Accessed November 30, 2019. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-08-30-xenophobia-in-south-africa-what-happened-to-ubuntu/>.

<sup>228</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. September 09, 2019.

<sup>229</sup> “Prisons Race Shock.” IOL News, December 2, 2016. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/prisons-race-shock-426802>.

<sup>230</sup> Jacobs, Sean, and Zachary Levenson. “The Limits of Coloured Nationalism.” The M&G Online. Accessed November 29, 2019. <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-06-13-00-the-limits-of-coloured-nationalism>.

and better representation of the Coloured community in local and state government collide with such a great dissatisfaction with the ways in which the government did not serve the people.

“Nothing has changed since apartheid years”,<sup>231</sup> says Cheryl Lynn Jafta. The Late Liberal government that was constructed through and fortified to maintain white supremacy has neglected and abandoned the Blikkiesdorp community, Xhosa and Coloured and migrant people alike. The community remains disillusioned with voting, even strategically, as a viable option, and no material change or service delivery from the City is in sight. In a 2016 interview with SABC, Open Democracy Advice Centre’s Alison Tilley countered an assertion that the Blikkiesdorp community choosing not to vote “reads into apathy,” by saying that, “I wouldn’t read it as apathy. I would say it’s more commitment to using community mobilisation and working through alternative structures because when party politics doesn’t work you have to find another way.”<sup>232</sup> The Blikkiesdorp community, their bodies and the material that “supports and eats through them”<sup>233</sup> continue to be divided and displaced through state authority. Many people have fled into Delft where they have erected backyard shacks on land rented from those who have property in the area. Pointing to the decaying zinc at the edges of the dirt floor that makes up their backyard shack, Jafta tells me that “this is just like a shack that we have in Blikkies. We have to pay R500 a month to keep our family here”.<sup>234</sup>

Current reports of racial tension and xenophobia in Blikkiesdorp are the result of the ways in which communities have historically been managed through the governance of difference,<sup>235</sup> that is, the geographic

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<sup>231</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 30, 2018.

<sup>232</sup> “Alison Tilley on Blikkiesdorp Situation #ElectionsonSABC.” SABC Digital News, June 6, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1RghMjZqhg>.

<sup>233</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>234</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

<sup>235</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

boundaries reflect geontopower at work in South Africa. Genealogical claims to Indigeneity, specifically how they play out in the Cape as claims to “Khoisan” identity, reflect the colonial influence of differentiation and the creation of distinct communities. Levenson and Jacobs write in their article, “The Limits of Coloured Nationalism”, that “Khoisan identity is a modern invention and reduces two distinct groups, the Khoikhoi and the San, to a single ‘indigenous’ catchall”, and point to “the deep interconnectedness of Khoikhoi, San, and Xhosa cultures”.<sup>236</sup> Areas like Blikkiesdorp and the Cape Flats are shown as examples of the ways in which racial tension and nationalistic discourse maintain a firm grip on South Africa as a whole, oftentimes followed by the liberal notion that the proper response to these conflicts is to heighten the police and military presence in these areas. Bio/necropolitical regimes of governance and geontopower are at work in the post-apartheid South African state in the forms of more immediate emergency intervention as well as the slow violence of being made to live in areas threatened by environmental hazard. In the next section, I engage with the ways bodies and matter are enmeshed in terms of “transcorporeal”<sup>237</sup> experience, the ways in which Blikkiesdorp acts as a “material anchor”<sup>238</sup> for understanding the relationship of bodies to landscape, and how these entities experience, remember and know noise pollution.

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<sup>236</sup> Jacobs, Sean, and Zachary Levenson. “The Limits of Coloured Nationalism.” The M&G Online. Accessed November 29, 2019. <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-06-13-00-the-limits-of-coloured-nationalism>.

<sup>237</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

<sup>238</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

## The Knowledge of Flesh and Zinc: Transcorporeal Experiential Knowledge of Sonic Apartheid

“Mistakes, wavy lines, confusion, obscurity are part of knowledge; noise is part of communication, part of the house. But is it the house itself?”<sup>239</sup>

- Michel Serres, *The Parasite*

“Do rocks listen and act intentionally on the basis of this sensory apparatus? The major actors within the settler late liberal state answer, ‘absolutely not’.”<sup>240</sup>

- Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*

Stacy Alaimo claims that examining the overlap between bodies and environment has “potent ethical and political possibilities . . . Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’.”<sup>241</sup> Following this line of inquiry, imagining how different ways of knowing have been produced in Blikkiesdorp can show us how knowledge of the environment has and can provide an important look at the transcorporeal relationship between “landscape” and “environment”. Creating a new epistemological approach to ways of knowing is not the main focus of my dissertation, but I do think it offers an important look into how communities like Blikkiesdorp can assert the intellectual labour they have already engaged in when living with/in that landscape. Creating ways of knowing land does not necessarily require a consistent or contained genealogical claim, and is, oftentimes, in flux with histories of displacement and removal. On this point, knowledge of Blikkiesdorp is marked by many different Indigenous knowledge-bases that come together on a contested landscape. Despite this, there is an interconnectedness of lives and events around the landscape that creates sites of encounter where everyday living generates knowledges of the environment. While Blikkiesdorp has existed as a TRA for over

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<sup>239</sup> Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

<sup>240</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

<sup>241</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

10 years, I would argue that it can be thought of as a “space of indeterminacy” that provides “new life” and new ways of knowing informed by transcorporeal historical occurrences on and with the landscape. Using Alaimo’s concept of “transcorporeality” as a guiding concept for how bodies relate to the landscape, and Povinelli’s concept of “material anchors” in order to examine the ways Blikkiesdorp represents a space that represents an “enflesh(ed) world”, I will look at the ways flesh and zinc represent aspects of a social world that are enmeshed, associated with each other and affect each other.

Marking a difference between corporeality and carnality is an important aspect of Povinelli’s work. Her emphasis on this leads to an understanding of how processes of power create substances (carnality). She notes: “‘Corporeality’ would be the way in which dominant forms of power shape and reshape materiality, how discourses produce categories and divisions between categories – human, nonhuman, person, nonperson, body, sex, and so forth – and ‘carnality’ would be the material manifestations of that discourse which are neither discursive nor pre-discursive”.<sup>242</sup> I use this line of theorising here to explore the ways in which flesh has been fed through processes of power in Blikkiesdorp, and how these processes are relevant to the entire material/social world that it encompasses. I am not currently looking to make any claims about the metaphysical aspects of this but rather how bodies in Blikkiesdorp are shaped through the experience of noise pollution. In other words, I engage with the ways in which subjecthood and materiality are created and enmeshed through processes of power, and how the landscape of Blikkiesdorp represents a “material anchor” through which to understand these connections. The Transcorporeal experience of noise pollution in Blikkiesdorp is bound up in the discourses of how zinc and flesh are produced through processes of governance, cordoned off from the rest of the city, and made adjacent to hazardous industrial areas. Povinelli explains how “a material corrodes a form of life” in terms of how sickness, the slow decay of bodies and the social/material worlds are matter of the “organization and disorganization, the channeling

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<sup>242</sup> Povinelli in DiFruscia, Kim Turcot. "Shapes of Freedom: A Conversation with Elizabeth A. Povinelli." *E-Flux* (March 2014). <https://doi.org/https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59889/shapes-of-freedom-a-conversation-with-elizabeth-a-povinelli/>.

and blockage, of immanent social life”.<sup>243</sup> This section engages with the ways zinc and flesh experience, remember and persist to create a life and ways of knowing outside of being considered inalterable and governed according to such.

The Blikkiesdorp community has garnered experiential knowledge of the landscape through processes of interpreting the effects of the lived environment on their bodies. Reading the body against the material world shows how massively interconnected health and the environment is. Chronic asthma, hypertension and stress affect the porous body and paint the relationship between Blikkiesdorp and the systems they are expected to participate in. With a whole generation of children who were either born in Blikkiesdorp or grew up there from a young age, the health effects of overexposure to all environmental hazards continues to affect their experiences in daily life. The enmeshed experience of stress, chronic illness and environmental hazard, come together to make what Povinelli calls “ordinary, chronic and cruddy”.<sup>244</sup> This form of experience lies in contrast to the immediate event-based violence of gang hits, army interventions, petrol bombings and others. These events are undoubtedly a large part of the conversation about what is happening in Blikkiesdorp and other areas of the Cape Flats, though many of the interviews I did with people who had lived or currently live in Blikkiesdorp highlight these dangers amidst the more day-to-day experiences of health problems, poor housing, immobility and lack of access to proper resources. De Kock, who now lives in Delft with her family, notes:

(My daughter) is really struggling with her breathing and so on. She started getting asthma attacks when we lived in Blikkiesdorp because of the wind blowing dust into our houses. Sometimes when I ask her ‘what’s wrong?’ then you can see, man, she’s got a lot of school work she’s got a lot of projects. She is meant to do interviews with people who lived in apartheid years and walk to other people around the neighborhood. Children need to walk to the library and it’s not

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<sup>243</sup> Povinelli in DiFruscia, Kim Turcot. "Shapes of Freedom: A Conversation with Elizabeth A. Povinelli." *E-Flux* (March 2014). <https://doi.org/https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59889/shapes-of-freedom-a-conversation-with-elizabeth-a-povinelli/>.

<sup>244</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

safe anymore. The stress and the school is making her asthma worse.<sup>245</sup>

Povinelli's work in *Economies of Abandonment* can offer insight into these concerns, saying that

Late liberal subjects do not have to be awoken from sleep to see death-scapes with much clearer borders, agencies, and intensities. In contrast to cruddy, cumulative, and chronic lethality are special forms of enemy and spectacular forms of death that capture and rivet the imagination of late liberal societies and act as an alibi for the concentration and consolidation of state executive power.<sup>246</sup>

The cruddy lethality of long-time exposure to the elements remains a bodily memory for many who lived or live in Blikkiesdorp. These high-risk health situations, along with limited mobility and poor access to health resources, have made many in Blikkiesdorp the “ordinary experts”<sup>247</sup> of their own health and wellbeing. Some interviewees mentioned how they would pad the inside of their houses with any cloth or wood they could find, also plugging up the joints of the structures where sound or dust could enter.<sup>248</sup> Maintaining housing amidst the constant decay of the material world, the perpetual oxidation and decomposition of zinc sheets that lets the outside in, remains a full-time job for those living in Blikkiesdorp. Domray Clemend notes in his noise diary that the noise pollution “affects all of the peoples, animals too. Dogs always bark. We wake up with headaches and migraines and the structures are always cold it makes us sick”.<sup>249</sup> Moneeb Miller notes that “(the noise) affects us a lot. My mother is a paranoid person with a lot of anxiety. My sister, age 22, has a heart problem. Both of them use medication but they’re at the hospital a lot

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<sup>245</sup> De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. September 09, 2019.

<sup>246</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>247</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

<sup>248</sup> Jafta, Cheryl-Lynn and De Kock, Bernadet. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 13, 2018.

<sup>249</sup> Clemend, Domray. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 8, 2018.

of the time. My mother sleeps very little”.<sup>250</sup> With the new site and service plots proposed as the next destination for most of the Blikkiesdorp families who do not qualify for city housing, the already decomposing materials they use will be transported with them or torn down with the promise of new materials, electricity and water provided in the new location.

Zinc represents one of the most socially charged materials in South Africa currently. one could not travel through any area, urban or rural, without encountering it. The symbolic weight of zinc sheets in their representation of low-cost housing, has been used in protests like the 2016 Shackville<sup>251</sup> action to protest the lack of housing for black students at UCT and the Reclaim the City’s symbolic building of zinc shacks in Cape Town’s CBD in 2018 to highlight lack of low-income city housing.<sup>252</sup> Reclaim the City’s statement for their 2018 action states:

... our best public land is captured by a wealthy few. Their homes are made of marble and glass and sit empty most of the year. Our homes are made of wood and zinc on the edge of the city which are often engulfed by deadly fires that injure us and destroy the little we have . . . We have been living in basements and backyards, and on wetlands and dunes for decades and still, like our parents and grandparents, the government will not grant us the basic right to live on the land, or stop our eviction and displacement to camps.”<sup>253</sup>

SRK Consulting completed an ESIA for the Gamsberg Zinc Project for Vedanta Zinc International’s Black Mountain Mining operations in 2008,<sup>254</sup> a project that currently comprises the “biggest

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<sup>250</sup> Miller, Moneeb. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. October 15, 2018.

<sup>251</sup> “Shackville’ Erected at UCT to Protest Lack of Housing for Black Students.” eNCA, February 15, 2016. <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/shackville-erected-uct-protest-lack-housing-black-students>.

<sup>252</sup> Jones, Aidan. “Housing Activists Build Shacks on Prime Inner-City Land.” GroundUp News, August 16, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/activists-build-shacks-on-private-land/>.

<sup>253</sup> Staff Reporters. “WATCH: Shacks Erected in Cape CBD as Advocacy Groups Protest Botched Land Auction.” Cape Argus, December 6, 2018. <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/watch-shacks-erected-in-cape-cbd-as-advocacy-groups-protest-botched-land-auction-18375748>.

<sup>254</sup> “Projects Undertaken by SRK.” SRK Consulting, n.d. [https://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/images-20181122/South\\_Africa/Public\\_Documents/Sasol\\_Fine\\_Ash\\_Dam/Appendicies/Appendix\\_B\\_Project\\_Experience.pdf](https://www.srk.co.za/sites/default/files/images-20181122/South_Africa/Public_Documents/Sasol_Fine_Ash_Dam/Appendicies/Appendix_B_Project_Experience.pdf).

current mining project in South Africa”.<sup>255</sup> The project is lauded for bringing in new jobs, and creating a “whole new town”<sup>256</sup> in that area of the Northern Cape. Zinc’s movement traces open pit mines, processes of purification and hot-dip galvanizing onto steel or iron, as well as the shacks of South Africa’s disadvantaged and can show us how racialised bodies and minerals are bound up in complex material processes. Yusoff’s urge to interrogate “the traffic between relations of race and material economy and to think race as a material economy that itself emerges through the libidinal economy of geology (as the desire for gold, mineralogy, and metallurgy)”<sup>257</sup> can be seen in all aspects of resource extraction in South Africa. An intimate relationship to zinc marks the experience of South Africa’s racialised bodies: from extraction to assembly to decay. The effects of excessive exposure to zinc fumes or dust is often experienced through “Metal fume fever”, an occupational hazard of welding, heating or cutting of galvanized zinc, occurs rapidly with “flulike (symptoms) including fever, chills, nausea, fatigue, muscle ache, and joint pain”, while long-term “chronic exposure to extremely high concentrations of zinc oxide fumes or dust for more than six months may lead to the development of dermatitis, boils, conjunctivitis, and gastrointestinal disturbances”,<sup>258</sup> as well as asthma. Exposure to zinc in the soil, air and food chains surrounding mining areas has been documented extensively, with zinc being present in air, water, food and soil surrounding mining areas in China’s Jiangsu Province, where “most of the estimated risks came from soil, the intake of self-produced vegetables and indoor air inhalation”.<sup>259</sup> In the case of the Gamsberg mine, the town of Aggeneys was established as a mining town in 1976 and currently has a population of about 61% Coloured

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<sup>255</sup> Scholtz, Christoff. “Mine Revivals under Way in Iron Ore, Zinc and Copper.” Global Africa Network, October 1, 2018. <https://www.globalafricanetwork.com/2018/09/19/regions/northern-cape/mine-revivals-under-way-in-iron-ore-zinc-and-copper/>.

<sup>256</sup> Scholtz, Christoff. “Mine Revivals under Way in Iron Ore, Zinc and Copper.” Global Africa Network, October 1, 2018. <https://www.globalafricanetwork.com/2018/09/19/regions/northern-cape/mine-revivals-under-way-in-iron-ore-zinc-and-copper/>.

<sup>257</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>258</sup> Ahsan, Syed & Lackovic, Michelle & Katner, Adrienne & Palermo, Christine. (2009). Metal fume fever: a review of the literature and cases reported to the Louisiana Poison Control Center. *The Journal of the Louisiana State Medical Society* : official organ of the Louisiana State Medical Society. 161. 348-51.

<sup>259</sup> Qu CS, Ma ZW, Yang J, Liu Y, Bi J, Huang L. Human exposure pathways of heavy metals in a lead-zinc mining area, Jiangsu Province, China. *PLoS One*. 2012;7(11):e46793. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0046793

and 23% Black population,<sup>260</sup> many of whom work for Black Mountain Mining. The rural area surrounding the mine is largely “privately owned and used for extensive, low-intensity small stock farming” with the mine “located in a sparsely populated region with the closest resident approximately 4 km east of the mine”.<sup>261</sup> Lead exposure in children was studied in Aggeneys in 2003, and the results actually showed that blood lead levels of children in Aggeneys “which averaged around 16 mg/dL, are more comparable to blood lead levels of Cape Town inner city children of a similar age and socioeconomic status, among whom a mean blood lead level of 18 mg/dL was measured”.<sup>262</sup> The pervasiveness of heavy metal exposure in low-income communities, made proximal to pollution both in rural mining and urban industrial areas, highlights the state of porous bodies meshed with the metabolism of soil, air and water. “Over the years the rain and sun makes the zinc thinner and the sound gets more effective and louder and the structures get colder”,<sup>263</sup> notes Clemend.

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<sup>260</sup> Census 2011: Main Place: Aggeneys. Adrian Frith. Accessed November 29, 2019.

<https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/368006>.

<sup>261</sup> “Gamsberg Mine Environmental Management Programme Amendment, Impact Assessment Report Report Prepared for Black Mountain Mining (Pty) Ltd.” Zinc International. SRK Consulting, December 2016. <https://www.vedanta-zincinternational.com/component/jdownloads/send/9-downloads/77-gamsberg-mine-environmental-management-programme-amendment>.

<sup>262</sup> von Schirnding, Yasmin, Angela Mathee, Maurice Kibel, Priscilla Robertson, Nicolene Strauss, and Rienette Blignaut. “A Study of Pediatric Blood Lead Levels in a Lead Mining Area in South Africa.” *Environmental Research* 93, no. 3 (July 29, 2003). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0013-9351\(03\)00117-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0013-9351(03)00117-8).

<sup>263</sup> Clemend, Domray. Noise Pollution Diary for research by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. November 8, 2018.



Blikkies on E Block

The effects of the elements and the constant decay of galvanized zinc sheets, slowly corroded by sand and rain exposure to expose the iron underneath, presents just one example of the racialization of matter. What is meant to act as shelter represents more of a material relation to contamination and exposure for racialised bodies. Zinc structures do more than just letting the noise and cold in, they represent the

effects of governance, geologic classification and racialisation through ongoing settler-colonial forces in South Africa. Histories of slavery and colonialism mark this relationship to the non-human world and the classification of racialized bodies as non-human. “This is how the inhuman as a mode of categorization and a monstrous attitude toward the enslaved contains, regulates, and subjugates bodies,” notes Yusoff. She continues: “The classification of the inhuman as inert, ahistorical, nonpolitical, inorganic, is both a division of matter that is biopolitical and a regime of ordering matter that separates spheres of politics and agency – or, biopolitics achieved through geologic means.”<sup>264</sup>

Contemplating the ways that the body and the landscape encapsulate and hold memory can help us understand how geontologies play out in classification and other systems of governance over Life and Nonlife. Povinelli examines the assertion that rocks can indeed listen and that the landscape itself is sentient. This (much more holistic) feature of Indigenous knowledge must be simplified to fit the Western epistemological concepts of Life and Nonlife used to strategically engage in land-claims hearings – A process that she notes is “not meant to challenge dominant geontologies on which capital depends but rather a means for the state to sort kinds of humans who are ‘stakeholders’ in geontopower”.<sup>265</sup> The initiative to give political subjecthood to the landscape represents to Povinelli a reaffirmation of the binary of Life and Nonlife. Marginalisation of Indigenous ways of knowing, then the subsequent chance to “attach a small spigot in the larger pipeline of late liberal approaches to geontology”,<sup>266</sup> shows how liberal state notions and dominant Western epistemes remain uninterrogated in terms of land restitution and material change for Indigenous peoples. Glen Coulthard notes in his book *Red Skin, White Masks* that “the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to

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<sup>264</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>265</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

<sup>266</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: a Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

transcend”.<sup>267</sup> The governance of Life and Nonlife cannot create the holistic material changes needed in places like Blikkiesdorp – understanding the issues faced here requires a multidisciplinary approach to understanding what has gone wrong, what has not worked and how to go forward.

In Blikkiesdorp, the struggle to be considered a part of the environment represents ways in which the governance of Life and Nonlife coerces communities fighting for protection from environmental hazard into immutable roles of perilous subjecthoods. Though Blikkiesdorp represents what is seen as a transcendent, disputed and displaced community, the community-based environmental knowledge guides a sense of “embodied obligation”<sup>268</sup> to the space where many have lived for over 10 years. The acquisition of experiential knowledge through the constant upkeep of bodies and structures represents what Thomas Csordas calls “somatic modes of attention”; that is, “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others”.<sup>269</sup> What residents in Blikkiesdorp have to say about their material landscape and their connection to it demonstrates their embodied connection to the environment. Jerome Daniels notes the ways in which the new site-and-service housing project could be helped by using sand in the surrounding landscape that must be removed from ACSA’s development projects, posing the question,

How are we going to help people who get service land who don’t get a brick and mortar house? We are looking at the idea of how sand bag houses would help, because there is a lot of sand that is going to be removed. It is not brick and mortar but it will be better than the blikkies.

We don’t want people to have to take the blikkies with them to the site-and-service housing. We don’t want this stuff anymore. There’s a lot of people who won’t be able to afford their own house and the government is not going to assist

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<sup>267</sup>Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis ; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

<sup>268</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>269</sup> Csordas, Thomas. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (1993): 135–156.

them, so we as the community need to assist ourselves. And it's not just about Blikkiesdorp, it's about Freedom Farm and Malawi Camp as well.<sup>270</sup>

Desperation to leave Blikkiesdorp in the midst of all of its turmoil can show us that caring for livelihoods is also a care for the landscape. Geographic boundaries are not fixed: Blikkiesdorp houses porous bodies on a diffuse landscape, but it remains a material anchor of great significance to the people there. Imbuing knowledge to objects in this way might be considered an ontological endeavor in line with the new materialisms as the Blikkiesdorp community has always paid mind to the world of things that make up their collective existence. All of these entities are bound together through noise – from the constant hum of distant industrial noise to the ear-shattering onslaught of air traffic noise on tin shacks. As Marina Peterson notes, “noise anchors airspace territory, a permeable body, and urban form”.<sup>271</sup> The knowledge of the human ear has been replaced by the decibel reader in processes of evidence-based scientific research like that conducted for the Environmental Impact Assessment, while the knowledge of the land under airspace territory is rendered useless. Giving credence to knowledge of the human ear, the asthma-constricted airways, the nervous system, the zinc shacks and the depleted landscape are all part of knowing the dynamics of the impact of power on Blikkiesdorp. Uncertain futures are traversed by the community in a constant perseverance against the slow violence of exposure. Organising for sufficient housing through the creation of what Povinelli calls “alternative social projects”<sup>272</sup> focus on the community’s embodied knowledge of the lived environment in order to resist further long-term abandonment.

### **How Blikkiesdorp Persists and Resists: Ungovernable Noise and Precarious Landscapes**

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<sup>270</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. December 10, 2019.

<sup>271</sup> Peterson, Marina. “Atmospheric Sensibilities.” *Social Text* 35, no. 2 (2017): 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3820545>.

<sup>272</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Persistence in Blikkiesdorp exemplifies what Povinelli calls the “materiality of endurance”.<sup>273</sup>

Harnessing enough energy to patch and bolster zinc roofs, getting kids to school and to the clinic, and walking out of Blikkiesdorp at the height of violence to go ask for shelter and resources from former neighbours living in Delft all show the ways in which there is a constant day-to-day bearing-down of violent forces. Interrupted sleep creates a state of constant fatigue that accompanies the fight to go about the day. “Deep ecology, posthumanism, and biopolitics would seem to converge around a central problem even as the issue of exhaustion raises”, says Povinelli. the interplay of persistence and exhaustion is the fabric of everyday life in abandonment. It leaves people “gatvol” and completely disillusioned with processes of participating in political processes laid out for them by representational democracy. As Povinelli says:

If we must persist in potentiality, we must endure it as a space, a materiality, and a temporality as we all know, materiality-as-potentiality is never itself outside given organizations of power . . . Thus the potentiality for living otherwise emerges from the differential capture and distribution of embodied and unintegrated life in neoliberalism and from the striated zones of indistinction and abandonment they create. When looked at in this way, the ethics of substance has a quite complex topological relation to the biopolitical management of life.<sup>274</sup>

Resistance to this biopolitical organisation takes the form of many strategic organising measures by community members.

Selmezi’s work with Abahlali shows how the community resists abandonment through “the disruptive effect of presuming equality” – a process of invading the space of the human in order to assert their humanness. She notes that “Abahlali contests the forced mobility of superfluous life by presenting biopolitics with a life heterogeneous to it; by fissuring the homogeneity of species being. It does so primarily through challenging an element central to governing the life of the population: the messianic spatio-

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

temporality of development”.<sup>275</sup> If we take the assertion that Blikkiesdorp should be considered part of the environment as a strategic claim made to take up the space of what is considered in processes of governance, how do we begin to think of resistance that is not solely based on an assertion of Life? Yusoff notes that “intimacy with the inhuman as an alliance with freedom in the matter and marronage of imposed lands, to think freedom in the earth, outside and against the world of the ‘given’ humanist subject (and their space-time).”<sup>276</sup> Asserting humanness is a rational project that has been used strategically in political spheres as a means of resisting biopolitical ordering and advocating for material change in the midst of abandonment. In a paradigm created according to the late liberal delineation between and governance over Life and Nonlife, processes of political engagement are oftentimes fixed around this problematic. While asserting humanness is undoubtedly a valuable tool for engaging with human rights discourse that can result in material changes for communities, I would like to pose this project as what Povinelli would call an “alternative social project” that can offer another force of resistance to governance. Creating a project that complicates the boundaries of humanness in Blikkiesdorp, following the pre-existing questioning of these boundaries after their exclusion from the Environmental Impact Assessment, can serve to engage the community in expressing their localised embodied knowledge and utilising it in the fight for material change.

I follow Povinelli’s method of dedicating the stories she tells in *Economies of Abandonment* to explore how “alternative social projects are able to open a space in these assumptions as they endure this dissipation – and more, to become more than merely persistence. As a result, I make use of an alternative glossary that seeks to illuminate ways that alternative social projects aggregate life diagonal to hegemonic ways of life”.<sup>277</sup> In alternative social projects we can rethink the organisation of life in ways that focuses on

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<sup>275</sup> Selmecezi, Anna. “... We Are Being Left to Burn Because We Do Not Count’: Biopolitics, Abandonment, and Resistance.” *Global Society* 23, no. 4 (October 9, 2009): 519–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600820903198933>.

<sup>276</sup> Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

<sup>277</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

localised ways of knowing in which community members are experts of their own embodied experience.

Alaimo notes that

some activist practices, such as personal carbon footprint analysis and other ‘micro-practices of everyday life’ already exemplify the attempt to understand the human as a geophysical ‘force’, through politicized modes of knowing and acting that are immersed and contingent rather than disembodied.<sup>278</sup>

Bozalek, Zembylas and Motala’s article on the value of GIS mapping as process of decolonial remembering and creating alternative pedagogies also speaks to the potential of this project – with the ability to document these things, there can be immense implications on how we can learn from Blikkiesdorp in its dissolution.

GIS within the frame of a pedagogy of hauntology troubles and queers the colonial approach which renders Whites as the normative ontological, epistemological, and ethical category and directs our attention toward ‘that’ which has been muted or rendered passive by coloniality. Hauntology can inspire and support decolonization processes at the university level by showing how temporalities and spaces are entangled and threaded through one another and how these matter.<sup>279</sup>

Community members diarising their experiences with noise pollution and participating in the gathering of decibel readings of noise pollution can represent an engagement that lies outside of the need to appeal to evidence-based scientific knowledge. The community-based knowledge collected in this project is not focused on creating a rebuttal to the evidence presented in the Environmental Impact Assessment but, rather, a practice of reaffirming the connection between the community and the landscape. As Povinelli puts it:

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<sup>278</sup> Alaimo, Stacy. “Your Shell on Acid: Material Immersion, Anthropocene Dissolves.” In *Material Feminisms*, edited by Richard Grusin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

<sup>279</sup> Zembylas, Michalinos, Vivienne Bozalek, and Siddique Motala. “A Pedagogy of Hauntology: Decolonizing the Curriculum With GIS.” *Capacious*. Open University of Cyprus, University of the Western Cape, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, January 4, 2020. <http://capaciousjournal.com/article/a-pedagogy-of-hauntology/?fbclid=IwAR1MSwL7MOeuW6dIOoNyuGGsm1qPhtqwNjJ8mTbs8OkHWkwliQ08Saspyqw>.

. . . rather than emptying the space for alternative social projects, however, these new formations of neoliberalism and late liberalism opened up the possibility of designing something that more tightly connected the digital archive with a local epistemology in which knowledge's end was not truth, though truth was a critical anchor of knowledge, but embodied obligation.<sup>280</sup>

The embodied obligation to the lived environment does not require a fixed geographical space, even when those who are living in Blikkiesdorp are repeatedly displaced the continued addition to archiving their experiences continues to assert that their experience and knowledge are not going away.

## Conclusion

Reading these cartographies of dispossession in Blikkiesdorp can help us bear witness to the ways these processes of power and governance served to create and uproot this community over the process of just over 10 years. As the realigned airstrip project will go ahead in coming years, Blikkiesdorp will officially be removed. As the new housing project is developed, it will take on a whole new set of relationships to the land, surrounding communities, and the lived environment. The environmental knowledge produced here will be informed by histories in Blikkiesdorp, and peoples' bodies will carry these memories as well. In the case of those eligible families who will move to the new housing project and receive City housing, the relationship to noise pollution could be different - muffled by concrete walls and a roof overhead. Jerome Daniels notes the continuing fight for the story of Blikkiesdorp to be commemorated:

We will be moved up farther on Symphony Way, where we occupied all those years ago. It will obviously be a touching story that we are moving there where we occupied on the street for two years. We talked to ACSA and said we want a museum to showcase where we come from and what we went through. Going into Blikkies we didn't actually want to go in and now you're taking us back where we're coming from - where our struggle started. We want something to be

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<sup>280</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economics of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

remembered. We want to document what the City did to us. We need to archive all of those things because it's important for our children to remember where we came from - how we came to live in houses after all of our struggle.<sup>281</sup>

For those who will move into site-and-service areas, experiential knowledge of the lived environment could also change. Those who are displaced and interspersed throughout Cape Town, such as those families who left in 2018<sup>282</sup> and those who have since fled because of the conditions of Blikkiesdorp, will carry their knowledge to other areas where they will try to keep afloat. We must remain attuned to the ways that bodies are all affected in different ways, and to decolonize understandings of how bodies are affected we must continue to listen to stories. The noise contours of the realigned airstrip, larger planes and more frequent flights will all produce new encounters for those formerly of Blikkiesdorp, Malawi Camp and Freedom Farm. The embodied reverberations of these encounters will remain palpable in the ways that people speak about their day-to-day. The colonial geographies of apartheid remain embedded in environmental governance in what is referred to as the “post-apartheid” era, and the processes of governance that created Blikkiesdorp are continuously in motion in South Africa today. Continuing to create alternative social projects<sup>283</sup> that go outside of normative forms of justice-seeking can show us ways that alternative ways of living and relating are possible. Creating more radical ways of relating to the material world can help us combat the limitations of Late Liberal processes of seeking environmental justice.

*Sonic Apartheid* was conducted over three years of research. This project began by explaining the forces of colonial through to Late Liberal forms of governance, environmental governance as an afterlife of histories of apartheid spatial planning, and how the creation of Blikkiesdorp remains tied to these histories. By examining Blikkiesdorp's organising efforts to resist exclusion from processes of environmental

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<sup>281</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. December 10, 2019.

<sup>282</sup> Gontsana, Mary-Anne. “The Long Wait for New Housing for Blikkiesdorp Families.” GroundUp News, November 8, 2019. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/long-wait-new-housing-blikkiesdorp-families/>.

<sup>283</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

governance, and their assertion that they should be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment and decisions between the Airports Company of South Africa and the City of Cape Town that would serve to displace them, *Sonic Apartheid* focuses on the ways that community-based environmental knowledge of noise pollution was utilised to advocate for sufficient housing measures. This knowledge, created and cultivated through transcorporeal relationships to the precarious landscape constitutes an expert perspective on the effects of in making racialised bodies proximal to excessive environmental hazard. By complicating the division between humans and the environment, the Blikkiesdorp community has cultivated epistemologies that are informed by interactions and entanglements with the material world – these ways of knowing can have massive implications on political, ethical, and epistemological theoretical initiatives that go beyond frameworks of the division between Life and Nonlife. By documenting this local knowledge through interviews and diaries and placing them on a map, we can see the great possibilities of telling stories in order to counter the elevation of Western evidence-based technoscience as the apex of knowledge. Gleaning knowledge from community members about their experiences with noise pollution, along with conducting decibel readings with community members shows the ways that the creation of an “alternative social project” can open the possibility to create multifaceted knowledge of the lived environment and show that other ways of engaging with the landscape are possible.

Going into the future, this project could serve to contribute to remembering Blikkiesdorp, but also to continue as a potential pedagogical tool for understanding the history of the land and the people who lived on it. Continued collaboration in the production of this project can serve to engage community members in teaching others about just what happened in Blikkiesdorp. Applying the knowledge of these stories comparatively and critically can give alternatives to normative solutions to issues of land, housing, and environment in other contexts. The creation of a digital archive of the history of Blikkiesdorp, the experiences of the people and their incredible endurance and resistance could help assure that these histories are not forgotten. Community members are hoping to create a Blikkiesdorp museum in the new housing

project that will tell the story of their struggle for the transformation of their material conditions,<sup>284</sup> as well as a media project using the new “Google station”<sup>285</sup> Wi-Fi in the area. These efforts coupled with the tools of other scholars, activists, and community members can serve to create a network of mutual aid that pays credence to the incredible stories of resistance held in Blikkiesdorp.

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<sup>284</sup> Daniels, Jerome. Interview by Alexandra Downing Watkins. Cape Town, South Africa. December 10, 2019.

<sup>285</sup> Mzekandaba, Simnikiwe. “Google Boosts Free WiFi Access for Cape Town.” ITWeb. November 7, 2019. <https://www.itweb.co.za/content/DZQ58MVJmjaMzXy2>.

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