Participatory Theatre and the Urban Everyday in South Africa

This book explores theatre and performance as participatory research practices for exploring the everyday of the city.

Taking an inner-city suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa as its central case study, the book considers how theatre and performance might be both useful practical tools in considering the everyday city, as well as conceptual lenses for understanding it. The author establishes an understanding of space as ever evolving and formed through the ongoing relationship between things, human and non-human, and considers how theatre and performance offer useful paradigms for learning about and working with city spaces. As ephemeral, embodied, material artistic practices, theatre and performance mirror the nature of everyday life. The book discusses theatre and performance games and playmaking processes as offering valuable ways of discovering daily acts of placemaking and providing insights that more conventional research methods may not allow. Yet the book also considers how seeing daily city life as a kind of performance, a kind of theatre in its own right, helps to further understandings of city spaces as ever evolving through complex webs of relationships.

This book will be of interest to academics, academic practitioners and post-graduate students in the fields of theatre and performance studies, urban studies and cultural geography.

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Participatory Theatre and the Urban Everyday in South Africa
Place and Play in Johannesburg

Alexandra Halligey
For Sara Matchett and Nicholas Dallas
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Names of interviewees and workshop participants are all aliases unless the participant specified that they wanted their real name to be used. All participants, interviewees and audience participants are initially referred to by their name and surname and from then on by their first name. All photographs of children are reproduced with written permission from their guardians.
1 Introduction

The subject of this book is the intersection between playmaking and place-making, with space, the ongoing material construction of space, as critical to both. It takes as its case study a participatory theatre and performance-based public art project I conceived of and facilitated in the Johannesburg inner city suburbs of Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl as part of my PhD research. The project consisted of weekly participatory theatre and performance-based workshops run with the residents/learners of local institutions from the August of 2015 to December 2016. From July 2016, I worked with a small cast of professional actors alongside participants from the workshops to make a site-specific play modelled on the format of a walking tour with fictional tour guide characters and short, self-contained performances along the way. The play was entitled *Izithombe 2094* (which translates from the isiZulu as ‘Pictures of 2094’, 2094 being the area’s postcode) and was performed publicly in the first week of September 2016 and again in the first week of November 2016. This book analyses the process of the project to understand the ways in which theatre and performance might be useful to understanding the everyday placemaking of a city.

The *Izithombe 2094* project was an interdisciplinary one. I conducted the research across two departments at the University of Cape Town: the Drama Department (now called the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies) and the African Centre for Cities, an urban studies think tank housed within the Engineering and Built Environment Faculty, though formed in collaboration with the Science and Humanities Faculties. This institutional confluence reflects the two primary, intersecting concerns of the *Izithombe 2094* project and this book: the spatial practice of human settlements and the spatial practice of theatre, both inflected by a socially engaged ethos: how might we draw our attention to living fully, robustly, sustainably in relation to fellow humans, things, land, elements? How might we be active in marking and potentially supporting the ways in which this is happening in our world/s and productively problematising the ways in which full, robust, sustainable relational living is being hampered?
Introduction

Space and place

This section considers what is at stake in geographic, urban terms to understandings of space and spatial practice, but quickly threads these into similar concerns in theatre and performance studies. The threading of the two fields together is the essential move throughout the book to find the correlations and resonances between urban geographic considerations and theatre and performance ones.3

Talking of African cities AbdouMaliq Simone seeks to understand, ‘how researchers, policymakers, and urban activists can practice ways of seeing and engaging urban spaces that are characterised simultaneously by regularity and provisionality’ (Simone, 2008: 69). Doreen Massey in her more global discussion of space, posits:

… if identities, both specifically spatial and otherwise, are indeed constructed relationally then that poses the question of the geography of those relations of construction. It raises questions of the politics of those geographies and of our relationship to and responsibility for them; and it raises conversely and perhaps less expectedly, the potential geographies of our social responsibility.

(Massey, 2005: 10)

How might theatre and performance be put to work as participatory public art processes to engage with geographies of relationally constructed space and the geographies of social responsibility that engagement raises?

This book applies a conceptual lens of performance and performativity to Massey’s geographic ends. To conceive of our relational actions as performance is to acknowledge that they are embodied and processual – physical, material acts taking place through time – and that they are also performative, they have an effect on the world. ‘[I]dentities … spatial or otherwise’ are made through relational actions in the form of our daily performances and their effects. But the book also asks what the practice of theatre and theatricality conceived as public art might offer a politics of urban space. What are the potential performative effects of a theatrical, socially engaged public art practice in city spaces?

What do I mean by space and how does this differ from place? Massey starts her argument in For Space with the following assertion: ‘And what if we refuse that distinction … between place (as meaningful, lived and everyday) and space (as what? the outside? the abstract? the meaningless)?’ (Massey, 2005: 130). Michel de Certeau in contrast describes place as lost to the city, but recuperated through ‘spatial practice’, through travel, movement, action through the city which makes space (1988: 103–107, my emphasis). De Certeau’s conception of space is far from meaningless, but rather prioritises a formation in the moment through practice. Place for de Certeau is resolved into static palimpsests (109). Place is origin (103). Place is fixed and only activated
by spatial practice, spatial practice which is alive only in the moment and in the motion of action (109).

Similarly to de Certeau, Massey proposes an active, ongoing production of space, but unlike him, she carries the idea of relational construction through to place. Place for Massey is not fixed origin, rather she argues:

If space is … a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometrics of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place.

(Massey, 2005: 130)

In this book I draw most significantly on Massey’s definition of place where the ‘multiplicity of stories-so-far’ that continually make space, might agglomerate into ‘spatio-temporal events’ of place (Massey, 2005: 130). Place, for the purposes of this analysis, is a moment in space and time that might be named or sensed, provisionally and with an awareness of all that is excluded in the making of that moment and its naming. Place is a glancing identity that is complex and quickly shifting out of its identifying moment. Places are not ‘points or areas on maps, but … integrations of space and time’ (Massey, 2005: 130). These events of integration are akin to the ‘something’ Kathleen Stewart describes which ‘throws itself together in a moment as an event and a sensation; a something both animated and inhabitable’ (2007: 1, emphasis in original). Emergent space and its fleeting, mobile resolutions into place are real, material, inhabitable, but not necessarily locatable either on a map or topographically. Or certainly an area on a map or a topographic area in the world are only two of the many stories-so-far of space that collect to make place.

Place in the terms above fits into Tim Cresswell’s definition, where:

Place is also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place. We see worlds of meaning and experience … the world as a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment.

(2004: 11)

In theatre and performance studies terms, performance is similarly offered as a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world, and of feeling it too. Mark Fleishman suggests:

that there are certain epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through performance itself and that such performance practice ‘can
be both a form of research and a legitimate way of making the findings of such research publicly available’


Fleishman is speaking of artistic performance, but Dwight Conquergood argues for considering ethnography as a performance to emphasise a ‘way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: “knowing how,” and “knowing who”’ (2002: 146). Performance in Conquergood’s sense here is that of process – the kind of everyday space-making performances that collect or are ‘thrown together’ (Stewart, 2007: 1) to make a transitory sense of place.

In this book I explore a correlation between playmaking and placemaking as collaborative, iterative, material, emergent and affectual practices that make the work of playmaking a fitting way of exploring the work of daily placemaking. For the same reasons the form of a play as public art might offer itself as an allusive communicator for the findings of research on place as ‘a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment’ (Cresswell, 2004: 11). As Brian Massumi suggests, proprioception is our primary means for wayfinding and inhabiting space. We know where we are and where we are going through sensing, rather than seeing and mapping fixed points, so that ‘position emerges from movement, from a relation to movement itself’ (Massumi, 2002: 180). This line of thinking is particularly useful in relating the physically relational, creative spatial practice of theatre making to the physically relational, creative spatial practices of daily placemaking.

In foundational urban studies, spatial analysis terms the concerns of this book are Lefebvrian ones. Lefebvre demands an attention to practice in order to understand the ongoing, active construction of space. He argues that it is in practice and the history of practices that ‘knowledge’ of space emerges, suggesting that more purely theoretical approaches to documenting space finally provide only ‘descriptions’ or ‘inventories’ of space (1991b: 7, emphasis in original). He distinguishes between knowledge which serves power (this he nominates ‘savoir’) and knowledge which refuses to acknowledge power (this he nominates ‘connaissance’). Connaissance he sees as contained in and expressed through daily practices and it is here that his investment lies (10).

In Rhythmanalysis, he proposes a means for working with the complex interrelations of practices which make space. Space by Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis, as for Massey (and as Massey is influenced by Lefebvre), is formed through patterns of intersecting mobilities (Massey, 2005; Lefebvre, 2004). Our ongoing practices and the ongoing trajectories of objects, land masses, nature, the heavens, create these patterns of intersecting mobilities. This book attempts to bring attention to the knowledges contained in our daily practices, offering theatre and performance as an apt tool and conceptual lens for doing so. I take connaissance as the starting point for getting into the interstices of the everyday as ‘simultaneously the site of, the theatre for, and what is at
stake in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat’ (2004: 73). In what follows, Lefebvre becomes a fleeting reference, although recurring thread. I have chosen to focus on the work of later scholars, in particular Massey and Tim Ingold (2000, 2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2013), for their perhaps more immediately practical though no less poetic thinking around spatial production and what it means for placemaking. Nonetheless, this work is foundationally about the ‘production of space’ and how theatre and performance might be aptly fitting tools for giving spatial production the kind of attention prescribed by Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis (1991b, 2004).

Site-specificity

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss theatre and performance processes, actions and games as they engaged the spatial practice of everyday life in Bertrams through the Izithombe 2094 project workshops. Although the spatial dialogue of these workshops had some relation to site-specific theatre and performance practice and theory, it was the final play component of the project discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 that was more strictly ‘site-specific’. I consider here briefly the concepts of site-specificity which the final play, Izithombe 2094 (from which the project as a whole takes its name) engaged through its making and in being performed in the streets of Bertrams.

Putting theatre and performance in ‘real life’ sites outside of designated theatre spaces is not a new concept. Even more significantly the ideological intentions behind making the spatial practice of theatre work with the spatial practice of everyday sites has been rigorously exercised and theorised by practitioners and scholars worldwide. Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks define site-specific performances as, ‘mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused’ (2001: 23). As Joanne Tompkins asserts, Pearson and Shanks champion the view that ‘the interrelationship between site and performance’ is integral to the value and therefore definition of site-specific theatre and performance. However, ‘site-specific’ might be defined more simply as ‘a production that takes place outside a conventional theatre venue’ (Tompkins, 2012). Certainly, Tompkins’ second definition is the more flexible use of the term for a theatre-going audience, but in its generality it raises issues around the stakes of defining and practising site-specific work which Tompkins broadly encapsulates as:

… how different types of spatial arrangements affect our understanding of and relationships with performance: specifically, the particularities of ‘place’ and its capacity to recontextualise performance, just as performance can reformulate how we perceive and experience space and place.

(2012)
Pearson and Shanks defend the exercising of these questions through their tighter definition of what counts as site-specific theatre.

The play *Izithombe 2094* absolutely took up the site-specific form as suggested by Pearson and Shanks. The research, rehearsal and public performances sought to test the intersection between play- and placemaking processes, and the interrelationship between a site-specific play (final artistic product) as public artwork and the place it was conceived about, through and performed in. In terms of the critical concerns Tompkins raises about site-specific work, the focus of the *Izithombe 2094* project, including the final play, was on what theatre and artistic performance might offer understandings and experiences of urban spaces and places, rather than on what urban space-becoming-place might offer in shifting conventional presentations and receptions of theatre and artistic performance. The process of making and performing *Izithombe 2094* in the Bertrams streets drew on, rather than intentionally extended further, other artists’ experimentation with site-specificity to break theatrical spatial conventions and the audience-performer relationship. The play employed site-specific theatre and artistic performance to ‘reformulate how we perceive and experience’ space and placemaking in the city. *Izithombe 2094* did seek to ‘affect our understanding of and relationships with performance’, but the challenge to conceptions of performance was not to artistic performance but rather to the performances of everyday space and placemaking.

Tompkins’s monograph, *Theatre Heterotopias*, makes an argument for the ways in which theatre offers alternate spaces for reconceiving our social boundaries and relationships (2014). Whether theatre takes place on a conventional theatre stage or ‘site-specifically’, she argues that it layers multiple spaces and times imaginatively onto that single site (17). Tompkins traces Foucault’s use of ‘heterotopia’ through to Kevin Hetherington’s application of it to cultural geography. She then deploys the term to consider the benefits of theatre’s own particular heterotopic nature (17–39, citing Foucault, 1986 and Hetherington, 1997). She argues that theatre productions considered as heterotopias (16, citing Hetherington, 1997: viii):

> demonstrate how the layers of spatiality – both the concrete spaces that architecture provides, as well as the abstract spaces and places that a specific production creates – articulate meaning in their own right, let alone through the overlap between and among the layers. In so doing, they attend to a spatial ordering, leaving open the chance to reveal and rethink existing structures of power and knowledge.

Tompkins’s project with *Theatre Heterotopias* offers a socially and politically focused understanding of theatre sites and their use. Her thinking supports Lefebvre’s championing of ways of knowing that might challenge oppressive hierarchies of power (Lefebvre, 1991b: 10). It also speaks to Erica Fischer-Lichte’s investment in how theatre might expose the ways in which we
construct our reality, through the self-aware experience of our own part as audience members in the construction of theatre (1995: 103).

My use and understanding of site in concert with theatre, performance, performativity and theatricality (terms which Chapter 2 unpacks in detail) in this book echoes much of what Tomkins argues for in discussing theatre as producing heterotopias. However, there is an emphasis on futurity in Tomkins’s work which is less of a focus in mine. She writes, ‘Heterotopia describes the relationship between performed worlds and the actual world beyond the theatre, holding the potential to spatialize how socio-political relationships might work differently beyond the stage’ (20). The intention of the play *Izithombe 2094* was to expose the spatialisation of socio-political relationships as they are. The next leap towards projected, different futures was a possibility left to the audience members themselves and which the play could not and did not seek to account for.

In its interdisciplinary approach, this book does not give an exhaustive account of site-specificity and theorising space through theatre and performance nor as much attention as it could to what theatre and performance as spatial practices do in their own right. Instead I focus on drawing geographic and urban spatial theory into a discussion of what the *Izithombe 2094* project, play included, did in engaging the everyday spatial practice of Bertrams.

**Theatre, performance and the city**

Why the city? The intersection of space and place and theatre and performance could work as well in any geographical situation. The work has a particular value however in terms of human settlements and, of human settlements, cities specifically with their density and the urgent problems the density poses to humans and the environment they are part of and contributing to.

In recent years much has been produced in the theatre and performance field on performance and the city (see Hopkins, Orr & Solga, 2009; McKinnie, 2007; Harvie, 2009; Whybrow, 2010, 2011, 2014; Kruger, 2013; Martin, 2014; Hopkins & Solga, 2013; Knowles, 2017). This body of literature is concerned with performance as a conceptual lens for understanding the city and with artistic performance as a way of engaging such a conceptual lens. As Nicolas Whybrow posits there is the city ‘as performance’ and there are, ‘site-specific or public artworks … that address a particular aspect of the city or effectively perform the city into a kind of being – however temporary – via their particular forms of engagement with or intervention in urban space’ (2014: 2).

Understanding the city ‘as performance’ is to consider urban spaces as material, relational and emergent. The city as performance supports urban geographer, Massey’s argument for space and place as constructed through the colliding and knotting trajectories of actors both human and non-human (2005). Our trajectories are performances with performatative effects as we
impact on one another’s trajectories, co-creating space. Performance and performativity also underpin Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift’s everyday urbanism (2002) and Thrift’s non-representational project to consider the material, affectual ways in which cities are constantly in the making (2008).

Artistic performance in city spaces activates an understanding of cities as relationally emergent (as performative performances). First, it serves as a way of knowing cities in the sense that Fleishman (2009) and Conquergood (2002) describe performance as knowing – through the formal practice of artistic performance in city spaces we learn about cities. Second, it serves to engage city publics in an understanding of cities as relationally emergent – through watching a performance in a city space we understand the city itself as a performance and learn about a specific aspect of that urban performance. Third, as Whybrow suggests, artistic performances can engage with the broader, daily performance of the city to bring a new kind of city into being, even if only temporarily (2014: 2). As D.J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr and Kim Solga frame it, ‘performance can help to renegotiate the urban archive, to build the city and to change it’ (2009: 6), both as conceptual lens and practical tool. To circle back to a geographic theorist: using performance as conceptual lens and artistic practice resonates with Tim Cresswell’s notion of place as a way of understanding where ‘attachments and connections’ between things ‘build worlds of meaning and experience’ (2004: 11).

The work cited above on performance and the city draws together geographic, artistic and performance theory concerns in application to urban contexts – what cities are; what cities are becoming and how scholars, artists and activists might productively intervene. Jen Harvie considers how theatre as a specific kind of artistic performance can be used in service of understanding and positively shifting city spaces, as well as how theatre as a practice can itself shift in response to cities (2009). In service of her argument she considers theatre through a cultural materialist lens and then a performative lens. She weighs the kinds of exclusions and hierarchies theatre perpetuates as a cultural product against the hopeful possibilities for change in social practices theatre offers through its ephemeral, embodied, performative (as in effecting change) nature as a performance discipline. The analysis of the Izithombe 2094 project in this book is concerned with the latter – how theatre can offer performative experiences of city spaces to bring less seen and less recognised knowledges of our social practices to light. Although the research also implicitly engages how the cultural material value of theatre might be shifted out of its more conventional uses to be more socially inclusive and socially and politically fungible.

Making with: art research and phronesis

The foundational approach for the Izithombe 2094 project was informed by Tim Ingold’s notion ‘thinking through making’ (2013). Ingold’s language offers itself as an evocative description of the kinds of methodologies proposed
by Henk Borgdorff in terms of artistic research (2012) and Bent Flyvbjerg in terms of social science research (2001).

In *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, Ingold proposes corresponding with the material of the world, to know it through making with it (2013: 7). The ‘with’ in Ingold’s ‘making with’ and his use of the term ‘correspondence’ encapsulate a knowing through relationality. He calls for a physical, textural, practical engagement with the world through his emphasis on materiality. Through the correspondence with materiality he proposes an unfolding call and response dialogue between things, emergent, not known beforehand. The ‘making’ suggested both my own art or craft of theatre – and all the kinds of daily arts or crafts I was looking to make with – everyday practices. Ingold’s language captures Borgdorff’s and Flyvbjerg’s combination of *techne* (know-how) and *episteme* (know-why) in the practice of phronesis with a poetic simplicity that made it a touchstone as a methodological approach – explicit as a way of proceeding, fungible across disciplines and emotively expressive. Perhaps most critically, Ingold’s notion of making with materiality to know is also a proposition for understanding space. He describes a ‘meshwork’ of relationality as the actions of material beings (human or otherwise) intersect, hook, loop round, affect each other. In ‘thinking through making with’, Ingold proposes a practice of research that matches the kind of practice and formation of space Massey proposes with her intersecting trajectories (2005).

In Borgdorff’s *Conflict of the Faculties*, he summarises some of the thinking around artistic research over recent years, asserting that practice and theory are intertwined (2012). He draws on Aristotle’s concept of ‘phronesis’ as the kind of ‘practical wisdom’ that goes into the ‘making (*poiesis*)’ and ‘doing (*praxis*)’ of artistic process which he sees as valuable to research (47). Borgdorff argues that where intuition and an approach to knowledge and know-how as, ‘tacit, implicit’ is fully licenced, if not honoured in art-making, academic research emphasises the rational, conceptual (theoretical) and articulable (47–50).

Borgdorff makes two points. First he asserts that ‘phronesis’ or practical knowledge although ‘sensory’, often ‘non-discursive’ and ‘non-conceptual’ is ‘cognitive’, of the mind, and ‘rational’, containing logic (49). Phronesis then is a kind of thinking as well as a doing and a making. As Ingold determines phronesis is a thinking *through* doing and making (2013). Second, Borgdorff argues that phronesis, thinking through doing and making, is *also* a significant part of research, but one that frequently goes unacknowledged, much as the cognitive and rational aspects of phronetic art-making often go unrecognised. Borgdorff’s proposition is that, ‘Not only do thinkers and doers need each other, but in a certain sense thinkers are also doers, and vice versa’ (20).

What Borgdorff proposes is a research methodology premised on performativity (how does knowledge come into being through research?) in service of a productive interrelation between theory and practice. Like Ingold, Borgdorff suggests that knowledge is not an inert substance waiting to be uncovered nor should there be a pre-defined formula for interpreting it.
Rather, ‘we know as we go’ (Ingold, 2000: 229, emphasis in original) and the interpretation, or theory, is made through the doing of getting to know, ‘Theories, including ones about artistic practice, co-constitute the practices they address – just as there are no practices that are not permeated by theories and beliefs’ (Borgdorff, 2012: 10). Cognition, logic, the sensual and embodied are all bound together in a field of phronesis; of the praxis of art-making and theory-making.

Bent Flyvbjerg proposes a nearly identical methodology for social science research, also based on Aristotelian phronesis. Both Flyvbjerg and Borgdorff write in response to an established call in the academy for the social sciences or humanities research to answer to the same research criteria as the natural sciences. Both argue for the value in the humanities or social sciences offering distinct epistemological uses which are not best exploited through a natural sciences methodological model. These arguments resonate with Claire Bishop’s arguments for participatory art’s particular values socially, politically and for knowledge generation which Chapter 3 deals with in more detail (2006, 2012).

Borgdorff’s sees art research as offering phronesis as a different way of knowing – a valuable inclusion in academic knowledge pursuit. Flyvbjerg’s foundational argument points phronesis a little more radically as ethically imperative for knowledge generation in the field of social science. He sees that a natural science approach will hamper, not enable, learning. The social research situation cannot provide the stable, predictable research conditions demanded by the natural science model to produce stable, predictable theories. Each social research situation has unique, context-dependent conditions that are muddied unpredictably by the researcher’s inevitable entrammelment with the situation (2001: 33). Like Borgdorff, Flyvbjerg demands more than the researcher acknowledging their presence and potential impact on the research situation, he argues that context ‘both determines and is determined by the researcher’s self-understanding’ (33). Like Borgdorff, Flyvbjerg sees the researcher and research field as co-constituting each other in the act (the doing and making) of knowledge production.

Flyvbjerg offers his own methodology as an elaboration of what he sees as the implicit methodology in Foucault’s work, in a lineage from Aristotle to Machiaveli to Nietzsche to Foucault (59). He traces this lineage in contrast to a line of thinking through Plato to Hobbes to Kant to Habermas which argues for a political science based on ‘know why’ (56, emphasis in the original) and with a top-down structuring of rules for process that will allow for democratic participation by all driving towards consensus. The Aristotle to Foucault lineage argues for the combination of ‘know why’ (episteme) with ‘know how’ (techne) in phronesis (56) where democratic participation for all is negotiated context-specifically, between all and through dissensus (100–109).

Flyvbjerg uses Foucault’s work with power – understanding how it is deployed in specific situations and in relation to history – to propose a methodology for the social sciences which seeks to know and interpret ‘practical
knowledge and practical ethics’ through practically engaged learning which requires a practically and continually negotiated ethics (56). We cannot definitively ‘know why’ or propose any definitive theory (56), so the ethics of Flyvbjerg’s project, via Foucault and Aristotle, is that there is no definitive ethic. We know as we go in life and so the same applies for research, which has implications for knowledge and ethics – the two being inseparable. As knowledge is emergent through relationality, so too are the ethics of the research engagement.

Flyvbjerg offers the following key questions, which he terms as ‘value-rational’, for ‘classical phronetic research’:

1. Where are we going?
2. Is this desirable?
3. What should be done?
4. Who gains and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

(2001: 60)

Borgdorff delineates his proposal for artistic research as involving process as products, research results including the final artistic product and critical reflection and documentation in discursive form. Flyvbjerg’s injunctions emphasised a practical and theoretical engagement with the operations of power I entered into, enacted, perpetuated and shifted through the Izithombe 2094 project, the writing of this book included. The emphasis in Borgdorff’s Conflict of the Faculties offered a proposal for how to work with my artistic practice in relation to academic theory in service of a phronetic approach to research. The research process, final artistic product and the discursive practices of academic research all operated together as ways of thinking through making and doing. Put very broadly:

1. According to Borgdorff I initiated an artistic process, applying my theoretical reading and writing to my artistic practice and allowing my artistic practice to shape my theoretical reading and writing. Both art and theory informed each other in this feedback loop.
2. Throughout the Izithombe 2094 project I kept asking Flyvbjerg’s ‘value-rational’ questions around intention, desire, what to do and who loses and gains, in order to understand and stick with the distribution of power operating in the research situation.

This methodological approach was in keeping with the kind of agonism Edgar Pieterse argues for in urban studies (2012: 50) via Laclau and Mouffe (2014) and which Claire Bishop champions in the complex relationship between ethics and aesthetics in participatory art-making (2012) via Rancière (2015). Ingold’s emphasis on materiality, Borgdorff’s analysis of the epistemological value in artistic process and Flyvbjerg’s use of Foucauldian power combined to form a research approach for the Izithombe 2094 project that
sought to negotiate the commons, where the ethics is never resolved but is nonetheless an imperative negotiation. This approach was critical to questions of participation as I unpack them in Chapter 3 specifically, but also in terms of all the participatory practices of the project discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Although it was not the primary methodology for the project Adele Clarke’s ‘situational analysis’ (2005) offered practical ideas and terms that were particularly useful in exercising point two above – keeping attentive to power distributions. Clarke developed her methodology from social science’s popular qualitative research approach: grounded theory. She reconfigures grounded theory however through a post-modern lens that looks at the research ‘situation’ more complexly. She says, situational analysis, ‘allows researchers to draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, image, text and context, history and the present moment – to analyze complex situations of inquiry broadly conceived’ (2005: xxii). Clarke’s methodology argues for research to take account of history and context at all scales: micro to meso to macro (xxii). In the Izithombe 2094 project and throughout this book I use her concept of working between macro, meso and micro ‘structural elements’ in the research situation (xxii and xxix) to engage with the fuller meshwork of Bertrams as space-becoming-place and to keep attentive to relational power dynamics.

The macro stands for the major structuring powers in the situation – what Bruno Latour terms ‘global causes’ (Latour, 2005: 131). The meso level structures are those that make up the more immediate social world of the research situation: ‘collective actors, key non-human elements, and the arena(s) of commitment and discourse … in ongoing negotiations’ (Clarke, 2005: xxii). The micro structures are the smaller day-to-day ‘fluid and discursive forms’ of ‘power and the powers of discourses’ (xxix). In the Izithombe 2094 project’s attentiveness to the everyday relational materiality of Bertrams, I strove in the practical work and analysis presented here to find ways of paying attention to, and actively working with, meso and macro structures as well as the micro-politics that are the project’s most obvious level of engagement.

**Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl, c.2016:**

*Izithombe 2094*

Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl make up Johannesburg’s second oldest residential area, Doornfontein being the first. Few original houses remain in Doornfontein, with most of the area now housing warehouses, high rises and sports stadia, while Bertrams, Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl still have many of their original buildings and although the area is mixed in use, it is still characterised as suburban. Johannesburgers refer to all three areas collectively as ‘Bertrams’, although people who have lived or worked in the area for any length of time are very particular about the boundaries and nominations of the three different sections. For ease of reading throughout I use the
common shorthand of ‘Bertrams’ to indicate Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl as well as the official Bertrams area.

Today the area is a mix of light industria, corporate head offices, residential houses and flats, shops, informal trading as well as several social service institutions. The population is predominantly poor and black, but with a higher percentage of racial and language group diversity than many South African urban areas bearing the legacy of segregational apartheid policy (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2014: 254, 256). Stats SA data attests to this in number (2003, table reproduced in Bénit-Gbaffou, 2014: 254), but the predominance of poor, black residents, as well as a visible degree of racial and ethnic diversity is immediately apparent from a drive or walk through the area.

Which leads me to a second characterisation of the area, also a little unusual for South African city formal suburbs: the predominance of street life. Children – white, black, coloured” and Indian – from the ages of five to teenagers are a common sight playing or socialising on the streets, pavements and several small parks in the area. There is an active pedestrian life, informal trade and adults – like the children – socialise on the streets whether in the small retail strips or spilling out of front porches and balconies into public spaces.
Figure 1.2 Bertams, Lorentzville, Judith’s Paarl and surrounding suburbs (map).
Bertrams lies in the valley between Yeoville Ridge in the north and Troyville Ridge in the south and is the start of Bezuidenhout Valley, so called after the Bezuidenhout family who owned the original farm which ran the length of the valley. The Jukskei River flows through the middle from its source in Doornfontein.

A property developer called Robertson Fuller Bertram leased the area officially demarcated as Bertrams from the Bezuidenhout family in 1889, just three years after gold was discovered in the region precipitating a gold rush and the birth of Johannesburg (Latilla, 2014). Bertram sold off plots, initially to wealthy buyers involved in the mining boomtown of Johannesburg. The Lorentzville and Judith’s Paarl areas were used for market gardens to supply the city but were soon incorporated into the suburbia of Bertrams. The whole area became officially part of the city, as opposed to a ‘satellite township’, in 1897 (Latilla, 2014). By the early 1900s the area was rezoned as affordable housing and became a predominantly lower-middle and working class suburb, which it has remained to the present day with oscillations between gentrifying and slummmifying trends. Initially racially mixed, the area underwent forced removals (among the first in South Africa) of all black, Indian and coloured residents in the 1930s.

Figure 1.3  East side of Johannesburg, 1986 (map).
Source: see blog by Latilla (2017).
The first wave of residents from 1889 to the early 1900s were predominantly Jewish. The second wave in the 1930s were white tenant farmers who had come to the city and were provided with state-funded accommodation built by the mayor of Johannesburg at the time, Maurice Freeman, and which the forced removals were intended to make way for. The third wave were Portuguese-speaking immigrants fleeing the Angolan and Mozambican civil wars in the 1960s and 1970s. The latest wave since the 1990s has been and continues to be immigrants from all over the African continent (Latilla, 2017 and Bertrams Junior School, 2015). Bertrams is well-situated as an entry point to Johannesburg with cheap accommodation, some social services, informal trading possibilities and easy access to the city (Latilla, 2017 and Bertrams Junior School, 2015). From working with the Bertrams Junior School learners, my sense was that there has also been a big influx of migrants from elsewhere in South Africa in the last two decades – families coming to Johannesburg from farming communities in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West provinces of South Africa.

All of these factors combined to recommend Bertrams as a potentially rich site of dense intersecting trajectories for considering a relational construction of space and place. Furthermore, unlike inner city areas such as Hillbrow, Yeoville and Berea which had hosted considerable numbers of public

Figure 1.4 Johannesburg, 1890 (map).
Source: see blog by Latilla (2017).
artworks since 2005, Bertrams had, at the time, had fewer art interventions, whether by individual artists or commissioned by the City and non-governmental institutions.

Since completing my project, a block of old warehouses have been converted into a complex of artists’ studio and artisanal shops. Called ‘Victoria Yards’ this newly developed precinct, popular among the hip and moneyed of Johannesburg, has contributed an edge of gentrification to the area. It also intersects with a larger, socially-engaged initiative called the Maker’s Valley. Run by artists, researchers and resident ‘makers’ with a three phase, three-year-long project currently funded by the US Consulate, the Maker’s Valley seeks to give more visibility to anyone who ‘makes’ (arts and crafts of all descriptions) in the area and to promote public street life in the area through creative public space activations. What the lasting effect of Maker’s Valley and Victoria Yards will be is hard to say, but they have created, in different and intersecting ways, new influxes into the area (the hipster middle and wealthy classes) and a more formalised, regular, artistically cultural tone to the street life.

**Working with Bertrams**

I employed three major research methods in creating the *Izithombe 2094* project in the 2015/2016 moment of Bertrams:

1. Theatre and performance tools which included:
   a. Workshops with learners and residents from Bertrams institutions.
   b. Playmaking with a professional cast of performers rehearsing and acting alongside participants from the workshops.
2. Participating in Bertrams everyday life and institutions.
3. Interviews.

**Theatre and performance-based workshops**

I initiated and ran an initial set of participatory theatre and performance workshops with four groups from different Bertrams institutions from October to December 2015:

- Grade 3s and 4s (8 and 9 year olds) from Bertrams Junior School
- The women in the frail care unit of Gerald Fitzpatrick House
- Women from Bienvenu Refugee Shelter
- Children from an aftercare facility run by Maurice Freeman Recreation Centre

For the whole of 2016 I continued to work weekly with the Bertrams Junior School and Bienvenu Refugee Shelter groups (incorporating the women’s children into the group). All workshop participants lived either in Bertrams
or within walking distance in the neighbouring areas of Hillbrow, Berea or Yeoville.

The workshops used improvisatory games and prompts for storytelling; song and dance sharing; miming daily activities and finding more abstract physical and vocal gestures to express feelings about the week, day or that particular moment in the workshop. These games employed imagination and the physical (including oral) enactment of the imaginaries engaged. I refer to these workshops throughout this book as ‘theatre and performance-based’ and as using ‘theatre and performance games/tools’. I have chosen to couple theatre and performance for several reasons, even though at times it may seem more cumbersome than using one or the other or another term like ‘drama’.

My first set of reasons relates to exercising the terms theatre and performance as defined to serve the research project. ‘Theatre’ signals the workshops’ use of pretence to reenact or imagine scenes, scenarios and stories. We drew on role-playing and imaginative games used in theatre making contexts, but employed in the workshops as explorative processes rather than with the intention of producing theatre pieces for formal audiences. ‘Performance’ signals moments that emerged through the workshop processes which did not sit cleanly in the realm of ‘theatrical fiction’. Verbal feedback discussions and certain physical gestures were less theatrical fictions than they were modes of performance as artistic, expressional practice – people speaking and using their bodies as themselves to express something real and not imagined, fictionalised or role-played in that particular game or moment of the workshop.

Engaging both terms together also serves as a conceptual reminder of how this book uses performance and performativity and theatre and theatricality as analytical lenses. In the workshops we played with the imaginative possibilities of seeing the theatrical in the everyday as much as we used performance as a medium to investigate the performances of everyday life and how these everyday performances are performative of creating spatial, individual and collective identities; of making place.

As I set up the workshops, I tended to use the word ‘drama’ with participants and institutional managers. I used it in the more common, colloquial sense of ‘drama’ as a high school subject or extra-mural activity. ‘Drama’ was a kind of shorthand that made more immediate sense to all involved than ‘theatre and performance’ and possibly involved less expectation of polished theatre plays as products. However, using the word ‘drama’ here to describe the workshops starts to carry all sorts of ambiguities. There is the drama of literature, visual art, daily life, as well as theatre, which refers to a kind of happening; a moment of conflict and battle towards resolution. Drama in this sense loses all the specificity of theatre and performance necessary to this book’s argument, but also has a very particular usefulness at certain points in its argument, for example, the drama perceived in a moment of theatrical fiction. ‘Drama’ in a more strictly theatre studies sense refers to a conception of theatrical form that developed during the Renaissance in Western Europe (Szondi, 1987: 5). As thinking shifted from a medieval god-centred ontology
to one of human individuation through interpersonal relationships, so theatre shifted to mirror this rise of the individual. The new theatrical form was nominated, ‘drama’. The fictive worlds and narratives of the Renaissance drama were constructed entirely through character and dialogue as devices. Neither the author nor the actor addressed themselves to the audience. The audience was held entirely separate to the theatrical world, which would take place ideally behind the invisible fourth wall of a proscenium arch stage (5–9). Although this is a very specific and partial aspect of the history of the theatrical, it is the definition that leads to the term ‘post-dramatic’. Drama in this rather narrow and European history influenced definition within theatre studies is one of the aspects of traditional theatre Shannon Jackson describes art as social practices as fleeing (2011: 2). Post-dramatic theatre seeks to escape traditional theatre spaces and clear cut delineations between fictive worlds and the real world; between character and actor and between audience and performance space. In this sense, the *Izithombe 2094* project was resolutely post-dramatic.

**Playmaking**

I used playmaking to assimilate the material from the theatre and performance-based workshops into short performances by participants for audiences along the way of the workshop process. On a much larger scale, playmaking was the method for assimilating material from the workshops and other research methods to create the site-specific ‘walking-tour’ play, *Izithombe 2094*, the culminating creative product of the project.

Where the theatre and performance games in the workshops were about process with no imperative towards final product, playmaking was orientated towards producing a final product. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the teleological orientation of playmaking in detail and what it offered to getting to know the everyday of Bertrams, but here a brief summation of what it involved as a method:

- Selecting stories, characters and actions (from the workshops, interviews and participant(observation processes) to make a theatrical fiction that could be performed for an audience.
- Rehearsing the selected material to effectively realise the proposed theatrical fiction, but also to make further selections through the practice of rehearsing as to what would and would not be incorporated in the final play.

These activities suggest the overarching dramaturgical function of playmaking. ‘Dramaturgy’ here encapsulates the choices made in the composition of theatre from its elements such as set, performers, performer’s actions, props and text (which might include non-linguistic sound). For the purposes of this book, dramaturgy describes the process of constructing the world of the play,
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but also describes constructing the drama of a piece of theatre, in the more general, literary sense of the word drama. Where is the conflict? What form does the struggle towards resolution take? I use dramaturgy in the sense of ‘composition’ as broadly defined by Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt in their introduction to a much more detailed discussion and debate on the uses of the term (2016: 4).

Shanon Jackson links visual art to theatre, and by her line of thinking the theatre maker might be figured to engage with dramaturgy in the same way as a curator curates: selecting what to include and how to place it to tell a story/stories and ultimately make meaning (2011: 2). Both curator and theatre maker are not bound to the confines of their disciplinary traditions. They are free to escape the art gallery or studio space with its art objects and the theatre with its clear divide between the fiction of the stage and the attentive audience in the auditorium. In terms of Jackson’s argument for socially engaged art, which Chapter 3 covers in more detail, the theatre making project of *Izithombe 2094* escaped the theatre building and its attendant conventions to apply the dramaturgy of playmaking to the placemaking of Bertrams.

**Participant-observation**

The *Izithombe 2094* project’s participatory aspects operated in two directions: I offered theatre and performance-based workshops as an invitation for locals to participate and I found ways of participating in Bertrams’ daily life. Before beginning the workshops, I started volunteering at Bertrams Inner City Farm: a Bambanani Vegetable and Herb Co-operative – an organic, permaculture market garden, funded primarily by Johannesburg City’s Department for Social Development and maintained by a mixture of paid local farmers and volunteers. The farm provides a soup kitchen service as well as selling vegetables to the local SuperSpar (a supermarket, part of the Spar chain) and at farmers’ markets. I worked at the garden for an hour or two weekly, talking to head farmers, Amon Maluleke and Refiloe Molefe, and the various other farmers while gardening.

The volunteering at the garden was only one, more formal aspect of my participation in Bertrams. Walking, driving, using services like locksmiths and hardware and spaza shops7 and renting a studio in an old house on Gordon Road (Twilsharp Studios), were all part of my ongoing participation with Bertrams spaces, which included people, infrastructure, buildings, objects, weather. This was ethnographic participant-observation as characterised by Kathleen and Billie DeWalt,

participant-observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture.

(2011: 1)
My participant-observation ran alongside and in communication with my theatre and performance-based work in the area. It was a critical resource for the research phase of the final play both in the material it produced and in how this material influenced the way I facilitated the playmaking process.

**Interviews**

The project made use of three kinds of interviews. The first was with academics and artists who work with and in Johannesburg spaces. These interviews ran throughout my research from proposal phase to thesis write-up. The second were interviews I arranged with residents, former residents, business owners or people who had a connection to Bertrams. The last kind of interviews were with people my research assistant, Baeletsi Tsatsi, and I approached on Bertrams’ streets.

The interviews tested the pictures of Bertrams that emerged through the workshops against other people’s experiences and from my own participant-observation. I was looking for overlaps in experiences as well as differences. The overlaps emphasised the shared and most common experiences of Bertrams, while the differences detailed the range of subjectivity in making and perceiving city spaces-becoming-places. In interviewing people who lived in Bertrams in the 1930s, 1960s, since the 1980s, differences and similarities emerged beyond the contemporary moment – across time and in relation to the formal history of Bertrams. The interviews were a process both of generating material and of refinement – refinement through the correlations that emerge through the generation – and all with a view to synthesising the findings into the *Izithombe 2094* play as a participatory public artwork.

We approached people on the street with a free form explanation and question: we were making a piece of street theatre about Bertrams and to be performed in Bertrams and what were their experiences of daily life in the area? From there we would feel out what questions to ask next: how long have you lived/traded here? Do you like Bertrams? What do you like about it? What do you see happening on the streets? And so on. I took a similar approach in the more formal interviews arranged with current and former residents.

The interviews were a conscious choice to extend the range of people the project engaged with in Bertrams beyond the workshop institutions and to elicit a more direct engagement through conversation than my experiences as a participant-observer produced. As Aidan Mosselson noted in his response to the *Izithombe 2094* play (Mosselson, personal communication, 15 September 2016) and a colleague from the UCT Drama Department who had grown up in Bertrams pointed out in relation to the research project more generally (Hutton, personal communication, 22 February 2016): there are many people in Bertrams who fall outside of the safety nets of institutional support. Interviewing people on the street was a way of engaging with the experiences of people who operate in the area as individuals with little formal connection to
in institutional services. The street interviews were interviews to densify the knowledges of the micro meshworks of Bertrams the project engaged with. The street interviews were also an engagement, on a broader, macro scale of demographic definitions, with unemployed; underemployed and self-employed people – young black men, older black men, female informal traders, some South African and some from elsewhere on the continent.

The arranged interviews were predominantly with middle-class people, ranging from artist bohemians to successful filmmakers to engineers and teachers. These were all people who had lived or worked in Bertrams, ranging in time periods from as early as the 1930s to the present day. The arranged interviews primarily offered the micro historical perspective I was looking for. However, they also engaged another demographic not captured by the workshop institutions – the private individual, middle-class home-owners. These interviews offered a macro level engagement with a privileged, mainly white, experience of Bertrams as well as a micro level engagement with the details of Bertrams daily life historically as subjectively experienced and enacted by each individual interviewee.

Analysing the Izithombe 2094 project

Chapter 2 situates the Izithombe 2094 project at the intersection of urban studies and theatre and performance studies. It marks concerns in the urban studies field the project serves, namely the interrelated lines of thinking around the cultural turn, the city as material and non-representational, the city as relationally emergent and the value of attending to everyday practices. It then moves to theatre and performance studies concepts and practical tools and how they might serve urban studies. I define performance and performativity, theatre and theatricality to argue for how these concepts help in thinking through the urban everyday and how they endow theatre and performance as art practices to be resonant, robust tools for learning and broadcasting knowledges of the urban everyday.

Chapter 3 reflects on the nature of participation theatre and performance provided through the workshop processes of the Izithombe 2094 project. I unpack participatory research and participatory democratic definitions along-side participatory public art ones to get into the knottiness of what is at stake in participatory processes of all descriptions, positioning the particular nature of participation in the Izithombe 2094 project. The second half of the chapter analyses the process of setting up the workshops and the practice of the workshops themselves. I reflect on what the nature of the workshops’ participation allowed in terms of a collective exploration of spatial practice in Bertrams in its 2015/2016 moment.

Chapter 4 extends the work of Chapter 3, but through a focused consideration of relational power dynamics. This chapter draws on Adele Clarke’s use of the terms micro, meso and macro in understanding a research situation. I combine Clarke’s lens with theatre and performance studies theories to parse
out the interplay of power dynamics in the different situations of workshop participants’ lives. I take two examples from the workshops to demonstrate the ways in which the workshop processes were able to momentarily unsettle power dynamics positively and offer participants experiences of authority in all senses of that word.

Chapter 5 deals with the making of the final play performed in the public spaces of Bertrams, *Izithombe 2094*. The chapter starts with scholarly thinking on public art and particularly its participatory processes. It then explores how the collaborative process of playmaking both extended my and the cast’s knowledge of the Bertrams everyday as well as assimilating this knowledge into a play form for sharing with the public. I consider the ethics of representational practices and the complex, agonistic value representation through the arts (theatre specifically) might offer to research and its broadcasting.

Between Chapters 6 and 7 is a description of the final play *Izithombe 2094* – the result of the devising and rehearsal work discussed in Chapter 5 and what the audiences discussed in Chapter 6 participated in. However, it falls somewhere between script or ‘score’ and what Clifford Geertz terms ‘thick description’ to realise ethnographic work where research moments are described in detail in an attempt to give as full a sense of the research situation as possible (2008: 29–39).

The description of *Izithombe 2094* is only partly ‘thick’, in that audience participation is generically described to give the reader a generalised sense of what a performance of the play was like, although it was inevitably different in each iteration.

Chapter 6 analyses the relationships of various audiences to the performance of *Izithombe 2094* and what the audience-play-place relationality exposed of placemaking in Bertrams. It starts with a delineation between a public art audience and a theatre audience for the play. I unpack the productive interrelation between the two audiences and the play in the *Izithombe 2094* performances to understand how the audience was critical to using theatre as a spatial practice that would heighten audiences’ self-awareness of their own daily spatial practices. The second half of the chapter analyses four specific audiences to detail the general effects of the audience-play-place relationship through a grounding in the nuances of the particular.

In conclusion, the Afterword draws the discussions in the book together into a set of propositions for the specific use of theatre and performance as methods and concepts in building knowledge of everyday placemaking in city spaces.

**Notes**

1 For ease of reference throughout, these three suburbs will be referred to as ‘Bertrams’, the colloquial shorthand nomination Johannesburg residents use for the area.

2 In process the project was initially called *The Bertrams Stories Project* and *Izithombe 2094* was the final, culminating play that came out of it. For the purposes of the
book I refer to the entire project as ‘the Izithombe 2094 project’, as the play name was finally more expressive of the area as a whole and what the work did.

3 There is a related but distinct argument to be made for the Izithombe 2094 project in terms of the relationship between the aesthetics of participatory public art, participatory theatre as public art specifically and the aesthetics of the everyday. A lively field of literature discusses the value of the aesthetic in everyday life and how giving the aesthetics of the daily attention extends understandings of our social worlds and the politics of how we construct and live through them (see Rancière, 2013; Leddy, 2012; Saito, 2010; Scarry, 1999; Bloch et al., 1988). In art and everyday life the question of aesthetics is, as Rancière asserts, fundamentally a political one (2015, 2004). What does and does not count as beauty? How might we figure the aesthetic as a complex, critically powerful force, that a term like ‘beauty’ might flatten into superficial considerations? How can we foreground the ‘distribution of the sensible’ which polices what counts as beauty and who may have access to it or who may have their aesthetic sensibility publicised and valorised and who may not (2004)? Aesthetics threads throughout this book in all sorts of implicit ways: the representational practice of theatre is also an aesthetic practice. The project’s curiosity and representation of daily life is surely about an interest in the aesthetics of that daily life. I discuss affect throughout and affect is a crucial part of aesthetic – the feelings/moods in daily life and art which magnetise us, enliven us, deflate us, which give us a certain experiential knowing that we cannot fully put into words or logic (see Bishop, 2012: 18 on aesthetics). I also draw significantly on Claire Bishop’s argument, building on Rancière, for the very particular use participatory art has in our social and political worlds because it plays between aesthetics and ethics (Bishop, 2012). Nonetheless, aesthetics remains implicit in my overall discussion and my explicit focus remains with spatiality, politically and socially. My concern in this book is with how the two spatial (even though they may be aesthetic) practices of theatre and daily life might productively correlate.

4 Michael McKinnie’s 2007 City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City is in a similar scholarly territory to Harvie’s work, though termed specifically through the lens of Toronto. McKinnie considers how Toronto’s development historically has shaped theatrical practice in the city and conversely how historically theatre in Toronto has shifted the city into new ways of being.

5 I would define rather that although phronesis does not always have an immediately articulable concept, one may emerge through reflection after the praxis and poiesis.

6 The term ‘coloured’ is a South African historical nomination, used during apartheid years to classify mixed race members of the population. Although the word has pejorative associations in many parts of the world, in South Africa ‘coloured’ is a term that an historically established, culturally specific group who are mixed race actively choose post-apartheid to self-identify.

7 Informal trading spaces known as ‘spaza shops’ operate directly from private residences, out of garages, front rooms or holes in the wall with makeshift built structures. The only supermarket chain that services the area is Spar. A SuperSpar (the larger of the two Spar supermarket franchise models) is the holding tenant for the only local shopping and post office centre. All other shops are independently owned and operate out of single shop fronts on street level or are spaza shops.

8 All conducted, interestingly enough, in the interviewees’ homes, so there was a marked divide between strangers accessed only through the public spaces of Bertrams and people with Bertrams connections, but not living in Bertrams, accessed in their personal, private spaces. The interviews became a following of threads from Bertrams to the more affluent Johannesburg suburbs of Norwood, Rivonia, Troyeville, Linden, Craighall Park as well as as far afield as London.
References

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Introduction


A ‘critical spatial practice’

The chapters that follow detail what architectural historian and art writer Jane Rendell terms a ‘critical spatial practice’, employing art to critically consider the daily activities that engage space by ‘using, occupying and experiencing them’. In the vein of the discussions in the section above, Rendell defines critical spatial practice as a way to ‘describe both everyday activities and creative practices which seek to resist the dominant social order of global corporate capitalism’ (2018: 8). In the Izithombe 2094 project a critical spatial practice was exercised through theatre and performance as art form with senses attuned to the performativity and theatricality in everyday practices of placemaking in city spaces. Through a close reading of specific moments in this year-long project, the rest of this book considers the specific ways in which theatre and performance engaged everyday practices critically and through relationality to allow knowledges of placemaking to emerge even as place emerges, to draw attention to moments, for even moments unsettle hegemonic systems of dominance and power.

Notes

1 Massey’s project speaks into a geographic concern with what Stuart Elden nominates as ‘the interrelation of the spatial dimensions of politics and the political dimensions of space’ (2009: xix). Elden employs this concern specifically in terms of ‘the war on terror’ to understand how it is a political dynamic foundationaly inflected by spatiality – who claims, defends, attacks and fights for which areas of space.

2 Although as Morten Axel Pedersen cautions, a focus on the relationships between things tends to overemphasise connection at the expense of how inter-thing relationality can also be used to create separation; detachment as well as attachment (2014: 197–198). This effect of both connecting and separating constitutes the kinds of politics of space discussed by Massey (2005) and Elden (2009) and which Ingold’s meshwork implies (2013).

3 I would like to clarify some slippage in the use of the term ‘performative’. In writing on performance ‘performative’ is used at times to indicate an artistic act that uses performance, in the sense of singing, dancing, acting, performance art etc. – an artistic act that is ephemeral. Other scholars have a stricter sense of using ‘performative’ only to indicate that the action, artwork, thing they are talking about has a performative effect in the world; it does something analysable as an example of performativity, as defined in this chapter. I use ‘performative’ only in the second sense, generally followed by an explanation of how the thing described is performative – what it does. Where there is doubt the intention is always to use ‘performative’ as indicative of an act that causes an effect in the world. ‘Performance’ is used throughout for an artistic act that is ephemeral. In the main, ‘performance’ is paired with ‘theatre’, as in, ‘theatre and performance’ to indicate the interplay between the two in my use of my artistic practice.

4 A popular South African music genre that emerged in the 1990s which draws on various South African musical eras and artists as well as Hip-Hop, Dub, Jazz and UK House (South African History Online, 2017).

5 My use of place and space here is slightly counter to de Certeau’s. I propose, in Massey’s terms, that spatial practice forms place as a transient, ever-evolving identifying moment in the ongoing construction of space (2005: 130). For de Certeau, spatial practice enlivens the statically fixed ‘place’ (1988: 103–107).
References

Considering the fields


Notes

1 What even was ‘the everyday’ or ‘daily life’? Surely it could not be as simple as walking to the SuperSpar across the valley or brushing your teeth?

2 All the games were embodied, indeed as living is an embodied practice. A classic ethnographic interview is also of course an embodied practice, where vocal and physical gestures, posture are all available for observation and communicating meaning and affect. Theatre and performance, with a more exaggerated or heightened use of embodiment, made the embodiment of expressions more explicit.

3 The game’s emphasis on routes to and from home resonates with Simon Jones and Paul Rae’s discussion of Dream → Work and Dream → Home, companion touring pieces made through the collaboration of Singaporean company, spell#7, and UK company, Bodies in Flight. The pieces took place at rush hour in train stations, playing between mundane actions, internal monologues and the flights of fancy and projections these daily routines contain (2013: 140–160).

4 The women spoke their stories into the microphone first and then either Baeletsi or I would retell their stories to the whole group, also using the microphone.

5 Although there were undeniably many small moments of change, empowerment and challenges to the status quo – moments that were visible and can be accounted for and I am sure many more that are unseen and hard to account for and that may still be unfolding.

6 Where the other might be human, object, animal, plant, landscape, building and on and on.

References


What the workshops revealed

are robust by the fullness of their realisation in the moment and precarious by their momentariness.

The next chapter starts to consider how a playmaking process works with fragments or worldlings of daily life and the fragments and worldlings of a play research and devising process to create a piece of theatre that is ‘an assemblage of disparate and incommensurate things throwing themselves together in scenes, acts, encounters, performances, and situations’ (Stewart, 2012: 519). I discuss playmaking as an attempt to capture ‘culture’ (519) in the sense that Hall (1997), Chambers (1986) and de Certeau (1988), among others, conceive of it: culture as ways of living that make space; where the making of space agglomerates transiently into place.

Notes

1 *Tsotsi* is a slang word for gangster or thief. It has, of course, negative, othering connotations as well as being reclaimed in the same way as ‘gangster’ is in popular cultural use – to indicate a rebellious empowerment through living outside or in contempt of the law (Urban Dictionary, 2005).

2 Stanislavsky’s system for acting developed in the early twentieth century is considered a foundational force in the realism of modern theatre. Using his method, actors imaginatively embed themselves in the ‘given circumstances’ of their character’s world in order to play their situations, personalities, actions and emotions with as much fidelity to ‘real life’ as possible. Lefebvre’s proposition in *Rhythmanalysis*, to think through the rhythms of daily practices as they produce daily life, is just the kind of attentive research necessary to realise a Stanislavskian understanding of ‘given circumstances’ to produce a character’s intentions, actions and emotions in a play scene. For a more contemporary exploration of Stanislavsky’s work and its value to theatre see Sharon Marie Carnicke’s work (2009).

3 The name everyone at Bienvenu used to refer to the weekly workshops, taken from a Kenyan chant we used at the start of each session.

4 The director of Bienvenu, a Catholic nun of the Scalibrian order. The Scalibrian sisters founded Bienvenu with support from the Catholic church in 2001 (Bienvenu, 2017).

5 Unsurprisingly, our view of Bontle shifted as we got to know her better. She had many moments of sudden generosity and tenderness towards the women and I came to understand her cross manner as a superficial defence against the many demands she was fielding from different managers, residents and children. She would often respond with a loud, ‘Hey?’ to any question or request, followed by a forceful monologue, hard to follow in speed and logic, with only a tenuous link to the initial question. Bontle was a *tsotsi* herself, in the way discussed here, tactically defending herself from the demands of her job with a bullish manner.

6 The Johannesburg Cricket Club is a charitable organisation that was founded in 2010 in the wake of development projects in the area for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. A group of civically minded former apartheid struggle activists took the opportunity to convert an empty field into a cricket oval and the adjacent two bowling greens into a market garden. The bowling greens and field are directly across the road from the Ellis Park sporting complex which hosted World Cup Soccer games. The bowling greens are now the Bertrams Inner City Farm. The connected cricket oval is used by the Joburg Cricket Club, where local children learn and play cricket every Saturday morning. The cricket oval is also connected to the Maurice Freeman Recreation Centre, a council-managed hall on the Fuller
Street and Thames Road side of the cricket oval (Govender, personal communication, 21 August 2016; see also: http://joburgcricket.club/).

References


which, like the final dress rehearsal, was both the start of the public performances and the beginning of a new arc of rehearsing. What follows is a thick description of the performance of *Izithombe 2094*. Chapter 6 considers how the audience completed *Izithombe 2094* as a public artwork and what the play did as a public artwork in the spaces of Bertrams.

**Notes**

1 Although these are arguably a kind of public space too, they are not the focus of the spaces engaged through my project.

2 With an understanding that this broadcasting is not only through the theatrical medium, but also through the mediation of a relationship with the artist. Lindiwe played a Francophone woman not to reflect the story of some of the women from Bienvenu, but to reflect her experience of their stories through relating to them. Their stories became known through their relationship with Lindiwe, through her theatrical representation of their relationship with her. In some ways, we were working in a similar vein to the kinds of verbatim theatre work made famous by Anna Deveare Smith (see 2003, 1997). Smith interviews people around an issue or crisis and then creates one woman shows where she performs edited versions of the interviewee’s side of the interview. She enacts these monologues faithfully to the interviewee’s words, gestures, intonations. She argues that she ‘embodies’ her interviewee as testimony to her listening to them (Smith, 2001, 2008). In the case of *Izithombe 2094*, I encouraged the professional cast to create characters and narratives inspired by, but not taken directly from, the people we worked with. The cast’s performances became composites of multiple people’s stories, including the fictive imaginings of the actor’s themselves. Partly this was a mechanism to protect the identities and privacy of the people we worked with. But it was also to actively create entirely new subjectivities, to make a clear distinction between the real-life person’s experiences and ways of being and the subjective interpretation of the actor.

3 Over the course of 2015 I did two tester projects, one with University of Witwatersrand students from the Wits School of the Arts and the Wits School of Architecture and Planning and one with University of Pretoria Honours theatre making students. I used these processes to experiment with research and devising tasks in relation to public spaces and to experiment with final product structures that would reflect our research and our ways of researching.

**References**


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and turning to face the audience on the street. As soon as they finished the second cycle they leapt into the crowd, calling, ‘Come on!’ and led us onwards. Baeletsi Tsatsi, costumed as a Victorian lady, joined us as before and was the one to open the gate at the bottom of Twilsharp. She handed me the key and then led the audience to the exhibition space. I would follow to close the play and invite the audience to interact with the exhibition.

Notes

1 For a short documentary on the playmaking process and public performances, see Izithombe 2094 Documentary: www.wits.ac.za/sacp/featured-projects/izithombe-2094-documentary/.
2 The track was played for amplification from a speaker hidden behind the parked cars.
3 ‘Superkids’ is a track from a Nigerian children’s television programme (Superkids, 2017). The choreography the girls were doing was one the professional cast had developed out of a series of gestures from our research tasks. We wanted to set it to music and asked the girls to propose a track. They came up with ‘Superkids’. It is loud, cheerful, anthemic and sung by children. With the lyrics repeating a refrain of ‘Superkids’, it felt like a proud public claiming of that title for the Bienvenu girls. It was like the dream of a feel-good Broadway musical version of a play about Bertrams. I would never have chosen the track myself – the sentimentality and positivity of the lyrics and melody, the fact that it was sung by children, all would have felt patronising, lacking in nuance and insensitive to the complexities of the girls’ lives. But coming from them, it was a glorious choice.
4 Rea Vaya is Johannesburg’s Bus Rapid Transport System, operational from 30 August 2009 (Rea Vaya, 2017). Frequently the Beach Granny performance attracted the attention of waiting passengers, who peered to see what was going on from the bus station island in the middle of the road. Bertrams Road also facilitated a pedestrian traffic of school children and people coming to and from Troyville and Jeppestown on the south side of Bertrams and Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville on the north side of the valley. These pedestrians were similarly drawn into watching the Beach Granny section of the play.

5 The council houses were built by Maurice Freeman, mayor of Johannesburg from 1934 to 1935 (South African History Online, 2017). In one of the first incidences of forced removals after South Africa was declared a union in 1910, Maurice Freeman legislated against all black, coloured or Asian people living in Bertrams and forceably had all people from these racial groups evicted during his term of office. His primary intention was to make space for government housing for white tenant farmers who had migrated to Johannesburg in significant numbers during the course of the 1920s. He built houses and a complex of flat blocks which were available on a leasehold basis to white people (Latilla, 2014). The accommodation came with a coal allowance, government issued Christmas hampers and various other subsidised services (Tsatsi & Morkel, personal interview with council housing resident, 15 August 2017). The houses and flats still stand, many occupied by the descendants of the first leasehold owners and others who have bought the leasehold papers. The area of council housing is in a square between Thames Road running into Frere Road and Kimberley Road up slope, bounded on either side by Viljoen Street and Bertrams Road. Although there is some crossover, coloured people mainly live in the flats and white people mainly live in the houses. There are few black residents in the Maurice Freeman council housing section of Bertrams.

6 Sophiatown is a misleading name in the context of discussing Bertrams. Founded on the border of Sophiatown and Westdene, Sophiatown Community Psychological Services has a branch that runs from Derby Street in Bertrams. Sophiatown, the suburb, on the western side of Johannesburg, is famous for its vibrant community from the 1930s to 1950s and infamous for the forced removals of the apartheid government which took place throughout the course of 1955 (South African History Online, 2017).

7 Up until the 1980s, part of living in one of the council properties involved representatives of the council coming to inspect the upkeep and daily decorum of the flats and houses and arranging the winter coal deliveries (Tsatsi and Morkel, personal interview with council housing resident, 15 August 2017).

8 A cheap bubble gum that can be bought singly from supermarkets, spaza shops and informal traders. The wrapper is green, red and blue, with a black line cartoon character face repeated as a pattern. The inside of the wrappers have a list of facts, four to five per wrapper, each headed with the title, ‘Did you know?’ Here we twisted the meaning of ‘Did you know?’ from referring to facts to a question of knowing a person.

9 Steve and Sheryl Shaw were a couple living in one of the Maurice Freeman houses who invited Toni and Baeletsi in to tell them about the local history.

10 Gearhouse is a sound and lighting rental firm, with equipment available for conferences, concerts and large functions requiring audio, lighting, stage and seating infrastructures. Splitbeam, one of their subsidiary companies, manages gear hire for theatre productions and supplied us with all the technical equipment for the Izithombe 2094 at a reduced rate. Gearhouse and Splitbeam take up three blocks of warehousing in Judith’s Paarl. Cecelia Nqobo had worked as a cleaner for Gearhouse for 30 years before retiring in 2015. With some assistance from the company she set up her food cart which caters to the Gearhouse staff lunchtime trade.
11 Meaning to buy some sort of cheap treat, usually sweets.
12 I use ‘café’ here rather than ‘spaza’ to indicate the more formal nature of this particular shop which was run out of a dedicated and purpose-built shop space on Lang Street.
13 Lindiwe had had an attack of swelling on her right knee which meant she could not walk and so performed the first half of the second run entirely in a wheelchair which we rented from Gerald Fitzpatrick House.

References


School learners, audience members did not respond dispassionately. They loved it (Pooley, personal communication, 30 August 2016 and The Huffington Post South Africa, 2016). They were uncomfortable and called an Uber to get them out of the situation. Yet although they felt, they were also able to reflect because of the fictional, artistically constructed nature of the experience.

Bernd Schulz said he experienced *Izithombe 2094* as a form of activism (Guhrs, personal communication, 31 August 2016, referencing Schulz’s personal communication, 30 August 2016). Gilbert Pooley said he experienced the play as a form of group therapy (personal communication, 30 August 2016). I intended for neither, though was greatly heartened to hear the work was perceived as both. Possibly the play was therapy and activism in many ways, big and small, but what is significant about both these labels is that they suggest the theatre offered something quite specific as a public artwork. In activist terms it highlighted areas of social and political concern and offered possible means of addressing those concerns to effect positive change. In therapeutic terms it offered a self-aware, affective experience; an embodied awareness that allowed you to live and feel in the world, while conscious of how you act and are acted upon.

The middle-class theatre audience’s experience of *Izithombe 2094* suggests for urban studies that the play was a means of gathering data on people’s lived experiences and how they connect to one another to construct space. But more than that it argues for the theatrical play as public art form as a way of knowing that is embodied and therefore both active and reflective at the same time; in the situation while seeing the situation. This is a value theatre has to offer for an ethos of urban knowledge production which is inclusive of as many voices as possible, an ethos of urban knowledge production that attends to micro actions and textures as it extends an awareness to macro forces, an ethos of urban knowledge production that is grounded in the lived reality as much as it seeks to know it and respond to it. As Nigel Thrift offers in favour of a performance lens and discursive approach to city spaces: ‘… it is an attempt to produce strategic and hopefully “therapeutic” interventions’ where we can see the ‘Power of performance as recognition of the fact that all solutions are responsive, relational, dialogical’ (Thrift, 2008: 147).

**Notes**

1 The cost of tickets was on a pay-what-you-can basis, but some amount of money needed to be exchanged for a ticket (in the form a paper wristband). The payment for a ticket was the formal ritual for the contract of watching the play from start to finish. It also gained theatre audience members entry into the semi-private gallery space of Twilsharp at the end of the play. That said I waived costs entirely in the case of the children who came at the start of the tour to watch the whole play and I would have done the same for any adult whose ‘pay-what-you-can’ was R0. The ticket cost played a formal rather than financial role in the theatre audience contract of the play.
2 Mainly in the realm of a macro level relational effect here, effects produced by outside audience members’ economic, class and cultural activities; racially and economically informed histories.

3 Afrikaans word for barbeque, used colloquially by South Africans.

References

ways through the project’s process. Communication, when it really happens, is exposing, and exposing because it is at the limits of ourselves that we meet the limits of others, equally exposed. In the workshops, in interviews, in the rehearsals and performances of *Izithombe 2094*, participants, facilitators, actors, audience (and all of us moving between these different roles, whatever we might have entered into the moment of the process as) were at the limits of our experiences in terms of skills, knowing spaces, performing actions, encountering each other. At these limits, and in our mutual exposure, our knowings and experiences communicated across our limits, partial, vulnerable, but present to the emergence of a nascent knowing of one another, of new knowledges we were forming at our exposed limits, in communication with each other. This then was the political project of *Izithombe 2094*, not one of being absorbed by power relations, but rather, with a wary attention to these power relationships, a hope to acknowledge worlds and find the communication between worlds, at their limits, to make new ones. What made this communication between worlds possible is what enables our experience of, our presence to our exposed limits: our sensual experience of it, subjective, individuated, but in common, a shared ability to see, hear, taste, smell, touch and feel through our beings.

**References**


