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Conclusion

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We offer a few remarks here, not in the vein of finality or to conclude, but rather as a way of opening or keeping open the exploration, but more importantly the reflection, the thinking of, and thinking about the many ways in which the past endures. What narratives are still to be told and how to ensure that they are told as they are lived daily? As De Beer asks, ‘whose knowledges shape our city?’¹

We have it from radical geographers and spatial theorists² that space should be understood as being produced. South Africa as a society – and within South Africa Bloemfontein/Mangaung as a city struggling to come to terms with while also hoping to overcome its colonial and apartheid past – is *par excellence* an example of how space has been and still is produced, by politicians, governments and by law. Another main insight from spatial theory is that it is relational³ – spatiality creates relations, entanglements of all sorts. Spatial justice urges us to challenge existing spatial relations.⁴ What are the relations that should be challenged in the Mangaung region? Such a challenge or challenges could be and must be manifold. How to rupture the endurance? Withdrawal has been suggested, meaning something that could bring about ‘a space of renegotiation and reorientation.’⁵ The idea of the ‘lawscape’ – ‘the ever-receding horizon of prior invitation by the one (the law/the city) to be conditioned by the other’⁶ – as a way of thinking about law and the city is another angle from where to approach the stories of endurance.

1 S de Beer *Clown of the city* (2020) 99.

2 H Lefebvre *The production of space* (1974).

3 D Massey *For space* (2005).

4 I de Villiers ‘Spatial justice, sustainable cities and gender issues in transport in Mangaung’ in MR Madlange and others *Enforcing accountability, consolidating democracy and compelling sustainable development in the 21st century* (2023) 114.

5 A Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos *Spatial justice. Body, lawscape, atmosphere* (2015) 2.

6 A Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (ed) *Law and the city* (2007) 10.

Recent work⁷ has focused on the idea of ‘overlooked’ cities in response to urban studies and geography that traditionally tend to focus only on the big cities of the north. What can the framework of ‘overlookedness’ contribute to our concern about spatial justice in Bloemfontein/Mangaung? The idea of the ordinary so elegantly written about by Ndebele⁸ in response to certain trends in literary writing in the 1980s has come up also in urban theory. Robinson⁹ has urged for all cities to be seen as ordinary as a way to respond to divisions made between Western cities and Third World cities and as a way to engage also with debates on modernity and development. Work on Bloemfontein/Mangaung as ordinary city can contribute to broader discussions on spatial injustice and the continuance of apartheid spatial geography in South Africa and it can assist to highlight the issues in the city as such. Clearly, much more needs to be done.

This volume focuses on spatial arrangements of the past and present in Bloemfontein/Mangaung. A number of issues, rights come to the fore on which we have not explicitly focused. For example, what are the service delivery implications given the spatial inequality? Has access to water, electricity, but also education, health care been altered? Given the distance between where people work and where they live, what are the arrangements concerning transport? De Villiers¹⁰ focuses on ‘transport poverty and spatial inequality’ in Mangaung. She notes that the Interstate Bus Company transports around 8 000 passengers daily between Botshabelo and Bloemfontein. This service, one of a few remaining state-subsided bus systems, is a remnant of the enduring spatial inequality that forms the focus of the chapters in this volume.

Marais and Gbadegesin in their engagement with the interviews find themselves confronted with a paradox: People living in Botshabelo and Thaba ‘Nchu experience a kind of stability that created a sense of home and place attachment. At the same time, the very reason for them being in those settlements is because of having been violently removed from their homes by the apartheid government. They believe that these inhabitants enjoy a certain right to the city and that ‘continued spatial

7 HA Ruszczyk and others *Overlooked cities: Politics, power and knowledge beyond the urban South* (2021).

8 N Ndebele *The rediscovery of the ordinary* (2015).

9 Robinson (2006).

10 De Villiers (n 4) 95.

segregation will hinder this right'. The authors question the view that all development in these sites should be halted. For them, because of a change in function value, there should be more acceptance of these spaces as rural homes. Serokoane and Twala are less optimistic about the possibility of these sites providing a true sense of belonging and fear that viewing the sites as rural homes can be seen as exclusionary. For them, '[t]he relationships between people and places remain complex and evolve through space and time'. Part of this complexity is to understand also the meaning of 'home' in the African context.

Brand concludes his chapter by stating that even though the interviewees asserted more traditional notions of property, they also invoked alternative imaginaries of what property could mean. These views were also not necessarily in opposition to one another but intertwined and overlapping. The reason for this can be practical need, but it could also be indicative of transformed visions or understanding of property that in a way manage to depart from traditional liberal conceptions. He finds that in particular where inhabitants offered a justification for their right to their homes, they relied on substantive, mediative and relational rather than stark formal or procedural reasons. Wara, in response to Brand, insists on the necessity for state law to work closer together with African communities to address issues related to land tenure reform. He urges for more respect towards African conceptions of land and for African solutions to be sought.

Kamdem Kamga and De Villiers, in their reflection on temporality, argue that one should refrain from placing too much emphasis on the role of legal documents, such as title deeds, as evidence of ownership but should rather heed the heterogeneous nature of the lived experience. They remind us that property is not only legal and material but relational and political, and underscore the 'complex interplay of historical injustices, current reform efforts, and evolving societal needs'. Mhlanga, in response to Kamdem Kamga and De Villiers, notes how the relation between space and time through history reveals ongoing tension and contestation between those who want to hold onto the *status quo* and those who want to challenge it. He highlights the extent to which the law and approaches to law tend to protect the *status quo* and resist change.

Van der Watt laments the many experiences of displacement and trauma revealed by the interviews. The forced removals by the apartheid government uprooted many and rendered them homeless, with no

space to mourn. For many people this seems to be a never-ending journey. Even though Botshabelo has been in some ways a 'place of refuge', 'a final arrival', homelessness continues. Unemployment, but also intergenerational trauma endures. Odendaal concurs with Van der Watt that the search for home continues and that much more should be done to repair. He makes three suggestions: first, a strong state that respects the Constitution; second, a state that realises the importance of serving the people; third, an active citizenry.

The chapter by Van Marle and the response by Motha raise questions about complicity, interdisciplinarity, *nomos* and narrative. Invoking Arendt, Van Marle considers the possibility of new beginning, of plurality, of responsibility. Motha reminds us of the importance of power and the role it plays in the narratives we may allow, listen to or not.

Whose stories are included and, more pertinently, whose stories are excluded?¹¹ Much is still to be said about the intersection of space, race and property across the metropole. In what ways does the present continue, persist, reproduce past practices, but maybe also here and there discontinue, subvert or transform? More to be asked, to be explored, to tell, to listen to.

11 De Beer (n 1).

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