A Politics of Loss?
The Threat of Public Housing in a Johannesburg Suburb

Anthropology is about large issues in small places (Eriksen 2001b). In this sense, this chapter is about the agency of a relatively small group of urban dwellers in north-eastern Johannesburg, yet the story is also about the larger struggles of South Africa and its citizens in coming to terms with changing spatial, cultural and economic differences in the post-apartheid city. The property owners in Linbro Park have been engaged in a struggle against a public housing project, so-called RDP housing (referring to the Reconstruction and Development Programme introduced in the 1990s), planned to be built by the municipality in Linbro Park. The area is also rapidly transforming because real estate capitalists have their 'greedy eyes' on the suburb, as property owners express it. Hence, the area is transforming from a residential area with small businesses to a mixed-use area with large office parks and warehouses, which not all the property owners are happy about. Many fear that it is only a matter of time before their 'country living in the city' will come to an end. Linbro Park is thus characterised by competition and even clashes between contrasting visions and interests regarding how the larger urban area comprising the peri-urban suburb and the adjacent township should develop.

The Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) would like to build RDP housing in Linbro Park, so that township dwellers can move to Linbro Park and become home owners here, as part of the larger spatio-political project to de-densify Alexandra. What is at stake here is thus a potential redistribution of land in what used to be a deeply segregated urban area. What is also at stake is that erecting public housing for Alexandra's residents in Linbro Park could lead to a neighbourhood mixed in ethnic and economic terms. Township dwellers and suburbanites may become neighbours, they may rub shoulders in the neighbourhood streets, and share a social position in terms of owning property.

In an ideal world, one might hope that such a mixed neighbourhood would lead to new forms of being together in the post-apartheid city, that it could turn into a stage where new identities and new relationships become formed, leaving the binary categories of apartheid around race and suburb–township behind. Reality, unfortunately, is more complicated. There are many social processes in place which strongly complicate, hold back, or even obstruct the emergence of something new, be it new forms of sociality, new ways of seeing the world and new spatial redistribution. There is the insuf-

ficient capacity of the local government to actually implement the large public housing programme, there is the strong competition by private real estate investors for urban land, and, most importantly, there are the suburban property owners of whom most are opposed to this transformation. Over the last two or three decades they have tried to obstruct, slow down, or at least influence the way in which the public housing programme is implemented, ranging from opposing densities in an Urban Design Framework to attempting to push land prices upwards. Instead of envisioning a less divided city, they argue against the public housing project with narratives based on simple binaries of Johannesburg as deeply divided in economic and cultural terms.[1]

The property owners' agency is driven by a fear of loss, that is, losing their properties, their wealth and their lifestyle. Imagining daily encounters with Alexandra residents as neighbours makes the property owners feel threatened as material and social beings. In what I consequently call their *politics of loss*, they struggle, on the one hand, for a Linbro Park as they imagined it to have been in the nostalgic past, namely as a peaceful, cohesive, orderly and implicitly white suburb. They do this by drawing boundaries between themselves and the Alexandra residents, constituting them as 'others'. On the other hand, they fear losing money, as they believe property values may decrease when they have to share their neighbourhood with residents with lower incomes. They are aware, however, that they are losing the battle. Their opposition is a fight of David against Goliath, not least because within the post-apartheid 'rainbow' nation the property owners' stance against public housing for the poor is morally troubling and their influence with regard to the larger socio-spatial processes at stake is limited. For this reason, many property owners have already sold their land and left.

Politics aimed at preserving privileges, keeping others out and, therefore, disentangling from them have taken centre stage in national politics across the globe in recent years. In 2016, the UK electorate voted to withdraw from the European Union (Brexit). Donald Trump was voted in as president of the United States with his promise of isolationist politics and the building of a wall on the border with Mexico. There is a rise in ultra-right movements in Europe like the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Last but not least, xenophobia is taking centre stage in South African politics. Conservative forces are on the rise, and hence there is a need to pay more attention to anti-social movements, to politics of loss and politics of disentanglement.

Anti-social movements in African cities have received little attention till now. If they are mentioned, they appear as rather opaque groups: the corrupt elites, the middle-class buyers of gated homes, or the angry xenophobic mobs. This may be related to a sort of overcompensation in African urbanism. Academic and political discourses on African cities have long been dominated by a narrative of doom, African cities tended to be seen as "as examples of all that can go wrong with urbanism" (Myers 2011: 4). Not least to counter this, urbanists have started to draw attention to the endless agentic possibilities that African cities offer and have focused on how urban dwellers make the urban work, based on their agency and creativity (e.g. Simone 2004a). Focusing on urban politics and governance 'from below' in African cities, researchers have made many important contributions, not only to Southern urbanism but to urban studies in

1 As in all the chapters in this book, this part fieldwork was also conducted between 2010 and 2012. Linbro Park has changed considerably since then and many of the interviewees have sold their properties and moved elsewhere.

general (Parnell 2014, Parnell and Oldfield 2014). Yet the overcompensation for the narrative of doom has led to a focus on urban movements that fight for *more* social justice, for example the right to the city movements or service delivery protests in South Africa. Conservative groups whose political agency is driven by the fear of losing something have received less attention.

Linbro Park was once a partially enclosed neighbourhood; the residents paid for a large concrete wall to be built along the eastern boundary in order to stop people from coming into the area from the adjacent open field. Some people wished to have a wall around the whole suburb but struggled to get enough fellow property owners to pay for it. Parts of the wall have since been removed when some properties were repurposed from residential to industrial use. In South Africa and elsewhere, enclosed neighbourhoods and gated communities have sprung up as forms of dwelling to which privileged urban groups retreat (Dirsuweit 2015, Young 2000).

Although Linbro Park does not exactly qualify as an 'enclosed' neighbourhood, as most of the wall has gone, many of the social processes at stake in the construction of such enclosed suburbs and gated communities are also present in Linbro Park. Jennifer Robinson warns us against treating cities as embodiments of abstract types because this limits the reach of comparisons and the diversity of features that we pay attention to. Rather, we should treat them as 'ordinary' and "attend to the diversity and complexity of all cities" (Robinson 2006a: 1). The *ordinary city* approach is also useful for studying changing neighbourhoods. Instead of categorising, ranking and labelling Linbro Park, I suggest it should be seen rather as a diverse, differentiated, contested neighbourhood shaped by a "multiplicity of trajectories of processes" (Massey 2006: 92). Neighbourhood change is the result of multiple actors trying to shape urban space according to their own images and visions. How Linbro Park evolves is thus a "product of political decisions and collective actions in space", and by analysing this we can unravel how agency shapes the effects of larger structural processes (Thompson 2017: 105, 107). In the *politics of loss* the property owners of Linbro Park shape their entanglements in the city by drawing boundaries, yet the state of disentanglement they strive for remains an ideal rather than a reality.

Linbro Park – A Changing Suburb

Once upon a time, Linbro Park was a plantation, owned by the surveyor, farmer and business man Edwin James Brolin, who was of Scandinavian descent (Louw 1981: 14). Probably in the 1920s, he bought the land on what used to be the Modderfontein farm in the north-east of Johannesburg. He planned to supply the mining industry with mine-props (wooden poles for propping up the mine) but the business idea failed and he decided to subdivide his farms into smaller plots, probably in the 1930s. He gave the area the name 'Linbro Park', as a word play on the family name Brolin. Some of the land he gave to his children who lived there with their families. Other plots he sold (ibid: 14-15). In 2010, the area had about 228 separate plots (City of Johannesburg 2010). A cemetery, an unkempt plot with scattered graves where the Brolins were buried, reminds residents of the founders of the area.

The property-owning families in Linbro Park have their roots in various European countries, like Germany, Austria, England, Greece and others. They or their ancestors

had moved to South Africa from Europe in immigration waves since the 19th century. Many of the contemporary owners grew up on farms in Southern Africa, predominantly in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Many relate to such rural roots when explaining their choice to move to Linbro Park.

> I grew up in Namibia on a farm … Linbro Park was country, there was nothing here [when we moved here]. This was agricultural, it was the closest that we could get to farming. My husband had a business, and also I wasn't a farmer who wanted to farm with cattle, but I just needed the space, the outdoors (Clara, property owner in Linbro Park, April 2012).

The property owners' ideas of the good life are still shaped by their childhood experiences which they speak about nostalgically. Living in Linbro Park enables them to live a lifestyle close to what they call 'nature' and 'outdoors: hence 'country living in the city'. One resident coined the slogan 'country living in the city' to describe their way of life, an expression which became widely used by other residents. 'Country living in the city' as an emic notion speaks about Linbro Park as 'lived space', as a space "directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of the 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre 1996 [1974]: 39, italics in original). The 'in the city' is important, as the property owners do not identify themselves as rural, not least because they all have urban-based occupations and shop in the surrounding malls.

> Barbara: What made you come here? Steve: You must understand, I was born on a farm, raised on a farm. I have been a farmer's son. To get a little box on top another is not my scene. And I see it, when I go to Germany, I see how there is no space. I come back to Africa and I think 'oh, we are very lucky' (Steve, property owner in Linbro Park, June 2012).

For 60-year-old Steve, a romantic idea of 'African' space associated with freedom and nature is an important reason why he continues to live in South Africa even though many of his friends have emigrated since the end of apartheid. Living in Linbro Park is hence part of a lifestyle that links them to their settler ancestry. The space is crucial to their place of being in and belonging to (South) Africa.

The property owners nostalgically remember the times of apartheid, which for them was the time before the neighbourhood started to change and when there still was cohesion and order. According to them, there was little crime and the fences around the properties were low. The property owners and their children spent their leisure time riding horses and breeding dogs; property owners recount that there was an intense associational life around horse riding. Many of them explain that they bought a property in Linbro Park because it was large enough to keep horses for themselves and their children.

> Barbara: Why did you moved to Linbro? Sandra: Because of the horses. My children were into horse riding. And I just loved living here, I love the quiet … Linbro is home to many people who were into horse riding and competing, who could have horses at home, but didn't have to farm. Even the library used to have a hitching point. One could tie the horse there. I still have a picture of my daughter and her tied up pony in front of

> the library when she went to get a book for school. It was lovely. But as they say, progress comes along, and all your good living goes down the window (Sandra, property owner in Linbro Park, May 2012).

Looking after a horse, riding out on horseback and participating in competitions also entailed socialising with neighbours. This was to such an extent that horse-riding became an important element of the notion of 'country living in the city', a part of the collective and individual identity of Linbro Park property owners.[2] While the youth of Alexandra threw stones and Molotov cocktails against the apartheid regime's military tanks, the youth of Linbro Park rode to the local library on horseback. My interviewees never brought up apartheid in their nostalgic narratives and when I asked how it was to live near Alexandra township, where political violence was rampant during the 1980s and 1990s, answers were usually short. She responded: "It was no hassle at all, no, no, not hassle at all" (Sandra, May 2012). In these nostalgic constructions of the past, the political-ideological context of apartheid is not present and their privileged, safe lives appear normal to them.

The times of the imagined rural idyll have passed, and Linbro Park is now seen as a changing neighbourhood by politicians, by town planners and by residents. The Urban Design Frameworks describes Linbro Park as peri-urban, as "an area in transition from rural to urban" (City of Johannesburg 2010: 5). Thomas, a Democratic Alliance (DA) politician in the ward that Linbro Park belongs to, represented it as an exceptional place:

> That's a suburb in transition, and probably one of the only ones in Jo'burg at this time. When you say 'transition', we talk about a changing heartbeat. Between what used to be ten years ago to what's going to be in ten years' time, there's a scary difference, two extremes. That can't be very comforting to those who chose their retirement in Linbro Park (Thomas, politician, September 2012).

Also, the property owners of Linbro Park perceive that their neighbourhood has changed considerably from what it used to be. They anticipate that further change will come, largely induced by outside forces that they are unable to influence, yet it is it is hard for them to estimate whether this will be in the next five, ten or even 20 years. Dave, a 60-year-old committee member of the LPCA, said "It's a nice place to come home to. I love my house, my home, my neighbourhood, and I am sorry to see it change, but I know the change must come" (Dave, June 2012).

Until the early 1990s, Linbro Park was a largely residential neighbourhood dominated by *lived space*, used by its inhabitants as homes and as a setting for their lifestyle. However, at the end of the 1980s, actors with different interests and intentionalities came onto the scene. Mr Silva, owner of a truck rental company and a European immigrant, started to buy up properties in Linbro Park. The land was cheap, and he saw its

2 The roots of horse-riding as leisure in Africa can be traced back historically to Victorian England where it was a sport of the wealthy and the elite, and a sign of social distinction. The Victorian enthusiasm for sports and game like cricket, tennis, golf and rifle shooting was spread throughout the British empire by British administrators, missionaries, traders and settlers (Stoddart 1988: 654). For colonial culture, sport played an important role in terms of determining and exhibiting the ranking of social groups (Stoddart 1988: 657-8).

potential owing to its location close to the highway. One property he used as his home, another one he used for his truck rental business, and others he bought as investments. Over the years, he acquired several properties. Like him, other property owners started to keep businesses on their properties, so that the area transformed from being a purely residential place to a mixed-use suburb. The neighbourhood increasingly came to be viewed by other family-based business entrepreneurs as an economic resource. Gabriel, a 30-year old member of the Silva property development family told me: "For us in Linbro, it's mostly monetary. And of course, we are a business there, so we have this interest in our neighbourhood. But mostly for us, we see it as a business opportunity. We always try to maximise our value" (Gabriel, May 2012).

Hence, a new rationality became important: a relationship to urban land that Lefebvre suggests should be referred to as *abstract space*: a space of instrumental, profit-seeking rationality, a commoditised space that serves the economic interests of the investors. This made Linbro Park more diverse in terms of property use. It was now home to what Aalbers (2006) calls *abstract space-maker*s, who "instrumentalise space for the production of exchange value" (Thompson 2017: 106), living side by side with *social space-makers* whose relationship to urban land is mainly based on lived space and the use value of space.

With the presence of businesses in the area, and especially with the arrival of professional property developers a couple of years later, Linbro Park's spaces as lived, perceived and conceived realities changed. For the long-term residents, the haptic, olfactory, auditory and visual experiences of the neighbourhood were affected. New buildings of a light-industrial and commercial character emerged which residents perceived as visually disturbing among the plots of green spaces and the suburban houses. The sensual habits of the urban dwellers were also disrupted by the noise resulting from the increase in traffic and the noises and smells from small-scale factories. Increasingly, horse riding along the streets became dangerous because there was more traffic, and the land on the northern fringe, which was originally used for horseback riding, was transformed into the Linbro Business Park in the late 1990s. Older property owners were deeply opposed to the transformation into a mixed-use area, and conflict emerged between the *social* and *abstract space-makers*. The property owner, Baldwin, recounted that that the opposing factions even got into physical fights, damaging each other's fences.

As Linbro Park was zoned 'agricultural', the changes in the use of space from residential to commercial were illegal, as the zoning did not actually permit commercial or light-industrial businesses. This change in land use took place at a time in South Africa when the newly elected post-apartheid government had other worries to the enforcement of urban by-laws. During the 1990s many South African cities and many parts of Johannesburg saw "such a shift to multiple land uses despite the continuation of increasingly irrelevant zoning schemes" (Mabin 1995: 192). It was a time of weak public authority, when the so-called decay of the inner city also took place. Residents lodged complaints with the new local government and approached the Public Protector, arguing that the state was obliged to prevent the illegal use of private property. The local government responded that it could not enforce the by-laws because it lacked the necessary resources (Public Protector 1998: 20-21).

In the nostalgic narratives of older residents, the imagined homogenous idyllic community was destroyed by the question of what the future of Linbro Park should

look like. The conflict between the faction of the property owners who wanted to keep the neighbourhood as it was and the other faction who wanted the suburb to become more business oriented had disruptive effects on neighbour relations in the suburb. A sense of a *divided community* with a lack of internal cohesion emerged and exists to this day, as the property owner, Clara, explained to me: "The community is very divided. Everyone has their own criteria of what should happen" (Clara, April 2012). Many property owners today see the lack of what they call cohesion as an impediment to their ability to shape the neighbourhood's future. Some even claim that it slowed down development and kept property prices low.

In the 1990s a third rationality, a third *spatial project* claiming space in Linbro Park became relevant: the government, more precisely the ARP, began to plan the construction of low-cost housing for the residents of Alexandra in the neighbourhood.[3] Peter, a leader of the communist youth league in Alexandra, expressed it like this: "It's just farmland, you find somebody living in 10 hectares alone, and there is nothing. And you know, within that space you could at least put 50 houses, take 50 families to live there" (Peter, February 2011). Because of the large differences in density – the densely populated township and the agricultural holdings – existing side by side, the idea that the land could be used to alleviate the housing problem in Alexandra is not farfetched. The spatial inequality is seen as a problem by many, be they Alexandra residents like the leader of the communist youth league in the quote above, government officials or even Linbro Park property owners like Andrew, an LPCA committee member: "The realities of life is we have a lot of land that is not being utilised to its fullest potential, and there is other areas that need to de-densify, to try and get other land" (Andrew, March 2011).

Already in the 1990s rumours had emerged that the local government was planning to use land in Linbro Park for public housing. The plans for the construction of low-income housing in Linbro Park became more concrete when the ARP, a larger urban renewal initiative, was started. The R1.3 billion (about 100 million CHF) ARP was a flagship project with considerable financial, managerial and political support from the African National Congress (ANC) at national, provincial and local level (Sinwell 2010: 30-31).[4] The most visible and, from the perspective of the Alexandra inhabitants, the most important mandate of the ARP was and continues to be public housing. The key element of South Africa's housing policy is an income-related capital subsidy used to purchase land, secure tenure, deliver the necessary services and construct a basic house for households that meet the subsidy criteria. The subsidy was introduced in 1994 and has been increased intermittently. There are several forms in which the subsidy has been put in place, but the most well-known and most visible form is the 'RDP house' (Charlton and Kihato 2006: 254), also referred to as 'low-cost housing'. 'Affordable housing', a further category in the housing policy, refers to subsidised bond houses aimed at buyers in the upper end of the low-income market.

3 Spatial projects are "coordinated, continuous, collective campaigns to produce and format space according to identifiable logics and strategic goals, pursued by specific actors utilizing particular techniques" (Madden 2014: 480).

4 The ARP was long an intergovernmental entity and part of a national Renewal Programme. In 2014/2015 the ARP became merged with the Johannesburg Development Agency. As this merging took place after the time this ethnography refers to (data collection 2012–2012), this book continues to refer to it as the ARP.

Over the years, there has been a shift in the way the government, locally represented by the ARP, imagined the future of Linbro Park, a shift reflecting changes in national housing policy. The first plans were to develop the whole neighbourhood into a low-cost housing settlement. This reflected the first housing policy in the post-apartheid era that focused on the construction of such mono-functional RDP settlements in order to rapidly meet quantitative delivery goals (ibid: 253). In the early years of the urban renewal project, the ARP constructed 3256 RDP housing units in the township Bram Fischerville (close to Soweto) and 3500 in Diepsloot (a post-apartheid township in the north of the city). Such relocations to distant and monofunctional settlements were increasingly criticised.

> We made a mistake in our housing policy since 1994, we should never put housing for the poor, to live on the fringes of the city, on large, cheap land pockets, because that was the motivation, because they said, "We need to accommodate for as many people, where is the cheapest land?" Where is the cheapest land? At the outskirts of the cities. But for the poor person, it's the worst place to be (Ron, executive employee at ARP, March 2011).

At the urban fringes, land was available and cheapest, yet the far-off location of public housing settlements and the lack of transport made life and economic survival harsh (see also Todes 2006: 64). The national housing policy became criticised for contributing to urban sprawl, perpetuating the marginalisation of the poor, and failing to contribute to the integration of the city (Charlton and Kihato 2006: 255). The RDP settlements were also criticised for being reminiscent of the 'matchbox' houses delivered during the apartheid period (Dangor 1998: 359-361).

In 2004, a new housing policy, called Breaking New Ground (BNG), was introduced, which entailed a major paradigm shift in the conceptualisation of the ideal public housing settlement: housing provision should now address poverty more broadly, improve the quality of life, stimulate economic growth, generate assets for the poor and ultimately develop sustainable human settlements (Charlton and Kihato 2006: 257, Department of Housing 2004). In addition, the ARP changed its housing approach: instead of the large-scale relocation of Alexandra residents to faraway areas, much like the policies of the apartheid state, a decision was taken to construct houses in Alexandra and in the vicinity of Alexandra. Accordingly, considerable pockets of land between Alexandra (East Bank) and the highway N3 were transformed by the ARP into RDP settlements, nowadays called Far East Bank. In its first 10 years, the ARP constructed 14,500 residential units (Ron, executive employee at ARP, March 2011). However, it was obvious that for rest of the 21,500 targeted households (numbers from 2008) land outside Alexandra had to be found. With an average density of 125 units per hectare, 90 hectares of land in the vicinity of Alexandra were needed (City of Johannesburg 2008: 17). In the search for land, several pockets of undeveloped land in the vicinity were identified: Frankenveld, Modderfontein, land of the Islamic Trust, as well as Linbro Park. The ARP then conceptualised the future for Linbro Park based on the new BNG housing policy. The main aim would be to develop Linbro Park as a 'sustainable human settlement' in order to accommodate "the housing backlog and future growth of Alexandra" (ibid: 39). Sustainability is a key notion in the BNG policy and the ARP planning documents for Linbro Park, as South African housing policies were

developed in the context of international discourses (Charlton and Kihato 2006: 257, Todes 2006: 64). The idea of sustainable human settlements entered policy discourse at the end of the 1990s and stems from the UN Habitat Agenda. In the BNG policy, 'sustainable human settlements' refer to neighbourhoods where "economic growth and social development are in balance with the carrying capacity of the natural systems" (Department of Housing 2004: 12), thus, understanding sustainability in an economic, social and environmental sense.

In order to address the spatial fragmentation and inequality inherited from the apartheid era, the new housing policy envisages the acquisition, and if necessary, the expropriation of privately owned, well-located land (ibid: 14). This is the broader political context within which the Linbro Park property owners' *politics of loss* emerges.

Opposing State Intervention through Tools of Abstraction

As early as the 1990s, Linbro Park residents heard rumours about the ANC government's plans for a public housing project in the neighbourhood. Only in 2013, however, did the local government acquire its first pieces of land in Linbro Park and it will take another couple of years to complete the project. During fieldwork (2010–2012), apart from a few exceptions, the property owners were fiercely opposed to this state intervention.

States have a particular way of seeing and acting with regard their citizens and spaces. Making the environment and its people legible is a central problem of statecraft (Scott 1999: pos. 117). It is through *conceived space*, the space constituted through mental activity and inscribed in powerful documents, that states 'see' their populations, shape spatial reality and draw boundaries (ibid). For Lefebvre (1996 [1974]: 38), conceived space is "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived". In order to 'see' and act, the state depends on 'tools of abstraction' which reduce the complexity of life to abstract categories. These state simplifications like title deeds, zoning and cadastral maps are like abridged maps, which represent only that slice of complex reality that is of interest to the state (Scott 1999: pos. 134). The land zoning in Linbro Park is such a tool of abstraction. It is a state instrument to prescribe and control land use. It is both descriptive and prescriptive: it delivers state information about what type of land use is practised on a certain property and, by changing zoning law, the state can change which type of land use is permitted. Zoning was important for implementing spatial segregation during apartheid: The Group Areas Act (1950), the key legislation designating different areas to different racial groups, was implemented through rezoning.

The discourses, categories and processes imposed by the state can become appropriated by urban dwellers and other actors, and they can instrumentalise them to project their own visions onto space. As zoning is about drawing boundaries per se, urban dwellers can use them to draw boundaries which are in their own interests. As mentioned, the official zoning in Linbro Park prohibited business activities, hence since the 1990s, some business-oriented families and potential investors in Linbro Park have pushed for new town planning documents to be drawn up; the new plans should record, legalise and enable their visions for the future of the suburb. In the 1990s and

early 2000s, different factions paid town planning offices to create precinct plans and reports, none of which were formally approved by the Council and therefore failed to become legally binding (City of Johannesburg 2008: 24-25). In 1998, the 'business' faction achieved an important victory: the first Integrated Development Framework was drawn up for Linbro Park (prepared by Setplan town planners), envisioning mixed-land use with a business node, industry, commercial and residential uses. Many residents did not like this framework, as it envisaged an end to their 'country living in the city', yet it was nevertheless adopted by the City. This was for many Linbro Park property owners one of the important battles lost in the *politics of loss*.

In order to represent their interests in these highly technical, power-shaped processes, the Linbro Park property owners acquired specialist knowledge about the legal and political processes, including urban planning instruments. A considerable part of community meetings and LPCA committee meetings is dedicated to the distribution of such knowledge by those who are better informed. Some residents like Amy, a 50-year-old property owner, refrained from participating in these meetings because of the technical knowledge needed: "I am a farmyard lady; I am not into the technical side as such … It is too technical for me, to be honest" (Amy, May 2012). Hierarchies of technical knowledge shape the *politics of loss* and the government–citizen interface in participation processes.

Citizens in post-apartheid South Africa have a constitutionally entrenched right to participate in development planning in local government. The authoritarian apartheid state saw its citizens only as objects of planning; the post-apartheid constitution seeks to put the lives of ordinary people at the provenance of planning (Williams 2006: 200-201). Historically, the call for participation grew out of the liberation struggles in the politically suppressed townships, but nowadays privileged groups can also make use of it in their politics of loss.

Although the plans by the local government for an RDP settlement in Linbro Park existed have since the 1990s, only in 2008/2009 were they written down in the Regional Spatial Development Framework (SDF, City of Johannesburg 2008/2009). The Linbro Park property owners took part in the public participation process; according to Ron, executive employee at ARP, they achieved a compromise with the residents. Linbro Park should not entirely become an RDP settlement, just a small section of it (5000 instead of originally planned 20,000 housing units). This also reflected the change in housing policy, however, and the ARP's limited financial capacity (see above).

Finally, the SDF officially earmarked Linbro Park for 'sustainable human settlement' development, envisaging it as 'ripe for development' and found that the area should be 'unlocked' (City of Johannesburg 2008/2009, City of Johannesburg 2008: 38). The vision of the SDF was "to create an integrated, sustainable neighbourhood through infill development on well-located land within Linbro Park" (ibid: 49), envisioning it as a mixed-use and mixed-income development with the idea that the area would "benefit the city as a whole and not just specific groups" (ibid: 47) and include the provision of social and economic infrastructure. This aspect of the BNG policy is often referred to with the notions of integration or inclusion (see Haferburg 2013).

As the next step, the Gauteng Provincial Department of Housing appointed a consortium to develop an Urban Design Framework (UDF), which is a refinement of the SDF. An Urban Design Steering Committee was established, comprising spatial professionals (town planners, engineers), representatives of the ARP, a representative

from the major private developer in the area (Intrapop) and a few property owners who had to be nominated by the residents (Bigen Africa/ADA Urban Design 2009: 7). The steering committee was tasked with developing more precise guidelines for zoning. The Linbro Park property owners could voice their concerns: "At the end of the day, we were quite happy with the framework that was presented. Except: densities" (Dave, LPCA committee member, June 2012).

One key site of contention emerged, the question of residential density. Density is one of the many tools of abstraction used by the state to regulate land use. It prescribes how many dwelling units are permitted per hectare in a certain space. For the local government, high was important for the housing project because of the lack of urban land and the high costs. High density also symbolises the political will to counter urban sprawl and spatial fragmentation. High density is seen as more energy efficient and the provision of urban infrastructure is proportionally less expensive. "Housing density is of central importance to sustainable urban form" (City of Johannesburg 2010: 21). As such, in the UDF the local government pushed for a density of 150 units per hectare.

For the property owners, high density invoked images of squatter settlements and badly maintained high-rise buildings where poor (black) people live. As Andrew, LPCA committee member, explained: "People believe – which is not necessarily correct – the higher the density, the lower the standard of the development" (Andrew, March 2011). For the property owners, low density symbolises their 'country living in the city' lifestyle, and they believe that that the lower the density, the wealthier the residents are. By resisting higher densities, they aimed to change the ARP's plans to provide fully subsidised RDP housing to building subsidised bond houses targeted at the better-off poor, which they considered more tolerable as neighbours (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

In a community meeting the property owners decided that "the community wants 75 [units per hectare] maximum" (Andrew, March 2011). In order to advocate this position, they appropriated the discourse of the new public housing policy, the BNG, and the notion of sustainability. They argued that it would be 'unsustainable' to have such high densities in the suburb because of the increase in crime and because the public infrastructure would become overloaded. At a meeting about creating a City Improvement District (CID), an exasperated resident explained: 'That was our whole argument, sustainable housing! (meeting about CID, June 2012). However, no agreement between the ARP and the property owners was reached. "Now it's almost like a stalemate. But we will just have to drive it through" (Ron, executive employee at ARP, March 2011). Hence, in 2011, the local government had the plan adopted by the city council, with the densities that the ARP desired against the will of the property owners. In the context of the political pressure on the ARP to deliver high numbers of housing, the property owners' opposition to high densities, part of the *politics of loss*, was unsuccessful.

Economic Aspirations – Replacing Lived Space with Abstract Space?

In Johannesburg, well-located, affordable urban land is a scarce resource. In this sense, a 60-year-old LPCA committee member once said in an interview: "Linbro Park is the best kept secret in Johannesburg" (Dave, June 2012). Strategically located between the Johannesburg CBD, Pretoria and the OR Tambo International Airport, the Gauteng

Spatial Development Framework from 2010 described Linbro Park as an area where a large part of future Gauteng development was expected to take place (City of Johannesburg 2010: 5).

The strategic significance of Linbro Park was only made clearer by the multiple new real estate and infrastructural developments emerging around it. Among them are a train station for the new commuter rail system, the Gautrain, and two examples of 'privatised urbanism' (Herbert and Murray 2015). the construction of Waterfall City, a mixed-use development, with the massive Mall of Africa which was opened in 2017 in nearby Midrand, and the planned megaproject on land which once belonged to the dynamite factory AECI in Modderfontein (Ballard et al. 2017). Since about 2006, professional property developers, though of a smaller scale than in the two cases mentioned above, have also changed Linbro Park. A large property developing company developed a major warehouse and other commercial properties on about twenty plots on the southern fringe of Linbro Park. The company also played an important role for the extension of public infrastructure in the area. Many other developers have bought land around the area and have started building or are still planning to do so.

The planning processes and land sales related to these diverse projects were closely observed by Linbro Park residents and other stakeholders and fuelled fantasies and hopes about the economic potential of Linbro Park land. Many property owners started to accept that they would not be able to defend their rural idyll against the plans of the government and the property developers, and their intentions and priorities started to shift. Instead of seeing their homes mainly in terms of everyday use, social meanings and memories, hence as *lived space*, many started to see their land in terms of its exchange value, hence as *abstract space*. Recognising that their attempts to save their 'country living in the city' was a lost cause, they redirected their *politics of loss* towards the economic dimension of their land. The 50-year-old property owner Amy told me, as did many others: "We want to get the best prices for our properties" (Amy, May 2012). This desire to at least make the highest profit possible out of the sale of the land constitutes a shift in the *politics of loss*, namely, a shift from a relationship to land based on its use value (*social space-makers*) to a relationship based on its exchange value (*abstract space-maker*s) (see below).

Some property owners hoped that because of the demand by property developers, the land in Linbro Park would become so expensive that the local government would not be capable of buying it for public housing. However, investors found it easier to develop areas like Modderfontein or Waterfall, where the land belonged to one property owner. In Linbro Park, as Anthony, a member of a property developing family, explained, ownership was split between multiple people, "all with different motives and interests" (Anthony, May 2012). In 2011, a group of property owners therefore attempted to sell their approximately 20 properties as a packet to big developers. As Andries, a former committee member of the LPCA, explained: "

> What we are trying to do is we are trying to get willing people together, under the banner of the framework of the development plan, and get developers in to fund the whole development, so that it is economically not viable for government to build (Andries, former committee member of the LPCA, March 2011).

Other residents tried to act as mediators between real estate investors and potentially interested sellers in the neighbourhood. As such, they attempted to create competition between the private developers and local government for urban land; a competition they assumed the local government would lose. However, at the time of research, the plan to sell a group of plots to private developers did not work out. The land prices in Linbro Park were low, and demand by private developers to buy land in the neighbourhood barely existed. This affected not only the residents who engaged in this plan of diverting urban development towards private city buildings, but also residents who needed to sell their land for other reasons. Clara, a 60-year-old property owner, had experienced a business bankruptcy, and was suffering because of the difficulty selling her property:

> We need to sell, because we can't afford to live here, but we are not selling, because the buyers are not ready. … We had really NO interest in three years and I really spent a lot of time on computer, on the telephone, and I got it on my website (Clara, property owner in Linbro Park, April 2012).

To the residents, the property market forces appear to be relatively obscure outside forces not accessible to immediate experience. The residents employed various theories to explain the lack of demand for their land: most importantly, they blamed the ARP, and said that no one wanted to buy land in an area where low cost housing will be built. However, others speculated differently: some argued it was because of the lack of infrastructure like public sewage and because the land was still zoned as agricultural. Others speculated that interest was low because the area was seen as crime ridden and the large properties were expensive and difficult to secure. Others made a link between the low demand and the world recession. Some then also blamed the Linbro Park residents themselves and their internal 'dividedness' and infights which they believed scared developers away. The *politics of loss* hence takes place in a context where larger forces are at play that are not always accessible to experience and hence are subject to many speculations.

In reality, the purchase offers by the ARP which arrived in 2012 were for some property owners the first offers they had received in years. In 2011, the ARP received funds from the national government for the purchase of properties in Linbro Park. In 2012, the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), the local government branch responsible for land acquisitions, made purchase offers to about twelve property owners on the western boundaries of the neighbourhood (Heer 2018). In these purchase offers, the JPC also made clear that the government would be ready to expropriate if no agreement could be found on the 'willing seller–willing buyer' basis.[5]

5 The current South African land redistribution policy favours the 'willing seller, willing buyer' principle based on the market and does not prioritise expropriation. The expropriation of privately owned, well-located land is only envisaged as a final resort by the new public housing policy BNG (Department of Housing 2004: 14). The Constitution recognises the government's right to expropriation if the land should serve "for a public purpose or in the public interest" and if the previous owner is compensated (Ntsebeza 2007: 117). The compensation has to be based on the current use of the property, the history of acquisition, the purpose of expropriation, and on the market value of the property" (ibid: 117, Republic of South Africa 1996). In the new Constitution of 1996, the protection of existing property rights, acquired during colonialism and apartheid, was entrenched (the 'property clause', ibid: 108). Ntsebeza

This 'expropriation threat' by the ARP, as the residents called it, caused alarm among property owners. The LPCA committee decided to call the affected property owners to a meeting to obtain information from them about what was going on and to empower them to deal in informed ways with the 'threat'. Their biggest fear was that one of the property owners would negotiate with the ARP and sell for a low price because they were scared. They feared that this would lead to a chain reaction and make property prices go down in the whole area (see below).

In May 2012, five property owners who had received purchase offers by the ARP appeared at the meeting. The LPCA committee members first informed the property owners about the legal situation. They explained that when no agreement could be reached on the willing seller–willing buyer basis, the JPC would send an expropriation notice. They recommended that when they received an expropriation notice, they should come to the LPCA and get themselves an attorney. One of them, Dave, said: "If you do not appeal within 60 days, the expropriation becomes valid. Please don't panic, you can fight for ten years" (Dave, meeting on expropriation, May 2012).

The key argument of the LPCA committee was that the property owners should not agree to sell, but they should 'take the expropriation route'.[6] Dave then explained that as soon as the property owner received an expropriation notice along with a compensation offer, all rights to the properties are immediately terminated. Yet the expropriated owners can then start legal proceedings regarding the compensation amount, a process that can drag on for years. The expropriated property owners must prove that market prices are higher than what the government is offering as compensation. In the end, the compensation would be higher than the price the local government offered them on the 'willing buyer–willing seller' basis, not least because the financial loss resulting from expropriation would be compensated. So, Dave explained to the group, "it's financially a better deal to wait for expropriation" (Dave, meeting on expropriation, May 2012). The LPCA committee members promised to assist the affected property owners in this legal fight.

Despite the committee members' explanations, one of the property owners, John, explained that he had want to sell his plot for a long time but had never found a buyer. He therefore entered into negotiation with the JPC, the local government branch responsible for land acquisitions. He had found them very accessible and learnt that they wanted to avoid expropriation because it was complicated and expensive. He concluded: "I want to sell" (John, meeting on expropriation, May 2012). John's statement provoked a heated debate. One of the LPCA committee member's face turned red with anger and he shouted: "If you sell to ARP, everyone else is doomed. Please don't sell to them! You gonna ruin all our chances. Have patience. Expropriation will be better for you than willing buyer-seller" (meeting on expropriation, May 2012).

In this debate, and also in the following weeks and months, property owners in Linbro Park represented John as a traitor, a 'sell out' to the 'community', as they believed that his selling would make property prices drop in the whole neighbour-

argues that this was due to the relatively powerful position of the National Party in the negotiation process. Other reasons may also be that some strands within the ANC and the alliance partners were pro-capitalism (Ntsebeza 2007: 116-117). Expropriation law has become a political issue in South Africa in recent years.

6 The committee members had read the MA thesis by Breedt (2009).

hood. In the debate that evening, it was suggested that perhaps LPCA members could put their money together and make John a better offer than the ARP. One committee member said: "It's a basic thing, give us a figure and give us a chance to purchase it. If we don't come up with an offer within 14 days or so, you sell." One of the affected property owners did not think this would work: "That's crazy, you don't have so much money, you can't buy up all of them" (meeting on expropriation, May 2012). The idea of making a counter-offer nevertheless calmed heated emotions for the rest of the meeting, yet it was never put in place and John eventually sold his property to the ARP. By 2014, the ARP was able to acquire a handful of properties in Linbro Park on the willing buyer–willing seller basis. Other property owners, however, 'took the expropriation route', engaging in long legal processes.

Conceiving a City of Threatening Encounters

The current expropriation act stems from 1975, from the pre-ANC government. Attempts to introduce a new act that strengthens the government's ability to expropriate have failed (2008, 2013). Land reform has long been debated in South Africa as a rural-agricultural rather than as an urban issue (Beyers 2013, Brown-Luthango 2010: 124). It is housing policy that is expected to address the difficulties with land access for poor urban dwellers. Expropriation, however, has become more politicised in recent years, mainly through the politician Julius Malema and his party, the Economic Freedom Fighters, as well as more radical factions within the ANC, which call into question the right to compensation. In a speech in 2011 at the Setswetla informal settlement in Alexandra, Julius Malema referred to government's difficulties in buying up land owned by whites in the vicinity of the township. He criticised the fact that government had to pay for it: "We have to buy land from whites when they did not even buy land from us" (Molatlhwa 2011).

In the post-apartheid city, being against desegregation and public housing is a morally troubling stance. In the many interviews, conversations and meetings with property owners on the 'ARP threat', I observed that the fear of being judged as racists was hanging like a sword of Damocles over the Linbro Park property owners' heads. For some, this was mostly a problem of public appearance, and in more private spaces they openly talked about negative feelings toward black people whom they did not want to live with. For most, however, it was also about how they wanted to see themselves, namely, as rational people who acted on the basis of objective reasoning and not racist attitudes. This subsection unravels these diverse narratives, entailing different forms of boundary demarcation, which the property owners employ to construct an urban world in which their negative stance towards public housing seems like a logical, justified attitude. The *politics of loss* strongly depends on these stories and theories property owners tell, as they constitute the way in which the property owners conceive of Johannesburg's social and spatial worlds and their own place in it in relation to their Alexandra neighbours. Replacing and moving beyond 'race', their narratives standing at the centre of the *politics of loss*, constructing new boundaries based on stories about class, crime, property ownership and culture. These narratives unravel the *conceived* city of the property owners, what kind of urban world they believe they inhabit and in which way they believe the 'other' are different from them.

One dominant way to interpret the relationship between Linbro Park property owners and their potential future Alexandra neighbours is to see it as a vexed relationship between economic classes, best exemplified by this statement by Kacy, an LPCA committee member, who was also involved in a charitable NGO in Alexandra: "We have no problem with the suburb developing, but we don't want a situation where we have … there is no racial issue, it's not a black–white issue, it's an economic issue" (Kacy, March 2011). Clara, another property owner, understood herself as a person who wanted to 'uplift the poor', and pointed out to me that she had always helped her black employees extensively. Being highly aware that her opposition, the ARP project stands in sharp contrast to the imaginary of the South African nation as a 'rainbow nation' working towards desegregation and racial reconciliation, Clara explained: "The Linbro community does not want them here … It's not about colour, it's about niveau. It's about low-income groups and middle-income groups" (Clara, April 2012). These narratives create a divided world, consisting of two apparently homogenous and opposed social entities. Imagining the 'low-income' Alexandra as opposed to the 'middle-income' Linbro Park, however, overrides the reality that a diversity of milieus live in these neighbourhoods, including, for example, domestic workers in Linbro Park.

The problem of poor and rich people living together in one area is, in their eyes, crime: the 'fact' that, so goes their theory, as soon as poor people become visually exposed to wealth, they turn into criminals. "It doesn't work if you are unemployed, sitting there without work, looking at the houses around you," the former LPCA committee member Linda explained to me (Linda, March 2011). Andries, also a former LPCA committee member, said: "Obviously, exposure. I mean if I walked past here every day and I see a pot of gold inside this fence, ja! Maybe, if I'd never knew about it, I would never make a plan" (Andries, May 2012). By referring to his imagined self as a poor, unemployed person who would also turn to crime if he was in the same situation, he makes clear that this theory of unemployment and exposure to wealth as causes for crime is racially neutral, based on logical inference and not based on prejudice. Everybody can be unemployed and therefore a criminal, it just happens that in contemporary South Africa most unemployed are black, his theory implies.

The everyday theory that when poor people are exposed to wealth they become criminals constructs the relationship between Linbro Park and Alexandra's residents as a relationship between potential criminals and potential victims. "When unemployed people move here, there will be crime," Sarah, a property owner in Linbro Park, explained to me (Sarah, May 2012). In this narrative, she presents the future as a predictable sequence of event, what Derek Edwards (2003) calls a 'script formulation': crime is presented as a typical, almost automatic characteristic of the category 'poor' or 'unemployed'. The course of events is presented as regular, factually robust and knowable in advance without having to wait and see whether it takes place (ibid: 38-41). Amy, another property owner, explained her anxiety about people from Alex potentially moving into the area: "Because of the crime, because of what will happen, I won't be able to protect my family against it. Because these people gonna be unemployed and there is gonna be more crime. There is no doubt about it" (Amy, May 2012).

Crime, therefore, becomes a powerful boundary-demarcation device in the *politics of loss*. The narrative of crime transforms the problematic opposition to public housing into a natural right of threatened citizens to defend their physical security and to protect their loved ones. With that, they try to present themselves in a good light and in

ways which confirm socially accepted values (Goffman 1959). Crime hence appears as a logical reason why segregation needs to be continued. This became apparent in the same conversation with Amy:

> Barbara: What do you think about the low-cost housing plans? Amy: I would be devastated, to be honest. I know people need places to live, but I see a lot of empty space around, for example in Modderfontein. It would be such a pity. I do look after people, I do my bit for society, I do get people, I do feel sorry for people, I do want people to get better, but I also have worked very hard. And I know that I need the money from this place one day. If it was only at the outskirts of the suburb, I wouldn't mind (Amy, property owner in Linbro Park, May 2012).

Scholars have called such narratives and stances as the 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY) phenomenon. The urban dwellers portray themselves as and believe themselves to be being morally good, benevolent, and even charitable people who want to do their 'bit for society', as long as it does not concern their neighbourhood space. Important to this narrative is that it entails a one-dimensional understanding of inequality: the property owners merely problematise the poverty of the Alexandra residents, while they construct their own affluence as normal and unproblematic. This normalisation of wealth and demonisation of poverty is similar to what has been found in research on gated communities and many white South African residents in cities such as Cape Town and Durban (Ballard 2004b: 56, Lemanski: 2006b: 416). The narratives present the property owners' favourable economic position as earned and something which they worked hard for, and not related to racial privilege during apartheid. Through these narratives, the property owners make the *politics of loss* appear reasonable and rational to themselves.

In some situations, property owners introduce boundaries with the category 'poor' based on the notion of class: they make a categorical differentiation between the 'bad' poor who are unemployed and therefore criminal and the 'better-off' Alexandra residents who have jobs, a decent lifestyle and who hence would be acceptable as neighbours. This distinction is reflected in the words of the property owner, Baldwin:

> There is also a situation of the actual social class. I don't mind if he is a middle and lower class, he doesn't have to be a rich man, but I wouldn't be happy if he was an impoverished man or an unemployed man. The problem about the ARP is they wanna move the people from Setswetla squatter camp, I think you know about that, over here. I said to everybody in Linbro Park: "I am going to Setswetla to do an investigation, I'm gonna go there and speak to the people and see what they think about the move." And when I went to Setswetla squatter camp, they all said: "When are we going to get our houses given to us in Linbro Park?" Right? Then I went and spoke to people on the East Bank [middle class section in Alexandra] who own houses there, and they said: "For God sake, when are you going to take that bloody rubbish into Linbro Park!" Because Setswetla squatters were robbing the guys on East Bank, who own houses. You follow? And this is where my problem comes (Baldwin, Linbro Park property owner, March 2011).

By emphasising that he, as a white person, personally dared to go to Alexandra and speak to the different parties, especially house-owning residents in East Bank, he

shows that his judgement is based on rational inferences from facts and not on racist prejudice. By means of the boundary drawn between tolerable better-off Alexandra residents and anti-social unemployed crime-prone poor he distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable types of public housing: property owners like him argue that they would accept 'bonded' housing, aimed at the slightly better-off groups (upper end of the low-income market), for example as teachers and nurses, but not 'RDP housing' intended for the poor. In the eyes of Linbro Park residents, this target group is equivalent to the 'bad' poor with no jobs. People who are able pay off housing bonds are, like the property owners themselves, hard-working citizens who take their destiny into their own hands, they believe. Property ownership hence becomes something shared between themselves and the imagined Alexandra neighbours, a realm promising intersubjectivity and mutual understanding (see also Heer 2018). Owning or not owning property, an important boundary property owners build in their *politics of loss*, does not explicitly follow racial lines, as there are also non-criminal, better-off Alexandra residents who could maybe afford a bonded house. This, again, helps the property owners to see themselves as non-racist.

Another way in which property owners talk about their stance towards public housing is through property values. As already explained above, when many Linbro Park property owners felt that they could not stop the disappearance of 'country living in the city', they no longer saw themselves as being solely interested in preserving their way of life (*social space-makers*), but as rational economic agents interested in maximising profit (*abstract space-makers*). Amy explained this shift like this:

> We want our properties to be worth the money. We want the money. There is lifestyle and there is the money. I used to be very involved in the lifestyle, and I would not have accepted nothing for my property. If they came with a 10 million offer, then [in the past], I would have said no. Nowadays, I would say: "The money is important." Yet I would still be very disappointed to sell (Amy, Linbro Park property owner, May 2012).

Space now became evaluated according to quantifiable criteria, such as size, price per square metre and zoning. Their felt shift in rationality feeds itself off one key theory, namely, the script formulation that public housing will lead to a devaluation of property prices in the area. What Clara, a property owner, said in an interview with me exemplifies this theory: "In the moment when my neighbour puts 100,000 people on his property, my property loses 50 per cent of its values. And that's how people think here and that's why they say, 'keep them away from us'!" (Clara, April 2012).

The property owners argue that when people sell their land to the ARP, this will negatively affect the overall property values in the neighbourhood, as crime will increase and businesses will suffer and they assume that investors will not be interested in putting high quality developments next to the low-cost housing. The assumption that proximity to a township and an increase in a black, poor population leads to a devaluation of property is a common-sense theory widespread among suburbanites and property economists in South Africa (Saff 1998). This white fear of property devaluation has also been observed in many cities around the world in similar situations when members of poorer and racially different categories move into white and affluent suburbs, for example in the US (Massey 1989). Andrew, an LPCA committee member, also links the Linbro Park situation to other places, namely, with what he knows

about the 1980s and 1990s when inner-city neighbourhoods like Hillbrow and Yeoville experienced rapid devaluation and housing abandonment (Morris 1999a).

> The community said [in the public participation process]: "Well if they get in here, it's just going to spread." Because obviously, I think that's the way most communities work. If you have one area, and nobody will buy around it because they don't want to be in close proximity to a, let's call it a slum, so eventually, it basically starts to carry outwards. I think Hillbrow and Yeoville are prime example of that. It used to be very good prime, nice locations, but as it started sprawling out, people wouldn't buy because they were worried about what was happening next door. Then the properties were going there for next to nothing. And that's what they were worried about here (Andrew, LPCA committee member, March 2011).

Suburbanites as urban citizens worrying about property values have greater moral legitimacy than property-developing enterprises, according to such narratives, as it is not only about maximising their profits but about securing their well-earned retirement. Andries explained:

> They all clung on to the property because their investment was going to be their retirement. So one day they planned they would sell it for the five or six million rand a property, or the 10 million rand a property, and that is enough to sustain as a retired person … So the people hold on to it, yet the retirement is diminishing in front of their eyes (Andries, former LPCA committee member, March 2011).

Creating moral legitimacy for their opposition to the ARP, the discourse of wealth earned through hard work constructs them as good, diligent citizens. Linking property values to retirement emphasises that what they are defending in the *politics of loss* is earned and not the result of previous privileges. They also use property values as a boundary demarcation device against the potentially interfering state. As Dave expressed it at the LPCA Annual General Meeting: "The government is attempting to steal land from us for no value" (Dave, LPCA Annual General Meeting, May 2012). For many years, property owners hoped that the government would not be able to obtain the funds needed to buy land in Linbro Park. They expected that the prices offered by the government would be very low. Sarah, a property owner, explained it this way:

> I don't see why I must agree to low-cost housing being built here. I really don't. And where are they going to get the money? As far as I know, they have never had the money and that [the rumours] has been going around for about 5 years as well. I am hoping it doesn't ever happen, I really do. Because I mean, I get nothing for my property [from the government], they will give me what the municipality can pay and that's nowhere near what the market value is (Sarah, Linbro Park property owner, May 2012).

This narrative is based on the notion of an 'acceptable price' (Plattner 1989), an imagined market value, which the property owners bring up in contradictory ways. The residents claim that they will not sell to the ARP, as the ARP will offer lower prices than the market, hence, a price which is not acceptable to them. Framing themselves as economic actors aiming to preserve their investment and retirement, they present

this stance so as to be free of moral censure: they are not against housing for the poor, but against selling their properties for below the actual price. This narrative creates the impression that the market prices for the properties are high and their lands very valuable. The reality, however, is different: As mentioned above, at the time of the fieldwork (2010–2012), the free market demand for the Linbro Park properties was low and residents complained that they had not been offered an 'acceptable price' by private buyers either, nor, indeed, had they even received an offer. Some property owners also believe in the conspiracy theory "that they [the local government] were actually trying to keep the price of Linbro Park down", because "they want to buy Linbro Park for Alexandra" (Baldwin, March 2011). Thus, there is a considerable discrepancy between the notion of the acceptable price present in their narratives and the reality of, at the time of research, a very low market demand for their properties.

A further boundary demarcating device property owners used in order to legitimate their *politics of loss* is culture: a further narrative constructs fundamental differences between Alexandra and Linbro Park residents as related to 'lifestyle' and 'cultural' differences. The encounter and living together in the future are imagined as a problem of intercultural communication and disagreements on what constitutes the right way of living and appropriate uses of space. In the following quote, the politician Thomas, from the Democratic Alliance party, theorises more extensively on these differences, linking them to what he defined as 'culture'.

> I'm one of the only champions in politics that calls everything a suburb. So whether you're in Alexandra, in Klipfonteinview or in Linbro Park, they are all suburbs and that's roughly what it should be. […] Now in Alexandra, you got a township. It is perceived as a township, it has a culture of its own. In Linbro Park, the culture is different. You bring them together now, and … You get people who say: "right, I am leaving the culture in the township and move to the suburb." So now when you are a stranger in someone else's backyard … and I call it backyard very loosely, and I don't think that's a fair or right word to use. There is a buzzword called 'ikazi culture'. There's life in the townships. There is 'ubuntu', which means get together and helping each other, so everyone knows each other, you know your neighbours. If you walk around at ten o'clock or if you walk around at six in the morning, there's a buzz: people walk in the street and talk, there's trade happening. The same can't happen in the suburbs. If someone started selling sweets outside my house, there'd be ten complaints from residents trying to get metro police to remove them. These are the kinds of things that are different between township and suburb. It's hard to verbalise it with words, you got to feel it (Thomas, politician, September 2012).

Thomas supports the residents' opposition to the ARP but has even more need than the property owners to avoid being judged a racist. As anthropologists and politicians did during apartheid (Cocks 2001: 741-742), he comes to use the notion of culture to justify segregation. He constructs 'township culture' and 'suburban culture' as essentially different lifestyles with different habitualised uses of space, different values regarding what appropriate uses of space and different intensities of neighbour interaction are, which also speaks to different public–private boundaries. Alexandra and Linbro Park thus become framed as two separate, clearly distinct urban worlds, each with its specific, radically different spatiality. Any entanglements would, as follows from this

key narrative in the *politics of loss*, create cultural problems. He comments that the difference is hard to put with words, but something which one needs to experience ("you got to feel it"). This points to the link between this discursive representation of cultural difference to actually lived and perceived urban diversity. Urban dwellers do indeed see, feel and hear that everyday life in the suburb and the township is different from what they are habitually used to in their own milieu. Ballard (2010) has shown that this perceptual aspect of desegregation can be experienced as an attack on the sensual habits by white suburbanites. Linbro Park residents for example fear the erection of shacks and informal trade on the street, uses of space which are confusing for the suburbanites' senses, as they are used to empty, quiet streets bordered by free-standing houses behind representational yards. They interpret these spatialities, which that are out of the ordinary for them, as out of their control, as dirty and dangerous.

Again seeking to legitimate the *politics of loss*, Thomas does not judge the township way of life in the above quote but values it positively as a form of culture. Linking township culture to income and assuming that social mobility would lead to a change in culture, he induces a categorical distinction between people who move voluntarily from the township to the suburb, implicitly referring to the emerging black middle class, who would adapt the 'suburban values', and those who would be relocated by a government housing programme, implicitly referring to very poor township dwellers who will bring with them their 'township culture', causing conflict among the suburbanites.

When imagining having several cultures sharing one neighbourhood it would appear to be a problem, as in the conversation with Kacy:

> You have your Muslims, your Jews, you have your … People like to group together. And how many people are going to be comfortable here? A lot of them, they like their friends in Alex, they like their way of life in Alex, they like doing things that way, you know. Why pull them into another area! Why pull somebody into another area. I mean, I wouldn't be happy sitting in … (Kacy, LPCA committee member, March 2011).

This narrative constructs differences between the milieus living in Alexandra and Linbro Park as complementary: they are constructed as two culturally distinctive and structurally equivalent entities which would feel uncomfortable if coexisting in close proximity. She reframes segregation from a phenomenon caused by inequality which is evaluated as damaging to a society to a cultural phenomenon resulting from the legitimate desire to form affinity groupings (see also Young 2000). Kacy argues that it is natural and not morally wrong that people feel most comfortable among people who are like them. In this essentialist understanding of culture, entanglements become undesirable.

There is also, however, a more negative interpretation of the conviviality of what property owners construct as two 'cultures': often, the 'ARP coming in' or 'ARP threat' in terms of which Alexandra residents would move to Linbro Park is narrated and experienced as a threat to the property owners' lifestyle. At one meeting, a property owner exclaimed: "These [swearword] across the river want to actually flush in here" (LPCA meeting on CID, June 2012). This comparison of Alexandra residents with a flushing river which overruns everything implies that the mixing of the two worlds would not lead to mutual adaptation, coexistence or a new form of neighbourhood;

rather it foresees that the township spatiality would take over, dominate and destroy what the property owners still imagine as the quiet white idyll of 'country living in the city'. The above narratives, by imagining borders of culture and lifestyle, construct future encounters as anticipated conflicts based on an essentialist notion of culture and identity as homogeneous, bounded entities. Imagining a conviviality of several lifestyles in one neighbourhood becomes impossible, and their *politics of loss*, the opposition to the ARP, a logical consequence.

Aspirations to Suburban Control

> All of us have been here a long time, very long time. If we could have had it our way, we would have just stayed as we were. But you know, the world is progressing, there is nothing we can do about it. But ja. We will be the last people standing (Jess, Linbro Park property owner, May 2012).

During the time of the research, many Linbro Park residents and the LPCA committee members were aware of the limitations of their attempts to counter desegregation. Nevertheless, the property owners liked to portray their stance towards the changes in their suburb as a resistant agency, reminiscent of the narrative of the last standing Gallic village resisting Roman occupation (Goscinny and Uderzo 2004 [1961]). Many residents thought that if they were not able to prevent this new development, they should at least attempt to shape and control it. The creation of a City Improvement District (CID) promised to give them such control, potentially putting in place a new administrative and financial barrier around which property owners could rally.

CIDs are self-taxing, self-help organisations set up by businesses and property owners in order to govern neighbourhoods, especially with regard to public services (Peyroux 2006: 09). They are regulated by provincial legislation and must be authorised by the state so that they can impose levies on the property owners within the defined geographical area (Clarno 2013: 1202, Gauteng City Improvement Districts Act 1997). As such, they constitute a model of privatised, decentralised governance (ibid: 1203). In South African cities, CIDs were first established in CBDs such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Sandton, and have mainly had economic aims: they were installed to protect and improve values and commercial profits. Since about 2006, there have been calls in Johannesburg for the establishment of residential CIDs in suburbs but the City of Johannesburg has opposed these demands (ibid: 1202).

The idea to create a CID in Linbro Park was pushed by town planners with a stake in Linbro Park. Town planners constitute an important, if also slightly opaque, group of actors in the neighbourhood. By selling their expertise to the interests and power of the state and private capital, this group of professionals influences the production of space. Many town planners with a stake in Linbro Park have worked for independent consultants, local government institutions (such as the ARP itself or Johannesburg Development Agency) and property developers. They are well connected among themselves, having worked with each other in a variety of roles in different urban development projects. Certain town planners have been working in Linbro Park for a long time; they have been employed for many development applications and know the suburb intimately (Dave, LPCA committee member, June 2012). One such town plan-

ner successfully lobbied for a CID to be mentioned in the Urban Design Framework (UDF) (City of Johannesburg 2010: 49). This idea was also appealing to the members of the LPCA committee.

In the existing literature, the reasons given as to why local actors create a CID are usually the provision of public services, particularly security, and the maintenance of public space. The CID should act as a private government, collecting levies from its members and in return providing or coordinating the delivery of services which the local government provides insufficiently. As such, the spread of CIDs has been linked to the rise of neoliberal forms of governance and 'urban entrepreneurialism' (Peyroux 2006: 09). But in the case of Linbro Park, the attractiveness of the CID lies less in the provision of public services, and more in the promise of achieving control over the development of the neighbourhood. The CID would give the property owners an administrative tool to guard the boundaries of the neighbourhood and ensure order:

If you wanna be in control what's happening in the suburb, you need a CID. It is the only way to control development in your area … Once the ARP comes, it has to participate in the CID. If they don't, it would be mal-intent … The CID sets standards in the area, the CID runs the suburb, and gets a levy from each property. It's part of the title deed. A good example is Illovo Boulevard … You can only police an ARP component with a CID. Do it now, then the ARP has to join (Dave, LPCA meeting on CID, June 2012).

Both town planners and residents alike understood the CID as what one town planner called a "mechanism for assisting the development in the area." (LPCA meeting on CID, June 2012). In other words, they hoped to influence development in Linbro Park in such a way that the ARP would not be able to buy the necessary land and, if the low-cost housing project was nevertheless implemented, the residents could retain power over the implementation of land use regulations via the CID body. They expected that this management body could inhibit the erection of shacks and keep away informal hawkers from public spaces. As such, the CID would be an authority with territorial powers through which the previous Linbro Park residents could monitor and enforce compliance with by-laws. The CID would give the property owners significant power over the usage of space by the potential new residents from Alexandra.

The felt need for such a controlling body is related to the boundaries of irreconcilable cultures above described which, in their imagination, separate Alexandra from Linbro Park. The CID is a way of dealing with feelings of dislocation the property owners anticipate experiencing when the new neighbours originating from townships transform the sterile RDP houses into what the property owners see as uncontrollable and chaotic spaces. The call for by-law compliance can therefore be understood as an appropriation of instruments of neoliberal governance by the Linbro Park property owners in order to defend what, for them, is a legible (Scott 1999, Lynch 1960) and safe lived space. Besides the assertion of governmental control over neighbourhood space, the creation of a CID also promises a renewed unification of the 'community' which, they feel, lacks cohesion. The CID should empower them to speak with a united voice, they hoped, which gives their objections to town planning applications or legal steps taken against other actors, such as the local government, more weight and more legitimacy. Improved crime control was also a positive aspect of a CID for the LPCA.

The LPCA made various attempts to establish a CID. Around 2011, the LPCA instructed a consulting company to make a proposal, but it was not followed up. In 2012, a town planning firm with many clients in Linbro Park approached the LPCA with

a proposal to create a CID for them. In June 2012, members of the LPCA committee held a preliminary meeting with a town planner from this company at the tennis club. The town planner explained the legal requirements for creating a CID in the following way: "To establish a CID, you need three things: support of 50 plus one per cent of the residents, a management company set up plus a CID plan" (LPCA meeting on CID, June 2012). The present LPCA members were very much in favour of this proposal, yet they had considerable doubts about their ability to implement it. The residents found it unrealistic to mobilise the necessary 51 per cent of approximate 240 property owners to sign, as community meetings were often badly attended, the community was 'divided' and the LPCA members anticipated that some residents would be opposed to the plans. The LPCA members were also worried about having to pay a considerable sum to the town planning office for drawing up the CID, as the risk of investing all this money and failing to get enough residents to sign up was considered overly high. Two months after this preliminary meeting, the LPCA committee members decided not to follow up with the plan. Failing to put in place a CID was another lost battle in the *politics of loss*, not least because the property owners' sense of 'community', their sense of a 'we' as opposed to the 'other' so strongly constructed in narratives, diverted attention considerably from the lived reality of a neighbourhood in transition, where many property owners had diverging interests and many had already sold and left.

Conclusion

In cities shaped by many inequalities like Johannesburg there are social groups that may lose out when the state intervenes to create more social justice, not least because this changes the power relations between those who benefit from the intervention and those who do not. Hence, there are social groups who engage in a *politics of loss*, opposing change because they may lose a part of their privilege. In current research on urban mobilising, there is a strong focus on progressive social movements that fight for more justice. There is, however, also a need to understand the agency of urban dwellers who want to keep things as they are ('conservative' movements), who aspire to disconnect from others, who see differences as irreconcilable and clashing. They are important forces in cities of inequalities, with considerable influence to shape change in the city.

An analysis of the routes for action and the discourses employed by the property owners unravelled their specific visions for the future of living together – or rather living apart. The routes for action chosen are largely within the realm of neoliberal city building and decentralised governance. Property owners appropriate the government's tools of abstraction – like resisting high densities and participating in public participation processes. The urban plans for the suburb that resulted were, according to the ARP, a compromise between residents and the local government, yet in the eyes of the property owners, they failed to convey their interests. Property owners tried to strengthen the presence of property developers in the area. They attempted but failed to make use of the organisational and spatial forms available under neoliberalism like CIDs. Their fantasies of seclusion became contested by the realities of vested economic interests, discordance among the property owners and a rapidly changing city.

The property owners aimed to shape their urban world based on exclusion, the maintenance of difference and the construction of difference as a threat. Their narra-

tives are about a politics of belonging, about defining oneself and the other, of drawing boundaries and narrating differences, of creating and strengthening social and political attitudes based on imagined encounters. The narratives are also about a politics of entanglements, of how they want to live with, or rather apart from, others. The scripted formulations property owners use do not merely represent an 'inner attitude': rather, they construct interests, identities, ways of interpreting the world and acting towards it (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]: xi). With these discourses, the Linbro Park residents construct and maintain the differences and inequalities. In their powerful narratives they construct the urban world they inhabit, whom they share it with, in what relationship they stand towards them, and they try to shape their surrounding materialities accordingly. By focusing on the narratives, one may unravel the kind of city they construct around themselves – a city full of problematic, even dangerous, entanglements with people whom they believe to be fundamentally, irreconcilably different from them. These become very powerful assumptions and theories beyond which the actors can barely think and with which they legitimate their actions. As such, the discourses have practical, powerful effects and can therefore be understood as ideology (Wetherell 2003: 14, referring to Foucault). Key terms like 'property', 'crime', 'class', 'culture' and 'sustainability' with which the property owners seek to invoke basic assumptions in the listener about universal rights and common sense, come to qualify as what Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) describe as *empty signifiers*. Such claims to universality are based on the "pure cancellation of all difference", they have to be emptied of particular meanings (Laclau 1996: 38). Such appeals to common sense are typical of discourses that touch questions of race, uttered in a societal context which morally judges racism (Edwards 2003: 40).

When we look at how this urban area is transforming, what emerges is not a teleological narrative of a formerly racially segregated city moving towards becoming a more equal and more just post-apartheid city. Rather, it is a city shaped by a multiplicity of processes and possibilities (Massey 2005) and where the old dualistic categories of black and white, suburb and township stubbornly resist dissolution, and yet become transformed in new dualistic representations of spaces around class and culture, which, like the old racial conceptions of the city, try to impose themselves onto the already existing diversity and entanglements of lived spaces and identities.

Instead of taking Johannesburg as a city consisting of neighbourhoods and social milieus as a starting point, *cities of entanglements* understands the city as always in production and asks about the difference-producing set of relations and processes. The *politics of loss* is part of the current processes at work, re-articulating the boundaries, real and imagined, between what in Johannesburg is conceived as a suburb and as a township. In Maputo, similar yet also very different processes of re-articulation can be observed on the boundary between the *bairro* Polana Caniço and the elite neighbourhood Sommerschield II. I call them the *politics of proximity* in Maputo and this is where this ethnography now takes us.

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