

The Political Economy of Wikiality:

A South African Inquiry into Knowledge and Power on Wikipedia

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OVSHAV001

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how knowledge construction on the English-language Wikipedia produces hegemonic representations of South Africa. Using Wikipedia's entries on Cape Town and various places in the Free State province as case studies, this dissertation demonstrates through critical discourse analysis that there is a systematic marginalisation, underrepresentation, and decontextualisation of 'black' working class communities and spaces, which echoes their historical marginalisation. This representation is contextualised through a historical narrative of Cape Town and the Free State, and explored against a theoretical background which, borrowing from Foucault, Castells, and others, sees the social construction of knowledge as an expression of power, and the networked society as an arena for the dynamics of hegemony. While Wikipedia is often hailed as a game-changer, the knowledge it produces tends to replicate and, thanks to its ever-increasing reach, further entrench hegemonic explanations of society. This might seem counter-intuitive given its credentials as a democratiser of knowledge, but can be explained with Wikipedia's architecture, which ultimately rests upon a regime of truth established during the Enlightenment. The online encyclopedia relies on well-established institutions and discourses of knowledge as sources of its content, and these, coupled with its particular preferences for some sources and topics over others, give it a particular slant in favour of the hegemonic status quo. The discourse it produces is given further gravitas and is naturalised through an insistence upon the knowledge it presents as 'neutral'. Studies have shown that Wikipedia's values are defined by its established community of editors and that, even as Wikipedia's reach is extending, it is increasingly difficult for new users to impact upon the online encyclopedia. Arguably it is rather the encyclopedia which impacts upon them by circulating seemingly uncontested representations of their communities, or, alternatively, simply ignoring the communities altogether. In a process I have, borrowing from American political satirist Stephen Colbert, termed wikiality, hegemonic representations have a tendency of becoming true when we act upon them as such. Thus, when certain communities are presented as marginal or unimportant, it becomes even more difficult for them to break out of this mould. Meaningful participation on Wikipedia can only be achieved if the user not only has access to relevant technological capital, but also the cultural capital required to make contributions which appeal to the established core of editors. In South Africa, as a result of its political economy, large parts of the population are politically, economically, and socially marginalised. This also means that they lack the cultural capital necessary to make meaningful contributions to Wikipedia. This tends to render them the subjects of Wikipedia entries, rather than their authors, which contributes to their further marginalisation. The key to understanding the relationship between knowledge and power on Wikipedia lies in the ability of some users to capture and define reality through representation and thereby effectuating it. Reducing this imbalance to a simple question of access downplays the social, economic, and political factors which created it in the first place, and accommodates discursive practices which downplay difference and perpetuate hegemony.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about power and representation on Wikipedia. Through exploring the collaboratively written encyclopedia's articles on Cape Town as well as those covering main places in the Free State province, using Matjhabeng Local Municipality as a focal point, I show how 'black' localities in South Africa are systematically marginalised on Wikipedia. This marginalisation is not unique to Wikipedia, but mirrors the economic, political, and cultural marginalisation of the same communities in everyday life. The two are connected. The knowledge constructed on Wikipedia is a product of power relations and struggles over discourse, both internal and external to the online encyclopedia. The situation is compounded by the many thoroughly depoliticised portraits of the Wikipedia process as unburdened by hierarchy – separate from market forces, politics, and traditions- making it appear as if knowledge presented on Wikipedia is somehow 'neutral', 'given', or 'natural', completely divorced from the situation which produced it. It is this portrayal and the process leading up to it that constitutes what I have termed the political economy of wikiality, a concept I outline in chapter two. The political economy part comes from Michel Foucault who outlines a "political economy of truth" (1980: 132), a reference to how our knowledge is not an undisputable given, but a social construction operating in favour of the status quo. This social construct is shaped by a range of factors and regulates how we think about things and act upon them. The term 'wikiality' is taken from the American TV comedian Stephen Colbert, and refers to how the 'real' world is represented on Wikipedia, and the dissonance between the two. Colbert's wikiality also connotes a process: socially constructed knowledge eventually becomes 'true' when we act upon it as such.

This is why the marginalisation of 'black' South African localities on Wikipedia is important. Too often are 'openness', 'Web 2.0', and 'the information economy' touted as a panacea for the developing world, a shortcut to levelling the gap separating the haves from the have-nots, the connected from the disconnected. Recently, an open letter to South Africa's four cell phone networks from a Grade 11 class at the Sinenjongo High School in Cape Town's impoverished Joe Slovo Park triggered wide interest in South Africa (Alfreds, 2012: online; Klee, 2013: online; *Times LIVE*, 2013: online). The open letter was later followed up with a change.org petition accompanied by a YouTube video produced by the Wikimedia Foundation. The letter noted that Sinenjongo High School does not have a school library and provides little to no access to computers, that the severely under-resourced local library is far away, and that accessing the internet either through internet cafés or cell phones is forbiddingly expensive. The pupils were asking cell phone operators to provide free access to Wikipedia, citing precedents from Uganda and Kenya (Sinenjongo 2013 class, 2013: online). The open letter gained support from a local economist at Stellenbosch University (Spaull, 2013: online), and attention from the Wikimedia Foundation itself, which dispatched a film team to

make a documentary about the young learners' quest for knowledge (Grigas, 2013: online). While few of us would think that the young learners' request is unreasonable, let alone oppose it, we should not allow our enthusiasm and techno-optimism to obscure the fact that life in Joe Slovo Park is what it is for a whole range of interconnected reasons, political, social and economic, none of which access to Wikipedia can solve by itself. The struggle of the Sinenjongo High School learners is not the focus of this thesis, but it illustrates why my dissertation is important. Without a more holistic approach to addressing the imbalances of injustices past and present, we run the risk of simply perpetuating them.

While access to Wikipedia via the cell phone is an undisputable good, it does very little overall to alleviate the marginalisation of communities like Joe Slovo Park. Since this thesis deals with the collaborative construction of knowledge and the consequences thereof, the first point to note is that while editing is possible from some mobile phones, it is, to say the least, cumbersome. In many ways, users who access Wikipedia on their cell phones are relegated to roles as mere consumers of knowledge (Deumert, forthcoming: 5). However, as several scholars have pointed out, access to Wikipedia itself is, in many ways, the least problem. The real hindrance to meaningful participation is cultural capital: knowledge of how to access information, how to present it in a form which appeals to established Wikipedians (by and large highly educated young 'white' men from the global north), and the ability to navigate Wikipedia's byzantine web of policies, guidelines, norms, abbreviations, coding syntax, and so forth (Deumert, forthcoming; Ford, 2011; Ford & Geiger, 2012; Geiger & Ford, 2011; Geiger & Ribes, 2010; Graham, 2011a, 2011b; Halfaker and others, 2013; Morgan, Mason, & Nahon, 2011; O'Neil, 2011; Panciera, Halfaker & Terveen, 2009). As a function of this, where present, residents of 'black' localities in South Africa continue to be the subjects of Wikipedia entries more often than they are their creators, with little chance of talking back. This is an important point, as to control the knowledge production about a given subject, to determine the discourse, the way we speak and think about it, is to exercise control over the subject itself. As people - however tacitly - accept these discourses and act upon them, they go from being purely social constructs to actual phenomena (Hall, 1992: 292-295). The supposed democratic nature of Wikipedia (the notion that 'anyone can edit') obscures these kinds of power relations, and gives extra credence to the kind of knowledge produced about these spaces.

Uncovering the power dynamics inherent in knowledge and language can be difficult. How can one contribute to a body of knowledge without at the same time affirming it? After all, this dissertation ultimately slots into the same regime of truth that it criticises. I have elected to apply critical discourse analysis of Wikipedia entries pertaining to Cape Town and so-called 'main places' in the

Free State province. This methodology recognises the problematic relationship between knowledge and power and offers a way of interrogating societal shifts in power dynamics through scrutinising its texts, while being conscious of its own role in leveraging power through knowledge generation (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 448-449). I get back to, and elaborate upon, my methodology in chapter two.

According to Mark Graham (2011b: 214-215), the notion of a digital divide tends to imply a kind of “linear path of digital development” in which it is a question of “catching up” with those on the other side of the divide. It is with this perspective in mind that we need to critically interrogate our enthusiasm for the rollout of Wikipedia to the cell phones of Joe Slovo Park and elsewhere. This is especially true when the material structures which continue to marginalise Joe Slovo Park on a daily basis remain untransformed. In writing about the South African school system, Crain Soudien (2007: 440-441, 450-454; Deumert, forthcoming: 22-23) has noted how the emphasis on access for ‘black’ students to well-resourced schools has come at the cost of transformation of the school system itself. As a result, ‘black’ students are expected to adapt to and ‘catch up’ with a school system which for centuries has perpetuated a kind of discourse which presents knowledge from an exclusively ‘white’ and European view point. When fissures occur in these situations, it is the ‘black’ learners who come under scrutiny, and it is their nature which becomes an arena of intervention, not the schools. The South African school system can in our context be read as an extension of the Western body of knowledge, the “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1980: 131) which by and large has held sway over South Africa since 1652. Through the dynamics outlined above, this regime of truth continues to exert power over ‘black’ subjects. Hence, we are arguably faced with a form of well-meaning Othering which emphasises the ‘black’ subject’s distance from knowledge. Reducing inequality to a question of access to an unreconstituted body of knowledge can therefore be said to serve as an extension and reinforcement of existing power relations rather than ameliorating the problem.

It is impossible to write about all of Wikipedia. It is also impossible to write about all of South Africa. There are too many starting points, too many facets, aspects, view points, and contradictions to cover everything. In this thesis, I have chosen to write about some specific locations, using their representation on the English-language Wikipedia as a lens through which to view how power relations continue to manifest themselves in knowledge, both globally and within South Africa. Power relations are of course quite literally written into space in South Africa: The geographic locations I am dealing with are still shaped by apartheid-era town planning, along with the class inequalities and uneven distribution of resources that go with it. In chapters three and four, I outline

the historical context for my elected spaces and relate it to their representation on Wikipedia. Writing about localities and representation on Wikipedia is apt because of the way in which it intersects with the notion of a digital divide and the way connectedness in our minds take on an air of spatiality (Graham, 2011b: 212). Furthermore, representation of place is important, because “how places are represented and made visible (or invisible) in Wikipedia has a potentially immense bearing on the ways that people interact with those same places culturally, economically, and politically” (Graham, 2011a: 269). Wikipedia “is now a de facto global reference of dynamic knowledge”, and so, “the spatial representations distributed throughout Wikipedia thus ultimately become a performative media embedded into the myriad decisions made by hundreds of millions of users” (Graham, 2011a: 269). Here, one might for emphasis add that impact is not only felt when ‘others’ read about ‘us’, but also when we read about ourselves.

To “media experts, academics and social commentators”, notes Philip Bonner (2013: 160), “cities are (...) where it’s at”. This is where change (or the lack of it) is gauged in South Africa. Bonner (2013: 160-161) cautions against this urban predisposition, and argues that “the bulk of this country, which is rural, semi-rural or small town” might serve as a more important yardstick, as change is slower and less visible in the countryside. Because of the size and restricted wriggle room in these spaces, the historical processes that emerge from them are all the more important and should be noted. Again, when it comes to my own research, I take my cue from Bonner’s contention that:

grand changes at the national level are the ones that have attracted most attention. However, a vast subterranean level of transformation has remained largely unexplored, which itself is often one reason for national change. Until we have serious investigations of these, we will have little idea of what South Africa is (2013: 165).

Likewise, until we have serious investigation of how the relatively obscure main places in the Free State are represented on Wikipedia, we will have little idea of what South African wikiality is.

Sill, to assume that the digital divide can be reduced to a question about space is a fallacy. While it is all well and good to investigate the wikiality of the margins, the margins might at times prove too thin. This is why my first case study is a locality which is about as high-profile as it is possible to get in South Africa: Cape Town. The Wikipedia entry on South Africa’s oldest city is lengthy, has a long edit history, and was on the eighteenth of July, 2006, promoted on Wikipedia’s main page as Featured Article of the Day. If Free State main places are located in Wikipedia’s long tail (Anderson, 2008: 19-26) of obscurity, Cape Town occupies a much more trafficked space. Graham has posited that while some geopolitical flashpoints like Palestine or Northern Ireland may be under scrutiny by the Wikipedia community, smaller, possibly less interesting places “that are not subject to a vortex of comment and a glare of attention can have the most unconsidered and unaddressed bias” (2011:

279). Comparing and contrasting a busy entry with some rather obscure ones therefore makes for rich source material. While there are differences, what is most notable is nevertheless the consistency of treatment. Whether one looks at 'black' communities in the Free State or in Cape Town, one finds that marginalisation is a constant. In comparison, whether we are talking about a Free State *dorpie*ⁱ or an affluent neighbourhood in Cape Town, the history of a 'white' place is the subject of a disproportionate level of attention with higher degrees of detailed representation. It is also important to note that the factors that have caused much of this marginalisation of 'black' localities offline (such as imperialism and a highly exploitative racialised economy) are consistently downplayed in wikiality's master narrative.

I start this thesis with a short history of the online encyclopedia, as well as a basic overview of some of its most central functions. To make the case that power is entangled with knowledge and vice versa, my second chapter provides a theoretical framework culled from Manuel Castells, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said. In chapter three, I analyse Wikipedia's representation of Cape Town, and draw a line from how blackness has historically been contained in the city to how Cape Town's blackness is being contained in wikiality. My fourth chapter is a systematic analysis of representations of Free State main places. I conclude by noting that Wikipedia's (mis-) representation of 'black' space is consistent throughout my findings, and explain this in light of my own theoretical framework of a political economy of wikiality. I conclude by showing that wikiality, just like the regime of truth it forms part of, is what it is because it is created by a particular group of people with access to particular technological and cultural capital. Rooted in hegemonic processes, the 'wikiality' they produce is one which tends to positively reinforce their own world-view and privilege. To reduce this issue to a simple question of access further obscures the dynamics of hegemony.

CHAPTER ONE: A SHORT HISTORY OF WIKIPEDIA

Most of us are probably already somewhat familiar with Wikipedia. Still, it can be worth looking closer at its origins, as they have a direct bearing upon its current incarnation. Without insight into Wikipedia's history and architecture, it is difficult to say anything meaningful about how Wikipedia's content is produced by a range of factors linked to politics, economics, and culture. In this chapter, I provide an insight into the genesis of Wikipedia, how it works on a daily basis, and how these factors shape participation in the project. Wikipedia is, of course, an online encyclopedia. However, as Joseph Reagle (2010: 3) rightly points out, the community that produces it is just as important. It might therefore be a good idea to, as it were, let Wikipedia introduce itself:

Wikipedia (Listeni/ⁱˈwɪkiˈpiːdiə/ or Listeni/ⁱˈwɪkiˈpiːdiə/ wik-i-pee-dee-ə) is a collaboratively edited, multilingual, free Internet encyclopedia that the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation supports. Volunteers worldwide collaboratively write Wikipedia's 30 million articles in 287 languages, including over 4.4 million in the English Wikipedia. Anyone who can access the site can edit almost any of its articles, which on the Internet comprise the largest and most popular general reference work, ranking sixth globally among all websites on Alexa with an estimated 365 million readers.¹

Note that I have given the reference in a footnote. Wikipedia is open to editing by anyone with an internet connection and thus under constant revision. The link I have provided in the footnote leads to the [[Wikipedia]] entry as it was when I visited it on the eighth of January 2014. The entry has since changed, as Wikipedia articles are wont to do. Every article on Wikipedia has, in addition to an entry on a given subject, a number of meta-pages related to it. These can be found by pressing the 'talk', 'edit', and 'history' tabs on top of the article, above the article name (although for pages extra likely to be vandalised, the edit button might only be available to registered users). The permanent link to the fifth of January, 2014, 22h35 Harare time version I provided in the footnote comes from the 'history' page. All the previous incarnations of the entry (even if the only change is a deleted comma) are stored here. Only in very rare cases where the Wikimedia Foundation risks criminal or libel prosecution will compromising versions be deleted. The version I am referencing is, at the time of writing, the same as the version available in Wikipedia's main space, and consequently the top entry on the 'history' page. For the sake of both the accountability and readability of my dissertation, linking to permanent versions in footnotes seems like the most practical solution, especially when dealing with direct quotes and discourse. Within Wikipedia's mark-up, the double square brackets signal a link to a Wikipedia entry on whatever word is contained within them: so-called 'wikilinks'. Wikilinks are those blue hyperlinks which take readers onto further Wikipedia entries. Taking a cue from Wikipedia chronicler Andrew Lih (2009), I shall, if I am referring to an

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia&oldid=589354482> [08.01.2014]

entry on a general level, do so using double square brackets, as I already did when I referred to Wikipedia's article about itself: [[Wikipedia]]. Occasionally, I translate terms from languages other than English or elaborate on a specific point in endnotes. In all other cases I shall be using the Harvard style of referencing.

Of course, opening my thesis by way of lifting a major definition from Wikipedia might be taken as a statement in itself. The former editor-in-chief of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Robert McHenry, highly sceptical of Wikipedia's open editing process and irreverence of formal expertise, famously likened Wikipedia to a public lavatory: "It may be obviously dirty, so that [the reader] knows to exercise great care, or it may seem fairly clean, so that he [sic] may be lulled into a false sense of security. What he certainly does not know is who has used the facilities before him" (McHenry, 2004: online). McHenry's main point was that Wikipedia is factually unreliable. His argument was challenged in a controversial study done by *Nature* which, while conceding McHenry's additional point that the writing on Wikipedia leaves a lot to be desired, found that, on average, each entry on Britannica contained three errors, while its equivalent on Wikipedia contained four. Out of a sample of 42 entries, *Nature* found severe misunderstandings or misleading statements in eight instances. Four of these came from Britannica and four from Wikipedia. Thus, *Nature* concluded that Wikipedia's factuality was coming "close" (Giles, 2005: 900-901) to that of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. My own project, however, places itself outside of the ongoing debate about Wikipedia and accuracy. Instead, I note through Lawrence Liang (2011) that anxieties around the unstable nature of knowledge are nothing new, but tend to follow any kind of shift in format and production model. It might seem counterintuitive now, but when printed books started replacing those hand copied (and, in the process, frequently updated or modified) by scribes, these were widely derided for their inaccuracy, and brought forth worries about forgeries and piracy (Liang, 2011: 54-57). Thus, we should acknowledge that the idea that printing technology put an end to "the crisis of reliability" (Liang, 2011: 58) is misguided, and recognise that when Wikipedia poses a challenge to the authority of knowledge, it is arguably a good thing. While our scepticism was briefly suspended under the reign of print, Wikipedia's incorporation of and reliance upon the unstable authority of knowledge, forever subject to revision by actors whose motives we do not know, prompts an unease within us: a dynamic which drives "the productive tension between the possibilities of knowing completely and never being sure that true knowledge can be produced" (Liang, 2011: 61). Celebrations of unstable knowledge aside, the debate about accuracy in Wikipedia articles compared to traditionally peer-reviewed and edited sources and whether Wikipedia gets the birth year of Alexander Hamilton right are not terribly important in the context of this thesis. Certainly, there are accuracy - and other - problems that are overlooked by the *Nature* study, but this paper largely trusts Wikipedia's factual

presentation of technical topics such as the [[Wikipedia]] entry I used in my introduction. This is perhaps ironic, considering how much of this dissertation is devoted to misrepresentation on Wikipedia, but it is my contention that quibbling about birth dates takes away focus from the more important sides of Wikipedia. It also implies that ‘truth’ is attainable –an ideal which glosses over knowledge as a social construction. I take my cue here from the Critical Point of View (CPOV) initiative. In a sea of more or less well-founded worries about accuracy (McHenry, 2004), the death of authoritative knowledge (Keen, 2007), and the atomisation of responsibility (Seigenthaler, 2005), the academic Wikipedia project CPOV simply asserts that Wikipedia is here to stay, “part and parcel of the ordinary routines of our networked life” (Lovink & Tkacz, 2011: 9). It is on this basis that Wikipedia needs to be evaluated, not what it should be, or if indeed, such a thing should exist at all. The initiative calls for research operating from outside Wikipedia that goes beyond the fascination with organisation and accuracy, research which takes Wikipedia’s existence for granted and rather looks at how the world has changed. For critics, it is time to “embrace the reality of Wikipedia’s massive use” (Lovink & Tkacz, 2011: 10), and move on. Wikipedia exists, but is in need for improvement. The social, political and technological parameters it operates along have clear implications for Wikipedia’s content and impact upon the world. Hence, “the role of criticism thus should be to generate radical and visionary proposals for a future Wikipedia that will clearly make a break with the male geek engineer culture, its limited ‘science’ focus, and decision-making rituals” (Lovink & Tkacz, 2011: 12). I hope my dissertation can feed into this, coming as it does with a developing world perspective and a critical view upon the way knowledge is constructed on Wikipedia, a process I theorise in chapters one and two and give examples of in chapters three and four. This chapter is dedicated to exploring where Wikipedia came from, and how it works, and - in brief - how this architecture influences participation. But if we want to explore some of the potential blind zones of Wikipedia, we need to start with its roots.

The name itself, Wikipedia is a portmanteau, made up of the words Wiki and encyclopedia. Most of us have a fair idea of what an encyclopedia is. The word is derived from Greek and refers to something like ‘the circle of learning’ (Reagle, 2010: 5). While the encyclopedic urge – the drive to collect and record the knowledge of humanity - can be traced back to Pliny the Elder, the modern encyclopedia movement sprang out of the Enlightenment, and was in its own way a deeply political project, despite (or maybe because of) its professed adherence to objectivity and science (Hamilton, 1992: 24-29 47-51; O’Sullivan, 2011: 35-36). The roots of the encyclopedic impulse are important, and we shall return to them in the next chapter. Like other encyclopedias, as well as the Enlightenment itself, Wikipedia is first and foremost a social and cultural project, a basic premise of my dissertation. Nevertheless, the Wikipedia project is only possible thanks to the underlying

technology. This is the wiki bit: the technical framework which enables this unprecedented form of knowledge production in which “anybody can edit”.²

Wiki

Wiki is a web programming language invented by computer engineer Ward Cunningham in the mid-1990s. While there were a number of web browsers around at the time, few of these allowed for the editing of web pages. For example, Mosaic, the then-market-leading precursor to Netscape, did not feature this option. This meant that for all intents and purposes, browsing and programming were separate activities for the average user; unless one had extensive programming skills, setting up web pages was out of the question. With what he was to call WikiWikiWeb, Ward Cunningham sought to obliterate the web as a read-only arena. His programming language essentially moved the editor, the function that formats text, creates actual hyperlinks, and so forth, from the computer itself to the World Wide Web. Cunningham’s great invention was essentially to contain the edit function in a web form. This allowed people to create web content without necessarily being conversant in programming language (Lih, 2009: 55-57; Reagle, 2010: 5, 38-39). For our purposes it might be worth noting that this transition also represents the moment the internet broke free from the large institutions, mainly universities and the military, which had so far dominated cyberspace. I flag this because it is somewhat reminiscent of the way the enlightenment movement wrested the control over knowledge away from the Church, and how Wikipedia, in turn, arguably enabled knowledge to break free from the institutions whose authority had been established exactly by the enlightenment movement (Chen, 2010: 249-250, 325). In any case, Cunningham sought to facilitate the decentralisation of power over the web. What came to be known as a ‘wiki’ was meant to harness the power of the masses, driving forth mass net development through collaboration. The term itself is derived from the Hawaiian ‘wiki wiki’, and means something along the lines of ‘fast-fast’. The term was meant to be indicative of the ease of use of this new programming language (Lih, 2009: 55-57; Reagle, 2010: 5, 38-39).

In a wiki, instead of having to write line upon line of code to format something, users could do it with a couple of keystrokes. Creating a hyperlink, for example, did not require writing code in a cumbersome operating system, but was done by simply putting two capital letters into a word, LikeThis. The CamelCase, as it became known, would then create a link to a web page by the same name. Incidentally, this is the root of the random capitalisation seen throughout the internet in names such as YouTube and LinkedIn (Lih, 2009: 57-58). Cunningham’s WikiWikiWeb program not only created a decentralised web platform upon which anyone could edit, but the manner in which

² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Main_Page&oldid=487091194 [03.06.2012]

they could do so was wholly transparent: the wiki preserved every previous incarnation of the site, and kept track of recent changes. Making errors was not a big deal; the programme could easily be rolled back to the previous version. The 'recent changes'-function made it possible to see who contributed what. Together, they enabled the decentralised co-ordination process so central to wikis. The level for entry was low, as anyone could edit without using special software or having to log in via a user account. Out of this was borne, "an easy to edit, networked, collaborative resource that people could share in creating" (Lih, 2009: 59). For the first time, a truly writeable web emerged. Still, as novel as this was, the real forte of Cunningham's invention lay not in the web it created, but the community it created around it (Lih, 2009: 44, 55-60). As we have touched upon already and shall see again and again throughout this dissertation, the same is true for Wikipedia. Indeed, according to its benevolent dictator, Jimmy 'Jimbo' Wales (2009: xviii), "Wikipedia is not about technology, it's about people".

Wikipedia

That Wikipedia came to take the form it has today was never a given. Amidst the dotcom bubble, in what Reagle (2010: 173) has termed a "happy accident", Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger conceived the online encyclopedia as a side project to what they were really doing. In 2000, Jimmy Wales, a former options trader, was working at an internet start-up company he had founded with a mailing list friend named Tim Shell. The company was called Bomis and ran a sort of web portal (Lih, 2009: 20-23, 30-31). Bomis made enough of a profit and had enough capital and resources for Wales to go looking for side projects. He started toying with his old idea of an online encyclopedia. Inspired by the free software movement and the Open Directory Project, Wales envisioned the encyclopedic content as freely available. The idea was to finance it through advertising as it grew in popularity (Lih, 2009: 30-33; Reagle, 2010: 35-36). The content was to be produced by highly qualified volunteers, and peer-reviewed according to standard academic norms. Wales hired Larry Sanger who was rounding up his PhD in philosophy. Sanger was not only well-versed in the philosophy of epistemology – the two knew each other from an objectivism mailing list - but had the additional advantage of some experience in running a website, engaging with newsgroups, email lists, and the like (Lih, 2009: 32-37).

Nupedia, as the project was called, struggled to gather momentum. The Bomis team had failed to take into account exactly how laborious and tedious the peer-editing process could be. A lack of formally qualified reviewers added to the problem, and the email list used to co-ordinate between contributors was "clunky" (Sanger, cited in Lih, 2009: 41). Within a year, it became clear that Nupedia would never reach critical mass and become a sustainable venture unless it substantially revised its operating procedures. When Bomis happened upon the wiki software, they leapt at it.

Meant as a pre-stage to peer-editing, a wiki encyclopedia, based upon the UseModWiki software was set up parallel to Nupedia. Sanger came up with the name Wikipedia. The idea was to encourage the production of content and rather worry about editing later. Via the Nupedia mailing list, they urged the community to get involved. The community was reluctant to approve of a method so radically different from the traditional encyclopedia editing process and, on the fifteenth of January, 2001, Wikipedia.com was reconceptualised as a separate project meant to generate raw material for the 'real' encyclopedia. This content was published under a GNU Free Documentation License (GFDL), thereby ultimately rescinding Bomis' claim of ownership over the content. By the end of January, Wikipedia had reached six hundred articles, far surpassing what Nupedia had achieved in a year. When news of the Wikipedia project hit the tech community website Slashdot, a host of new volunteers, most of whom came from a techie background, started flowing into the project (Lih, 2009: 37-45, 60-69, 72-73, 88-89; Reagle, 2010: 39-41; Shirky, 2008: 110-111). In September 2003, the Nupedia servers crashed and took all of Nupedia's twenty-four complete articles down with them. By then it had become patently clear that the project was not viable. Wikipedia, however, had reached a staggering forty thousand articles, albeit of varying quality, and now had the same level of web traffic as Britannica.com. Unsurprisingly, Bomis never bothered to resurrect Nupedia (Lih, 2009: 88-89, 183-184; Reagle, 2010: 40-41).

What is perhaps more surprising, is that, in the same year, Bomis would give up on Wikipedia and cede it to the newly formed not-for-profit Wikimedia Foundation headed mainly by Bomis partners and employees. In essence, the company realised that despite the fact that it had managed to build up an active and devoted community that sent plenty of traffic to their servers, there was no way they could monetise on this asset (Lih, 2009: 183-184). It is to their great credit that they, whilst reeling from the burst dotcom bubble, realised that Wikipedia might have enormous cultural if not financial value, and allowed it to take root and grow outside of the market rather than selling it off or simply pulling the plug on it as a failed investment (Lih, 2009: 183-184). The reason Bomis couldn't profit from Wikipedia provides valuable insight into the formation of the online encyclopedia. Simply put, the users wouldn't have any of it. This realisation came out of an event referred to in the community as the Spanish Fork, explained below.

As we have seen, the inspiration for the Wikipedia project is to be found in the free software movement. This is where the technical side of things, the wiki programming language, came from. At least as important, though, is the legal inheritance from Richard Stallman and the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) movement: the open licensing model (Chen, 2010: 263). Stallman was a computer enthusiast who disliked the emergence of proprietary software in the late 1970s and

1980s. Up to this point, monetary profit had been harvested from the sales of hardware, whereas software to run the machines was free for everybody to share and tinker with. As a reaction to the encroachment upon what he saw as a public software domain, Stallman started the GNU (a recursive acronym for GNU's Not Unix) project to develop a free and open operating system, and released its work under an General Public License (GPL) (Lessig, 2004: 279-280). Wikipedia, and Nupedia before it, made use of a similar license, the GNU Free Documentation License, which had been created by Stallman's Free Software Foundation. In later years, Wikipedia has moved over to a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike license (Chen, 2010: 258-259). These kinds of licenses are built upon intellectual property law. Proponents of this type of license argue that traditional copyright is too extensive, and locks down large swathes of culture that ought to be in the public domain. Open licenses are meant to ensure a viable non-proprietary culture. They do so by allowing for widespread copying, dissemination, modification, and use, without necessarily having to ask the right owners' permission. While the individual licenses differ, the most basic condition is that copies, modifications, derivatives and the like be made available under a similar license (Chen, 2010: 258-259; Lessig, 2004: 279-286). Since, under an open or free license, anyone is free to copy and make use of the licensed work, people or communities who want to take a project in a different direction elsewhere are free to do so. This is called a fork. Despite its technological environment, forks are usually attributed to emerging social or philosophical differences rather than purely technical ones. Wikipedia forks, which happen from time to time, are usually notable on the basis of content being used elsewhere rather than the use of the same software (Reagle, 2010: 82-83). In 2002, Bomis was in dire financial straits, and Sanger lost his job. On a mailing list he speculated that Wikipedia might start to finance itself through advertising. His comments caused massive uproar and, in protest, the Spanish language Wikipedia moved all its content to a different project hosted on different servers. In the long run, Spanish Wikipedia again overtook the new *Enciclopedia Libre Universal*, but the experience shook Bomis. It was clear that the community was not interested in putting in hours of volunteering for the sake of advertisers, and if the community left, the content on Wikipedia was worth precious little (Lih, 2009: 9, 136-138; Reagle, 2010: 82-83). Here, we might remind ourselves of the assertion mentioned earlier that Wikipedia is really a social innovation, not a technical one.

Speaking of community and content, how does Wikipedia work? Why is it that an encyclopedia open to editing by anyone with an internet connection hasn't deteriorated into a lump of puerile incoherence, nonsense, and spam? To some, it shouldn't. According to critics such as McHenry, the entire premise of the free encyclopedia is "faith-based" (McHenry, 2004: online). The idea is that everything is open to contributions by anybody, and here comes the leap of faith: "Some unspecified quasi-Darwinian process will assure that those writings and edits by contributors of greatest

expertise will survive; articles will eventually reach a steady state that corresponds to the highest degree of accuracy" (McHenry, 2004: online). And yet it moves! Despite McHenry's rather dim view of the supposedly brutish and chaotic nature of voluntary decentralised knowledge production, Wikipedia sports a total of 22 million articles, most of which, one would assume, are reasonably coherent. Why, then, is it that Wikipedia has not descended into total chaos?

The answer, again, is not so much in the technology itself as in the culture that has grown around it. Wikipedia trusts people to do good. It was the same instinct Ward Cunningham followed with his WikiWikiWeb, so in that sense, a precedent was already in place. The principle is straightforward enough: "groups of people who want to collaborate also tend to trust one another" (Shirky, 2008: 111). That is exactly what we see happening on Wikipedia. For example, in what Shirky (2008: 118) terms a "spontaneous division of labour", someone out there decides that an article on existential quantification is needed. Thanks to the Wiki software, creating the [[existential quantification]] entry is easy. In turn, that there is now an entry on the subject attracts readers, some of whom decide to add text, edit, provide citations or wikilinks, and so forth. The reason it works is that Wikipedia recognises that knowledge is provisional. That an entry is constantly under revision is seen as strength - quite the opposite of traditional encyclopedia entries. Thanks to the prominently displayed 'edit' button, the barrier to participation is so small that it is easy to meet people's inherent desire to do good. It is this process which makes so-called vandalism less of a problem than one would think (Shirky, 2008: 109-142).

Vandalism is often touted as a disruption to the Wikipedia process, and much attention has been devoted to it, both by the community itself as well as the scholars studying it. In a nutshell, vandalism is a form of undesirable editing on Wikipedia. Viegas, Wattenberg, and Kusahl (2004: 578-579) divide vandalism – or what they call "malicious edits" - into five distinct categories: "Mass deletion" is when someone deletes all or substantial portions of an entry, sometimes just replacing it with a single (likely offensive) word. "Offensive copy", is just what it sounds like, the insertion of offensive statements and/or imagery solely to cause offense. "Phony copy" refers to the insertion of text wholly unrelated to the article topic at hand. "Phony redirection" happens when a user links a term to offensive or unrelated content. The last category is "idiosyncratic copy", the insertion of text which is somewhat related to the topic but irrelevant or inappropriate. Most, if not all, vandalism on Wikipedia fits either one or a combination of these categories (Viegas, Wattenberg & Kusahl, 2004: 578-579). Vandalism is usually quickly reverted. Indeed, "half of mass deletions are modified within 3 minutes, and half of vulgar mass deletions are modified within 2 minutes" (Viegas, Wattenberg & Kusahl, 2004: 579). Viegas, Wattenberg and Kusahl (2004: 576, 581) attribute this to the so-called

watch lists, which enable users to ‘subscribe’ to pages that interest them in particular. If a user puts an article on her watch list, the user will get notified every time the article is modified (Viegas, Wattenberg & Kusahl, 2004: 576, 581). In the years after this widely cited article was published, the Wikipedia community grew rapidly, but so did the efforts to curb vandalism. Enhanced editing software and bots, scripts or computer programs which can edit and carry out simple tasks associated with maintenance and administration without assistance from human editors have helped keep the problem in check (Kittur and others, 2007b: 461; Suh and others, 2009: online). With a few caveats linked to the unintended consequences of anti-vandalism work, which I get back to later in this chapter, it seems that overt vandalism in itself poses a lesser problem than one might think. As one editor put it, “the transaction costs for healing Wikipedia are less than those to harm it” (cited in Dalby, 2009: 213). Hence, Wikipedia has been fortunate enough to create a positive feedback loop. As long as people do more good than bad edits, the articles will improve. This explains Clay Shirky’s assertion that “on average, over time”, “Wikipedia articles get better” (Shirky, 2008: 112, 119, 142).

There is a bit more to it. When Shirky says that people who want to collaborate implicitly trust each other, we need to ascertain what it is that they entrust each other with. In the case of Wikipedia, it is that other users to the best of their abilities are adhering to the project’s fundamental principles, and that these principles have the community’s best interests at heart. This, in a nutshell, is what Joseph Reagle’s book *Good Faith Collaboration: The Culture of Wikipedia* (2010) is about. These guiding principles, known as the five pillars of Wikipedia, have become a sort of collective understanding of what it means to do good in Wikipedia. Any entry or edit is, at least in principle, evaluated on the basis of how it adheres to these five postulates:

- 1) Wikipedia is an encyclopedia;
- 2) Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view;
- 3) Wikipedia is free content that anyone can edit, use, modify, and distribute;
- 4) Editors should interact with each other in a respectful and civil manner;
- 5) Wikipedia does not have firm rules.³

It is easy to see the old hacker ethos and the culture around the free open source software movement at work here. Pillar three, anyone can edit, is what open software is all about. Pillar five, often known as an incitement to ‘be bold’ is perhaps one of the earliest principles of Wikipedia, tirelessly championed by Larry Sanger. Then known as ‘Ignore all rules’, the dictum lowered the

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Five_pillars&oldid=492214904 [08.06.2012]

barrier to participation (Lih, 2009: 112-114). Point four is more or less what gave Reagle's book (2010) its title: assume good faith. That Wikipedians assume that others always act with the intention of honouring the five pillars facilitates the pursuit of a neutral point of view. According to Reagle (2010: 60-71, 169-173), these twin processes, driven by social norms rather than technology, are the key to Wikipedia's continued relative success and utility. The five pillars, first crystallised by a user named Neutrality, are a form of shorthand for Wikipedia's ever-expanding complex web of norms regulating Wikipedians (Lih, 2009: 113). Like all of Wikipedia's norms, they spring out of collaboratively authored pages in the Wikipedia namespace: Wikipedia's 'behind-the-scenes' "web of practices, discussion, and policy pages" (Reagle, 2010: 10). The norms can generally be divided into three levels: policies, guidelines, and essays. Policy pages outline the project's stated goals and deal with things such as "the development of content, the behavior of editors, the treatment of legal issues, and the processes for resolution of conflicts within the community" (Hansen, Berente & Lyytinen, 2009: 43). They are the closest one gets to official positions on Wikipedia. Of the three levels, this is the most authoritative one. Guidelines are quite similar, and it is often difficult delineating a clear difference between the two, although in general, policies are oriented toward behaviour and easier to use to gauge whether a particular action is in line with the spirit of the project. Policies are, in the words of Reagle, "actionable" (2010: 51-52). Essays are generally taken a bit less seriously. They function more like advice than strict norms, and can be seen as "nonauthoritative writings that contain insights and exhortations" (Lih, 2009: 112).

We have seen how the free software movement had a great deal of influence on Wales and the community around Nupedia and later Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Foundation. A second set of inspiration, with direct impact upon Wikipedia policies such as the ones discussed above, came from none other than Ayn Rand, the darling novelist of America's libertarian right. Her idea of objectivism, that the world exists independent of the mind, yet its true nature can be observed and learned by it, turned Wales on to objectivist philosophy in general. Sanger and Shell, too, were drawn towards a philosophy of knowledge that argues that it is possible to map reality in an accurate fashion, and that this must be done by committing to objectivity, which is both feasible and desirable. This philosophy became the rallying point of Nupedia, and later the foundation of Wikipedia's neutral point of view (NPOV) policy. When questioned, Wales has sought to downplay this, arguing that the Wikipedia environment can easily accommodate postmodernists and objectivists working on the same article (Lih, 2009: 32, 36-37; Reagle, 2010: 53). Objectivism and the NPOV policy are important to my argument, and I return to these in the subsequent chapter. The argument, in a nutshell, is that such a core belief in a verifiable reality separate from perception and context often serves to mask or discredit arguments that present potential disruptions to the status quo. Objectivism is thus at

odds with characterisations of truth as a social construct informed by social structures. Wikipedia's neutral point of view policy (NPOV) lists six principles to follow in order to attain something approximating a neutral point of view. Editors should "avoid stating opinions as facts (...) avoid stating seriously contested assertions as facts (...) avoid presenting uncontested assertions as mere opinion (...) avoid stating facts as opinions (...) prefer non-judgmental language", and "accurately indicate the relative prominence of opposing views".⁴ While these are undoubtedly helpful in dealing with controversy, in a clear echo of objectivism, the implication is nevertheless that there is such a thing as truth and it is obtainable. In that sense the guidelines and policies outlined above form part of Wikipedia's own regime of truth. Through its policies, guidelines, and essays, Wikipedia "has a whole body of forceful statements whose function is to establish the truth of any particular statement; a truth of what is neutral, non-original, published, reliable, attributable, and verifiable" (Tkacz, 2012: 92). This is important because by acknowledging Wikipedia as a regime of truth, "we might", in the words of Tkacz (2012: 92), "begin to understand how power is distributed throughout the project; from where authority derives; how some contributions are accepted over others; and how the project maintains order and coherence (...)". As I get back to in chapter two, Wikipedia is also part of a larger regime of truth. While the online encyclopedia is often framed as a challenger to expertise, this is not necessarily the case, as its insistence that all claims be verifiable "clearly [anchors] it in the ecology of what could be called the established media" (Sundin, 2011: 841). From this perspective, Wikipedia is a public space where already published knowledge is continuously reconstituted. Indeed, Wikipedia depends on this regime of truth: its credibility is established through its links to external sources, and it is these links which appear to "stabilise" (Sundin, 2011: 481) the knowledge it presents. At the same time, the verifiability requirement establishes which kinds of sources are relevant, and which are not, forming a symbiotic relationship with its preferred sources which I get back to in the next section. It is through verifiability that notability is established; essentially, if a topic is noted by a particular source, the community is likely to regard it as notable. Conversely, if a topic has not been written about in a notable publication (and, as we will see, what constitutes as notable is a reflection of Wikipedia's core demographic), the community tends to dismiss the topic as not notable (Ford and others, 2013: 1). It is not too hard to see how the power of definition lays down guidelines for how to write (or not write) about a subject. I will get back to the relationship between Wikipedia and power in the next chapter.

The Network Effect

A strong signal that the public took Wikipedia's aspirations to a neutral point of view seriously came in 2004. To tell this story, we need to look at that other web success of the 2000s: Google. Thanks to

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view&oldid=591311120 [27.01.2014]

its neat and efficient delivery of search results, as well as its novel search algorithm, the so-called PageRank that used hyperlinks to determine and rank the relevance of search results, Google emerged as “the victor in the winner-take-all race to serve as the chief utility for the World Wide Web” (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 17). In fact, by using the number of pages that link to a specific page as an indicator of its usefulness, Google has made us experience web search as so pleasant and effective that few of us bother to look beyond the first page of search hits (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 1-3, 7, 14-17). However, in 2004, when it was discovered that Google’s top-ranking search hit for the word ‘Jew’ went to an anti-Semitic website called JewWatch, the American public’s view of Google took a hit. A petition was launched, demanding that Google remove the offending search hit. The search giant refused to alter the search results, hinting that its heavy reliance on algorithms was fully automated and that uncomfortable results such as these were the unwanted but unavoidable results of “subtleties of language” (cited in Lih, 2009: 201-204).ⁱⁱ As a response, activists decided on a GoogleBomb, a mass-coordinated effort at making the Google algorithm associate a certain search query with a certain web page, by having a multitude of people all putting a certain term on their web site, and then adding a link to the desired page (Lih, 2009: 202-204, Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 65). The most famous example of this kind of activism is perhaps the GoogleBomb that had the search engine associate the search query ‘miserable failure’ with the White House web site’s entry on then-president George W. Bush. However, in the case of the search query ‘Jew’, there was debate over what kind of web page, rather than JewWatch, should be associated with the term. Eventually, the Wikipedia article [[Jews]] was decided upon as sufficiently non-controversial, and a least common denominator that would not shut any groups out the way that, say, the Anti-Defamation League might. It is hard not to read this as a massive vote of confidence in Wikipedia’s NPOV policy (Lih, 2009: 202-204).

While incidents such as this helped propel Wikipedia up on the Google PageRank, the symbiosis between Wikipedia and Google goes further back in time. Almost immediately since its inception, Wikipedia got indexed by both Yahoo and Google. Since that time, Wikipedia has figured high on most search terms. Google’s exact method of determining relevance is secret, so the reasons for the consistent favourable treatment of Wikipedia are hard to pin down. As Siva Vaidhyanathan (2011: 65-66) has pointed out, though, to simply ascribe it to automated algorithms might miss out on the full story. Indeed, Google has recently changed its tune on search results. Possibly as a response to renewed interest in regulatory interference in its search rankings, Google has reframed its search results as editorialised content (Doctorow, 2012: online). Six years ago, Orłowski (2007: online) speculated that Wikipedia’s consistently high ranking on Google might be a result of spam and search engine optimisation, not by Wikipedia or the Wikimedia Foundation, but by a massive

proliferation of spammers and bloggers that, at one point, seemed to dilute the internet itself. According to this explanation, around 2005, Google, what Vaidhyanathan calls the “chief utility of the World Wide Web” (2011: 17), was actually “being swamped in noise”, due to “a perfect storm of ruthlessly effective SEO and wittering blogtards” (Orlowski, 2007: online). Orlowski’s (2007: online) contention, one supported by Dalby (2009: 85-86), is that prioritising Wikipedia was a conscious decision by Google, undertaken to make search results appear more relevant, and thus keeping users happy. A related argument is that Google’s engineers were aiming to avoid controversy, such as the one outlined above. Through its NPOV and assume good faith (AGF) policies, Wikipedia already has a system in place for handling controversies relating to specific search queries. According to this explanation, for Google to favour Wikipedia is simply a way of shifting the burden of dealing with controversy over on the online encyclopedia (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 63). What the two explanations have in common is that they see Google’s favourable treatment of Wikipedia as a way in which the search giant can retain its image as useful and relevant.

The symbiotic relationship between the two ensures a consistently high ranking of Wikipedia entries. Here we see the so-called network effect at work. The network effect is a term used to describe the phenomenon that occurs when “a service increases in value as more people use it” (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 19). The most obvious example is the telephone network. If only one person has a telephone, it is useless. If two people have one, its usefulness doubles (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 19). The same is true for the relationship between Wikipedia and Google. The higher Wikipedia climbs in the Google search results, the more popular it gets. The more popular it gets, the higher the number of hyperlinks and clicks on links. The higher this number is, the higher it will climb on Google (Dalby, 2009: 82-86; Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 19-20). The higher it climbs on Google, the more people are attracted to edit the article. The better and more relevant the article becomes, the more people will link to it, and the higher it will climb on Google. The better and more relevant the article appears, the better and more relevant the Google search results appear. And so the loop goes (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 63). It is worth noting that the synergy effects emerging from the symbiotic relationship between Google and Wikipedia resonate with Castells’ (2009: 45-47) notions of the power inherent in “switching” and “network-making power”, that is, the ability to connect networks. I explore the relevance of Castells’ ideas to how Wikipedia portrays the world and why it is important, in chapter two.

It would seem the online encyclopedia has reached critical mass. In 2006, writer and cyberspace critic Nicholas Carr searched Google for the following terms: World War II, Israel, George Washington, Genome, Agriculture, Herman Melville, Internet, Magna Carta, Evolution, and Epilepsy.

The Wikipedia entries for these all showed up on the first page of Google, respectively ranked as numbers 1, 1, 4, 9, 6, 3, 5, 2, 3, and 6. In 2007, he did the same searches. Except for [[George Washington]] and [[Epilepsy]] (which reached numbers two and three), the corresponding Wikipedia entries had a climbed to the very top of the Google search results. By 2009, all the top search results were Wikipedia articles (Carr, 2009: online; Dalby, 2009: 84-85). Whatever its origins, that there is a symbiotic feedback loop favouring Wikipedia should be clear. Thanks to the network effect, Google gives us wikiality squared, and it is exactly Wikipedia's prominent place in popular culture which necessitates a critical reading of it, a point I get back to in chapter two.

Wikipedia's Nuts and Bolts

My dissertation is about Wikipedia's cultural impact, what is and is not visible on Wikipedia, and how this is related to Wikipedia's architecture. However, to be able to discuss these topics, it is necessary to take a look at how Wikipedia works. We have seen how Wikipedia is dependent upon an adherence to a shared set of values, notably the five pillars. These ideological underpinnings are important. I have explored them already and will get back to them in chapter two, but for now, it is time to take a look at the nuts and bolts of Wikipedia.

In principle, anybody with an internet connection can edit Wikipedia. It is just a matter of hitting the tab marked 'edit', which opens up an edit page. Here, people can delete, add, or modify text, provide references, or tag particular claims as being in need for a reference. They can also tag the entire entry as being poorly written, promotional, or somehow problematic in a variety of ways. To begin with the last, these tags exist despite the community's SOFIXT dictum, a knee jerk response to criticism and a clear demonstration of the Wikipedia ethos: If a reader is unhappy with content on Wikipedia, the best solution is for her to fix it herself (Lih, 2009: 114-115). That said, the point of the tags is that they will caution the reader and encourage other Wikipedians to improve the article. If she moves on to the talk page, she can also tag the entry as being of particular interest to WikiProject Gastropods or any other of the around 2100 WikiProjects, a loose group of editors who collaborate on improving articles in a particular field. To edit, though, requires not only internet connectivity, but also a basic familiarity, or at least a willingness to experiment with, the Wiki markup language, the way of writing which lets the software know how it must render itself.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, for words to appear in bold, they have to be written with three apostrophes at the beginning and end, like *'''this'''*. For those who would want to edit it, in Wiki markup language, the paragraph from Wikipedia I quoted from in the beginning of this chapter looks like this:

'''Wikipedia''' {{IPA|en|audio=En-uk-Wikipedia.ogg|w|ɪ|k|i|ˈ|p|iː|d|i|ə}} or {{IPA|en|audio=en-us-Wikipedia.ogg|w|ɪ|k|i|ˈ|p|iː|d|i|ə}} {{respell|WIK|i|PEE|dee-ə}} is a [[collaborative editing|collaboratively edited]], [[multilingualism|multilingual]], [[Free

content|free]] [[Internet encyclopedia]] that the non-profit [[Wikimedia Foundation]] supports. [[Community of Wikipedia|Volunteers]] worldwide collaboratively write Wikipedia's 30 million articles in 287 languages, including {{srlink|Wikipedia:Size of Wikipedia|over {{#expr:0.1*floor ({{NUMBEROFARTICLES:R}}/100000)}} million}} in the [[English Wikipedia]]. Anyone who can access the site can edit almost any of its articles, which on the [[Internet]] comprise^{<ref name="anyone" />} the largest and most popular general [[reference work]],^{<ref name="AlexaStats" />}^{<ref name="Tancer" />}^{<ref name="Woodson" />}^{<ref name="AlexaTop500" />}^{<ref name="comscore WP most popular 1">}^{<cite web|url=http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2012/9/comScore_Media_Metrix_Ranks_Top_50_US_Web_Properties_for_August_2012|title=comScore MMX Ranks Top 50 US Web Properties for August 2012|publisher=comScore|date=12 September 2012|accessdate=6 February 2013}}}</ref> ranking sixth globally among all websites on [[Alexa Internet|Alexa]] with an estimated 365 million readers.^{<ref name="AlexaStats" />}^{<ref name="365M" />}⁵

However, not all users can, even if they wanted to, edit this page. It is semi-protected. That means that should they want to edit it, they need to have had a user account for at least four days, and have a record of having done at least ten edits to unprotected entries, thereby acquiring what is termed autoconfirmed status. This is true for a number of pages, including the front page, but most commonly pages covering potentially controversial content. Should one wish to create a brand new article, one also needs to register an account, although it does not have to be autoconfirmed. The reasoning behind these limitations is that they are thought to discourage vandalism.^{iv} Some IP-addresses or ranges of IP addresses, typically belonging to education institutions, but also other institutions, including proxy servers and companies (such as internet cafés) which offer internet connection to the public have been banned from editing anonymously on Wikipedia. The reason for such bans is that these IP addresses have become associated with frequent vandalism. Nor is it possible to create a user account from such an IP address.

Being a registered user has other advantages as well. Amongst other things, such as being able to communicate with other Wikipedians, joining WikiProjects and building up your own track record of edits and contributions, your IP address, which can be used to track down where you are editing from, and therefore, at least semi-identify you, becomes hidden to all but Wikipedians entrusted with so-called CheckUser rights.⁶⁷ This is a very small group of less than fifty well-established Wikipedians, almost always administrators, who are entrusted with the right to check which accounts are associated with which IP addresses. This is in order to prevent, investigate or rectify issues such as vandalism, sock puppetry (the act of creating several accounts in order to operate

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia&action=edit&oldid=589354482> [08.01.2014]

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Why_create_an_account%3F&oldid=581968625 [18.12.2013]

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:User_access_levels&oldid=586413202 [18.12.2013]

with alternate identities, often done to appear to be ‘winning’ consensus), “disruption (or potential disruption) to any Wikimedia project”⁸ (hereunder making edits that can land Wikipedia in legal hot water), and “legitimate concerns about bad faith editing”⁹, that is, fears that edits are being made which knowingly go against the five pillars of Wikipedia and therefore the spirit of the project. CheckUsers are expected to keep an eye on each other, to prevent abuse of this privilege, while ombudsmen are trusted to make sure Wikipedia’s privacy policy is not breached.¹⁰

Paradoxically, while Wikipedia is widely noted for the way it eschews authority, its hierarchy is perpetually growing. It is far too complex to deal with in all its byzantine splendour, but one group of users does warrant special mention: the administrators. There are, per the eighteenth of December, 2013, 1423 administrators, sometimes also referred to as sysops, on Wikipedia.¹¹ Although Jimmy Wales (cited in Lih, 2009: 95) famously referred to so-called adminship as “not a big deal”, the administrator group has attracted considerable attention and debate. Administrators are users, who after being nominated in what is referred to as the Request for Adminship (RfA), are (if accepted) appointed by the community through a long-winded consensus-minded process of debate and gruelling scrutiny of candidates’ edits and conduct since they first joined Wikipedia (Burke & Kraut, 2008: 3441-3442).

Becoming an administrator is increasingly difficult. Burke and Kraut (2008: 3441-3446) looked into what might make a bid for adminship successful and found that, despite conventional wisdom, the amount of edits to a normal article, effort put into maintenance chores or even consensus-seeking and politeness (measured by the use of words like ‘please’), are weak indicators of whether a request will be successful. Other things are more important. One is editing on Wikipedia’s policy pages (Burke & Kraut, 2008: 3444-3446). Administrators would also do well to participate on article talk pages (Burke & Kraut, 2008: 3444-3446). These are core to Wikipedia’s consensus-oriented way of collaboratively building an encyclopedia. Every article has a talk page, easily available through the ‘talk’ tab sitting together with the ‘edit’ and ‘history’ tabs atop the article name. Whereas the article is the space for presenting a particular topic, the talk page is the place to go to discuss how that topic is presented. This is where the community is able to “discuss, debate, or coordinate editing” (Lih, 2009: 75) of that particular article. Burke and Kraut’s (2008: 3444-3446) last indicator of whether a bid for adminship will be successful is whether the candidate has a history of leaving behind edit summaries after editing.

⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:CheckUser&oldid=586484792> [18.12.2013]

⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:CheckUser&oldid=586484792> [18.12.2013]

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:User_access_levels&oldid=586413202 [18.12.2013]

¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:About&oldid=586419455> [18.12.2013]

An edit summary is a brief account of one's editing action. For every time one saves one's edit to a page, one is prompted to provide an edit summary. The edit summary is a way of ensuring accountability and transparency. This way, editors who have an article on their watch list, for example, will not only be notified that there has been an edit to the article, but also what the edit was about. Conversely, if one does not provide an edit summary, the chances are smaller other editors will assume that the edit was done in good faith.¹² Edit summaries are available under an article's 'history' tab. On the history page, users can compare any two versions of the article. Every time someone as much as moves a comma, it is logged as a new version. The different versions are listed by time and date, editor's name (or, in the case of anonymous editors, IP address), the size of the edit (measured in number of characters changed), and finally, the editor's own edit summary (should they choose to provide one: even though it is highly encouraged, not all editors leave edit summaries for every edit).¹³

I mentioned earlier that administrators are the subject of much debate. The reason for this is that they enjoy a number of privileges. This small group of users are the only ones who have the rights to completely delete an article. They can also undelete it, should they disagree with another administrator's decision to delete. Administrators can also block or unblock other users from editing, either permanently or for a given time period. I mentioned semi-protected articles earlier; administrators have the right to either place pages under full protection, which means that they can only be edited by administrators, semi-protection, as well as protect various other features of an article. Administrators set the duration for these decisions, and also have the right to revert them (Lih, 2009: 94-96).¹⁴ Mathieu O'Neil, scrutinising authority on Wikipedia from a Weberian perspective, has argued that administrators' exclusive grip on the delete and restore buttons is a democratic problem: "1500 people are determining what deserves to be included in the encyclopedia, whilst the project has 12 million user accounts" (2011: online). Administrators have the right to unilaterally delete an article without further ado should it, in their eyes, meet any of 24 criteria known as the Criteria for Speedy Deletion (CSD), most of which, at least on the surface, are relatively straight-forward, such as the article being spam. In other cases, articles get nominated for deletion –this process is known as Articles for Deletion (AfD), and, after a week of deliberation, a decision is made to either keep or delete them. Geiger and Ford (2011: 201-202) found that around 60% of all deletions were CSD-deletes, but that nonsense and spam made up a surprisingly small portion of these. Instead, the number one reason administrators gave for deleting an article was

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Help:Edit_summary&oldid=585808146 [18.12.2013]

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Help:Page_history&oldid=577414879 [18.12.2013]

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Protection_policy&oldid=583249971 [18.12.2013],
<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Administrators&oldid=586317242> [18.12.2013]

that the article showed “no indication of importance” (Geiger & Ford, 2011: 201). In the case of debates around AfD, they found that newcomers or indeed the article creators themselves were rarely involved. The authors conclude that newcomers who want to contribute with new articles on Wikipedia need to learn to write in a way that appeals to administrators, a clear indication of their role as gatekeepers and ability to define what is acceptable discourse (Geiger & Ford, 2011: 201-202). It is this kind of policing of what is and is not knowledge that shapes the representation of places I analyse in chapters three and four.

Barriers to participation

Wikipedia, like other online collaboration projects, relies on newcomers and occasional dabblers to provide new content. However, Halfaker and others (2013) have warned that it is no longer able to retain its newcomers. From their perspective, the current Wikipedia environment is a response to the explosive rate at which Wikipedia grew in popularity between 2004 and 2007. The burst in popularity saw the project awash in newcomers unaccustomed to Wikipedia’s norms and values. The solution to the perceived mess this made on Wikipedia was increased bureaucratisation and use of bots: “autonomous computer programs that perform edits with little or no human intervention” (Halfaker and others, 2013: 668). At their most basic, bots can detect and revert vandalism and spelling errors, but their range is wide, and they can perform a whole range of “algorithmically-defined tasks involved with editing, maintenance, and administration in Wikipedia” (Geiger & Riber, 2010: 119). As of 2010, 16,3% of all edits on Wikipedia were made by bots (Geiger & Riber, 2010: 119).

While the intention behind the bots, as well as the increased focus on bureaucracy is well-intentioned and arguably necessary to deal with the increasingly complex society evolving around Wikipedia, they have nevertheless produced an environment that is less welcoming and less likely to incorporate the contributions of newcomers, arguably putting the entire project at risk (Halfaker and others, 2013: 683). Geiger and Riber (2010: 125) see bots and algorithms created to assist in the editing process as actors that systematically discriminate against newcomers and unregistered users by keeping them under closer scrutiny and affording them fewer opportunities to edit. Wikipedia’s increasing conservatism, not to say stagnation, is not limited to mainspace content: ‘meta’-pages on Wikipedia - policies, guidelines, and essays - are decreasingly receptive to the input of new Wikipedia volunteers. “Wikipedia”, the authors write, “has changed from the encyclopedia anyone can edit to the encyclopedia anyone who understands the norms, socializes himself or herself, dodges the impersonal wall of semi-automated rejection, and still wants to voluntarily contribute his or her time and energy can edit” (Halfaker and others, 2013: 683). Ford and Geiger (2012) have explored informal requirements to participation in Wikipedia through qualitative case studies,

arguing that the biggest deterrence to participation is not technical, but cultural. On Wikipedia, “a variety of activities and practices collectively constitute a new kind of literacy” (Ford & Geiger, 2012: 17) that is hard for novices to penetrate. By not knowing the bureaucracy and the values, it is difficult for new users to ‘talk back’ when their contributions are criticised or deleted. For example, new users need to learn how to present a topic as notable, should their topic of choice happen to be documented in sources out of easy reach from editors in the global north. In one case, an entry about a Kenyan coffee chain kept getting deleted. The community simply did not recognise its relevance until a Wikipedia administrator rewrote the entry with reference to an article in the *Guardian* rather than to Kenyan news sources (Ford & Geiger, 2012: 19). Ford has elsewhere (2011: 258-260) written about the Kenyan faux action hero meme Makmende, and how its corresponding Wikipedia entry kept getting deleted for lack of notability, until it was finally kept when coverage in the *Wall Street Journal* could be documented. Stories like these indicate that it is especially important for aspirant Wikipedia editors from developing countries to acquire the necessary cultural capital to be able to present topics in a way that appeals to established Wikipedians before they can become successful editors in their own right (Ford & Geiger, 2012: 18-19). It is in this sense that Ford and Geiger (2012: 19) can argue that “literacy is a means of exercising power in Wikipedia”. Thus, meaningful participation does not come down to internet access alone, but a whole host of factors linked to development on a more general level (Ford, 2011: 261-262).

As is clear from my discussion of not only Pentzold (2010), but also Suh and others (2009), and Kittur and others (2007a; 2007b) below, in later years, pages outlining the policies and guidelines for participation in the Wikipedia process have become far less open to inputs from new users. The increasingly hostile policies and (semi-) automated responses to new edits constitute a form of “sociotechnical gatekeeping” (Halfaker and others, 2013: 684), a phenomenon which can ultimately lead to the decline of voluntary online collaboration projects. One might also here note that acknowledged membership in the project is dependent upon what Pentzold (2010: 718) terms “orthopraxy”: users need not only master the technical tools of the trade, but also “acquire the appropriate beliefs, values, common undertakings and practices” (Pentzold, 2010: 718). For new users, then, what is required is conformity to a project ethos already developed by the early adopters. This includes ideas of what constitutes a credible source and what kind of knowledge is valuable. The same is true for content. Viegas and others (2004: 580-581) have noted that Wikipedia features a “first-mover advantage”, in which most of the text initially added to a new entry tends to survive and be quite resistant to subsequent modifications. The increasing recalcitrance of Wikipedia, whether we are talking about participants, content, or policy, resonates with Soudien’s (2007: 440-441, 450-454) comments upon the discourse surrounding access to education in post-

apartheid South Africa; it is the student that is expected to transform and conform, not the school system. In other words, people who have historically been marginalised are expected to adapt to the regime of truth, and not the other way around. These observations are quite relevant to my own thesis in the sense that, given the fact that Wikipedia appears less responsive and less accommodating to newcomers, it is doubtful whether it will be able to build an infrastructure which encourages people other than the early adopter demography to contribute to and continue to build the project. As we shall see in this thesis, the end result is that while Wikipedia's reach might be growing thanks to proliferation of communication technology, the discourse it produces fails to transform. Participation is, as we have seen, predicated upon privilege in the form of cultural capital and orthopraxy. At the same time, the discourse analysed in this thesis typically glosses over how this privilege is produced, and how it favours wealthy, traditionally 'white', localities over more marginalised spaces, which in South Africa have traditionally been 'black'.

As I discuss in chapter two, these factors speak to Castells' notion of network power: the power inherent in being able to set up the rules for a network and also regulating participation within it. Participation in networks and construction of their parameters is also a way of exercising power over those excluded by the network (Castells, 2009: 41-47). This also resonates with Edward Said's (2003: 19-27) argument that to generate knowledge about something is to exercise authority over it, a point I get back to in chapter two. Kittur and others (2007a: 8) argue that it is the early adopters and denizens of Wikipedia (as well as in any other online collaboration project) who build the infrastructure which lays the ground for mass appeal and therefore give the project momentum enough to keep going. Given that as a project matures, membership becomes more and more dependent upon adherence to already established values, the network power of early adopters in relation to relative newcomers seems apparent (Pentzold, 2010: 712-718). Kittur and others (2007b) observed that a growing proportion of edits to Wikipedia were devoted to work other than contributing to an article. In 2001, over 90% of all edits were direct modifications of mainspace content. Five years later, the number was down to 70% (Kittur and others, 2007b: 455-456). At the same time, the total number of edits grew exponentially, which lead the authors to conclude that the increased channelling of energy into co-ordination was a necessary function of Wikipedia's growth, and as such, a guarantor for Wikipedia's quality rather than a challenge to it (Kittur and others, 2007b: 461). Suh and others (2009: online) build on this observation, and find that while tools such as bots and enhanced editing software have become both more effective and prevalent, they nevertheless take up a lot of editors' and administrators' time. The authors, leaning on a biological metaphor, suggest that a population will stop growing once it leads to increased competition over resources, and that in such a situation, "advantages go to the members of the

population who have competitive dominance” (Suh and others, 2009: online). This speaks directly to networking, network, and networked power as discussed in chapter two, and forms part of the “sociotechnical gatekeeping” (Halfaker and others, 2013: 684) outlined above. Interestingly, Suh and others (2009: online) find that part of the ‘resource conflict’, to stick with the metaphor, is due to the fact that Wikipedia is running out of “easy topics to write about” (Suh and others, 2009: online), an argument previously brought up by Kittur and others (2007b: 455). This, I would argue, is a slightly problematic claim in light of my own research. Mark Graham (2011: 272-275) has also made a powerful argument of why this is not the case, finding evidence in the highly unequal distribution of geotagged Wikipedia articles. Yes, articles like [[apple]], [[cat]], and [[The Simpsons]] have already been written. However, as is clear from my findings, there are plenty of localities in the Free State for which information is easily available, yet the corresponding entries, if they exist at all, are sparse. Nor can [[Cape Town]] really be said to be an adequate representation. There are, as I show in chapter three, analysing the [[Cape Town]] entry, glaring omissions and misrepresentations (the word ‘poverty’, for example, is conspicuously absent), and this is an entry that was prominently displayed as ‘Today’s Featured Article’ on Wikipedia’s front page.¹⁵ To overlook discrepancies such as these is, as is a recurring theme in this thesis, to contribute to the further marginalisation of particular peoples and places.

When it comes to networked power, it is also worth noting that the edits of firmly entrenched Wikipedians, here defined as registered users with more than 250 edits to their name, have longer lifespans than those done by occasional editors (Panciera, Halfaker & Terveen, 2009: 53-56-57). These users, whose contributions are assumed to be of high quality since the reversion rate is so low, are interesting in that they maintain a relatively steady output, whereas most users come into the project, engage in a short burst of intensive editing and then disappear again. Interestingly, the persistence of edits from these established Wikipedians do not change over time. If quality, which a number of authors equate with edit persistence, does not change over time, it appears as if the value these editors bring to the project is carried over from elsewhere rather than created in Wikipedia. Hence, Panciera, Halfaker and Terveen assert that “Wikipedians are born, not made” (2009: 51), a clear allusion to privilege on a more general level.

Another way of looking at those with power over others on Wikipedia is to look at deletion of articles. I have already mentioned two studies which look at Kenyan contributions to the English-language Wikipedia (Ford, 2011; Ford & Geiger, 2012) and how notability (as part of the Wikipedia

¹⁵

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Today%27s_featured_article/July_18,_2006&oldid=61981013 [01.02.2014]

ethos as a whole) is established from the perspective of “a small, homogeneous, geographically close community” (Ford, 2011: 266). The same authors have also looked at article deletion. Geiger and Ford (2011) find that deletion decisions are overwhelmingly done by Wikipedia editors, and that the most frequently cited reason for deletion is not that it constitutes spam, vandalism, or nonsense, but that it does not live up to Wikipedia’s standards. In other words, the content might be relevant, but the way it is presented fails to live up to the community’s standards. Here we might remind ourselves of Ford and Geiger’s (2012: 19) idea of Wikipedia literacy as power, the lack of which makes it difficult to argue for an article’s relevance. Geiger and Ford (2011: 202) note that the AfD process, which requires deliberation by the community before consensus on whether to delete or keep a particular article is reached, is typically marked by a very low number of participants. Furthermore, these participants are overwhelmingly regulars. On average, 95,8% of participants in an AfD discussion have participated in at least one AfD discussion previously. At the same time, only 17,59% of creators of the articles nominated for this process ever participates in these debates. It would therefore appear that newcomers are overwhelmed by the more seasoned Wikipedians well-armed with cultural capital. I mentioned earlier that Wikipedia is increasingly unable to retain newcomers. Part of the explanation, argue Halfaker and others, might be that the early edits of newcomers are increasingly met with reverts by algorithms, and that new users might be put off by early encounters with algorithmic tools “because of their impersonal nature and the aggressive editing patterns they encourage” (2013: 669).

Factors such as these make it difficult for Wikipedia to broaden its editor base. The core demographic of editors has remained fairly static since 2001. The average Wikipedian working on the English language version, according to the Wikipedia essay Wikipedia: Systemic Bias,

“is (1) a male, (2) technically inclined, (3) formally educated, (4) an English speaker (native or non-native), (5) aged 15–49, (6) from a majority-Christian country, (7) from a developed nation, (8) from the Northern Hemisphere, and (9) likely employed as a white-collar worker or enrolled as a student rather than employed as a blue-collar worker”.¹⁶

The essay goes on to acknowledge that the demographic of the editors necessarily shapes the content. While it is hard to make any kind of overarching claims, we know that users of Wikipedia, whether they contribute or just seek out information, are relatively young and engaged in secondary or tertiary education. A 2010 survey found that of all the respondents who make use of Wikipedia, seventy-five percent were under than 30 years old. The vast majority of contributors to Wikipedia (among readers, the division between genders is more even) is male, with less than 15% of Wikipedia contributors being women (Glott, Schmidt & Ghosh, 2010: 7). Numbers on race and

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Systemic_bias&oldid=581561285 [31.01.2014]

Wikipedia are hard to come by, but an unofficial survey of female contributors to the English-language Wikipedia, found that most were based in the U.S., and that a total of 77 per cent of respondents self-identified as 'white', and as little as 3 per cent self-identified as 'black' or 'African-American' (Stierch, 2011: online). Wikipedia's recalcitrance and apparent stagnation when it comes to recruitment does therefore not bode well in terms of what kind of view of the world it produces. That the nature of the editors shapes their output is linked to notions of power and hegemony, which I will explore in the next chapter.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Wikipedia was made possible by technology –most notably wiki software- and an ever-expanding set of principles, of which Wikipedia's five pillars might be the most important. These two are what made possible the vital third component: the community. Since its start in 2001, Wikipedia has become a resounding success, in large part thanks to the (initially) relatively low barriers to entry, as well as its symbiotic relationship with Google. While there is much anxiety about the unstable nature of knowledge presented on Wikipedia, this thesis does not concern itself with debates pertaining to accuracy as such. Instead, I try to take Wikipedia's presence and importance for granted, and use this as a starting point for interrogating the relationship between knowledge and power, a dynamic I will explore further in the next chapter. While much of the inspiration for its architecture comes from the FOSS movement, the encyclopedic urge itself can be traced to the Enlightenment. The guiding principles are derived from both Enlightenment thought and a favourite of Silicon Valley libertarians: Ayn Rand and her ideas of objectivism. Wikipedia's basic operating principles presume that there is such a thing as objective truth, and that this can be attained or at least approximated by adhering to credos such as the NPOV policy. Together with the demand that content be verifiable, and the way this elevates certain sources, it becomes clear that Wikipedia is its own regime of truth, while also slotting into a bigger regime of truth. Certainly, a lot of power rests in these definitions, a theme I will be exploring in the next chapter.

While Wikipedia on the face of things eschews authority, it has actually built up a very complex hierarchy. Newcomers are at a distinct disadvantage in this environment, because they do not know the conventions. It is, in many ways, a question of cultural capital or, in the words of Ford and Geiger, "literacy" (2012: 19). This literacy is connected our traditional understanding of privilege. Wikipedia is struggling to retain newcomers, and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to add or change content. To do so, as pointed out above, requires considerable cultural or institutional capital. Wikipedia's content is shaped, as this thesis shows, by its core user group which is by and large young, 'white', well educated, male, of a certain 'techie' bent, and based in the global north.

Simply rolling out access is not going to address this groups 'first mover advantage', or Wikipedia's increasingly recalcitrant response to change.

CHAPTER TWO: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WIKIALITY

Following the airing of Comedy Central's *Colbert Report* on the last day of July in 2006, there was an unusual bustle of activity on Wikipedia's [[Elephant]] entry. Wikipedia proudly proclaims itself to be "the free encyclopedia anyone can edit"¹⁷, and the satirical TV personality Stephen Colbert had decided to give it a go. In his regular segment 'The Wørd', Colbert waxed lyrical about the virtues of Wikipedia, where "[any] user can change any entry and if enough other users agree with them, it becomes true" (cited in Lih, 2009: 201). He said that contrary to popular belief, the number of elephants in Africa had in fact tripled in the last six months, and urged his viewers to update Wikipedia to reflect this 'fact'. In a matter of minutes, the first prankster changed the [[Elephant]] entry to reflect the supposed sudden increase in Africa's elephant population. The misinformation was weeded out in less than a minute and the article was quickly placed under protection; only registered users who had made more than 10 edits to Wikipedia could edit it. At the time of writing, February 2014, seven years after the fact, [[Elephant]] remains semi-protected, due to consistent attempts at vandalising the content. The 'Wørd' of that day was *Wikiality*. Stephen Colbert's snappy, if somewhat ambiguous, praise for Web 2.0 pretty much summed up the postmodern information age: "Together we can create a reality that we all agree on - the reality we just agreed on" (Colbert, cited in Lih, 2009: 202).

It might be a joke, but wikiality matters. This dissertation argues that content on Wikipedia and the way it is produced and consumed has a bearing on how we understand ourselves and others. While I have taken the term 'wikiality' off a faux pundit TV show, the meaning with which I infuse it comes from Foucault, and is almost surprisingly applicable. The nature of Wikipedia content itself is neither random nor neutral, but a product of existing social power relations. This is significant, because Wikipedia has become the go-to place for easily accessible and digestible 'facts' and is often hailed as a democratiser of knowledge (see, for example, Chen, 2010). At the same time, Wikipedia's reach is growing. It seems that Wikipedia, in the words of its 'benevolent dictator' Jimmy 'Jimbo' Wales, is indeed bringing us a little closer to "a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge" (2009: xv).

The purpose of this thesis is to add a cautionary caveat to the techno-optimistic tale of the online "free encyclopedia that anyone can edit": Like the encyclopedias printed upon dead tree mass which preceded it, Wikipedia's reach is wide. Its uptake is unprecedented. It is often hailed as a "spectacular success", and "revolutionary and crucial", especially so in "those cultures in the 'long tail' of the language list" "in which there are no strong commercial incentives to create an

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Main_Page&oldid=487091194 [03.06.2012]

encyclopedia” (Lih, 2009: 10-11). What often gets lost in the fervid accolades is that Wikipedia, just like its predecessors, arguably reflects and reinforces rather than challenges society’s dominant ideas, and that such a knowledge loop comes at the expense of the margins.

If the point of Wikipedia is, as Wales (2009: xv) suggests, “free access to the sum of all human knowledge”, then we need to interrogate knowledge. It is, as the old cliché goes, power. Conventional wisdom has it that the acquisition of knowledge is in itself empowering. Thus, on the face of it, to make available “the sum of all human knowledge” (Wales, 2009: xv) to everyone on earth, is a laudable exercise in global democracy, in the sense that it - at least theoretically - enables a people’s power. Crucial to this paper, though, is a slightly different understanding of the old adage and, consequently, Wikipedia’s growing spread. To understand power relations, and to explore how these are bound up in knowledge production, we first need to define power. When we talk of power as a socio-political concept, it is first of all necessary to understand that this is not an absolute or a constant. It is not a thing in itself as much as a feature of a relationship. Thus, Castells refers to power as “the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values” (2009: 10). In other words, ‘power’ refers not only to an actor’s ability to influence another, but simultaneously the other actor’s ability to resist and challenge this influence. Castells’ ideas of power in a network society are particularly relevant to this paper, as they operate at the intersection between technology, knowledge production, discourse, and hegemony.

Castells, Wikipedia, and network power

To some extent, Chairman Mao’s assertion that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” (1960: 13) is true; power ultimately rests upon brute force. However, force as a mechanism of power is only half the story. To maintain any kind of social order, the construction of meaning, that is, discourse, “through which social actors guide their actions” (Castells, 2009: 10), plays an equally important part. Indeed, to Castells (2009), the use of brute force is of little importance, especially when interrogating power as a social feature, as it ultimately destroys the relationship. Still, Mao’s dictum holds true in the sense that in a social hierarchy like the modern nation state, the use of force has become institutionalised, and thus “sets up the context of domination in which the cultural production of meaning can deploy its effectiveness” (Castells, 2009: 11). The more this relationship depends upon the construction of meaning and the use of discourse, the less likely it is to descend into brute force (Castells, 2009: 11). Instead, the structural dispersion of power derives its legitimacy from “consent elicited by the construction of shared meaning” (Castells, 2009: 12). This understanding of how power works is closely related to the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Castells, 2009: 16, Fraser, 1992: 116-117, Pellicani, 1981: 31-32), which I will get back to later in this chapter.

Castells (2009: 42-47) lists five types of power evident in the network society: networking power, network power, networked power, and network-making power. *Networking power* refers to the power exercised by the included over the excluded. A central tenet in this dissertation borrowed from Foucault (1980) and Said (2003), which I get back to later in the chapter, is that to construct knowledge over a subject is to hold power over it. Since a lot of the discourse around Wikipedia and the developing world revolves around access to networks, it is also instructive to note that “the costs of exclusion from networks increases faster than the benefits of inclusion in the network” (Castells, 2009: 42-43). This means that the developing world is playing a perpetual game of catch-up, with few opportunities to shape the network itself, a notion also reflected in Castells’ concepts discussed below. *Network power* refers to the power to impose the rules regulating use of the network, and how effectively these control participants’ behaviour. This form of power “ultimately favours the interests of a specific set of social actors at the source of network formation and of the establishment of the standards” (Castells, 2009: 43). In chapter two, I outlined how the early comers to Wikipedia were able to set up its architecture, and how this has created an environment increasingly resistant to change. Here we might recall that Wikipedia’s increasing demand for “orthopraxy” (Pentzold, 2010: 718) means that it is the new Wikipedians who need to adapt to Wikipedia, and not the other way around. For example, it has become much more difficult becoming an administrator (Burke & Kraut, 2008: 3442). The power that comes with this position is thus retained among those who came to the project early. Castells (2009: 43) uses the Washington Consensus as a set of rules or norms for use and harnessing of global capital and production as an example of this kind of networking power. This comparison is apt as participation here makes participation in competing networks or solutions more difficult, while ultimately favouring developed nations. Staying outside of the network comes at an increasingly higher price, while the terms of inclusion are rigged to favour the already established players. This thesis argues that some of Wikipedia’s core principles, such as its elevation of (typically Western) written sources fulfil the same functions (Castells, 2009: 42-43). *Networked power* simply refers to those who have power in the networks. As an example, we might recall the last chapter’s emphasis on “sociotechnical gatekeeping” (Halfaker and others, 2013: 684) and the cultural capital required to make a lasting contribution to Wikipedia (Ford & Geiger, 2012: 17). In general, the exact nature of the power-holders is quite nebulous. The nature of power is dependent upon the network. If power is the ability to impose one’s will through influencing others, thereby achieving one’s goal, then the nature of power will depend upon the goal of the specific network. This brings us to the next point about networked power: it is never absolute, but fluid, and shared among several actors (Castells, 2009: 44-45). Here, we might remind ourselves of Castells’ definition of power as a “relational capacity”

(2009: 10). Lastly, we come to what Castells terms “the paramount form of power in the network society” (2009: 47): *Network-making power*. This refers to two things, namely the ability to construct a network, including setting up its goals, and the ability to connect various networks. Those with the capacity to establish networks and define their goals are referred to as “programmers”, whereas those who can connect and coordinate between various networks are referred to as “switchers” (Castells, 2009: 45). Here one should stress that power is not necessarily linked to particular individuals or organisations, but rather rests with the networks themselves. Networks, in this sense, carry a specific meaning; what is meant here is not infrastructural or technical, but particular associations and constellations of human beings. More than the sum of its individual parts, power is latent in, and can be harnessed from, these constellations (Castells, 2009: 45). Programmers are powerful, as these have the ability to design, redesign and decide what the network is for, thereby determining value (Castells, 2009: 28, 45-46). In other words, network-making power goes beyond Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, even if some of Wikipedia’s basic values (such as NPOV) reflect some of their own (such as their partiality toward objectivism). In light of the relationship between Google and Wikipedia explored in the previous chapter, it is interesting to note how these two networks connect and, through harnessing the momentum inherent in the network effect, elevate a particular representation of reality: what I refer to as wikiality. Google, as mentioned in chapter two, might have its own reasons for featuring Wikipedia entries so high in its search hits. Wikipedia, in turn, ultimately rests upon traditional institutions of knowledge production whose products are curated on Wikipedia by a multitude of volunteers with wide-ranging motivations for participation. The end result is that particular representations of the world become more prominent than others. While ‘programming’ connotes technical wizardry, the design of the network is in fact determined by “*ideas, visions, projects, and frames*” (Castells, 2009: 46, italics in original), which are cultural rather than technological elements. Wikipedia’s intellectual ancestry is thus highly relevant to analysing its output, which is why I gave a rough outline of its predecessors, spanning from the Enlightenment to libertarianism and Ayn Rand’s objectivism, in chapter two.

Cultures, the building blocks of any network, need to be communicated. The key to having the capacity to shape a network thus rests with one’s command of communication networks. This brings us to Castells’ switchers. Switchers derive their power from their ability to coordinate and interact between networks. Switchers “are not persons, but they are made of persons. They are actors, made of networks of actors engaging in dynamic interfaces that are specifically operated in each process of connection” (Castells, 2009: 47). A powerful example would be the military-industrial complex. It is from their “position in the social structure” (Castells, 2009: 47) that switchers and programmers derive their network-making power. I mention the power of switching here as Wikipedia, which

operates at the intersection of multiple discourses, is written by both amateurs and professionals, and functions as a ready canvas for all and none agendas, whether they be those of Israeli right-wing activists (Hasson, 2010: online), Norwegian 'counter-jihadists' (Saugestad, 2013: online), or slick PR firms (Owens, 2013: online). However, to be able to switch, to connect one's own localised knowledge to Wikipedia is, as Ford's (2011: 258-260) powerful Makmende example has shown, dependent upon "literacy" (Ford & Geiger, 2012: 17). This is the cultural capital required to make contributions that appeal to the already established Wikipedia community that companies like Wiki PR are selling to businesses, (Owens, 2013: online), and that neo-Nazis and right-wing Zionists are urging their members to acquire, lest their contributions be deleted (Hasson, 2010: online; Reagle: 2010: 1-2). Hence, Wikipedia's own role as switcher should not be ignored. It also operates as an interlocutor between academia and popular knowledge. Few of us bother to read heaps of bone-dry peer-reviewed academic articles every time we want to look up a subject, but go straight to Wikipedia to get a quick synopsis of the most important elements of a field. Wikipedia's role as a scholarly source might still be contested, but its credentials as seemingly democratic and roughly accurate have nevertheless made it a popular choice as a first point of contact between people and information, including "researchers of all categories" (Regalado, 2007: 5). Wikipedia citations are on the rise in academic journals, conference papers, and the like. Some of this can be attributed to a growing body of research *on* Wikipedia (like this dissertation), but fields spanning from arts and humanities to engineering and medicine nevertheless "give more citations to Wikipedia than conduct research about it" (Park, 2011: online). Luyt and others (2008: online) have found that much of Wikipedia's appeal among young people is due to its "ease of use and broad range of information resources", although they emphasise that the main concern of their respondents was information retrieval. Few of them expressed any interest in exploring any of the other aspects of Wikipedia. Use of Wikipedia is also on the rise in newsrooms, even if it often remains unacknowledged. Nor is information necessarily double checked (Shaw, 2008). Messner and South (2011) surveyed references to and use of Wikipedia in a 2001-2007 sample of *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. They found that these publications generally presented Wikipedia in a neutral or favourable light, and that use of the online encyclopedia as a source was on the rise. Crucially to my own context, they note that the more it is cited in the media, "the greater the agenda-setting influence of the online encyclopedia will become" (Messner & South, 2011: 156), and that this legitimization process might lead to a self-reinforcing loop, in which the regard the newspapers treat Wikipedia with might lead to it being held in higher esteem among the general public, and that this might lead newspapers to use it more, and so forth. This is a close echo of the network effect arising out of the symbiotic relationship between

Wikipedia and Google, as noted in chapter two. Certainly, the encyclopedia anyone can edit has established itself as a highly authoritative source, both among communities on the internet and offline. Thus, it deserves to be taken seriously, and interrogated as part of a regime of truth just like more established institutions of knowledge production.

Marx, Gramsci, and Wikipedia

The recent global financial crisis has brought renewed interest in Marxist analyses of the political economy. This renewed interest has come about at the intersection of the recent contractions in global finance, the globalisation of capital (as well as the globalised resistance this has triggered), the role of technology and the consciousness industries in underpinning contemporary society, the continuous immiserization of the world's poor, the surge in neoimperialism as exemplified by the 'war on terror', and the impending ecological crisis (Fuchs & Dyer-Witheford, 2012: 784). As a response to these events, Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford call for a re-orientation of internet studies "as a Critique of the Political Economy and Critical Theory of the Internet" (2012: 785). This is especially pertinent given how media and the capitalist system shape each other. They suggest that Marxist dialectics can be used to analyse the dual nature of, for example, Google, which on the one hand "anticipate a commons-based public Internet from which all benefit and create new potentials for human cooperation", but at the same time "is (...) enabled by online surveillance and user commodification that threatens consumer privacy and results in the economic exploitation of users" (Fuchs & Dyer-Witheford, 2012: 786-787). Part of my argument rests on a similar duality: as I get back to later in this chapter, Wikipedia, through the power implicated in 'knowledge', both emancipates and imprisons. While my analysis steers clear of making use of dialectics as such, Marxist interpretations of power nevertheless form a backdrop. In researching how South African spaces are represented on Wikipedia, the factors which influence this process, as well as its consequences, I take my cue from Firer-Blaess and Fuchs who argue that up to now, research on Wikipedia has been largely "positivistic and [lacking] a critical focus, because it pays little heed to its societal implications in terms of economic property, economic production, and participatory democracy" (2012: 2). While I concur with this assessment, and appreciate their efforts in exploring a "political economy of Wikipedia" (Firer-Blaess & Fuchs, 2012: 4-7), this is where my own path diverges. Firer-Blaess and Fuchs see Wikipedia as based on a mode of production which comes very close to "what Marx and Engels described as communism" (2012: 2) and a "dialectic connection of social relations and information technology" (2012: 4). My own findings lead me down a different path, and the argument that Wikipedia, thanks to its architecture, just as soon works toward preserving hegemony.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in arguing that if the working class was to improve its own position it needed to attain self-consciousness, observed that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” (1938: 39). The working classes see their interests as aligned with those of the ruling classes, despite their divergent nature. This is what makes the continued existence of an exploitative class system possible. Whereas the ruling class is self-conscious and will incessantly explain and justify its own position through continuous production of ideas and their expression, the working class has not yet attained self-consciousness, and therefore lacks true awareness of its own exploited condition. It is consequently left to the capitalist class to define what is in the interest of society, hereunder what is in the best interest of the working class. Pursuing these kinds of lofty ideals is a luxury that the working classes can ill afford, as it has little access to or command over “the means of mental production” (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39). Here we might recall Ford and Geiger’s notion of “literacy” (2012: 17) when it comes to making lasting contributions to Wikipedia. The means of mental production are owned by the very same group that control “the means of material production” (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39) while the classes “who lack the means of mental production” are nevertheless “subject to it” (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39). This dissertation argues that the same holds true even in a society where Web 2.0 and user-generated content are the order of the day. Whether we are talking about Europe in the 1800s or the South Africa of today, all societies are ultimately held together by ideas. Indeed, to Marx and Engels, ideas are so crucial to the existence of stable power relations that “the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas” (Marx & Engels, 1938: 41). In this sense, Wikipedia’s goal of absolute knowledge dissemination can be read as an extension and bolstering of already existing power relations. Of course, this depends on the kind of ideas Wikipedia helps spread, but part of my argument is that, even if the infrastructure of knowledge is changing in South Africa, the nature of ideas appears more or less static.

To contend that Wikipedia merely functions as an extension of already existing global power structures is, on the face of it, to ignore its stated goals and policies. After all, among its most central tenets are the ideas that it is supposed to be an encyclopedia, written from a neutral point of view.¹⁸ The barrier to contribution and participation is ostensibly low: all it takes is adequate internet access. Hence, Wikipedia is necessarily open to political subversion in one form or another, at least if we temporarily suspend our reservations about the distribution of internet, both globally and within South Africa. As a matter of routine in an environment in which anybody can contribute, ideas and perceptions are at constant loggerheads. Yet, this thesis argues that despite its openness, Wikipedia remains an extension of existing power relations rather than a challenge to them. This is less of a paradox than it might seem. The ruling class consists of those with access to the means of both

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Five_pillars&oldid=492214904 [08.06.2012]

material and mental production. However, this is not to say that all members of this class engage in all production aspects of society. Put somewhat crudely, the ruling class might be divided up into 'thinkers' and 'doers': those who depict the tableaux and those who enact it. The latter might have little time for the niceties of the former, while the former might not want to sullen their hands by engaging in actual production. Thus, at times, these two groups might appear at odds with each other. Despite the occasional (if not continuous) tension, the interests of these two are strongly aligned. Hence, according to Marx and Engels, the kind of tension described here will never be allowed to truly disrupt the status quo: the ruling class does not consciously jeopardize or challenge its own position (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39-41).

Gramsci later picked up the ruling classes' monopoly over the means of mental production to explain the absence of the ostensibly inevitable and imminent overthrow of capitalist society: The ruling classes maintain hegemony through controlling discourse (Pellicani, 1981: 31-32). Hegemony is, in its most basic form, the willingness to consent. It might ultimately rest upon the elite's access to forces of coercion, but just as important is the elite's ability to provide "intellectual and moral direction" (Antonio Gramsci, cited in Pellicani, 1981: 31-32). This willingness is maintained through participation in, and thereby tacit accept of, discourse. Hegemony can be uncovered by looking at both cultural practices and institutions (Holub, 1992: 78-80, 104). Wikipedia is of course both a cultural practice and institution, and according to Pentzold and Seidenglanz, "can be viewed as a discourse in the sense of a formation that regulates and structures the production of statements" (2006: 64). On a macro-level, hegemony corresponds with what Foucault later termed "regimes of truth" (1980: 131-133), institutions which make the political status quo seem not only inevitable or commonsensical, but also desirable (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39-41; Pellicani, 1981: 31-32). With the dynamic nature of power and hegemony in mind, it is instructive to view Wikipedia as a means of mental production, and the knowledge it produces as manifestations of power: "ideal expression[s] of the dominant material relationships" (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39). Thus, to make these available "to every single person" (Wales, 2009: xv), then, is to act as the ultimate disseminator of the manifestations and justifications of current power relations, and in full concord with Marx and Engels' notion that it is the ruling classes who "regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age" (Marx & Engels, 1938: 39). From this follows this project's central contention that Wikipedia's project risks to cement, perhaps even reinforce these relations, rather than alleviate them.

Foucault and the political economy of truth

If knowledge and what we perceive to be 'truth' are social constructions rather than universal constants, epistemological enquiries into Wikipedia must take this construction process as a starting

point. Here, Foucault's notion of a "political economy of truth" (1980: 131) might be useful. Foucault's basic point is that the agreed-upon nature of any fact is shaped by the relative weight of and the dynamic relationship between five central factors. Thus, a Wikipedia article like [[*Bulbophyllum metonymon*]] (to take a random example) reads the way it does thanks to a confluence of these factors. What Wikipedia presents as a "neutral compilation of verifiable, established facts"¹⁹ about this orchid is, if Foucault is to be believed, shaped by the interaction of:

1. Scientific discourse and institutions;
2. The economic and political demand for particular knowledge and perceptions of the subject;
3. The nature of this truth's spread as well as its consumption;
4. The authoritative framework of production and diffusion provided by "political and economic apparatuses..." such as "...university, army, writing, media" (Foucault, 1980: 132);
5. The dynamics of hegemony.

Taken together, the end product of these factors, the 'truth' about *Bulbophyllum metonymon*, slots into a bigger picture: a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 131). Society's power relations ultimately rest upon this kind of overarching discourse "which it accepts and makes function as truth" (Foucault, 1980: 131). It is important to note, though, that Wikipedia is not just an *outcome* of the political economy of truth; the online encyclopedia is just as much a *constituent* of it. This is why the wikiality trope borrowed from Colbert is especially apt. In that sense, it would perhaps be better to say that Wikipedia articles like [[*Bulbophyllum metonymon*]] are *symptoms* of the political economy of truth.

Central to Foucault's work on epistemology is the idea outlined earlier in this chapter: knowledge cannot be properly separated from power (1980: 131). This is in stark contrast to the tradition of humanism, which has insisted on viewing the neat division between the two as one of the virtues of science. In this master narrative of knowledge, rooted in Enlightenment values, power is an antithesis to knowledge; only those who abstain from the corrupt temptations of power are in a position to discover or value the truth. As we saw in the previous chapter, and I will also get back to it in this one, the Wikipedia project reflects similar values. This view of truth is of course a fallacy; power and knowledge are two sides of the same coin. They are articulations of each other (Foucault, 1980: 51-52). They are inseparable, in that "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Foucault, 1980: 52). This is most readily understood as power's use of knowledge as an instrument of its exercise, and its tendency to vet those 'truths' which serve to bolster its own position in society. This dynamic between power

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_in_brief&oldid=435538464 [09.12.2012]

and knowledge is very important to my own arguments about Wikipedia's knowledge of South Africa, and I will return to it later in the chapter when discussing the work of Hall (1992) and Said (2003). For now, though, let us just note that it is not simply a case of noble science commanded and corrupted in the service of malevolent power. In a perpetual dynamic, "the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information" (Foucault, 1980: 51). In turn, as the nature of knowledge and information changes, so does power (Foucault, 1980: 51-52).

Foucault (1980: 119, 1980: 51) identifies the birth of the nation state and the transition between feudalism and capitalism as a time of great change for the nature of power. As state apparatuses grew, exercising power through brute force became decreasingly cost-efficient. A "new economy of power" (Foucault, 1980: 119) based more on persuasion than coercion emerged. Despite the centrality of the state in this narrative, assuming that power is synonymous with the state is a fallacy. State power can only operate on the basis of already existing power relations (Foucault, 1980: 119-122). Indeed, the term 'economy' is apt; Foucault emphasises its dynamism and efficiency, the depth of its reach, and its simultaneous individualised and networked characteristics (Foucault, 1980: 119). These are characteristics which speak to Castells' discussion of power in the contemporary networked society, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Foucault's political economy of truth goes a long way in explaining my findings. However, I first want to explore the role of economics and politics in the construction of knowledge about Europe's Other, before moving on to look at how Wikipedia is an extension of scientific institutions and discourses established under the Enlightenment.

Economic and political demand for knowledge: Orientalism

This thesis interrogates Wikipedia and knowledge production from a South African perspective. It is hardly possible to write about the socio-political implications of discourse and hegemony in a developing country still reeling from the aftereffects of colonialism without mentioning Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003). Indeed, the genealogy of Orientalist discourse, as mapped out by Said (2003), is a perfect example of the political economy of truth. The West constructed a body of knowledge about the Other, even if this body of knowledge was at least as constitutive of the West as it was of the Other. By building up this knowledge massif through interdependent texts (artistic, philological, historical, economical, and so forth), the West gradually acquired the cultural gravitas to dominate its object of study. Through discourse, the West built itself up as an *authority* on the subject. This kind of overarching discourse has continued to serve as an instrument of dominance and political, economic, social, and cultural imperialism (Said, 2003: 19-27). In the process, the Occident, while subjugating its Other at the "nexus of knowledge and power (...), in a sense

[obliterated the Oriental] as a human being” (Said, 2003: 27). This is highly relevant in a country in which it is a privileged minority produce and negotiate knowledge about social, economic, cultural, and political conditions. In turn, this knowledge feeds into a global network of popular knowledge. Some of my own findings when it comes to coverage of Cape Town and main places in the Free State province echo the same kinds of relationships, strengthening the link between Foucault’s political economy of truth and what I have termed the political economy of wikiality. Presumably, much of the knowledge about South Africa on Wikipedia is produced from the outside, as is often the case in the developing world. Yet, because of requirements linked to technological and cultural capital, one must assume that the local guarantors and negotiators of this knowledge largely belong to a privileged minority whose interests are not necessarily commensurate with those of the populace as a whole. Certainly, their editorial choices hint at a certain dissonance between Wikipedia and South Africa’s population at large. This, as my thesis shows, results in a representation of South Africa (or wikiality, if you will) which downplays continued economic exploitation and marginalisation of the majority of the populace.

Leaning on Foucault, Said (2003: 2-3) describes Orientalism as a regime of truth which incorporates elements such as academic discourse, the general desire to establish an antithesis to the Occident, and, crucially, the exercise of power. In short, Orientalism became “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 2003: 3). As is the case with race (see, for example, Erasmus, 2001: 12, 21 and Posel, 2001: 88-98), the idea of the Orient is a construct, albeit a construct with real and lasting consequences in both “socio-economic and political institutions” (Said, 2003: 6). Like race, Orientalism is “a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been considerable material investments” (2003: 6). The point is that a body of knowledge, and a language for articulating this knowledge, is intimately linked with power relations and works to legitimise them. In the case of Orientalism, this regime of truth was crucial in enabling Europe to “manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (Said, 2003: 3). Essentially, in the history of Orientalism, through the application of ‘reason’ and the ‘arts’, one part was able to talk for, describe and represent, the Other. While it is not simply a question of dominance, but rather a dialectical relationship, Orientalism, like other regimes of truth, can only be sustained through hegemony (Said, 2003: 3-6).

Again, in an echo of Foucault's point about economic and political demand, dominance is dependent upon knowledge to function. To be possessing knowledge about something is arguably also an expression of power (or influence) over it; the strong not only observe and study the weak, but subjugate the weak for the purposes of study and observation, and so forth. A neat separation between observer and object is maintained (Said, 2003: 44-45). This division is "intrinsic", not only to Orientalism, but "to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference" (Said, 2003: 45). This is the "social management of knowledge" (Said, 2003: 44-45): Peoples, places and events are neatly categorized. The categories are based on generalities "whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends" (Said, 2003: 45). When, in turn, this knowledge is put to use, it reinforces the distinctions as well as the differential power relationships. While Said is often brought up in discussions relating to more or less overt imperialism - such as debates around the 'war on terror' - his ideas are nevertheless directly relevant to my findings of how the inhabitants of Cape Town and the Free State are being represented on Wikipedia. As we have seen, one of Wikipedia's core values is that it is supposed to be written from a neutral point of view.²⁰ This value alone is good reason to interrogate the knowledge produced and presented on Wikipedia. To assume that knowledge can attain an apolitical nature, and conversely, that knowledge that is somehow 'political' cannot aspire to be truth, is to ignore the contexts within which knowledge is produced. Indeed, to even propagate such an assumption is to obscure the highly political circumstances that produced that particular bit of knowledge, lending it additional gravitas (Said, 2003: 9-10).

Interestingly, as far as the negotiation of hegemony is concerned, in his 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, Said signals a cautious optimism when it comes to the internet as a new arena for organisation, communication, and the production of knowledge. While the preface mainly focusses on US aggression against Iraq as a continuation of modern imperialism and how this was founded in a notion of difference, he also notes that cyberspace, as a mediator of meaning "is an enormously encouraging democratic field" (Said, 2003: ii). After all, while the build-up to the invasion as well as the invasion itself was a product of politics, technology, economy, and intelligence, the global demonstrations in March 2003, signalling a co-ordinated global opposition of a never-before witnessed magnitude, would hardly have been possible without the internet. All of a sudden, it seemed possible to bypass the hegemonic gatekeepers of knowledge and place competing narratives on the agenda. Indeed, it appeared the opposition to global imperialism was harnessing the power inherent in networks. In that sense, Said's cautious techno-optimism is an early precursor

²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Five_pillars&oldid=492214904 [08.06.2012]

of much of the literature on Wikipedia's ability of levelling the playing field (see, for example, Firer-Blaess & Fuchs, 2012; Hansen, Berente & Lyytinen, 2009; Shirky, 2008; and Tapscott & Williams, 2006, for wildly differing, yet enthusiastic, takes on Wikipedia). Much scholarship tends to present Wikipedia as unburdened by power, free from the interference of market forces, hierarchy, and tradition (Tkacz, 2010: 41-43). As should be clear by now, however, this paper remains sceptical of the internet, exemplified by Wikipedia, as an avenue of transformation, at least in the short run.

The Enlightenment

According to Foucault (1980: 119), the modern political economy of truth originated in the transition from feudalism to early capitalism. New groups attained economic and political power in society. In relation to the construction of knowledge, the crucial transition from rule more or less based on brute force to rule based on consent, is worth noting here. At roughly the same time, reason, in the form of the Enlightenment movement, started to take over divinity's role in explaining both human existence and the world. As is the case with the political economy of truth itself, all these factors are heavily interlinked. It was a clear paradigm shift when scientists started to infringe upon domains previously enjoyed exclusively by the Church, introducing new frames of reference and challenging its ability to vet or veto truth. Today, some see parallels between this liberation of knowledge and the way in which ownership of knowledge, through Wikipedia, has been wrested out of the hands of scientists and into the hands of the commoner. Open to anyone with internet access, Wikipedia's implicit challenge to the traditional gatekeepers of knowledge is seen as a democratising feature (Chen, 2010: 249-250).

Despite the shift that came with the gradual move from divine right to democracy, from feudalism to capitalism, from religion to reason, power and privilege nevertheless remain relatively exclusive reserves. The discourse of the Wikipedia entries analysed in this paper bear witness to this. A clear line runs from early Enlightenment efforts to catalogue, represent, and understand the world to today's collaborative efforts on Wikipedia. These bodies of knowledge are largely composed by the same kind of people, situated within the same kind of modern scientific discourse, and based upon the same kind of values. Both vehemently deny their own complicity in the hegemonic process, insisting on a clear separation between truth and agenda and observer and object. Thus, if one is to interrogate the regime of truth guiding the construction of knowledge on Wikipedia, arguably the biggest encyclopedia in the world, a natural time and place to start is eighteenth-century France, the birth place of the world's first encyclopedia.

The *Encyclopédie, Ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, all in all 17 volumes of text and 12 volumes of illustrations, was edited by Jean d'Alembert and Denis Diderot,

and published between 1751 and 1772. It is a powerful witness to the Enlightenment tendency to treat “all aspects of human life and the natural world as open to rational study” (Hamilton, 1992: 27). The *Encyclopédie* managed to attract most of the period’s major *philosophes* as contributors and had a stated aim, much like Wikipedia, of compiling all human knowledge (Hamilton, 1992: 27-28). The Enlightenment movement that gave birth to the *Encyclopédie* is usually credited as a crucial stage in the development of modern society. Through the application of reason, the Enlightenment gradually led to a more informed and open-minded society. However, some of the things flagged as problematic with Wikipedia are direct continuations of the encyclopedic tradition. For example, some of the accusations of less than desirable traits among modern-day Wikipedians are the same as those levelled against the eighteenth Century *philosophes*. The Enlightenment thinkers were mostly men, and they came from the upper echelons of society. Similarly, a fairly recent survey of users found that less than 13% of respondents were active female contributors to Wikipedia (Glott, Schmidt & Ghosh, 2010: 7). While the Enlightenment movement has often been credited as instrumental in the democratisation of society, first through the French revolution and later through the American one, we need to bear in mind that few of the Enlightenment philosophers had any actual interest in genuine social change (Hamilton, 1992: 27, 31-34). Likewise, while social transformation might be a guiding force for some Wikipedia editors, it might not be the same for everyone. Certainly, it is not the only motivation for participation. According to Shirky (2008: 130-135), while the “desire to do a good thing” is “both the most surprising and the most obvious” motivation, more self-indulgent reasons, such as stimulating the intellect and the sheer vanity of putting one’s work on the internet for millions to see, are equally weighty reasons. In many ways like Wikipedia, the *Encyclopédie* was part of what was, in effect, a new infrastructure for the production, dissemination and consumption of knowledge. The emergence of this infrastructure cannot be over-emphasised, in that it is what allowed the Enlightenment movement to bypass the monopoly on “the legitimization of knowledge” (Chen, 2010: 250) previously enjoyed by the Church. However, this celebratory narrative obscures the fact that power relations continue to be uneven in the information society, just as they were during the Enlightenment. Access to knowledge and debate were highly limited under the Enlightenment, and was dependent upon economic and cultural capital in the form of the ability to make use of the new institutions of knowledge: journals, conferences, academies and so forth (Hamilton, 1992: 40-41). In other words, even if the Church’s monopoly had been broken, the Enlightenment movement did not exactly constitute a true democratisation of knowledge.

Likewise, it is my argument that the perceived paradigm shift represented by Wikipedia does little to challenge pre-existing power relationships on the ground in South Africa. The most obvious

argument to make here is that Wikipedia continues to rely on traditional producers of knowledge from scientific journals to the BBC and the *New York Times* (Nielsen, 2007: online; Nielsen, 2010: online). Wikipedia also relies heavily on information provided by governments and other associations, quite contrary to its own guidelines which favour scholarly sources (Ford and others, 2013: 3-4). The fact that 56 per cent of all sources cited on English-language Wikipedia are based in the US, whereas a meagre 0,3 per cent come out of Africa is indicative of Wikipedia's recalcitrance (Ford and others, 2013: 8).

Critical discourse analysis

As should be clear by now, to understand the relationship between power and knowledge as well as how this relationship plays out on Wikipedia, it is necessary to interrogate the dynamics of discourse. A discourse is a framework or a way of representing and conceptualising a phenomenon, and a concept that seeks to describe "the production of knowledge through language" (Hall, 1992: 291). It frames the way a topic can be formed and "limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed" (Hall, 1992: 291). These discourses build upon each other without neat divisions between them (Hall, 1992: 292). While the same discourse can be used differently by different people for different means, this does not entail that the discourse itself is 'neutral' or given. An element of power is always implicated in it (Hall, 1992: 240, 293). Being able to produce a discourse is part of Castells' (2009: 10) concept of power as "relational capacity" –the ability to influence other actors to behave in a way that suits us. This is especially true in a scientific setting, as those who construct the discourse are also the ones who "have the power to *make it true* –i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status" (Hall, 1992: 295, italics in original). Just as important as authoritative vetting, however, is our tacit acceptance. When we participate in a certain discourse or employ knowledge produced by a discourse, we are compelled to speak from a certain vantage point (Hall, 1992: 292, 294-295). Herein lays the regime of truth as an exercise of power: certain discourses, while being social constructions, nevertheless become true when people act upon them as such (Hall, 1992: 292-295). Evident from this, is that discourses are not static, but in continuous flux. Practice influences discourse and discourse influences practice (Hall, 1992: 291).

If we take discourse to mean "a formation that regulates and structures the production of statements" (Pentzold & Seidenglanz, 2006: 64), Wikipedia clearly fits the bill. I therefore take a clue from Pentzold and Seidenglanz (2006), who demonstrate how discourse analysis can be used to deconstruct the Wikipedia process. Discourse analysis offers a convenient framework for taking apart representation of South African spaces on Wikipedia. Rooted in linguistics, critical discourse analysis scrutinises how power relations manifest themselves in language, taking as a starting point that manifestations of 'truth' are not simply reflections of the world, but also help build it, a point

that has repeatedly been made in this chapter. The aim of critical discourse analysis is to make visible how the world continues to be (re)made from a mould supplied by privilege (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 448). However, analysing manifestations of power and inequality in language and discourse is problematic, as it is impossible to do without participating within (and thereby perpetuating) it. If this paper is to be of any value, a critical appreciation of this dilemma is crucial. Representations of the world through discourse are central in the production and challenge of dominance: “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequality” (van Dijk, 1993: 249-250). In other words, in one form or another, power relations circle around dynamics of dominance, which are not simply (re)produced through a unitary discourse, but are an outcome of the dynamic interaction between a wide range of modes of discourse that simultaneously compete with and fulfil each other. It is through discourse that people internalise these kinds of power relationships as simply given or natural, and start enforcing their own subjugation (van Dijk, 1993: 250, 255).

As I pointed out above, these power relationships are dynamic. Part of the rationale behind critical discourse analysis, in addition to giving a general insight into the struggle over hegemony, is to consider whether hegemony is shifting, as this would be reflected in the discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 449). This is highly relevant for this paper, as the heaps of praise have been lauded upon Wikipedia as a game changer and liberator of knowledge might need moderation. The way knowledge is constructed on Wikipedia, deliberately and between large numbers of people under a supposedly benevolent and ‘neutral’ set of rules and guidelines, can at times obscure the factors that shape the final outcome and the role of this in the struggle for hegemony. Certainly, my findings indicate that, when it comes to South Africa, little has changed in terms of discourse. Representations of South African localities continue to emphasise narratives of people and place in a way that resonates with the world view of the privileged, while marginalising the spaces usually occupied by the largely ‘black’ working class. A striking example is presented in chapter four, where I document that Wikipedia’s representation of main places in the Free State, carries eerie similarities to colonial- and apartheid-era South Africa’s master narrative made ‘white’ domination of the land appear natural, devoid of any links, for example, to an exploitative economy, while downplaying any notion of claims to a ‘black’ history of the same spaces.

Critical discourse analysis acknowledges that discussions or use of particular tropes are infectious, especially if these are taking place within a well-regarded or credible discourse, and affect both people’s thinking and, crucially, actions (van Dijk, 1993: 268). While it has its detractors, there is little

doubt that Wikipedia is becoming such a well-regarded place of discourse. Critical discourse analysis is a linguistic discipline building on the ideas of Foucault, Gramsci, and Althusser, which strives to overcome structuralist absolutism and open up the possibilities of agency. At the same time, the work of critical discourse analysts tends to look at the text in isolation, and is less concerned with how it is produced, distributed, received, and so forth (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 450-452, 460-461). Here, my own approach diverges from that of Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), not only in terms of the relatively modest emphasis placed upon linguistics, but more importantly, the political economy of wikiality sees political, economic, cultural, and social context as instrumental in understanding how particular forms of knowledge are produced and how these function in society. This is in line with Norman Fairclough's contention that critical discourse analysis needs to interrogate the "texture" of a text, and not just the "content" (1995: 185-186, 188, 210-211).

What sets critical discourse analysis apart from ordinary discourse analysis is its willingness to evaluate. The analysis should not be merely descriptive but in some small way "have effects in society" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 449). It should aspire to somehow redress these power differentials. Van Dijk (1993: 252-253) argues that, essentially, the perspective of critical discourse analysts, "if possible, [should be] that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality" (1993: 252). Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000: 449) go even further, and posit the aim of critical discourse analysis as "empowering the powerless, giving voice to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs", a notion also echoed by Fairclough (1995: 186). "Giving voice to the voiceless" is, to say the least, an ambitious proposition, and one that might very well run the risk of ignoring the researcher's own complicity in perpetuating dominance, exactly because of the proposition that the researcher can adequately represent marginal subjects within established discourses. The implication that the researcher's interests are commensurate with those of the subject is a proposition which my dissertation does not subscribe to. While the emancipatory potential of critical discourse analysis might be limited, the social and moral impetus behind it nevertheless informs my approach. Certainly, this project does not shy away from evaluating Wikipedia. Critical discourse analysis is, as should be clear by now, concerned with power, abuse of power, and the power imbalances associated with this, and is overall "unabashedly normative" (van Dijk, 1993: 252). This means that the research is expected to take a firm stand in favour of the discursive subaltern and propose avenues of mediation to lessen the imbalance of power and its consequences (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 448-450; van Dijk, 1993: 249-252). From this follows pragmatism of approach: critical discourse analysis is not so much interested in participation within specific research paradigms as it is "primarily interested and motivated by pressing social issues"

(van Dijk, 1993: 252). The specific methods or theories are of secondary importance to social intervention, and hence largely determined by whatever serves this goal best (van Dijk, 1993: 252).

I am hesitant to make the claim that my dissertation represents some sort of social intervention. At most, it represents a tiny dent in the myth of Wikipedia as a liberator through knowledge. The way that discourse on Wikipedia is propagated as simple 'facts', neutral and belligerent, is not only false, but part of a discursive strategy to naturalise dominance. Critical discourse analysis specifically concerns itself with "discursive strategies that legitimate control, or otherwise 'naturalize' the social order, and especially relations of inequality", and argues that "another strategy for the reproduction of dominance is that of denial: there is no dominance, all people in our society are equal and have equal access to resources" (van Dijk, 1993: 254, 263). Hopefully, this project may, in some small way, make a dent in the perception of Wikipedia's representation of particular spaces in South Africa as 'neutral' 'facts': pure knowledge unblemished by the vested interests of the elites who actually produced it. If Wikipedia is to truly benefit a developing society like South Africa, the first step must be to acknowledge its relationship with dominance.

While critical discourse analysis has few qualms about the researcher as a participant-observer, my own work has taken on a more passive role. I have not edited or attempted to change the discourse I analyse in this project. This makes my position quite weak vis-à-vis Wikipedia's SOFIXIT dictum. That I, rather than writing a 50 000 word tome to complain about weaknesses in Wikipedia's coverage of X, Y, and Z, could have put my energy into improving the relevant entries and overall tone of its coverage, is a completely valid argument. At the same time, a more active participant-editor role could have compromised this project in the sense that while Wikipedia might have 71 000 active editors²¹, it is clear from a glance at the history of the entries I write about here that the pool of regular contributors to articles pertaining to South African society is limited. Couple this with Wikipedia's reputation for relentlessly obsessive web 2.0 wranglers, and my fear is that my research could easily be dismissed as an off-wiki extension of an edit dispute or simply an alternative outlet for an overly sensitive and quarrelsome editor-ego. While both active participation and critical analysis at an arm's length are valid avenues for addressing social imbalances, for the sake of integrity I had to choose one of them. I have not completely refrained from editing on Wikipedia, but to the extent that I did, I chose to edit and participate on topics unrelated or only marginally related to the topics I have analysed in this dissertation. For much the same reason, I have for the most part avoided writing about particular users or usernames, or linking these to particular edits. They are there, on Wikipedia, and who is responsible for which edits is a matter of public record, but by and

²¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia&oldid=589354482> [08.01.2014]

large there is little use in naming particular users. My argument is important and can speak for itself. It should not be dismissed as part of a personal editor vendetta. But at least as important is a perspective inherent in the argument itself: this is not about individuals, most of whom are well meaning and work toward (what they see as) a common goal of some sort. It is about a structural blind zone, or shortcoming, within Wikipedia. Again, there is a resonance with the principles of critical discourse analysis, which concerns itself with power relations between groups, not individuals (van Dijk, 1993: 254). Bringing up individual user names might detract attention from this issue.

Part of Wikipedia's nature is that it is in a constant state of flux. No content is permanent. Everything is subject to revision. This is, as we have seen, part of what makes Wikipedia work. It is also what makes it a difficult subject to write about. It is like taking a picture of the sea; in a second, everything will have changed. In the next two chapters, I will be writing about a number of Wikipedia entries pertaining to South African localities. My chapter on [[Cape Town]] is an analysis of this page and related entries as they were in the time period from December 2012 to January 2013. The following chapter, which analyses how Wikipedia presents settlements in South Africa's Free State province, are based on a similar snapshot of how these entries looked around the same time. These have since changed. I get back to this in my conclusion. Some have changed substantially, others have changed less. I nevertheless contend that my findings are of value, pointing to overarching structural issues linked to representation on the online encyclopedia anyone can edit.

A quick note about 'race'

South Africa operates with racial classification, inherited from its colonial past and cemented by Afrikaner nationalist rule. As Deborah Posel (2001: 88-98) has shown, these classifications were conscious constructs emerging at the intersection between class, heritage, culture, status, lifestyle, biology, supposed 'common sense', and so forth. "In short", Posel writes, "the business of racial classification gave free reign to an assortment of social and individual prejudices on what was racially self-evident" (2001: 96). As we have touched upon previously in this chapter, discourses have a tendency of making themselves come true. The legal and bureaucratic classification of persons into racial categories soon came to justify and reinforce itself (Posel, 2001: 94-95). For example, the kind of 'common sense' notion of racial superiority among South Africa's 'white' settler society, seemed even more justified as this group continued to reap the rewards of privilege. The success of 'white' business, for example, was attributed to racial features rather than legally entrenched favourable treatment of 'white' people. When the National Party came to power, it sought to eradicate racial ambiguity and introduced in the 1950 Population Registration Act, the three categories 'white', 'native', and 'coloured'. The latter referred to "a person who is not a white person nor a native"

(cited in Posel, 2001: 102), which meant people of mixed ancestry. Later, the act was amended to also accommodate the 'Indian' category. Even if the 1950 Population Registration Act has been repealed a long time ago, these racial categories continue to exist in the minds and everyday lives of South Africans. In an ironic twist, they also live on in legislation; the Employment Equity Act of 1998 seeks to redress the injustices of apartheid through giving 'black' employment seekers - defined as those previously classified 'African', 'coloured', and 'Indian' - preferential treatment (Posel, 2001; 109-110). Likewise, Statistics South Africa in its census asks people to 'self-identify' with either one of these groups or its 'unspecified/other' category (Lehohla, 2005: online).

I make a note of this here for two reasons. The first is to emphasise how the reproduction of these categories on Wikipedia reproduces existing power dynamics. As will be clear from my Cape Town and Free State chapters, Wikipedia incorporates census numbers pertaining to racial statistics without contextualising or critiquing them. Prominently displayed in handy infoboxes, constructed racial categories are naturalised as geographical 'facts'. Therefore, despite the apparent shift in ownership of the means of knowledge production and representation, it appears that Web 2.0 in the form of Wikipedia serves as a continuation and reinforcement of discourses and practices harking back to apartheid and colonialism.

The second reason is that I, through my dissertation, am in the business of knowledge production myself. As much as I know that these racial classifications are social constructs which serve to underpin a continued imbalanced power structure, I nevertheless need to deal with them. Again, the discourse has real consequences. The challenge is therefore to speak of these terms, using them, but at the same time cultivating an awareness of how this also serves to further entrench them. In her excellent introduction to *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*, Zimitri Erasmus notes that "blackness, whiteness and colouredness exist, but they are cultural, historical and political identities" (2001: 12). To continue to use them is to continue to perpetuate mechanisms of linguistic and cultural oppression that have been used to rule the nation since its ignoble beginning. Erasmus, and later Haupt (2012: xv) have resolved the dilemma by applying quotation marks and italics to highlight these terms' nature as social constructs and role as instruments of power. I follow their example by referring to these constructs in single quotation marks, so that every time the terms 'black', 'white', 'Indian', and 'coloured' crop up, we may remind ourselves that they are instruments operating in the service of power, even when employed to critically interrogate the same. To some degree, my thesis seeks to overcome or address the problems inherent in these categories by employing a more inclusive understanding of the word 'black'. Taking my cue from Steve Biko, I understand 'black' as referring to "those who are

by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations” (1987:48). While discrimination is no longer sanctioned by law, marginalisation and discrimination is nevertheless a lived reality for many, if not most, South Africans. Accordingly, Biko’s approach continues to be relevant.

Conclusion

The continued imbalance in the distribution of power and dominance is closely linked to knowledge and the way this knowledge is presented through language. When the elite is able to determine the parameters we think along, it is able to determine what we think about, and, crucially, how we think about it. This means that ‘truth’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘facts’ are not simply neutral observations of phenomena, but rather re-presentations of these, moulded to make it appear as if the interests of the higher echelons of society are congruent with the rest of it. Knowledge is shaped by its context: political and economic demand, scientific dogma, its distribution, the credibility of the discourse in question, and the general dynamics of hegemony. Still, this knowledge gets dressed up as ‘purely’ scientific and value-neutral, and has a great deal to say over how we see the world. What is more, when these ‘truths’ are taken at face value and acted upon, they do actually shape the world. This dynamic, as it plays out on Wikipedia, is what I have termed the political economy of wikiality, borrowing in equal amounts from Colbert and Foucault. As I have shown, Wikipedia does not represent a break with established knowledge institutions as a continuation of them. It can therefore be instructive to interrogate how power structures play out in the encyclopedia anyone can edit. I have chosen to make use of critical discourse analysis to shed light on how Wikipedia shapes knowledge (and the production of it) about specific localities in South Africa. In the following chapters, I will be using critical discourse analysis to show how the English-language Wikipedia’s presentation of certain aspects of South Africa is shaped by its existence within this political economy. In chapter three, I start with a look at a South African location with a relatively high profile on Wikipedia, Cape Town, before, in chapter four, moving on to spaces that have a much lower profile and are arguably less subject to scrutiny: main places in South Africa’s Free State province.

CHAPTER THREE: CROWDED OUT OF CAPE TOWN

This chapter, as well as the next one, is an indication of how ‘black’ South Africans are crowded out of the knowledge produced about South Africa on Wikipedia. It is a hands-on application of the political economy of wikiality outlined in chapter two. The way the Wikipedia entry on [[Cape Town]] uncritically incorporates demographical statistics from the 2001 Census bears witness to how something which is supposed to be a democratiser of knowledge, through its reliance on existing structures of knowledge and power, reproduces an image of Cape Town bereft of ‘black’ people or any sign of the socio-political tension inherited from colonialism and apartheid and cemented by a racialised post-colonial and neoliberal mode of production. I use the historical circumstances around the creation of Langa to argue that marginalisation on the wiki echoes the experience of marginalisation in physical space, a process often couched in rhetoric around social upliftment (just like Wikipedia). Likewise, as we will see in the following chapter, the knowledge produced about various main places in the Matjhabeng municipality in the Free State, as well as the Free State in general, is, when not clinical, centred on a ‘white’ intonation of place and history, with little room for subaltern voices. Together, these two case studies explore how Wikipedia and the political economy of wikiality form part of a political economy of exclusion and marginalisation.

Bottici and Challand (2006) note that when societies are driven by consent rather than coercion - as is the case with post-apartheid South Africa - politics centre on “a struggle for people’s imagination”, and that “an important part of this struggle is played through the work on myth” (2006: 330). In their introduction to an anthology of oral history of Cape Town, Sean Field and Felicity Swanson argue that “popular cultural myths serve a variety of positive and/or negative functions but most significantly they provide people with the vocabulary and beliefs to understand and cope with a myriad of challenges within the city” (2007: 11). This is why Wikipedia’s portrayal of Cape Town matters. It perpetuates a certain conception of the city, its surroundings and inhabitants that in turn have an impact on how both insiders and outsiders view it and themselves, as well as their political analysis of the situation. As I show in chapter four, the same principle can also be applied to how particular localities in the South African Free State province are represented on Wikipedia. In this chapter, I argue that Wikipedia’s portrayal of Cape Town is one that is consistent with the view of the city’s minority elite, which it ultimately serves: a picturesque world city subtly spiced with palatable Otherness, but largely bereft of any signs of the racialised exploitation that made both the city and the lifestyles of the upper- and middle classes possible. [[Cape Town]]’s marginalisation of largely ‘black’ working class experiences of the city echoes the physical marginalisation entrenched by colonialism, apartheid, and neo-liberal economic policies.

Crowded out of [[Cape Town]]

While my initial assumption was that inaccuracies on Wikipedia as they relate to South African content would be most prolific in ‘narrow’ areas, less subject to the scrutiny and wisdom of crowds, such as those discussed in chapter four, it soon became clear to me that relatively well-trafficked entries are not automatically more representative. For example, the Wikipedia entry on Cape Town, as of 22.12.2012²², contained the following demographical breakdown under the subsection named ‘Key statistics (2001)’:

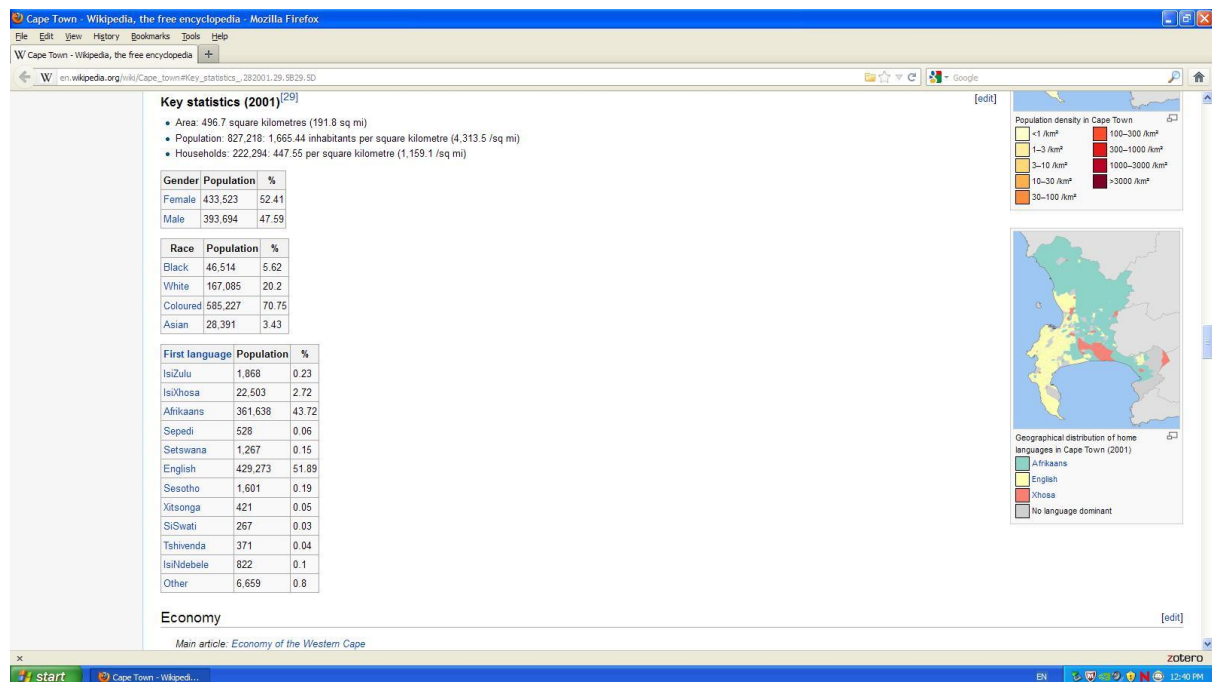


Figure 1: Screenshot, 'Key statistics' section. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

If this subsection is to be believed, roughly seventy per cent of Cape Town’s population are ‘coloured’, twenty per cent are ‘white’, three and a half per cent are ‘Asian’, and five and a half per cent are ‘black’. The infobox in the upper right-hand corner repeats the same ‘facts’, albeit with more rounded-off numbers. Here is the breakdown of Capetonians according to first language, as per the infobox:

English	51.9%
Afrikaans	43.7%
Xhosa	2.7%
Other	1.7% ²³

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

Again, the 'Key statistics (2001)' subsection operates with more decimals, and breaks the 'Other' category down to various languages. The main 'facts', however, remain the same.

To suggest that only 5,9% of Capetonians are 'black' and that a mere 2,7% speak Xhosa as a first language is ludicrous. According to the city's own web pages (capetown.gov.za: online), the actual numbers are closer to 31,69% 'black Africans', 48,13% 'coloured', 1,43% 'Indian/Asian', and 18,75% 'white'. As for languages, 27,95% speak English as a first language, 41,43% Afrikaans, 28,74% speak Xhosa, 1,32% speak another African language as a first language, whereas 0,56% have another, not specified, home language. According to the City's web pages, these numbers are "compiled by Strategic Development Information and GIS from 2001 Census data supplied by Statistics South Africa" (City of Cape Town, n. d: online).

I should here point out that the 'Demographics' section does indeed reflect these numbers in the text. They are credited to South Africa's national statistics service Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) and the 2001 census, through a link to the web pages of Stats SA (statssa.gov.za: online). This link, however, does not work, and is marked as a 'dead link' in the 'References' section. For what it is worth, this section is effectively the only place on [[Cape Town]] to touch upon the city's huge inequalities, in that it breaks down some statistics related to education and unemployment. However, the 'Demographics' section is undermining itself. For example, the paragraph that lists the racial groups of citizens ends with the somewhat odd and unreferenced sentence "In the actual city of Cape Town, there is a higher percentage of white people".²⁴ When I visited the page at the end of December 2012, this sentence had remained unchallenged since February 2011.²⁵ I will come back to this later, and deal with it on a more general level, but here I will note that part of my argument is that what constitutes "the actual city", both in this sentence and on the entry in general, in the end appears to be less connected to municipal delineations and more of a moving target linked to pigmentation and class. The most obvious contradiction, however, is the 'Key statistics (2001)' subsection. The numbers here do not correspond with the ones given directly above it. One might speculate that the relative accessibility of the infobox and the neat list in 'Key Statistics (2001)' combined with the 'dead link' to Stats SA, obscures or downplays the numbers hidden within the text under 'Demographics', and that is why this discrepancy had not been challenged.

2001 Census figures

The misleading claims in the infobox and under the 'Key Statistics (2001)' section are referenced in two different footnotes, both leading to the same page. The references lead to the web pages of one

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&diff=prev&oldid=412350894 [22.12.2012]

Adrian Frith who, according to his blog, is a South African born in 1988 (n. d: online). On the particular page [[Cape Town]] is referencing, Frith has gathered statistical material on Cape Town from Statistics SA, by utilising the 2001 Census material. The numbers on his page are the same as those found in the infobox and the ‘Key statistics (2001)’ section of [[Cape Town]], detailing “Cape Town Main Place 17106 from Census 2001” (Frith: online). Frith has also provided a map, derived from Google Maps. What immediately stands out about the map is South Africa’s oldest township, Langa. It is contained within a red rectangle, indicating that the township does not form part of ‘main place’ Cape Town, even if surrounded by it.

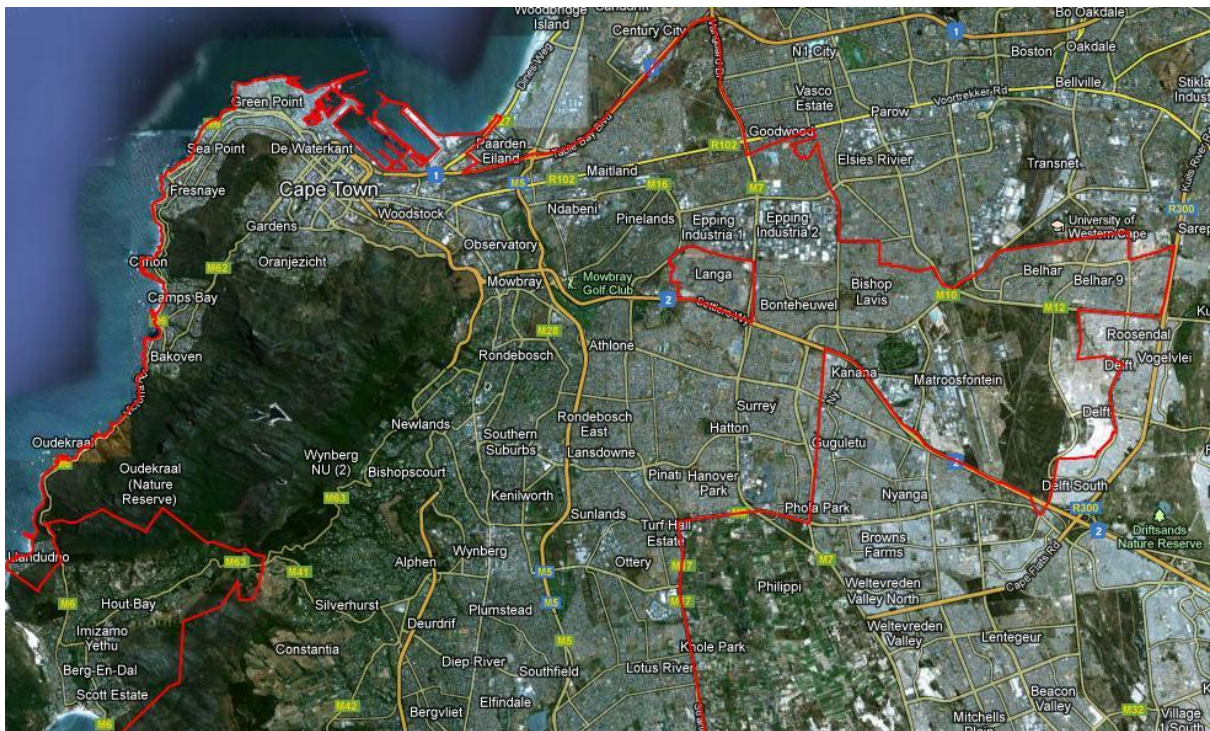


Figure 2: Screen grab, Map of Main place Cape Town. Source: <http://census.adrianfrith.com/place/17106/map> [09.10.2012]

I will get back to Langa, but for now, it is worth noting that there are other odd omissions as well. Hout Bay and Simon’s Town are excluded. The same goes for the ‘coloured’ mega-township Mitchell’s Plain and the ‘black African’ Khayelitsha, South Africa’s second-biggest township. Bellville and the entire Northern suburbs are missing too. At first, I wrongly assumed that this selective portrayal of Cape Town was due to some sort of bias or geographical blind zone on part of Mr Frith. This is not the case. Frith’s web site is an excellent resource when it comes to ease of access to the results of the 2001 Census, and one which I will be making much use of in this dissertation. The omission of Langa from main place Cape Town originates with the 2001 Census.

The census statistics that Wikipedia cite, via Frith’s website, are numbers supposed to cover ‘Main Place Cape Town’, rather than metropolitan Cape Town, which includes arguable outliers such as

Somerset West, Klipheuwel, Mamre, Koeberg, Melkbosstrand, and Simon's Town (Statistics South Africa, 2001). A main place, according to Statistics South Africa, is "the equivalent of a small city, a suburb with subdivisions in a large city or a tribal area in communal or trust land areas" (2007: 46). In terms of the geographic framework of the census, main places fall between district councils and sub-places (Statistics South Africa, 2007: 55). Both sub-place and main place are supposedly variants of place name, "the most easily recognisable small area geographical entity at a local level" (Statistics South Africa, 2004: online). Presumably, this is why Langa (which, according to the same census, has 49 667 inhabitants) was afforded main place status (Statistics South Africa, 2001). Why the 2001 Census sees Langa as more distinct than neighbouring Bonteheuwel or Pinelands, for example, remains unclear.

The red circle around Langa stands out like a sore thumb, and together with the rather counterintuitive statistics presented on [[Cape Town]], it is clear that the possible reasons the Wikipedia community might have for this curious omission need to be interrogated. Even though the numbers are gathered from Frith and Stats SA, responsibility rests with the Wikipedia community, as the more inclusive Metropolitan Municipality alternative is readily available from both Mr Frith and Stats SA. As already mentioned, the City's own web pages also provide more accurate statistics, also based on the 2001 Census (City of Cape Town, n. d: online). Indeed, the Wikipedia community at one stage did recognise the problem and tried to rectify it, but, in my analysis, nevertheless failed to accurately and fairly represent the citizens of Cape Town. If the overall impression of Cape Town through its Wikipedia entry, is a town of less than one million inhabitants, of which 2,7% per cent are Xhosa-speakers, this is not necessarily what the Wikipedia community was hoping for. Looking at the archived talk page of [[Cape Town]], it becomes clear that there has been debate over the numbers.²⁶ Under the section title 'Population', one editor protests against the use of the 2007 Community survey, as the numbers it provides are overall numbers for the municipality, which "include cities such as Simon's Town, Somerset West and Durbanville"²⁷, and that these numbers are thus more appropriate for [[City of Cape Town]] –an entry which specifically covers Cape Town as a municipality or administrative unit. A different user explains that breaking down Cape Town's population numbers is a complex thing: the 2007 community survey operates with municipality as the smallest level, while on the other hand, the 2001 Census operates with main places, some of which correspond with this editor's view of Cape Town, whereas in other cases, "the demarcation

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Cape_Town/Archive_1 [03.01.2013]

²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Cape_Town/Archive_1 [03.01.2013]

is—I won't say 'racist', but 'showing the legacy of apartheid'—for example, Langa is separate from "Cape Town", despite being completely surrounded by it".²⁸ The editor then suggests

“We could do what I've done with Port Elizabeth, which is to list both the smallest sensible figure (the population of the main place with the name, so in this case 827,218) and the largest (the population of the metro, so 3,497,097) with a note explaining the context. Obviously in the text of the article we could go into more detail (...).”²⁹

This comment did not elicit any further comments, but it appears the suggestion was taken to heart, as the infobox per 22.12.2012 carried the area and total population of both main place (“City”) and municipal (“Metro”) Cape Town.³⁰ This discussion demonstrates an awareness within the community, not only of the problems linked to the 2001 Census, but on a more general level, the way in which institutions of knowledge continue to exercise power in a way that elevates the privileged view, as well as a certain willingness to address these issues.

However, these efforts were arguably undermined by the demographic breakdown that immediately followed in the infobox. Here, the numbers for main place Cape Town were uncritically reproduced, making it appear as if whether we are talking about metropolitan Cape Town with its 3,7 million people or just the city, the relative sizes of demographic groups remain the same: slightly less than six per cent of the population consists of 'black African's, and only 2,7 per cent are Xhosa speakers. While the footnote that accompanies these numbers does indeed point to main place Cape Town, nowhere in the article is the suggestion that the context be explained properly or more detailed in-text taken to heart.³¹ While the footnotes make clear that these are the numbers for “Main Place Cape Town”, without a definition, this term does not do anything to moderate the authority of the statistics. From this perspective, the inclusion of both metro and city numbers merely add authority to a picture of Cape Town which excludes its 'black' African inhabitants.

In what follows, I centre much of my argumentation on Langa. Generally, it is my contention that South Africa's subalterns have been crowded out of the encyclopedia anyone can edit as a function of the political economy of local knowledge production on Wikipedia, in much the same way as South Africa's marginalised groups were spatially and socially marginalised as a function of the political economy of colonialism and apartheid, and continue to be so under the current liberal democratic regime. To this end, I make use of Langa as a miniature model of the crowding out of marginalised South Africans in general. I will show this by looking at the way Cape Town is framed, and in chapter four, how certain localities in the Free State are represented on Wikipedia. However,

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Cape_Town/Archive_1&oldid=474899129 [03.01.2013]

²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Cape_Town/Archive_1&oldid=474899129 [03.01.2013]

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&diff=prev&oldid=412350894 [22.12.2012]

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&diff=prev&oldid=412350894 [22.12.2012]

if these arguments are to make sense, it is instructive to start by taking a close look at the history of marginalisation and segregation in Cape Town.

The roots of segregation in South Africa

My central contention is that Wikipedia's omission of Langa from [[Cape Town]] echoes the historical trajectory of the city's approach to 'black' settlement. In the introduction, I mentioned the persistence of popular cultural myths. This might be as a good place as any to dispel one that keeps cropping up in the master narrative of the rainbow nation: South Africa's and Cape Town's history of exclusion is not reducible to Afrikaner nationalist policies between 1947 and 1994. The roots go much further back. True, the 1950 Group Areas Act heralded the coming of petty apartheid with its miniscule regulation of people and places and devastating consequences for individuals, families, and societies. However, that South Africa's continued spatial segregation can be attributed exclusively to the National Party's instigation of policies such as these is little more than a liberal myth (Maylam, 1995: 28). The coming of National Party rule and the Group Areas Act of 1950 did not constitute a break with established practice as much as "a continuation and culmination of pre-1948 trends and policies" (Maylam, 1995: 28). Both of South Africa's most seminal pieces of segregationist legislation, the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 (which preceded the National Party rule by a quarter of a century) and the later Group Areas Act of 1950 should be seen as formalisation of the *de facto* segregation that had already gained substantial momentum indirectly, through various laws pertaining to public health, social policies, and so forth (Maylam, 1995: 27). Historically, colonial authorities in the Cape had long been preoccupied with containment of and control over rural migrant labour, guided by the contradictory desire to preserve the integrity of the 'native' state of the labour force while imposing a sense of colonial order (Coetzer, 2009: 2-5). In that sense, Cape Town's relatively early adoption of segregationist policies took its cue from further east in the colony, where several towns already in the mid-1800s insisted that 'black' people who did not own property of their own or were living on that of their employers', should be contained within specified 'locations'. These 'locations' were the colonial solution to the idea that 'natives' were 'alien' to the urban environment in which they were working, and the social tension this might cause (Maylam, 1995: 22-23).

The historical reasons for the urge to segregate were myriad. Most accounts, however, centre on what Swanson (1976 & 1977, cited in Maylam, 1995: 24), terms the "sanitation syndrome", in which the urge to segregate was driven by a "moral panic and racial hysteria, as whites increasingly came to associate the black presence with squalor, disease and crime" (Maylam, 1995: 24). Often, though, the actual impetus was to preserve the existing material interests of groups like merchants, property owners, and 'white' labour. Moving the 'black' labour force into designated residential areas served

capital in two ways: it provided extended control over labour while opening up for the establishment of new industrial estates (Maylam, 1995: 25-26). Urbanisation carried the potential for unwanted social change, and the established ('white') elites came to see segregation as the key to preserving privilege (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 72-73). Thus, segregation hindered the coming together of a truly universal class struggle, while at the same time, property developers were eagerly eyeing the centrally located inner-city neighbourhoods opened up by the forced removals of 'black' inhabitants (Maylam, 1995: 25-26). The impetus behind South Africa's historical trajectory of segregation and its resultant power distribution is multifaceted: it is not reducible to totalising strategies such as the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 or the Group Areas Act of 1950. Instead, it is the product of numerous "ad hoc responses to short-term situations" (Maylam, 1995: 34). Policies and their implementation varied in time and place according to the tension between the need for labour and the reluctance to accept African urbanisation for fear of social unrest through increased demands for socioeconomic change. Overall, though, the overarching theme in the history of South African urban policy is the quest for control, even if the policies were dressed up as pertaining to health or social upliftment (Maylam, 1995: 33-34).

Cape Town's uneasy relationship with migrant labour

Despite its image as a liberal city, Cape Town was actually an early adopter of influx control (Maylam, 1995: 33). Part of the reason for Cape Town's reputed liberalism is its history of apparent widespread cross-cultural relationships, especially among the working classes, as well as its post-slavery tradition of a non-racial franchise (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 63-66). In that sense it arguably *was* liberal, albeit for a relatively short period of time; in the years between the abolition of slavery and the mineral revolution it was largely *de facto* rather than *de jure* segregation that cemented the correlation between socioeconomic status and pigmentation in Cape Town. From the 1870s onward, though, colonial expansion together with the resultant conflicts lead to a larger influx of Africans to Cape Town. This, in turn, triggered a segregationist backlash (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 66-68).

Between the final days of slavery in the 1830s and the 1880s, the dominant thinking among Cape liberals had been that the 'natives' could be 'civilised' through, among other things, sheer proximity: urbanisation would stomp out tribalism, which, in turn, would lessen the colonial efforts linked to ensuring compliance (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 69). In the 1880s, however, Cape Town's pristinely 'white' elite classes found themselves perched on top of a speedily changing colony, pondering "how to maintain social order in a society undergoing rapid urbanisation, immigration and industrialisation" (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 72). After all, these developments opened up for the possibility of rapid social mobility, which, in turn, posed a very real threat to the established order. The solution appeared to be segregation. Gradually, policies limiting 'black' participation in politics

were implemented. What kept the complete disenfranchisement of Africans in the Cape at bay was the growing worry among English liberals about rising political aspirations and power among Afrikaners. Thus, to ensure political continuity, it was better to secure friendly votes from the 'coloured' electorate (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 69-73). Residential, rather than social, segregation was slow in the making in Cape Town, partially due to the recalcitrant nature of well-set residential patterns. It was difficult to enact segregation in already established neighbourhoods, although newer developments were segregated, either through simple mechanisms of exclusion, like price, or special title-holder clauses (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 74). The motivations for the drive for segregation were complex, but its outward expression tended to be one of moral panic over perceived hygienic and social conditions in the inner city. A brush with a smallpox epidemic in 1882 gave an initial impetus for these worries, but residential segregation was still slow in the making. The 1901 outbreak of bubonic plague proved a turning point with the creation of the 'native location' Ndabeni. This dynamic was later echoed during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, which gave the initial push toward the creation of Langa (Coetzer, 2009: 2-5; Bickford-Smith, 1995: 73).

Around the turn of the century, the garden city movement came into vogue in Britain. The movement, among other things, worried about working class urbanisation and its perceived causal relationship with moral degeneracy (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 73). Garden city proponents argued that village-like surroundings could uplift and improve souls degenerated by life in the inner city. The idea was to provide, in a manner of speaking, a sunnier disposition to the working classes (Coetzer, 2009: 1). In the Cape, the movement caught on, but with a peculiar local twist: it was specifically moral degeneracy among the 'black' working class population that was viewed as the problem (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 73). The formation of Langa was highly influenced by this. Together, the expansion of the economy, the influx of Africans from the countryside, and the unwillingness to face the tension these produced, combined with moral panics, the civilizing mission, and town planning trends, shaped Cape Town in ways that are still noticeable today. Langa was born at the intersection of these economic, political, and social concerns. That said, as far as marginalisation and residential segregation goes, the same dynamics can be traced to Langa's precursor, Ndabeni, the opening of which was triggered by the 1901 outbreak of bubonic plague. The rhetoric around and even the layout of places like Ndabeni ostensibly centred on preserving the integrity of the inhabitants' 'native' state, while, conveniently, containing and controlling rural migrant labour for the ruling classes (Coetzer, 2009: 2-5). Despite the rushed execution, and its overarching function as emergency containment during a pandemic, a great deal of effort went into planning in Ndabeni, and inherent in the design of the 'native location' were two unmistakable messages. First of all, in the colonial imagination at least, its use of circles and provision of residential 'huts', even if aborted

in the face of the massive influx due to the plague, served to emphasise its 'Africanness', despite being mangled up with colonial 'order' and English village impulses. At the same time, this layout reinforced the identity of Ndabeni's inhabitants as "visitors to the city from another place" (Coetzer, 2009: 4), a signal later replicated in the way Cape Town is framed on Wikipedia.

The History of Langa

The nature of Ndabeni was always transient, and during the Spanish Flu of 1918 its shortcomings as a permanent fixture became obvious to the city council: Ndabeni had long ago reached a saturation point while plenty of Africans still resided within Cape Town. Sparked by the influenza epidemic, the city of Cape Town now undertook a search for a place that could serve as a new 'native location' (Coetzer, 2009: 4-5). The coming into law of the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, proved the final nudge toward establishing a township for 'natives' in a town that had so far relied on social, rather than residential segregation mechanisms (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 73-75; Coetzer, 2009: 5). The quest for a suitable locality eventually centred on the area which came to be known as Langa. In 1924, the City's Secretary of Native Affairs, A.G. Goodley, true to the sanitation syndrome, advocated the establishment of Langa as crucial if the city council were to "achieve any measure of success in cleaning up the city" (cited in Coetzer, 2009: 16). Like its 'white' counterpart, Pinelands, Langa was designed to be a garden city. Indeed, the English architect who realised the creation of Pinelands, Albert John Thompson, was roped in to design and implement the creation of the 'native' township. In the case of Langa, however, to the powers that be, quality of life was less important than control. Small wonder, as the numbers started adding up quite quickly. Langa was to both completely absorb the around five thousand contemporary inhabitants of Ndabeni, as well as the estimated five to seven thousand Africans thought to reside in the city proper (Coetzer, 2009: 7-17). Uptake was slow, as Africans were not particularly keen on moving. It took around ten years of expansion of Langa with correspondingly tight policing of the inner city to shift most of the 'black African' population out of the city centre. The tipping point was the forced removal of Ndabeni's inhabitants. Once empty, Ndabeni was razed to give way for an industrial area. Only the name remained (Coetzer, 2009: 16-17; Field & Swanson, 2007: 17, 23).

While little overt racism can be found in the garden city movement in general, its preoccupation with stable class relations is obvious. In Cape Town, this found expression in a kind of architectural civilizing mission. Control over social dynamics was placed at a premium, and a great deal of energy went into efforts such as keeping the unmarried away from the married, and those perceived to be temporary residents apart from those thought to be permanent. The 'temporary' inhabitants, single males, were located in barracks whose courtyards were turned in on themselves, in an echo of the European panopticon prison design. While there was no guard tower in the middle, the design

nevertheless meant that inhabitants were hard pressed to avoid the scrutiny of neighbours as well as officials. The main entrance to these compounds was located between the administration building as well as the houses of the superintendent and two of his assistants. The only way to enter or leave Langa was either via the train station, or a single entry and exit point in its south-western corner. The police station was centrally located to maximize oversight and ease of enforcement (Coetzer, 2009: 7-17). Health concerns might have been the rallying cry of the city's higher echelons when it embarked on the relocation of Africans, but the sanitation syndrome seems to have eased its grip on the establishment as soon as Langa became a reality. While town planning and residential design was informed by scientific impulses, especially when it came to hygiene, time and again, the development of Langa failed to live up to the standard prescribed measures, and it soon became overcrowded and unhealthy (Coetzer, 2009: 13-15).

On paper, Langa might have started out as a garden city, respectful of African identity, but in reality this was little more than a cruel joke. At every turn, the interests of the ruling classes took precedence over those of its inhabitants. Coetzer (2009: 17) points out something about the nature of Cape Town's oldest township which is instructive for us to keep in mind if we are to consider the dynamics behind Langa's otherness on the encyclopedia anyone can edit:

Despite its failings as an architecturally convincing Garden Suburb, Langa nevertheless achieved what the stewards of the city intended it to achieve; it deployed the Romanticism of the Garden City Movement to symbolically and literally maintain the city as a white space bereft of signs of otherness, and thereby, temporarily erasing the contradictions of colonialism intent on preserving tribalism whilst simultaneously crafting 'natives' into socialised and ordered labourer-visitors.

Today, Cape Town remains a segregated city. While the number of 'white' inhabitants is declining, the city nevertheless retains a certain dominant 'whiteness', both culturally and geographically. Arguably, the cultural make-up of Cape Town remains truer to its pre-1994 self than does Johannesburg or Durban, both rapidly growing cities which differ from Cape Town in that they have a less cemented and segregated spatial layout with increasingly diverse middle classes (McDonald, 2008: 269, 283). This might seem odd, considering the Mother City's historical relative laxness when it came to strict segregation (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 75). Crucially, the neoliberal reforms that coincided with the coming of democracy have consistently widened the income inequality, which in turn contribute to further entrench spatial inequalities (McDonald, 2008: 270, 284-285). The prospects of opportunities continue to draw in immigrants from rural South Africa and the rest of the continent. This is grudgingly accepted by the city's establishment, but with the implicit understanding that while the newcomers are free to take up low-paid jobs, they should stay on the

margins and avoid “[interfering with] the cultural lives of the city’s elite” (McDonald, 2008: 270, 294). It is this de facto segregation that I argue is reflected in the discourse of [[Cape Town]].

A place for Others

The urge behind the sanitation syndrome, the desire of the colonial power to blame its subject for its own suffering, did not disappear with the coming of democracy. The tensions and paradoxes outlined by Coetzer (2009) remain highly relevant. Indeed, the term itself is echoed in David McDonald’s *World City Syndrome: Neoliberalism and Inequality in Cape Town* (2008). In his book, he argues that Capetonian capital continues to rely on cheap labour, but preferably whilst keeping the labour force at an arm’s length, and, as was the case with Langa, without expending too much money on infrastructure (McDonald, 2008: 294-296). Hence, containment continues to be a key strategy in labour as well as residential relations. The perceived influx of ‘black Africans’ to the city, whether these are from the rural South Africa or elsewhere, gets connected to the health and safety of Cape Town’s establishment. Whereas Ndabeni and Langa were founded on fears of disease, elite concerns now tend to centre on crime. Then as now, the underlying reasons have more to do with a general fear of and uneasiness with the indispensable Other. As far as possible, poverty and its fellow travellers, such as disease and crime, are kept at the margins of a city eager to present itself as ‘world-class’ (McDonald, 2008: 69-70; Miraftab, 2012: 297-298; Spinks, 2001: 23-30). The most prominent recent example of this approach is Blikkiesdorp^v, so named for its shiny corrugated iron shacks. It is a shanty town built by the city in 2008 to temporarily house evictees from informal settlements, ostensibly while they wait to be allocated proper housing. In the aftermath of the 2008 xenophobic attacks uprooted ‘foreigners’ were relocated to Blikkiesdorp from temporary refugee camps in the district. In the run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, numerous street people, as well as hostel- and backyard dwellers complained of being relocated to Blikkiesdorp, allegedly to make the city more palatable to tourists and television spectators (Mail & Guardian, 2009: online; Mail & Guardian, 2010: online; Ntsaluba, 2010: online; Gerardy, 2010: online).

Cape Town’s continued parallel exploitation and containment of disruptive Others can only work on the basis of myths. The city’s liberal whiteness, after all, is little more than “a political and cultural fantasy,” which serves as “part of Cape Town’s efforts to be a ‘world-class city’: an attempt to create a networked place of urban capitalists that looks and feels familiar to a (largely white) transnational elite” (McDonald, 2008: 269-270). The city’s establishment is seldom willing to perform meaningful introspection around this, usually hiding behind Cape Town’s image as a liberal city, taken hostage by Afrikaner nationalists in national government, a notion we have already seen is, at best, flawed (McDonald, 2008: 286-287). The myth of liberal Cape Town tends to mask the underlying racism that enables “the physical separation of racial groups as well as the ongoing racialized division of labour,

and perpetuate the dominance of white cultural practices that have come to be seen as Cape Town's contribution to global urbanization" (McDonald, 2008: 290). Given the above, we should note that the construction and representation of Cape Town, both through formal state institutions such as the Census and more informal avenues, such as Wikipedia, illustrate Foucault's (1980: 131) notion that knowledge cannot be separated from power. We also see a clear link between, for example, various institutions (such as the Census), scientific discourses (such as the Garden City Movement), and political and economic demand (such as the tension between racism and the need for cheap labour). These dynamics continue to shape the way we see the city and its potential challenges. I have spent a sizeable chunk of this chapter on Wikipedia's use of the 2001 Census. From Coetzer (2009) and Bickford-Smith (1995) to McDonald (2008), the historical tendency to sweep the majority of Cape Town's population under the carpet, coupled with an unwillingness to lay bare the social conditions produced by the city's political economy, is clear. I hope, by now, that the link to the nature of [[Cape Town]] is emerging as well. However, if we are to say something meaningful about the political economy of wikiality as it pertains to [[Cape Town]], we need to go beyond the dubious use of 2001 Census statistics, and look into the rest of discourse surrounding Cape Town on Wikipedia.

[[Cape Town]] versus [[City of Cape Town]]

We have already established that the use of statistics on [[Cape Town]] as it looked on 22.12.2012 is misleading. Most of this chapter centres on the perpetuation of an image in which, among other things, 'black' people make up less than six per cent of its population. Sceptics might, at this stage, point out that already the third sentence of the opening paragraph of [[Cape Town]], makes clear that Cape Town only "forms part of the City of Cape Town metropolitan municipality".³² The same sentence also provides a wikilink to [[City of Cape Town]]. In this entry for the municipality as a whole, the numbers make more sense. Confusingly, numbers are taken from the 2011 Census, but of overall concern here is that the city's total population is given at 3 740 026, and, per the infobox, the demographic breakdown is 42,4% 'Coloureds', 38,6% 'Black' Africans, 15,7% 'Whites', and 1,4% 'Indians/Asians'. In terms of major languages, the given breakdown is 34,9% Afrikaans, 29,2% Xhosa, 27,8% English, and 8,1% Other.³³ This is of course much closer to the numbers that the City of Cape Town uses on its web pages, as well as the numbers that can be found under the 'Demographics' section on [[Cape Town]].³⁴ From this perspective, then, Cape Town's working- and underclass is indeed represented.

³² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [13.01.2014]

³³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=City_of_Cape_Town&oldid=524849567 [26.12.2012]

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

My argument is that this is the virtual equivalent of the sweeping-it-under-the-carpet approach that we have seen characterised the Capetonian establishment's self-understanding under colonialism, apartheid, and presently under a globalised neoliberal regime. We see this mentality actively at work among editors, who are at pains to point out not only the difference between the municipality and the city, but that the numbers here are not representative of the "actual city", in which "there is a higher percentage of white people".³⁵ In fact, the 'demographics' section opens with an assertion that the metropolitan municipality "includes suburbs and exurbs often considered not to be part of Cape Town".³⁶ This begs the question 'not considered to be part of Cape Town by whom?', but about this, the entry is silent. No citation is provided for the statement. The signal sent by Wikipedia via Statistics SA is clear: spatially, Langa and its citizens might well be situated within the limits of the city, but do not form an "actual" part of it. The meticulous omission of Langa from main place Cape Town is a particularly good example, but it is also quite telling that among the almost three million citizens left out, we find several large townships, such as Khayelitsha, Mitchell's Plain, and Gugulethu.

While the full citizenry of Cape Town might be represented via the entry on the municipality, it still languishes in relative obscurity. The [[City of Cape Town]] entry, hereunder Langa, which is excluded from yet surrounded by what [[Cape Town]] calls the "actual city"³⁷, is not very visible, compared to [[Cape Town]]. For example, there are 275 pages on Wikipedia that link or redirect to [[City of Cape Town]].³⁸ In comparison, 6742 Wikipedia pages link to [[Cape Town]].³⁹ Whereas [[City of Cape Town]] also can be found in the Afrikaans, Korean, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, and Russian Wikipedias, [[Cape Town]] has an entry in an additional 114 languages⁴⁰, even if these vary in information density and accuracy. The signal it sends when it comes to importance and relevance is unmistakable. Searching for Cape Town on Wikipedia leads one straight to [[Cape Town]], albeit with a link to the disambiguation site. Likewise, a cursory Google search returned [[Cape Town]] on the first page, whereas [[City of Cape Town]] only appeared on page 6. Significantly, whereas [[City of Cape Town]] had been viewed 6028 times between September 24 and December 23 2012 (Wikipedia Article Traffic Statistics, n.d: online), [[Cape Town]] had been viewed 288 768 times in the same time period (Wikipedia Article Traffic Statistics, n.d: online). The net effect is that almost three

³⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

³⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/City_of_Cape_Town&limit=500 [22.12.2012]

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:WhatLinksHere/Cape_Town&limit=500 [22.12.2012]

⁴⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=City_of_Cape_Town&oldid=524849567 [[22.12.2012]], http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [22.12.2012]

million Capetonians are relegated to [[City of Cape Town]], an entry solely dedicated to basic geographic statistics, political and bureaucratic administration. The only sections on this entry are 'History', which pertains exclusively to the formation and development of the administrative unit, 'Government' (hereunder an 'electoral history' which starts abruptly with the Democratic Alliance's historic 2006 majority –quite ironic considering that few things might have produced more shelf-meters of writing about South Africa than its long history of disenfranchisement), and 'Geography'.⁴¹

The signal this sends out is that out of Cape Town's 3 740 026 citizens (Statistics South Africa, 2012: online), almost 3 million are portrayed as without a history; they do not form part of the "actual city" and appear irrelevant to Cape Town's sports, education, transport, tourism, economic, or communications and media sectors, sections which only appear on the [[Cape Town]] entry. Instead, they appear as a mass in need of governance. This strengthens McDonald's (2008) argument about the reflexive repression of the tension and paradoxes inherent in a highly unequal and racialised post-colonial economy. As should be clear from my recap of Cape Town's history of racial segregation, Cape Town is built upon economic exploitation along racial lines, and that it is the same unjust class system - largely distributed along the same racial patterns - which keeps the city afloat today. At the same time, the by and large 'black' working class has often been viewed as a problem that needs to be controlled and contained at arm's length. Historically, this was done with reference to hygiene, but in more recent times, the same urge has been justified with crime prevention and other safety issues. This is a theme that is recurrent in my findings, and one I get back to in chapter four, which deals with main places in the Free State. In terms of the political economy of wikiality, it is worth noting how these communities have been created by a racialised economy, justified through ostensible societal concerns such as health and safety. Wikipedia's representation of these spaces is built on the same discourse.

[[Cape Town]]'s discourse at a glance

So far, I have compared the [[Cape Town]] and [[City of Cape Town]] entries. That Wikipedia appears to place more relevance with the former is clear, with its 288 768 page views in three months. But how is the city framed on [[Cape Town]]? A short discursive analysis should make that clear. I will do this with the [[Cape Town]] entry as it was on 22.12.2012. We have already seen that although there are two different sets of demographic statistics, the more accurate ones are hidden in the 'demographics' section, whereas the statistics claiming, for example, that only 2,7% of Cape Town's population speak Xhosa, can be accessed more intuitively through handy tables. The choice of pictures on [[Cape Town]] is quite interesting. Immediately upon entering the page, the first thing

⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=City_of_Cape_Town&oldid=524849567 [[22.12.2012]]

one sees on the top right hand side is the infobox, at the top of which there is a montage of six images from Cape Town. Starting on top, going clockwise, the montage consists of an image from the V&A Waterfront shopping mall, a picture of the city centre, possibly taken from the Devil's Peak, a picture from Chiappini Street in Bo-Kaap, the iconic Bloubergstrand view of the city underneath Table Mountain, St. Georges Street in Simon's Town, and, finally, Cape Town's City Hall seen from the Grand Parade. The city's flag and coat of arms are displayed right under the montage, and under those, two maps, one showing Cape Town's location in South Africa, and one metropolitan Cape Town. Below we find the demographical statistics we have discussed already. The second most prominent picture on [[Cape Town]] is found on the left hand side, a bit further down on the page. Charles Davidson Bell's iconic painting *Landing of Van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652* introduces the 'History' section. Under 'Geography', we are presented with a panorama of the city bowl. Panoramas of the City Bowl, Camps Bay, and Hout Bay, along with the image from Simon's Town used in the montage, accompany the 'Suburbs' section. Interestingly, of these four, only Camps Bay and the City Bowl form part of main place Cape Town, according to the 2001 Census.

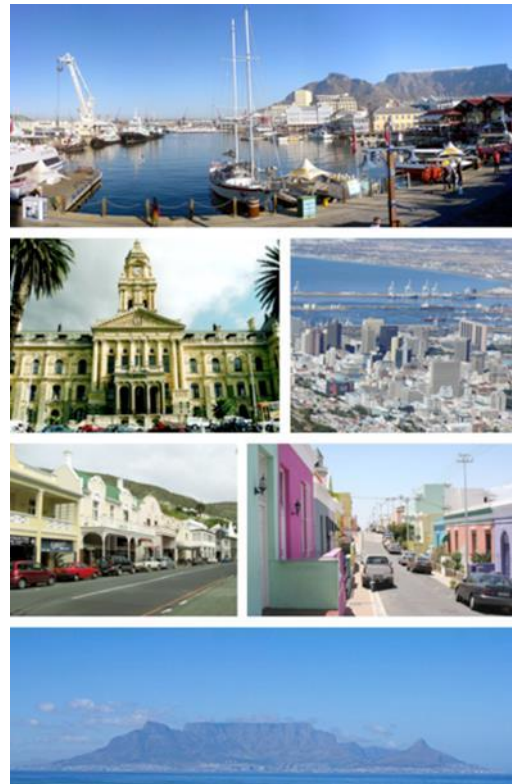


Figure 3: Cape Town Montage.png

Top: A panoramic view over the Victoria Basin at the V&A Waterfront. Centre left: Cape Town City Hall. Centre Right: Central Cape Town. Middle Left: Historical centre of Simon's Town. Middle Right: Bo-Kaap. Bottom: Table Mountain from Bloubergstrand.

Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=529387437 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cape_Town_Montage.png [23.12.2012]

The picture of City Hall illustrates the section on 'Government', and the 'Demographics' section is illustrated by maps over metropolitan Cape Town. The 'Economy' section is illustrated by pictures from the central business district, and the 'Tourism' section features a photo from Cape Point, and a photo from Clifton beach, as well as the two pictures from the Waterfront and Bo-Kaap above.

Furthermore, there are pictures from the botanical gardens, a picture of a windmill from 1796, a photo from the Cape Town stadium, a picture of kite surfers on West Beach or Bloubergstrand, a photo of the University of Cape Town's picturesque upper campus, a map of flight routes connecting Cape Town to the rest of the world, a photo of Cape Town taken from the harbour, and three

pictures illustrating transport in Cape Town: one of a train on the Simon's Town line, one of the Nelson Mandela Boulevard with Cape Town's skyline in the background and, lastly, one from the taxi rank at the Cape Town central station. Some of these pictures are from places that fall outside of main place Cape Town, as defined by the 2001 Census. I have already mentioned pictures from Simon's Town and Hout Bay. In addition, there is the picture of kite surfers, taken somewhere "near Bloubergstrand".⁴² I do not protest their inclusion; these things are by all means part of the Capetonian experience. However, the absence of working-class Cape Town is conspicuous. Given the socioeconomic realities of the Mother City, that means in practice that visual cues of 'black' Cape Town are largely missing. As with the availability of statistics, this ultimately comes down to a matter of choice among the Wikipedia community: clearly, when it comes to illustration, it seems the distinction between municipal/metropolitan Cape Town, and the town of Cape Town does not matter. Hence, there must be other explanations for why, for example, there is not one picture from any of Cape Town's numerous townships or informal settlements.

Two pictures appear to go against this trend. The first is from Bo-Kaap, a neighbourhood in the City Bowl that was designated 'Malay' under apartheid, and which still retains much of its character, even if it is under constant threat of gentrification (Kardas-Nelson, 2012: online). From that perspective, not only does [[Cape Town]] indeed feature a picture from a 'black' neighbourhood; it is even featured in the top photo montage and repeated further down in the entry. However, what is one to make of the fact that the photo, with its gaily painted houses on a charmingly hilly street, is completely bereft of people? McDonald (2008: 296) might be onto something when he asserts that the hegemonic portrayal of Cape Town is one that reduces the presence of Africanness to a whiff of non-threatening exoticism. A picture of pretty houses in an exotic neighbourhood, without the uneasiness accompanying having to confront the descendants of slaves who actually populate it, is arguably exactly the kind of pleasant exoticism which leaves the nature of the establishment intact.

The picture of a Metrorail train in Kalk Bay speaks to the working class experience, but again, there are no people in this picture. This means that the only picture that deals with a working class experience of Cape Town is the one from the central taxi rank. This picture not only illustrates a typical working class aspect of the town, but is the only picture in the entire entry in which one can clearly make out 'black' people. While it stands out from the majority of the illustrations, it is buried at the very bottom of the article, in sharp contrast to the prominently placed painting of Jan van Riebeeck which illustrates the 'history' section. Again, we see an example of how visible traces of the tensions Cape Town rests upon are relegated to the margins. As usual with discourse analysis, what

⁴² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kitesurfers-001.JPG> [23.12.2012]

is not being said is not just as interesting as what is being said (Fairclough, 1995: 210). We have already seen how [[Cape Town]] visually favours some experiences of the city while downplaying others. The same can be said for which themes it deals with, how it deals with them, and which themes are ignored.

Considering how a recurrent theme in this chapter is the repression of the tension that accompanies an economy built upon a racialised class divide, a good starting point is to note that the words 'racism' and 'racist' do not occur on [[Cape Town]]. On the other hand, apartheid, and the consequences of the 1950 Group Areas Act are dealt with both under 'History' and, further down in the 'Suburbs' section, the description of how the 'Cape Flats' were used to relocate people forcibly removed from the now 'white'-designated areas. One might argue that this is typical of the Capetonian liberal myth discussed earlier in this chapter: segregation was imposed from the outside, and with its demise institutional racism is no longer a problem or a topic for discussion (McDonald, 2007: 286-287). Certainly, there is no mention of Cape Town's history of pre-apartheid segregation anywhere. Similarly, the word 'poverty' only appears once, and then simply in the title of an article listed in the 'References' section. The reference is used in the subsection 'Taxis', but only to discuss taxi turf disputes, not poverty. Incidentally, the same subsection also makes brief mention of how, "with the high demand for transport by the working class of South Africa, minibus taxis are often filled over their legal passenger allowance".⁴³ This is the only mention of "class" in the entire article. It should not come as a surprise, then, that the words 'unequal' or 'inequality' do not occur at all, although Cape Town's crass class dynamics arguably get a sort of backhanded mention in the same subsection, which establishes that "taxis are the standard form of transport for the majority of the population who cannot afford private vehicles".⁴⁴ The reference for this claim goes to a page now missing from a web site billing itself the "Cape Town Online Casino Guide" (cape-town.org, n.d: online). In light of this, and the fact that taxi rates are typically higher than bus or train tickets, the merits of the claim itself seem dubious. It is also not clear if the author(s) here indeed mean to say that a majority of the population cannot afford private vehicles, or that of those without private vehicles, the majority prefers minibus taxis. Without any proper citation, however, one suspects that this assertion is little more than an unfounded presumption made by someone with little actual knowledge of public transportation in Cape Town.

It should be noted that the 'Demographics' section relies on the 2001 Census to cite unemployment numbers (given at 19,4%), and the vast discrepancies in the racial make-up thereof. While the link is dead and South African unemployment statistics are both contradictory and controversial, it cannot

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

be contested that [[Cape Town]] in this section provides evidence of stark inequality linked to race. At other times, though, the article appears to do the opposite. In the last paragraph of the ‘History’ section which deals with the struggle against apartheid, liberation, and post-1994 developments, [[Cape Town]] establishes that “since 1994, the city has struggled with problems such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, a surge in violent drug-related crime and more recent xenophobic violence. At the same time, the economy has surged to unprecedented levels due to the boom in the tourism and the real estate industries”.⁴⁵ As we have established time and again, the dominant narrative of Cape Town is one which downplays economic exploitation in patterns that largely continue to be racialised for the benefit of a well-off establishment. One should note here that the economic growth in the 2000s disproportionately benefitted wealthy South Africans (Marais, 2011: 209). At the same time, disease, crime, and xenophobia are closely linked to poverty, inequality, and marginalisation (Kenyon, 2008: 531-532; Marais, 2011: 219-221, 223, 226-231, 267-271, 421-423), but here, if anything, economic growth in the property and tourism sectors is presented as if it sets off serious problems linked to health and safety. Certainly, [[Cape Town]] makes no effort to explain why infectious diseases, crime and xenophobia have been on the rise. Cape Town’s economy and tourism sectors, on the other hand, both have their own dedicated article sections.⁴⁶ Again, issues around poverty or inequality are swept under the carpet, and de-contextualised from the political economy that produced them.

‘Black’ people are present in [[Cape Town]]’s narrative, but their presence is framed by difference. For most of the time, they are contained as some sort of quaint primordial phenomenon, rather than the overstretched backbone of the local economy. When it comes to ‘black’ spatiality, the creation of townships is briefly covered in the subsection on the Cape Flats, even if no reason is offered anywhere for their post-apartheid persistence. The only other mention of township life comes in the ‘Tourism’ section, where there is mention of tour companies arranging tours to both Khayelitsha, and, somewhat confusingly, the Cape Flats, here explained as “a mostly Coloured township”.⁴⁷ The point here, though, is not geographical inaccuracies, but the contemporary dominant narrative of Cape Town, which emphasises its European nature while downplaying continued economic exploitation along racial lines. The city’s ‘Africanness’ is framed as a pleasant non-threatening element of exoticism (McDonald, 2008: 269-270, 296). In this case, readers are told that the city’s townships feature Bed and Breakfast operations, in which “you can spend a safe and real African night”.⁴⁸ The implication here is that the “real” Africanness is safely contained in townships outside

⁴⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

⁴⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

⁴⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [23.12.2012]

the city. This echoes Coetzer's (2009: 4-5, 17) explanation of pre-apartheid location developments in Cape Town: they are supposed to simultaneously contain, preserve, and civilize the Otherness of Africa. Here, as elsewhere in the article, we find that the encyclopedia anyone can edit perpetuates colonial discourses about Cape Town.

The sentence in question clashes with two of Wikipedia's basic principles. The use of the second person pronoun is in clear defiance of the Manual of Style, which prescribes strict adherence to the third person pronouns or passive voice tone.⁴⁹ It appears to go wrong in terms of register, too. It reads like a tourist guide: a clear violation of the What Wikipedia is Not policy.⁵⁰ From the page history, it appears this sentence was intended as promotion for a particular tourism-oriented website, as the IP addresses associated with these edits can be linked to other edits pertaining to the same website. The packaging of 'black' Cape Town as a commodity to be consumed by tourists is not limited to comments about the Cape Flats as a tourist destination. For example, Cape Town has a distinct jazz tradition and a vibrant jazz scene, but on [[Cape Town]], jazz is only mentioned in connection with the marching bands at the *tweede nuwejaar*^{vi} minstrel parade.⁵¹ While both of these two topics are accompanied by wikilinks and thus have entries of their own, their role as identity markers and ongoing cultural practices among the city's inhabitants ought to warrant them a bit more context on the [[Cape Town]] article, rather than a brief mention as tourist attractions. In general, the tourism angle appears strong on the [[Cape Town]] entry. Of the external links gathered at the bottom of the page, two go to the official websites of the city and the province, whereas the two last ones both go to tourism websites.⁵² Oddly, there is little mention of culture anywhere on [[Cape Town]]. That is, there is a separate sports section, but little mention of other cultural practices or expressions, apart from where they function as tourist attractions.⁵³ The closest one gets is the section on 'Communications and media'. Again, one sees the marginalisation of the 'black' experience of Cape Town. The very opening sentences mention how Independent News Media publishes "the major English language newspapers in the city"⁵⁴, the *Cape Times* and the *Cape Argus*, and that Naspers publishes the Afrikaans equivalent, *Die Burger*. In fact, the tabloid the *Daily Voice* and *Die Son*, its Afrikaans competitor, are the biggest newspapers in Cape Town by far. Typically aimed at the 'black' working class market, the *Daily Voice* has a readership of over half a million, while *Die Son* has over a million readers (Farber & Daniel, 2012: online). Of the newspapers listed by

⁴⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style&oldid=529789565 [26.12.2012]

⁵⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:What_Wikipedia_is_not&oldid=529003301 [26.12.2012]

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

⁵² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

⁵³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

⁵⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

[[Cape Town]], only *Die Burger* comes close to these numbers, with an average of over 484 000 readers daily (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2013: online). By comparison, the *Cape Argus* has a readership of 303 000, and an average of 251 000 read the *Cape Times* (South African Audience Research Foundation, 2013: online). While Cape Town's biggest print media are aimed at a largely 'black' working class market, Wikipedia ignores these, elevating smaller papers as "major".⁵⁵ True, the paragraph dealing with the city's knock-and-drop community newspapers makes mention of newspapers aimed at both affluent and impoverished areas and in all of Cape Town's major languages. Still, the feeling that the working class is being overlooked is hard to shake, a recurrent theme in [[Cape Town]]'s portrayal of the city.

The 'Demographics' section lists some statistics on literacy, education, and employment. As we have already seen, a sentence in the 'History' section mentions problems related to illness, crime, and xenophobic violence. The 'Cape Flats' subsection has a brief backstory on forced removals, and establishes that since then, the Flats have "been home to much of the population of Greater Cape Town, and most of the residents in the area are of African descent".⁵⁶ Other than these, the only descriptions of contemporary 'black' working class experiences of Cape Town is the aforementioned paragraph about minibus taxis, apart from a very brief mention of the bus and train lines. The paragraph on minibus taxis elaborates, but nevertheless takes on an air of middle class sensibility; it acknowledges that it is a necessary service, but laments inadequate attention to maintenance, taxi operators' inattention to road safety, and neglect of legal requirements. The paragraph ends off with mentioning that the industry is prone to turf wars.⁵⁷ While all of these concerns are valid in themselves, it is nevertheless worth noting the echoes of the sanitation syndrome in that the only paragraph on the entry that actually deals with a 'black' working class side of the city frames it as a problem. For example, while middle class transportation in the form of private vehicles can cause problems too (road congestion, air quality), these are not mentioned here. As far as transport goes, it appears as if Wikipedia takes on a 'white' bourgeois perspective, in which 'black' realities are problems deserving of scrutiny, whereas 'white' ones are not.

Conclusion

Earlier in this chapter, I pointed out that the creation and layout of Ndabeni signalled the otherness of its inhabitants as "visitors to the city from another place" (Coetzer, 2009: 4). Here, it is suitable to take a step back to our main object of study, and observe that the 2001 Census conducts a similar act of seclusion and marginalisation when it decrees Langa a main place. Through this kind of

⁵⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

⁵⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=528946276 [26.12.2012]

categorisation, Langa is portrayed as autonomous, and distinct from Cape Town. The case of Ndabeni supports this argument. While the name remains to this day, once all its 'black' inhabitants had been relocated to Langa, Ndabeni was razed and repurposed as an industrial area. The question, then, is whether it really is by happenstance that Langa is seen as a main place, "the equivalent of a small city, a suburb with subdivisions in a large city or a tribal area in communal or trust land areas" (Statistics South Africa, 2007: 46), distinct from Cape Town, whereas Ndabeni is seemingly not distinct enough to warrant main place status. The same is true for today's leafy Pinelands, Langa's 'white' garden city precursor, designed by the same people. The drive to preserve an air of 'whiteness' in a colonial setting through containing the Other whilst smoothing over the tension inherent in the racialised servant master-relationship defining the South African political economy, has been a major driving force in the making of modern South Africa. The same drive continues to mould the image of Cape Town and its Other both offline and on Wikipedia; distinctions and Otherness are marked by race. The approach to Langa by the 2001 Census, and, by implication, Wikipedia which uncritically replicates it, is consistent with the popular perception of 'black' African Capetonian township- and informal settlement dwellers as outsiders and temporary visitors from the Eastern Cape and elsewhere (Coetzer, 2009: 4; 17, Spinks, 2001: 23-30; Thorn & Oldfield, 2011: 518-519, 528-529). Such a perception is a recurring trope in discourse on urbanism both in Africa and elsewhere (Bank, 2011: 15-17). This attitude was also reflected in Western Cape Premier Helen Zille's reference to overcrowding and conflict at a Grabouw school as being caused by "education refugees" (cited in Nkosi, 2012: online). When this kind of compartmentalisation is accepted and mimicked by Wikipedia, it reinforces these myths which have their roots in colonial Cape Town and whose rationale is rooted in the quest to preserve 'white' privilege. As was the case in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the city of Cape Town continues to be caught up in the tension between reliance upon cheap African labour and discomfort at the presence of a 'black' underclass. The solution continues to be spatial segregation, driven by a combination of neoliberalism, xenophobia, and implicitly racist impulses (McDonald, 2008: 270, 284-294). McDonald argues that Cape Town's continued marginalisation of 'black' people is driven by a "strategic – if sometimes unconscious – attempt by the city's decision makers and developers to maintain a sense of 'whiteness'" (2008: 269-270). Such a "racialized discourse and practice ... serves to entrench negative racial stereotypes, while at the same time strengthening the city's appeal to a (largely white) transnational elite who do not want to know about (or feel guilty about) their racialized existence" (McDonald, 2008: 286). Indeed, [[Cape Town]] makes no mention of any kind of racist segregation outside of apartheid. Consistent with the myth of liberal Cape Town (Bickford-Smith, 1995: 73-75; McDonald, 2008: 290), the entry instead makes it appear as if apartheid segregation

represents a painful and sudden break with a historical tradition of diversity, rather than a continuation of colonial practices. This kind of master narrative reinforces a 'white' Capetonian self-image which conveniently avoids confronting capitalist exploitation along racial lines as the foundation of both historical and contemporary privilege (McDonald, 2008: 283-290, 293-294, 296).

When the Wikipedia community paints a picture of a city with a mere five and a half per cent 'black' Africans through highlighting certain statistics over others, as was the case with the creation of Langa, it is arguably a move to "symbolically and literally maintain the city as a white space bereft of otherness" (Coetzer, 2009: 17). On [[Cape Town]] as a whole, we see a version of the city which tries to explain away or simply hide the tensions and paradoxes inherent in a beautiful city and tourist destination still sharply divided along class and race vectors. This was picked up by an anonymous user whose IP address originates in the US. Creating a new section, 'Racism issues' on the talk page, the user wrote: "Why no mention of the open sore of racism in cape town? [sic] The whole article reads like a tourist brochure for potential rich white middle class tourists. Almost all the blacks are kept as menial workers, out of executive positions, and many places refuse or discourage black patrons".⁵⁸ Wording and lack of sources aside, this critique comes close to my own: the image of Cape Town perpetuated by Wikipedia is a wikiality tailored for Western eyes that obfuscates the tension arising from its racialised and exploitative mode of production. The anonymous user made this comment on 30 December 2011, yet over two years later it has not elicited any responses. That is, it could have influenced other editors' subsequent editing on [[Cape Town]], but given my analysis of the article per December 2012, this does not seem likely.

This analysis of [[Cape Town]] unmaskes the political economy of wikiality at work. Scientific discourse and institutions in the form of the 2001 Census are being used to paint a particular picture of the city's demographics, and the reproduction of racial categories created by colonialism and later, the apartheid regime makes the division of people into different racial groups, purely a social construction, appear as a 'natural' 'fact'. On Wikipedia, Cape Town retains its 'world class city' status whilst relegating the exploitation that the city rests upon to the side lines. Meanwhile, Cape Town's Otherness, its African nature, is carefully managed and contained. The majority of its population, 'black' and of the working class, are largely dismissed from the "actual" city. Instead, they are consigned to an entry dealing with administration of the town and its inhabitants, completely bereft of a historical context and preoccupied with the population as something that needs to be managed. In this chapter, we have seen how Cape Town itself was shaped by a myriad of discourses, by the (conflicting) demands of politics and labour, by myths, by the selective use of authoritative

⁵⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Cape_Town&oldid=506422204 [03.01.2013]

institutions, and the struggle for hegemony. The [[Cape Town]] entry is borne out of these same dynamics, which continue to mould it. Taking [[Cape Town]] at face value as, in the words of Wikipedia itself, a “neutral compilation of verifiable, established facts”⁵⁹, is therefore to ignore how both reality and perceptions of it are shaped by, and play into, struggles over power.

⁵⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_in_brief&oldid=435538464 [09.12.2012]

CHAPTER FOUR: CROWED OUT OF THE FREE STATE

It is wholly possible that [[Cape Town]]'s air of pleasant tourist consumer guide is informed by the city's position as a major tourist destination, its role in the networked economy, and general presence on the global radar: a "world class city", to quote McDonald (2008: 15-48). While at least half of the most frequent editors on that entry are South African, it is nevertheless clear that [[Cape Town]] attracts editors and readers from outside of the country. Hence, an analysis of this article alone is not necessarily a sufficient indication of how marginalised South Africans appear on the encyclopedia anyone can edit. To this end, a look at how communities in the more peripheral Free State province are represented might provide a useful corrective, as a quick glance at contributions suggests that the most of the frequent editors are South African. Looking at representations of the Free State is also in line with Bonner's (2003: 160-165), argument that academia and the commentariat is too focussed on urban areas, and that social change is better measured by looking at the South African periphery. Using Matjhabeng local municipality as a focal point, later zooming out to look at the representation of main places in the Free State in general, I document a very persistent pattern: the 'black' working class and the lumpenproletariat appear only at the margins, if they can be found at all. This chapter shows that the history of 'black' settlements in the Free State tends to be relevant and present on the English-language Wikipedia^{vii} only as far as it relates to the history of 'white' settlements. The typical trend is that there is no entry for main place X, a township connected to the town main place Y, or if there is, it consists only of one sentence explaining that it is a township or settlement outside Y. If the history of township X is present at all, it usually appears in a sentence in the general history of town Y, in which it is explained that during apartheid people were relocated to township X ten kilometres down the road. As is clear from my analysis of [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]] and the Wikipedia entries on the various main places therein, the history of main places in the Free State appears to be first and foremost a 'white' history. This trend is generally representative for Wikipedia's treatment of main places in the Free State. While analysis is subject to interpretation, the 'Main places of interest in the Free State' section of this chapter is a quite specific numbers exercise, and the results are damning. The 2001 Census operates with 204 main places in the Free State. Of these, 94, slightly less than half, have entries on Wikipedia. Of the 110 main places without entries, 100 of have a relative or absolute majority of 'black' people. That is, of the 141 places with a relative or absolute majority of 'black Africans' (so, depending on the racial mix, between approximately 40 and 100 per cent 'black Africans'), only 41 have entries. This is in contrast to main places with a relative or absolute majority of 'white' people: out of a total of 47 main places, only 3 places do not have entries. If the population count was to be taken into account here, the numbers would be even more damning, but it is hardly necessary. As this chapter makes

clear, at least as far as settlement and places of residence as well as their context are concerned, Wikipedia's portrayal of 'black' South Africans is one of systematic marginalisation. But before we can look at how it is represented in wikiality, it is important that we familiarise ourselves with the terrain. That the Free State Province looks the way it does is not a coincidence. As we shall see, the two foundations of the Free State economy, mining and large-scale agriculture, were only made possible through the exploitation and marginalisation of the 'black' population. It was colonial powers that first created the Free State as a geographical polity. Through legislation and its enforcement, 'white' people dispossessed other groups of their arable lands, banishing large parts of the population to inadequate 'reserves'. Some population groups were banned from entering the Free State altogether. Yet the link between mode of production and distribution of privilege in today's Free State is absent from the way these localities are represented in wikiality. It is my contention that this is no coincidence, but a result of hegemony. Those with access to the resources to edit Wikipedia, both in the sense of technology such as adequate hardware and an internet connection, as well as cultural resources - what Ford and Geiger term "literacy" (2012: 17) - are glossing over how this privilege was created. However, it is hard to criticise Wikipedia for lack of context without providing it myself. To that end follows a short history of South Africa's Free State province.

A Short History of the Free State

The Free State Province lies in South Africa's interior, framed by the Vaal River in the north and the Senqu (also known as the Orange River or Gariep) in the south. East of the Free State lies the independent constitutional monarchy Lesotho, and a bit further north the end of the Highveld plateau marks the border to KwaZulu-Natal. In the West, the border to the Northern Cape is marked by a straight line which cuts southwest through the Karoo from the Vaal to the Senqu. Around half of the world's gold comes from South Africa, and of that gold, a third comes from the Free State. Mining is the biggest employer in the province, although the sector has been in a sustained decline, leading to growing unemployment and increased poverty (Butler, 2004: 42-43, 57). In addition to mining, the economy of the province has always been heavily dependent upon agriculture. With increasing depletion of minerals, lower gold prices, and exposure to harsh international competition in the agricultural sector coupled with reduced subsidy levels, the Free State economy is in a downward spiral, with almost 51,7% of the Free State population living in poverty. Manufacture, the third corner of the Free State economy (tourism is the fourth) has declined for much the same reasons (Marais, 2006: 58, 61-63; Marais, 2013: online). The closed mines and the contracting economy have led to a decrease in the Free State population, and a move from hostels to informal settlements, putting additional pressure on housing delivery issues (Marais, 2013: online).

The earliest inhabitants of what is now the Free State were hunter-gatherers, the presence of which in Southern Africa goes back at least ten thousand years. Around two or three thousand years ago, some of these groups underwent a so-called pastoralist revolution, and gradually turned into herders. By the year 200 AD, these so-called Khoikhoi pastoralists had reached the western parts of the Cape in search of grazing grounds. Between the years 300 and 1000 population groups partial to crop agriculture, some of which had the resources to mine and process metals, started arriving in the region. Judging from linguistic and archaeological evidence, these were Bantu-speaking peoples, originating from east and central Africa. Such settlements in the Free State area go far back, but expanded substantially around year 1000. Over time, these groups and settlements settled into a range of differing and coexisting polities. Many of these were based around clanship and chieftaincy, some of which gradually evolved into “more centralized kingdoms or states” (Worden, 2007: 9). All these communities were marked by a complex web of interactions, of which trade and conflict over land were typical attributes. A characteristic trait of the population dynamics around this time was that the expansion of the Khoikhoi pastoralists as well as the agriculturally-minded Bantu-speakers drove the San to areas less suited to these areas (Worden, 2007: 8-9). In the late 1700s, communities known as Oorlams, typically consisting of Khoikhoi, San, and escaped slaves from the Cape, were beginning to form in the Senqu river region and elsewhere, as a reaction to conflict arising out of the Trekboers’ expansion into the interior (Worden, 2007: 11). Some of these groups later morphed into or gave way to what came to be called Griquas and Kora (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 32, 149).

From the mid-1830s, the gradual and often temporal encroachment of the Trekboers was replaced by what came to be known as the Great Trek. While the reasons for the systematic exodus of Boers from the Cape and into the interior are contested, the main lines are nevertheless clear. The economy in the Cape had transformed. The ban on Khoikhoi labour was lifted in 1828, and together with the ban on slavery, this created huge changes in the labour market. At the same time, British financial interests started investing in wool production, which led to huge upsurges in the price of land, an increasingly rich and settled gentry, and “the extrusion of labour tenants” (Worden, 2007: 14). In addition, the Voortrekkers were dissatisfied both with their own lack of political representation, as well as what they saw as a too liberal treatment of freed slaves and Khoikhoi pastoralists. However, the economic impetus was the decisive one (Worden, 2007: 13-15). Many of those who made the Great Trek were reeling from currency evaluations, land price hikes, and debt. Others, anticipating colonial expansion into the interior, might have been motivated by the prospect of land resale value (Worden, 2007: 13-15). To this, one could perhaps add as a secondary motivation Boer opposition to colonial power, which felt both distant and pervasive at the same

time and often at odds with Boer interests (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 52-53). In retrospect, this move formed a cornerstone in the Afrikaner nationalist mythos (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 53-54, Worden, 2007: 15). However, Nigel Worden warns against the presumption that the Great Trek was “the steady march of a racially conscious ‘volk’ seeking to establish themselves in the ‘empty land’ away from colonial or African control” (2007: 15). Such a view ignores the complex interactions between different peoples and actors in the region.

At the same time, the interior of southern Africa was undergoing a state of tumultuous and violent change: the Mfecane. According to Worden, the Mfecane emerged from “the consolidation and expansion of the Zulu kingdom in the Natal Lowveld in the 1820s, the subsequent migration of other Nguni-speaking people into the Highveld, and the often violent competition for land and livestock with the inhabitants of those areas” (2007: 15). The background for the Mfecane is complex, and a number of additional reasons have been suggested. The region had undergone severe environmental degradation with successive droughts. At the same time, the Zulus under Shaka Zulu had made recent innovations and changes both within their military organisation and society in general. These gave their expansionist policies a bit more momentum, which in turn pushed other groups to move as well. As a result of settlements in the coastal regions, new trading patterns had emerged, which saw the polities established in the interior realigning and jostling for position. In the face of the ensuing chaos, a number of leaders attempted to assert their own authority, a move which tended to escalate the violence. Lastly, new opportunities and pressures in the labour market arose as a result of the slave trade out of Delagoa Bay and the enforced servitude in the Cape Colony. That increased contact with new settlements in the exterior led to the Mfecane has been criticised as a Eurocentric interpretation of events but, together with increased competition over resources in general, it is certainly a factor that led to both increased opportunities and challenges in the region. During the Mfecane, the Griquas, a people descendent from ‘white’ settlers, Khoikhoi, and freed slaves that had long eked out an existence on and beyond the fringes of the colony, moved into what later became the northern Free State, and became an active part in the hostilities. Likewise, the Boers made an impact on the interior already prior to the Great Trek, but it is also clear that the trekkers were part of the Mfecane dynamics, not only through the increased competition over land and resources, but also through their alliance with the Barolong of Thaba Nchu. Out of the intense dynamics of the Mfecane a number of new polities arose, such as the Basotho, the Swazi, and the Ndebele. It also led to the expansion and reformation of Batswana and Bapedi. Contrary to the myth propagated by Afrikaner nationalism, the subsequent formation of the Orange Free State was an outcome of the same dynamics (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 20, 32-33, 78; Worden, 2007: 15-19).

In 1848, despite resistance from Boers and Basotho, the Cape Colony annexed the lands north of the Senqu, calling it 'the Orange River Sovereignty'. While the Boers initially succumbed, King Moshoeshe of the Basotho was more successful in his resistance against the British. Ever the diplomat, he eventually sought the alliance of the Boers settled north of the Vaal. This prompted the British to accept an independent Transvaal Boer state in return for neutrality in the Orange River Sovereignty conflict (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 195-198; Worden, 2007: 19). In 1854, the British, tired of repeated confrontations with the Basotho, decided to withdraw from the sovereignty, and the 1854 Bloemfontein Convention left the Boers nominally in control of what was renamed the Orange Free State. In short, the constitution of the Boer republic gave the vote to all 'white' men, established a parliament in the form of a *Volksraad*^{viii}, and created the office of the State President, to be elected directly (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 84, 197-199; Worden, 2007: 19, 21). The British withdrawal was in line with colonial policies at the time, which saw indirect rule as more expedient than costly direct rule (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 198). Thanks to a number of encroachment strategies, land ownership ended up as practically exclusively 'white' in the Orange Free State, and the 'black' people who were already living on the land mainly made up the workforce. The Orange Free State was the first and only province, prior to the formation of the union and the Natives Land Act of 1913, to make it illegal for 'black' people to become title holders of new land. At the behest of British traders who feared competition, 'Indians' were barred for trading from 1885. Five years later, the Boer republic went even further, and banned 'Indians' from residency overall (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 85-86). I mention these processes here, because they provide background for the contemporary geography of the Free State. It is all the more important as few of these processes are visible on the Wikipedia entries analysed in this dissertation.

In 1886, gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in what was then the Boer-controlled South African Republic. Together with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, this completely transformed the economy of the entire southern African region. It created demands for new kinds of labour and agricultural products, thus transforming both the countryside and the emerging urban centres. In a nutshell, during this time, "new classes of industrial workers, capitalist producers and landless farm labourers emerged and competed with the merchants, rentier landlords, artisans, peasants and sharecroppers of the nineteenth century" (Worden, 2007: 30, 41-42). The mineral revolution ushered in "a capitalist and industrial economy and society" (Worden, 2007: 42), and the transformation of both agriculture and mining is at the core for understanding the Free State - and South Africa - today. The mineral revolution changed the economy. With this change came changes in the labour market and novel forms of social organisations. Pass laws, taxation, trader credit, rural poverty, and the masters and servants acts - legislation that criminalised breach of contract -

generated a steady stream of cheap African labour to the industry (Feinstein, 2005: 56, 63-64). The mines recruited African labour from the reserves on the basis of short contracts, usually lasting only between one and one and a half years. Under these contracts labourers were not allowed to hold any secondary work, and were kept under tight control when they were on the premises. The motivation was the bottom line: mechanisms and laws that made unions and strikes impossible (not to say illegal), control over the workers' movements, and not having to pay a wage that had to feed and house both the individual worker and his family saved the mines money. Low wages were crucial, as the cost of extracting gold was relatively high compared to gold operations elsewhere in the world. Besides, the mines were dependent upon ('white') skilled labour which had to be imported from outside the continent. This required competitive wages, and these expenses were recuperated by paying very low wages for unskilled work. The limited contracts also meant that the mines did not have to take responsibility for miners developing silicosis as, the defence went, the risk of contracting silicosis was small when workers spent so little time at work (Feinstein, 2005: 63-67; Worden, 2007: 43-44). Out of the mining industry sprang a segregated work life based on race, complete with separate housing, pass laws, laws to prevent strikes, and stringent anti-pilfering techniques to be used on 'black' workers. Initially, 'white' workers had also been subject to these, but since 'white' workers could and did express dissatisfaction through the ballot, this was quickly abandoned (Worden, 2007: 44-45). The mineral revolution brought additional changes both in the countryside in general as well as in agriculture. For some 'black' people from the rural areas, mining became an attractive way to expand their domestic budgets. In certain cases, the motivation was failed crops and a faltering economy for small agricultural producers, for others, the driving factor was the wish to acquire more assets and commodities, whether it was cattle, guns, or garments. Other groups were simply not interested, and in the early years, were able to resist. It was the colonial desire for a stably expanding economy and therefore a steady supply of labour that drove colonial interests into the interior in the first place, and the authorities therefore embarked on a long string of legal measures to transform the rural peasantry into a labour force suited to the mineral-based capitalist economy. The imposition of taxes, for example, did much to boost migrant labour recruitment. Recruitment was later reinforced by other external factors such as "locust plagues, rinderpest, and drought" (Worden, 2007: 49-51).

Among those who remained outside of the migrant labour system, many Africans became peasants, profiting from the growing urban demand for agricultural products. However, the boons of peasant cash crop production were short lived. The mining industry was complaining that the labour force was taken up by farming, the authorities had problems collecting revenue from the crops, and 'white' farmers did not appreciate the competition. The result was a flurry of legislation that put an

end to the short-lived 'black' agricultural boom and took away some of the most common alternatives to participation in the migrant labour system and farm labourer work (Worden, 2007: 51-55). Land dispossession was intimately linked with the labour demands of the 'white' economy, and kept mining wages low while also laying the foundations for the ('white') large-scale agriculture as the peasantry gradually transformed into a rural proletariat (Feinstein, 2005: 44-48). Land dispossession bolstered the migrant labour system and the exploitative wages, as "Africans were left with enough land to justify - at least in the eyes of mine-owners - the payment of extremely low wages, but not so much that they could avoid periods of work on the mines" (Feinstein, 2005: 46). I flag this because the long history of land dispossession is crucial to understanding today's demographic patterns.

During the South African war, the Orange Free State was allied with Paul Kruger's South African Republic, and after the latter's attack on the Cape Colony, Britain invaded the Orange Free State in March 1900 and followed up by declaring sovereignty over what they now called the Orange River Colony (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 223-225). The war ended in 1902, and despite lingering bitterness, the British were quite happy to resettle Boers back on their land. However, Lord Milner was adamant that 'black' South Africans should not be resettled on the land, but rather turned into a labour force. The need for a steady supply of labour was, after all, essential to the overall British goal, stable economic growth, which hinged on creating favourable conditions for the mining houses and rural agricultural production aimed to feed the urban areas (Worden, 2007: 32-33, 35-37). The Orange River Colony received self-determination in 1907, complete with a new constitution, a legislative assembly, and a franchise limited to 'white' men. The Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, and it is quite symptomatic of South African history that no 'black' person was present at the Pretoria Conference in 1908 where the foundations of the union were laid and the first draft of the constitution was made (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 254-255, 258-259). Clearly, the union was not conceived with the interests of its 'black' inhabitants in mind. In the end, writes Nigel Worden, "in an ominous sign of what lay ahead, 'white' unity was upheld at the expense of black political and land rights" (2007: 36).

The 'white' takeover of land in South Africa had been growing steadfastly, gaining momentum around 1870, and reaching its apex with the Natives Land Area Act of 1913. However, the government of the Orange River Colony enacted a series of laws making land ownership, sharecropping, and tenancy by Africans increasingly difficult and eventually illegal already in 1907. This was a response to the pleas of poor 'white' farm tenants, labourers caught up in increased stratification of rural societies, and 'white' commercial farmers that sought to obliterate

competition. African peasants and sharecroppers, as well as the land owners who made use of their work, became targets for violence (Worden, 2007: 54). It was from the preceding Orange Free State ban on 'black' landownership that the Natives Land Act of 1913 was born. A seminal piece of racist legislation, it essentially extended the Free State ban on 'black' ownership to the rest of the South Africa (Worden, 2007: 55). The Natives Land Act of 1913 is crucial in understanding the face of modern South Africa and, indeed, the Free State. It was brought about by the confluence of interest between mining and commercial agriculture, and set a precedent for apartheid by introducing land segregation and establishing 'native reserves' which became the foundation for a number of apartheid-era 'homelands' (Worden, 2007: 55). Under this Act, it was illegal for Africans to buy or rent land outside these reserves. It effectively banished two-thirds of the population to a mere 7,3% of the land which "was totally inadequate to sustain any independent and viable peasant economy, and - precisely as intended - left them vulnerable to the growing labour demands of 'white' farmers and the mines" (Feinstein, 2005: 43). In the Orange Free State, the Act empowered 'white' farmers "to evict croppers and other tenants who would not submit to full control of their time and labour by the landowner" (Worden, 2007: 55-56). It was what made large-scale ('white') commercial farming - which together with mining continues to be the backbone of the Free State economy - at all possible. It also led to increased poverty among rural Africans who had previously made a living off the land (Worden, 2007: 56). Ten years later, the notorious Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 left a lasting legacy in South Africa's more densely populated areas. It "empowered municipalities throughout the country to enforce residential segregation, and it also forebade the granting of freehold property rights to Africans on the grounds that they were not permanent urban residents" (Worden, 2007: 48). To the extent that they were allowed in towns at all, it was always a temporary measure, and on the condition that their presence would, in some form, serve the 'white' population (Worden, 2007: 48).

In the 1940s, new gold deposits were discovered in the Free State and Transvaal (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 615, 618; Feinstein, 2005: 94-95, 166). The Free State gold was deep in the ground and required extensive initial investments. In addition to the mines themselves, surrounding infrastructure ranging from housing to transport, electricity, water, schools, and hospitals had to be provided. Whole new towns appeared in what had ten years earlier been a sleepy agricultural area. These had to be carefully planned. Town planning in the Free State is a good illustration of the tensions between the needs of industry and 'white' political concerns when it came to segregation, and form part of the explanation for the way the Free State looks today. In the Free State Gold Fields, Anglo American, under the leadership of Harry Oppenheimer, wanted to house 'natives' in hostels under conditions that were marginally improved compared to those on the Witwatersrand

(Feinstein, 2005: 167). In a new development, Oppenheimer also wanted to establish “villages for married native employees” (1950: 153). Anglo American had concrete plans to house about “500 married natives per mine” (Oppenheimer, 1950: 153), ten per cent of the total work force, in these villages. Then-Minister of Native Affairs and apartheid ideologue Hendrik Verwoerd was not amused, and the official response from the government was to set a limit on married quarters: no more than three per cent of the ‘native’ work force could settle permanently in these, and then only if it was absolutely crucial to the mine’s operation. Oppenheimer’s enthusiasm for his ‘villages’ eventually waned, and in the end the percentage of the ‘black’ work force living permanently in the married quarters never even reached the stipulated limit of three per cent (Feinstein, 2005: 167-168). By the 1960s, the Orange Free State Goldfields “produced 60 per cent of South Africa’s total output of gold, and 79 per cent of the profit” (Feinstein, 2005: 166). However, despite increases in both the gold price and the general profitability of the new fields, the wages remained very low.

In 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act turned the existing ‘native reserves’ into eight (later expanded into ten) distinct and nominally sovereign ‘Bantu homelands’ with varying degrees of self-government. These were supposedly based on the various nations’ ‘historic’ areas, a notion that in many minds reinforced the coupling between ethnicity and homeland. This was done in the name of ‘separate development’, but with the intention that ‘black’ political aspirations would be redirected from the South African state and into of homeland loyalty based on ethnicity (Worden, 2007: 120-125). In the Orange Free State, ‘black’ people were forcibly removed on a totally unprecedented scale. The supposed link between the ‘homelands’, remote and barren lands ill-suited for agriculture, and various ethnicities was, by and large, spurious. Taken together with the attempt to redirect ‘black’ political efforts, it is clear that ‘separate development’ was little but a euphemism for “a bold attempt to break down a broad African nationalism and to replace it with tribal identities, led by new classes of collaborators” (Worden, 2007: 125). To placate industry, which feared competition should the homelands develop industrial ‘Hong Kongs’ within their borders, the South African government provided various incentives and subsidies for industries electing to set up or relocating close to (but still outside) the homeland borders. The idea was to draw a ‘migrant labour’ force of sorts, setting up shop close to where the labour was located, but making sure that tax and revenues did not disappear into the coffers of the homeland governments, at the same time making industrial establishment within homeland borders unattractive. However, the downturn of the economy in the 1970s meant that this plan never came to fruition (Davenport & Saunders, 2000: 621). With the coming of South Africa’s democracy and the interim constitution in 1993 as well as the 1996 Constitution, the ‘Orange’ was dropped from the name of the province. The homelands were reintegrated into the Free State, but the province’s outer borders remained intact, (Davenport

& Saunders, 2000: 576-577). However, this does not mean that the Free State borders are uncontested. In Lesotho, a political undercurrent still insists on getting back the so-called 'conquered territory': the fertile lands east of the river Caledon which the Boers took by force in the 1860s (see, for example, Lelimo, 1998).

This is a useful reminder that the Free State has not always been the way it is now, and that its constitution remains contested. The province was forged out of conflict and its economy built by systematic dispossession and exploitation of 'black' labour by the privileged 'white' classes. Its first incarnation as a polity came about as a result of colonialism and hunger for land. Like much of South Africa, it was transformed by the mineral revolution and the transition into a full-on capitalist economy. Racism has also been a crucial element in the nature of the Free State. These dynamics continue to have a clear impact on who lives where in the Free State, and under what conditions. In many ways, settlement patterns in the Free State are the result of meticulous planning which did not necessarily have the good of the majority in mind. Gold price fluctuations and a globalised economy helped steer the province into an economic downturn, which started to gather serious momentum in the aftermath of apartheid. Poverty levels have increased dramatically. At the same time, certain myths about 'empty lands' and the noble nationalist intentions of the Voortrekkers persist, often obscuring the real genesis of the geography of South Africa. A fairly recent example is Deputy Agriculture Minister Pieter Mulder's comments about historical land ownership and the Mfecane (Davies, 2012: online). This is really the point of this brief history: in my analysis of the discourse produced about localities in the Free State, two themes are recurring. One is the perpetuation of myths that serve to justify the establishment and perpetuation of a repressive, exploitative, and racist polity and that ignore the links between these dynamics and the contemporary Free State. The other is silence: things that are not mentioned at all. For example, my analysis looks at how the demographics of Free State main places are represented on Wikipedia. Without an idea of the historical background, one might assume that the lack of any kind of sizeable group of 'Asian' inhabitants in any given locality might be 'natural' or 'just the way it is', while in reality, for one hundred years, 'Indians' were outright banned from residing in the Free State. This links to my previous point since, as we have seen, this ban came about at the behest of British capital, and was later enthusiastically embraced by racist Afrikaner nationalist policies. This kind of context is largely missing in South African wikiality, which I will now demonstrate by using representations of Matjhabeng Local Municipality on Wikipedia as a focal point.

Matjhabeng Local Municipality

“Matjhabeng local municipality,” to quote Wikipedia, “is an administrative area in the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State in South Africa, that includes the city of Welkom”.⁶⁰ Like the entries on other Free State municipalities, it is sparse in information, focusing on administrative facts. There is nothing wrong or suspect with this per se. It reflects the municipalities’ overarching administrative nature, as well as their relatively recent formation. Content-wise, for example, [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]] as it appeared on 28.12.2012 follows the same formula as the other Wikipedia entries for municipalities in the Free State: an introductory sentence which explains that it is a municipality, and that it is located in a particular region of the Free State, South Africa. Usually, a one-sentence explanation of the name of the municipality follows. The only other section, apart from ‘References’ (usually these go to Stats SA and an electronic copy of P. E. Raper’s (1989) *Dictionary of Southern African Place Names* uploaded to the Internet Archive), and ‘External links’ (usually to the municipality’s web site) is ‘Main places’. Here, one will find a table with basic demographic information from the 2001 Census on the main places in the given municipality. This information includes names, area, population size, and the most widely spoken language. If the main place has a corresponding Wikipedia entry, the name contains a wikilink; if there is no entry, the name appears in red. On the right hand side, there is an infobox with a map and relevant political and geographic information. On the bottom of the page there is a banner which places it into the ‘Municipalities of the Free State’ category. There are only two real exceptions from this formula. [[Setsoto Local Municipality]] is a relatively minor exception, as it contains some additional information about mayors, economy, and proximity to Lesotho. [[Dihlabeng Local Municipality]], on the other hand, is quite lengthy, with detailed accounts of geography and economy.⁶¹

What sets [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]] apart, if anything, is the two-sentence section ‘Corruption’, which reads: “In 2011 the municipality came into the news as one of the worst examples of the widespread corruption under the ANC. In about four years about R2bn went missing”.⁶² This is backed up by a reference to the South African online publication *TimesLive*. There is a bit of editorialising here; nowhere in the *TimesLive* article is there any mention of the ANC. The article simply outlines the claims of abhorrent corruption and establishes that the (ANC-governed) municipality is “one of the country’s worst-run municipalities” (Wa Afrika & Hofstatter, 2011: online). That corruption is widespread in the ANC is thus the poster’s own opinion. This sentence has remained uncontested since it was added to the article on 13 June, 2011. The edit summary

⁶⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=500253629 [28.12.2012]

⁶¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Setsoto_Local_Municipality&oldid=522553585 [28.12.2012],
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dihlabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=522552998 [28.12.2012]

⁶² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=500253629 [28.12.2012]

accompanying it is further confirmation that this editor had an axe to grind. In an apparent dig at former President Thabo Mbeki's Africanist ethos, the 'Corruption' section was added with the edit summary "The African Renaissance at work".⁶³ Overall, though, the infusion of overt political aversion, in clear defiance of Wikipedia's fundamental NPOV principle, is an anomaly in this category. The entries on Free State municipalities might be sparse, but they are generally well laid out, systematic, informative, and thoroughly referenced. The downside of this, however, is that it lends an authoritative tone to a discourse that is nevertheless partial to a 'white' perspective on notable locality. Using [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]] as a focal point, I explore the discourse Wikipedia produces, often through omission.

Again, I want to draw attention to the main places. As already mentioned, [[Matjhabeng]] has a table where these are listed, together with their census code, total area, and population. For some reason, dominant language is not listed here. It is unclear why this is the case; most of the 'Main place' sections on Free State municipalities include 'Most spoken language' in their tables. This feature is an indication of dominant population group, which is central to my argument. To this end, I made use of Adrian Frith's (Frith: online) website, which faithfully reproduces the results of the 2001 survey complete with maps. I will get back to it later. For now, however, I just want to look at which main places have an entry (and are thus marked with a blue wikilink), and which do not. The main place tables are gathered from the 2001 Census. It appears the Census is counting certain mines as main places, and since Matjhabeng is a mining area, 9 out of 23 main places listed are mines, usually recognisable by a very low number of inhabitants. None of these have entries, a point I get back to later.

First, however, I want to look at the relationship between towns and townships. Setting the mines aside from now, going through the main places in Matjhabeng alphabetically, a clear trend appears. [[Allanridge]], for example, apart from the usual right-hand-side infobox, explains that it is a gold-mining town, the main seat of the Lorraine Gold Mining Company, that it was founded in 1947, and "designed by town planner William Backhouse".⁶⁴ The entry ends off with a sentence about another main place in Matjhabeng, Nyakallong: "The Nyakallong location is 3 km outside of Allanridge. It was established during the apartheid era to house the mine workers of the Loraine [sic] Gold Mining Company".⁶⁵

⁶³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&diff=prev&oldid=433965947 [28.12.2012]

⁶⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&oldid=529689960> [28.12.2012]

⁶⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&oldid=529689960> [28.12.2012]

In what is actually quite untypical of Wikipedia entries, [[Allanridge]] was for a long the victim of persistent vandalism, in which factual information segued into a long scree consisting of a mix of self-promotion and downright vandalism, marred by poor syntax. This started on 3 May 2011 with a one-sentence line praising the qualities of a particular chemistry student at the University of the Free State⁶⁶, and mushroomed to the extent that it comprised around half of the article, before, almost two years later, it was finally deleted.⁶⁷ While it is quite exceptional that such obvious and substantial breaches of multiple policies and pillars go undetected for such a long time, it speaks to the article's relative obscurity. After all, [[Allanridge]] only has 14 incoming links.⁶⁸ Still, between 29 September and 28 December 2012, the page had been viewed 695 times (Wikipedia Article Traffic Statistics, n.d: online). From this one might conclude that while [[Allanridge]] is not languishing in total obscurity, an average of 7,72 views per day is not enough to combat vandalism.

This is somewhat marginal to my main point, though. The clue to my argument lies in the last sentence about how Nyakallong was established “during the apartheid era to house the mine workers”.⁶⁹ First of all, the discourse is noteworthy. True, apartheid is acknowledged, but no mention is made of forced removals, or of the skin colour of the mine workers in question. Instead it appears as if Nyakallong was established simply to house mine workers: at the very least a rather euphemistic representation of the historical relationship between the needs of capital, labour, and Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. This is where it gets really interesting. Nyakallong is mentioned on [[Allanridge]] as an, for lack of a better word, accessory location to a mining town of, if Wikipedia and the 2001 Census is to be believed, 2822 souls. Main place Nyakallong, however, with a population of 16 837, does not have an entry on Wikipedia.⁷⁰ Apart from its mention in the table of main places on [[Matjhabeng]], the only place on Wikipedia Nyakallong is mentioned, is this one sentence in the entry on Allanridge. It is indeed as if Nyakallong appears as a mere accessory to the town it serves, Allanridge, without any history or notability of its own. Or, rather, that its history is only relevant inasmuch as it relates to Allanridge.

The same pattern is apparent with the next town on the list, Hennenman, population 2931.⁷¹ Apart from the standard infobox, the entry has a brief history of the town, its name, and economics. The rest of [[Hennenman]] is actually dedicated to its history of segregation, detailing how the ‘black’ population were living in separate areas of the town up until the 1950s, when they were forcibly

⁶⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&diff=next&oldid=385874198> [28.12.2012]

⁶⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&diff=529689960&oldid=427288735> [28.12.2012],
<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&diff=550045888&oldid=542520602> [05.09.2013]

⁶⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:WhatLinksHere/Allanridge> [28.12.2012]

⁶⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allanridge&oldid=529689960> [28.12.2012]

⁷⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=500253629 [28.12.2012]

⁷¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hennenman&oldid=496744572> [28.12.2012]

removed to a township today known as Phomolong. Phomolong, with a population of 18 146, is a main place in Matjhabeng, but does not have its own entry. The argument that ‘black’ people’s history appears notable only as it relates to ‘white’ history is hard to resist.

An exception to the emerging pattern is the entry on the township Kutlwanong, which, in addition to the infobox, consists of the following sentence: “Kutlwanong is a town in Lejweleputswa District Municipality in the Free State province of South Africa”.⁷² More context for this place with a population of over 58 959 can be found on the entry for the next main place on the list, the neighbouring Odendaalsrus (population 8653). Apart from a brief local town history and a picture of the local church, one can read that Kutlwanong was established ten kilometres down the road “to house black people during the apartheid era”.⁷³ From this point of view, the pattern holds: even if Kutlwanong has an entry, its history is only told in connection with Odendaalsrus. Even though there is an entry for Kutlwanong, on [[Odendaalsrus]], the name is written in bold, rather than wikilinked.

Next up on the list are Riebeeckstad and Thabong, the entries of which consist of an infobox and a single sentence describing their location. Riebeeckstad goes against the general trend, in that, if the 2001 Census is to be believed, the majority of its inhabitants are ‘white’, yet no history or context is provided.⁷⁴ The township Thabong, adjacent to Welkom, is the biggest main place in Matjhabeng, with 148 206 inhabitants, as per the 2001 Census and Wikipedia.⁷⁵ Still, its history is reduced to one sentence on [[Welkom]], Matjhabeng’s main mining city. It reads: “In the years of segregation, the township of Thabong was established for black people and the township of Bronville for coloured people”.⁷⁶ I will return to [[Welkom]] later.

The entry on Ventersburg contains a bit of history relating to its origins and fortunes during the South African War. A photo of an intersection in Ventersburg is perched atop the usual infobox. In what has become a clear pattern, the last sentence refers to apartheid segregation as the force behind the creation of another main place: “During the apartheid era, black people were forced to live outside Ventersburg in the location of Mamahabane. The location has expanded into two districts, the second is Tswelangpele”.⁷⁷ Mamahabane is with one ‘m’, whereas the 2001 Census uses the spelling Mmamahabane. For some reason, Mamahabane is written in bold, but, in contrast to most of the other entries we have dealt with that deals with main places, there is no attempt at

⁷² <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kutlwanong&oldid=499810373> [28.12.2012]

⁷³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Odendaalsrus&oldid=526786313> [28.12.2012]

⁷⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Riebeeckstad&oldid=484285422> [28.12.2012]

⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=500253629 [28.12.2012]

⁷⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

⁷⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ventersburg&oldid=513580307> [28.12.2012]

wikilinking to it. There is no wikilink for Tswelangpele, nor is it written in bold.⁷⁸ The name does not appear in the 2001 Census. Most likely, it is being counted as part of Mmamahabane. Mmamahabane does not have an entry on Wikipedia, even if it is a main place with 9078 inhabitants compared to Ventersburg's 1069.

The entry on Virginia is relatively substantial, compared to most of the other entries on main places in Matjhabeng. Spanning over three paragraphs, it follows the usual structure. The first paragraph describes its mining- and agriculture-based economy, and notes that Virginia has "the deepest pipe-mine into the earth on the planet".⁷⁹ The second paragraph describes its history and the origins of the name. The last paragraph consists of two sentences. The first is on the town's incorporation into Matjhabeng, the second is a direct echo of the [[Ventersburg]] entry: "During the apartheid era, black people were forced to live outside Virginia in the location of Meloding".⁸⁰ Meloding, a 2001 Census main place, is written in bold, but not wikilinked. That is, as with most of the townships we have dealt with here, there is no entry. The point, however, is that no red link was created either.

Although alphabetically [[Welkom]] is next, due to the town's size and role in South Africa's mining industry it makes more sense to deal with the last main place in Matjhabeng first. Apart from the mines and mining compounds, Whites, southwest of Hennenman, is the smallest main place in Matjhabeng, with a mere 411 inhabitants, 96,4% of which are 'black' Africans, according to Wikipedia and the 2001 Census.⁸¹ Still, it has an entry, consisting of an infobox and, in typical fashion, a sentence which explains that it is "a settlement in Lejweleputswa District Municipality in the Free State province of South Africa".⁸²

[[Welkom]] is on a different level compared to the rest of the entries for Matjhabeng main places. This is no surprise, as it is both the administrative seat for Matjhabeng Local Municipality as well as a hub for the mining industry in the area. At a glance, the entry, though lengthy, is a bit lacking in execution. While it has the usual infobox and a photo of a mining tower, two hatnotes on top of the page caution readers that the entry is lacking in citation, and that the referencing that is there, is "unclear".⁸³ A glance at the 'References' section confirms this: there are only two references, and both of them refer to Adrian Frith's 2001 Census web site. Contrary to what is usually the case - as I showed in the previous chapter, it certainly is not the case with [[Cape Town]] - the demographic numbers are made up by agglomerating the city with the nearby township and suburb. That the

⁷⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ventersburg&oldid=513580307> [28.12.2012]

⁷⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Virginia,_Free_State&oldid=514137914 [28.12.2012]

⁸⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Virginia,_Free_State&oldid=514137914 [28.12.2012]

⁸¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Whites,_Free_State&oldid=484286563 [28.12.2012]

⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Whites,_Free_State&oldid=484286563 [28.12.2012]

⁸³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

numbers are agglomerate is also pointed out in the references. In addition, the ‘References’ section contains what is most likely vandalism in the form of the inexplicable line: “{{{ Moeketsi Nolo-Soccer and dance master of the year Sima Msayi - Best basketball player in Free State”.⁸⁴ A quick skim read of the entry shows up two additional issues: a good number of sections are composed, at least partially, of bullet points, and there are very few wikilinks. Out of six lists, only one, on ‘Famous people’, contains wikilinks. Others are long lists of schools, monuments, suburbs, tourist attractions, and strategies for economic development. None of these are even attempted redlinked, and it would appear that at least some of these are in contravention of the What Wikipedia is Not policy, which establishes that “Wikipedia is not an indiscriminate collection of information”⁸⁵, in addition to the Manual of Style’s dictum that lists should not be used where prose will work better.⁸⁶ The main concern here, however, is not the overall quality of the article, but the discourse it produces around its ‘black’ inhabitants. Although wordier than the rest of the Matjhabeng main place entries, it appears to nevertheless conform to the same kind of segregation narrative: the ‘History and City Design’ section starts with its gold mining history and the official establishment of the town after the discovery of substantial gold fields in 1946. The section then goes on to describe Welkom in terms of town planning, mentions that it was elevated to city status in 1955, and goes on to talk about contemporary traffic management. After this comes a bulleted list of residential suburbs. The only mention of segregation comes in the section’s second-last sentence mentioned above: “In the years of segregation, the township of Thabong was established for black people and the township of Bronville for coloured people”.⁸⁷ Ironically, the section spends much energy lauding the town-planning efforts of the mining industrialist Ernest Oppenheimer, but never draws the link between town-planning, mining, and racial segregation.⁸⁸ Segregation was crucial to Oppenheimer’s and Anglo American’s vision for Welkom and formed part of the town plans from the onset (Oppenheimer, 1950: 153-155). [[Welkom]]’s sentence on segregation falls within a now familiar pattern, as [[Thabong]] does not feature any history of its own. There is no entry for Bronville at all. As was also the case with [[Cape Town]], we see that the tension between the need for cheap labour, and the desire by both state and capital to keep said labour force at an arm’s distance, is smoothed over.

This brings us to a category of Matjhabeng main places that do not have entries on Wikipedia: mines and mining compounds. Nine out of the 23 main places listed on [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]]

⁸⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

⁸⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:What_Wikipedia_is_not&oldid=530110155 [30.12.2012]

⁸⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style&oldid=530353181 [30.12.2012]

⁸⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

⁸⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

are mines, which, most of the time, appears to include worker's compounds, although the number of inhabitants listed is surprisingly small.⁸⁹ These omissions are interesting from two points of view. First of all, in a familiar pattern, they ignore places where 'black' people live and work. Second, it is both odd and interesting that crucial as mining is to the economy and culture both locally and nationally, no more information is available about these mines. First of all, the Matjhabeng Local Municipality by and large covers what was once known as the Free State Goldfields (Marais, 2013: online). In that respect alone, it would seem natural that there was a bit of information about these individual mines. More importantly, the South African economy is built on gold. Gold mining, in turn, has, as I showed earlier in this chapter, traditionally only been possible because of the structural and raw exploitation of the 'black' population (Feinstein, 2005: 109-112). As my short history of the Free State shows, part of this exploitation had very noticeable and lasting effects upon settlement patterns. In any case, looking at the demographics provided by the 2001 Census and Wikipedia via Adrian Frith's website (Frith: online), we see that typically, of the few inhabitants that are counted as living on these premises, between sixty-seven and one hundred per cent (but most often between ninety-five and one hundred), of the inhabitants are male, and between ninety-eight and one hundred (typically one hundred) are 'black'. This information is not available on Wikipedia, nor is the political economy, history, or culture of the mines itself. Once again, we see that the link between mode of production and social, political, and cultural conditions in South Africa is being obscured by omission.

Main places of interest in the Free State

While my analysis of Wikipedia's coverage of Matjhabeng is clear enough, the question is whether the pattern 'scales', to use hacker parlance. Moving up to provincial level, there are 204 main places in the Free State, according to the 2001 Census. As per 31.12.2012, 94 of these have corresponding entries on Wikipedia. Of those, forty-four are main places where a relative majority of the population is 'white', forty-one are main places where the biggest population group consists of 'black Africans', five are main places where the biggest racial group is 'coloured,' and the last four main places are too diverse to call one way or the other. As is a recurring theme, the most interesting thing is nevertheless what is left out. Please note that in this section, unless I specify otherwise, I have not distinguished between majority (that is, over 50% belong to a particular racial group) and relative majority (simply, cases in which one racial group is bigger than the other). Lastly, the four main places that were too diverse typically contained 'black African', 'coloured', and 'white' racial groups around 33 per cent each or 'white' and 'black African' groups of equal size with a small group of 'coloured' citizens. All of these have entries on Wikipedia, and three out of four have

⁸⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=500253629 [30.12.2012]

entries longer than three sentences. Of the 110 main places that do not have entries on Wikipedia, there are three main places in which the majority is 'white', all in Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Furthermore there are seven main places in the Free State in which the biggest population group is 'coloured' that do not have a corresponding entry. The most telling number is this: one hundred out of the one hundred and ten Free State main places that do not have Wikipedia entries have a relative majority of 'black' people. In many cases, these are the highest populated main places in their local municipality. Many of them are townships, and the pattern from our detailed look at Matjhabeng still holds: if the story of a township is told, it is usually told on the entry for the town. Around thirteen of the missing main places are mines or mining compounds. I have outlined above how negligence of the mines continues to obscure the link between mode of production and South Africa's demographic distribution. If Wikipedia's treatment of main places in the Free State is any indication, it appears that this treatment is relatively systematic.

On the entries [[Letsemeng Local Municipality]], [[Nala Local Municipality]], and [[Mafube Local Municipality]], the tables of main places provide wikilinks for the townships Bolokanang, Kgotsong, and Mafahlaneng.⁹⁰ However, these simply redirect to the entries [[Petrusburg]], [[Bothaville]], and [[Tweeling]]. From their infoboxes, both Petrusburg and Bothaville are presented as having solidly 'white' majorities. [[Petrusburg]] and [[Bothaville]] both recognise their adjacent townships in the body of the text. [[Bothaville]] simply establishes that it is there, whereas [[Petrusburg]] spends a sentence on Bolokanang's apartheid origins and continued growth. None of them, however, incorporate the population numbers of the townships into their infoboxes.⁹¹ If they did, the population numbers would be much higher, and the percentage of 'white' inhabitants would be dwindling low.

[[Tweeling]] is a different case. Here, the numbers are indeed incorporated into the infobox. There is even a photo of the town, and at the bottom of the article there is a link to more at Wikimedia Commons.⁹² The twist here is that Tweeling is not a main place at all, but in fact a sub-place of Mafahlaneng. Whereas Tweeling is not, Mafahlaneng is indeed correctly listed as a main place in the main place table of [[Mafube Local Municipality]]. Still, the wikilink redirects to [[Tweeling]]. Here, Mafahlaneng is mentioned in the text as the "adjacent black township".⁹³ No attempt is made to wikilink or redlink the township name, in contrast to the redlink that accompanies the mention of

⁹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Letsemeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=522551551 [01.01.2013],
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nala_Local_Municipality&oldid=522550627 [01.01.2013],
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mafube_Local_Municipality&oldid=522552567 [01.01.2013]

⁹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Petrusburg&oldid=527748788> [01.01.2013]
<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bothaville&oldid=519528905> [01.01.2013]

⁹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tweeling&oldid=514610193> [01.01.2013]

⁹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tweeling&oldid=514610193> [01.01.2013]

the Liebenbergsvlei River. As is usually the case for the main places I have looked up on Wikipedia, the 'References' section contains a link to Adrian Frith's 2001 Census web page. This link reads "Main Place Tweeling Census 2001"⁹⁴, as per the convention. If one clicks it, however, one lands on Frith's page for "Mafahlaneng, Main place 42003 from Census 2001" (Frith, n.d: online). The mismatch appears to have arrived with the insertion of the infobox in February 2012. For some reason, Tweeling, which in the 2001 Census is sub place 42003002, was given the Census code for main place Mafahlaneng, but not the name.⁹⁵ Nowhere on the entry or its corresponding talk page, is there any indication of naming disputes or any other factors that might explain the mismatch. Whatever the reasons, the persistence of the Afrikaans place name and marginalisation of the Sesotho one, and the subjugation inherent in the redirect from [[Mafahlaneng]] to [[Tweeling]] alone, is indicative of where the relative power of definition sits on Wikipedia.

The relative weight of coverage on Wikipedia is also important here. By relative weight, I am referring to the seeming importance afforded to main places through sheer volume of content. When I went through the existing Wikipedia entries on main places in the Free State, I decided to put them in two camps. The short ones, and the ones with a bit more meat on their bones, the latter usually consisting of some context referring to history and economy. I decided to make the threshold very low, and classified Wikipedia entries over three sentences long as substantial, and those of three sentences or less as minimal. The findings conform to the pattern: three out of the four main places with an evenly mixed population had entries longer than three sentences. All five Wikipedia entries about main places with a 'coloured' relative majority were longer than three sentences. Of the forty-one Free State main place entries with a relative majority of 'black' African inhabitants, a little more than half, twenty-four, had entries longer than three sentences. In contrast, the Wikipedia entries on places with a relative majority of 'white' people were well covered. Out of forty-four entries, forty-two were longer than three sentences. Again, we see that Wikipedia places relative importance on the 'white' experience of South Africa, an argument strengthened by the usurpation of township history into the histories of the towns, portraying an image of Free State South Africa as a place where 'black' people have little to no history or agency, and where the history of settlement is largely a 'white' history.

Conclusion

The findings of this chapter appear quite conclusive. In short, we see that more time and effort is exerted into places that have a majority or relative majority 'white' population, than with a 'black' African one. The same trend holds true if we look at the number of majority or relative majority

⁹⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tweeling&oldid=514610193> [01.01.2013]

⁹⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tweeling&diff=next&oldid=453524490> [01.01.2013]

‘coloured’ main places. Of these, seven out of twelve do not have entries. This is in stark contrast to the entries on main places with a majority or relative majority of ‘white’ inhabitants; of these, a total of forty-four out of forty-seven have dedicated entries on Wikipedia. The entries considered in this chapter typically take on an air of authority; most of them are short, no-nonsense articles or stubs, containing little but a few, quick, ‘facts’. At a glance, the Free State appears to be presented in a sparse matter-of-fact manner, but the reality is, as we have seen, that Wikipedia is underrepresenting certain parts of it. This underrepresentation tends to follow the typical South African fault lines of class and race. Certainly, the intersection between the two is seldom elaborated upon, whether it pertains to the lack of information about mines, mining, and the demography and culture of mining compounds, or the link between the interests of capital and the previous political elite, and current residential patterns. An ironic illustration of this last point is present on [[Welkom]], where the meticulous planning of the mining town is praised, without any link made to the segregation and containment of the ‘black’ working force that was necessarily part of the same planning, or the economic and political reasons behind this segregation.⁹⁶

Brief mentions of removals and relocations are made on many entries, including [[Welkom]]⁹⁷. While a number of these, although certainly not all, contain slight euphemisms along the lines of ‘was established under apartheid to house black people’ which appear to lend forced removals and segregation an air of benevolence they decidedly do not deserve, this is not really the point. These brief mentions of township histories tend to occur as isolated sentences under the general histories of towns that, according to the 2001 Census, still have a majority or relative majority of ‘white’ citizens. Here, they are not contextualised within the general histories of the towns, but typically occur as an afterthought with no mention made of general political or economic dynamics, apart from references to a more or less nebulous ‘apartheid’. The townships themselves, usually with a population many times bigger than the towns, typically do not have entries, or if they do, these consist only of one or two sentences pertaining to geography and possibly the origins of the place name. Thus, we find that ‘black’ places of residence, possibly apart from what can be deduced from the origins of the name, appear to have no history, economy, or culture. That the origins of these places are only mentioned in the town histories contribute to a pre-democracy portrayal of ‘black’ people as without agency. Overall, the weighting and lack of certain entries, despite the ‘factual’ nature of the ones that do exist, appear to suggest that the history of ‘black’ settlement in the area is only relevant as far as it pertains to ‘white’ history. Furthermore, the documented lack of wikilinks and redlinks to ‘black’ settlements and townships combined with the no-nonsense ‘factual’ tone,

⁹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

⁹⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=526529372> [28.12.2012]

illustrates the lack of importance placed upon these by Wikipedia. The redirects, not to mention the renaming of Mafahlaneng to Tweeling, described earlier in this chapter, are even more blatant examples of the prominence given to 'white' settlement over 'black'. From this analysis of Wikipedia entries on main places in the Free State, the impression is one of an encyclopedia, which, despite billing itself "the encyclopedia anyone can edit"⁹⁸, appears to be written from a 'white' perspective. At the same time, the political and economic context for settlement patterns is, by and large, lacking. To be sure, there is the occasional reference to 'apartheid', but these are usually treated as self-explanatory, with the result that no economic or political context is provided.

Underrepresentation of 'black' spaces is nothing new in South Africa. Prior to the coming of democracy to South Africa, P.J. Stickler (1990: 329) wrote about how - in much the same way as 'black' spaces in the Free State have been kept out of Wikipedia - official maps and atlases left out many 'black' spaces, "in a way that reasonably reflects their size, complexity and influence". Many South African maps included small 'white' towns, but excluded much larger 'black' settlements in the same areas. If these settlements were informal, they were even less likely to be included. This, he argued, was a reflection of the way in which 'black' spaces were perceived by those with power of definition and formed part of a discourse which delineated which places were important, and which were not (Stickler, 1990: 329-331). "Maps", Stickler wrote, "enjoy a long standing reputation as unbiased and neutral information about the world" (1990: 329). These are characteristics which clearly resonate with Wikipedia's self-image as a "neutral compilation of verifiable, established facts"⁹⁹, and Stickler's (1990: 329) warning therefore comes quite close to my own worry about wikiality: "Such is the authority of the map", he writes, "that if authoritative, official maps and atlases (...) fail to map places, the impression is given that those places do not exist".

These particular representations of main places, villages, towns, and townships in the Free State are very much in line with Wikipedia's representation of Cape Town analysed in chapter three. They are formed by what I in chapter two termed the political economy of wikiality. Wikipedia, relying on editors with cultural and technological capital, which in South African terms dovetails with class, which correlates with race, uses institutions such as the 2001 Census to paint a picture of localities in the Free State as largely devoid of 'black' people. This feeds into a regime of truth about South Africa established under colonialism and perfected under apartheid which naturalises economic exploitation largely falling along race lines. Society, as I mentioned in the introduction to chapter three, relies on myths to gain acceptance from its members. This is the hegemonic process discussed in chapter two. The ruling classes benefit from the current mode of production, and therefore

⁹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Main_Page&oldid=574690625 [19.12.2013]

⁹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_in_brief&oldid=435538464 [09.12.2012]

generate and circulate myths which make this mode of production appear sensible and natural. In the beginning of this chapter, we saw how the Free State and settlement patterns within it are historical products of resource competition, migration patterns, violence, military expansion, colonialism, racism, and economic demands. As with Cape Town, this is a legacy culminating in physical segregation and stark economic inequalities that is hard to shake. Yet the way wikiality represents the Free State through its main places one would not know how today's state of affairs came about. This mirrors the discourse on [[Cape Town]]. Particular narratives about space implicitly help construct particular ideas about race and class, politics and economics. Wikipedia's 'facts' appear authoritative, and the discourse they form part of inevitably shapes our thinking around the subject, especially given the lack of alternative narratives carrying the same gravitas as one of the most popular reference works in the world. Thus, the narrow selection of available myths surrounding the Free State might affect Free Staters' and other South Africans' view of possible political ways forward. This is why the political economy of wikiality is important: it shapes our perception of South Africa, as well as the way that we act upon it.

CONCLUSION

Through a critical discourse analysis of Wikipedia entries on Cape Town and the Free State, this dissertation has shown that knowledge production about post-apartheid South Africa continues to perpetuate discursive practices inherited from colonialism which marginalise black working class realities and downplay the link between social conditions in South Africa and the mode of production. Part of the wave of websites centred on user-generated content, the not-for-profit online encyclopedia is often hailed as a democratiser of knowledge production and distribution, but if Wikipedia actually replicates and perpetuates deeply entrenched power relations rather than challenge them, we should moderate our assessment of it accordingly. With Michel Foucault's notion of a "political economy of truth" (1980: 132) and US satirist Stephen Colbert's concept of wikiality as a frame, I argue that hegemonic representations of Cape Town and the Free State on Wikipedia mirror the way pre-apartheid and apartheid policies and discursive practices marginalised black subjects in urban and rural South Africa.

The way in which Cape Town and main places in the Free State are represented on Wikipedia is, like all other knowledge, a product of power relations in society. In chapter two, I outlined Michel Foucault's notion of a "political economy of truth" (1980: 132). In chapter three we see very practical examples of this. For example, the only mention of townships on [[Cape Town]] framed them as a safe tourist destination, and was added by an operator in the tourism industry. This is a version of events shaped by economic demand. When, in chapter four, I show that the entries I have analysed provide little to no contextualisation for who lives where, I posit that this is linked to political demand. A recurring theme in chapter two is that knowledge is constructed in a way that serves and naturalises the social standing of the privileged classes. In chapter four's history of the Free State, we see how settlement patterns in the province are a direct result of economic demands from the mining industry and large-scale agriculture, interspersed with political demands in the form of racism. When Wikipedia leaves out entries or presents townships on the entries for neighbouring towns without adding the population numbers, it is downplaying the very inequality that South African privilege was built on. Here, we should recall that, as discussed in chapter two, successfully editing Wikipedia is reliant upon technological and cultural capital. In South Africa, these are hallmarks of privilege. Hence, this systematic marginalisation (and from chapter four it is clear that it is systematic) is arguably a way of downplaying the conditions which lead to this privilege. In discourses such as these, we see the dynamics of hegemony unfold in practice. It is also worth noting that this dissertation has found that this kind of problematic discourse appears independent of whether the particular entries are in 'high traffic areas' of Wikipedia or more obscurely situated.

Here, Castells' (2009: 42-43) notion of networking power comes to mind. In our context, this means that to be able to produce knowledge of a subject on Wikipedia is to exercise authority over it. Thus, when we find no entry on very large 'black' neighbourhoods, but only on the neighbouring white one, this implicitly send out a signal as to who is seen as important and not. One might think that this will improve over time as more and more South Africans gain access to Wikipedia, but this is not necessarily the case. Castells (2009: 42-43) posits that the longer one is outside the network the lesser the advantages of inclusion become. In chapter one I detailed the increasing recalcitrance of Wikipedia: how participation in setting up the rules of the network – its policies and guidelines – is becoming more difficult, how new Wikipedians are put off by a less welcoming environment, and how their edits tend not to stick. This closely echoes Crain Soudien's (2007: 440-441, 450-454) observations, noted in my introduction: in the South African school system, it is the 'black' student that is expected to transform and conform to an already established architecture of knowledge, not the other way around. In short, those who already have the privilege have the ability to exercise power over both newcomers and outsiders to the project. They do this not only by constructing knowledge, but also the parameters along which this knowledge can be constructed. If the price, then, of participation on behalf of latecomers to the network is what Pentzold (2010: 718) termed "orthopraxy", and adherence to an already established world-view, it is far from given that increased connectivity will actually shape the South African wikiality. Here, research into whether the demographics of participants and the nature of the discourse is changing over time, is needed.

The dynamics above are especially important in light of Wikipedia's role as a switcher, as discussed in chapter two. Wikipedia acts as an intermediary between institutions of knowledge and the public. This is where wikiality is created. It is essentially myth, and as I mentioned in chapter three, what holds society together are the myths we tell ourselves about it. Myths (or social constructions, if you will) have the ability to become true when we act upon them as such. Our understanding of who lives where in Cape Town, and how many citizens there actually are, might have something to say for how we think resources should be distributed, for example. If we do not ascribe any importance to the 'black' working class majority in the Free State, its ability to influence us will inevitably dwindle. Historically, 'black' groups have been kept geographically out of sight for much the same reason: If these groups are too visible they might attain too much power and influence, and therefore pose a threat to the established elite. This brings us back to chapter two and my comments on discourses and power, and how particular discourses slot into regimes of truth, and how these, in turn, shape how we think (or do not think) about a particular subject. There is also a parallel between the wikiality I outlined in chapter three and four, and the historical marginalisation of the black working

class discussed in the same chapters. As I have shown, these too were driven by economic and political demands, shored up by regimes of truth relating to race and development.

The big question is where this leaves Wikipedia. Is it simply an extension of already existing power relations where knowledge is produced by the global North and its local subsidiaries about their Other, or does it have transformative value? There is no easy answer, although I am cautiously optimistic. At the time of writing, 12.02.2014, the entries I have analysed, [[Cape Town]], and the main place entries for the Free State province, have changed, as Wikipedia pages are wont to do. A lot of this has to do with the rollout of statistics from the 2011 Census into Wikipedia. The Matjhabeng entry, for example, is no longer structured around a table of main places. Instead the 'geography' section lists "towns"¹⁰⁰, the population numbers of which, according to the references, are made up of composites of main places. Typically, these will include a town and the surrounding townships. There can be little doubt that this is a huge improvement, all the time that it makes the sheer numbers more visible. Much of the same is true for [[Cape Town]].¹⁰¹ The entry has incorporated Census 2011 numbers for the metropolitan municipality in the infobox, and removed the entire misleading 'key statistics' subsection as well as the sentence under 'demographics' which asserted that there were more white people in the "actual" city.¹⁰² These are huge improvements, and an indication that the Wikipedia community's awareness of these issues, as discussed in chapter three, can translate into action. This rightly gives cause for optimism. In this case, Shirky's (2008: 119) assertion that Wikipedia improves slowly but steadily seems to ring true.

The use of more inclusive population numbers are just part of the equation, though. We also need to consider whether there is a change in the discourse itself. In chapter two I point out how the infoboxes containing demographic breakdowns lend further authority to the racial categories employed by the 2001 Census, thereby reinforcing these social constructs as 'facts'. This continues to be the case for the infoboxes. [[Cape Town]]'s 'geography' section, however, puts a bit of distance between itself and the racial categories by putting them in quotation marks, and making clear that these numbers pertain to how people "self-identify".¹⁰³ The same is the case on [[Matjhabeng Local Municipality]]¹⁰⁴ and [[Welkom]], the latter under the subsection 'population makeup'.¹⁰⁵ Drawing attention to the constructed nature of racial categories is a clear improvement. This, however, is as far as changes in the discourse goes. The rest of the textual discourse for the entries I analysed in

¹⁰⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=592380944 [12.02.2014]

¹⁰¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=595158621 [12.02.2014]

¹⁰² http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&diff=595158621&oldid=528946276 [12.02.2014]

¹⁰³ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&oldid=595158621 [12.02.2014]

¹⁰⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matjhabeng_Local_Municipality&oldid=592380944 [12.02.2014]

¹⁰⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Welkom&oldid=595273876> [12.02.2014]

chapters three and four remains largely unchanged. They continue to represent South African spaces in ways which downplay the link between economy, politics, history, and living conditions, and 'white' middle class spaces and their context continue to be the recipient of an inordinate amount of attention compared to their 'black' working class counterparts which may or may not be present at all.

That, in the case of Wikipedia's coverage of the Free State, main place has been replaced by town is an interesting development. Now, for example, the population statistics for [[Odendaalsrus]] are referenced as "the sum of the main places Odendaalsrus and Kutlwanong". By not simply replicating the main place category, Wikipedia has freed itself from the discourse provided by the Census, integrating town and township. At the same time, this opens up a new dilemma. Who is to decide what constitutes a 'town'? Which parts count and which do not? With this move, the power of definition has shifted to the Wikipedia community. My analysis in chapters three and four shows that Wikipedia tends to put more weight on 'white' middle class spaces, and less on 'black', working class ones. As previously pointed out, this continues to hold true, even if the demographic breakdowns have improved. My discussion of image representations of Cape Town in chapter three, for example, remains on point, even if some of the images have been replaced and moved around.¹⁰⁶ The point is that if it is the Wikipedia community which has the power of definition to say what counts and does not count as part of, say, Welkom, then that same community has the power to change it again. There is no guarantee that these changes will last.

I have throughout this dissertation shown that the kind of knowledge produced by Wikipedia tends to reflect the background of its editors. This might be construed as a good thing; one would presume that as Wikipedia's reach becomes wider, its outlook becomes more diverse and accommodating. However, as the literature discussed in chapter two shows, Wikipedia is actually increasingly resistant to change and new inputs, whether we are talking about proposed changes to the architecture or edits in the mainspace content. Thanks to this "sociotechnical gatekeeping" (Halfaker and others, 2013: 684), Wikipedia might simply continue to reflect the worldview of already established editors whose edits implicitly entrench and naturalise their own privilege while it nevertheless extends its reach. In chapter one and two, we saw how Wikipedia is built upon well-established knowledge institutions and discursive practices which have their roots in the Enlightenment. Thus, both Wikipedia and the South African school system arguably form part of the same regime of truth. In the introduction I mentioned Soudien's (2007: 440-441, 450-454) observation of the South African school system as an institution which replicates dominance because

¹⁰⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Town&diff=595158621&oldid=528946276 [12.02.2014]

of its dogged insistence that despite continuous tensions, it is the students, and not the institution, that must transform. This observation resonates with Wikipedia's insistence on "orthopraxy" (Pentzold, 2010: 718) as a prerequisite for participation, outlined in chapter one. This is how hegemony works.

Wikipedia is, as shown throughout this dissertation, first and foremost a social project, and here lies the key. If it is to move beyond serving as an amplifier for entrenched discursive practices, it needs to acknowledge its complicity in the same, and find meaningful ways of accommodating the contributions of new editors. Furthermore, to contribute to Wikipedia not only requires technological capital, but also enough cultural capital to be able to make contributions which appear pleasing to already established Wikipedians. In a South African context, these attributes are hallmarks of privilege and, on the whole, privilege continues to fall along the rough fault lines of race and class. Reducing these questions to a question of simple issue of internet access is, as has been a common theme throughout this dissertation, to downplay how privilege is created. Through analysing entries covering various South African localities, this dissertation has shown that 'black' working class communities appear to be systematically marginalised on Wikipedia, just as they are economically, culturally, and politically marginalised in everyday life. If we, in our eagerness to accommodate the Sinenjongo High School learners in terms of getting free access to Wikipedia on their cell phones forget that meaningful participation is only attainable once one has sufficient cultural capital, and if we do not work actively toward developing this capital among such groups, both inside and outside Wikipedia, we risk simply bolstering a regime of truth geared toward preserving hegemony.

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ⁱ *Dorpie* is an Afrikaans word widely used in South Africa to describe a small town.

ⁱⁱ At the time, few thought to question why searches on the German Google did not yield the same kinds of results. Google certainly did not bring this up (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 65-66).

ⁱⁱⁱ While I wrote this thesis, in an attempt to address the declining number of editors and the lack of diversity in same, the Wikimedia Foundation developed, released, and subsequently pulled back something called the VisualEditor, which allows users to edit in-text in real time, without having to deal with the markup language at all. The VisualEditor, which was built to make editing a seamless experience much like that users all over the world know from editing text in word processing documents was rolled out in July 2013 and pulled back already in September the same year. The established community of Wikipedians simply did not see the use for it, and complained of bugs in the software, a reaction Simonite (2013: online) puts down to the recalcitrant 'techie' disposition of the community. As a result, the Wikimedia Foundation's "flagship project to help newcomers is in fact invisible to newcomers, unless they dig through account settings to switch the new interface on" (Simonite, 2013: online). Some Wikipedias in other languages still make use of the VisualEditor, but on the English Wikipedia it is only available to registered users, and they have to opt in to use it. Thus, the threshold to recruit users unfamiliar or uncomfortable with markup language remains high. See: <http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/520446/the-decline-of-wikipedia/> [14.02.2014] and <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:VisualEditor&oldid=586581881> [28.12.2013].

^{iv} Interestingly, Viegas, Wattenberg & Kusahl (2004: 580) find no link between anonymity and vandalism.

^v *Blikkiesdorp* is an Afrikaans name which can be translated with 'Tin Town'.

^{vi} *Tweede nuwejaar* is Afrikaans, and means something along the lines of 'second New Year's Day'. The parade is arranged every year on the second of January.

^{vii} My study is limited to the English-language Wikipedia. Further research to see if other Wikipedias paint the same picture of the Free State is recommended.

^{viii} *Volksraad* is Afrikaans and can be translated with 'people's council'.