Torn Wheels and Rough Pavements: An Ethnography of Navigation Towards Informal and Indigenous Urban Futures Amidst Crisis in Warwick Junction, Durban

Submitted by

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PLAGIARISM 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.

Signed by candidate

Signature: Date: 08 December 2022

Abstract

This dissertation explores the context(s) in which 'mobile informality' is practiced by traders and associated workers in Durban's Warwick Junction, theorising the conceptual affordances that arise from it. Using an ethnographic approach, the study explores the navigatory responses of barrow operators and recyclers to the 'friction' and 'roughness' which make up the fabric of life-making projects in a city in crisis, and investigates the State and Municipal logics of governing informality. I show that eThekwini Municipality's attempts to achieve a 'caring and liveable City' in line with its Modernist ideals, through such approaches as the formalised, restrictive and aggressively policed permit system for informal workers, negatively impacts many informal workers. Additional 'frictions' in the path of informal work – which emerge daily as issues of safety, of dignity, of rights, and of access to opportunities – are rooted in the Municipality's problematisation of informality as a survivalist response to moments of crisis, and thus as something counter to 'a modern Durban', and therefore which ought to be discouraged. This account is challenged by informal workers and NGOs in Warwick, who understand informality as a set of indigenous urban forms and practices which are entirely appropriate to the time and place in which they exist, and which should be protected and accounted for in the policy and planning of a truly 'caring and liveable' city. By pushing up against the Durban's 'margins of refusal', these actors practice informality as a prefigurative politics of urban life, an approach which offers much to the theorisation of city futures.

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There are several people to whom this dissertation is indebted:

First and foremost, without the generosity displayed by the informal mobile workers of Durban in answering my questions, I would never have come to understand the space and context of Warwick in this way. I am truly grateful for the insights you offered me, and I hope that I have done them justice.

Likewise, the team at Asiye eTafuleni. Thank you for all that you did for me while I was in the field with you. Not only did my time with you ease my entry into the field and provide valuable data, it also gave me hope that Durban really can work towards a "caring and liveable" future.

I also wish to take the opportunity to thank the participants working for eThekwini Municipality, who willingly gave up their time to speak to me.

My family – especially my parents – and friends have been exceedingly supportive as I worked on this dissertation. I am so grateful for the moral support and all the advice I received, not to mention all those early morning lifts into Warwick.

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Abbreviations Used

AbM – Abahlali baseMjondolo

ACC – African Centre for Cities

AeT – Asiye eTafuleni

BSU – Business Support Unit (officially, the Business Support Tourism and Markets Unit)

CBD – Central Business District

DPEM – Development Planning, Environment and Management Unit

DUT – Durban University of Technology

EMM – Early Morning Market

IDP – Integrated Development Plan

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NMT – Non-Motorised Transport

PSTG – Public Space Trading Guideline

SALGA – South African Local Government Association

SERI – Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa

SMME – Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise

SPLUMA – Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 (2013)

UCT – University of Cape Town

UFC – Urban Futures Centre

UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal

WIEGO – Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." – Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Arriving in Warwick

Figure 1 David Webster Street Hangs Over the Asiye eTafuleni Offices in Warwick.

On the 1st of February 2022, I stood outside the offices of Asiye eTafuleni[1] (AeT) in Durban's Warwick Junction, shadowed by the thrumming overpass of David Webster Street. As a way of navigating the complexity of doing research in Warwick, I was set to "informally intern"[2] with AeT – a local NGO advocating for inclusive urban design and governance practices through their support for informal work in and around the Markets of Warwick. Taking the road's namesake, anthropologist and anti-apartheid activist David Webster, to be a

[1] isiZulu for "bring it to the table" (Chen, 2019).
[2] During the period of my fieldwork, I volunteered as an unpaid intern at AeT. During this time, I was involved in a number of projects – some directly related to my research interests and some not.

serendipitous sign on my entry to the field, I rang the bell and shortly entered the offices to meet my colleagues-to-be. Although I did not know it at the time, David Webster St. is one of Warwick Junction's arteries, forming part of the outline of the "Warwick Superblock" (alongside Market Road, Warwick /Julius Nyerere Avenue and Access Road) and would, as part of my "commute" from AeT offices into the markets, end up becoming a major part of my research.

Although I entered the field planning to focus on imaginaries of food sovereignty within the indigenous foods trade in Warwick, I was immediately fascinated by the flexibility and "light-footedness" with which participants in the space – informal workers, AeT team members and other stakeholders – navigated the "roughness" that their life-making projects faced. Because of this, my research focus shifted to the contexts in which mobile informality is practiced by barrow operators and informal recyclers. This came to involve engaging with the challenges and successes (present and future-possible) of mobile informal work in Durban. As well as this, I found myself considering the impact of eThekwini Municipality's Modernist imaginary of Durban's futures (and the resultant problematisation of informality) which shape the governance of informal work in Durban. Finally, drawing on this research, I consider the City's (2020) stated goal of a "caring and liveable City" in the light of AeT's (2022) imagined "Rights to the city for informal workers" and worker experiences of the space to examine what these mean for the possible futures of, and future possibilities for, informal workers.

Durban and Informality

In 2007, Imraan Valodia (2007, p. 4) argued that the state had hitherto failed to take seriously the nature and extent of informal work in South Africa, and that this was a key undertaking in understanding the post-apartheid South African economy. In this paper, he also draws on the International Labour Organisation work in making the convincing case that informal work, while a valuable term in some contexts, fails to capture the extent of the "informal economy" – the sum total of work not governed by formal arrangements (Valodia, 2007, p. 4). As predicted (Valodia, 2007, p. 5), this catch-all sector of informal labourers (often experiencing barriers to both the formal labour market and the licensed, permitted forms of informal labour supported by the government, has grown substantially since 2007 (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing; Asiye eTafuleni, 2022).

As WIEGO and AeT (2022, p. 3) note, the informal economy made up approximately 24% of all urban employment in South Africa at the time of research, with Durban marginally above the national average at 26% of workers in the Metro identifying as informal workers. Of these labourers, women make up slightly over half of the population (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing; Asiye eTafuleni, 2022, p. 3). This suggests, as research participants anecdotally confirmed to me, that informal labour – however broadly or narrowly defined – is central to the economic, dietary and social wellbeing of a vast portion of Durban's (and South Africa's more broadly) population.

The WIEGO and AeT report (2022, pp. 4-5) makes clear the fact that crises – notably the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent restrictions, and the civil unrest following the arrest of former president Zuma – served to discourage informal labourers from practicing their work, as well as increasing economic insecurity for the population of informal workers. A key point about informal labour in Durban is that the experiences of precarity and crisis held by informal workers differ by sector. For traders and vendors, the impact has primarily been defined by economic insecurity, while waste pickers have suffered more from the punitive governance of informality in the city over this period (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing; Asiye eTafuleni, 2022, p. 6)

Warwick Junction: The Trade and Transport Hub of Durban

Figure 2 Map Showing the Location of Warwick Junction in Durban. Taken from Google Earth (2022).

Warwick lies within the part of Durban known as the Berea. It is a collection of streets in Greyville, bordered by Durban Central, Congela, Bulwer and Musgrave. It consists of the Warwick Triangle (an old residential area), Grey Street and surrounds (mostly formal businesses), and the Warwick Junction itself (the main public transport and informal trade hub in the City). It is a particularly busy and important part of Durban, currently and historically. It functions as a primary entry point to Durban, as the M13 enters the City through Warwick[3], while the R102 also passes through Warwick as it winds through the City. This transitionary zone from major roads into City streets ensures that the area is always busy during the day.

A lot of the traffic passing through is in the form of cars, but Warwick's location includes Durban's rail system, with the large Berea Station forming a major landmark. Several bus and taxi ranks are also scattered throughout Warwick. Collectively, these transport nodes account for a large proportion of Durban's daily commuters and pedestrians. An estimated 460,000

[3] My own commute into Durban for my fieldwork brought me this way daily.

commuters pass through the space daily (Lees & Dobson, 2021, p. 6). The streets and pavements, especially during the morning and late afternoon, throng with people moving from one form of transport to another.

Because of the busyness of the space, Warwick is ideally located to serve the shopping needs of the (largely Black and economically-dispossessed) population passing through it twice a day. Consequently, the area has become home to several informal markets selling everything from food to electronics, as well as culturally significant goods and services. Some of the major markets which collectively make up the Markets of Warwick are the Early Morning Market (selling fruit and veg), Berea Station (which hosts many informal traders selling mixed goods and clothing), the Brook Street Market, the Bovine Head Facility, the Mealie Cooking Facility, the Traditional Medicine Market, the Bead market, the Lime and Imphepho Market, the Music Bridge (once known for selling bootleg music, now struggling in the age of easy digital downloads) and the more formalised English Market. However, countless other forms of informal work exist in the space – not least the necessary services provided by barrow operators and recyclers.

Figure 3 Map of Warwick Junction with "Superblock" Roads and Key Points Labelled. Taken from Google Earth (2022).

Over time, the markets themselves have consistently added to the busyness of the district by actively drawing in customers from further afield. At peak, and when not impacted by crises like COVID-19 (and associated lockdowns), severe flooding or "civil unrest", up to 8000 traders sell their wares to hundreds of thousands of customers (Lees & Dobson, 2021). Not only are the cheap prices for small quantities of fresh foods important for customers without fridges or who, due to the nature of their income, purchase groceries daily on the way to or from work, but cheap bulk goods and hard to find goods like traditional medicine ingredients or quality beadwork draw in rural customers on less frequent shopping trips to the City.

The Historical and Current Context of Warwick

Although the confluence of transport modes at this "gateway to the city" meant that the area was ideally placed for it, any informal trade during apartheid was harshly managed through violent police harassment (Skinner, 2009, p. 103). Although some informal trade was allowed in the late 1980s, no facilities were provided to enable such work (Skinner, 2009). By the 1990s, Warwick was seen as chaotic and "lawless", with thousands of underserviced traders operating in extremely poor conditions (Skinner, 2009). In 1995, the City Council planned to redevelop the Warwick Avenue area with a focus on "the needs of the urban poor" in order to promote it as a trade and transport hub. Over time, sites were made available for informal markets with some infrastructural provision being made including, notably, for traditional medicine traders who had a long history of trading in the space and a longer history of being harassed by the authorities (Skinner, 2009, pp. 104-105). However, since then, much of what was provided to the area – from trading structures to public toilets – has decayed and continues to decline.

Since the City Council's attempt at the "sensitive integration of street traders" through a collaborative and people-centred planning approach, Warwick Junction is largely seen as a "success story" for city planning (2009, p. 101). Unfortunately, this progressive trend has been far from total, and the City's approach to governance since the mid-2000s might now be better described as regressive as it governs through a formalised bureaucracy, relies heavily on police enforcement and selectively implements policy while championing Modernist ideas of what Durban ought to be (Skinner, 2008, pp. 232, 237, 238). Holness (2020) notes that Warwick's governance has – through stringent by-laws and harsh policing of them – become exclusionary and anti-poor.

As Ashwin Desai (2002, p. 12) has suggested, the transition "out of" apartheid aligned with "the ANC's capitulation to domestic and international capital" and a consequent "betrayal of the South African liberation struggle". The Durban Metro Council was, and is, known for some particularly devious approaches to managing the city and its residents, throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Desai (2002, p. 50) pays particular attention to eviction strategies, but the tough lines taken by municipal officials and the zealous and physical policing he describes was not ever limited to housing issues.

However, for Warwick at least, the era of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project (1997-2000) was generally regarded to be an improvement for various reasons. Involving officials from an array of municipal departments, as well as consultation of and with informal workers, the city invested a significant amount into infrastructural upgrades to key portions of the Junction (WRI Ross Prize for Cities, 2019). As well as reflecting a change from the decades of heavy-policing-as-governance, this process proved effective at addressing concerns of informal workers. A project office in the middle of Warwick Junction came to host trader meetings as well as municipal meetings regarding the space. Unfortunately, the municipality did not remain committed to this approach, and by 2008 was attempting to build a mall over the Early Morning Market, displacing thousands, and was brutally policing those who protested this (We Came In Spring Carts, 2010). This marked the end of what Holness considers the brief window when Warwick Junction's governance was not exclusionary and anti-poor.

It is in this context, Skinner (2009, p. 106) argues, that street traders can be "a challenge to Modernist city making". She discusses this with reference to what was, at the time, the impending replacement of the Warwick Markets with the speculatively-titled Warwick Mall and the widespread trader protests (faced by police who teargassed them) against this. While the mall ultimately did not materialise, not least because of widespread social and political criticism of the plan, Skinner's (2009, p. 108) concluding question of "development for who and how" remains relevant to Warwick to this day.

Asiye eTafuleni:

Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) is a non-profit organization, founded in 2008 by two eThekwini officials who were formerly involved in a Municipal urban regeneration project in and around Warwick Junction (AeT, 2023). With the stated goal of "Rights to the city for informal workers", AeT

work to include informal workers and their places of work in Durban's priorities for planning and budgeting (AeT, 2023). A small team of around 8 people, the organisation includes a wide array of expertise. Team members have backgrounds in area management, architecture, law, public-facing urban development, social work and environmental management; and are typically involved in multiple ongoing projects. Such projects (past and present) include the Vikelani Amalungelo traders' rights education and incident forums, the Markets of Warwick educational tours, inner-city recycling/waste research and advocacy, childcare initiatives and COVID-19 interventions. With a strong ethic of consultative processes as critical to creating sustainable interventions, and longstanding relationships with many of the actors in Warwick Junction, AeT made for a good way to introduce myself to the space and begin doing my research with as limited "roughness" as possible.

Crises in Durban

Skinner and Watson (2021) have more recently noted the extent of the impact of COVID-19 on informal traders and the urban poor in Warwick. In doing so, they make clear how critical informal employment is, not just as an economic lifeline, but in supporting the City's food security (Skinner & Watson, 2021). Measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19 disrupted the informal food systems so important to many urban residents, highlighting some of the infrastructural flaws increasing hazards faced by informal workers (Skinner & Watson, 2021, pp. 2-4).

Even as I entered the field in February 2022 (delayed by a month by myself and members of AeT contracting COVID-19 sequentially), the impacts of the pandemic on the viability of informal public space trading was obvious, and it was a rather muted Warwick into which I arrived to begin my research. This, and other crises like the "July Unrest" and the "April Floods" which devastated parts of Durban, came to frame my research in very particular ways.

Twice, my time physically "in" the field was paused as myself and AeT team members were exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19. The changing of lockdown regulations and their impacts on informal trade were major concerns for every participant I interacted with and frequently influenced the direction of conversations. I was in Durban in July 2021 as I wrote my research proposal, in part because of the pandemic, and witnessed some of the destruction, precarity and heightened social tensions that arose out of the protests and looting which

occurred across KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng after former President Zuma was arrested (SABC News, 2022). As I was working with AeT during April 2022, I also experienced the burst rivers and washed-away roads of the severe flooding that occurred across KZN. These floods were severe enough to cause over 300 deaths, severe infrastructural damage to cities like Durban and ruptures in the life-making projects of those living and working there (Coetzer, 2022). In fact, I and other AeT team members were unable to reach Warwick Junction (or leave our homes) for a few days, and we returned to devastation in Warwick, including flooded AeT offices and livelihoods erased by the damage. Participating in clean-ups after the latter two crises, especially the floods, were vivid reminders of how "seismic" such crises can become.

Method

- ### The Field/Site

Conceptualising my "site" of research was a challenge. This is because, although much of my time was spent in a fairly small geographic area (what AeT calls the "Warwick Super-Block"[4]), I was not wholly limited to that space in the course of my research and spent time in the region of the Palmer Street Recycling Facility too (see Figure 2). Additionally, most of my participants were actively and consistently mobile – whether AeT team members moving in and out of the office and the markets, the roving recyclers or the barrow operators who followed very complex rhythms. Drawing on Marcus's (1995, p. 96) work on ethnography in and of world systems, I understood my research as being an attempt to follow a set of ideas which cannot adequately be ethnographically researched in a single location. In doing so, I ended up with data that – although it did not necessarily come from co-theorising participants (see interviews with Dr Faya and Ms. Ntuli in Chapter 5) – spoke directly to experiences and insights that were shared with me by the informal workers and AeT team members who I worked with.

I drew heavily on the work of Mususa (2021, pp. 191, 192), who argues that the field might best be conceived of as a multi-dimensioned volume through and in which the actions of both participants and researchers resonate and impact one another in a multitude of (often unpredictable) ways. At a very practical level, this appealed to me, as Warwick consists of so

[4] Consisting of Market Road, David Webster Street, Nyerere (formerly Warwick) Avenue and Access Road, as well as the area contained between them (host to the Early Morning Market, temporary Bovine Head Cooking Facility and scores of informal traders and workers).

many intersecting kinds of motion and activity, at so many levels, that any attempt to bound the site into a 2-dimensional map is certain to fail in one way or another.

- Ethnography and Participant Observation

Given the motive complexity of the space I was working in, I found Malkki's (2007) account of anthropological research as itself deeply improvisational to be a helpful way of thinking about my methods. "Improvisation" in this sense speaks both to the notion of "borrowing" from other disciplines, situations and participants and to the deploying of such tools in appropriate ways (Malkki, 2007, pp. 179-181). As an approach, this both requires and contributes to what Malkki (2007, p. 163) calls "a heightened sense of time and process", a situational sensibility to the flows and relations within the field.

Immersing myself in the context of Warwick for an extended period as a participant observer enabled me to become better attuned to the realities of the space, and thus to engage in more socially situated research. I treated participants as co-theorists – not just in terms of the ideas that they shared, but also in terms of our embodied behaviours and logics within the field.

I was afforded an excellent opportunity to "do" participant observation by Asiye eTafuleni, who suggested that I informally intern with them when I approached them about my intent to do research in Warwick. This made for a relatively frictionless entry into the field while allowing AeT to keep an eye on me and ensure that I did not in some way upset their existing relationships with market workers.

As an intern, I was able to spend a lot of time in the markets and wider area and attend team meetings and other events which gave me a deeper understanding of my field site and the relations it homed. It also made introductions to informal workers easier and less intrusive, as I was there as a member of a trusted organisation and typically had some purpose for being around beyond my research. Throughout these sorts of encounters – going out to perform "pit stops" on the trolleys of recyclers, helping prepare a former storage space for a pop-up creche intervention and attending team and project meetings – I found myself exposed to vast quantities of data, often arising unexpectedly out of the most quotidian of conversations.

While working on an iteration of a four-wheeled trolley that AeT was hoping to pilot – sanding, painting, putting parts together and attaching the wheels – I was introduced to AeT's brand of iterative co-design. Rather than starting from an already existing body of knowledge about

barrows and their operators, the AeT team began design by observing various barrows and talking to operators about them. From this, specific concerns about sturdiness, wheel longevity and ergonomics all emerged, and these became some of the key design foci.

The work, from plans to construction, was done in conversation with willing barrow operators and when it was finally complete and presentable, it was handed over to barrow operators to try for a few weeks before further feedback could influence the next iteration[5]. The dialogic and future-oriented nature of this design approach resonated with the idea of the "intellectual poaching license" that Malkki (2007, p. 162) describes as being one of anthropology's strengths. The approach ended up informing how I understood the kind of ethnography and participant observation I was doing both conceptually and ethically. In listening to discussions of the difficulties in manoeuvring barrows through the Junction and working with them to improve barrow design faced by the os'gadla[6], or barrow operators, I gained an embodied understanding of the "roughness" that I later discuss – and what it takes to limit its impact on carts and people.

- Walking in Warwick

Much of my data ended up coming from simply walking around Warwick in the course of my time working with AeT. So much so, in fact, that I came to approach walking as a form of multisensory research, rather than merely a way of moving between places. Given the mobility-centric nature of Warwick Junction itself, as well as the role mobility plays in the economic life-making projects of many of the informal workers I was most interested in, I came to realise that walking was an appropriate method of research.

It is one thing to read or be told about the dangers faced by barrow operators carting goods from storage facilities to the markets and entirely another thing to experience the difficulty of navigating polluted and decaying pavements and roads, or to have a near miss from a speeding car in a notorious "danger zone" for pedestrian traffic. This is something that Meagher (2007, p. 8) accurately captures in her comparative work on the role that a "walking philosophy" played in the work of de Certeau and Engels, where she argues that to walk a city as a research method "locates" one's thinking in the streets in a theoretically generative and powerful way.

[5] The trolley was ultimately stolen from the operator trying it out, which we took to be evidence (along with generally favourable reviews from test-driver operators) that the trolley was a success, and a desirable one at that.

[6] isiZulu for "movers of goods".

Through walking, I was better able to experience the constant state of flow – and the impediments to this flow – of people, goods, money and so on as a part of this flow than as a static observer.

Figure 4 Accidental Capture of Walking as Method.

- Talking in Warwick

While much of my data came from observations that happened fortuitously as I walked and worked, a lot of insight came out of informal and semi-formal conversations that arose in the course of my time in the field. I did not record these as they happened, in deference to both the preferences of most participants and the difficulty of writing while walking and talking in such busy circumstances as the markets.

Some of these conversations occurred in isiZulu. Where my grasp was inadequate, AeT team members would step in and mediate the conversation. Although this can lead to methodically and ethically fraught situations, it was also a particularly effective way of gathering data, as some participants seemed to feel more comfortable talking to AeT team members than to a stranger. Overall, given the general alignment between my research interests and AeT's own

interests, the main issue was the lack of "direct" information, rather than a fear of having my words or those of interlocuters changed by a translator.

As Borchgrevink (2003) discusses, the assistance of an experienced translator is not automatically less desirable than an outsider anthropologist attempting to converse in the language of their interlocuters. While one might manage to make oneself understood and to understand much of the literal meaning behind an interlocuters words, without extensive comfort with the language and experience in the space/context, it is likely that researchers will miss out on figurative or less obvious features of a conversation which a translator is able to pick up on and relay with ease (Borchgrevink, 2003). This was certainly the case for my research, and I was typically thankful for the depth of explanation I received, especially when interlocuters used more metaphorical and figurative forms of isiZulu to express themselves.

Towards the end of my time in the field, I more formally interviewed (using my phone to record audio) four individuals particularly well-placed to answer questions that had arisen in the course of my research. Two of these were with long-serving members of AeT and allowed me to both clarify some of the questions I'd gathered over the preceding weeks and to reflect with them on my own thinking. The next was with a member of the eThekwini Municipality Business Support Unit (BSU) and centred on my attempts to better understand how the BSU conceived of its mandate/role and the "problem of informality", as throughout my time in the field I had witnessed what seemed to be ineffective, sometimes cruel, policing of informality under the direction of the BSU. Finally, I interviewed a long-serving municipal urban planner about how the Municipality conceptualised the relation of urban and spatial planning and policy to the "problem of informality". While these more formal interviews were done with officials, and not mobile informal workers, they form a critical element in the discussion of mobile informality nonetheless, as they regard the governance of mobile informal work (which, as I argue, is one of the "roughnesses" experienced in doing this labour).

- Field Notes

I had originally conceived of taking field notes as a necessary element of research in that remembering details without notes would be challenging. Drawing on Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997), I ensured that they contained "essential data" – observations, context, affective responses – with the intent of later analysing these notes. As such, I considered the

practical role of note taking to essentially be a way of recording important moments, thoughts or quotes that I could later return to in writing up my dissertation.

However, it rapidly became clear to me that my field notes were 1) not at all an objective recording of what was and that 2) to treat them as such was not even at all desirable. Rather, they were a place to jot down observations and notes from various contexts – in the markets, in meetings and conversations, while reading documents and academic literature – and to play and theorise with all of this in a speculative fashion in attempting to "make" my dissertation out of these disparate nodes of data. As such, what my field notes constitute during the write-up process is a record of the evolution of my thinking – complete with mistakes, dead-ends and meta-thoughts about my time in the field, all scrawled over and around each other to such a degree that they came to reflect my experience of the space of Warwick almost too accurately.

My fortnightly "field reports" to my supervisor served in much the same way, if somewhat neater and more directed. They consisted of an overview of what I had done in the time since the last report, what I was thinking and reading about and some of the challenges I was facing in the research. The feedback I received from these reports was then invaluable in how I approached my research and fed into the direction that my field notes and reports took over time.

- Literature and Documents

When not actively working "in the field", I spent a considerable amount of time reading literature and documentation on Warwick. This includes not only anthropological research but other academic disciplines[7], news and social media commentary concerning the area, NGO internal and external documents, and several legal, policy, planning and proposal documents. This practice was key to my research, as it situated my observations and questions in broader and longer-term contexts than my own experience of the space.

[7] Including (but not limited to) sociology, history, urban planning, economics, architecture and development studies.

Ethics

My approach to ethics is, in line with UCT's principles, shaped by the University's guidelines, and those of Anthropology Southern Africa (2005). My research proposal passed a review by the Ethics in Anthropological Research Committee (Ethical Clearance Number EARC 2021-32). I also drew on work by practicing anthropologists that discussed the ethics of research in contexts similar to my own to better prepare for the depth of ethical problems I could face.

My understanding of research ethics is informed by Malkki's (2007, pp. 173, 178) account of a "quotidian ethical practice", the everyday and socially-situated nature of ethical concerns arising out of ethnographic research. This dovetails with Das' (2015, p. 55) claim that the ethical "inheres in the quotidian", rather than in exclusively in spectacular moments. In this sense, ethics is the practice of "translating" both the loud "dilemmas" rupturing the research experience and the questions of etiquette that define what is "common sense" and "good manners" in a given situation (Malkki, 2007, pp. 178, 179). Upon beginning to spend time in Warwick Junction and surrounds, I drew heavily on the existing notions and practices of ethical behaviour specifically engaged with/in by AeT as one way of making sense of and "translating" the ethical concerns that my research provoked. The following were some of the primary ethical concerns and practices that emerged:

- ### Do No Harm

I followed Anthropology Southern Africa's (2005) directive to "do no harm". In line with AeT's own ethical norms around "hazards" for informal traders – the occupational risks which arise outside of one's control and threaten one's wellbeing – ensuring that my research did not unduly contribute to the hazards already faced by informal workers was my primary concern.

- ### Consent

Throughout my research, I ensured that participants gave me continuous and informed consent to use their words, ideas and circumstances in my dissertation. In practice, this means that participants were aware of the purpose of my research, that they were able to express and have concerns accommodated, and to withdraw their consent at any time and for any reason (Anthropology Southern Africa, 2005). Although a multilingual consent form might have simplified the process of consent, written consent forms can cause people to feel that they are

bound in "contractual relationships" to allow researchers full ownership of conversations (Ross, 2005).

- Reciprocity

As Maiter, et al (2008) note, it is critical that participatory research be reciprocal. Interning with AeT offered a way to ensure that I practiced my research reciprocally, as I was able to be useful in myriad ways (from typing up meeting minutes to cleaning up after severe flooding). Not only was I able to give back and make my research useful in various ways for the organisation, but some of the activities that I undertook – especially around the maintenance and repair of carts and barrows – served to assist informal workers who formed a part of my research.

- Anonymity and Acknowledgement

As Anthropology Southern Africa (2005) outlines, while researchers owe participants credit for their input, protection from possible harms related to representations of them in academic work is a critical concern. To this end, I protect the identities of participants through using aliases[8]. However, it is also important to me that the work and co-theorisation of participants be adequately recognised, so I ensure that I acknowledge and "reference" the role that participants have played in my thinking throughout the dissertation.

- Positionality:

Following the call for a politically and morally-committed and engaged anthropology outlined by Scheper-Hughes (1996), I thought carefully about how to do this while avoiding tropes of white-saviourism in a space rife with ongoing crises. Spiegel (2005, p. 136) outlines the need for a "care ethic" in research around African cities which are frequently experienced by Black South Africans as exclusionary and "a place of white people's ways" (Ngxabi, 2004) due to their Modernist rigidity, and, as a white researcher, I attempted to keep this in mind as a reflexive practice.

[8] Randomly assigned from names taken from Ari Sitas' (1993) speculative masterpiece of a possible future for Durban, *Etopia: A week in the life of a worker in the year 2020*.

One of the early ways in which my positionality impacted my research was in my privileged access to organisations and institutions. Durban's NGO, academic and Municipal official populations are relatively small and tightly interwoven, and personal connections often eased my access to spaces and opportunities. For example, my father, a former Municipal employee, academic and AeT Board Member[9], is known by many of my participants. Although my father is not involved in the day to day running of AeT in any way, the organisation regularly accepts interns and I received no special treatment, I was aware that my access was mediated by and through my connections to others.

Regarding my internship, I was unpaid for the approximately 4 months of 4-day weeks I was with AeT. I was fortunate that my family live not-too-far away and were able to provide me with lifts between their own work schedules, as this substantially lessened the financial and temporal costs of doing this research. Since I was frequently involved in projects which touched on my research interests, I found it challenging to separate "AeT work" from "research work". In fact, it was in doing the "AeT work", albeit alongside frequent opportunities to walk the markets, that most of the data came together for me.

As well as this, I was often assumed to be either a tourist or a Municipal official as a consequence of how I "stood out" as a white person with a notebook, and this certainly impacted how people perceived power dynamics between myself and themselves, and how they "performed" their interactions with me. Although I was always quick to reassure people that I wasn't an official, and to explain what I was doing, people were often still understandably wary of speaking much with me until they realised I was with AeT. In understanding this, I draw on Becker, Boonzaier and Owen (2005) on citizen anthropology as a way of considering the obligations of locally-situated anthropologists. The writers (2005, p. 124) note that this involves a departure from "culture" as the location of our ethics, and a re-location of ethics into the historical-political contexts of our work. In my context, as a white and middle-class Durban resident, this necessitated an ontological- and practice-based rejection of apartheid spatial injustice and modernist planning philosophies shaping how the city is made, and who for.

[9] AeT has however had many students do research alongside them without the necessity of family connection, and my position with them was not excessively privileged through this.

- COVID-19

COVID-19 was perhaps the most obvious hazard that I was concerned with in the process of my research. I followed the legal requirements for being in public space during the pandemic and limited myself to the research protocols laid out by the University of Cape Town (2022). I also always followed AeT's own guidelines – often more stringent than the government's – about masking, handwashing/sanitising, temperature-recording on arrival to the offices, and avoiding contact with others when exposed or symptomatic.

I was fully vaccinated and got my booster shot on the day I could. I maintained social distancing as far as possible, even when in the confines of the markets, and wore a mask throughout my time in the field. I also carried hand sanitiser with me, which I offered to participants when appropriate. In navigating the need to be polite, I found the "elbow-tap" greeting suggested by the president to be a widely used gesture that took the place of hand-shaking as a risk-avoidance measure.

- Responsibility to Stakeholders

Throughout my research, I endeavoured to avoid bringing the name of either the university or Asiye eTafuleni into disrepute through my words and actions. Fortunately, through attempting to practice ethical (as discussed above) and "good" (at outlined below) research, I avoided any major complications in this regard.

- On Money

As I noted earlier in the chapter, my time with AeT was voluntary in nature (and was thus unpaid). This relationship seemed appropriate, as it allowed me to spend more time engaging with issues regarding informal work in Durban and the stakeholders in these conversations, while allowing me to contribute in ways judged most helpful by those impacted. However, this was not the only case that money emerged as a complex intersection between practicalities and ethical quandaries.

It rapidly became clear to me that conversations about money with participants – especially the informal workers – were emotionally charged topics, about which people practiced a high degree of circumspection. Early in my time in Warwick, I became interested in how market workers were navigating future possibilities and uncertainties with their income, so I joined an NGO visiting Warwick to discuss the possibility of working with traders to develop

opportunities to safely save money. However, this site visit (and conversations that took place during it) made it clear that income, saving strategies, costs of business and other "typical" financial matters were very suspect topics of conversation.

While people were happy to share generalities like "Oh, I use the 'informal banker' to save, she just comes and collects my money weekly and gives me a slip – there she is now!", details (even seemingly innocuous ones like what os'gadla charge traders per day or per load) immediately prompted avoidance and/or concern, and even hostility towards the asker as "a government form-filler".

This reluctance to talk about financial matters seemed to originate from a combination of suspicion and privacy and or shame (about economic status) that outsiders enquiring about money may result in the government shrinking one's earnings.

Likewise, many participants openly shared that permits to trade in Warwick were "informally" sold between traders, but were purposefully vague about who was doing this and how and would retreat from the topic if I asked further questions.

Thus, while some workers in the space were clearly relatively well-off, and others seemed to be experiencing severe poverty, it proved difficult to get even a broad idea about how participants engaged with money.

Ultimately, while I found the topic fascinating and slim on existing data, I chose to step back from bringing money up in most cases, in line with the normal practice in the space.

Dissertation Structure

The structure of the rest of the dissertation is as follows:

In Chapter 2, I summarise the literature relevant to my research. I begin by unpacking some of the theoretical tools key to my understanding of mobile informality – "trying", "friction" and "crisis" – before discussing some insights from academic work which takes "the city" as its focus of enquiry. Finally, I draw together an account of the speculative as it pertains to the practice and governance of mobile informality in Durban.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the os'gadla. These barrow operators important in considering informality – mobile and otherwise – in Durban, as their motion through the markets is critical

to the function of the space and their mobility positions them as conceptually disruptive of the modernist imaginaries held by the Municipality. In developing an ethnographic account of the roughness experienced and navigated by the os'gadla, I argue that barrow operation is exemplary of an approach to life-making in the City which is no less of, and appropriate to, the current context despite the obstacles in the ways of this practice.

In Chapter 4, I develop my account of roughness by thinking with another form of mobile informality which occasionally rubs against Municipal imaginaries of modernity and sanitation. Focusing on my time with Ma Zondi and her cart, I argue that the recycler' utilise convivial social relations to smooth frictions and navigate forward in their life-making projects. This offers something to an account of city life which Lefebvre might describe as "the urban", and which speaks to the issues with the current rigid approach to governance.

In Chapter 5, I build on the above demonstrated phenomenological experience of mobile informal work in Durban as "rough" by turning to the Municipal account – and problematisation – of informality. Here, by drawing on conversations with Municipal officials, I show that the Municipality has a profoundly Modernist imaginary of Durban's future, which leads it to see informality as purely survivalist and thus out of place in a "good" city. This is behind the harsh and frictional approach to governance taken by the Municipality and explains why informal mobile operators experience local governance as "roughness".

Finally, in Chapter 6, I respond to the Municipality's accounts of informality and governance by arguing that informality is, in fact, entirely appropriate and beneficial to the urban context and the needs of city-dwellers. Drawing on participants' theorisation of rights to the city for informal workers and the value of provocation in making them, I conclude that informality is a valuable and dignified indigenous urban form and practice deserving of its place in Durban.

Chapter 2: Speculating Urban Informal Futures

In reviewing literature relevant to my research, van der Waal and Sharp's account of "informality" as a concept and subject of research was a critical intervention in my own understanding and use of the term. I found work engaging with the navigation of possibility in difficult circumstances – what Mususa (2021, p. 61) calls "trying" in her work – to be an ideal starting point in thinking about mobile informality in Durban as a process which of wayfinding through uncertainty. Tsing's (2011, p. 4) work on "friction" as producing and being produced by encounters across difference prompted me to pay closer attention to how informal trying happens and the ways in which experiences of roughness amongst mobile informal workers are understood. Vigh (2008) offers a further affordance to this in theorising crisis as a chronic condition, which speaks to the endemic and ongoing nature of crisis as the texture of life-making projects in Durban which provokes such kinds of trying as informal mobile work.

With AeT, eThekwini Municipality and informal workers all working towards specific futures in and for Durban, Lefebvre's (1970/2003) prefigurative approach of a "right to the City" for urban stakeholders provided a way of thinking about the kinds of urban forms and practices which are desired by actors in the space. In developing his work, Purcell (2013) and others draw heavily on the Lefebvrian dichotomy of "the city" and "the urban" as a framing, a tool which I found particularly useful in analysing how people spoke about their "solutions" for informality in Durban.

As the future-possible orientation of my research suggests, the speculative was consistently an element of my thinking. In this, the otherwise-ness and alterity of speculative anthropologies provided me with a place to root my thinking. Oman-Reagan's (2018) framing of what it is to *do* speculative anthropological research, Colón-Cabrera's (2018) use of Afrofuturism as a mode of challenging rigid colonial imaginaries and Badami's (2018) framing of policy *as* hopeful speculative literature were particularly key to my approach to research. In addition, I drew on the fictional and fiction-adjacent work of Martine (2019) and Older (2018) in attempting to theorise the role that future speculation can play in making the present.

On Informality – Trying, Friction and Crisis

What counts as "informal" and why in differing contexts – legal, academic, activist and self-identity – was one of my early research avenues. As van der Waal and Sharp (1988, p. 136) discuss, the 1970s account of the "informal sector" and the "formal sector" as two discrete parts antithetical to each other is closely related to the argument that cities in the developing world have two separate "sectors"; one "modern" and the other "traditional". This dichotomy was deployed to explain "the lack of progress in the third world", as if it is certain that the "traditional sector" necessarily exists in opposition to the distinct other that is the "modern sector" (van der Waal & Sharp, 1988, pp. 136-137).

More recently, Wilson (2011, pp. 205, 209-212) has claimed that this dualist account endures in state imaginaries of the economy, reflected in the confusion around street vendors, their roles and their "place" in the economy around the world. She particularly notes how locating street vendors in the informalised "traditional" sector not only contradicts the commonly experienced formalities of this line of work – notably in the forms of policing and bureaucracy – but results in state hostility towards this kind of work in the name of "modernization and 'revitalization' projects" for the city (Wilson, 2011, p. 211). van der Waal and Sharp (1988, pp. 139-147, 152) note that whether or not a government views informality with favour, attempts to "develop" it frequently set up a dichotomy between state and tradition, with the latter imagined to be holding back modernity.

In the course of this research, I utilise the terms "informality" and "informal work" as eThekwini Municipality (2014) defines them in the Informal Trading By-Law[11], and as used by municipal officials and AeT workers (who themselves choose to use the dichotomy of formal and informal despite acknowledging that this framework is insufficient at capturing the complexity of informal and formal work because of the need they have to be intelligible to the state in the course of their work). As such, informal workers (unless otherwise noted) are characterised by their work (whether based in goods or services) being practiced in a public place and without a declaration and the formal taxation of income (eThekwini Municipality, 2014). Such work can be, but is not necessarily, legal and/or subject to the permit system. As

[11] (eThekwini Municipality, 2014) Available at: http://www.saflii.org/za/legis/bylaws/eth/emitb2014439/#:~:text=An%20informal%20trader%20must%20not,any%20public%20or%20private%20property%3B%20(

the Municipality (2014) itself has noted, in addition to many other thinkers, there are cases where the divide between formality and informality becomes blurred.

It is worth noting that the very notion of work – formal or informal – is enmeshed in a set of assumptions and historical contexts shaping how labour is valued and understood, which themselves emerge out of particular imaginaries of race and humanity. Hylton White (2020, pp. 23 - 28) has argued that capitalism is racial – that race is internal to the development of capitalism and that, in South Africa, the colonial history is one of reframing of labour and personhood in an attempt to better extract the former from the latter. Furthermore, the way that this emerges is that "the Black of antiblack racism is the racial type that embodies abstract labour in the form of amassed biological force", generated out of the forms of capitalist society (White, 2020, p. 32). White (2012, pp. 400-401) also discusses some of the forms this has taken in South Africa, including the "colonial variant on Fordism" that was the "homelands" system with its tightly regulated family life around the margins of labour. More recently, White (2012, pp. 406, 417) argues, the form of capitalist race has been one of post-Fordist ethnicity marked by "the disassembling of temporal links between the rhythms of labour and the rhythms of domestic and personal life" and "calls for the state to intensify its grasp on the realm." Sylvia Wynter (2003, pp. 321, 316) takes a related approach in her account of "Man2", the "jobholding breadwinner", contrasted with the "jobless and criminalised poor." This account is drawn out of a dissection of the coloniality of being as something constructed, in part, through race (itself partially constructed out of deployments of Christianity in service to capital via the enslavement of vast swathes of the human population in the preceding centuries) (Wynter, 2003, p. 316); gesturing to the interconnectedness of notions of work, race and the "value" of humanity.

To return to an earlier concern, dualistic thinking around informality and formality as two, largely separate, sectors is something that science-fiction author and city planner Arkady Martine (2019) identifies as key to the "High Modernist"[12] approach towards social reform. In rejecting this "Corbusierian" notion of the ideal city as a "designed place" where modernity is produced, Martine (2019) draws on her experience of climate resiliency planning to call for a kind of city planning which functions "in a state of permanent flux". As I explore throughout

[12] Discussed later in greater depth but, simply put, "High Modernism" refers to the philosophy that "progress and development" towards "spatial order" in a city will through the judicious implementation of "technological and scientific-empirical solutions" (and ought to, in the moral sense) likewise impact the population for the better, perhaps best exemplified by Le Corbusier's "Radiant City" (Martine, 2019). In the words of Scott (1998, pp. 54-65), "City making and citizen making were the same."

this and the following chapters, these arguments have had profound impacts on my understanding of the context that informality in Warwick exists in.

Mususa's (2021) book *There Used To Be Order: Life on the Copperbelt after the Privatisation of the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines* was my starting point in thinking through how people navigate challenging and informal contexts. Her ethnographic analysis of the notion of "ukwesha" ("to try") as being central to attempts at navigating uncertainty and hardship on the Copperbelt, for both her participants in their life-making projects and herself as a researcher, is key in how she comes to theorise wayfinding within/through crises (Mususa, 2021, p. 61). This account of improvisational methods of making a life in challenging contexts through "trying" speaks to the necessity of being open to affordances – often momentary – and attempting to utilise them in novel ways, as the situation demands (again, both as a researcher and for the residents of the Copperbelt) (Mususa, 2021, pp. 55, 81). What Mususa (2021, p. 81) makes clear in this account is the speculative reality of such adoptions of the "improvisory agency" of trying.

Another key offering in Mususa's (2021, p. 191) work is that, while trying is critical *for* survival and is rooted in "difficult circumstances", it is not exclusively survival-oriented. In fact, this goes back to the speculative nature of trying, as "making it" is always a hope for the try-er (Mususa, 2021, p. 190). In this way, trying goes beyond the present of survival and aims towards a desirable possible future, however unlikely it seems. In this sense, trying works both as ethnographic description and as an analytic for the practice of anthropology (Mususa, 2021, p. 191). To this end, Mususa (2021, p. 191) points towards the value of "experimentation and pluralism" in practicing an anthropology which can speak to the processual, textural and performative ways that people relate to place, circumstances and life-making projects.

As in the Zambian Copperbelt, informal workers in Warwick experience many challenges in their day-to-day economic life-making projects. Perhaps because of the obvious role and impacts of physical friction on the carts and jobs of mobile informal workers, "roughness" quickly became a part of how I understood the experience of "trying" in Warwick. Tsing's (2011) *Friction: A Global Ethnography* provided me with a way to begin to theorise this roughness as friction. Her framing of the concept as arising out of, and forming the "grip" of, encounters and interactions is a helpful one in understanding contexts fraught with emergent ruptures (Tsing, 2011, pp. xi, 1). For Tsing (2011, p. 4), friction consists of the "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interactions across difference." Tsing's (2011, p. 5)

example of the productivity of friction is an appropriate one in the context of research around mobile informal work, as she discusses the necessity of friction to the "grip of encounter" in terms of a wheel, which must encounter the road's surface to move anywhere, or spin fruitlessly in the air.

Just as a wheel meeting the road can generate something new – movement, so to can the "heterogenous and unequal" interactions that occur in more abstract contexts, like that of "culture" or "power" (Tsing, 2011, p. 5). Tsing (2011, p. 1) also proposes that "capitalism, science, and politics" are all dependent on global connections and exist in the form of "universal" aspirations exists in a frictive relation to the fact that such global ideals are enacted in the local, "in the sticky materiality of practical encounters". This speaks powerfully to the situation of informality in Durban which I discuss in later chapters, where the Municipality's aspiration for a Modernist "caring and liveable City"[13] feeds directly into the granular, daily experiences of mobile informal workers in Warwick in specific ways.

However, friction does not just drive progress (Tsing, 2011, p. 6). The wheel might move the cart forward through the friction it generates against the ground but, in doing so, it also starts to decay as the frictive environment tears at its fabric. And, to continue the metaphor, if the bearings of the wheel introduce undue friction, then very little generative motion is likely to occur. The flexibility of this notion of friction as what arises out of and characterises 'messy encounters'[14] is what makes it a compelling conceptual tool for thinking of the ways that infrastructural, social, and governmental 'roughness' is experienced by mobile informal workers in Warwick.

In attempting to follow Martine's (2019) provocation to think about cities as experiencing "permanent flux" in the context of the myriad of frictions experienced by informal workers in Durban, I found Vigh's (2008) *Crisis and chronicity: Anthropological perspectives on continuous conflict and decline* useful. Vigh (2008, p. 5) argues that crisis –"the loss of balance and the inability to control the exterior forces influencing our possibilities and choices" – is often incorrectly perceived as an isolated period of time in which this upending happens, when in reality such crises are often ongoing and endemic (for Vigh, this is best described as "chronic" crisis). Such chronicity of crisis speaks to crisis not as a "turning point" but as a condition which is experienced and navigated (Vigh, 2008, p. 10). This account of crisis as

[13] eThekwini Municipality, *Integrated Development Plan (IDP) - By 2030, eThekwini will be Africa's most caring and liveable City*. 2020.
[14] What Tsing (2011, p. 5) calls "interactions across difference".

chronic affords the opportunity to go beyond analysing "crisis *in* context" and to realise the role of "crisis *as* context" (Vigh, 2008, p. 8). What this does is allow for a greater sensitivity to both the social and local layers at which crisis emerges and impacts us (Vigh, 2008, p. 13). Vigh (2008, p. 15) notes that when it comes to ongoing social crises, people may "attune and adjust their lives to it", something reflected in Mususa's (2021) account of life on the Zambian Copperbelt as well as in my own fieldwork. As I later discuss, this is an approach I found particularly helpful in coming to terms with the natures and impacts of the crises I witnessed/experienced during my time in the field.

Cities and Rights Thereof as Objects of Theorisation

What some of the above literature offered was a sensitivity to the idea that "The City" – a kind of abstracted whole of an urban space – is something that can be thought with in productive ways. Within Warwick, "The City" was frequently deployed in conversations – often, but not always, used to speak to the complex assemblage that is the material structure of Durban and the set of relationships which govern it, given face by the eThekwini Municipality.

The urbanist approach of work like Amin and Thrift's *Seeing Like A City* (2017, pp. 2-3), with the aim of getting to "the 'cityness' of cities", provided a useful place to begin theorising "urban vitality" as the process resulting from a "mangle" of "urban sociotechnical systems" which interact in various ways and through different political economies. This approach affords an understanding of infrastructure not as the static background to life-making in the city, but as an actively "surging" and "flowing" set of relations which, by what they supply, define and create publics in the city (Amin & Thrift, 2017, p. 3). Amin and Thrift (2017, pp. 9, 15-16) note that, in this account, the nature of urbanity is that of a "coming together" of entities – people, systems and networks, geographies, machines and institutions – which, in combination and/or disjunction, perform the "world-making" function of "urbanicity".

In this model, infrastructure allows for "flows" in the city (Amin & Thrift, 2017, p. 47). Whether continuously linear, as in the flows of cars along roads, water and sewerage through pipes and electricity along cables, or multi-directional, as in the case of the wireless signals broadcast and received across the city, the function performed by infrastructure is the same – to enable movement of energy and matter through and around the city (Amin & Thrift, 2017, p. 47). As I later show with reference to barrow operation and informal recycling, the

breakdowns or ruptures which can interrupt these flows can be catastrophic to (parts of) the city's function. However, as Tsing (2011, pp. 5-6) argues, the impediments to flows, even infrastructural ones, can simultaneously generate new potential directions in which to move.

These "jagged edges" can, however serve a generative purpose in offering moments where new politics can emerge (although, as the authors point out, the question as to "what kind of politics?" remains unanswered) (Amin & Thrift, 2017, p. 63). As the authors themselves note (2017, p. 64), the interruptions to and of infrastructure could as well be described in Tsing's (2015) terms of cities as "live mappings" and "constant constructions" of "patchy and incomplete but still productive…assemblages". Put simply, cities (especially the flows of infrastructure) are exactly the sort of places/things where friction can, and does, arise (Tsing, 2011).

Similarly, AbdouMaliq Simone's (2004) *For the City Yet to Come* speaks to the "patchiness" of city formations and relations in various ways. His account of "the mooring and taking apart social ties" as critical to life-making projects in the city and as "a locus of intense contestation and concern" is a particularly insightful addition to conversations around what it means to make a life in the city (Simone, 2004, p. 4). Central to Simone's (2004, p. 11) work here is a set of questions which ultimately came to define my ethnographic approach: "Who can be in the streets under what circumstances; who can have recourse to protected spaces without recourse to figure out ways of dealing with others; who can have access to what spaces?". Addressing these questions allows Simone (2004, p. 21) to near the apparent (if anything but) "ephemerality" of the opportunity-seeking practices of urban actors as they attempt to work towards specific goals through "wielding constraint and possibility" – or, in a word, "trying" (Mususa, 2021). This link to Mususa's (2021) account of trying as experimental wayfinding is made stronger by Simone's (2004, p. 65) discussion of how urban dwellers must "try things on for size" and "experiment with different ways of being and doing things." As he notes, while such attempts are not always successful, it is characteristic of the attempts that when they begin to fail, new opportunities are followed (Simone, 2004, p. 90). These points offer a vision of an active process of "place-making" in African cities, one in which "informal" methods are deployed in working towards (possible) urban futures less inimical to life.

Over time (and in this line of reasoning), I found myself drawn to the explanatory and future-theorising potential of Lefebvre's (1970/2003) comparison of "the City" and "the Urban" as a way of thinking through the context of informality and life-making projects in Durban. In his

call to move from the "industrial city" towards "urban society", Lefebvre (1970/2003, pp. 1-5) offers a way of conceiving of "urban practices" as revolutionary and liberatory technologies of reclamation. Purcell (2013), taking Lefebvre's work further, explains that the possibilities of life within the city are constrained by a poor imagining of urban life and impoverished by Fordist modes of capitalist industrialism and a "Modernist vision" of the city in service of profit and economic production. This is a diminishing of urban life-making into the barest of economic facets, as the fabric of the city is reduced into marketable commodities (down to the very space of the city in "the system of private property") – carved up into own-able, map-able, plan-able and profitable chunks (Purcell, 2013). Consequently, Purcell (2013) notes, life in the city becomes "sterilised" as elements not wholly in service to Modernist growth – play, encounter and interaction – are removed and the urban fabric formerly maintained by these elements decays.

In contrast, the urban is what the city ought to be. For Lefebvre, this is an ethically normative claim. The urban is the city not as a vehicle of capitalist accumulation first and foremost but as a space nurturing city-dweller, which attempts to protect the use-value of the space in ways which encourage integration and engagement between people (Purcell, 2013). As Purcell (2013) outlines, it is an account of city life which focusses on the "web of social connections" in which we are enmeshed, and which consequently stimulates residents to overcome forms of social segregation and to take an active part in deliberating the future(s) of the city. This sort of participatory and engaged sociality, Lefebvre argues, is desirable and worth cultivating on the part of city-dwellers (Purcell, 2013).

While the (capitalist and modernist) City may actively supress the sort of social engagement that typifies the urban, Lefebvre sees the city as a site in which the urban can be cultivated and brought forth most easily, through the vast number of possible meaningful social interactions (Purcell, 2013). There is a sense in which this overview of the complexity of the relationship between the city and the urban which perfectly gestures towards what participants like AeT members, the os'gadla and the informal recyclers are attempting in a context governed by actors like the BSU or Municipal Planning, who are firmly entrenched in the position that "the city" is a desirable goal for Durban.

Lefebvre's critique of the production of urban spaces also provides a serendipitous avenue into better understanding rights and rights dialogue as deployed in Warwick by various actors. AeT's (2022) webpage proudly displays a banner declaiming their goal as "Rights to the city

for informal workers", a modification of Lefebvre's (1970/2003) call for a "right to the city". This right is neither uncomplicated, nor uncontested. For Lefebvre, such a right is rooted in what a city is (or at least what it ought to be), a collective work produced through the labour of those who inhabit it (Attoh, 2011). As such, this kind of right is important – it is the right to inhabit the city, and to do this on one's own terms (at least in contrast to the top down governance that capital wields in and on the city). Huchzermeyer (2018) considers that the right to the city reframes city-dwelling as a "revolutionary concept of citizenship". Thus, while the right to the city may be encoded legally in some way or other, the right as imagined by Lefebvre (and as practiced by city-dwellers) goes beyond the legal into transformative social relationships through and within the city. Indeed, for Lefebvre, this right must make "entry into social practice" and be made and remade through the actions of those who live in cities (Huchzermeyer, 2018).

As Purcell (2013) has noted, the right to the city is a prefigurative call to action in appropriating the city in an attempt to "de-alienate" it from its service to capital and reorient it toward serving as a "constitutive element in the web of cooperative social relations among urban inhabitants" (Purcell, 2013, p. 149). In other words, the right to the city is the rallying cry of attempts to cultivate "the urban" within "the city".

Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) (2010), known for their "living politics" of appropriating city-space for informal housing in the absence of government provision, have critiqued the notion of a right to the city. They write that their "living politics" is the "politics of daily life" and that the apparently desirable right to the city is a slogan prone to being tamed by power, such as when such a right is reduced to a "technical issue" of service provision, a "legal issue" of human rights relevant only to lawyers, or frames the solution only in terms of "'participation' in 'good governance'" (and thus in terms of working within bounds set by those in power) (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2010). What this shows is that simply calling for a right to the city is deeply insufficient. What that right is and how it is practiced are critical points for informality to have a say in, and such a right must be in line with "living politics" and not the cut-and-dried politics of government (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2010). This is important, but difficult.

AbM (2010) claim that if there is indeed such a thing as a right to the city, it is very difficult to achieve in a country where the poor are swept out of the way (as during the 2010 FIFA World Cup or the recent Municipal clean-up led by the deputy mayor) in service of ideas of a "world class city" where "what counts is money" held by the rich. They conclude that "For the right

to the city to be real what will have to count will be people and not money", that for the hope of a right to the city to emerge as reality, it cannot be a mere "slogan which repressive governments can hide behind" but must be rooted in the democratisation of cities from below (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2010). This is resonant not only of Lefebvre's own theorising of the right to the city and the distinctions between the city and the urban but also of AeT's engagement with the notion of a right to the city and attempts, through their various initiatives and interventions alongside informal workers, to bring forth the urban in Warwick Junction.

Claire Bénit-Gbaffou (2016) gestures to what this means for informality in South African cities by framing the discussion in the context of the contestation of informality's right(s) to the city in Johannesburg after Operation Clean Sweep in 2013. She argues that when it comes to informality, many (if not most) informal traders who are not affiliated with street trading organisations or NGOs lack the recourse to rights language and thus adopt politics of invisibility and mobility as a defensive measure (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016). In Durban, policing and governing of informality is just as predatory and concerned with strict forms of legality which exclude many informal workers (most obviously, in my research, the permit-less os'gadla), precluding them from opportunities to deploy rights-based attempts at claiming space and power.

However, my exposure to informality through AeT drew my focus to the attempts being made to challenge this state of affairs. AeT's legal programme, Vikelani Amalungelo[15], has a great concern with educating and empowering informal workers when it comes to rights, and regularly shares information and assistance with informal workers seeking legal assistance when it comes to their work. Working to include informal workers – as their rights encourage – in conversations about policy adoption and amendments, infrastructure development, impounding and destruction of informally traded goods and permit issues are all ways in which AeT and informal traders work towards what Lefebvre calls "the urban", AeT team members call "sustainable indigenous urban forms and practices" and informal workers themselves call "a fairer city".

[15] "Vikelani Amalungelo" is isiZulu for "Protect our Rights".

Speculation and Futures

A growing interest in speculative futures consistently guided my interest in, and approach to, mobile informality in Warwick. I regularly drew on insights and city-theorisations from fictional works like *Etopia: A week in the life of a worker in the year 2020* by Ari Sitas (1993) and China Miéville's *Bas-Lag* series[16]. As such, I was drawn to academic literature that shared, in some way, this speculative framing.

My entry into considering the value that such thinking could offer me in an anthropological context was CulAnth's provocatory series of blogposts on speculative futures. Oman-Reagan's (2018) piece is an excellent account of speculative anthropologies/ethnographies, defining them as having three critical aspects. These aspects – engaging creatively with possibility, imaginative use of anthropological research and working towards "just and ethical relations across spatial and temporal scales" – are what practicing a speculative anthropology offers us (Oman-Reagan, 2018).

Colón-Cabrera (2018) takes Oman-Reagan's work further in considering what Afrofuturism as a genre can do for speculative approaches to anthropology. He concludes that the rejection of colonial epistemology and ontology's superiority inherent to the genre provides something of a blueprint for anthropological research which validates ways of knowing and doing which are not wholly subsumed by Western colonial and capitalist imaginaries (Colón-Cabrera, 2018). In my research, this offered a way of approaching participants not as mere "studied populations" but as "narrative protagonists" in their contributions (Colón-Cabrera, 2018). Building on this, Lempert (2018) posits that an important feature of both Afrofuturist literature and speculative anthropological work is that it goes beyond associating indigeneity with "mythic pasts and suffering presents" and questions what indigenous futures may be like.

Nandita Badami's (2018) *Solarpunking Speculative Futures* informed my research in a foundational manner. In this piece, she argues that policy, as a genre, is shaped by an "aesthetic" of fantasy (Badami, 2018). To read policy as speculative acknowledges the suspensions of disbelief that such documents require in positing specific futures as causally

[16] Namely *Perdido Street Station* (2000), *The Scar* (2002) and *Iron Council* (2004) – each of which covers a different "possible city".

certain (i.e. that if the prescribed actions of policy X are followed, then the outcome *will* be Y)[17].

Policy's need for optimistic certainty is something novel to speculative fiction (which generally also concerns itself with less desirable futures) and is thus worth interrogating. The way in which Badami (2018) does this is to consider the work that optimism does for policy. Reading policy in this fashion allows us to go beyond a mere ethics of optimism or of framing such an ethics as "cruel"[18], and instead become sensitive to the "labour" of optimism. For Badami, the sub-genre of "solarpunk", with its conscious attempt at imagining optimistic futures free of the fossil-fuel addiction of steam- and oil-punk works, and the techno-dystopia of cyberpunk, is one place to begin considering the work of optimistic speculation as more than utopian – perhaps even as "acts of dislocation" (Badami, 2018).

However, as Badami (2018) notes, it can be tempting to simply settle into analysing the fantasies of speculative fiction and policy as discrete genres rather than truly reading "policy documents *as* speculative fiction".[19] Speculative fiction writer and sociologist Malka Older (2018) explains something of the importance of understanding that policy performs an optimistic speculation in her use of the term "speculative resistance", which she defines as a method of navigating towards the kinds of future we desire by "trying out" possible futures in the ways that speculative works allow us to. This echoes the work of Mususa (2021, p. 1), who argues that – in uncertain and challenging contexts like the Zambian Copperbelt – people attempt to make lives through the experimental and opportunistic method of "trying" to "open up possibilities".

Arkady Martine (2019) builds on this in arguing that her understanding of city planning at its best is a kind of speculative resistance; that it "is made of ways of imagining other futures, other ways we will have to live, and how to get ready for them." In doing so, she rejects the defeatism (and consequent inaction) that can breed in times of crisis, which she summarises in the claim that "the apocalyptic is itself a form of denial" (Martine, 2019). This is precisely the benefit of "parabolic thinking" as a way of approaching other possibilities in the way described by Chandrasekaran (2018). Martine's (2019) argument here is that merely reacting with "grief" and feelings of "loss" to crisis – whether in the moment or in speculating on future possible

[17] One such case is eThekwini Municipality's (2020) Integrated Development Plan, which is framed as *the* method by which Durban *will* become "Africa's most caring and liveable City" by 2030.
[18] As Berlant (2011) might.
[19] Author's italicisation.

disasters – can resign us to their continuation, allowing the trajectory to lead us towards further tribulations. Instead, she argues, it is in imagining better futures – the ways that they might be better for us, the challenges that might arise and how we might get there – that we find ways of doing the work in the present that resist the defeatism and disasters that exist in front of us, as well as those which loom over our temporal horizon (Martine, 2019). As Older (2016, 2017, 2018) has done in the *Infomocracy* trilogy, trying out better – if imperfect – futures allows us to play with ideas of what might be in ways which allow us to better prepare ourselves for, and even to shape, what the "actual" future brings.

The above works drew me into work on speculative anthropology and what it offers in terms of an "epistemological humility" about the sorts of worlds which we could/should inhabit (Anderson, et al., 2018). In addition, this flirtation with speculation allowed me to near what has in recent years been called "the otherwise", the emergent political potentialities and forms of life typically made subaltern by colonial and Modernist logic-regimes (McTighe & Raschig, 2019). What this means, for McTighe and Raschig (2019), is an approach to anthropology which seeks to make visible possibilities for other modes of being, something very much in line with Older's (2018) ethics of speculative resistance. Such an approach to world-making is exactly what informal workers and organisations like AeT already practice as a matter of course through attempts at making the rights to the city for informal workers in both their daily navigation of social and physical roughness and the "provocations" against "margins of refusal" that such actions constitute.

Chapter 3: The Expertise of the Os'gadla

Figure 5 Barrow and Protective Gloves Outside the EMM

Entering the Markets

On my first day "in the field", I accompanied some of the AeT team with on a visit to the Early Morning Market (EMM) to check the site for a planned pop-up creche. This was a short walk, only around 500m, but far from a quiet one. Even at this point in the day – the mid-morning lull between the early commute and the lunch rush – being on foot in Warwick Junction was sensorially disorienting.

Figure 6 Warwick Junction (David Webster St, Canongate Rd and Julius Nyerere Ave Intersection) Midmorning

Hooting taxis and cars competed with shouted discussions between taxi washers under the bridge and fuzzily blaring gospel music from the stall of a pirate .mp3 trader. In the muggy heat of a Durban summer, everything – abandoned rubbish, a drowned rat, people's sweat and urine, incense, rotting vegetables and fumes from vehicles and burning cables being harvested for copper – seemed to meld into an overwhelming, uniform reek. With my glasses, perched precariously atop my mask, already fogging up, the already confusing jumble of people, traffic, goods, decaying infrastructure and litter which seemed to make up the fabric of Warwick seemed even more chaotic. In fact, the entire experience resembled nothing so much as the

kind of metropolitan sprawl – complete with unevenly-distributed futures[20] – so popular in cyberpunk texts[21].Once off the streets, in the humid confines of the vegetable storage unit being converted into the creche, I looked out at the bustling busyness of traders and potential customers thronging the narrow "alleys" between the hundreds of stalls and storage cages and wondered how, if at all, we would manage to get the two large thick-canvas and metal event tents that would provide walls and a better roof and the large, AeT-designed crates containing necessary goods to the creche from the offices, down and across busy roads and on the far side of the EMM's sprawl.

The Os'gadla

I was answered the next morning by the arrival of two slight men who arrived at the offices with their two-wheeled carts in tow. This was my introduction to the os'gadla, who move goods to-and-fro in the markets. After a minute or two of muttered discussion and a slow circling of the pile of goods I had painstakingly dragged out the door over the last half hour, the operators efficiently packed the crates and tent bags (each larger and heavier than I) onto their suddenly tiny- and flimsy-looking carts in a matter of minutes. Having balanced the boxes and tents, the two operators tied them down with what I was later told were ratchet straps – often stolen from trucks – sold by an informal businessperson along with scraps of wood and metal for cart repairs, to the os'gadla[22].

I tried to help secure the parcels but gave up when I realised that I was only confusing a streamlined and efficient process. I watched with something approaching awe as the operators hoisted their carts and swung them around on their shopping-trolley wheels so that the carts

[20] The quote "The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed yet." is commonly attributed to speculative fiction and cyberpunk author William Gibson (Kennedy, 2012), but could as easily be referring to the complex ways in which futures are felt in Warwick.

[21] At the time, I doubted I would adjust to the frenetic nature of the markets. However, I quickly adjusted to the busyness and most of the sensory landscape. What I didn't get used to – the chaotic traffic, the blocked drains, the potholed pavements and the limited public amenities – emerged as elements of the chronic polycrisis of spatial governance in Durban. That is to say that the disorganisation which I experienced at first was not reflective of how informal workers treat the space themselves – one of the most common sights on my way in every morning was traders sweeping the pavements around their stalls, and the markets themselves are fairly tightly managed by trader committees – but came out of the systemic problems with how the space is imagined and "run" by eThekwini Municipality, as well as wider crises.

[22] The trolleys, a common type of cart in Warwick, resembles a jury-rigged two-wheeled handtruck like that used by stores to move goods around – albeit crafted out of a motley of metal and/or wooden pieces welded or nailed together, with scraps of rope and truck ratchet straps to hold loads more securely and with liberated supermarket trolley wheels.

rolled behind them like trailers in one smooth action. Easily, the os'gadla led the way along Market Road to David Webster Street, and then into the EMM towards the pop-up creche.

New to the space, and far from acquiring any sense of the everyday rhythm of the place, I was amazed at the facility the os'gadla displayed in navigating potholes, pedestrians, and stalls and how they moved through the moving traffic seemingly without a care – not once crashing or bashing their loads – all the while shouting greetings out to passers-by. To my eyes, the trip was a sequence of near misses as the os'gadla slipped their carts between moving cars and taxis, around gaping potholes and clattered over steep curbs.

While I knew that the operators "knew" Warwick far better than I – that they had some kind of embodied knowledge of place and rhythm from long experience – I was astonished by how effortless their motion seemed and how challenging it must be to do this sort of work, day in and day out. The way they navigated the pavements, roads and market – a kind of haphazard-seeming flow, swerving around obstacles at the last second and, apparently by happenstance, towards brief, on-the-move social calls to friends and acquaintances in the space – immediately caught my interest.

I felt close to overheating in the sweltering, rotting-fruit air trapped under the metal EMM roof while the os'gadla chatted and unloaded their carts (as efficiently as they'd loaded them) and then set off through the market again at an amble. Unlike the operators, my work for the morning was just beginning. Chatting with some of the AeT team as we pitched tents, I learned that the os'gadla were probably on their way to find somewhere to sleep out the rest of the morning until the lunchtime rush of delivering cooking supplies to food traders. Days start somewhere between 4 and 5 in the morning for os'gadla, when they collect traders' goods and stalls from storage, haul them to their places in the markets and set them up. The work day ends 12 or so hours later when they've done the same tasks in reverse. Between these two big sets of jobs, the os'gadla rest except when delivering supplies to food traders, who they are "on-call" for (a business relationship where the os'gadla work on-demand for certain traders) or carting loads of shopping to the taxis or busses for market customers.

The os'gadla are typically seen as an insular community by the City and by other informal workers. Part of this is rooted in the common background of os'gadla as coming from the Eastern Cape to work in the city for 2 to 6 months at a time, all the while saving their money to take back home, in contrast to the more economically active informal traders who are often from KZN. While some stay in formal accommodation, many choose to stay in squatted

building or on the streets to save money. However, they are also differentiated by their struggle for acceptance by the Municipality, which does not provide permits for informal work not done in a single demarcated site. This results in a lack of protections of the work and for the workers, alongside the occasionally frictive relationships that the os'gadla seem (from conversations with informal labourers in the markets) to have with their employers – typically informal traders selling goods which must be brought out of storage each morning and returned each evening.

As discussed in Chapter 1, financial details regarding this line of work are tough to come by in conversation. However, every so often someone would share something. A barrow is worth a few thousand rand (depending on wheel type, materials used to construct, etc.) but can be rented from another operator for a weekly payment. Os'gadla-trader agreements are highly variable - they may or may not be long-term arrangements, the cost can be decided by weight and distance or per trip. Some of the os'gadla qualify for grants, others do not. Losses of goods are almost always the responsibility of the os'gadla, and eat into earnings.

Figure 7 Barrows and Trolley at Rest Outside Early Morning Market

This set of jobs is, I was told, constant and necessary, as the narrow and complicated pathways in the markets and the busyness of the roads and pavements in the area mean that nothing bigger

than the barrows could be relied on to move goods at scale. As one participant said, you can't get rid of the os'gadla without killing the markets, "even if the City is right and they are amaphara"[24].

Barrows as Non-Motorised Transport

Over the next few weeks, I kept returning to some of the insights from this first encounter. Part of my work as an intern ended up including research and hands-on work around Non-Motorised Transport (NMT), including research around the environmental, and economic affordances of NMT within the City and assisting in the construction of iteratively designed carts for use in Warwick Junction and surrounding areas. It became clear that the os'gadla were not just necessary to the markets as a result of circumstances like the infrastructure(s) of Warwick excluding "more efficient" transport but because the barrows are, in themselves, an ideal and efficient approach to moving goods.

This is of particular interest in the current global circumstances, where a number of first world governments are supporting the use of NMT, especially for the so called "last mile" of urban freight (de Oliveira, et al., 2017). This is in an attempt to "decarbonise" the city through reducing traffic and emissions caused by freight transport while simultaneously creating a more "walkable" or "liveable" city (de Oliveira, et al., 2017). These are noble and important goals, but while European nations claim to be leading the way in the innovation of NMT, it is already being practiced in places like South Africa as a matter of course.

Despite the ongoing benefits of urban freight NMT provided by informal workers like the os'gadla, the government's Draft National Non-Motorised Transport Policy (2008)[25] has done little to protect this line of work beyond some impressive statements. Claiming that transport is "the heartbeat of South Africa's economic growth and social development", the department describes this document as an intervention "towards reversing challenges of accessibility and mobility" and notes that NMT is a "fully acceptable mode of transport" in urban spaces, rather than an "add-on" (Department of Transport, 2008). The issues with the policy draft are that, while it claims to offer a "single framework and enabling environment" for stakeholders to

[24] "Amaphara" in this context is a disparaging way of referring to young homeless men living in Durban, many of whom are believed to use whoonga/nyaope and/or to be involved in crimes like cable theft.
[25] The Department of Transport's most recent NMT Policy document.

address the challenges of NMT, it is yet to be formally implemented and does little to materially protect or enforce rights to the City's streets and pavements for NMT operators. Additionally, it was clear throughout my time in Warwick that relationships between the City and the os'gadla were, as best, frictional and often included the predatory policing of barrow operators that is so often reported (Heneck, 2020). This disjunct between the reality of the os'gadla in Warwick and the kind of framing of NMT as desirable and even "of the future" by national and international bodies in some way drew me to remain involved with the os'gadla.

Roughness: The Friction(s) of Barrow Operation

In every sense of the word, running a barrow is a job filled with friction. There is, of course, the "grip of an encounter" (Tsing, 2008) between the wheels and the ground, driving the barrows forward as the feet of the os'gadla experience a similar "grip" on the ground. There is also "social friction" – conflicts or differences of interests between operators or with police, municipal officials or informal traders. There is the kind of frictional policy and governance which municipal departments are drawn to by how they understand informality and its relationship to space, law and the economy (which I discuss in a later chapter). But, spending any time around os'gadla or those working alongside them reveals that the most pressingly understood kind of friction experienced by the operators and their barrows is that of the "rough pavements" and "danger zones" that are a daily part of life as an operator.

Figure 8 Potholes and Puddles in Warwick (Outside EMM.

This "roughness", as various participants referred to it, is something of a texture of life for barrow operators, who do not merely walk the streets as a business practice but also live on them for months at a time. Mostly men of variable age from the Eastern Cape, the os'gadla tend to spend around 6 months in Durban at a go. In this time, they live on the streets – often guarding stallholder's goods and their barrows each night rather than "wasting" money on storage facilities – with their savings wedged tight across their bellies in felimntwini[26] until they feel they have saved up enough to return with it for a time to family still living in the Eastern Cape.

The "danger zones" and "rough spots" are not only the busy, speeding-car intersections that must be crossed while working but also areas where sleeping will get formal business owners to call the police on you or where you might be mugged. The roughness of barrow operation, likewise, is not exclusive to the potholes and cracks in unmaintained roads and pavements, but a more general description of the "path" or rhythm that the os'gadla follow. Some roughness

[26] Zipped money bags worn tight across the chest or belly under one's clothes and packed with the savings of the os'gadla.

cannot be avoided and so must be borne, but other roughness is something to be navigated around, fitted into the paths taken by barrow operators. Part of the expertise of the os'gadla lies in how effectively they perform these constant calculations on the fly.

Some of the "danger zones" are so bad as to be well known. This is the case for spots like the area in the CBD where Afrika Ntuli, a much-respected informal worker in Warwick was hit by a vehicle and tragically died in 2016 (Quazi, 2016). Others are more nebulous – this area or that is "rough", "hard to cross" or has some personal tragedy connected to it. For the os'gadla, roughness is constituted of the many challenging facets of life-making projects in Durban – the decay of infrastructure, aggressive policing of by-laws and policies instituted by a bureaucracy which does not have the same interests as most of those using the space, economic hardship – and structured by the experiences of the effects of these in Warwick. However, these roughnesses are not limited to the experience of the barrow operators – their impacts resonate out through the "volume" of Warwick and impact countless others (as I discuss later with regard to a fire at a local storage facility).

The roughness os'gadla dealt with was continually obvious. The informal traders selling pieces of wood and shopping trolley wheels to the barrow operators for necessary repairs to their barrows were one sign of how rough the roads and pavements – pot-holed and littered with rubble, rubbish and stagnant water – are to traverse. A good set of trolley wheels, I was frequently told, might last a month. After seeing how the tar tore up some of the plastic wheels AeT was testing on recycling trolleys, I had no problems believing this. As well as this, while there are os'gadla of every age between teenager and octogenarian, there are no bulky or unfit operators. All are whip-thin, lean from hauling heavy loads over substantial distances many times a week, often on poor diets. Their bodies, as they adapt to the roughness of the space, shed almost anything unnecessary for the work they do. Seeing a water seller hauling many litres uphill on a 30°C day, all the way from a taxi-washer's tap to the mielie cooking facility a few hundred metres away, was yet another reminder of this labour. As well as this, and as I discuss in a later chapter, predatory policing in the name of keeping the streets clean (a frequent

occurrence in Warwick) formed another thread in the fabric of roughness for barrow operators and illustrates something of the frictional relationship between them and Municipal officials.

Figure 9 Market Rd and David Webster St Intersection with Informal Traders Catering to Os'gadla.

The Storage Facility Fire Crisis

On the 9th of February 2022, a fire occurred at a building on AB Xuma Street, severely damaging a building and provoking much conflict between the City and informal workers in the aftermath (Hlangu, 2022). Although only one building was severely damaged, with a couple of small businesses suffering some degree of destruction, this building contained the stalls, goods and barrows of well over 1500 informal workers, with the financial cost of the fire ultimately estimated to be well over R1 million (Phungula, 2022). The fire, and the subsequent conflict, offers an example of what roughness can mean for the life-making projects of os'gadla, as well as showing the degree to which such roughness impacts others in the space.

After the fire, the Municipality decided not to effect repairs on the storage facility or to provide an adequate replacement facility, telling traders to use a facility over half a kilometre away.

While the burned goods and equipment had been a devastating blow for traders and barrow operators, the longer-term impact of losing a key node[27] in the network of barrow operations serving the markets became a far larger issue than that of fire damage. For the os'gadla, already carting hundreds of kilograms between storage facilities and markets, an extra half kilometre throws out the rhythm that they cultivate and so is a roughness that could not be suffered – a literal step too far.

On the 21st of February, after the Municipality had taken no further action, the os'gadla downed their trolleys for the day in a strike and sought out officials at the Business Support Unit (BSU) to air their grievances. However, barrow operators neither have, nor qualify for, permits (as I discuss in depth in Chapter 5). As a result, the BSU followed their protocol regarding "unpermitted informal trade" by refusing to engage with the operators (and thus avoided condoning informal work without a permit). Traders, losing income as their barrow operators refused to work, acted in solidarity and several them went, with their permits, to join the os'gadla in seeking an audience with the BSU. The BSU agreed to meet only those traders with permits, leaving out the os'gadla themselves, and the meeting eventually broke down in mutual recrimination and no material change.

Seeing no chance of a new or repaired facility, the os'gadla ended up charging substantially more for their services. This cost is pushed onto the informal traders employing them, who ultimately then move the cost onto customers purchasing their goods.

In a city like Durban, where hundreds of thousands of people directly and indirectly rely on the cheap food and goods from Warwick, any prices have the potential to be truly catastrophic (or, at least, of adding to the ongoing "polycrisis"[28] of challenges people face in making a life) – either for the end customers or for the many people involved in the supply and production chains involved in selling the goods. In a sense, what keeps the Markets going is as smooth and lubricated, or frictionless, flow of goods as possible and the labour provided by the os'gadla is indispensable in this. The decision by the Municipality not to repair the storage facility, by making the travel of the barrow operators rougher, introduced significant new friction to this flow.

[27] I use "node" in the sense of "a point in the constellation of relationships existing in a space", in this case a building serving the needs and impacting the viability of informal trade in Warwick.
[28] Homer-Dixon, T. & Rockström, J., 2022. *The New York Times (Opinion: Guest Essay) What Happens When a Cascade of Crises Collide?*. [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/13/opinion/coronavirus-ukraine-climate-inflation.html

Whether or not this decision reflected a conscious desire to interrupt and make frictional this flow of people and goods, it reflects a "theory of informality" held by the Municipality which anticipates, among other things, that informality must be controlled, limited and shepherded and that an effective way of doing this is, through policy, planning and governance methods, to introduce friction or roughness into the flows of informality. This, rather than "encouraging a move towards formality" or making Durban a "modern city", ultimately leads to a destructive and anti-poor situation of increased precarity for informal workers and higher costs for residents. I discuss this tendency and its origins in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Why Don't the Os'gadla Have Permits?

A seemingly obvious solution to the above situation would be for the BSU to recognise os'gadla as necessary informal workers around the markets and grant them permits to ply their trade. This would, one might expect, grant barrow operators a degree of official protection and representation and possibly alleviate the predatory policing that they experience.

This has, at times, even been suggested and attempted by the City but has never been fully implemented due to opposition from barrow operators and civil society/organisations like AeT who worry that permitting would force the os'gadla into more tightly-policed and costly relationships with the City, as well as on the grounds that (as a number of interlocuters stated in various circumstances) "the permits don't work" – or, rather, that the work they do is exclusionary and anti-poor, rather than efficient management.

The suspicion that permits would lead to further policing of the barrow operators is borne out by the fact that when the City last attempted to introduce permits for barrow operators, something that AeT and the os'gadla took them to court over, technicalities like the size and type of wheel were the sort of things that Municipal officials attempted to haggle over as ways of excluding barrows as "unsafe" when rejecting permit applications – a degree of control that the os'gadla found absurd in the uncertain contexts in which they work.

Market Logics

As I researched os'gadla navigation of the roughnesses in the path of informal mobility, the kind of close attention to both space and process which ethnography can offer became increasingly clear to me. Drawing on Mususa's (2021, pp. 191, 192) description of the field as a "volume", I came to see the space of Warwick as liquid-like in how actions (and consequences) resonate through it, often in ways unforeseen by the actors involved. This particularly came through in the gradual realisation of the frictional "encounters across difference" (Tsing, 2011, p. 6) that emerge between two oppositional logics at play in the markets.

On the one hand, there is what one might call the "os'gadla logic" of barrows as efficient transportation, appropriate to the sociocultural, physical and temporal context of Warwick. This is embodied in the framing of barrow operation by informal workers throughout the markets, as the trader response to the BSU's treatment of the os'gadla after the storage facility fire shows. On the other hand, there is the technocratic logic of "safety" espoused by the Municipality in the form of an often-exclusionary permit system. These permits, as I discuss in Chapter 5, are imagined to be a way of protecting Durban (including informal workers) from the imagined destructive excesses of informality.

While the permits and by-laws which so rigidly structure the governance of informal public space trade may at times serve to limit the oversaturation of certain markets, such an approach clearly has impacts which reverberate through the space in the manner that Mususa (2021, p. 191) describes as "rhythms and unfolding wholes" – a complex emergence within the volume. When the storage facility burned, the BSU's dependence on permits left it unable or unwilling to respond in a way that addressed the needs of the os'gadla. Consequently, they were unable to practice their mobility, so critical to the businesses and life-making projects of Warwick's traders and customers, in the way they had formerly done so. The eventual price-raise for barrow operation resonated in such a way as to unexpectedly raise the price of doing business as an informal trader in Warwick and, ultimately, to impact the prices paid by customers. Such an outcome stands in contrast to the Municipality's (2020) desire for "caring and liveable City", despite being rooted in the very logic(s) of governance that eThekwini – through organs like the BSU – imagines to work toward this future.

Chapter 4: Informal Recycling and the Cultivation of Relationships

Figure 10 Heavily Laden Recycling Cart.

Barrow Prep and Distribution

Part of my work as an intern at AeT was to assist with the preparation and distribution of some AeT-designed four-wheeled trolleys to informal recyclers. This was a job that took some days, spread out over a few weeks. Over this time, we worked through a number of potential wheels for the carts before settling into the lengthy installation process, checking and tightening bolts, sanding and cleaning the wooden parts, labelling and numbering the carts, and handing them over to the excited recyclers who joked about how they'd be "driving without a licence".

In attempting to prepare carts which would survive the rigours of criss-crossing the City, I learned a lot about the carts and their operators. In handing over the carts I gained a far better understanding of how AeT imagines their work as, in some sense, prefiguring a possible future set of urban relations through "provocations" which "push against [Municipal] margins of refusal" like these carts themselves, which serve to "take up space" in the City – a kind of claim made of rights to (the waste of) the City for informal recyclers.

Informal Recycling – Benefits and Challenges

Informal recycling in Durban is an important job. According to WIEGO (2022), South African municipalities benefit to the tune of R750 million in landfill space-saving from waste pickers and other informal recyclers. In cities like Durban, where much of the informal recycling trade is based on collecting waste from the streets or from local businesses, a substantial quantity of material collected would not otherwise have been recycled (or, in underserved parts of the City, even collected), ultimately contributing to Durban's litter problem and/or ending up in the ocean. Informal recycling is laborious and often hazardous but, for many formally unemployed residents of the City, provides a critical economic lifeline in the form of the selling of collected recycling to "middle-men" bulk-buyers, or to recycling centres.

As we worked on the carts, we kept both the importance of the work done by informal recyclers and the often-rough terrain traversed in the course of their work in mind. The constant strain taken by the wheels as heavy loads are carted over potholed roads and bumpy pavements was a major concern when it came to cart design, as wheel damage was of significant concern to NMT operators who discussed cart designs with us. The violent friction – the "grip of the [ongoing] encounter" that is hauling a cart of waste through Durban, as Tsing (2011) might put it – tore up normal plastic wheels, shredding their surfaces and jolting the bearings out. Eventually we ended up resorting to more expensive and harder to replace metal wheels with more secure bearings and rubber-coated surfaces which have (up until this point) served their part adequately. However, to get to this point, we iterated on wheel types several times, reinventing the wheel until satisfied with its performance. As Mususa (2021, p. 14) describes this sort of experimental process of problem-solving, we "tried" until something worked.

Figure 11 Damaged Wheel Removed from Cart After Bearing Fell Out.

What was perhaps the most enlightening moment for me while working on the carts was not the stress tests or looking at earlier wheel versions but was experiencing the intensity of the physical labour it took us to put together and prepare the carts. Something about the force with which we were forced to turn wrenches and widen the protective metal sleeves into which the wheels were set spoke very clearly to the roughness the carts were expected to endure – if these were the forces that went into making a cart, it was easy to imagine the forces that the carts would be subjected to in their lifespan as they bounced across decayed roads and cracked pavements, piled high with anything from plastic and paper to waste metal and building rubble.

As with the os'gadla, it proved hard to get information on income from recyclers. A number of the recyclers qualify for grants but, apart from this, the consensus was that they (especially women) typically earned rely on recycling to support themselves. Again, this varies quite drastically by circumstance, as those with "good connections" to middle-men (the purchasers of bulk recycling material) earned considerably more than those relying on whoever showed up to the facility. Likewise, recyclers who had connections to businesses or people working in buildings which generate a lot of waste, like hotels, have a greater degree of security in getting enough recycling to sell each week. The recyclers of Palmer St. were especially happy with the

scale at the facility, as it means that they do not have to rely on scales owned by middle-men, which are widely believed to measure lower weights.

The Right to the City for Informal Recyclers

This experience of working on the carts speaks to how AeT and the informal workers imagine, desire and work towards what Lefebvre calls "the urban", described by Purcell (2013, p. 149) as the active and participatory space made possible by the "web of cooperative social relations" in which city-dwellers and the city are enmeshed. As are all AeT interventions, the carts are imagined as contributing, in some way, to the statement on the header of AeT's website, "Rights to the city for informal workers".[30] In doing so, these interventions can be seen as moments where possible futures emerge in the City-present, thus shaping and "provoking" the City's actual trajectory towards the future(s) that are made of and for informality.

In this sense, the carts are not just experimental in the sense that they are yet another iteration in an attempt to work towards better designs but also in their attempt to help forge a greater right to the city for informal recyclers (and NMT and informality more generally). Through their presence on the streets (complete with large and "official-looking" labels granting them a degree of protection), they make the strangeness of NMT and informality[31] familiar. As well as this, the recyclers, now able to transport heavier loads over further distances and with greater ease, can avail themselves of more diverse affordances.[32] One participant referred to this as allowing the recyclers to "take up more space" in Durban – both in terms of an increased range and in terms of being able to assert themselves as practicing a valid form of urban life.

[30] It is worth noting that, while informal workers are not the only urban dwellers deserving of rights to the city – for example, joblessness/unemployment is a large and growing phenomenon in Durban with an "expanded definition" (unemployed people seeking and not seeking work) rate of 35,2% (Stats SA, 2023)- informal workers are the group(s) that AeT works with, and whom I did my research alongside.

[31] Strangeness, in this sense, refers to the perception held by some stakeholders – especially within formal business owners and Municipal Officials – that informality is out of place and does not belong in a modern Durban.

[32] These being the desires expressed by recyclers throughout the process.

Figure 12 Recycling Cart Label with AeT and Municipal Logos and Warning.

Meeting Ma Zondi

I first met Ma Zondi[33] a few weeks into my research, while visiting the Palmer Street Recycling Facility with an AeT team member who was checking how recyclers were dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 which, while it had led to a decrease in costs for the permit necessary to access the facility, had also driven many of the recyclers off the streets (and thus out of this line of work) for some time. One of the two recyclers at the facility when we arrived, and by far the most vocal in discussing her work, was Ma Zondi. It was clear from her measured and careful approach to sorting and packing her collected waste that recycling was a "real job" to her – perhaps not an ideal one, but one which she practiced with dignity and an earnest care. I had not been planning on doing my research alongside recyclers, but Ma Zondi provoked me into following the circumstances of the recyclers very closely through her outspoken insistence on the value of her work for the City.

The following week, while working with another AeT team member on a blogpost covering some of the challenges faced by informal recyclers, I met Ma Zondi at Palmer Street again. She

[33] A pseudonym to protect her identity.

sat surrounded by wispy clouds of plastic spilling from the storage cage behind her as she methodically bundled and tied the plastic she had collected. She did this throughout the time we spoke, almost absentmindedly knotting the plastic into neat bundles for the "middle-men", the formal recycling businesses who buy cheap recycling in bulk from the street recyclers and turn it in at recycling facilities for a profit.

This conversation was enlightening. Ma Zondi described in detail the challenges she faced and what helped her overcome them. For example, the "Friends of Recyclers" initiative uniform – a luminous yellow-green golf shirt, denim apron with pockets, sturdy boots, a hat and thick gloves – was a major improvement in her circumstances for several reasons, she told us. For one thing, a lot of the waste she picked was dirty, had sharp edges, or was otherwise hazardous; which the gloves and boots helped with. She spent a large part of each day walking the streets of Durban CBD, which she described as "broken". The boots provided protection from the decayed cement of the pavements and the sprays of broken glass which litter them. The hat protected her from the intense summer sun. She told us that the next version of the hat would need a string to hold it onto her head because "the buildings make the wind blow it off on some days". The apron held everything from useful string for tying bundles to her scissors and shears, and her gloves. She maintained that the brightness of the shirt kept her safe from being hit by a speeding vehicle, the all-too-regular fate of informal NMT operators in Durban. However, the most important thing about her uniform, she said, was that it made her recognisable and acceptable. Ma Zondi was clear that looking more "official" was affording her more consistent access to spaces which typically excluded her. These included barriers like fences, boundaries, property owners, police, private security, and even formal recycling businesses. Some exclusions were hard-line, such as predatory policing and goods confiscation. Others were apparently 'soft,' such as keeping recycling behind walls. All discouraged her line of work. In her words, "That's how they recognise me, through my uniform … even the security guards recognise me, and they let me recycle…."

This advantage of being recognised and accorded a degree of dignity and social-acceptability was essential to navigating the socially-rooted challenges of working as a recycler. Ma Zondi laid the barriers and frictions bare. She explained that police or private security harassment, even when just walking through areas, was on the rise for waste pickers. In the context of deputy mayor Philani Mavundla's spearheading of a "clean-up" of the CBD in March 2022, with the stated goal of reducing "illegal activities" like informal recycling in order to "reclaim the city" and encourage adherence to municipal by-laws, this was not particularly surprising

(Singh, 2022). What was surprising was that Ma Zondi was adamant that her "uniform" was making a difference, even near the beachfront, where property owners use private security to keep the streets 'tourist-friendly'. The implied formality and connection to organisations like AeT conferred a degree of "officiality" on her work, and consequently she was finding it easier to get recycling – even from big hotels near the beach.

Even with the uniform from AeT, informal recycling involves several obstacles that Ma Zondi must frequently overcome. Among other issues, the "middle-men" pay very little for most recycling – an ongoing scandal to many recyclers. As well as this, Ma Zondi is distinctly aware of the Municipality's disapproval of her work and insisted that she would like nothing more than for the City to recognise that her work was important – that without her and other recyclers "all this waste would go into the drains and into the sea" and that they should know that "I'm helping them, not making the City dirtier, because they don't even collect a lot of the waste that I am picking". Finally, a major challenge for her and her fellow recyclers at the facility was the cost of permits to use the facility, which (even after a period of cost-forgiveness during the height of the pandemic) served to exclude some women from the tenuous security of the facility with its storage cages, security guard, bathrooms and large scale to weigh recycling and ensure accurate, if not fair, payment from the "middle-men"[34].

Walking with Ma Zondi

As well as meeting Ma Zondi at the Palmer Street Facility, I also encountered her as she worked around Durban. One of these occasions offered me a chance to walk with her on a trip to collect recycling from a beachfront hotel, while another was a "pit stop" to check her cart's wheels after she pointedly mentioned their unreliability and clattering cacophony to us.

Walking the kilometre or so from the facility to the beachfront hotel in the midday summer heat with Ma Zondi was an experience that cemented in my mind the idea that walking was, in and of itself, an important research method. The walk was a gradual uphill, mostly along some of the notoriously busy main roads of Durban's CBD/beachfront area. While the distance might ordinarily, even in the humidity and bright sun, be an easy walk, the path we took was far from easy. There was the constant reek of exhaust fumes hanging heavily in the air from cars

[34] On this last point, middle-men are widely believed to modify their scales in their own favour so as to pay less for the recycling that they buy.

screaming past. The vehicles hooted in competition with the thunderous rumbling of the worn and damaged wheels on Ma Zondi's cart; a headache-inducing soundtrack. Frequently, due to assorted barriers in our path – pavements which abruptly narrowed due to cars parked on it, lampposts and fellow pedestrians, the coarseness of the decayed pavement and roads, and the frequent absence of ramps to return the cart to the pavement after crossing roads – we were forced onto the busy roads, weaving between cars or darting back into cover as a taxi sped past.

Figure 13 Ma Zondi Walks Up Monty Naicker Rd with Cart in Tow.

However, it was not just the frictions impeding the flow of informal recycling that I observed on the streets with Ma Zondi, but also the sort of "trying", of navigation, that is necessary to move around or through this sort of context. As we walked, Ma Zondi maintained a constant awareness of our surroundings, affording her the opportunities presented by a slim gap between two cars or ensuring that she didn't get stuck on a stretch of particularly rough and fragmented pavement. Much like the barrow operators, Ma Zondi carefully navigated the fabric of the area through which she moved.

A security guard for a building we passed laconically raised a hand in response to her greeting, and she turned to us to explain that, since she had started wearing the uniform, "sometimes

when he sees plastic or cardboard, he keeps it for me now." When we arrived at the back gates of the hotel that she'd heard had some recycling to get rid of, she SMSed her "contact" and, after a short wait, a security guard opened the gate and let us in, warmly welcoming "Ma" and helping get some of the recycling out. Like her relationship with AeT, Ma Zondi maintained and cultivated her relationship with this security guard in the knowledge that it opened up access to the hotel to her when he was on duty.

In this sense, relationship cultivation is something of a practice of conviviality as a way of responding to the frictions arising out of what Nyamnjoh (2016, p. 196) calls "incompleteness as the normal order of things". By working to foster mutual relationships with other urban-dwellers and stakeholders, Ma Zondi smoothes some of the rough edges – legal, physical and social – that Durban leaves in her path and is thus better able to navigate the urban incompleteness of a city consistently experiencing change and insecurity. These relationships with others "using" Durban's by-ways constitute a mutual enhancement – of security, of motion through the city's byways and of social networks – of incomplete beings, made more capable through their relations to others (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 201). This is, Nyamnjoh (2016, p. 202) notes, especially critical for those on the "frontiers" like Ma Zondi, who necessarily prove false rigid and exclusionary accounts of City-belonging through their inhabiting of "borderlands" and "operation across borders".

Another one of the relationships Ma Zondi cultivated in her work that is particularly exemplary of this convivial smoothing of social roughness was unexpectedly revealed when we went out to do a pit stop on the wheels on her cart. While replacing them with an experimental (hopefully improved) set, we were interrupted by a severe, elderly owner of a corner store, who demanded to know what we were doing to "Ma's cart". With her help, we defused the situation and explained that we were doing a repair. After commanding his nephew to keep running the store, he explained that he regularly used Ma's services to get rid of waste and then helped her load the mountain of plastic she was transporting back onto the cart. In a space so prone to aggressive policing of informal activities, maintaining relationships with her customers provided not only a steadier stream of recycling but also a protective web of social relations.

Figure 14 AeT Performs a Pit Stop on Ma Zondi's Cart.

Improvisory and Convivial Navigation of Roughness

Spending time with Ma Zondi highlighted some aspects of mobile informality which had begun to materialise out of my interest in the os'gadla. The re-emergence of "roughness" as a descriptor of mobile informal work appropriate to anything from road conditions to recyclers' relationships with Municipal officials brought me back to considering the frictive experience of mobile informality as something closely-connected to Municipal imaginaries of what Durban ought to be and the resultant logics involved in governing such work. Part of this comes through in what Durban's infrastructural decay does in making informal mobility tougher to practice, but Ma Zondi's explicitly-stated belief that the Municipality does not value the work that informal recyclers do speaks directly to an imaginary of informal work as something which is capable only of harming Durban, and not a viable urban practice.

Walking with Ma Zondi, as well as working on her cart, also made it clear that improvisation was key to navigating the roughness of informal mobility. While some of the challenges facing mobile informality can be abstracted or generalised into broad terms like "governance", "predatory policing" or "road safety", the experiences of these challenges are highly localised

and specific to the moment and context in which the mobile worker encounters them. What this means is that, while these experiences of roughness are totalising issues of/for Durban in one sense, they are experienced in particular and localised ways and "moments" which require both constant situational awareness and contextual responses to, as Mususa (2021, p. 61) has it, respond to what the environment affords.

As well as this, I came to better understand the role that convivial social relations play as a necessary aspect of this kind of navigation. Ma Zondi expertly navigated social frictions and used her relationships with others to great effect in making informal recycling viable as a way of life. Through signalling her "right" to certain spaces with her uniform and cart, she is able to build and maintain relationships with actors like security guards who ease her passage and occasionally supply her with recycling. In this way, she not only "makes" the right to the Durban's streets in the prefigurative Lefebvrian sense but finds ways to limit her exposure to some of the rough edges which arise in the course of her work

Chapter 5: Policy and Permits, or How the Municipality Problematises Informality

The Municipal Understanding of the Relation Between Governance and Informality

The regime of permits and by-laws, of which participants had little good to say, seemed obviously unsuited to effectively managing the space, as well as inimical to the Municipality's stated goal regarding its Integrated Development Plan that "By 2030, eThekwini will be Africa's most caring and liveable City" (eThekwini Municipality, 2020). The shared vision of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) – of creating a "caring and liveable city" – is ostensibly at the heart of Municipal governance of informality, but the reality experienced by many of the informal workers and organisations working in the space is often one of predatory, corrupt or otherwise anti-poor policing of regulations which seem a far cry from making the city liveable for informal traders. How, I wondered, did the officials governing the spaces and issues at hand understand the context that they worked in?

Questions about the governance of informality in the City are, at their core, questions of problematisation. Why is informality seen and treated as a problem; how do officials understand the problems of informality; and what are the problems that can then arise from this?

Resolved to better understand the Municipal understanding of the relation between governance and informality, I began reaching out to officials listed on municipal websites and reading through all the by-laws and permit documentation that I could find. After weeks of failed attempts to arrange interviews, I was on the verge of giving up on this line of questioning when a senior member of AeT offered to use his "connections" to find someone to speak with me. I accepted his offer with scepticism, but the next morning I received a flurry of WhatsApp messages from Ms. Ntuli, a BSU Area Manager willing to speak to me. A day or two later, a city and regional planner connected to eThekwini's Development Planning, Environment and Management Unit (DPEM), Dr Faya, agreed to speak to me.

What's in a Mandate? The Roles of the BSU and DPEM in Planning

Terms such as 'Municipality' and 'governance' might suggest coherence and singularity. Yet the governance of informal public space trade in Warwick (across Durban) consists of actors like the BSU and DPEM ,which have differing mandates, attempting to manage informality through enforcing very formalised regulations (in the form of by-laws).

The BSU is responsible for the management and support of informal trade and markets in the City (as well as a wider remit, including the support of formal businesses). The "Key Function Areas" that the BSU works in around the informal economy are listed as: providing management of informal public space trade in accordance with Council policy and National/Provincial legislation; identifying further management and development opportunities for Council (as well as implementing and monitoring them); community consultation on the behalf of Council; and initiating and providing policy documents relating to street trading issues in Council (Business Support Tourism & Markets Unit/eThekwini Municipality, 2022). This means that, at least within the bounds of existing by-laws, the BSU has a wide authority over how informal trade exists in the city. Not only is it the Unit tasked with actually managing informal trade, but it is also a major contributor to the policies regarding informal trade and responsible for representing the needs and voices of the traders to the Municipality.

The Development Planning, Environment and Management Unit is responsible for "assessing, implementing and monitoring of all development of land", including a role in the creation of relevant by-laws (eThekwini Municipality, 2020). The Unit is divided into separate departments for "Development Planning" (which focuses specifically on land use issues), "Development Management" (which deals with enforcement of regulations, the application process and safety inspectorate issues), and "Environmental Planning and Climate Protection" (eThekwini Municipality, 2020). This means that, in an atomised way, DPEM not only decides on land use schemes, but also monitors and enforces regulations regarding the use of those spaces (which necessarily impacts both the availability and condition of spaces for trading). According to Section 76 of the Municipality Planning and Land Use Second Amendment By-Law, 2021[35], the purpose of this DPEM's schemes and regulations is to manage land use and

[35] "The planning by-law", as most participants referred to it.

development in line with the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP).[36] Ultimately, DPEM has similarly sweeping powers to the BSU when it comes to the spatial aspects of informality and how they are managed.

By-Laws and Permits

At the time that I began reading the policy documentation, my own understanding of the permits and by-laws at this point was limited to what I had seen in my time alongside AeT and informal workers, or what they had told me. Essentially, this boiled down to an emphatic insistence that neither aspect of this mode of governance is suited to purpose. This confirmed my own intuition that the formal specificity of these modes of governance is almost inimical to the fluid problem-solving and wayfinding approach to world making adopted by informal workers themselves.

The by-laws, rooted in the logics of apartheid spatial planning, are typically experienced as exclusionary and anti-poor, and as being policed in a predatory fashion. As I discuss below, most important of these by-laws is the so-called "informality by-law". Among other things, it is the by-law which contains the legal grounds for the permit system. The permits are, according to virtually every participant not employed by the BSU who I spoke to, something of a surrealist nightmare involving a Kafkaesque bureaucratic application process of forms, queues and bizarre legal formulations through a short-staffed BSU, unlikely to result in a legitimate permit, rife with corruption. As well as this, permits are considered to offer little in the way of protection from the police.

[36] The IDP is centred on the "Vision" that "By 2030, eThekwini will be Africa's most caring and liveable City" (eThekwini Municipality, 2020).

Figure 15 Beadwork Traders Queue During a BSU Permit Inspection.

eThekwini Municipality's Informal Trading By-Law, 2014

Informal public space trading is regulated by a network of by-laws governing aspects relevant to the trade in question. eThekwini's Informal Trading By-Law (2014) is the primary document that describes the rights and responsibilities of informal traders in the city. The objectives of this by-law are to regulate informal trade in such a way as to ensure that: trading conduct is orderly; job and entrepreneurial access is offered to trader; the relationship with the formal sector is "harmonised" and the public's health and safety is protected. Tellingly, the document opens with the claim that while informal trade has historically improved the lot of the urban poor, it is important to promote development of informal trade towards greater formality in socioeconomic, health, planning, licensing, and management contexts, implying a view that informality is not desired in a modern Durban.

In service of the above aims, Council may adopt an "informal trading policy", a strategic plan for dealing with informal trade. It is through this that informal trade on municipal and private property is managed, by: deciding on and formalising the geographic bounds of an area where

informal trade happens, demarcating specific trading sites and markets, limiting trading hours, and specifying how socio-economic development of the space and traders should happen. The BSU is apparently charged with creating, updating and operating this policy (Business Support Tourism & Markets Unit/eThekwini Municipality, 2022). However, from the start, there is complexity around what informality is and does. In a case of circular definitions, the City's Informal trading by-law, describes an informal trader as "a person who carries on the business of informal trading", while the business of "informal trading" is defined as "trading in goods and services in the informal sector by an informal trader in a public road or public place" (eThekwini Municipality, 2014, p. 7).

The Permits

Informal trade on municipal property without a permit is prohibited and, as such, permits are essential to the Municipality's imaginary of informal trade (eThekwini Municipality, 2014). In Durban, one applies with a Permit Form (section 12) at the BSU offices. The permits themselves contain details on the marked and numbered trading area that the permit holder may use, conditions of use (including minimum and maximum trading hours), the goods and services that the holder may trade, legal requirements for any trading structures utilised, details of any assistants of the holder, and the permit's expiry date.

Individuals qualify to apply for permits if they wish to work as an informal trader and do not already hold such a permit, are a South African citizen or hold a valid work/refugee permit, employ under 10 persons, are not entrepreneurially invested in more than one other informal business, and are unemployed. These requirements ensure that not only is the Municipality not encouraging widespread informal work within the city, but also that it imagines such work only as a response to crisis – a last resort for the desperate unemployed – and not as a normally desirable type of job. There may be some truth to this – certainly the circumstances of many informal workers in the city are dire – but it reflects a misunderstanding of the motivations and understandings held by my participants, like Ma Zondi, who insisted that their work was as important – and ought to be as dignified – as any formal labour.

The application process for the permits – ostensibly with the protected rights to receipts for their applications, full explanations for denial, to appeal, to a fair and transparent process – is widely considered to be excessively complicated, extremely understaffed and very open to

corruption. However, even when running in an optimal fashion, the requirements that traders submit proof of residence, an application letter, an affidavit confirming status as unemployed and a letter from an area Councillor alongside the Permit Form (as well as compliance certificates from the health department when selling food) create a high bar for a population often living in informal circumstances extending well beyond their employment.

The difficulty experienced by those applying for permits often leads to the illegal borrowing, trading, and selling of these supposedly non-transferable documents, as well as rumoured back-door deals with BSU and Metro officials said to grant permits to the high bidders. Many traders, as well as other informal workers who fail to qualify for whatever reason (like the os'gadla), resign themselves to avoiding the police and officials when trading and to occasionally losing their goods to being impounded and/or destroyed. In fact, after 2 p.m. (when the police typically leave the area for the day), there is a noticeable upswell in Warwick's informal trade as the "illegal" informal traders appear amidst their slightly more formal brethren.

Understandings of the Problem(s) of Informality

Drawing on the methodological innovation of David Coplan in *A Terrible Commitment: Balancing the Tribes in South African National Culture* (1993), I bring the two interviews into conversation with each other and myself by bringing parallel excerpts of the participants' voices together to speak to two ways in which the Municipality understands the "problem" of informality. This approach of creating a kind of conceptual and narrative flow through combining individual interviews in the form of a transcript back-and-forth allows some of the nature of the discussion happening at abstract, policy-oriented levels to become more apparent. A "roughness", or friction, emerges between how Ms. Ntuli (who represents the "primary" Municipal imaginaries of informality) and Dr Faya (representing a critique of the current policy's regime, rooted in a more liberal, market-oriented account) speak about the problems of informality, offering a generative "grip of the encounter" (Tsing, 2011) in thinking through how the Municipality generates and responds to problems, and the impact that this has on informal trade and traders.

This conversation reflects a bifurcated approach within the municipality, a useful thing to interrogate for two reasons. In the first instance, the two sets of views do broadly constitute an existing, oppositional binary within municipal departments; albeit not in quite as defined a

division between planning and the BSU as exists between Ms. Ntuli and Dr Faya. In the second instance, these views align with how other participants – particularly mobile informal workers, but also AeT members – described their own understanding of how the BSU understands things, and of how "allied" officials tend to frame things. This is all to say that the following conversation serves as a useful exemplar of the kinds of imaginaries held by municipal officials working with informality, but is not (and cannot be) a definite and encompassing description of how all officials in any one department problematise informality. Furthermore, neither view is presented here as the ideal way of problematising informal work in Durban, although Dr Faya's account is certainly markedly less hostile to the practice of informal work on the face of things.

As the participants' identities are protected, it isn't possible to fully introduce them and their relevant backgrounds. However, as an Area Manager for the BSU with experience in the Municipality's various interventions aimed at informal trade, Ms. Ntuli is well-placed to comment on how the BSU often imagines the problems associated with informality and how they are responded to. Likewise, Dr Faya, as a town and regional planner for the Municipality, is ideally qualified to interrogate and critique the Municipality's treatment of informality at the policy level. Both individuals clearly see the work they do as important, and both seem to be attempting to balance the best interests of "the City" and "informal traders" with good intentions. However, their radically differing accounts and views speak to the friction that exists within and between their projects and within the state itself.

The Conversation

MR: Ms. Ntuli, to start with could you maybe just tell me a bit about how and the BSU think about informality?

Ms. Ntuli: Well, to me, it is clear that this sector plays a big role. We might take it for granted, but it does play a big role. Especially with our problems as a city and our social ills.

I will say that the informal trade within the City, within the South African economy, were the first sector to come back during the lockdowns. The informal trader has a big role in feeding people when they can't go to the shops.

Even during the unrest, there was a big role that they played. I remember, I ended up buying from informal traders because there were no groceries, no more bread around when there was looting, and the shops closed.

But… The traders have a survivalist mentality. They don't want to be proactive, they want to react at all times. That's what I've noticed. South African informal traders spend time worrying about… I'm not saying that the challenges they face, their pity or whatever, aren't there but… They're busy complaining about petty things and not working

MR: And what are some of the problems of informality that this policy of management through the by-laws and permits addresses?

Ms. Ntuli: That's a challenge we have when we manage the informal trade. If one informal trader starts to trade a thing, and its going, the other informal traders will want to trade the same thing. So, it's going to be a competition when they're all selling the same thing at the same time. And that ends up killing their business sometimes.

The informal trader doesn't want to go from where they are. They think that if you pull them out from where they are, you are taking out their business. They don't see that you are trying to grow them into big businesses or an SMME. So that's the main challenge.

We have to change their minds in terms of how to run the business. It all comes back to their mindset. They all want to come together, converge into one place only to find that one place becomes saturated … They don't have an SMME mindset.

MR: Dr Faya, as someone who has been critical of the typical "planning approach" to urban informality – of either avoiding dealing with it at all or of attempting rigid and formal responses to issues like informal public space trading – I'm interested in how you'd respond to the idea that it is crucial for the city to police informality like this for its own good, that the "problems of informality" are largely rooted in the behaviour of the traders and are not external issues?

Dr Faya: Hmm… I actually think a big problem is control. The ways people live in the city are a *blurring*.[37] The formal is informal and the informal is formal. But also, in planning, it's a little bit difficult to address that. Because there's such a rigid box of things … A lot of the formal tools don't really work with informality.

Government responses are always about being formal. So, in response to the informal, Government borrows from the formal – that's your permitting and your by-laws.

But my starting point is that all our by-laws around managing informality do not work. Because it's based on a notion that there's a "capacity". Now, *who*[38] determines this capacity? It's us. It's a fake determination. It's the same as we do in planning. We take a decision these land uses belong together, and these other uses don't. Informality is just another way of providing a service. Is it safe and effective? Then we should just be managing the impacts.

MR: So why the permit system then, Ms. Ntuli? To be honest, a lot of the traders don't seem to think it works in their favour at all – that the city doesn't have their interests at heart, rather than being on its way to being "Africa's most caring city", especially when the police are so aggressive about enforcing regulations.

Ms. Ntuli: I would say it comes down to dealing with the informal traders, the people… The informal trader doesn't want to follow the law. They don't want to follow the rules and the regulations. They don't work with rules and regulations. They just want to do as they feel. And then they encroach in spaces. We say, "here's where you're going to trade, here's what you apply for if you're going to sell vegetables". The next day, they're selling alcohol! Without following the rules. Without following the regulations. Without following the by-laws. So, when the metro police come in, they fine them for encroaching … and… the traders say the police are abusing them. I'm not saying it isn't happening, but…

[37] My italics to show the participant's very pointed emphasis of this word, which they used throughout our interview.
[38] My italics to show the participant's emphasis.

Dr Faya: But this notion that we can only have so many permits, how was that determined? There's still an apartheid governance and when you draw these rigid lines, you just start tripping over yourself.

Why can't you take a lane off the street and let people trade and not give permits? I don't think we should be giving out permits because then you're getting stuck into "what is the capacity?".

If I want to come on Tuesday and sell old clothes, and maybe on a Friday sell fruits, and other days I'm doing other types of work, I should be able to do that. I should be able to get a ticket, come in at 5 in the morning and pick up a table, pick up an umbrella, leave you with R100 and come back return it and get R50 back.

If you ask the BSU people, they'll say "no, we deal only with those that have a permit." The rest is regarded as illegal. When you say there's a problem with traders, they'll say "no, there's no problem with traders, there's a problem with illegal traders who we don't deal with. That's a metro police problem because it's illegal, it's a by-law issue. We deal with the formal informal traders."

And how many times have they issued new permits? I don't know. They don't issue those permits, so they become like hot property. So, people trade them between themselves and lend it out for a bit. You have a fixed response when you don't need a fixed response and you have an option for a more tailored demand response.

Flexible Informality: Moving Outside the Rigidity of the State

In talking with Ms. Ntuli and Dr Faya, several things emerged – both out of the often-competing claims made by each interviewee and by the friction generated between them. Ms. Ntuli's perspective suggests that informality is, for the most part, problematic. She recognises that it offers a way of surviving through periods of crisis, something that Durban is familiar with,[39]

[39] In addition to the various ongoing and interconnected "normal" challenges faced by South African cities, like infrastructure, corrupt governance, finances, and loadshedding, my time in and around Warwick was impacted by three further crises – COVID-19, the 2021 "July Unrest" and the 2022 "April Floods".

but in her view, it is fundamentally incapable of "horizontal management"[40], as the traders are unable to regulate themselves and their spaces effectively – choosing to complain and oversaturate opportunities rather than efficiently develop their businesses in line with the more desirable formality of SMME entrepreneurship in a capitalist economy.

As a result, strict by-laws and permits are a necessary intervention in order to protect the existing traders from their own excesses, as well as to protect the city from chaotic informality. Any "business support" from the Business Support Unit should be focused on bringing informal traders into formality, creating the preferred modern citizen of the City. The need for rigorous enforcement of the by-laws is due to informal traders not being willing to follow the law – that without a measure of punitive consequence provided by police confiscation or impounding of permits, goods and equipment or the threat of a fine, traders would simply not follow the rules.

In contrast to this, Dr Faya sees informality as just another form of service provision, where the prevailing concerns for traders and users are ones of utility – convenience, safety, efficacy – and not necessarily of survivalist desperation or lack of ambition. She agrees that a major problem with informality in Durban concerns control but argues that the problem is not in the struggle to control the informal traders, but in that the Municipality is attempting such control at all. However, her account verges on a laissez-faire, individualistic liberalism which is not much truer to the desires of mobile informal workers – who maintain what James Ferguson (2013) calls "declarations of dependence" on and with state/municipal actors and other entities (not least AeT) – than Ms. Ntuli's belief in the need for strict policing.

For Dr Faya, not only is the binary of formal/informal insufficient for the "blurring" and complexity of Durban's city-dweller's ways, so too is the rigid formality that government – including planning and the BSU – limits itself to in responding to informality. More often than not, as in the case of permits, these rigid responses do not work (or, when they do work, the work they do is ultimately harmful to those it is apparently intended to help). When the Municipality's interventions don't work, people will seek to circumvent them unless the risks are too great.

In fact, the place to start in thinking about managing informality is the informal workers, who are experts in their spaces and could speak to their own needs, rather than the officials drafting

[40] As opposed to the layered, hierarchical bureaucracy of management favoured by Municipal departments and units.

arbitrary limitations on, for example, the capacity for trading a certain type of good in an area. As well as this, the way the permits exclude some forms of informality allows the BSU to ignore vast swathes of the population of informal traders as "illegal" without any consideration of whether the services they are providing are useful and safe, and how best to manage their impacts on the areas in which they work.

By focusing on differentiating between legal and illegal informal trade like this, the actual problems that informal traders experience (and sometimes create) – infrastructural decay, inadequate financial support and opportunities, pollution and waste-disposal, hygiene, and so on – are often left unaddressed in dogmatic attempts to focus on informal traders who might be moved into more formal circumstances. This blinds officials to the myriad other urban forms which are possible for Durban and entrenches highly problematic forms of the City – many rooted in apartheid and colonial logics of racism, classism and the 'superiority' of western rationalism – into the fabric of Durban.

As figures like Lefebvre or Purcell (2013) might suggest, what is evident here is a set of imaginaries around what makes for a modern and "good" life in Durban, with the Municipality firmly on the side of the sterility and profit maximising of "the city"; and informal trade generally reflecting the kinds of nurturing use-value maximising for city-dwellers of "the urban".

These conversations make clear that the Municipality is attempting to force a specific and formalised Modernist kind of "caring and liveable city" into circumstances which might better serve other kinds of "caringness" and "liveability" in Durban. Such otherwises are exemplified by the relational conviviality and webs of social connections already being practiced by informal workers like the recyclers and os'gadla in Warwick, outside of the rigidity of the state.

Perhaps most importantly, it is obvious that the Municipal "problems of informality" are rooted in the following set of assumptions: that formality is preferable to informality in the modern city, that informality is a survivalist response to crisis, that informal workers are largely incapable of governing themselves effectively, and that regulating informal trade heavily in order to limit numbers is an important role of the Municipality regarding informality (both to protect the livelihoods of existing informal traders and in order to limit the further decline of Durban into informality).

These assumptions have infiltrated the Integrated Development Plan and informal trading policy adopted by the Municipality, and so have very real and marked impacts on lives and

life-making in Durban. In fact, these assumptions are the foundational logic behind the imagining of the by-laws as effective and appropriate governance, the permits as effective tools for managing and protecting Durban's capacity for informal work, and the harsh enforcement of the by-laws and permits to be a necessary feature of the Municipality.

Friction as Governance

In interviewing Dr Faya and Ms. Ntuli, it became clear to me that the ways that eThekwini Municipality thinks about urban spaces and the practices we ought to encourage in them are deeply rooted in high Modernist ideals of metropolitan profitability. For Durban to be a "caring and liveable City" is, in this account, for it to exhibit the economic "mindset" and formalised orderliness championed by Ms. Ntuli. This, as both she and Dr Faya note, obviously exists in friction with the practices of informal workers in several ways. For one thing, traders apparently lack the "SMME mindset", relating to their work in ways which are not entirely focused on maximum profitability. As well as this, Ms. Ntuli acknowledges that many informal workers resent the heavy-handed enforcement of the by-laws which Dr Faya claims are based on arbitrary and inexpert attempts at restricting informal trade and "do not work".

Perhaps the most important insights from these interviews are that, as Ms. Ntuli says, the Municipality imagines a large part of its role regarding informality is in the limitation of informality for the good of Durban and that the ways that the Municipality does this is through introducing friction into the processes of informality as a way of curbing the "flow" of informal work in public spaces. Dr Faya speaks to this in her account of permits and by-laws as existing to limit informal work to the imagined capacity that Durban has for it.

This confirms that, while much of the roughness that the os'gadla and informal recyclers traverse may be co-incidental to (or at least not directly rooted in) the ways that informality is governed – whether caused by infrastructure decay, the hazards of speeding vehicles or flooding – at least some of the primary sources of mobility-decelerating friction encountered by mobile informal workers are intentionally placed in their path by eThekwini Municipality. That officials see things this way is a testament to the extent that their hopes for Durban are that it become a sterile industrial city of the Lefebvrian mode. From the perspective of mobile informal workers, this is a bleak possible future and exists in contrast to the urban conviviality of a Durban which values informality as an "indigenous urban form and practice", as I discuss in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Informality as an Indigenous Urban Form and Practice

Roughness: A Crisis in the City

Throughout the months that I was in Durban for my research, it was impossible to ignore a sense of crisis within the City. Part of that is rooted in the spectacular set of crises – alluded to in the previous chapters (COVID, the "July Unrest" and the April Floods[41]. However, the pervading feeling of crisis also comes from a more generally apparent collapse, what Vigh (2008, p. 9) calls the "slow processes of deterioration, erosion and negative change – of multiple traumas and friction", creating a social and physical fabric of "the devastation in the everydayness of life" (Mbembe, 1995). In Durban, these processes are often at the root of the specific kinds of roughness and friction that informal workers like the os'gadla and the recyclers ultimately attempt to navigate every day.

The City centre is increasingly abandoned by what affluence the city has and the infrastructure is consequently coming apart. There are accusations of corruption and mismanagement at every level of state governance stretching back a number of years, and the city is widely accepted to be experiencing financial difficulties (Goba, 2022). For the informal workers of Warwick, the confiscation of goods or the impact of the workspace's health hazards on their livelihoods represent some of the most immediately obvious human impacts of these crises, as their life-making projects, already products of disruption, are further disrupted.

This suggests, in line with Vigh's (2008) account, that crises can be experienced as ongoing rather than (as they are frequently characterised) as moments. Moments of crisis, such as the "July Unrest" or the impounding of a trader's goods are just, as William, an AeT participant put it, the points at which existing (chronic) crises "go seismic". The Municipality acknowledges the existence of these crises but, from the point of view of workers and civil society, is unable adequately to address them, in part because of how it problematises "informality". In contrast to this, AeT's approach mirrors that of the form of "trying" exemplified by informal workers like the os'gadla or the recyclers[42], treating the disruption of crises as an opportunity to generate or "provoke" systemic change.

[41] See discussion of impacts that crises had on my fieldwork in Methods.
[42] Discussed at length by Mususa (2021) in regard to the Zambian Copperbelt.

In this chapter, I discuss how "crises" might be best understood in the context of informal work in Warwick and what this understanding offers those who adopt it. By considering some of the "otherwise" possibilities for informality in Durban, I challenge the framing of informality as a purely desperate, survivalist response to crisis. Doing so allows consideration of the opportunities for desirable urban forms that emerge as a consequence of informality.

Understanding Crises

As Vigh (2008, p. 5) claims, the norm in imagining crisis is to frame it as a section of time during which lives are "shattered" – that while it consists of a "loss of balance and the inability to control the exterior forces influencing our possibilities and choices" – this state of affairs is a temporary warping of the way things typically are. In the context of informality in Warwick, this is certainly how actors like Ms. Ntuli of/and the BSU explain(s) things. There "was" a crisis of the "July Unrest", there "was" a crisis of the April Floods, there "was" a crisis co-constituted of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns responding to it and, while there "*is*" a crisis of "social ills", that is anticipated ultimately to resolve itself.

Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the case of the Municipality's response to the floods. In early November, around half a year after the floods, Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda distributed around 150 vouchers of R2000-R3000 for traders to purchase new stock, bringing the total supported informal businesses in the "first phase of eThekwini's Flood Relief Programme" to about 2000 (Berea Mail, 2022). While these vouchers may well be a lifeline for traders impacted by the floods, they are woefully late, assist only a fraction of the impacted traders, and address only the "seismic" crisis – the actual flood damage to stock – rather than the infrastructural and governance issues that led to Durban's susceptibility to such severe flooding and the logics that place informal public trade in spaces prone to such hazards.

This idea that crisis is momentary and passing does two things. First, it ignores the reality of crisis as experienced by the "structurally violated, socially marginalised and poor" (like many of the informal workers of the Warwick Junction) – as an endemic condition of possible futures involving further disruptions to their lives (Vigh, 2008, p. 5). Second, it allows the Municipality to frame what informality offers to urban life-making projects as itself temporary – informality is useful *as* a response to momentary crises but is not suited to the normal (imagined crisis-free) world, and thus does not require consistent attempts to protect and develop it in policy.

However, the navigatory behaviours of informal workers show how, and the extent to which, crises are experienced as ongoing disruptions while Dr Faya provides a powerful response to the idea that informal trade ought not be a policy focus for the Municipality. In line with Vigh's call to "see crisis *as* context", and thus as "chronic"[43], I draw on some insights from AeT team members about how crisis can be theorised more productively and what this would offer to informal futures.

William, one of the more senior team members, explained that his understanding of crisis comes down to "disruption", a description echoing Vigh's (2008, p. 6) own use of the word alongside phrases like "chronic disorder". Drawing on the idea that crises are situations of upset, uncertainty and challenge, he framed informality – both the work and the workers – as existing in a constant state of crisis. This allows two particularly interesting arguments to be made. First, these spectacular and "temporary"[44] crises – of floods, looting and pandemic – are, in William's account, largely features of pre-existing crises – infrastructural decay, climate change, Municipal priorities for policy and funding, widespread economic and political disenfranchisement, an ill-equipped public health system – at scale. As William put it, these were all crises already making up the fabric of life for the urban poor and informal workers before they went "seismic" and their scale became overwhelming and/or newsworthy beyond the bounds of the City centre and informal workers. In the language that Vigh (2008) uses, the "moments of rupture" of these crisis-events do not "separate two 'states of normality'[45] from each other", but are rather exemplary moments (albeit particularly so due to their scale) of already-extant "chronic conditions".

William's use of the word "seismic" was particularly interesting here, both for the appropriateness of the metaphor – as with earthquakes, the striking destruction of the "shockwaves" is allowed for through existing stresses in fabric or context of the situation and resonate out through the field, or what Mususa (2021) might term the "volume", in different ways. What Mususa's (2021, p. 191) use of "volume" offers to the conversation is a sensitivity to the ways that the actions one takes in a field have impacts beyond that which we immediately intend – much like the ripples and currents which shape the flow of a liquid volume. Drawing

[43] Vigh's (2008, p. 8) italics.
[44] Which is to say, temporary in terms of the "event's" duration, rather than temporary in terms of cause or effect.
[45] Redfield, Peter. 2005. Doctors, Borders and Life in Crisis. Cultural Anthropology, 20(3): 328 –361.

on this, one can see how crises, as they become "seismic", have consequences beyond the immediate and at scales which transcend the very local.

The second dimension of William's claim is that informality is best thought of not as a crisis of its own or as suited only to a survivalist response to seismic crises but as a response to, a method of navigating, the everyday "disrupted existence" of the root crises in the City's fabric. In this account, informality can be thought of in much the same way as Mususa's (2021, pp. 71, 73) "trying" – a method of experimenting with, or wayfinding through, life in the manner that the context or crisis "at hand" demands.

In this light, the os'gadla are not best thought of as "informal workers" because they have no written contracts with a boss or because they lack permits (after all, the majority of permit-holding workers in the markets are, to the Municipality, informal nonetheless), but because their work – and the way that they do this work – exists in response to the disrupted existence or roughness of (life-making in) Durban. Likewise, the informal recyclers. Regardless of whether, like Ma Zondi, they have permits and utilise the Palmer Street Recycling Facility, the recyclers' lives and work are characterised by the need to navigate constant upheaval and uncertainty, whether that be weather conditions, decaying infrastructure or the social dynamics of how informality is policed in Durban neighbourhoods.

"Provocation", or Pushing Against Municipal "Margins of Refusal"

The above argument about crisis as fundamentally a state of ongoing disruption (and the claim that informality is itself a response to the disrupted existence of endemic crisis) is something that has had a profound impact on how AeT works with informality in Warwick. Through its close, "granular" interaction with people living and working in Warwick, AeT "tunes into" crises and can respond, no matter how seismic.

This is critical because, in William's account, AeT's "M.O." is to treat crisis as an opportunity for systemic interventions in the space, often through acts of what he describes as "provocation", a very different approach to the problematisation of informality to that sketched out by Ms. Ntuli.

William first used the idea of 'provocation' in speaking about the informal workers themselves, describing them as provocations to the Municipality in their embodied rejection of what

speculative fiction author and city planner Arkady Martine (2019) calls “high Modernism”. This concept is perhaps best exemplified by the “designed place” of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City, “where planners work their will on the built environment and the souls of their compatriots at once” (Martine, 2019). As well as this, William described informal workers as processing the provocations (or “crises”) that this kind of City, in the Lefebvrian sense, implies for them.

Much like for interlocuters like William and Dr Faya, this kind of modernist city – and the implied “authoritarian tool[s] of social design” like permits – doesn’t work for Martine (2019). Le Corbusier’s Radiant Cities (for example, Brasilia and Chandigarh) were transformed, but by the “‘on the ground uses’ the city finds for itself” rather than by architectural influence on city-dwellers’ behaviour (Martine, 2019). In a parallel with Lefebvre’s call for a transformation from the City to the Urban, Martine (2019) concludes that “the street finds its own use for things….”

What this says in the context of informality in Warwick is that, as William has it, the aforementioned “tools of social design” like permits and policy being deployed – in service to the modernist ideal held by the Municipality in their imagined “caring and liveable city” – are provocations to informal workers who, in processing them as roughness interrupting the navigation of their life-making projects, provoke the Municipality in turn. In this sense, Ms. Ntuli’s frustration with informal workers becomes somewhat clearer. As a face of “the City”, she is provoked by the implicit rejection of her ideology in the behaviour of the traders when they attempt to make urban spaces and rights for themselves, outside of (or at least not dependant on) the Municipality’s policy.

This maps onto AeT’s own role in making “the Urban”, as they imagine it. In drawing on and supporting the provocations to the City made by informal workers, AeT attempts to provoke the City as well, navigating and pushing up against what William aptly described as the Municipality’s “margins of refusal” (that which is immediately unacceptable to the Council) through interventions aimed at claiming space – whether physical land area, policy, funding or conceptual – for informality in Durban. In this sense, AeT recognises the generative possibilities of the friction between the Municipality’s imaginaries (bounded by its margins of refusal) and the embodied urbanism of the actions of informal workers throughout Durban.

This is where AeT’s appropriation of Lefebvre’s prefigurative politics of “Rights to the city”, and their appending of “for informal workers” to it, comes in. Viewed through this lens, there

is a coherence to the myriad interventions and projects AeT was involved in during my fieldwork. The health and hazard education programmes, the informal economy policy review, creating mini-creches in the markets, iterating on barrow designs and providing them to the os'gadla and recyclers, reviewing the waste chains of the markets, engaging with the municipality to effect infrastructure repairs, and the legal information and support provided through the Vikelani Amalungelo[46] programme all work towards the reclamation of urban spaces and possibilities that Lefebvre believes is critical. They do this through iteratively "making" these rights and push against Municipal margins of refusal in leaving it to the officials to refuse their provocations, just as informal workers do.

Informal Warwick Futures

In understanding informality this way, not only are the existing Municipal logics of governing informality challenged but an opportunity to reimagine the role that informality could play in Durban's future as a "caring and liveable city" emerges too. Drawing on the expertise of my participants – the os'gadla, recyclers and other informal workers, AeT team members, Dr Faya and Ms. Ntuli – and on published work – policy, academic and boundary-transgressing documents like SALGA's Public Space Trading Guidelines – I take advantage of this affordance in speculating on the possible informal future(s) of Warwick in a truly "caring and liveable city" which, in William's words, safeguards "sustainable indigenous urban forms and practices."

This is rooted not only in the earlier-introduced speculative origins of this research and Nandita Badami's (2018) formulation of policy as an inherently speculative and future-optimistic genre, but also in some of the work I was involved in as an "informal intern" for AeT. During my fieldwork period, eThekwini Municipality put out a tender for, and then began (finishing in November (Berea Mail, 2022)), the process of a review of the Informal Economy Policy[47]. Much to the surprise and elation of everyone at AeT, reforming the policy to be compliant with

[46] The Vikelani Amalungelo ("Protect our Rights") Programme is an initiative facilitated by AeT which aims at equipping informal workers with the legal knowledge to directly engage with the by-laws, policies and governance through which their work is managed by municipal officials (AeT, 2019). Outcomes of this project include multilingual pamphlets explaining relevant ordinances and rights, incident forums, community training sessions, and meetings with trader committee leaders and officials to discuss enforcement issues and solutions (AeT, 2019).

[47] 2023-2028

the stringent and transformational South African Local Government Association's Public Space Trading Guidelines (SALGA PSTGs) for Local Government (2021), for which AeT had been an involved research and consultative party, was necessary to the review.[48] As a result, AeT both became involved in the review process – offering some of their experience and social capital to the review in return for the opportunity to shift the next iteration of the Informal Economy Policy towards better supporting informal workers – and brainstorming and seeking funding for some pilot interventions to "provoke" the Municipality with interpretations of the PSTGs which might move the "margin of refusal" slightly further in favour of informality. It was this latter process of thinking through and then proposing pilots to potential funders that I became involved with, and which informs my arguments as I respond to the provocations around what a truly caring and liveable city entails that came out of my conversations with interlocuters like Ms. Ntuli, Dr Faya and William.

Taking together Dr Faya's claim that the current, formalised systems of governing informal trade "don't work" and William's claim that informality is a response to the provocations of a "disrupted existence", it might seem that that there is very little that could be done to efficiently and supportively manage informal work in Durban while rejecting the Municipality's logics of informality as a problem to be solved except in limited cases where survival is at stake. However, as the SALGA PSTGS and the interventions that have been made over time by informal workers, AeT and other NGOS suggest, this is not the case. Many of the tools and technologies (in a broad sense) already exist in some form and could be implemented relatively simply, possibly to great effect.

Overlays as Governance

An example of this can be found in the possibility of adopting urban management "overlays" – an existing planning tool already in use in other contexts in Durban and other South African cities – to change and experiment with spatial zoning and the enforcement of by-laws. This on its own would afford several possibilities for rethinking the management of urban informal

[48] In fact, a few team members remarked to me that they did not believe that the officials responsible for including SALGA PSTG compliance into the review could have read them, as they depart so drastically from the formalised orthodoxy of Durban's Informal Economy Policy.

trade and is very much in line with Dr Faya's impassioned arguments in favour of flexibility in managing informal public space trading.

Overlays are a "planning tool" for zoning. They which allow for greater flexibility in land use than more typical single-use zones. This is achieved by "overlaying" or revising basic zoning regulations with "special districts" which in some way modify the effective by-laws and land-uses in the space being overlay-ed. This approach is allowed for by the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 (or, SPLUMA) (2013), and has been adopted by municipalities across South Africa in varying contexts, often in attempts to generate economic development or manage the density of urban and peri-urban areas (Department of Rural Development & Land Reform, 2017). It is in relation to these existing use-cases that the SALGA PSTGs (2021, pp. 39, 54) recommend the use of SPLUMA overlays in guiding municipal responses to "public-space usage and demarcation of informal trading spaces."

Overlays might be utilised in any number of ways, but typical uses include the following: economic (allowing, say, additional land-uses like small-scale farming or business operation in a designated residential area), environmental (shifting the allowable impact of developments on the space in some way) or cultural (acknowledging a space, or activities within it, as being of cultural import in some way and thus protecting this or modifying by-laws to enable it to legally continue). A particularly widely cited example is that of the City of Cape Town's (2022) adoption of heritage overlay zones through a Heritage Protection Overlay as a part of the City's Municipal Planning By-law and amendment.

For informal work in Warwick, and in Durban more widely, overlays could be a way of recognising the actual use-value of the space without over-prescribing (or, as Dr Faya put it, "controlling" and "falsely determining capacity of") it. This would allow many of the frictional steps of the current approach to spatial governance, like rigid enforcement of outdated by-laws, to simply be sidestepped and thus enhance the "fluidity" of the way that urban residents engage with local policy and infrastructure (Amin & Thrift, 2017). Overlays could step back from the permit system, instead stipulating the minimum standards allowable within a space for informal trade to occur. Rather than rigidly outlining the times an individual can trade, what goods or services they can trade, and where they can trade on their permits, governance could instead move the focus onto what is allowable in the space and let the workers manage themselves

within legal bounds. In doing so, some of the uniquely informal "indigenous urban forms and practices" of Warwick might better be protected.[49]

Trader Organised Reblocking as Planning

Overlays could afford opportunities for a more horizontal, networked mode of management where informal workers' expertise on the challenges and requirements of informality is drawn upon. Successful interventions in informal housing projects like "reblocking" are a potential way to achieve this. Reblocking centres, through dialogue between stakeholders, the ability of informal residents of a space to decide what is most important in the layout of their spaces. In the case of informal settlements like Mtshini Wam near Cape Town, this took the form of an iterative process of redesigning "clusters" of shacks in such a way as to create shared courtyards that each shack in the cluster faced out onto (Hennings, et al., 2012).

Drawing on the residents experience and knowledge, this approach worked to make those living in the space safer from crime, limited the risks of fires spreading throughout the settlement, created space for emergency vehicles to pass further into the settlement and fostered community engagement between residents of each cluster, as well as making it simpler to continue to iteratively develop the shacks and clusters (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 2012). This is a significant way of reducing the frictions which occur in a rigidly state-planned approach to urban public space trading, and the consequent roughness experienced by informal workers attempting to ply their trades. As a report by involved parties from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (2012) states, the goals of this reblocking are to empower the impacted community to engage with the state not as dependants without agency, but as collaborators in a shared project of improving the community's quality of life. This plays to the navigatory expertise of informal workers like Ma Zondi in practicing convivial cultivation of social relations.

[49] In the Markets of Warwick alone there are a number of critical cultural/heritage practices which are irreplaceable to tens of thousands of people. The Early Morning Market supplies in bulk indigenous vegetables not found in supermarkets. The Traditional Medicine Market provides herbs, bark and animal products to people across South Africa in bulk and variety unlike any other market in the country. The mealie and bovine head cooks serve traditional meals in a traditional manner – something widely appreciated by their customers. The bead- and grass-work traders are key to local wedding and funerary rites celebration. The Lime and Imphepho Market sells varieties of both substances from around the country which have specific uses that cannot be replaced with other varieties. Warwick is also renowned for its handmade church uniforms and pinafores, and is functionally the last place in Durban where such goods are made and repaired by hand.

Allowing the traders to self-organise in this way in Warwick, through an overlay rolling back some of the formal requirements of permit-based trading space and time specificity in the name of the social, economic and/or cultural value of the work happening in the space, could allow for less frictional connections between the informal workers, their labour and the state. As it stands, the layout of each Market is an accretion of state and informal frictional engagements built up over time, and serves neither the state's interest in managing informality, nor the traders' interests in adequate space infrastructure and freedom to work. As reblocking is both iterative and focused on community engagement, Warwick Junction would be well-placed to experiment with reblocking initiatives.

Informality as Indigenous Urban Form and Practice

In this dissertation, I have ethnographically followed the experiences of roughness which are navigated by mobile informal workers like the os'gadla and the recyclers. Such frictional obstructions to the "flow" of their work are exist not only in the physical decay of infrastructure but in the socio-political context of how Durban's possible futures are imagined, and by whom.

The Municipal imaginary of Durban as a thriving hub of profitable formality is one which values the easy passage of cars over that of NMT, and which sees a mall replacing the markets as a "golden opportunity for investment" which saves informal workers from being "trapped in the second economy" (Maharaj, 2014). This has the effect of framing and treating informal work as inappropriate to the time and place in which it is practiced – a result which is embodied in the exclusionary and friction-inducing modes of governance deployed by officials in Warwick (namely the zealous policing of by-laws and permits rooted in apartheid logics of city-making). As Ma Zondi's desire for Municipal approval of the recycling that she does in Durban suggests, informal workers see themselves as practicing forms of labour which are not just appropriate to the time and place, but which actively contribute to the creation of desirable urban spaces. The impact of the current approach to governing informal public space trading on informal work is evident in how rough the paths taken by the os'gadla and recyclers are as they skirt and push up against Municipal margins of refusal.

However, governance does not have to be done like this. Warwick was, for a time, renowned as a successful example of inclusionary and pro-poor planning and management and could be

so again (Skinner, 2009). The "parabolic thinking"[50] of speculatively resisting the Modernist ideology of the industrial City through imagining different planning and management solutions for Warwick is one way of coming to something already understood and practiced by many actors in the space – that informality is, in its own right, an indigenous form and practice deserving of (and appropriate to) a place in a "caring and liveable" Durban.

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