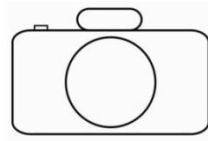# Youth Perceptions of Public Space in Yeoville: an Autophotographic Approach

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Youth Perceptions of Public Space in Yeoville: an Autophotographic Approach

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning with Honours to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.

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(Signature of Candidate)

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Abstract

Professions, such as planning, have searched for innovative alternatives when conducting research in the field. While there have been some important contributions to the epistemology of research methods, such as the work of Kevin Lynch's cognitive mapping (1960) and the works of geographers working in the field of planning such as the diaries of Paula Meth et al (2009), methods such as interviews have dominated qualitative research. In this study I introduce autophotography – a visual as well as rapidly growing area of research methodology.

Through this study, I seek to validate this method, to interrogate its usefulness to planners and to identify what sort of implications it bears for the planner and urban designer. In essence, I am testing out what its value is in the planning profession. This is done by capturing youth perceptions of public spaces in Yeoville, an inner city neighbourhood in the City of Johannesburg.

The study further attempts to address abstract spatial concepts that are often difficult to realise for those working in design related disciplines. While these concepts are ubiquitous in planning and design literature, they are challenging to implement on the ground. These concepts form

the theoretical framework and have further shaped the questions on the brief for the participants.

Five students residing in Yeoville were each given a disposable camera to answer six questions outlined on the brief they were given. The students had seven days to complete the task. At the development of the generated photographs, photo-interviews followed where each where photo elicitation took place, on an individual basis. Analysis of the photographs and photo-interviews was a fuse between content analysis and ethnomethodology – two methods of analysis with different sentiments to conducting analysis.

What emerges from the study is that perceptions of public space amongst there youth were underpinned by eight different variables with the top three being i) memories and experiences ii) personal dreams and aspirations and in some instances perceptions were based on iii) self-exclusion from certain spaces.

Firstly, this implies that planning needs to facilitate the process by which memories and experiences are created by supporting the organic growth of activity in public spaces as this is how people make spaces their own and create memories. Secondly, perceptions of space are influenced by the dreams we have for our own lives. Hence, planning needs to be mindful of people's aspirations, which is something that often gets lost in plan making. Finally, some of the participants intentionally excluded themselves from some spaces for differing reasons one of them being criminal activities. Hence the designer needs to intervene by ensuring that designed spaces do not offer any opportunities for criminal activity, which is what pushes users away.

Thank you:

For my mother

Preamble

I am fascinated by images. Captured for artistic purposes or not, I think that they accurately represent reality and make us aware of things we take for granted everyday, introducing a whole new way of looking at the world. Variations of photography, such as documentary photography and photo-journalism are the reason why I believe photography has the capacity to reveal information and represent the world in its true sense, particularly for this research project.

When I came across a study by Dodman (2003) in which Autophotography was used to research how students perceived their urban environment, I was immediately captured once again. In the study, Dodman (2003: 293) maintains that "life in the city is an intensely visual process, and visual representations of the city are increasingly treated as 'texts' to be studied". There is so much to see in the city – how people interact with each other as well as with their everyday environments, how different spaces are allocated meanings and how users claim those spaces. It is interesting alone to simply take a walk in the city and to see the spectrum of urban processes therein. This is why I thought Autophotography to be the most appropriate in my research as it captures that visual character of the city, spaces and the people as they are.

I therefore studied Dodman's (2003) project closely and began to see how I could use the same method in this study. I thought that the use of Autophotography combined with the passion I have for photography itself would give my research more depth and character and make it rich in information. I also believed that this would bring forward a form of meaning-making as well as a new way of knowing. Since then, the findings have been more captivating than discovering the method itself.

Furthermore, the idea of being able to influence the way urban design has always been carried out pushed me even closer to Autophotography. Having done urban design courses for half my duration at university, I noticed that this field of city planning does not entirely incorporate public participation. The irony is that design often has its interventions in the public realm. How then can the very same people we design for not have a word in influencing the form their neighbourhood spaces take? As an individual also interested in urban design, the method I have chosen for my study thus taps into this gap, where users are not given a platform to voice their perceptions of public spaces to shape interventions. As cited, the method also incorporates photography which intrigues me. Hence there is a fusion, throughout this study, of photography and design which

attempts to change the way developmental processes have been conducted in cities such as Johannesburg.

Moreover, I am inspired by other people's creativity in the city – how each person does things differently from the next one, the thought process each of us adopts and our actions. For me, this is what makes the city what it is. The fact is that difference is everywhere we go in the city. What is further interesting is that this difference does not divide the city but brings us together as urban dwellers. Yeoville is a classic example of this. The neighbourhood is very diverse in terms of culture, social lives, religion, nationalities and other elements that make up city life. Even the participants chosen in this research are from different parts of South Africa and Africa but now reside in Yeoville. It is this diversity that gives birth to individuality amongst urban dwellers, which further makes us stand out and thus creative in the way we conduct our lives. This is another reason why I am interested in people because there is always something to learn when strangers meet.

Finally, in terms of my interests is public space. I am interested in the publicness of these spaces as they allow autonomy, freedom, identity and

expression. Public spaces are literally the interface between those that have and those that do not have in the city. It is the one thing both parties have in common and I believe that to overcome some of the injustices of the past and to unite the city, we should start considering public spaces. This should be the case as public spaces enable people to come together. This is where no one tells another what to do or how to conduct themselves. Therefore this makes public space the very essence of human existence because these are spaces in which one can be totally free and express who they are. Autophotography, in this sense, permits life to take its own course as photographs are taken by users of public spaces, where life is at its peak.

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Chapter 1: Contextualising Autophotography

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Contextualising Autophotography

1

1.1 *What* is under study in this report?

Professions, such as planning, have searched for innovative alternatives when conducting research in the field. While there have been some important contributions to the epistemology of research methods, such as the work of Kevin Lynch's cognitive mapping (1960) and the works of geographers working in the field of planning such as the diaries of Paula Meth (2009), methods such as interviews have dominated qualitative research. In this research report I introduce Autophotography, a rapidly growing area of research methodology. The idea is that photography is conducted by the research participants themselves. It is a visual method which has been minimally explored within the planning profession. In this study I set out to validate this method, to interrogate its usefulness to planners and to identify what sort of implications it bears for the planner and urban designer. Essentially, the study pursues the utility of Autophotography as a research method in planning.

The usefulness of the method is assessed by capturing the perceptions the youth hold of public spaces in Yeoville, an inner city neighbourhood in Johannesburg (Figure 1). Public spaces are essential in our cities and studying the dynamics within them allows for the nurturing of the idea of "access into the city". According to Stea (1970: 37), "we tend to regard space, in the designed environment, as defined by physical barriers which are erected to restrict motion and the reception of visual and auditory stimuli. In fact, it is also defined by the behaviour of organisms occupying the space". This research follows the same train of thought as the above statement. It maintains that space – particularly public spaces, are more than the hard, physical and tangible properties visible. These spaces are saturated with emotion, people's everyday lives, with homeliness, fear, nostalgia and other intangible qualities. The research also maintains that it is these intangible qualities of spaces which are more important as they influence the manner in which people perceive and eventually interact with those spaces.

The study further emerged out of an attempt to address abstract spatial concepts that are often difficult to realise for those working in design related disciplines. Often the terminology used in planning, urban design and architecture is abstract and is difficult to realise as a physical product. Hence I seek to ground and make empirically possible these concepts that are ubiquitous in planning literature but not easy to achieve or identify in practice. Part of the reason why it is

challenging to achieve these abstract concepts is because we do not know how to define them. We do not know how to draw the linkages between those concepts and how they actually unfold in reality. Therefore, the study takes the form of an experiment in which practical definitions of these abstract concepts are given meaning so that we know what they look like in reality. The concepts under investigation are as follows:

- Place attachment
- Place meaning
- Place identity
- Sense of place

The rationale for using these concepts and the definitions related to them is discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

Moreover, Proshansky et al (1970: 174) hold that "each individual interprets and gives meaning to his (sic) environment, and to this extent the real differences among individuals and groups lie not in how they behave but in how they perceive". One thus begins to note that a link exits between the meanings individuals attach to places and ultimately how those places are perceived. This adds to the reasons why perceptions are so important to document in order to create environments that are responsive, especially to the youthful population of cities. Meanings are highly objective, while behaviour might be similar amongst individuals within any given place. It is at the core of this research to explore what some of those spatial meanings are so that perceptions can be better understood.

1.1.1 Research question

In proceeding, the research thus asks the following question:

Can autophotography help the planner in capturing youth perceptions of public space in Yeoville?

This question attempts to directly extrude the value of Autophotography as a method and how it can be useful to the planner in addressing concepts that are often abstract, such as the ones listed above. In doing so, further sub-questions are posed which will crystallise or make explicit the value of the said method. The key sub-questions are as follows:

- What does the youth identify with in public spaces?

- What is the basis for the way they perceive public spaces?

- How does the perceived use of public spaces by others affect the way those spaces are used by the youth?

1.2 *Why* is this studied?

I am advocating for Autophotography becoming a frequent phenomenon in research within the planning field as I believe the method is not only interesting but has the potential to attract individuals into the field of planning who are concerned with the user rather than the physical product. It poses a way of exposing some of the possibilities in the sphere of research, what some of the

contemporary issues are, and what innovative methods are present to address those issues. I seek to demonstrate that planning can produce data just as captivating as any other field of study and that planning is well placed as it makes interventions in society based on the acquired data set.

Secondly, Autophotography is favoured because it breaks away from conservative tendencies and narrow perspectives in approaching research. An example here is that an Autophotographic research relies on images generated by participants and not the planning 'expert'. The researcher relies heavily on this information; he or she thus also becomes a learner in the process. This learning process carries on as the researcher studies some of the backgrounds feeding into the fashion in which people perceive. The method evokes the creative within both the researcher and the participants as it is visual. It also forms a good base for discussions as photographs need to be elicited and ideas communicated verbally.

The value of Autophotography, due to its infant stages in the planning profession, rests on the fact that it becomes a learning process. Not

only do planners learn about users of public spaces but they also get an opportunity to learn about the research method itself – some of its constraints and successes, as well as how the method can be moulded and manipulated to address urban planning issues effectively in our cities. On learning about users of public spaces, planners will gain firsthand experience of some of the living conditions of the city inhabitants, thus being less prone to making assumptions. This would in turn inform better decision making as data is solid and reliable.

1.2.1 Research aims

In summary, the research aims for the following:

- Explore innovative ways in which perceptions of urban public spaces can be understood;
- Address concepts often found to be abstract and difficult to interpret and implement in planning and design;
- Give a voice to the youth, who are often excluded in policy-making processes;
- Suggest how the method that embraces participation can assist planners in design.

1.3 *How* is it studied?

The usefulness of Autophotography is tested through five youth members all residing in Yeoville (see Figure 1). The rationale for using Yeoville as a study area and the reason for choosing to work with the youth is clarified further below. The participants in this study are from diverse contexts with three participants of Zimbabwean origin, one with a Kwa-Zulu Natal origin and another Gauteng-born individual. The method is tested by investigating the perceptions these youth members hold of public spaces throughout Yeoville. They choose the spaces to photograph in an attempt to answer questions asked in the form of writing. The participants were given a set period of time to answer six questions on a brief through capturing public spaces with the provided disposable camera.

After cameras were collected and photographs developed, photo-interviews followed. These were conducted individually, where participants elaborated on each photograph they had taken in order to make explicit what it is they are attempting to communicate in the photograph. These sessions were formulated to extract the abstract concepts discussed above, which would prove to be a challenge to visually represent through a photograph.

Part of succeeding at addressing the abstract concepts above involved ensuring that the language in the brief for the participants was not difficult to understand. Terms were broken down systematically to avoid confusing the participants. The same applied in the interview sessions where verbal communication took precedence, guided by the photographs. I had to ensure that the language comprised of simple and easy to understand terms. However this was less of a challenge since I am also a member of the youth, thus communication barriers were minimal.

1.4 *Where* is it studied?

The research project is based in the neighbourhood of Yeoville in Johannesburg (Figure 1 below). This neighbourhood captured my attention firstly due to its cultural diversity. The diversity here rests on the fact that a considerable portion of the population in Yeoville are from other African countries. Hence there are migrants predominantly from other parts of the continent as well as other parts of South Africa. Historically, Yeoville was "one of the initial 'grey'[1] areas of Johannesburg in the 1980s and attracted a heterogeneous set of residents for that reason" (Harrison, 2002).

According to Jacobs (1961: 159), "the diversity, of whatever kind, that is generated by cities rests on the fact that in cities so many people are so close together and among them contain so many different tastes, skills, needs, supplies and bees in their bonnets". This statement has further inspired this study with regards to how people have diverse interests which therefore implies a different way of perceiving.
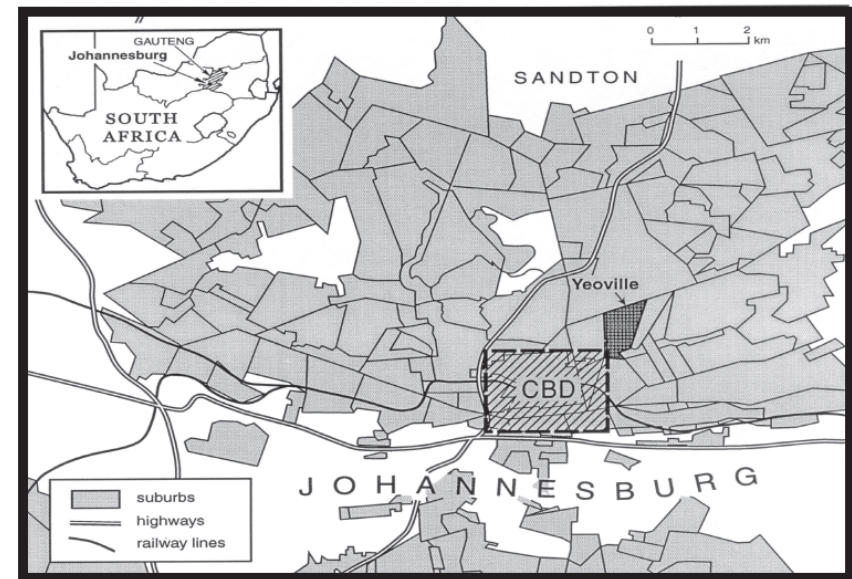
Figure 1 - Locating Yeoville within Johannesburg (Harrison, 2002: 73)

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[1] This is an area that comprises of both black and white residents.

Hence the core interest in Yeoville was vested in the question: how do all these people in this neighbourhood come to live together? How do they share public spaces in the area and how are those spaces perceived by people of different cultural backgrounds? I wanted to find out what kind of a social world is therefore created by this wealth of diversity in the neighbourhood. According to Strauss (1970: 311), "what is important about a social world is that its members are linked by some sort of shared symbolisation, some effective channels of communication". The diversity we witness in public spaces is not a defining feature which draws boundaries between people of different cultural backgrounds.

This is the very reason why Yeoville stood unique to me to the extent that it became the location of study for this research. I wished to see whether that diversity influenced the meanings attached to spaces and ultimately how residents in the neighbourhood perceived those spaces as well as each other.

1.5   Structure of report

The report therefore begins by defining a theoretical frame for the research, which is addressed in chapter two. The chapter provides an in-depth analysis and outlines clearly how that set of literature relates to the topic and its relevance in this study. Chapter three goes further to explore the method of Autophotography – what it entails, how it was applied in this study and what the outcomes and experiences with the method were. Chapter four provides portraits for each participant, which incorporates a brief biographical frame. This chapter also incorporates some of the meaningful inserts from the photo-interview sessions that support the information they were sharing as well as a discussion on their perceptions of Yeoville when they first visited the area.

The portraits chapter is an important addition to this study. Normally this kind of chapter would sit in an appendix as it is more of an archive. In this study however the richness of the participants' lives, their everyday experiences, the places and spaces that affect their world are foregrounded rather than being marginalised. Chapter five goes through the analysis of the data acquired, which includes both photographs and material from the photo-interviews, complementing

each other. Finally, chapter six concludes the study by outlining the values of adopting innovative methods in planning practice as well as how the method of Autophotography can be applied in the profession.

Space and the Perceptive Process:
Theoretical Backdrop

2

2.1 Introduction

The Literature Review outlines and analyses some of the literature that assists in unpacking the research question. It does this by engaging deeper with theory from a field of human geography entitled environmental psychology. The links between this branch of human geography and my research go beyond the fact that they are both rooted in society. They are both interested in spaces found within societies. The research has thus engaged with the above string of theory as it deals to a great extent with how people relate to spaces and how meanings are attributed to spaces. My research thus follows a similar path in terms of interrogating perceptions of public space in Yeoville as a neighbourhood.

This section thus entails a discussion of the theory around environmental psychology, its critiques as well as responses to those critiques. The responses stand to acknowledge the limits of environmental psychology and introduce other theorists such as Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (1993) to fill in some of the missing gaps in environmental psychology. In summary, a conceptual framework is applied which will assist in the framing of questions to ask the participants as well as assist in knowing what to look for in the perceptions the participants hold.

2.2 Environmental psychology

Human geographers have coined what is called environmental psychology. According to Antonsich (2010), its core focus is on the existential relation between individuals and places. The theorists further assert that there are four main ways in which individuals relate to places and this will further influence the manner in which they perceive those places: place identity, place attachment, place dependence, and sense of place (ibid). By studying the manner in which people relate to places, the planner can further begin to understand the perception that comes with it. It is that very same perception that will aid him/her in providing better public spaces that are more suitable to the needs of the youth as well as the community in general.

The first constituent of environmental psychology is *place identity*. It is defined as the "sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in

which the individual lives" (Antonsich, 2010: 122). A person's own identity cannot be defined if the notion of place is disregarded – a large portion of their identity consists of this. The personal identity of an individual is not defined in relation to others, but to place and spaces and things found therein (ibid). Therefore one's identity develops and is defined by the location in which they are in.

In the same light, youth identity in Yeoville is shaped by social processes in that community. Youth identity in Yeoville is not the same as the identity in the next neighbourhood due to the differing social processes, and this is the same identity that influences the way the youth in Yeoville perceive public spaces – whether they have resided in Yeoville their whole lives or have recently migrated there. Hence place identity is "the product of experiences, feelings, attitudes, and values, which are not only unconscious, but also conscious" (ibid: 122). These experiences and attitudes are unique to each location, and Autophotography can aid the planner in capturing those experiences which ultimately influence the way the youth perceive public spaces in Yeoville.

The second constituent of environmental psychology is *place attachment*. This deals with the notion of 'rootedness' – "an emotional, affective bond between people and place" (Antonsich, 2010: 122). Place attachment considers space as a realm in which people can develop close relationships with the spaces they inhabit, and stands as a symbolic element which is of importance to an emotional extent. In this case, place is not taken for granted – it holds memories and experiences and is a major part of an individual's everyday life. Place attachment is also generally associated with feelings of 'being at home', belonging, comfort, and security (ibid). Once individuals begin developing such attitudes in relation to a certain space (for a considerable amount of time), they begin to act in a particular manner, adopting a certain identity in that space. As that place attachment develops and grows, it is hypothesised that the perception of that place will also shift, the feelings of 'being at home' begin to be saturated, perceiving that place differently, and thus being able to identify positive and negative aspects about it.

Place attachment therefore enables the youth to make comparisons and preferences in public spaces and this is something the planner can easily extract through Autophotography. By focusing on the youth's

preferences and experiences, the planner permits them a platform in which to tell their stories – whether good or bad – and s/he can thus use this as the basis for the provision of better public spaces. Hence, place attachment represents a process rather than a static and fixed condition in which individuals identify with and then perceive that place.

Place dependence is the third factor shaping individual identity and perception of a space. It is concerned with the "utilitarian value that a place has in relation to other places in terms of satisfying an individual's specific goals and desired activities" (Antonsich, 2010: 122). It is thus the usefulness of a particular space according to an individual user. The more the public space is able to respond to his/her needs, the more useful it becomes, thus perceiving it to be more valuable as it meets his/her needs. This is what Lynch (1981) terms the vitality of space.

Place dependence is thus more tied to perception than it is to emotion. Place dependence is in essence what this research aims to create. It is hoped that through the use of Autophotography, public

open spaces can be made more useful to the youth in Yeoville providing them with more choice. It will achieve this by first finding out how useful the current public spaces are to each individual member of the youth and then through the resultant photo-interviews, establish the missing elements which could enhance that space's usefulness.

Finally, *sense of place* "deals with the meanings attached to a spatial setting by an individual or a group" (Antonsich, 2010: 123). It is the most elusive and ill-defined notion of place as it is adopted by many disciplines to communicate different ideas. According to Antonsich (2010), it encompasses the cognitive (place identity), affective (place attachment), and conative (place dependence) components of people's attitudes towards place. It is a highly individualistic perspective of space, as much as the others discussed above, and some geographers have even argued that places have no inherent meaning, only the meanings humans give to them (Rose, 1995).

A sense of place, therefore is also linked to practices that take place in space. It is these practices that will result in a place being inscribed

with a meaning – whether positive or otherwise. This is the very essence of perception and the chosen participants in this study will be able to reveal their sense of place in Yeoville through some of the stories that they have about the photographed spaces, the people and activities within those spaces.

2.3   Critiques of environmental psychology

The four abovementioned theorisations of place and identity in environmental psychology have been under criticism from other authors in the field. From a geographical perspective, one of the shortfalls of environmental psychology is its focus on a relatively small scale such as a house or neighbourhood (Antonsich, 2010). It thus leaves out a whole range of places at smaller scales where similar processes might be taking place and potentially be studied (ibid). However, for the purposes of this study, this local scale is suitable as I will be allowed to engage deeply with the participants and their experiences in Yeoville. This is deemed positive and more grounded as findings in the research can be immediately contextualised and the necessary interventions can be made by the planner – who has thoroughly studied the place.

Another criticism of environmental psychology is that the theories within it fail to observe and acknowledge socio-economic processes that take place in society (Antonsich, 2010). The socio-economic status of individuals is of importance and should be incorporated into the study as it influences the way in which individuals perceive public spaces. A poorer resident might feel that some spaces are designed for more affluent members of society due to their high maintenance and security efforts. These socio-economic processes thus contribute to the construction of the relationship between people and places (ibid). In this research however, interesting results can be shown in that the socio-economic status of the participants is similar because they inhabit a shared, fixed location as well as the fact that none of them were born in Yeoville. It would therefore be interesting to see how each of them perceives public spaces within that location. The challenge that will be posed for the planner in this instance would be to provide public spaces that accommodate all members with different socio-economic statuses.

Environmental psychology has further been critiqued for its individualistic, mentalistic, uncontested and apolitical (Antonsich, 2010) perspective of how public spaces function and how users relate

to them. In this sense, space has been depoliticised to represent a utopian model in which these forces do not operate and do not influence how the public perceives the public space. According to Massey (1993), space does not operate as an island that is free from social as well as political forces manifested in society. Some of the migrant youth in Yeoville might have emerged from societies that have been destroyed by effects of civil war and social unrest. Such issues will all shape the manner in which they perceive space and what they look for in space. Some might seek qualities of public space that are more therapeutic and ameliorative for the experiences they were denied as youth in the spaces they originated from before relocating to Yeoville.

Massey (1993) further contests that there is therefore a need to conceptualise space as constructed out of interrelations and interactions at all spatial levels – local to global (ibid). Indeed, the uniqueness of a place may even arise from such conflicts and controversies (Agnew, 1987). It is from these interrelations that politics and conflict will spring up and this is what makes society and public spaces within it what they are. How individuals maintain an identity in space in relation to the interaction between the local and the global, and how they perceive that space should thus be taken into account.

2.4   Response to the critiques

Henri Lefebvre (1991), a French theorist has similar perspectives to Massey (1993) pertaining to space and how it functions. He comprehends space and city as a complete body, more than just a simplistic entity (Frick, 2002). He further acknowledges the complexity of space and attests that this is what gives space depth and meaning (Frick, 2002). Part of that complexity lays in the fact that space and its meaning is a product of contestation and social processes, as Harrison (1998) deems. In the centre of the contestation lies power, which is defined as a "set of practices, discourses and mechanisms that govern the interactions between social actors (Greenstein, 2003: 1). This contestation and power conflict springs up due to the fact that those in power often tend to exploit the less powerful.

My research therefore employs some of Lefebvre's (1991) sentiments about power contestation in society, as a way of supplementing the

individualistic nature of environmental psychology as criticised above. I acknowledge that power struggles and inequality exist in society, even amongst the youth, and this is why interviews with participants are conducted individually and not in groups. I want to ensure that the participants can express themselves freely without feeling inferior or otherwise to the others participants.

Lefebvre (1991), writing from a Marxist perspective, goes beyond the study of the individual and holds that power struggles exist in society, and that these struggles will influence the manner in which one perceives and interacts with public space. His position is apparent in his notion of 'the right to the city' which takes into account the fact that there are power struggles in society that underlie the production of the urban space itself (Purcell, 2002). In essence, Lefebvre notes the fact that there are already spatial inequalities existing in society. A certain group of people can access certain spaces in the urban environment while another group may not be able to do so. In the same light, some people do not have the same 'right to the city' as others.

In this research, the notion of 'right to the city' is also considered, particularly in a neighbourhood such as Yeoville where a considerable percentage of the population comes from other African countries. Do members of the youth that are not South-African born have the same right to certain public spaces as others that were born in the country? How do the youth members from the different nationalities interact in space? These are just some of the question that I will be seeking answers to in this research project. What is certain however, is that autophotography facilitates and contributes to equal right to the city as it enables participants to voice their impressions of space. The method is not discriminatory as it does not even rely on language for issues to be uncovered but on photographs.

Thus as a shortfall of environmental psychology – that it is highly individualistic – the research takes into account the socio-political dimension of the psychological equation. This will provide a more vivid representation of some of the dynamics that could potentially have an influence on how the youth in Yeoville perceive public spaces in the area. As Pile (1993) holds, the human being is an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Hence it becomes problematic to document perceptions of public space, an entity that is

shared by society at large, without acknowledging some of the dynamics within that society. Although the socio-political dimension does not comprise the core of the research, it is acknowledged, and it will be uncovered in the interviews where a brief autobiographical portrait of the participant will be established. This will be done as a means of comparison: in instances where the participant came from another part of South Africa or from another country, to try and stitch together what it is that they look for in public spaces, something that they might have been denied in the past.

2.5   Perception

The manner in which one perceives the urban environment will have an impact on how one interacts with that environment. It is on this very assumption that my research is rooted. According to Beck (1970), the perception of the physical environment requires humans to interpret the physical and social components of their stimulus field. This is to say that the way in which one perceives something has deeper underlying influences rooted in society, such as the manner in which they are socialised and the values they possess when moving into a particular space. Hence, perception is achieved when something that is observed by the participant bears meaning for him/her,

whether seeing it for the first time or not. This explains why "space is personal and has unique meaning for an individual" (Beck, 1970: 135).

The manner in which a user perceives a certain space will not be the same way in which another user perceives that same space. My research therefore sets out to document all those different perspectives in which the youth in Yeoville perceive urban public spaces in their area, through the use of Autophotography. It acknowledges that there are differences in the way in which the youth perceives spaces and that these are some of the differences that the planning profession needs to address in planning and designing more appropriate and responsive spaces that accommodate the youth.

Furthermore, as meaning is attached to a particular space, it clothes the perceptual world (Beck, 1970). As hinted earlier, once something has a particular meaning to an individual, they begin to address and interact with it in a particular manner. This new interaction will be different when compared to the pre-conceived ideas the user might have had before coming into interact with that space. Therefore, meaning is perception (Beck, 1970). Whether that perception is

positive or negative, it is still influenced by what the observed public space means to one alone as an individual.

Concepts of spatial meaning thus derive from individual modes and styles of perception (Beck, 1970). One cannot begin to perceive public space as an individual if one does not hold a certain meaning of that space. Even though this is something that happens quickly and almost sub-consciously, meaning is assigned in one's mind and then the perception about that particular space follows. This is how humans perceive as based on Beck's (1970) presumptions. Therefore, meaning affects one's perception and perception in most cases, may also influence a further meaning of what is observed in public space.

As Ittelson (1970) holds, it is the fact of perceptual consistency which makes effective behaviour possible. If perception remains constant as stimulation changes, then clearly there can be no constant relationship between stimulation and perception (ibid). Hence, perception should change as the dynamics in public space change. New meanings should spring up in one's mind when a new phenomenon is observed or experienced. This is what makes the urban environment rich, what

maintains that strong level of interest in societies as there is ongoing evolution. Populations grow, new spaces are discovered, uses for existing spaces change and users of particular spaces also shift with time. Perceptions will also change as meanings attached to particular spaces change.

There is a variety of public spaces in Yeoville –streets, parks, the recreation centre, the market, churches, the library and the list goes on. It is hence expected that as each participant navigates through these space, documenting their experiences, there will be a variety in perceptions as well. The stories behind these perceptions will further help to extract what is communicated in each photograph.

Just as perception is linked to meaning, it is also inseparably related to action (Ittelson, 1970). It is argued that one first perceives, and then acts. Perception in most cases, therefore always predicts the action that follows. Ittelson (1970) attests that one is not passive in the perceptual process. Some form of action or contemplation of action will emanate from that perception, even if it is at a later stage. In the same light, the kind of perceptions the participants hold about

particular spaces in Yeoville will influence the type of action they will carry out in those spaces. One cannot act in space if they did not have preconceived perceptions about that particular space. It is a process that takes place subconsciously as hinted at earlier. Hence, "the perceiving of something cannot be understood if the action is not understood" (ibid: 116).

In the context of my research, it can further be contested that perception and identity are also related. As Garrod (2008) holds, the perception one holds of a particular space is influenced by a range of other factors, more than its physical tangible qualities; one's identity being one of the factors. The manner in which one perceives public space will be influenced heavily by one's social identity, what one's intentions in that space are and how one came to identify with it. Identity is therefore influenced by a range of other social factors such as gender, values and religion.

The concept of "the youth" alone, is taken to be a form of identity in society which is manifested in space. This is apparent through the way in which this social group uses space and interacts with each other in space, as well as defining their own spaces within the already provided public space. As a member of the youth, one's social background hence forms a large part of one's identity, and that identity will further influence how one perceives urban public spaces in Yeoville.

Perceptual knowledge is therefore, nothing else than an apprehension of the relatedness of things (Ittelson, 1970). When one perceives, one begins to understand how things relate to each other, how the urban fabric is stitched together and where one finds one's place within it. This research again sets out to document the different ways in which the youth in the community of Yeoville perceive public spaces in the area. The challenge is now for the planner to explore those perceptions through Autophotography. In turn, it can be established where Yeoville youth's place is in the urban environment. The moment this has been discovered, planners and designers can provide the appropriate spaces for the youth in Yeoville.

2.6   Public space

According to Eriksson, et al (2007: 31), "public space can in general terms be described as a place open to all, free of charge". This implies that a public space is one that has no limitations to accessibility, in its broad sense. It can be accessed by anyone during most times of the day, and others even at night time. In South Africa and other democratic countries, public space can also be considered as a space where people can express themselves politically, for example through demonstrations (ibid).

As Eriksson (2007) asserts, public space has to be able to provoke, inspire and push opinions. This is the essence of its publicness. There is therefore a certain level of autonomy in the type of activities one can carry out in public spaces. The types of activities users carry out in space define that space and give it its own character. In Yeoville, I seek to understand how the youth in the area relate to that character of public spaces – to find out if they identify with some of the activities and character of public spaces or if it is something they do not associate with, and how that happens.

The use of public space is therefore carried out in different ways. Uses are also governed by the type of public space and the facilities provided therein. Krier (1979) makes further projections on the concept of the usage of public space, although doing so from a 20th Century perspective. He argues that there has been a loss of understanding of the urban space (Krier, 1979). He holds that in cities not planned for cars, public space functions as an extension of the living-room (ibid). There are strong ties between the two, such that it becomes difficult to make a distinction due to the fluid relationship between private and public spaces.

Public space was therefore, in its conception, an inhabitant's second 'home' and this tradition should be carried out in the present time as well. This will be seen in how the youth [who are the participants in this research] find 'refuge' in public spaces, the type of activities carried out and the social benefits achieved which no other private space can account for. Krier's (1979) sentiments therefore call for reclamation of public spaces – for the pedestrian to be emphasised once again, for public spaces to be accessible to all citizens. This research certainly contributes to this, as it includes the youth who are often not represented in urban processes and policy formulation.

Furthermore, "public space is an amazing physical and social interface between different people and a set of urban interests, both regarding consumers, suppliers, dwellers and jurisdiction" (Eriksson, 2007: 32). Public space becomes the common factor in all urban dweller's lives, thus making it possible for interaction between different people to take place. It is still the common factor amongst the Yeoville youth even after the xenophobic attacks in 2008. In this regard therefore – and to maintain harmony in public space – management strategies should do away with being too stringent and thus destroying the publicness of public spaces.

According to Carmona (2010), it is both the over-management and under-management of public space that results in the erosion of the public realm. Over-management restricts access to space and sets out the types of activities that can and cannot be undertaken in a particular space, thus destroying the publicness of public space. Under-management leaves the public space to fall into deterioration, also pushing users away as it no longer serves their needs. In summary, "too much control results in dull predictable public spaces whereas no restrictions can end up in pure anarchy" (Eriksson, 2007: 33).

Yeoville is interesting because it has privately managed public spaces such as the recreation centre, the market and the library, as well as purely public spaces such as the streets and open parks. In instances where one mode of public space is not accessible, users have a choice to go to another. This research will establish how the youth perceive these different types of public spaces.

Where access has been restricted or public space invaded with socially undesirable uses such as crime, the youth's Autophotography will also capture this. The narratives accompanying photographs will help state it even more explicitly, hence drawing the line between whether public spaces are over- or under-managed as well as documenting the result of the current situation. It will also become apparent if there is any difference between public spaces that are managed privately and those that are not.

In summary, public spaces cannot fulfil their function in society if they are not responsive. These spaces are designed to bring people together. To keep people within them, however they have to be more responsive. They need to respond to the users' needs, leave them with

enough choices pertaining to the activities users can engage in as well as being flexible to ensure that they are able to deal with the changes taking place in society.

Bentley, et al (1985) have written extensively on the responsive character of public spaces and how the physical qualities of urban forms are able to change the way people perceive and eventually interact with spaces. In their book "Responsive environments: a manual for designers" (1985), the authors list seven components of responsive environments, listed as follows: permeability, variety, legibility, robustness, visual appropriateness, richness and personalisation. Each of these elements manifests themselves differently in spaces, but they all contribute to better functionality of the urban environments. Chapter 6 adopts one of the above concepts, robustness, as a form of intervention and is thus discussed in greater detail then.

2.7   The youth and public space

Public spaces fulfill many functions. Some of them ordinary and some less so, but it is the main point of this research to explore how the youth view public space – which essentially determines the resultant use of that space. Some of the broad functions of public space include the fact that they satisfy social functions, used as intermediate public spaces [such as streets] through which to get to other places, as well as important meeting places (van Lieshout and Aarts, 2008).

According to van Lieshout and Aarts (2008: 501), "young people hang out on the street to meet each other but also because they are looking for a place to be together without supervision" so that they can fully explore their choices as they approach adulthood, and discover their identities before reaching adulthood. This means people do not like being observed. They behave like themselves fully when there is no supervision, such as CCTV cameras and security guards present in some public spaces. The youth therefore meet on the streets and other public spaces because there are no strings attached (ibid). This means one can decide to leave at any moment they wish without anybody being offended. It is not similar to the situation at home where it would be considered rude in some households to stand and leave especially amidst adults. This is another reason why the youth have built strong social links with public spaces, because they are granted a greater level of autonomy. Although there are rules in public

space, they are not rigid and strictly enforced (ibid). One is still able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy and claim public spaces to meet one's needs.

Moreover, the choices people make about where to meet turn out often to be related to the construction of identities, both of themselves and of others (van Lieshout and Aarts, 2008). According to Della Porta and Diani (1999: 85), the construction of identity is "the process by which social actors recognize themselves — and are recognized by other actors — as part of broader groupings". Identities are constructed through the other youth members an individual will meet and associate themselves with. Therefore not only does public space present itself as a meeting place for the youth in which different activities can be undertaken, but it also becomes an important part of the construction of identities for this group as they approach adulthood. This will mark the beginning of a particular perception of public space from the youth, whether migrant or local in Yeoville. For immigrants also, public spaces help to both express and strengthen their identity (van Lieshout and Aarts, 2008). This is when they can show their true colours and a true reflection of who they are. This is

why public spaces are important in urban change, particularly in Yeoville where there is a considerable percentage of immigrants.

In summary, Lieberg (1995) makes two main categories of places: places of interaction and places of retreat. Places of interaction serve to meet and confront the adult-world and to put oneself on display to see and be seen (ibid). Places of retreat deal with the withdrawal from the adult-world to one's own peers – and this is precisely why the youth goes to public spaces (ibid). This distinction can be captured on film in Yeoville, through the type of company and the activities taking place in public spaces and noting the level of familiarity with the different activities and people by the participants.

2.8   Theoretical framework

The concepts comprising the conceptual framework stand to elucidate precisely how perceptions of public space will be extracted from the participant-generated images. Through these concepts, I will also know what elements to draw out from each image in order to compile a much more rigid analysis. This in essence enables me to know what to look for in Autophotography itself as a method. The identified

concepts therefore act as tools which are to be applied with the appointed method.

Fundamentally, this Autophotographic research project seeks to find out what sort of meanings places have in order to understand the way some of those spaces currently function. Therefore the first concept to be explored is *place meaning*. According to Relph (1976: 36), "all places and landscapes are individually experienced, for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences, and intentions, and from our own unique circumstances". The way one perceives a given space is influenced by the current circumstance they are in – social, economic or even political. Hence one person's meaning of a place will differ from that of the next person. It is due to prior experiences with other spaces therefore, that people interact with spaces the way they do. A place will thus have a special and unique meaning to an individual as it might appeal or bring out aspects they are familiar with, bringing memories from the past. Meaning of places will be sought after the interview sessions, demonstrated by the sort of memories participants hold of certain places and how they express themselves in the process.

For one to understand the environmental psychology in public space, the concept of *place identity* needs to be explored. The research seeks to know how people know their immediate environment. What do they identify with? As this is the environment that forms the other half of who they are as individuals (Antonsich, 2010). More crudely, the concept of place identity "deals with the interaction between the question of who we are and where we are, and how our local environment, including geographical location, ethnic traditions, family heritage, and educational background influence our lives" (Fisher, 2006). Hence place identity will be measured by how one knows Yeoville on a broader scale. This raises the question of how aware one is of what is around one and how much one knows about it which will further be extracted through the interviews with participants. Extracting the level of place identity from each participant will help understand how each one of the participants relate to Yeoville and where they find their place within it as a neighbourhood, the type of spatial elements they prioritise.

Thirdly, *place attachment* will also assist in understanding the environmental psychology within the context of this research. How attached are users to their everyday spaces, and how does that

attachment influence the way they interact with those spaces? According to Relph (1976: 37), "it is this attachment that constitutes our roots in places; and the familiarity that this involves is not just a detailed knowledge, but a sense of deep care and concern for that place". Interviews will be required to supplement the photographs in order to evaluate the level of emotional attachment one has with a place, to evaluate how much they want to be in that space. It would be a great challenge to try extracting an emotion by simply looking at the photograph. However, if an object appears frequently on film, it might begin to suggest a certain level of attachment with the participant. If it was something the participant was not comfortable capturing, they were most likely not going to revisit the subject to capture it again. Hence the interviews will be helpful in order to make valid deductions over the method of analysis to be chosen for the photographs.

Sense of place makes the fourth constituent Autophotography will explore in order to establish an understanding of environmental psychology. As Nairn (1965) elaborates, each of us has their own sense of place in the different localities we find ourselves in each day. We also do not make a conscious decision to have or not have that sense of place; it is something that comes almost naturally. In the end we are able to identify features of places, how to access them and ultimately how we relate to them. This is the essence of sense of place. Hence sense of place is the unique meaning (Beck, 1970) associated with each space as captured in the photographs participants will take. It is this 'unique meaning' the research aims to pursue. What is so unique about what is shown in the photograph? This sense of uniqueness has traces of place attachment in it but explores it even further, therefore bringing forth the emotional element again. Only this time the participant is stating what is unique about a certain space. The interviews will again be facilitative, in which I will prompt an emotional response to establish if that uniqueness is there or not.

In conclusion, *perception* is unique to each individual. It is a highly subjective concept and Autophotography facilitates that as each participant is permitted to capture and bring forth representations of how they perceive space. This is the perspective one adopts when they look at public space, that particular angle that works for them alone. Interviews will be essential in this case as a way of exploring how the participants perceive space. This therefore provides the link

perception shares with place identity, place attachment as well as sense of place and these concepts further crystallise the way people perceive.

2.9 Conclusion

By studying how people relate to spaces through an environmental psychology lens, one is able to understand how the process of perception is initiated in human beings and what some of the components of it are. The chapter has further outlined the importance of the youth as members of society and how that age group relates to public spaces, elements they identify with when they interact with public spaces. This chapter has also provided a solid theoretical base to begin to explore the methods that can be used in capturing the perceptions youth hold of public spaces.

Practicing Autophotography in Yeoville 3

3.1   Introduction

The current chapter sets out to explore the application process for Autophotography as a method. It outlines in detail the extent to which the Autophotographic process was applied in Yeoville and what some of its encounters and challenges were. The purpose of the detail is to ensure that the humanistic and soft component of the said research method is retained as this demonstrates clearly how the method can be used in the planning profession. To maintain a flow in the discussion, my thoughts, examples and some of the encountered issues are summarised in text boxes throughout the chapter and they stand to concretise the argument put forward in this chapter.

The chapter is divided into three sections: pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork. This arrangement was favoured due to the fact that one is able to follow clearly the process I have gone through with this research and so that these distinct elements are not confused and lost in the process as the chapter advances. Not only does this arrangement demonstrate the three main steps taken in most research projects, but it thoroughly explores the dynamics of Autophotography as a method that has not been adopted often in the planning profession. The initial part of the chapter thus frames Autophotography as a method, as well as the intentions of the project prior to fieldwork, while the second part begins to see Autophotography unfold during the fieldwork process. The third component of the chapter then proceeds to discuss the processes taken after fieldwork was completed, which includes the quest to find the appropriate method of analysis for the data collected during fieldwork. In summary, limitations and challenges of the Autophotographic method are discussed with regards to this research.

3.2 Pre-fieldwork

3.2.1 Autophotography as a research method

Autophotography is a visual qualitative research method using images, in which the photography is conducted by research participants themselves (Johnsen et al, 2008). It is therefore self-directed photography in trying to research a particular topic of interest to the researcher, even though photographs are produced by participants and not by the researcher. The method is used mostly in the field of social sciences and assists researchers to know more about the participants, the way in which they see and understand their immediate environments on a day-to-day basis (Dollinger & Dollinger, 2003). Individuals are presented with the opportunity of telling their stories as they wish, through the taking of photographs. In this research, Autophotography is adopted as a method to explore and document the youth's perceptions of public space in an urban setting.

Autophotography has been used widely as a method due to its potential utility in examining how participants understand and interpret the world and their place within it (Johnsen, et al, 2008). How do people see themselves and their native environment? How do they relate to public spaces therein? These are some of the questions that will bear interesting revelations as participants reveal their environment and how they relate to it, through photographs. The youth as participants in this research could easily be misunderstood and misinterpreted, and Autophotography finally provides a platform for a certain level of autonomy for them so that they can tell their stories the way they wish. As Johnsen, et al (2008) assert, photographs act as tangible resources helping research participants tell a narrative about themselves (and their everyday geographies) that retains a solid sense of social and personal context.

Furthermore, Autophotography stands as a way of responding to [cultural] geography's methodological conservatism and unwillingness to move beyond well-established methods such as in-depth interviews (Thrift, 2000). It explores other ways of achieving research that is more participatory in nature as well as augmenting analysis thus making it much denser. The method can also also be supplemented with others

such as interviews, which is the chosen path of this research. When participants bring forward their photographs, they will be coupled with narratives and explanations of thoughts behind each photograph. It becomes clear therefore, that Autophotography breaks the rigidity in which research has always been undertaken. It adds an extra layer acquiring information about a particular subject as one does not only rely on written material but also visual – the photographs.

3.2.2   Advantages of Autophotography

Firstly, the use of Autophotography as a research method has been escalating due to the fact that it acknowledges that the language used by researchers in interviews and questionnaires creates frames within which knowledge is realised (Johnsen, et al, 2008). In Autophotography, participants are asked a particular question which they will answer through photographs. It is entirely the participant's choice what they photograph and what they do not. The realisation of knowledge through this approach is made more fluid and interesting – the participant is not intimidated by the researcher's knowledge and thus more free and willing to be an active factor in the project. This is due to the fact that the manner in which researchers have always asked questions in interviews – for instance – hints towards a particular type of answer. While in Autophotography, the participant is free to interpret the question anyhow they wish, painting a much more rigorous and real image of their everyday experience and how they perceive public spaces in the urban environment.

Autophotography is also advantageous due to the fact that one no longer relies on researcher-generated images (Johnsen, et al, 2008). This is one of the ways in which Autophotography has shifted from conservative tendencies where the researcher was in charge of all aspects of the research – including taking photographs. There has been a growing dissatisfaction with this trend (ibid) and Autophotography is the alternative where participants generate the images required for the research. This further implies that researchers will no longer be prone to making stereotypes about their topic of study, as they have witnessed it from people most familiar with that topic. According to Dollinger and Dollinger (2003), this is what makes Autophotography "richly revealing", as it illuminates 'hidden' spaces that do not typically feature in public or academic discourse (Johnsen, et al, 2008). It thus provides a better understanding of the use, meanings and dynamics associated with spaces. It is these characteristics of Autophotography that will guide the assessment of

the method regarding its helpfulness in capturing perceptions people hold of public spaces.

Lastly, Autophotography challenges the unequal power relations that exist between researchers and researched that have been prominent (Johnsen, et al, 2008). As mentioned earlier, research participants often feel inferior to researchers as they are associated with large institutions and are thus seen as more powerful. This perception alone goes as far as shaping the type of answers participants will give the researcher. Responses might be kept short and unexplained due to that fear of the researcher and of being 'wrong' in their presence. In Autophotography, there is less tension between researcher and researched. The researcher relies on photographs generated by participants and not only does this make them feel more empowered and at ease, but also allows them to enjoy themselves and increases their observation skills (Garrod, 2008).

3.2.3   Limitations of Autophotography

The first limitation of Autophotography lies in the fact that the method has a very low completion rate due mainly to its logistical and ethical challenges especially when working with vulnerable groups such as children or the homeless (Johnsen, et al, 2008). Researchers using the method often appear to be 'taking advantage' of such groups of people who are desperate and mostly do not earn an income at all. In other studies where participants were handed cameras for the project, some have failed to return the cameras – reporting cameras stolen or not reporting back at all. This was an encounter in a study with homeless people in America, where twenty-five disposable cameras were distributed and only seven were returned (ibid). Therefore a notable limitation here is that the method becomes very resource-intensive (in terms of time and money), where the researcher will have to take into account extra costs to be incurred for the project to successfully reach completion.

Furthermore, societal norms often shape the ways in which people want themselves and their lifestyles to be seen by others, thereby influencing the selection and framing of images for a particular audience (Johnsen, et al 2008). Thus the everyday hard realities might not be portrayed, or might be tempered by the participants themselves – for example tidying up spaces, dressing in a particular way or omitting other photos for presentation. However, this does not limit my research to a great extent as participants are not asked to photograph personal spaces such as their home environments and so on, but the focus is on public spaces which is something shared with all

members of society and thus less personal. These are just some of the issues I had to be aware of in extracting data in order to minimise the effect of the limitations discussed above.

3.2.4   Justification for the choice of participants

The most important element in completing an Autophotographic exercise is recruiting the correct participants for the research. As cited earlier, this research has chosen the youth as the participants. It could have easily been men, women or children both from other parts of South Africa, Yeoville or from other African countries. But the youth were chosen based on the following reasons:

- The research chooses young people and immigrants as these groups include citizens who are not necessarily represented in policymaking processes**.** Yeoville is characterised by a youthful population – 19.7% falls in the 25-29 age bracket (Yeoville Census Data, 2001 and Meyer 2002). Hence it is my firm belief that the youth should have some influence on how policies are made regarding their area of residence and the research acts as an initial step to take where youth input can be noted.
- Moreover in most cases, the youth do not belong to the institutionalised, organised, and well-represented groups of

concerned people who usually take their places at the negotiation table when public spaces are being discussed (van Lieshout and Aarts, 2008). This emphasises the initial point above. How else will the youth (who make up a considerable portion of the total population) perspectives on public space be noted?

- According to Dollinger and Dollinger (2003), the self can integrate its own multifaceted and sometimes contradictory tendencies at higher levels. Memories are no longer easy to recall as one ages. An adult's mind is also likely to be much more saturated with other matters that might hinder the smooth progression of the project. This is why preference was given to the youth as such tendencies are rare.
- Finally, I am a member of the youth population although not from Yeoville. Therefore I feel I can connect and establish a relation or a certain level of understanding much quicker than I would be able to with an adult. As a young African male, I was brought up to be respectful to elders and approach them in that manner – especially if I was hoping to win their help in a project such as this. Considering the youth, there are less formal ways of interaction. This enables me to be much

starker in my approach in documenting their perceptions of space.

3.2.5   Selection process for participants

The selection of participants in the study resulted from a series of workshops I was involved in together with second year Urban and Regional Planning students from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in the School of Architecture and Planning. The students were running a project working with a class of Grade eleven Geography learners from Sheikh Anta Diop High School in Yeoville. The project was essentially about how well the youth from that school know Yeoville and how they feel about it as a neighbourhood in the city of Johannesburg. The project ran for four weeks with workshops being held once a week at Sheikh Anta Diop. Some of the questions in the project included: where do you go to play, study and relax, as well as where do you feel unsafe, free, or what parts of Yeoville are exciting for you? The four-week long workshops were held on Fridays, in their school hall.

My role in the workshops was therefore to assist in facilitating some of the activities that took place, and to assist the learners with anything they needed help with, clarifying questions and guiding them through activities. My supervisor, Garth Klein, and Claire Benit-Gbaffou (who was in charge of the second year students) suggested that I become part of the workshops as my research project is based in Yeoville and it involves the youth in the area. The workshops would therefore enable me to have a rough idea of how the youth think and perceive their environment, and if I would as a result like to select some of them as participants in my own research project.

As the workshops progressed, I was able to see how some of the learners view certain things and how they would reason to justify those views. Some of them showed a more pronounced level of maturity in their reasoning, which was positive with regards to this research project. At the end of the four weeks of the workshops a total of five learners were approached to be participants in this research. Together with my supervisor, we selected those students who we both felt would bring interesting results to my project. There were no set criteria for the selection process, but the selection was based mainly on pure observation. This involved how the selected

participants conducted themselves during the workshops, how they interacted with others and the kind of initiative they had as well as self-presentation when given an opportunity to speak. This formed the basis for the selection of participants who were then briefly introduced to my research project and they show great enthusiasm towards it.

3.3.1   Gathering the participants together

As time progressed the list of participants had slightly altered. The initial participants chosen during the workshops at Sheik Anta Diop were the following: Senzo, Rodreck, Yolander, Norma-Jean, Thabiso and later Tshepo.

Tshepo was not approached in the workshops as his behaviour came across as uncontrollable and crowd-pleasing, which would have been negative for my project as individual meanings of space are crucial. He was therefore left out of the project, but after a few instances of individual interaction with him, he portrayed a higher level of responsibility and self-control, which was another side of him he did not expose during the workshops. He was thus invited as a participant due to those reasons. However, I was unable to get hold of him as he left Yeoville during the holidays.

Due to a failed attempt at contacting some of the participants, their participation in the project was thus not possible. This was the case with Senzo who was then excluded from the project. Furthermore, one of the participants withdrew from the project due to unforeseen circumstances.

> In the process of arranging the first meeting I contacted Thabiso who informed me he was away (out of the province) and would call me as soon as he returned to Berea where he lives – which is the neighbourhood next to Yeoville. At this stage I only had three confirmed participants, and the pressure was building on my side as the project was now at the edge of the time frame it had been planned for. A few days later, after I had already distributed consent forms to the three confirmed participants, Thabiso called me informing me of his return back to Berea. However the next day [of a scheduled meeting with him] he called me again to cancel the meeting due to severe sickness and therefore not being able to be present at the meeting. Since then he has not contacted me.

The list of participants in the project then changed to the following: Rodreck, Yolander, Norma-Jean, Leneance and Lorraine who made the final selection of participants in this study. I had initially intended to select five participants for this study and this is the number I had at the end. Five respondents were seen to be easier to manage and keep track of. Financial costs and the time factor also contributed to the choice in number of participants. Ten participants, for instance would have increased the costs I had incurred during the course of the project (buying cameras and developing photos). Furthermore, more time would be required to complete the study as I would have a larger amount of data to collect and analyse, therefore being too long for an Honours Research project. Hence, five participants became the ideal number for the purposes of this study.

Leneance was invited to take part in the project when I met him outside the Yeoville library. He agreed to take part and I immediately handed him a consent form to take home. Leneance thus replaced Senzo, who I still could not contact. The last addition to the participants was Lorraine. After citing the sickness of Thabiso to the other four participants, one of them mentioned that Lorraine (who I remembered as she was also at the workshops) could also take part in the project. I therefore proceeded to call Lorraine to invite her into the project. The following day I went to Yeoville and gave Lorraine a copy of the consent form to take home and complete.

The research has thus relied heavily on co-operation from each of the chosen participants. To ensure the smooth progression of the project, I had to be more flexible and operate on their 'terms' such as having meetings when they were available, how much time they had free during that day and so on. Moreover, I was very cautious about the type of questions I would ask them as some of them might have come from disadvantaged families or have deprived social skills. I did not want make them feel vulnerable. For ethical purposes, abidance with the "codes of informed consent" became necessary. Participants were informed of their rights in the project, and these were outlined in the consent form participants signed prior to taking part in the study.

3.3.2 Preliminary workshop with participants

Prior to handing out a brief for the project, a preliminary workshop was held with the participants. The purpose of this workshop was to introduce camera usage to the participants as well as share with them some pointers on how to better compose photographs. This included considerations about lighting, camera angles to achieve certain results and considering the subject to be photographed.

I assured the participants that nothing special was expected of them or their photographs. I was not expecting art. They did not have to be excellent in terms of abiding to universal rules of photography but the focus was more about what the individual aimed to portray through a photograph. The brief pointers I shared with them were not to give them the impression that they needed to be artistic in their responses but was to ensure that their photographs were legible. The workshop

was therefore also an opportunity to discuss the expectations of the project and to elaborate on any issues or questions they might have before fieldwork commenced.

3.3.3   Commencing with fieldwork

As cited, consent forms had to be distributed to the recipients as they were below 18 years of age necessitating their parents to give them permission to take part in the project. This would allow me to record the interviews as well as using their names in the report. I thus scheduled a meeting with Yolander, Norma-Jean, Rodreck and Thabiso.

The meeting was scheduled to take place at Hotel Yeoville along Raleigh Street. Rodreck and Thabiso were not able to attend the meeting, therefore present at the meeting was Norma-Jean and Yolander, who were given consent forms to take home. While waiting for Norma-Jean and Yolander I met Leneance who then took a consent form home.

The consent forms were scheduled to be collected three days later, but only Leneance was able to be present at the meeting. The other three respondents were unavailable. Another meeting was then organised for the next day. Leneance was present while Rodreck, Norma-Jean and Yolander arrived after the other participants had departed. Consent forms were collected and four cameras together with a brief were distributed to each participant. The brief comprised of six questions participants had to answerer by taking photographs. Photographs could range between two and four for each question. Each camera had the capacity for twenty-seven shots, implying each participant would then take 24 shots maximum. With the remaining three shots, the participants were allowed to capture whatever they wished and they would be able to keep those photographs. On this day I was able to give Yolander a consent form to pass on to Lorraine, who was aware of this as I had already spoken to her over the phone.

I received a call from Yolander who informed me that she could no longer take part in the project as she was going away with her family. The research process at this moment was taking longer than I had expected. At this stage, I had already purchased six disposable cameras. The sixth one was a 'backup', in case Thabiso quickly recovered or Tshepo came back or I could finally get hold of Senzo. But this did not happen. However, I was able to secure a meeting with Lorraine for the following day to hand her a camera and a brief so she can commence with the project. A few days later I received another call from Yolander who informed me her trip with her family was postponed and would like to continue with the project. She was accepted back into the project and carried on from the photos she had earlier taken on her camera.

The participants had a full seven days to complete the project. Rodreck, Leneance and Norma-Jean who started on Tuesday the 15th returned the cameras on Tuesday the 22nd, while Lorraine and Yolander who started on Thursday the 17th returned their cameras the next Thursday, 24 June 2010. Even though Yolander got a camera on Tuesday, I permitted her more time until Thursday, as I told her to

stop using the camera earlier when she announced she was withdrawing from the project. The extra two days would therefore help her make up for the time lost when she thought she was going away.

All the cameras were collected and the photographs developed in preparation for the first interview which was with Norma-Jean. The interview was held at the Yeoville Recreation Centre. However, I had to contact the manager David Maredi to explain the project to him before a room could be secured for the interview to take place at the Recreation Centre. The first interview then commenced around 14h00 at the time when the participant arrived.

3.3.4   Autophotography questions

The formulated questions to ask the participants were informed by the conceptual framework previously discussed previously in chapter two. These questions were not to be verbally answered but through photographs. Below is a brief overview of the conceptual framework which is based on a set of literatures mainly on space, identity and environmental psychology (space psychology):

- Place identity
- Place attachment
- Sense of place
- Place meaning

Therefore, each of the questions attempts to extract one of the concepts (which can overlap) directly from the above framework. Furthermore the questions are intentionally broad and not too specific so as to allow a diverse response to them from each participant as well as encouraging them to be more explorative of their own neighbourhood. It is envisioned that this approach will also not shape the type of responses (in the form of photographs) from each participant. Some of the questions might even be reformulated by some of the responses received from the participants. They might bring forward other ideas about public spaces that I might have not been aware of and thus make the findings even richer in content. Hence the purpose of the broad questions was to keep an open window for anything new and valuable that emerges from discussions with participants to be incorporated into the research. The questions were as follows:

1. **What do you like most about Yeoville?**
   o To try and see how well they know Yeoville [place identity]

2. **What is your favourite place in Yeoville – and why?**
   o To begin to see how they perceive, and to see if they have been able to capture those perceptions on film [sense of place]

3. **What kind of people and/or activities would you find in that area?**
   o Similar to the above question, to try and extract perceptions, what certain things mean such as another person's character and the type of activities they engage in implies about them [sense of place]

4. **What are the places that are meaningful to you in Yeoville?**
   o To try and evoke meanings they hold about places [place meaning]

5. **Which places in Yeoville would you miss the most if you had to go away right now?**
   o This will help me to establish the level of emotional attachment to Yeoville, memories they have about the place [place attachment]

6. **What would you change about public spaces in Yeoville?**

o   Directly tackling the issue of perception, to find out what the current state of public space means to the youth, and how those meanings would change with the desired changes [place meaning]

In the brief, I indicated that two to four photographs could be captured for each question. This range would ensure that the data generated was manageable and that trends were clearly identified therefore aiding the process of analysis by not being time consuming. Having more than one photograph for each question would also give a better idea of how each participant thinks, what their perceptions are pinned on and what they hold dear with regards to public spaces.

3.3.5   Photo-interviews

These are photo elicitation sessions held with each participant after cameras have been collected and the photographs developed. The purpose of the photo-interviews was to clarify or extract thoughts, ideas and meanings behind each photograph as these are abstract ideas which would prove to be challenging to identify by simply looking at the photograph. According to Harper (1994), the process of

photo elicitation is a simple variation on the theme of open-ended interviewing. In approaching the photo-interviews, only four questions were prepared (listed below). The rest of the questions (as planned) emerged as the elicitations progressed. As Harper (1994: 410) clarifies, "in the photo-elicitation interview, interview/discussion is stimulated by and guided by the images". As the researcher, I had to listen very carefully to the participant's responses and identify key themes or ideas they would bring up in their responses. Further questions were drawn out from there. "As the individual interprets the image, a dialogue is created in which the typical research roles are reversed" (ibid: 410). I now had to be the one paying attention, the one relying on whatever information the participant chose to reveal and work with that.

I opted for individual interviews over group interviews as an attempt to ensure that each participant was at ease and could say whatever they wished without discomfort and peer pressure from the others. I kept in mind the fact that the participants were in the same class at school, that they knew each other and that they had presumably interacted with each other at some point. Whether that interaction was of a positive nature or otherwise, is not known, but I did not want

that interaction to influence the type of answers I received in the interview sessions.

I also assumed that if interviews were conducted in groups, participants might have given responses that were aimed at impressing the others and that the more 'shy' participants would be dominated by the others. I wanted to ensure that everyone would be given an opportunity to speak and that they would use it wisely to give a unique account and clearly elaborate on their images. Therefore I concluded that richer information would be drawn out if participants are interviewed individually without the others present. The interview sessions were digitally recorded, and some of the questions asked included the following:

- *What were you thinking when you took this picture?*
- *Were you comfortable?*
- *Why did you choose to photograph this subject/space?*
- *What does the photographed subject mean to you*?

The above questions as can be noted, are broad. They do not prompt for a particular type of answer and again they allow the participant to have control over their photographs, own them and reveal their thoughts on them. Further questions did emerge, depending on what was photographed, the participant's reaction towards the photographs, their expressions and emotions towards the subject in the photograph, as well as what they said about it even before a question was asked. The aim was to allow the conversation to flow in order that the important ideas could be drawn out. According to Bazeley (2007), interview questions not asked in such a way that they prompt superficial answers provide a starting point for a meaningful analysis. If questions prompt superficial answers, they become thin in their response and also fall into the trap of providing generic answers. My approach however, ensured that each response was unique as people experience spaces differently hence avoiding superficial responses from the participants.

Meetings (especially the interviews) were ideally held in Yeoville where the participants reside. This was aimed at ensuring that the participants felt as comfortable as possible so that they were able to freely communicate with me. I thought that if I brought them to the

Wits Campus they might be made to feel somehow inferior, coming to such a big institution with its bureaucracies and security measures such as CCTV. The idea was to make the participants feel at home, like they could say anything they wanted and not to have them feel they were watched all the time which I thought would influence their responses thus ruining the project. I thus concluded that the Yeoville Recreation Centre would be the ideal venue in which to conduct the interviews, as a known public space in the area.

In addition to this, they were participants in my project. I doubt that it would have been appropriate to rely on the participants to always find a way to arrive at Wits, for example, when I hand them cameras and when I collect them. It is my research and thus I felt the initiative should be carried by me to ensure that my data was safe always and that I do not charge anybody with the responsibility thereof. I also made hard copies of the photographs to avoid having to carry a display instrument such as a personal computer. The idea was to make the participants feel that their contributions in the project have materialized and that they were a part of something real and tangible. I tried to avoid all approaches that would make them feel intimidated.

I wanted to blend in and appear as one of them even though I was conducting research. This approach proved to be fruitful.

As hinted at earlier, the interview sessions were recorded on a tape recorder to ensure that the participants had my undivided attention when they spoke and that I was not distracted by activities such as having to write down notes which might further distract their thought process too. Not having to take down written notes also ensured that I was more aware of spontaneity in the participant's reactions to their own photographs as well as the subjects captured on film. I was able to read their reactions, be aware of body language and other expressions shown, depending on the topic at hand.

3.3.6 Honouring participants for their participation

At the end of their participation in the project, participants were awarded an incentive for their participation. This was done at the end and not even mentioned in the beginning of the project, as this information might have deterred the manner in which they responded to the questions and the type of photographs they chose to capture. I wanted the data to be as raw as possible and reflect reality as it

occurs. If incentives were given at the beginning it would have implied that I was buying them or securing a certain kind of relationship with them which might have biased the findings. Hence it was best to give out the incentive after their participation in the project came to an end.

The type of incentive given was something they could take home and keep, educational and nothing like money. I believed that something thoughtful and longer lasting would appropriately show my deepest appreciation for their participation as without them the project would not have made any sense nor be approved by the faculty.

3.4.1   Searching for a method of analysis

After fieldwork was completed, I had to decide on a method of analysis for both the photographs as well as the photo-interviews. Supplementing the photographs with the interviews had already begun to elucidate some of the meanings behind the photographs and this as a result guided what type of methods to adopt in analysing the data. Each participant had a unique style of responding which also necessitated me to compare their perceptions before formal analysis took place. Hence the three methods I had chosen for analysis were as follows: semiotics, content analysis and ethnomethodology. The three methods were chosen after much reading and consideration of implications with regards to this study. In the search for a method I went through other studies that had also adopted visual approaches as their research method in an attempt to see what method had been used to analyse the visual data.

3.4.1.1   The Semiotic Approach

The first method for consideration was the semiotic approach. This method is rooted in Semiology which is the study of signs and symbols (Penn, 2000). The assumption Semiology makes is that everything is a sign; it stands for something else in society and thus "instead of measuring isolated elements, symbolists and structuralists endeavour to arrive at a fuller appreciation of the visual representation by relating it to other social and cultural arrangements" (Ball and Smith, 1992: 31).

Regarding visual data, the analyst's task would be to identify each element in the photograph as a sign and study precisely what it signifies. This can be tricky particularly when working with real images that reflect reality where nothing in the photograph was planned. Hence the analyst would fall in the trap of analysing elements that are not part of the point the participant was aiming to make when the photograph was taken. Hence this method was not chosen as it would require much time due to the fact that each element in the photograph would need to be analysed and also due to the fact that the analyst would further require a cultural understanding of what each element signifies (Penn, 2000).

3.4.1.2   Content Analysis

Secondly, content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952: 18). It a very rigidly structured method with clear procedures to follow when conducting analysis. To content analysts, it is the obvious features of the message that are of relevance to content analysis, not its hidden dimensions (Ball & Smith, 1992). This implies that the analysis is forced to focus on what is said or shown in the data, not to take into consideration what has been omitted or why it might have been omitted in the process "because a content analysis has as its goal a numerically based summary of a chosen message set" (Neuendorf, 2002: 14). It does not account for further relations between those accounts, nor does it make further enquiries. My belief is that the omitted information is just as important because it can tell us about the participant's priorities and how that process of prioritisation takes place.

According to Ball and Smith (2003: 21), "content analysis is also primarily a quantitative technique in that it aims to establish the frequency with which certain categories or themes appear in the material investigated". Hence it assists in exposing what the
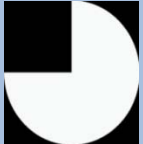
participant emphasises but fails to explore why that is the case. This is why I have decided to go further by introducing a qualitative aspect into content analysis. I have gone further to explore how one's experiences in Yeoville have shaped the way they see certain things and how an emphasis on a theme has come about. This is why content analysis was favourable in analysing the photo-interviews in this study because it has allowed me to monitor both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the data to be analysed.

3.4.1.3 Ethnomethodology

Finally, "ethnomethodology is the study of the methods people use for making sense of their everyday experience" (Ball and Smith, 2003: 61). The method becomes valuable in this research due to its character of highly valuing the native's point of view (ibid). The method assumes that the participant knows more and the researcher thus relies on him/her to reveal all the information. When revealed, this point of view becomes the ultimate, there is no other truth over what the participant has provided because he/she knows the environment better – this is where his/her everyday life unfolds. The method is thus valuable in this research as it deeply concerns itself with experience.

Moreover, "where everyday social life is normally taken for granted, the ethnomethodologist turns this into an object of reflection" (Francis and Hester, 2004: 25). The ethnomethodologist maintains that there is something unique about how individuals perceive their environments and this can only be uncovered if those everyday experiences are reflected on. Hence this method has also been chosen to aid in the analysis of the images in my study as it directly deals with experience, as I believe that experience is essentially the influent of perception. We perceive what we see or now based on what we might have experienced or heard of in the past.

Table 1 - Comparing the different methods of analysis

Method of analysis	Description	Pros	Cons	How can it be applied?
Semiotics	▪ Semiology – the study of signs and symbols. ▪ Signifiers and signifieds ▪ others similar to the semiotic approach: 1. *Symbolic approach* 2. *Structuralism*	▪ Pursues meaning, in a cultural context ▪ Comprehensive in its approach, examines all elements of the data	▪ The signified is often ambiguous, differing from person to person ▪ Required to identify all of the elements in the image and analyse individually, requiring further cultural knowledge	▪ I would have to identify *all* elements in each photograph, and analyse individually, use data from photo-interviews to strengthen analysis
Content analysis	▪ "A research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the *manifest* content of communication" (Berelson, 1952: 18) ▪ It is the obvious features of the message that are of relevance to content analysis, not its hidden dimensions (Ball & Smith, 1992)	▪ Gives a good representation of trends, frequencies ▪ Objective method – no interpretation of data required ▪ Systematic and standardised – thus easier to organise information	▪ Fragments data through its categorisation ▪ Becomes difficult to draw out meanings from the whole data set ▪ Neglects the rare and absent	▪ Monitor frequencies and links occurrences to what is said in photo-interviews, introducing a qualitative element into it, *OR* ▪ Categorise photographs (according to questions), but not invite frequencies – use photo-interviews data instead
Ethnomethodology	▪ This is the study of the methods people use for making sense of their everyday experience – highly values the native's point of view (Ball & Smith, 1992)	▪ Studies culture and how people perceive their environment ▪ Reflective method – deeper engagement with participants, emphasises process	▪ Appears to be more of an approach to research than an approach to analysis – therefore failing to analyse the photograph	▪ Method could be very useful when it comes to writing the analysis itself (after observing the photo and analysing interviews)

3.4.2   Autophotography: challenges

The first major challenge with the method of Autophotography is that it is very costly. Costs incurred involved the following:

- Purchasing disposable cameras

- Developing the photographs

- Purchasing a voice recorder

- Travelling to Yeoville on a near-daily basis

- Purchasing airtime at least twice a day

- Making printouts [briefs, consent forms, notes, etc.]

- Purchasing snacks for interview sessions

Other costs were miscellaneous, such as using a public phone when I did not have airtime at that moment. Most of the time I had to make phone calls to the participants to organise meetings, remind them of meetings in the morning and informing them again when I arrive in Yeoville. About 95% of the time I had to call them and do so again when they did not arrive at the agreed time.

The second challenge I experienced was the fact that things never go exactly as planned. About 90% of the time the participants were late for meetings – by an hour, over an hour at times. I was thus forced to wait until they finally arrived. I also avoided complaining about their late appearances as I wanted to ensure that they were comfortable at all times – even if it meant them choosing to arrive at their own times. I wanted to make them feel as though this was their project too, as an attempt to try and have the findings as informing as possible.

The third challenge experienced with this methodology is that sometimes not all the photographs come out in the developing process. Some of the photographs do not get printed. This means that data is lost before the researcher is able to see it. This further implies that I was forced to rely on the available images and could not ask the participants whose photographs have not been printed to go take new shots as time was running out. This trend seems to be common with disposable cameras, but the images that do get printed are of excellent quality. If there was a way to minimise this occurrence I would have warned the participants but that knowledge was not available to me at the time. It was often frustrating to discover that

more pictures were taken for a particular question but they are not there to be discussed.

The fourth challenge encountered was related to the venue we had chosen for the interviews – the recreation centre. Even though I had met the manager and briefed him on the project, the message was not passed on to the rest of the staff – security guards and the caretaker. Hence at times the interview sessions were invaded, being asked what I was doing, and forced to change rooms as they were booked. However this was not the impression I received when I first arrived at the centre. I did not imagine that rooms had to be booked and neither was I informed about such processes. At another time I could not secure a room at all and the interview had to be postponed as they were busy with construction within the venue. The library was not an option as silence is an order therefore permitting no opportunity for discussions.

Lastly, the Autophotographic project requires researchers with certain traits. The method is unpredictable and things could go wrong at any moment. A researcher firstly, has to have patience. They need to be able to work around the times that suit the participants. They need to be able to not rush the participants because anything of this nature could affect the way they would respond to questions in the photo-interviews. The researcher further has to be diligent and be willing to compromise as the need arises, such as when participants quit the project or something unexpected happens. The process essentially involves managing people with their personal lives. Hence there is an opportunity for things to go wrong but it is how the researcher addresses those situations which give value to the project. Without these qualities the project might take another turn which would not be favourable.

3.5   Conclusion

Autophotography is a demanding method and requires the researcher to be dedicated with a goal in mind. The method is time-consuming – from the moment fieldwork commences until the end of the analysis. This is be due partly to the fact that after photographs are taken, photo-interviews still have to be conducted to engage deeper with the material at hand.

The planner also needs good communication skills to ensure that participants are made to feel comfortable and that there is leverage between him/her and the participants. These considerations further open the gates to establishing brief autobiographic backgrounds for each participant to better understand the way they perceive spaces in Yeoville.

Framing Youth Portraits 4

4.1   Introduction

The following chapter sets out to tell the story of each participant chosen in this study. These are five distinct individuals with differing social and cultural backgrounds. The stories are more biographical, which intend to document each participant's perceptions of Yeoville from their earliest memories. This is done in order to have a solid background of each participant's perceptions and to also begin to note how some of those perceptions were constructed.

For each participant, the chapter first presents some of the photographs they have taken during the study while biographic and perceptual inserts from the photo-interviews dominate the remainder of the discussion for that participant.

Norma-Jean was born in Zimbabwe and first came to South Africa in 2000 when she was seven years old. On her arrival she lived in Diepsloot, north of Johannesburg and then later relocated to Pretoria. Before she permanently moved to Yeoville in May 2009 she seasonally came to visit over holidays and then return to Pretoria when schools reopened again. She does not refer to her memories back in Zimbabwe, to a great extent possibly as she was still quite young when she left. But she does make strong and vivid comparisons between Pretoria and Yeoville:

Me: "What did you think of South Africa, when you came here, what were some of the changes that you hadn't seen or experienced from back home?"

Norma-Jean: "I wasn't free..."

Me: "Where, here [Yeoville]?"

Norma-Jean: "Yeah, here, as I used to be"

Me: "How so?"

Norma-Jean: "You know, there's this saying which goes: if you go to a Roman country, right? You have to adopt their styles, do everything that they do in order for you to be part of them, and that's kind of challenging, you see, if you're used to your own stuff"

Me: "Yeah, like the way you were brought up and what you used to do and whatever..."

Norma-Jean: "[*interjects*] Exactly! Yeah, so..."

Me: "What were some of the things that you were forced to adopt, in order to try and fit in and be one of them?"

Norma-Jean: "The languages!"

Me: "Yeah?"

Norma-Jean: "Yeah!"

Me: "What language could you speak when you came here, just English?

Norma-Jean: "English and Ndebele"

Me: "Yeah?"

Norma-Jean: "Those two languages"

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Norma-Jean: "Yeah, so like the languages. You know mostly in places like Diepsloot, Pretoria, you find there are mostly *Tswanas, Sothos* there..."

Me: "In Pretoria, yeah..."

Norma-Jean: "People don't know, they don't know Ndebele. That's one big problem..."

Hence the language barrier was one of the biggest challenges she had to deal with when she first came to South Africa. She further asserts that this is exacerbated by the fact that some people are arrogant and do not want to learn [other] African languages. However, one is compelled to learn their language so that communication can take place. However Yeoville was quite different to the previous experiences she has had in Diepsloot and Pretoria:

Me: "Did you manage to make friends, though?" [in Pretoria]

Norma-Jean: "Yeah I did. I did..."

Me: "Easily?"

Norma-Jean: "Not quite easily, 'cause I was always at home, just locked myself inside. But after some time... yeah. But I came free when I came here [Yeoville]"

Me: "Yeah..?"

Norma-Jean: "Here you meet *Ndebeles, Shonas*[2], whatever..."

In her relocation from Pretoria to Yeoville, Norma-Jean maintains that she became more liberated than she was before. Liberated in a sense that she no longer felt like she was alone, mainly because there so many other people that are from Zimbabwe as well as other African countries found in Yeoville. In Yeoville when she communicated with people in English, she was not thought of as boastful or arrogant – which was the perception people had of her in Pretoria, whilst that was the only language she could speak. But in Yeoville, so many other people speak English so she was free in those terms, enabling her to finally identify with other people easily. This is why she appreciates the diverse cultures and lifestyles that are found in Yeoville, and

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[2] The *Ndebele* tribe originates from the eastern parts of South Africa while the *Shona* tribe from Zimbabwe.

further maintains that this is a way of learning, about other people and thus argues that the diversity found in Yeoville is a good thing.

In the brief time that I had spent with Norma-Jean, I found her to be well spoken. She clearly articulates ideas from her mind and looks below the surface of things. In relation to public spaces and the task given to her and the other participants, her concerns are mostly around the environmental quality of public spaces in Yeoville. She worries about the pollution, the degrading nature of buildings, streets and parks. Hence she is conscious on those grounds and I think this is the case as she has three younger brothers whom I presume she is mostly responsible for. Judging from the interviews, it does not seem like her parents are around very much and thus she often steps up to be the 'grown up' in the family. She appears to be responsible too as she talks about how all these environmentally negative elements in Yeoville could affect one's health.

Me: "Were you comfortable taking this photo?" [the first photo above]

Norma-Jean: "No!"

Me: "Why not?"

Norma-Jean: "'Cause the place stinks. I wasn't comfortable"

Me: "Yeah..?"

Norma-Jean: "Yeah and if someone is passing by and saw someone of my calibre inside here taking this photo, it's not good"

Me: "[*I laugh*] What do you mean 'someone of your calibre'?"

Norma-Jean: "Yeah someone, no! I'm just not fit for to be in such a dirty environment..."

Leneance was born in Diepkloof, Soweto, and relocated to Yeoville in 2003 at the age of ten. Together with his parents, he had been staying with his grandparents until they moved to Yeoville. His initial impressions of Yeoville were shaped by his mother as well as his own thoughts as a child:

Me: "How did you find Yeoville when you first came here, though, how was it?"

Leneance: "At first, you know... *eish*... you see, my mother, she was too... too protective [*laughs*]. I never got a chance to go out and make some friends"

Me: "She preferred you to stay indoors?"

Leneance: "Yeah..."

Me: "Did you like that?"

Leneance: "Yeah... [*hesitant*], it was fine, because she was teaching me a lesson. I used to come back late from school"

Me: "But why was she over-protective though, what was she worried about?"

Leneance: "Well, she was worried about the streets, especially Rockey Street there..."

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Me: "So why was she worried about Rockey?"

Leneance: "No there... there are too many drunkards there [*laughs*]"

Leneance also maintains that Yeoville is a safe place, as compared to its neighbouring areas, Hillbrow and Berea. According to him, crime levels are lower and only apparent in *some* parts of Yeoville and only committed by *some* people and not everyone. While in Hillbrow one can get killed and other people would not even intervene or try to help. He is thus presenting Yeoville as a much better neighbourhood with a sense of community where residents care about each other. These are the perceptions he holds of Yeoville as a whole, having lived there for seven years.

Me: "But why do you think that Yeoville is much safer than Hillbrow and the other... Berea?"

Leneance: "No, Yeoville is a small place..."

Me: "So most people are kind of..."

Leneance: "[*interjects*] Yeah most people are, kind of, here and they live together, they are related..."

Similar to Norma-Jean, Leneance commends Yeoville for its character of cultural diversity – having a concentration of different nationalities from diverse African countries. He maintains that this is a positive feature of Yeoville because people have an opportunity to learn from each other – their cultures and the different customs they practice. Another reason he prefers Yeoville over the neighbouring suburbs is that Yeoville is a fairly youthful neighbourhood. He thus feels he can identify with other youth members, as compared to Hillbrow and Berea where most of the residents are adults.

Leneance is very clued-up about Yeoville. He knows where everything is and how to get there. This became apparent even during the workshops at their school as discussed in the previous chapters. His perceptions of public spaces in Yeoville are anchored around the aesthetic quality of public spaces in the area. He wants to see Yeoville evolving into a beautiful and attractive place that he can tell everyone about. He therefore thinks that there is a lot that can be fixed in the area in order to make it more favourable for tourists and for him to be proud of living in such a neighbourhood as well.

Leneance appears to worry about the impressions of Yeoville visitors get when they visit the area. He wishes to have them perceive Yeoville as a decent place in which they would want to visit again hence he has identified negative features of Yeoville in his photographs as well as positive features which he hopes would spread all across the entire neighbourhood. An example he identified is the Rockey Corner mixed-use building,and wishes that the rest of Yeoville would be just as "modern":

Me: "How do you think Yeoville, as your favourite place as a whole, would change if all the buildings, or most of them were changed to have this kind of character?" [second photograph above]

Leneance: "You know, *the vandals*[3] don't like clean places so they will move away... [*laughs*], and you'll be finding, like you know, tourists coming to the place [Yeoville]"

According to Leneance, Not only will the improvement of physical characteristics of a building enhance the aesthetic qualities of Yeoville as a whole, but it will also help alleviate crime levels in the area. His response in the above discussion implies that crime is mostly associated with places that are deteriorating, but if this condition was altered, petty crime levels would also be alleviated.

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[3] The 'vandals' is a name given to a group of petty robbers in Yeoville.

Rodreck was born in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe and first came to Yeoville in December 2008. He makes very interesting comparisons between Yeoville and Harare and holds that although he likes Yeoville, there are things that he still likes about Harare. He also states that Yeoville is safe and comfortable compared to other areas in Johannesburg.

Me: "How do you find Yeoville?"

Rodreck: "Oh... as from what I hear from people, I find it different"

Me: "What have you heard from people?"

Rodreck: "Mostly people, they criticise this place, like "it's not a good place, you meet too many thieves", so... I think it's a safer place..."

Me: "Is it?"

Rodreck: "Comfortable... especially if you're a foreigner... you don't feel lonely, you see, unlike if you go somewhere far like Soweto there, you really feel like you're alone that side..."

He also provides an interesting comparison of his experiences in Yeoville to back home in Harare, where he often visits as he still has family members living there. He mentions the type of things which he has seen in Yeoville, which would not be acceptable in Zimbabwe.

Rodreck: "The changes is like, in people you know, the behaviour as compared to here, and the culture as well..."

Me: "What's it like in Zimbabwe? I'm just trying to get a picture because I haven't been there yet"

Rodreck: "Well, in Zim it's kinda like... there are... more like behaved guys you see..."

Me: "Yeah... the guys there are well-behaved?"

Rodreck: "Yeah... you may find out here you can speak any language... yeah, like freedom of speech, you can talk any word in the street, like any vulgar language, you see... and like, in Zim there... when you talk, like if I find a younger person than me speaking a vulgar language, I can... punish him, and do something else"

Me: "[*I laugh*] how would you punish him?"

Rodreck: "Like, anything like, to ask him or... "can't you... see that what you're saying is not meaningful?", or something like that, you see..."

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Rodreck: "And also, as well, there are... there's not much of killing and stuff like that... even fighting, you cannot fight that side. If you fight, if an older person meets you, know that you're in trouble..."

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Rodreck: "And also, like, the schools, they are very strict at schools"

Me: "Strict in what way?"

Rodreck: "Like uniform... everything. The behaviour of schools, punctuality, everything... Do you know that... having, like long... long hair is not allowed for boys, you have to cut, so if you..."

Me: "Like the hair that I have?"

Rodreck: "Yeah, like the one which you have. They might even say "go back home and have a cut.""

In the comparison made between Yeoville and Harare above, Rodreck appears to criticise the "South African way of doing things" – the lack of discipline amongst the youth in public spaces even in controlled environments such as schools. His comparison seems to almost imply that in Yeoville there is too much freedom which is actually ruining everything. Even though a part of him does not have a problem with this freedom, I felt he was bringing in some traits or elements from back home and picking up new ones here [in Yeoville] to proceed as a youth member in the area. For him, this is what makes Yeoville interesting because it a place which enables learning – not only at school, but from other people as well.

The perception Rodreck holds of the education system in schools here in South Africa is based on what he has observed at his school. His perceptions are driven by his motivation for being in South Africa, which is improving his life and being successful in the future. He thus

wants to be able to demonstrate to the people back home what one can become though education.

Me: "Are you planning to go back home anytime soon, like to go work there maybe"?

Rodreck: "Yeah... I'll stay here for some time... 'cause home is not nice to go back there when you have nothing, you see? It's better to go that side when you have something..."

Me: "Something like what... like money, like..?"

Rodreck: "[*Interjects*] like money, rides, like housing... something like that"

Me: "Why is it not good to go back home when you don't have... say, any of those things?"

Rodreck: "'cause... when you go that side, right? People, they'll be more shocked. They'll be like: "so this dude was in South Africa, right? But what did he go and do that side??" That kind of thing, you see... 'cause they'll be expecting to... 'cause we're here to invest for our lives, right? 'cause if it wasn't for investment, I could have just stayed at home [Zimbabwe]..."

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Rodreck: "And as well, like, I have... the other thing also, even though I cannot invest for my life, at least if I have more education, like a lot of degrees and stuff, when I go back home I'll be knowing where to start, you see... I can just put my qualifications... yeah, you see"

The intentions and the personal ambition he possesses have gone as far as shaping the way Rodreck interacts with public spaces in Yeoville. He always wants to learn something, adopt ideas valuable enough to him to help at some point later in his life. This is why he perceives the Yeoville library and Hotel Yeoville as valuable resource centres, places where he can gather knowledge and also have an opportunity to interact with other people that also pursue knowledge by using the available services such as the internet.

Hence, Rodreck is concerned mostly about personal growth as an individual, and he maintains that being in South Africa (Yeoville) is a good place to achieve that. The most important tool for that personal growth is education. He thinks that this is very important for the youth to be successful, as most of the successful people he knows have it – and therefore without education, one cannot get anywhere in life. This is something he stressed quite a lot, explicitly, and mentioned some of the benefits of securing good education. Therefore to him, public open spaces are good in a sense that they provide a balance to all the studying and serious activities he conducts that require concentration. He maintains that going to parks, watching people and taking walks in the neighbourhood help in clearing one's mind.

Lorraine relocated to Yeoville in 2008 from Durban where she was born and went to boarding school for most of her primary school years. For her, coming to live in Yeoville therefore implied freedom, no more boarding school rules and restrictions. In Yeoville she would live with her mother, whereas before she would briefly visit over school holidays and then leave for Durban again.

> **Me:** "What were your first impressions of Yeoville when you came here..?"
>
> **Lorraine:** "The time I came here... like [*pauses*], it was fine 'cause there, *eish*... where I used to live, it was boring, very quiet place, then here..."
>
> **Me:** "Did you enjoy that?" [the transition]
>
> **Lorraine:** "Yeah, I enjoyed it, 'cause I came here and that's where I made a lot of friends..."

Hence Yeoville was, for her, the first real attempt to improve social skills, where they would be sharpened and where she would interact with people that were not necessarily in her school. However, Lorraine hardly elaborates on her statements – which were normally very short such as one-word responses. This made it difficult to pin down her train of thought, and it took a while before I finally began to stitch the pieces of answers together to make sense of everything. A considerable number of her responses were also not verbal, but gestured, and some revealed through general body language. She was quite cautious in her responses, holding back to an extent.

Another aspect which I think contributed to the lack of flow in conversation was the fact that her communication skills were shallow in effectiveness. She struggled to find words. At some point I even encouraged her to communicate in Zulu (her home language), which also seemed to make her a bit uncomfortable. Perhaps she wanted to show me that she can also communicate in English as well as the other participants, or that in Zulu she would be inclined to revealing more, which I concluded she was not willing to do. Hence most of the time I had to use examples to explain certain things, as well as referring to my own experiences to demonstrate how she can respond to questions. Nonetheless, she made an interesting interviewee.

She is interesting because she asks questions back. So I took advantage of this and painted as vivid a picture of whatever she asked in attempt to let her know that it was okay to tell everything – talk about emotions and revisit memories. It was starting to work, but time was running out. Her main concern appears to be more about personal relationships, their value – even though this is not something she openly discusses, but it is implicitly stated and given away through body language. She mentions friends several times, and her mother, father. She also mentions places in which she has met some of her first friends when she came to Yeoville two years ago, as well as boyfriends. In the following conversation she was talking about her first boyfriend in Yeoville, who left for the Eastern Cape, and now maintains that this area in the park (shown in the last photograph above) is still meaningful to her.

> **Me:** "Okay, uhmm... this place is also meaningful to you, in the whole of Yeoville... what... how so? What kind of meaning does it hold for you?"
>
> [*silence*...]
>
> **Lorraine:** "[*clears throat and giggles*] again, I met my first boyfriend by the time I came here." [Yeoville]
>
> **Me:** "Here?" [*pointing the park*]

Lorraine: "Yah."

Me: "Serious?"

Lorraine: "Yah!"

Me: "Oh so Anele is your second one?"

Lorraine: "Yah..."

Me: "The one that you met before Anele was in the park…?"

Lorraine: "Yah... by the time I came here in Yeoville...'

Me: "In 2008?"

Lorraine: "Yah."

Me: "Okay, about how much time did you have in Yeoville when you first met him?"

Lorraine: "Hmmm... how much time?"

Me: "Yah, like, were you only here for a week, and then you met him, or like a month and then you met him, or..."

Lorraine: "[*interjects*] maybe two months."

Me: "Two months?"

Lorraine:"Yah."

Me: "Wow, okay... did you like him?"

Lorraine: "...'cause I used to hang... here with friends, yah."

Me: "And then one day you met him..."

Lorraine: "Yah."

Me: "What was that like?"

Lorraine: "'twas good." [*giggles*]

To her, it appears that the value of public spaces is that "enabling" feature they provide – enabling people to come together and interact. This is what came across as the most important thing to Lorraine, the outdoors and interacting with people. But she knows how to prioritise, depending on moments and what she has going on at that time. For example, she said that they used to have parties at her school every Friday and she enjoyed that. But now she does not want that type of entertainment at school as she fears she might fail at the end of the year. As a result she has a good spatial configuration of Yeoville and it came through as being linked to social spaces – being away from home and meeting new people. From her shown interest in relationships, I attempted to capture further her understanding of the topic:

> **Me:** "Do you think relationships are important? Like... as youth members, how... why do we even want relationships?"
>
> **Lorraine:** "I don't know." [*giggles*]
>
> **Me:** "Why do *you* want a boyfriend?"

Lorraine: "I can't tell you." [*laughs*]

[*we both laugh*]

Me: "Okay, it's fine, it's fine don't tell me."

Yolander was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She first came to Yeoville around the age of seven years when she did her Grade one at school. She still visits Bulawayo frequently as she still has family members living there – her grandmother and cousins. Through her body language it became apparent that she still likes Bulawayo and has fond memories of the place, despite the fact that she came to Yeoville at such an early age.

Me: "At that age [7 years old], like, what were some of the differences that you noticed between, like Bulawayo and Yeoville? That sort of, like, transition..: 'I was in Bulawayo now I'm doing... I'm moving here, I'm growing up here, I'm doing school here, I have friends here...'"

Yolander: "Bulawayo... and Yeoville..?" [*contemplates*]

Me: "What are the differences?"

Yolander: "There's a lot of freedom, you see..."

Me: "Where, Bulawayo?"

Yolander: "Yeah, Bulawayo there's freedom, even here. I think here it's..."

Me: "But which place has more freedom?"

Yolander: "Here!"

Me: "Here?"

Yolander: "Here."

Me: "Freedom in terms of what though? Like... give me an example..."

Yolander: "[*contemplates*] like... walking around, roaming around."

Me: "That type of freedom? In Bulawayo you can't freely walk around?"

Yolander: "No, you can't..."

Me: "Why not?"

Yolander: "[*pauses*] the police, you know... and they're just too strict."

Yolander was the most contemplative of all five participants selected for this research. She was willing, and easily revisits her memories. She

paints a vivid picture of her childhood in Yeoville, the way she grew up, what it was like – and remembers the friends she grew up with as well as the kind of things they would do together, even the pets they kept. She is fond of these memories and wishes to relive them if she could. The building shown in the photograph (third photograph) bears meaning to her as this was her first home in Yeoville, the place where she grew up and made her first friends.

> **Me:** "Uhmm... so what still makes it your favourite place? [the building she grew up in] What kind of memories do you have?
>
> **Yolander:** "Uhmm, 'cause it's... see behind the flat, that's where..."
>
> **Me:** "On the other side?"
>
> **Yolander:** "Uh-huh! There's, uhmm, my best friend since, like... crèche"
>
> **Me:** "Yeah... your best friend lives there... on the other side?
>
> **Yolander:** "Uh-huh! And I used to, like, sneak out, you know [*laughs*], and go there 'cause it's like, there's some kind of a... garage, so you can jump there then go inside that house."

Me: "Oh... that's where you friend lived?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh! And she still lives there."

Me: "Oh okay, do you still visit?"

Yolander: "Yeah, I do."

• • •

Me: "But, what was it like growing up in here? This... this place, this... maybe even the streets, the building... or the neighbouring buildings, what was it like?"

Yolander: "[*contemplates*] it was... it was fun..."

Me: "What kind of things did you guys do?"

Yolander: "Uhmm... oh, they had... we had dogs."

Me: "You guys had dogs?" [you and your best friend]

Yolander: "Yeah, I had a dog and she had a dog."

Me: "Oh, okay..."

Yolander: "Uh-huh! So we used to go by her house, play with the dogs... and they, they've got a vineyard, by her house... so

we used to, it's like a vineyard, right? This is a vineyard [*demonstrates*], and there's swings down there [*laughs*]..."

She also has a clear idea of how one thing affects the other, particularly spatial elements such as land uses. For example she identifies the clubs and taverns in the photograph (first photograph above) and talks about how her church which is closely located to those clubs, is affected by the clubs. She mentions how drunk people would then destroy the church property, and often disrupt some of the services in session – which is why she does not like this part of Yeoville. She wishes to be as far away as possible from such areas – that have alcohol, because trouble often erupts from there.

Me: "Okay, so... we are talking about a club but it's not showing in the photo. What are you trying to communicate with this one? What don't you like about this area, or this space that's shown in the photo?"

Yolander: "There's a lot of, uhmm... of drug dealers around this place."

Me: "Really?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh! And too much alcohol."

Me: "Outside, or are you saying there's too much places that sell alcohol?"

Yolander: "How is that visible when you're on the streets, do people come outside drinking? 'cause I know it's illegal to be drinking in the streets."

Me: "[*interjects*] yeah, people come out drunk, drinking, carrying beer... and... they... I see teenagers coming out of those places, and its' not good... [*pauses*], and some girls, you know, they... they always pass by here 'cause they do prostitution, and they know that they gonna get people, you know..."

4.7   Conclusion

Public spaces are important as a reference to memories users hold. Without these spaces, it becomes difficult to recall past experiences as well as comparing what has happened in the past with current situations. Furthermore, one's introduction and orientation to certain spaces during childhood, for example prepares them for more different landscapes and settings on which new experiences can be based. The chapter has also shown how one's individuality and experiences add to the diversity found in public spaces. This leads to multicultural communities where one is able to learn from other locals. The information discovered in this chapter is intensely valuable and provides a base for the analysis of the data in the overall study.

• • • *Utterances removed*

Deciphering Perceptions, Revealing Meanings 5

5.1 Introduction

In proceeding with the analysis of the photographs and interviews, the process is shaped by the conceptual framework discussed in chapter two. To recap briefly, the drawn conceptual framework consists of four major concepts that have shaped the Autophotographic questions for the participants:

- Place attachment
- Place meaning
- Place identity
- Sense of place

Therefore the above concepts will be interrogated by discussing how each participant has responded to each of these concepts through the photographs taken together with dialogue in the interview sessions. Hence for one concept, there will be five different perspectives or responses to it which will further form the crux of the analysis. This is done in order to ensure that ties between the conceptual framework and the collected data remain strong and that findings would therefore respond directly to the proposed research question. For each concept, a total of five photographs are selected from each participant in an attempt to analyse the respective concept.

5.2 Place attachment

"It is this attachment that constitutes our roots in places; and the familiarity that this involves is not just a detailed knowledge, but a sense of deep care and concern for that place" (Relph, 1976: 37)

Norma-Jean

Me: "The tennis courts?"

Norma-Jean: "Well, this is the netball [*pointing*]"

Me: "Oh..."

Norma-Jean: "[*still pointing*] ...this is the tennis, that's the basketball. I can play tennis"

Me: "Okay, uhmm... why would you miss this place?

Norma-Jean: "'Cause this is where I play ..."

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Me: "Uhmm... why did you choose to photograph this place though, as one of the meaningful places you go to?"

Norma-Jean: "'Cause I go there to relax, play, socialise, stuff like that..."

For some of the youth, public spaces are valuable due to their ability to support interests and the ability to engage with others. Users of these spaces are given a choice as to what they wish to partake in and this is how the users have come to be attached to the public spaces.

Norma-Jean has emphasised the 'play' aspect of public spaces. She is well oriented in these spaces, she knows her way around them and this is portrayed in the confidence she demonstrates when she talks about the courts. She knows where all the other activities take place and how they relate to each other. Furthermore she is aware that public spaces do not get used for one purpose. Hence her attachment to these places is rooted in the fact that there is a choice of activities when one visits these spaces and the spaces are robust as well – they can adapt to the many uses they are utilised for.

Hence, one finds that the first element that fosters places attachment is choice – for "any physical setting that provides many alternatives for the satisfaction of a primary purpose and the satisfaction of related and unrelated subsidiary purposes provides considerable freedom of choice" (Proshansky et al, 1970: 17). This is when a user is not compelled to engage in an activity they do not wish to on the grounds that there are no other available activities within that space. Thus, when the choice rests with the user, this is when place attachment becomes nurtured, when one feels one belongs – because there is also something for one in public spaces. Ethnomethodologists would expand as far as to see this as the way in which users understand the

daily experiences in these spaces. The experience Norma-Jean has with the courts has enabled her to have a clear idea of the spatial organisation of the courts. The value of her experience also contributes to her leisure of choice as to which activity she chooses to partake in.

Leneance

Photo 2 – Leneance's "childhood park"

Me: "Why would you miss this park if you had to go away right now?"

Leneance: "As I said, there isn't... when I was growing up they wouldn't allow me to go to... far, far places. This is where I used to go because it's much closer"

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Leneance: "I used to swing... play soccer... yeah, I like... I used to play soccer here with my friends"

Me: "So, now that you're grown, do you still go to this park?"

Leneance: "[*pauses*] Mmm... like yeah I go here, I, I come here to chill..."

Me: "To just chill and relax?"

Leneance: "Yeah because now soccer I play in *Bez Valley* so, yeah..."

Me: "Why do you feel that need to just chill though? Like, you would go here [the park] when what happens exactly?"

Leneance: "When what... [*falters*] like, when like... [*falters again*] when I'm like at home you know, I'll be like... having nothing to do, only watching TV. You know watching TV sometimes is boring so I come here to, like... just sit and, watching people do their stuff..."

For some of the youth members, their sense of belonging or place attachment is rooted in the memories and experiences they have encountered in certain public spaces. One becomes very aware of the dynamics in particular spaces such that there are no longer surprises when they visit the space because they have been there numerous times. This is nothing negative as it provides the grounding from which a user begins to feel comfortable and confident in a space to even partake in some of the activities therein. As Carr (1970: 523) holds, "while we may retain literal images of some significant events or places, we normally use a few key perceptual features to classify each unique experience under some simple, usually verbal, category". For Leneance, that category is recreation and the main activity he took part in from an early age was soccer. This directly mirrors Antonsich's (2010) assertion that people get attached to places as time progresses as this is when one gets to explore all the dynamics of a space until one chooses what suits one's needs within it. At a later stage, it is those categories that will inform one's perceptions of those same spaces.

Therefore, some public spaces foster attachment with their users as interaction has been taking place from an early age; memories have been made in those spaces which further trigger a deeper level of caring for a space. According to Relph (1976: 37), "the places of childhood constitute vital reference points for many individuals."These spaces become special and are used to recall particular memories and experiences (ibid). Furthermore, one begins to note that even though a user ages, some spaces still remain attractive to them although for different reasons. More memories are created, more reference points. The park used to be more useful for active recreation as a child and has now shifted to be more useful in terms of passive recreation. In terms of ethnomethodology, this park might even be a tool that users such as Leneance adopt to make sense of their everyday experiences in Yeoville. As apparent in both the photograph and the conversation, uses within public spaces become important. Ultimately, these are what draw users to the space.

Leneance: "When I need to be in peace, I can come here..."

Rodreck

Photo 3 – The views from Yeoville

Me: "What is so special about this view, though? Like, why did you even take the photo?"

Rodreck: "You know... this, I took it as in, like, I'll miss this... I told you I like these views, you see. You really see how beautiful the place is, mostly like, and like, natural features. We also need to see some man-made features like these ones – like housing... yeah"

Me: "How often do you go here?

Rodreck: "Well I normally go here, like... I told you I normally walk when I'm feeling... like on a Sunday. 'Cause Sunday I don't normally go to my friend's place, you see, so I go at this place... when I'm lonely, when I feel like walking, that's where I go..."

In some instances, place attachment is linked to geographic features of an area. According to Carr (1970), it is these features of the "man made" world that affect our interactions with our immediate environments. Rodreck acknowledges the elevation of Yeoville in the context of Johannesburg as a city and further elaborates on how he interacts with the space photographed above. From the discussion above one begins to understand Yeoville's physical features as having more psychological benefits in which they contribute to one's healing and mental well-being. Hence this shows that one is most likely to feel more attached to a place if it is able to help with resilience of the users as the need arises. Spaces are no longer just places where one is active but can also be passive and process their thoughts. This is one feature of how place attachment emerges between users and certain spaces.

The concept of place attachment alone hints that there is a certain emotional dimension involved and Rodreck, through the photograph and the discussion, has succeeded in demonstrating exactly what place attachment is and what some of its benefits are. In the photo-interview session, he cites his ideal activity to partake in when he is lonely and without friends. This is when he becomes contemplative, when he has a need to walk. Public spaces stand therefore as places that also afford contemplative, reflection and clearing one's mind. This is the psychological aspect of place attachment and pushes for the concept to be most apparent when public spaces are able to make one feel better psychologically and perhaps spiritually too. This is when one will know they have a clear place attachment with a particular locality and the public spaces within it.

Lorraine

Photo 4 – Yeoville swimming pool

Me: "Uhmm... why is this place meaningful to you?"

Lorraine: "'Cause... I met friends, again"

Me: "Here?"

Lorraine: "Yeah"

Me: "Oh, okay..."

Lorraine: "...and that's where I met my boyfriend"

For some of the participants, the value of public spaces in their neighbourhood lies in the fact that they are enabled to create relationships with other people. In this instance, Lorraine met her first boyfriend in Yeoville at the Yeoville swimming pool. She clearly remembers this place for that specific reason. Hence at times users feel like they belong, like a space is really theirs when they have positive things to say about it and when it has brought certain positive things into their lives too. One begins to feel at ease, being at home, and that emotional bond between a user and spaces becomes visible again.

Places also hold memories that we wish to remember in our lives, because they might be associated with good times, fun and enjoyment. It is when these reasons are found that we begin to see spaces through a new eye and eventually interact with them in a particular way as well. Leneance previously also referred to memories and experiences as contributing to his place attachment in Yeoville. What becomes interesting with Lorraine's perceptions is that she associates the Yeoville swimming pool with another person, thus introducing the feeling of being attached to a place because there are other people familiar to us within those spaces. In Lorraine's

experience therefore, place attachment is linked to both people and memories, adding another dimension to what Leneance has introduced earlier.

Yolander

Photo 5 – Sheikh Anta Diop High School

Me: "This is your school..."

Yolander: "It's my school"

Me: "What do you love most about your school?"

Yolander: "[*contemplates for a while*] Hmmm... [*contemplates further*]"

Me: "Nothing?"

Yolander: "[*interjects*] friends! Yeah... my two best friends"

Considering place attachment, Yolander emphasises friends, similar to the discussion with Lorraine in the photo above. The primary reason she has a connection with her school is not only due to the fact that she becomes educated, but because she is also presented with an opportunity to socialise with other people. There is a relational dimension to social life and education although she does not mention anything educational in the discussion. This could result from the fact that going to school is almost not optional, most teenagers in society are expected to do normal things such as going to school as part of growing up. Therefore, she has found other "extras" to do at school and those are emphasised as they act as a balance to what she is required to do when she is at school – learn.

In her responses and the accompanying photograph, it becomes apparent that social spaces are more important in developing a sense of belonging for Yolander than any other kind of space especially institutional. For her as a youth member, to connect with and begin to care deeply for a particular space, the space has to have a social element to it. This is where one can interact with other people, feel free and claim those spaces as they see fit. Toffer (1970: 33) maintains that "many people feel at home wherever they are with people of similar interests, regardless of the particular place they are in". It no longer becomes a matter of the location, but who is present in that location that enhances the feeling of being attached to a place. Through the discussion, Yolander has further demonstrated that it is possible to engage with a space for another purpose that it was not necessarily intended for. This is how meaning becomes embedded in spaces, how the youth becomes attached to places due to the flexibility of those spaces. User's needs are met.

5.3   Place meaning

"All places and landscapes are individually experienced, for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences, and intentions, and from our own unique circumstances" (Relph, 1976: 36)

Norma-Jean

Photo 6 – Yeoville Clinic

Me: "Tell me about the Yeoville Clinic. Why is it meaningful to you?"

Norma-Jean: "[*contemplates*] ...it's free"

Me: "Is it? Everything? *Everything*?"

Norma-Jean: "Yes..."

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Me: "So why is it meaningful, have you ever been hurt and... gone there for free?"

Norma-Jean: "No... But just for the community, for other people who are less privileged. So if you get to be sick or... anything like that, you just come here for free, yeah..."

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Norma-Jean: "You know, these people... even come, they always come to our school to talk about whatever issues – teenage pregnancy and stuff like that. If you're traumatised, you come here, you get counselling, and... all of that stuff. It's socially good, and I've never heard any bad stuff about this clinic here. It's always packed... not because people are running after cheap things but, the way you're handled, yeah... it's better for you to pay money as long as you're

gonna be handled well, rather than to go to a free place where you'll be more traumatised, you see..."

The concept of place meaning was very well expressed with regards to the generated images from Norma-Jean. She has identified the Yeoville Clinic as one of the meaningful spaces in the neighbourhood and further elaborated why that is. It appears places become important to one when there is a strong sense of community existing within them, when they serve a greater good beyond individual benefit. The clinic, as Norma-Jean has demonstrated, cares for the Yeoville community as a whole. Even though she has not had firsthand experience at the clinic, she has no doubt of its impact on the social lives of some of the Yeoville residents. She expresses care for the other person. This is emphasised on different occasions which implies that the health issue is something that is important to her. In the previous chapter I have discussed how she is concerned about the environmental quality of public spaces and how their dilapidated nature can affect one's health. In the above discussion she now extends that care to the entire community, the clinic is identified as an important tool in achieving a healthy community.

Carr (1970) states that the social significance or meaning of a place is easier to determine if an individual is familiar with that particular space. It is this familiarity with the Yeoville clinic that further enables Norma-Jean to note some of the inequalities that exist in the community. She is aware of the fact that not all its members have equal access to the same amenities and at times it is important, particularly in a neighbourhood such as Yeoville, to provide some basic services. Place meaning therefore, is not just about the individual in this case. Even though it is about how the individual perceives spaces, those perceptions do not selfishly embody that individual alone – but spread across the entire community they reside in. It can thus be deduced that a place would not have meaning – a positive meaning – if only a few of its residents had access to infrastructure and all the other amenities. A place comes to bear meaning only if benefits are distributed and are accessible by all residents in it.

Leneance
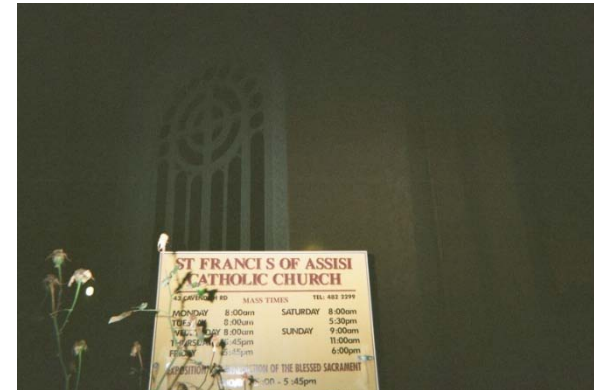
Photo 7 – St. Francis Catholic Church

Me: "So what makes it [your church] meaningful for you? I mean, you took all that effort and went to photograph it, what were you thinking, what were you trying to show me?"

Leneance: "Like, I grew up as a Catholic. Yeah... and this, these Catholic churches, they are very old churches. From back... back old days... they are still here"

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Leneance: "...this is where I grew up, in my church. It taught me a lot of lessons"

Me: "Like what though? You keep saying that church is good because it taught you a lot of lessons, what kind of stuff did they teach you that's helping you now?"

Leneance: "Like... the word of God, yeah. And uhmm... staying out of crime. They always preach that"

Me: "Is it?"

Leneance: "Like Sunday school, not in the church"

For Leneance, another meaningful place in Yeoville is his church as reflected in photo 7 above. He recalls how he grew up in the church and the role it has played in his upbringing. Once again he makes reference to memories like he did when place attachment was discussed earlier. The meaning his church holds for him today is influenced by those memories and the amount of information he managed to absorb at the time. It thus becomes evident that place meaning is not just about the present, it is also influenced by events that have taken place in the past, experiences one might have had as a user of those spaces. One bases their current perceptions of spaces to the experiences one has had in the past (Carr, 1970) as Leneance has demonstrated.

Further embedded into place meaning for Leneance is religion. This part of his life has in essence shaped the way he perceives the world today and the systems within it. As a child, he was fortunate enough not be exposed to societal factors such as crime as he spent most of his time in the church. Moreover, the way the photograph was taken in the evening may suggest that he still has access to the facilities even as a youth and still interacts with the place. It is as though meanings are accumulating as time progresses and will always be grateful to what he has learnt at this institution. Hence other forms of place meaning are shaped by institutions in society such as the church and the types of interactions that take place within that.

Rodreck

Photo 8 – Inside the Yeoville library

Me: "Another part of the library... what was the thinking? Why did you come to this space in the library as compared to the other one that you had earlier?"

Rodreck: "Mostly... what came into my mind was like this: uhmm, when you are being taught at school, right? Some of the things you might not understand it like that in firsthand information. You have to, to go and study. So I thought of this place as more meaningful because that's where you might go and sit down and read your notes, like where you didn't understand anything"

Me: "Is it comfortable though? Because I know some people prefer to study not alone, like in groups, or like listening to music. I... I can't do that, I also need to be alone, and quiet and study. Is this place comfortable for you?"

Rodreck: "Yeah it is 'cause unlike if you go at home, they mostly send you like, "do this, do this". If you got the book, there is another command coming – "come and do the dishes", 'cause we don't have a maid. So I have to do a lot of chores, that's why sometimes I don't even... I came, I sometimes come late this side [to the meetings]. So that time when I came early I was running from other chores..." [*we both laugh*].

The way that an individual attaches meaning to a place is sometimes done with reference to other places. One place might come to bear meaning for a user because it enables them to get away from another place which they do not necessarily want to be in at that time. Rodreck has documented such experiences photographically by capturing a shot of his 'alternative place', particularly when he needs to do school work. He finds the other place – home – to be a distraction when he needs to do schoolwork hence resorting to the quietest part of the

library. He is pushed into this space by other factors and the space thus becomes more meaningful on those grounds.

Furthermore, another factor that makes the photographed part of library more meaningful is the fact that the place acts as an extension of school. If he did not understand something, he knows that he can come to this space and better understand it through studying afterhours. However, this factor occurs more because of his actions (not understanding certain things at school) as compared to the initial one where he is attracted to the library due to the many chores he undertakes when at home.

Rodreck: "So this side no one tells you what to do..."

Photo 9 – Yeoville Park

Me: "This place is also meaningful to you, in the whole of Yeoville. How so? What kind of meaning does it hold for you?"

Lorraine: "[*silence... then clears throat and giggles*] again, I met my first boyfriend"

Me: "Here?"

Lorraine: "By the time I came here [to Yeoville], yeah"

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Lorraine: "I used to hang here with friends"

Me: "And then you one day met him?"

Lorraine: "What was that like?"

Me: "It was good! [*giggles*]"

In the photo 9, the quality of spaces as references to memories is more expressed. This photograph was taken exclusively to show where Lorraine met her first boyfriend when she relocated to Yeoville. The space has thus become significant for her since then and she remembers it for the same reason. This goes to show that for a place to be meaningful, it has to be able to prompt fond memories from one's past. Users need to feel that they can relate to the space because their memories can remind them of the past experiences they have had in those spaces.

The way that Lorraine feels about her boyfriend is even apparent through her expressions – both verbal and non-verbal. She expresses happiness in the above conversation, which implies the affection she holds for her boyfriend and has similar emotions about the park where

they met because had it not been there, they would not have met. Beyond the meaning the park holds, there are signs that she is attached to this space also because she used to relax with her friends here. She thus associates this space with two types of people and this is where meaning of the park is drawn from. The park is the uniting feature between her and her friends and well as her boyfriend.

Yolander

Photo 10 – Sheikh Anta Diop High School

Me: "why is your school meaningful? What does it mean to you... when you think 'school'... is there a certain, sort of like, role or purpose that your school plays in your life..?

Yolander: "[*interjects*] yeah! I mean... uh-huh!"

Me: "What's that?"

Yolander: "[*contemplates*] It's 'cause of uhmm, what's his name? Mr. Kilele. You know Mr. Kilele?"

Me: "No"

Yolander: "[*giggles*], Well he's the owner of the school..."

Me: "Oh, no I don't know him. What about him?"

Yolander: "Uhmm... well I don't know about others but I think for me, he's taught me a lot – through drama and... and school. And he... I've got a bursary, see..."

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Yolander: "And [*falters*]... the different people... you know, as teens, we share a lot of stuff"

Me: "Yeah... what kind of stuff, interests or..?"

Yolander: "Yeah interests, ideas, we share ideas, opinions and different stuff

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Me: "Is there a lot of people that are from different... sort of like cultures or like African countries..?"

Yolander: "[*interjects*] African countries. Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Congo, Mozambique..."

For Yolander, who is Zimbabwean, part of the learning process at school is through interaction with other students. This type of learning is different from the technical and rigid dimension embedded in the traditional meaning of school and she does not refer to this in her responses. Rather, she places emphasis on the diverse cultures and social backgrounds that are found in her classroom and maintains that this is an opportunity to learn about other people – through the sharing of ideas, interests and opinions. This is one attribute of the meaning her school holds, that it is more than just a traditional learning environment. One becomes more aware of other things and further learns new ways of interacting with other people.

Furthermore her school, Sheikh Anta Diop is a meaningful place to her as she has been granted a bursary to study there. The fact that she has listed the school as a meaningful space thus implies she does not want jeopardise this learning opportunity she has been granted as it is free, while other students are paying for the same learning. Yolander also makes reference to the head of the school who she asserts has been influential during her time at the school and this is another reason why the school bears such meaning for her. Place meaning, therefore is when spaces present the users with opportunities that others often do not receive, when there is a learning opportunity within that, particularly from the diverse cultures in our societies.

5.4 Place identity

"Place, person, time and act form an indivisible unity. To be oneself one has to be somewhere definite, do certain things at appropriate times" (Wagner, 1972: 49)

Norma-Jean

Photo 11 – Behind Shoprite

Me: "How does that make you feel though? [the dirtiness of the place, and the hobos]"

Norma-Jean: "[*sighs*] It's so... [*sighs again*]. You know, I can't walk past this place after 6 'cause all the hobos will be gathered here"

Me: "After 6 in the evening?"

Norma-Jean: "Yeah! They'll make a fire, and they'll be gathered here and sometimes when you pass along, they... you know, they do these funny stuffs that... [*sighs*]"

Me: "What funny stuff?"

Norma-Jean: "This other time, this other guys ran up to me..."

Me: "One of the hobos?"

Norma-Jean: "[*interjects*] Yeah!"

Me: "And what, chased you away?"

Norma-Jean: "No, and he kissed me on the cheek! Can you imagine?" [*we both laugh*]

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Me: "And you don't like it at all [the place], why? They're just trying to have a place to sleep"

Norma-Jean: "Okay... I get that. But ever since that guy ran after me, you know I've always... I hate this place. I hate it. I just hate it [*we both laugh*]. Maybe if he hadn't done that I would understand but..."

For Norma-Jean, her sense of place identity is established through the way she distinguishes herself from others such as the homeless people found in some parts of Yeoville. The photograph 11 demonstrates some of the spaces she finds to be negative features of her neighbourhood and she further goes to verbally elaborate on some of the impacts these spaces have. It therefore becomes apparent that place identity is not only uncovered through spaces one only likes or deems positive, but also the negative ones because being familiar and comfortable in a place involves knowing all aspects of a place. This is when users are pushed to alternative spaces they feel they can better identify with.

Furthermore, Norma-Jean demonstrates a saturated level of non-verbal communication at the subject under discussion. She sighs, exclaims and shows that there is no desire from her side to interact

with the homeless people, or be around the same spaces with them as shown in the photograph. Another face of place identity is therefore shown through the dynamics between people and the spaces they occupy. Where Norma-Jean is – socially – she does not see herself being in such an environment that unclean and occupied by homeless people. This factor forms part of the place identity she projects.

Leneance

Photo 12 – Rockey Corner

Me: "Are you very comfortable in this space?"

Leneance: "Yeah, this a very comfortable place"

Me: "What makes it comfortable for you?"

Leneance: "For me? It's clean. Now it's uhmm... more protected because I think there is a guard here"

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Me: "So what were you thinking when you took this photo, what was going through your mind? Why did you take this photo?"

Leneance: "It's a very good uhmm... view, like for these tourists [*falters*], to come and view this place"

Me: "...But how do you interact with it? Do you just look at it from far? Like, what makes it your favourite place in Yeoville, what you like most about Yeoville rather?"

Leneance: "Yeah, you know, there's a restaurant down there – it sells African food. That's what I like most about it"

For other participants, the notion of place identity is explored on a much broader scale. Leneance mentions tourists, which further implies he is comparing Rockey Corner (photo 12) to other places on a global

basis as tourists would be coming to South Africa from other countries for the World Cup tournament. The way in which he relates to Yeoville is therefore based on a global image which he, through the discussion above, implies can be found in Yeoville. Moreover, this image is better as African cuisine is served in Yeoville – even more reason to attract foreign people. Leneance emphasises this factor quite often, which makes him come across as a proud Yeoville resident.

The identity of Yeoville is further portrayed in a positive light through Rockey Corner's clean nature. With regards to place identity, one begins to note that it is drawn from comparisons with other areas (at ranging scales) as well as the physical conditions of that place. This is how Leneance as one of the youth members in Yeoville understands place identity and as these places are clean, he is able to interact with them more openly and be proud of it.

Rodreck
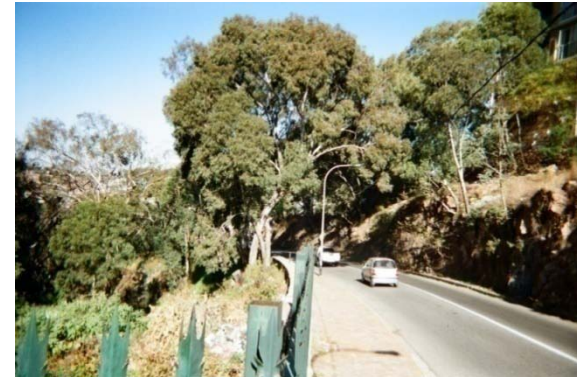
Photo 13 – Snake Road

Rodreck: "When I used to have my phone, I was going this side [the area photographed] to *Bertrams*. I was visiting this other friend of mine there, so... I had to meet those *vandals*"

Me: "Oh, you met the *vandals* here? [*pointing*]"

Rodreck: "Yeah, down there [*pointing*]. Even by, when I was taking this picture I was a bit scared"

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Me: "Why does it not make you comfortable? You said you were a bit scared"

Rodreck: "'Cause, you know when you have... as for my first year I wasn't scared as such 'cause I have never been to that place before. So, there was this guy who came just from this mountain, and then he was trying to get my phone. So... that day it was my first time experience such thing"

The discussion with Rodreck above reveals that some aspects of place identity are embedded in the experiences one has in certain spaces. Those experiences shape the form of rootedness in a place and in turn influence the way one interacts with it. Due to the incident of him being approached by a criminal in the pictured space, his whole perception of it has shifted. He is now no longer comfortable in that space and this has resulted in a sense of detachment between him and this space due to those previous unpleasant experiences.

Hence another element of place identity is linked to one's feeling of security. Where spaces are perceived to be more secure, there is an enhanced level of place identity compared to unsafe spaces where

place identity would be lower. One is not able to connect with a place, become attached to it if one is constantly made to feel insecure. This is why Rodreck now chooses to separate himself from the above space in Yeoville. This implies that those unsafe spaces do not coincide with the type of person he is, as one's identity is deduced taking into account the type of spaces one associates with.

Lorraine

Photo 14 – Inside the Game Shop

Me: "What do you like most about this space, the game shop?"

Lorraine: "I like it 'cause... most of the time if I'm bored I just go there... having some fun"

Me: "What would you do when you're there though?"

Lorraine: "Playing snooker, soccer box..."

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Me: "Is it a comfortable space for you?"

Lorraine: "Yeah, it is a comfortable space"

Me: "And what makes it comfortable for you?"

Lorraine: "'Cause... [*pauses*], there are no old people... [*pauses again*], even if the *vandals* are there, they won't do anything to us girls"

The *vandals* in Yeoville are well-known for petty crime mainly against the youth population. In the above discussion, Lorraine maintains that girls are not entirely the vandals' target. This therefore makes the game shop a safer environment for her and she willingly goes there fully aware that the vandals might be there as well. The security factor does not seem to be a concern to her as much as it might be to Rodreck and Leneance. Regarding place identity, this strengthens the fact that as people, we differ in our perceptions of spaces and we have certain elements we identify with in space, that other people might not.

Lorraine also mentions the fact that there are no adults at the game shop. This implies that she feels more comfortable and confident when she is with people that are within a similar age bracket as her. This hints that people, especially the youth, are more comfortable when they are not being observed. Adult supervision at the game shop would take away the comfort and freedom that is currently there, in Lorraine's perspective. Therefore, place identity becomes apparent when users of a space can identify with others on the grounds of age. There are more similarities than differences in this approach, with interests being one of them (Relph, 1976).

Yolander

Photo 15 – A string of clubs along Rockey/Raleigh Street

Me: "Okay, so... we are talking about a club but it's not showing in the photo. What are you trying to communicate with this one? What don't you like about this area, or this space that's shown in the photo?"

Yolander: "There's a lot of, uhmm... of drug dealers around this place"

Me: "Really?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh! And too much alcohol"

Me: "Outside, or are you saying there's too much places that sell alcohol?"

Yolander: "How is that visible when you're on the streets, do people come outside drinking? 'cause I know it's illegal to be drinking in the streets"

Me: "[*interjects*] yeah, people come out drunk, drinking, carrying beer... and... they... I see teenagers coming out of those places, and its' not good... [*pauses*], and some girls, you know, they... they always pass by here 'cause they do prostitution, and they know that they gonna get people, you know..."

Probing the photograph above, there are certain clues that imply Yolander as the photographer does not find this part of Yeoville attractive. She does not identify with it. There is a reasonable distance between her (where she was standing when taking the photo) and the subject, the nightclubs which are further down the street on the left hand side. This break or non-existent relationship is further emphasised by a physical edge between them, the street with cars aligned on the side. This hints that Yolander as a youth member in

Yeoville does not associate herself with such places, where there is alcohol and drunk people. Her identity as an individual does not match that of this particular space shown in the photograph, and that is why this part of Yeoville is not her favourite.

The types of activities that she outlines as being a part of this space also contribute to the reasons why she does not identify with anything in the space. According to Strauss (1970: 309), "streets acquire and keep reputations" which can either attract or repel users from them. For Yolander, the reputation of the above street is rooted in prostitution, drinking as well as drug-dealing and she does not wish to be associated with any of those activities. Place identity in this case, similar to Norma-Jean, means being aware of one's needs as an individual and knowing exactly where they could and where they could never be met. Yolander places more emphasis on the types of activities found here, more than the people – as Norma-Jean did.

5.5   Sense of place

"It seems a commonplace that almost everyone is born with the need for identification with his surroundings and a relationship to them – with the need to be in a recognisable place. So sense of place is not a fine extra art, it is something we cannot afford to do without" (Nairn, 1965: 6)

Norma-Jean

Photo 16 – Dunbar Street

Me: "Do you like your street, where you live?"

Norma-Jean: "[*interjects*] Yho! [*exclaims*], I love it! "Liking" is an understatement. This one? I really love it, yoh! [*exclaims again, we both laugh*]

Me: "Where is your street?"

Norma-Jean: "This one. [*points*, the street is shown running up-down in the photograph]"

Me: "What do they call it?"

Norma-Jean: "Dunbar"

Me: "What do you love about it so much?"

Norma-Jean: "Yoh! [*exclaims*], it's so quiet, you know it's... less vandals. When you're stressed, I advise you to come to this street – walk all... just take a taxi from Braamfontein [where I reside], you come, and you walk in the street. I tell you, you'll go back home relieved, yoh! [*exclaims*] I tell you"

Norma-Jean is very fond of her street, Dunbar. In fact, she was the only one who made a direct reference to a street in the entirety of Yeoville. Her passion and description of her street in the above conversation shows that she has a strong sense of place in this area. She finds it flawless. This is where she wants to be when she is stressed, when she needs to clear her mind. That is why she loves the street where she resides the way she does. The photograph also shows her (left) standing with a friend. This further goes to imply that she is totally free in this environment; it is the most comfortable space for her in the entire neighbourhood of Yeoville and is not afraid to invite people and share it with her.

Regarding sense of place, Norma-Jean's emotions and the way she interacts with her street of residence concretises the notion of sense of place and makes it more understandable. One begins to understand this very abstract concept by examining the bond, the knowledge about a place and finally the ability to choose an element one likes about a place. These are the three dimensions that have been found to define sense of place in a more practical manner. Without the evidence of a bond existing between the user and a place, a less positive sense of place would be demonstrated. In Norma-Jean's case however, sense of place rests in the qualities of her street and how she interacts with the place.

Leneance

Photo 17 – Hotel Yeoville/Yeoville library

Me: "This is your favourite place in Yeoville?"

Leneance: "Yeah. It's my most favourite place in Yeoville"

Me: "More than the Game Shop?"

Leneance: "Yeah, more than the Game Shop"

Me: "Why?"

Leneance: "Here... from here you get a lot of education. Yeah, you read... there's internet isn't there? You research about the world and everything"

Me: "But you can't play games like you can play games at the Game Shop?"

Leneance: "No here it's a studying place, you know"

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Me: "Do you find it better to work here than at home?"

Leneance: "[*interjects*] Yeah it's better to work here than at home because at home they'll be sending me to the shops you know, disturbing me and... yeah"

At times the value of the spaces one chooses to associate with rests in one's intentions (Proshansky et al, 1970). Leneance can clearly allocate different activities to different spaces, like he did for the library and for the Game Shop. He understands the value of this differentiation as he visits each space with different intentions in mind. There is something he can identify with in each space; hence the sense of place goes beyond identifying spaces and interacting with them. It further taps into the mindset of the user. This is the very basis on which a bond is created between space and the users as it is the moment when the user's intentions coincide with what the space offers, thus

establishing a positive sense of place. Leneance is also aware that he has to behave in a particular way when he enters the library. He states that the library is a study place, thus it excludes other activities that may be noisy. This is what Carr (1970) calls the environment program. Although people might go into certain spaces with plans, we still have to adapt our actions as we enter that space (Carr, 1970).

Similar to Rodreck, Leneance often uses the Library and Hotel Yeoville as an alternative space to home. There are some processes at home which they both do not appreciate, and that is being disturbed or given duties to do. The Yeoville library thus acts as a space in which they are free from parental supervision and where they can conduct their own tasks, which further nurtures a sense of place for the two participants. They know exactly where to go when an unfavourable task takes place at home. Thus a sense of place is also established when users are not coerced to partake in activities they would not willingly engage with. When users choose when and what to do in spaces, this is when we know sense of place between the two is achieved.

Rodreck

Photo 18 – Ground floor, Yeoville library

Rodreck: "You see, what comes in my mind when I look at this photo, it's more like I visit it [the library] like, when I want to read. Let's say when the exams are towards... when I'm towards exams, so that's mostly when I go. And also there's Yeoville library [*falters*], what you call? [*ponders*] Hotel Yeoville. I've got an account there, internet is free like if they give you the code and then you have to access your *Facebook*. So I can check my *Facebook* there for free"

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Me: "So, what does the library mean for you, this place?

Rodreck: "It's a more like, quiet environment. And also... [*pauses*] you see, what I believe in my life is like, education for me comes first and the other follows. So when I get in the library I mainly focus on my education, and then I have to read. That kind of thing..."

Education, for Rodreck, is of paramount importance. It is one of the reasons why he relocated to South Africa and the Yeoville library and Hotel Yeoville are tools to be employed in ensuring that his dreams come true. As Proshansky and Murphy (1970: 120) maintain, "perception develops positively in the direction of the reward, tending away from the region of failure". Rodreck is aware of the rewards of education which is success and explains why he perceives the library the way he does. He places a large amount of emphasis on this factor and the manner in which the photograph was taken concretises his argument. The photo was taken inside the library, which implies that he does have a certain level of interaction with the place and he is used to this environment. It is not foreign to him. This implies that for sense of place to exist, there has to be a relationship between a user and a particular space. In Rodreck's case, that relationship is based on his aspirations to be successful through studying, that is why he has that relationship with the library which further fosters a sense of place.

Furthermore, a sense of place develops when there is a balance between activities. The Yeoville library boasts different moods, where it is quiet and serious, while another part of it is less so. This is the Hotel Yeoville part where users of the spaces can take photographs of themselves with friends and access social networking sites such as *Facebook* as Rodreck maintains. One therefore begins to note that although users might appreciate a serious environment, a little balance with other social activities can also prove to be beneficial. This is when a sense of place develops, when users truly begin to actively interact with spaces and deepening their rootedness in the place (Relph, 1976).

Lorraine

Lorraine: "These are Rasta's"

Me: "These are Rastafarian people inside the market? Do you like or not like these people?"

Lorraine: "I like these people"

Me: "What do you like about these people?"

Lorraine: "I like their culture"

Me: "Really?"

Lorraine: "Yah!"

Me: "And?"

Lorraine: "And those things which they're selling here"

Me: "What do you like most about their culture? What have you heard, I don't know anything about them?"

Lorraine: "I like their songs... their dressings"

Some forms of sense of place in public spaces are more profound and complex to realise. Lorraine's sense of place is rooted in the richness in cultural diversity as well as the curiosity that comes with it. As people we often find ourselves in places where there are different kinds of people, and this presents an opportunity to learn from each other. Such spaces come to symbolise something new and may even be captivating because they are not like others we are used to experiencing. In photo 19, Lorraine presents a Rastafarian stall in the Yeoville Market and further expresses that she likes their culture.

This distinction immediately implies that the Rastafarian culture is external to her and she finds it attractive through the music Rastafarians play as well as the way they dress. A sense of place begins to develop based on their curiosity for what they are not familiar with. This involves both the people within that particular space as well as preconceived ideas about those people and what one might associate them with. Even though one might not relate to their activities, the sense of place exists due to the pride one holds in the diversity that they contribute to in Yeoville. The photograph is also filled with merchandise that is being sold by the Rastafarians, which enables the viewer to begin visually interacting with the merchandise through the way they are represented in the tight frame.

Yolander

Photo 20 – Yolander's first home in Yeoville

Me: "What makes this building your favourite place?"

Yolander: "This is the place where I grew up..."

Me: "Really?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh!"

Me: "Wow... when you moved to Yeoville, you moved in this building?"

Yolander: "Yes!"

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Me: "Uhmm... so what still makes it your favourite place? [the building she grew up in] What kind of memories do you have?

Yolander: "Uhmm, 'cause it's... see behind the flat, that's where..."

Me: "On the other side?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh! There's, uhmm, my best friend since, like... crèche"

Me: "Yeah... your best friend lives there... on the other side?

Yolander: "Uh-huh! And I used to, like, sneak out, you know [*laughs*], and go there 'cause it's like, there's some kind of a... garage, so you can jump there then go inside that house"

Me: "Oh... that's where your friend lived?"

Yolander: "Uh-huh! And she still lives there"

Me: "Oh okay, do you still visit?"

Yolander: "Yeah, I do"

For other users, a sense of place is entrenched in memories. They feel comfortable, at home and free when they have prior and positive experience with particular spaces. Such memories act as references for lived experiences and would shape the way they perceive and ultimately interact with a space in the present. For Yolander, this building (photo 20) was her initial form of introduction to Yeoville. It was her first home when she relocated to Johannesburg, the place where she made her first friends and from where she began to be a part of the Yeoville community. Hence sense of place in this instance is when one feels comfortable and that they have been long enough in a particular space hence making them feel more confident and encouraging better interaction with the space.

Furthermore, a sense of place is evoked through people who we share memories with. Having fond memories of other people alone can change the way one perceives spaces as it no longer becomes about the physical characteristics of that space, but the person in mind. Yolander makes reference to her childhood friends as well as the activities they used to partake in as children. It is these fond memories she holds which still make her feel at home when she walks along this street, when she visits people even today.

5.6　Conclusion

Public spaces are multi-faceted phenomena of the urban environment and it is the responsibility of the planner and designer to understand the different faces of space. This chapter has found that people choose to interact with spaces depending on the needs they have at a particular moment. This implies that one does not always look for the same thing in public spaces everyday but needs change shape according to an individual. This is the reason why it is important for public spaces to be flexible and be able to meet the needs of users. These revelations have important implications for the planner and much can be learned from the experience of this Autophotographic project.

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# Invoking the Autophotographic Planner 6

6.1   Introduction

The following chapter provides a transition between the analysis in chapter five and the evaluation of Autophotography as a method in the current chapter. The research question is answered by referring both to the analysis as well as outlining interventions towards the end of the current chapter.

This chapter is therefore divided into two parts. The initial part discusses how the chosen participants perceive spaces and what some of the perceptions of space were based on as gathered from analysis. These bases for perception are indicated in graph 1 and each respective issue is expanded on as the chapter progresses. This discussion is important particularly as it is a solid foundation on which the recommendations are based. This section is also important as it ensures that the rich findings of the study are not lost but further makes planners aware of how people perceive spaces, thus equipping them with the psychosocial knowledge to make appropriate interventions in public spaces. This information will also alert planners to current perceptions of public spaces to consider in providing new public spaces

The second part of the chapter focuses on the recommendations, which are strongly informed by the bases of perception discussed in the initial part of the chapter. The section engages with how Autophotography as a method can assist planners and designers in their practices as well as how the method can be applied for effective use. Six key points are outlined to support this, noting some of the challenges in the process but also highlighting the end product. In summary, the chapter discusses some of the opportunities for further research using innovative methods.

6.2   The basis of perceptions

The basis of perceptions
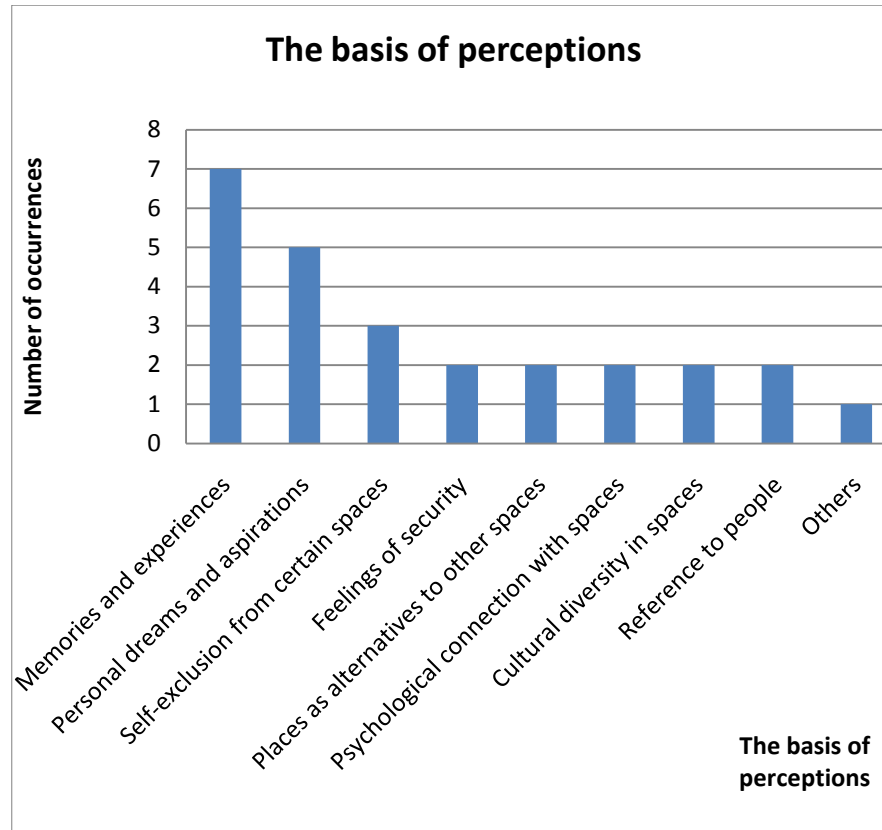
Graph 1 - The basis of perceptions

As cited earlier, the concept of perception is highly elusive due to its objective nature. To understand whether Autophotography could assist the planner in capturing youth perceptions of public space in Yeoville was not a simple task. The study had to first understand what informs those perceptions. From graph 1 above, the analysis demonstrates that most of the perceptions of public spaces in the area by the selected participants are based on the memories and experiences they have encountered (occurring seven times). At times, experiences from other spaces not photographed influenced interactions with some of the photographed spaces in Yeoville. Memories that have influenced some of these perceptions were mostly childhood memories which involved either other people or particular spaces. This goes to show that as we perceive spaces as humans by drawing from memories and past experiences, we tend to evaluate the spaces we currently interact with. Thus, planning needs to facilitate this process by supporting the organic growth of activity in public spaces and as this is how people make spaces their own and create memories.

Secondly, perceptions of space are influenced by the dreams we have for our own lives. This is more arguable particularly for the youth who

are faced with many decisions pertaining to their education, social lives and growth as people. This second means of perception became apparent when the issue of the importance of education emerged on five separate occasions, and positive ideas emerged from those discussions. As Proshansky et al (1970) hold, the individual's behaviour in spaces is guided by the goals s/he has. This implies that one's behaviour is guided by the different settings one encounters, depending on the reasons or intentions one had for visiting that particular setting. This therefore led to the deduction that the chosen group of participants are ambitious, have dreams and aspirations and that these expectations have influenced the way they perceive and ultimately interact with different spaces in their neighbourhood. For example, the library is perceived as a highly valuable community resource which contributes to their learning processes and this has gone as far as deciphering some of the participants' behaviour within that space and how they utilise some of the resources therein. Hence one would visit the library as they wish to gain more knowledge on a particular subject which therefore becomes one's goal in that space. As a result they will be quiet and be mindful of other people in the library. Hence, planning needs to be mindful of people's aspirations, which is something that often gets lost in plan making.

Furthermore, some of the participants intentionally excluded themselves from some spaces. Their decisions for this self-exclusion were based mainly around the people that occupied those spaces most of the time, as well as the activities that would take place within those spaces. These spaces were thus seen to be unsuitable by each participant for their type individual characters as well what they seek in public spaces. Carr (1970) states that people want to see features of the environment that coincide with their needs and purposes at that time. When a feature of a particular space does not meet what one wants at that moment, they separate themselves from that space. As a result, such spaces were only perceived from a distance and no interaction took place. These are the spaces that were perceived to be unsafe and dangerous as well as adding negative perceptions to one's social identity. Therefore the planner needs to first understand why places are underutilised before any interventions are made. Interventions made should also be informed by the fact that spaces are used by different kinds of people and thus have to meet their social needs. The designer needs to intervene by ensuring that designed spaces do not offer any opportunities for criminal activity, which is what pushes users away.

Other perceptions of public spaces in Yeoville were based on feelings of security. In numerous parts of the photo-interviews, the *vandals* were often referred to and may as a result contribute to users of public spaces worrying about their safety. The issue of security has either led to some spaces being avoided, or avoid experiencing public spaces at all. Hence the more public spaces are infiltrated with criminal activity or users that are deemed to be involved in crime, the less favourable they become to the youth in Yeoville. A space is first assessed in terms of how safe it is prior to any interaction in it. Safety in public spaces is a useful tool in analysing the functionality of spaces. Interventions here should pertain to the spatial arrangement of elements within spaces. This should include orientation, where trees are planted and where lights are shining. These are some of the qualities of public spaces the designer needs to think about to ensure safer public spaces.

Other perceptions of spaces were based on their quality of being the alternative space to other forms of spaces which are less desirable to an individual at that moment. This is linked strongly to what a user wishes to do or not do at a given moment and alternative spaces are then sought after if the current space they are in clashes with their intentions. Two of the participants felt that at times home is not the best environment to undertake school work as other non-educational activities come to consume their time. However, this other activity is introduced by an adult in the house. therefore at times, public spaces such as the Yeoville library are positive as they enable youth members to have a place where they can concentrate solely on school work and separate themselves from any other activity which is not educational at that time. According to Proshansky, et al (1970), it is this freedom of choice in cities that make more fulfilled individuals as individuals are given a choice as to what spaces they choose to interact with and what activities they choose to engage in once inside those spaces. It is therefore important for the planner to identify and understand these needs in order to ensure that public spaces become places users willingly want to engage with daily as their diverse needs are met.

Other participants had positive perceptions of public spaces due to their ability to appeal to them psychologically. Some spaces, such as Dunbar Street for Norma-Jean, are able to help one psychologically. This implies public spaces are no longer passive spaces where a user would simply go in and out of. These spaces have become active agents in changing one's psyche for the better through their

atmosphere and unique characteristics for each user. This psychological relation allows the user to perceive that given space in a positive light and always want to engage with it as they feel they can connect to this space. Research methods such as Autophotography are valuable as they allow the planner to indentify the users' needs and further understand them through the photo-interviews.

In a context rich in cultural diversity such as Yeoville, two of the five participants positively identified with this and deemed it to be a positive feature of their neighbourhood. This cultural diversity was seen mostly as an opportunity to learn, an opportunity to challenge the perceptions one has always had of 'the other'. In this research, South African born youth members are enabled to learn about other African cultures and customs through their class mates, friends and close companions. There were no signs of xenophobia. Public spaces are shared equally amongst the youth in Yeoville and it is this cultural diversity which provides as a positive feature of public spaces in the area. Autophotography informs the planner here as it encourages the participants to visit various spaces in their neighbourhoods. One of the participants has photographed for example, a Congolese-owned salon and had indicated that she gets her hair done there. Hence

Autophotography does not only help in documenting perceptions of spaces but also highlights broader meanings of those spaces. This is how the method assists the planner.

In summary, perceptions of public spaces are also conceived with reference to other people that are found in those spaces. This is linked to the intentional self-exclusion from public spaces discussed earlier. Some spaces are given certain identities due to the type of people that associate with those spaces, such as the area behind Shoprite and the Yeoville Market. These spaces are mostly occupied by homeless people, particularly in the evening and this has resulted in a push factor for some of the Yeoville residents. This portrays the complexity of perceptions as well as how one place is attached with different meanings for different people. Autophotography aids in establishing and enabling comparisons between meanings. This helps the planner as he/she will be better enlightened on some of the spatial dynamics in an area, thus enabling more informed interventions.

6.3 How can the autophotographic method be applied by the planner or urban designer?

Autophotography is valuable as a method in planning and urban design due to its character of engaging with people. It is an innovative way to document people's stories and experiences in order to plan and design better and responsive public spaces in our cities. The section below explores how this method can be applied by the planner and designer in order to enhance the experiences of public space users particularly in Yeoville as the study area of this research. The recommended ways of exercising Autophotography are informed by the bases of perceptions discussed in the previous section.

6.3.1 The character of the planner

Through my experiences with Autophotography, it has become apparent that the planner or designer needs to have a particular disposition to conduct research successfully using the method. The initial reason is the fact that the planner works with people who have their personal lives to attend to. This complicates matters as one's temperament and other personal matters might get in their way

during the progression of the project. There are a wide range of problems associated with Autophotography such as participants being unavailable for meetings, participants withdrawing from the project and so on. The planner needs to be understanding as well as compassionate in order for the Autophotographic project to be a success. A more assertive character from the planner or the designer might result in the participants being negative, pushed away and ultimately resigning from the project.

The planner and designer's actions should always be directed towards attaining trust form his/her participants at all times. However, this should not be done using incentives as this may contaminate the research findings. Trust should be attained through communication, being able to listen carefully and always making the participants feel like they know more. This is essential as the success of an Autophotographic project relies on information brought forward by the participants. Without a high level of trust and comfort, participants may not be willing to expose certain things to the researcher thus rendering the research discoveries thin in that regard. The planner or designer therefore needs to have good communication as well as

listening skills in order to connect with the participants and ultimately extract the necessary information from the participants.

Thirdly, the planner or designer needs to have a curious character. He/she needs to demonstrate to the participants that he/she is genuinely interested in the way they perceive certain things in their everyday environments and that they can be valuable informants in the project. The planner demonstrating interest in the lives of his/her participants sends out a positive impression of him/herself rather than being perceived as an academic or official who is unable to transcend class, intellectual or other barriers. This approach will ensure that he/she becomes a part of the "team" with the participants thus facilitating better communication as discussed above. This is part of acknowledging cultural diversity in public spaces particularly in neighbourhoods such as Yeoville.

Fourthly, there is no "checklist" for Autophotography as a method. The researcher cannot rest assured that the project is progressing as planned until completion has been reached. There are no set directions to take to assure a smooth flow of a research project. It is entirely up to the planner or designer what direction the research process takes and how to manage implications thereof. Things might

go wrong at any moment – such as participants withdrawing from the study as I experienced, or the project taking longer than expected. The planner or designer is thus required to have strong managerial skills to not only manage the process but the participants as well to make certain that plans are adhered to.

6.3.2 People-centred approaches

As Carr (1970: 521) asserts, "the planner or designer, with his personal vision of a better world so different from the present reality, often concludes that people's desires are apparently misguided and that their level of aspiration is too low". Rather, people know what they want. This has been established in the previous chapters when Leneance and Rodreck discussed the importance of education and how they wish to be successful at a later stage in life. It is these aspirations that planners or designers often assume do not exist and that people will always adapt to the environments that are provided. What if things were to be turned around? What if planners and designers gave users of public spaces a chance to express precisely what they wish for with regards to public spaces in their neighbourhoods to ensure that they are not compelled to always adapt to something that already exists but they have been a part of it

from conception? This is the approach my research is advocating as many of our public spaces often "die" and are left to dilapidate as they do not meet the needs of the community in which they are found. Autophotography encourages the needs of the users of spaces to be explored and given a platform on which they can be noticed through documentation such as this research.

Furthermore, it is often challenging for planners and designers to know exactly what the community needs. Without participatory approaches to this challenge, the planner or designer will fall into the trap of dictating to the community what they need through his spatial plans and designs. According to Carr (1970: 531), "the amount of contact between the designer and the users of the environment is usually nil. Since the shape of the environment will have a real effect on people's lives, as we have seen, this should not be a tolerable situation". Designers need to be in contact with the communities they are designing for. They need to pay careful attention to communities' concerns and use expertise to translate those aspirations into better living environments. It is important to engage with the community, to ensure that the plans generated by the planner coincide with what the community renders important at that moment – while catering for flexibility and robustness.

6.3.3 Autophotography as a communication strategy between public space users and city officials

The utility of Autophotography lies in the fact that the method uses photographs. This feature can be adopted by city officials as a communication strategy with public space users in the urban environment. This approach would further ensure inclusion as one does not need to be literate or have public speaking abilities to get ideas across. The method would be highly valuable in particularly African contexts where citizens are often marginalised, find themselves in economically and socially poor conditions and where there is increased informality. Autophotography as a method would therefore allow residents to break the bureaucracy that is often associated with government processes to ensure that change takes place at a desirable pace with more inclusivity and with recognition of formality and informality.

The above approach would further ensure that the youth are incorporated into decision-making processes in the city. Previously, this has not been the case in many development projects. By having a role to play in policy formulating processes, city officials will also be enabled to engage more deeply and learn about some of the dynamics in public spaces pertaining to the youth. A sense of belonging and ownership of public spaces will therefore be nurtured as a result as locals have participated in shaping the types of spaces they wish to see in their own neighbourhoods.

6.3.4   The task of the autophotographic planner

Planning would not have any value if it did not bring positive and desirable change into society. Part of bringing that change is using innovative methods to sufficiently deduce people's needs particularly pertaining to public spaces. Therefore, the task of the planner in instances where Autophotography is employed as a method is to be able to link users of public spaces to city authorities actively. The planner facilitates that interaction between the two parties and ensures that what the local state offers with regards to public spaces is aligned with what users on the ground actually need, without disrupting their everyday lives.

Regarding the youth, the above roles of the planner will ensure that decision making by city officials considers the perceptions of public spaces the youth hold. This is important as it has not been taking place in the past. The youth have not been actively included in spatial policy-making processes while they are active users of public spaces. This trend thus puts interventions into the trap of failing to bring the positive and desired change planning should bring. If this changes however, as this study suggests, spaces will be even more meaningful as their utilitarian value will increase being able to accommodate more activities and a greater social diversity within them. Neighbourhoods such as Yeoville already have a diverse African population. In such cases, inclusion of the youth into policy-making processes will nurture that diversity and ensure that each public space user is attracted to a particular space due to something they identify with.

6.3.5   The shift from beautiful, pretty spaces to more responsive and inclusive spaces

Urban design has been critiqued for its tendency to emphasise "beautiful, pretty public spaces" that are often exclusive and which result in "dead" spaces. These are often designed to cater for the needs of the elite while not taking into consideration the needs of the

urban poor. As a result, the urban poor are made to feel uncomfortable and not confident as they traverse these spaces, to such an extent that they end up no longer interacting with those public spaces (Carmona, 2010). To resolve this persistent trend in new development in our urban environment, autophotography can be employed as a method prior to an intervention in public spaces.

Most importantly, due to the character of autophotography – participation and allowing participants to explore their immediate environments through photography, the designer is enabled to be aware of what the public actually desires. He/she interrogates this as the participants will reveal spaces they are most intimate with and what nurtures that intimacy. Once the planner or designer knows this, his/her interventions in public spaces are less likely to disrupt the way people experience their environments. Hence it is important for designers to adopt Autophotography as a method used mainly in social sciences, but expand on it further by carrying out inclusive design of public spaces. Inclusivity is highly important particularly in neighbourhoods such as Yeoville that boast a high level of cultural, social and African diversity. Planners and designers therefore carry the responsibility of ensuring that all inhabitants in such diverse

neighbourhoods feel like they belong. This feeling of belonging is what will further encourage ownership of public spaces in their area.

6.3.6 Treatment of public spaces and users

Related to the notion of inclusive design is the concept of choice in public space. Users cannot feel included in the design of public spaces and how they function if they do not have a choice in the sort of activities they wish to partake in and the type of people they wish to interact with in those spaces. Doxiadis (1968) sees the individual's freedom of choice as an essential determinant in the planning and organisation of cities. The individual *must* have a choice and this is simple to achieve. An incorporation of a variety of activities in public spaces is one of the strategies and Autophotography becomes useful again because the planner becomes aware of the sort of activities users wish to engage in – thus making it easier to intervene appropriately. The sort of intervention however, should always be spearheaded by the notion of creating responsive spaces. This ensures that spaces are vital (Lynch, 1981) and that they meet the needs of each user thus sparking more life and activity within them even at different times of the day.

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Feeding into the notion of choice in public spaces, Carr (1970: 529?) stresses that there should be an increase in "the plasticity and manipulability of city form to the actions of small groups and individuals". People have to be empowered through participatory approaches and ultimately design to be able to mould public spaces in such a way that they become part of their everyday lives, extensions of their living rooms (Krier, 1979). Inversely however, the city form should be flexible too. It should be designed in such a way that it is able to adapt to present situations and for the city form itself to assist in addressing urban challenges. This will ensure that the urban poor and migrants that live in our cities are not disregarded when it comes to city making, further nurturing meanings public spaces may hold for users. It is important that planners and designers consider their needs just as much to ensure that spatial equality is promoted.

Furthermore, according to Bentley, et al (1985), one becomes aware that design affects choice in space. As discussed in chapter 2, the physical characteristics of the same spaces we associate with influence what we choose to do once we are in those spaces. This is how the design for Responsive Environments (Bentley, et al, 1985) emerged. What I wish to dwell on in this chapter however, is *robustness*.

According to the authors, robustness "affects the degree to which people can use a given place for different purposes" (ibid: 9). This is an issue that arose frequently amongst the participants chosen in the study, and thus deserves a deeper focus. When users are not forced to stick to one activity within a given public space, this makes the space more attractive especially for youth members who are still explorative and tend to become bored with routine. Hence ensuring that spaces are flexible in their conception will render a responsive environment which all members of society can enjoy.

6.4   Conclusions

With a planner boasting certain characteristics as well as people-centred approaches to planning and design, Autophotography as a method could be one of the most powerful ways of conducting participatory planning in the profession. The planner or designer needs to be optimistic about the project as well as understand that people have personal lives and that there will be hindrances along the way. Through the adoption of Autophotography as a communication strategy between citizens and city authorities, inclusion will also be promoted in society – particularly in post-apartheid South Africa as well as in the aftermath of the 2008 xenophobic attacks. With the

gathered information being put to good use, Autophotography possesses the potential to contribute to considerations of innovative methods in the planning profession.

Accompanying the method however, is a list of challenges. Firstly, the Autophotographic approach relies heavily on participants that also have errands to run, which makes it difficult for smooth progression of a project. As discussed earlier, things do not always progress as planned due to such reasons. Coupled with that is the potential loss of data due to the unreliable nature of disposable cameras. Some photographs get damaged during the developing process, which always limits the data generation at the end of the project.

Although the method is innovative and is an advance in the fashion research has been traditionally conducted, it has its further core challenges. The first challenge relates to the analytical methods of the data generated in this type of study. It is not clear how photographs are analysed. Once fieldwork is completed, the researcher is left alone to discover his/her own method of analysis. This is a danger because one might adopt an analysis method that does not necessarily retain the character of each of the participants. Such a method would therefore result in a loss in the meaningful information that accompanied those photographs as all the images were mixed together. The vagueness in how to analyse images in Autophotography implies that more time will be spent on the project trying to find the "appropriate" method. It is further not guaranteed that the researcher will eventually find a suitable method of analysis. In the end, responsibility rests with the researcher to be creative in analysing the photographs, possibly ending with a fusion of diverse methods, as witnessed in this study.

As hinted at above, the method often needs a longer time frame. In this study I was fortunate enough to attend the workshops at Sheikh Anta Diop School with the second year Urban Planning students from the University of the Witwatersrand. This enabled me to become familiar with the students and them with me, therefore enabling better interaction later when the final five participants were chosen. One of the factors contributing to time consumption in the Autophotographic method could be establishing a relationship with the chosen participants. This is important as the more they trust the

researcher, the more comfortable they will be therefore willing to share their experiences more openly.

The last key challenge with the structure of the method is that it is highly contextualised. This is related to the nature of environmental psychology itself as discussed in chapter two. This character of the method therefore means that it disregards broader urban issues including those relating to space. With regards to spatial acknowledgements such as participants' biographical backgrounds (chapter 4), Autophotography is very helpful. However its quality of being contextualised is a challenge as it leaves on the outside other social processes. It focuses its energy on one specific location and processes within that.

These are some of real challenges encountered and can hinder the success of any Autophotographic project. It is important for a planner using this method to be diligent and patient with the end product in mind throughout the entire process. However, these difficulties are worth overcoming as Autophotography is an innovative and informative way of studying urban issues and involves members of society that are not often given a platform to share their views in policy-making processes such as the youth.

In summary, Autophotography is not the only method that may be exercised in participatory approaches. There are others that are similarly creative in involving local communities. This includes the use of diaries, film and discourse analysis. These methods may provide a voice to those often excluded in society, making these methods even more relevant in the context of diversity. Innovative methods such as Autophotography enable diversity to be acknowledged through the way it breaks language barriers as participants do not necessarily have to speak but relies on the photographs generated. Hence, Autophotography being used as a method in this study opens up further research. The creative approaches to research have not been adequately explored in the planning profession. Hence this research report can stand as one of the stepping stones through which an innovative generation of urban planners can carry out research.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

11 June 2010

Hello, I am Potsiso Phasha from Wits University, an Honours Student in Urban and Regional Planning under the School of Architecture and Planning. I am currently undertaking research in Yeoville, to find out how the youth perceive public spaces in the area.

Public spaces are an essential component of our cities, particularly in Johannesburg where the city has to address high rates of urbanisation. Studies on public spaces in this context have however been sparse. Where studies are undertaken, they do not encompass the users of those public spaces. My research therefore aims to fill this gap, by using Yeoville as a case study and further proposing that for planners and urban designers to provide responsive public spaces, perceptions of users should be taken into account. The study aims to achieve this by using Autophotography as its method.

Autophotography as a research method entails the distribution of cameras to participants. It is self-directed photography. Participants are required to answer a question by taking photographs of spaces in their immediate neighbourhood they are familiar with. The participants will meet with me (the researcher) afterwards for short interviews to discuss the generated photographs.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and should you decline the request to participate you are free to do so without penalty or loss. You may of course also discontinue your participation at any time and refrain from answering some of the questions asked during the discussion of photographs. I will use the information obtained from you together with the information from all the other participants to prepare a research report for the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University. If you agree, the information reported will be attributed to you.

Should you have any questions or complaints about the study, the interviews or the researcher, please contact Garth Klein, my

Supervisor - Tel. (011) 717 7616; Cell (082 855 5645); Fax (011) 717 7649; e-mail address: garth.klein@wits.ac.za

CONSENT

With my parent/guardian's approval, I ………………………………………………………………………… am willing to take photographs with the provided camera and interviewed as part of this study and understand that my participation is voluntarily and that I can withdraw from participating at any time, for whatever reason without penalty or loss.

Signed: (Parent): ………………………………………

(Participant): .... Date: …………………………..

Please also sign below if you are willing to allow your name to be recorded and used in any report or publication flowing from the

research. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have your name recorded.

Signed:………………………………………………………Date:………………………………

Furthermore, please sign below if you are willing to have the interview recorded on audiotape and archived. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded. If you have not given permission for your name to be recorded, the tape will be labeled "anonymous".

Signed:………………………………………………………Date:………………………………

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study!

Appendix B

Brief for participants

15 June 2010 – Project brief for participants

Each person will get a camera with 27 photos on it. During the next week, use the camera to take photographs that answer the questions below.

There are 6 questions, so you can take 2 to 4 photos related to each question. You can also photograph more than one place for each question if you like.

The central question for this exercise is: **how do public spaces in Yeoville make you feel? How do you see public spaces here?**

However, you will take photographs of different **public spaces** to answer the following questions:

1. **What do you [not] like most about Yeoville?**

- Generally - such as, when you think about Yeoville, what comes to mind..?

2. **What is your favourite place in Yeoville?**
    - A place where you can just be you, do what you love doing, and being free…

3. **What kind of people and/or activities would you find in that area?**
    - Different kinds of people (is it youth, grownups, "the vandals", or what?), and what are those people doing? The different kinds of activities would you find in that space…

4. **What are the places that are meaningful to you in Yeoville?**
    - Where you met a loved one, your first real experience of Yeoville maybe. A place that has a unique meaning or memory just for you…

5. **Which places in Yeoville would you miss the most if you had to go away right now?**
    - Places where you have always gone to, to relax maybe, play, socialise or whatever you like doing…

6. **What would you change about public spaces in Yeoville?**
    - The kind of things that make you most uncomfortable about public spaces in Yeoville etc…

On an agreed date and time, we will all meet to hand in the used cameras. Pictures will be developed and each participant will get a set of pictures to keep at the next meeting. At our next individual meetings we will put all the pictures together and discuss some of the stories or thoughts we had while taking those photographs.

Happy shooting ☺

Appendix C

Photo-interview questions

SCHOOL OF & ARCHITECTURE PLANNING UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Potsiso Phasha – interview questions

___

The essence of questions (from conceptual framework)

- Place identity

- Place attachment

- Sense of place

- Place meaning

Direct questions [interviews]

- *What were you thinking when you took this picture?*

- *Were you comfortable in this space?*

- *Why did you choose to photograph this subject/space?*

- *What does the photographed subject mean to you*?

Appendix D

Photographs

These are other photographs that did not make part of the analysis due to their large volume. This section thus showcases some of the other spaces each participant photographed, organised through the four concepts introduced in chapter one.

a. Place attachment

b. Place meaning

c. Place identity

2. Leneance

a. Place attachment

b. Place meaning
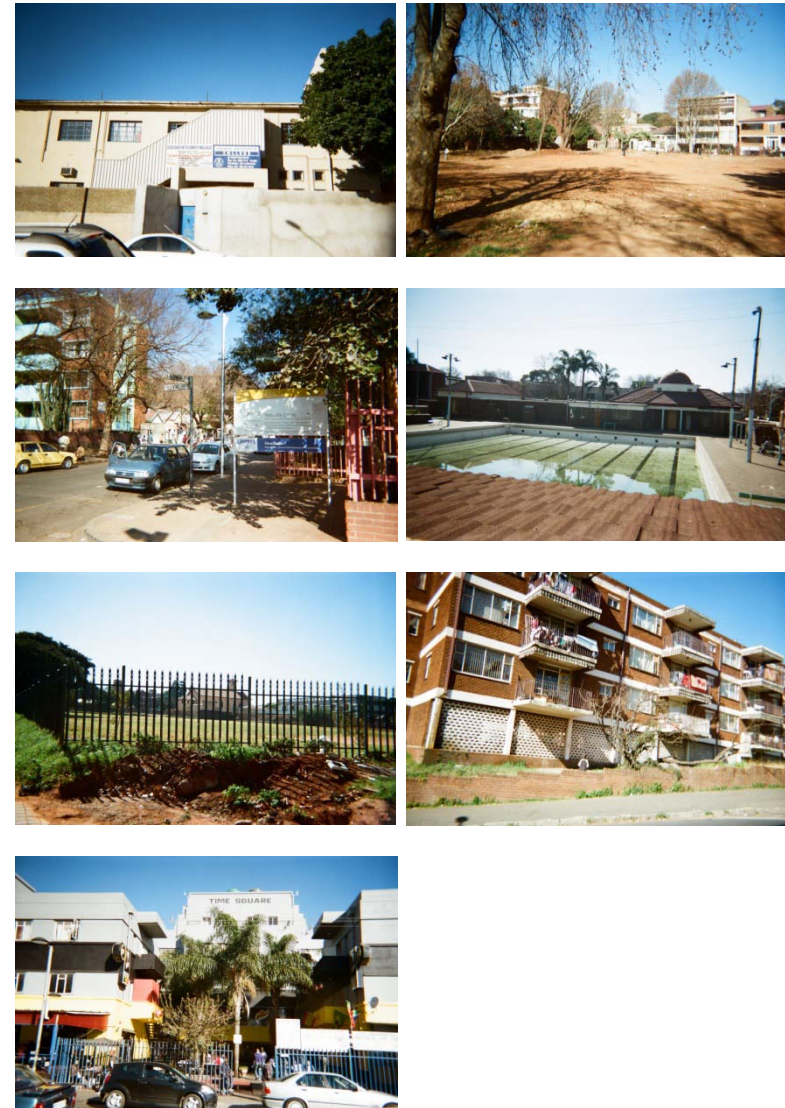

c. Place identity
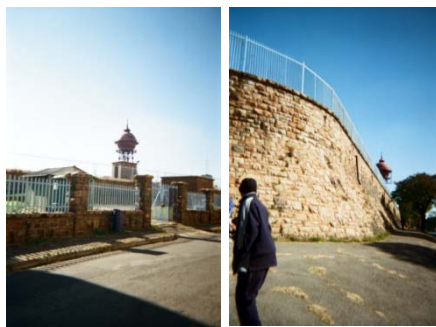
d.   Sense of place

b.   Place meaning

3. **Rodreck**

a.   Place attachment

c. Place identity

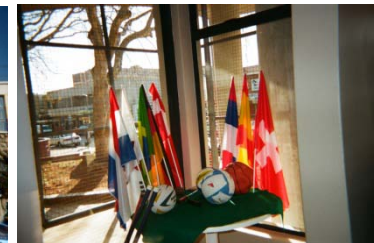d. Sense of place

4. **Lorraine**

a. Place attachment

b. Place meaning

d. Sense of place
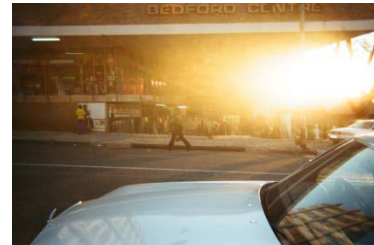

c. Place identity

5. Yolander

a. Place attachment

b. Place meaning

c. Place identity

d. Sense of place

Addendum

Posters

Being Young in Yeoville

The Method

The research uses **autophotography**, a visual method used growing widely in the social sciences. This is photography conducted by research participants themselves.

Participants were asked **6 questions** which they had to answer through taking photographs:

1. What do you like most about Yeoville?
2. What is your favourite place in Yeoville – and why?
3. What kind of people and/or activities would you find in that area?
4. What are the places that are meaningful to you in Yeoville?
5. Which places in Yeoville would you miss the most if you had to go away right now?
6. What would you change about public spaces in Yeoville?

Choosing Yeoville

- Very **diverse neighbourhood**, different from most neighbourhoods I've been to.
  Diverse African cultures, social backgrounds and lifestyles
- A **good location to learn** – from other people, their way of life, languages and other qualities we each possess as we go into Yeoville.
- Wished to **document perceptions and experiences** in Yeoville as a neighbourhood in inner city Johannesburg

From the Beginning

- Selection of participants - from a **series of workshops** I was involved in together with second year Urban and Regional Planning students.
  Running a project with a class of grade geography 11 students from **Sheikh Anta Diop High School.**
- Worskhops were a good **introduction to the youth** - how they perceive and think about urban spaces in Yeoville.
- A total of **five students** were then approached to be participants in this research.
  Through **observation**, 5 students that showed a degree of maturity and ability to express themselves were selected.
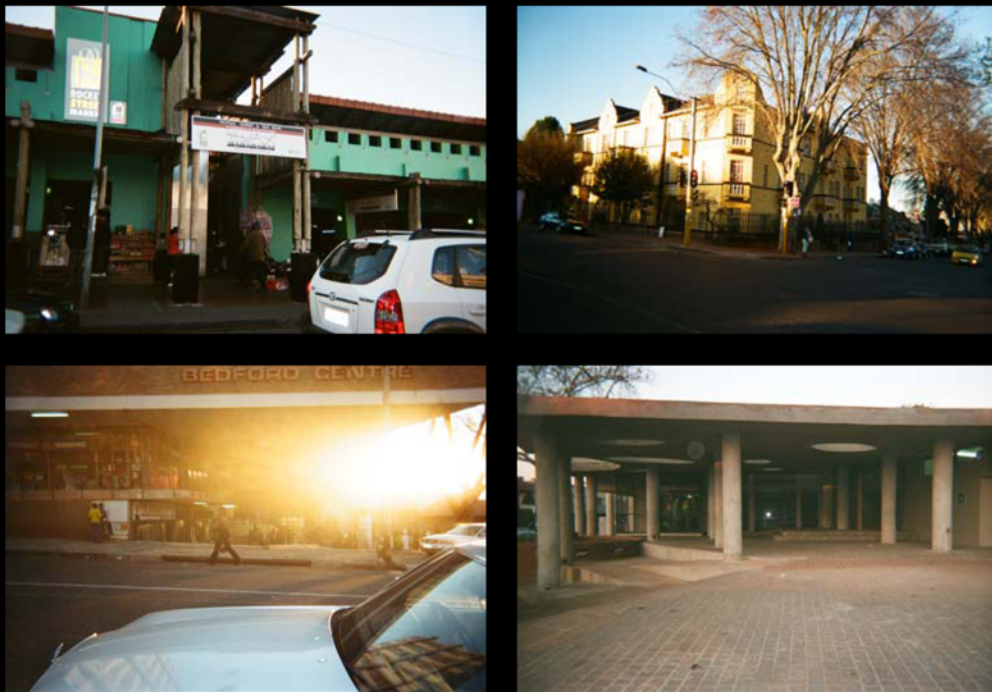
Behind the Topic

- I am **fascinated by images**. I think that they accurately represent reality and make us aware of things we take for granted everyday, introducing a whole new way of looking at the world.
- I believe photography has the capacity to reveal knowledge, **tell stories** in a more interesting manner and represent the world in its true sense.
- I am inspired by other people's **creativity in the city** – how each one of us does things differently from the next, diverse thought processes and actions. For me, this is what makes the city what it is. The diversity.

Being Young in Yeoville...

- Being young in Yeoville means being **perceptive**.
- There are certain **spaces** the youth identify with more than others. As a youth myself although from outside Yeoville, I am still **explorative**, I want to see everything and public spaces are there for my advantage. This is where as youth meet our friends, the place we go to when we don't want to be home.
- These spaces become our 'sanctuaries' because here we are free, there is **no supervision** and we can freely engage in any activity we wish.
  It starts becoming evident how the spaces we associate with shape the way we grow up as youth.

Norma-Jean

When I came to South Africa I lived in Diepsloot. I was not as free as I used to be back home because of the language barrier. It was difficult to communicate with other children because I could not speak Tswana or Sotho. I came free when I came to Yeoville. Here you meet *Ndebele's, Shona's*, whatever. I did not feel alone anymore.

- Norma-Jean

Name: Norma-Jean
Age: 17
Born in: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Length of residence in Yeoville: A year and 5 months
Lives with: Mom and younger brother
Dreams of living in: Strijdom Park - there are house, no flats. It's nice, beautiful and quiet

What I do not like about Yeoville	My meaningful space	My favourite place in Yeoville	A place I would change

What I do not like about Yeoville

I cannot walk past this place after 6 in the evening. It is always full of hobos. They make a fire and sometimes when you pass by they do these funny things…

Norma-Jean: "This other time, this other guys ran up to me…"
Me: "One of the hobos?"
Norma-Jean: "[*interjects*] Yeah!"
Me: "And what, chased you away?"
Norma-Jean: "No, and he kissed me on the cheek! Can you imagine?" [*we both laugh*]
…
Me: "And you don't like it at all [the place], why? They're just trying to have a place to sleep"
Norma-Jean: "Okay… I get that. But ever since that guy ran after me, you know I've always… I hate this place. I hate it. I just hate it [*we both laugh*]. Maybe if he hadn't done that I would understand but…"

I was not comfortable when taking the picture, someone of "my calibre" is not meant to be seen in such an environment…" [*laughs*]

My meaningful space

The Yeoville Clinic is meaningful to me because it is free. No one pays for anything. It is good for the community, for people who are less privileged. If you get to be sick or anything like that, you just come here for free.

Norma-Jean: "You know, these people… even come, they always come to our school to talk about whatever issues – teenage pregnancy and stuff like that. If you're traumatised, you come here, you get counselling, and… all of that stuff. It's socially good, and I've never heard any bad stuff about this clinic here. It's always packed… not because people are running after cheap things but, the way you're handled, yeah…"

My favourite place in Yeoville

My street is called Dunbar. This is me standing with my friend on my street (runs up-down in the photo)

Me: "Do you like your street, where you live?"
Norma-Jean: "[*interjects*] Yho! [*exclaims*], I love it! "Liking" is an understatement. This one? I really love it, yoh! [*exclaims again, we both laugh*]
…
Me: "What do you love about it so much?"
Norma-Jean: "Yoh! [**exclaims**], it's so quiet, you know it's… less *vandals**. When you're stressed, I advise you to come to this street – walk all… just take a taxi from Braamfontein, you come, and you walk in the street. I tell you, you'll go back home relieved, yoh! [*exclaims*] I tell you"

A place I would change

I don't understand why even people from Pik it Up don't care about this place. They go to every street in Yeoville to collect dust bins but not here. It bothers me a lot because it is near to the shops, I go there almost everyday.

Me: "Do you think it would change completely if it was cleaned up?"
NJ: "No, if you find a completely clean place like this [reffering to a room in the Recreation Centre], it is difficult to take this thing and throw it down [a juice bottle], you see that? But if you find a place like this in the picture you can throw it down and you won't even feel guilty.
…
Me: "So, this makes it a really uncomfortable place to be in?"
NJ: "No… No, I'm heartbroken [laughs], so heartbroken…"

Leneance

When I arrived in Yeoville, I never got to make friends immediately. My mother was always too protective, she preferred me to stay indoors. I think she was teaching me a lesson because I used to come back late from school. She was worried about the streets, especially Rockey. There are too many drunkards there [*laughs*]

- Leneance

Name: Leneance
Age: 17
Born in: Soweto, Johannesburg where he lived with his grandparents
Length of residence in Yeoville: 7 years
Lives with: Mom, two younger sisters and brother
Dreams of living in: Rosettenville, where it is "nice and quiet and the people are civilised"

A place I would miss the most

This is where I grew up. This park was close to my house and I spent a lot of time here.

Leneance: "I used to swing... play soccer... yeah, I like... I used to play soccer here with my friends"
Me: "So, now that you're grown, do you still go to this park?"
Leneance: "[pauses] Mmm... like yeah I go here, I, I come here to chill..."
Me: "To just chill and relax?"
Leneance: "Yeah because now soccer I play in Bez Valley so, yeah..."
Me: "Why do you feel that need to just chill though? Like, you would go here [the park] when what happens exactly?"
Leneance: "When what... [*falters*] like, when like... [*falters again*] when I'm like at home you know, I'll be like... having nothing to do, only watching TV. You know watching TV sometimes is boring so I come here to, like... just sit and, watching people do their stuff..."

My meaningful space
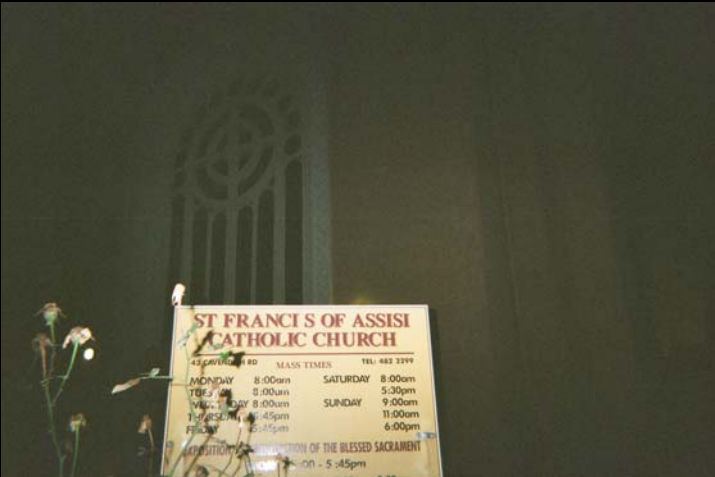
I grew up as a Catholic. Even when I lived in Soweto I went to a Catholic church. These churches are very old, have a rich history and have been around for many years and they are still here.

Leneance: "...this is where I grew up, in my church. It taught me a lot of lessons"
Me: "Like what though? You keep saying that church is good because it taught you a lot of lessons, what kind of stuff did they teach you that's helping you now?"
Leneance: "Like... the word of God, yeah. And uhmm... staying out of crime. They always preach that"

What I like about Yeoville

I am very comfortable in this place (Rockey Corner). It has just been renovated. The place is now clean and safer because there is a guard here.

Me: "So what were you thinking when you took this photo, what was going through your mind? Why did you take this photo?"
Leneance: "It's a very good uhmm... view, like for these tourists [*falters*], to come and view this place"
Me: "...But how do you interact with it? Do you just look at it from far? Like, what makes it your favourite place in Yeoville, what you like most about Yeoville rather?"
Leneance: "Yeah, you know, there's a restaurant down there – it sells African food. That's what I like most about it"

My favourite place in Yeoville

This is my most favourite place in Yeoville - even more than the Game Shop.

Leneance: "Here... from here you get a lot of education. Yeah, you read... there's internet isn't there? You research about the world and everything"
Me: "But you can't play games like you can play games at the Game Shop?"
Leneance: "No here it's a studying place, you know"
...
Me: "Do you find it better to work here than at home?"
Leneance: "[*interjects*] Yeah it's better to work here than at home because at home they'll be sending me to the shops you know, disturbing me and... yeah"

Lorraine

Yeoville is different to where I used to live (Durban). When I first came here I thought it was fine because where I used to live it was boring, very quiet but here it is different. I enjoyed being here and that's where I began to make a lot of friends…

- Lorraine

Name: Lorraine
Age: 17
Born in: KZN, Durban
Length of residence in Yeoville: 2 years
Lives with: Mom, Dad, younger brother
Dreams of living in: Norwood because she used to live there and still likes it as it is quiet

My meaningful space	What I like about Yeoville	My meaningful space	My favourite place in Yeoville

My meaningful space

I probably met him after two months of living in Yeoville but after three months he went to the Eastern Cape . He then called me to say he was not coming back…

Me: "This place is also meaningful to you, in the whole of Yeoville. How so? What kind of meaning does it hold for you?"
Lorraine: "[*silence… then clears throat and giggles*] again, I met my first boyfriend"
Me: "Here?"
Lorraine: "By the time I came here [to Yeoville], yeah"
…
Lorraine: "I used to hang here with friends"
Me: "And then you one day met him?"
Lorraine: "Yes"
Me: "What was that like?"
Lorraine: "It was good! [*giggles*]"

What I like about Yeoville

You find pool tables, soccer tables, juke box and the TV if you want to watch. It is simple, very smart.

Me: "What do you like most about this space, the game shop?"
Lorraine: "I like it 'cause… most of the time if I'm bored I just go there… having some fun"
Me: "What would you do when you're there though?"
Lorraine: "Playing snooker, soccer box…"
…
Me: "Is it a comfortable space for you?"
Lorraine: "Yeah, it is a comfortable space"
Me: "And what makes it comfortable for you?"
Lorraine: "'Cause… [*pauses*], there are no old people…
[*pauses again*], even if the vandals are there, they won't do anything to us girls"

My meaningful space

Me: "Why is this place meaningful to you?"
Lorraine: "'Cause… I met friends, again"
Me: "Here?"
Lorraine: "Yeah"
Me: "Oh, okay…"
Lorraine: "…and that's where I met my boyfriend"

We met last year… around October. I was sitting on the left hand side (of the pool) and he was inside the water. I was with a friend and he came out of the water. He then pushed me into the water and I pretended like I was drowning so he can save me… [*we both laugh*]

My favourite place in Yeoville

I go to the market every two days, on average. I normally buy veggies, fruits. I feel safe in this market because there are security guards – so I know nothing will happen to me.

Lorraine: "These are Rasta's"
Me: "These are Rastafarian people inside the market? Do you like or not like these people?"
Lorraine: "I like these people"
Me: "What do you like about these people?"
Lorraine: "I like their culture"
Me: "Really?"
Lorraine: "Yah!"
Me: "And?"
Lorraine: "And those things which they're selling here"
Me: "What do you like most about their culture? What have you heard, I don't know anything about them?"
Lorraine: "I like their songs… their dressings"

Yolander

Here in Yeoville there is more freedom as compared to Bulawayo. I can take walks, roam around. In Bulawayo you can't walk around as freely because
of the police, they are just too strict

- Yolander

Name: Yolander
Age: 17
Born in: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Length of residence in Yeoville: 10 years
Lives with: Mom, Dad, two younger siblings
Dreams of living in:

My meaningful space	What I do not like about Yeoville	My favourite place in Yeoville	A place I would change

My meaningful space

My school plays an important role in my life. My principal has motivated me to work hard.

Yolander: "...and [*falters*]... the different people... you know, as teens, we share a lot of stuff"
Me: "Yeah... what kind of stuff, interests or..?"
Yolander: "Yeah interests, ideas, we share ideas, opinions and different stuff
...
Me: "Is there a lot of people that are from different... sort of like cultures or like African countries..?"
Yolander: "[interjects] African countries. Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Congo, Mozambique..."

What I do not like about Yeoville

There is a lot of drug dealers around this place and too much alcohol. My church is close to this area and they always come to interrupt services whenever we have.

Me: "How is that visible when you're on the streets, do people come outside drinking? 'cause I know it's illegal to be drinking in the streets"
Yolander: "[*interjects*] yeah, people come out drunk, drinking, carrying beer... and... they... I see teenagers coming out of those places, and its' not good... [*pauses*], and some girls, you know, they... they always pass by here 'cause they do prostitution, and they know that they gonna get people, you know..."

My favourite place in Yeoville

This is the place where I grew up. When I moved to Yeoville in 2000, I moved in this building.

Me: "So what still makes it your favourite place? What kind of memories do you have?
Yolander: "Uhmm, 'cause it's... see behind the flat, that's where..."
Me: "On the other side?"
Yolander: "Uh-huh! There's, uhmm, my best friend since, like... crèche"
Me: "Yeah... your best friend lives there... on the other side?
Yolander: "Uh-huh! And I used to, like, sneak out, you know [*laughs*], and go there 'cause it's like, there's some kind of a... garage, so you can jump there then go inside that house"
Me: "Oh... that's where your friend lived?"
Yolander: "Uh-huh! And she still lives there"

A place I would change

I once got in trouble because of her, my friend. I feel like Times Square has a huge role to play in some of the mistakes the youth make. I would go there if none of these bad things were happening.

Yolander: "No, I'd totally remove the place!"
Me: "Totally?"
Yolander: "Totally!"
Me: "Why?"
Yolander: "[*sighs*] This place… [*pauses*] a friend of mine – she's got like… lots of boyfriends, 'sugar daddies'. She always comes here, to this place in there. See these flats, whatever they are? You find a lot of school kids In there believe me…"
Me: "Yeah?"
Yolander: "…and that's not right"
Me: "Wow…"
Yolander: "This place gives an opportunity for those 'sugar daddies', whatever, and those teenagers, you know… hopeless teenagers"

Yeoville from Youth Eyes

Telkom explosion area

Sheikh Anta Diop

Dunbar St

Game Shop

'Behind the Market'

Cellphone shop

Library/Hotel Yeoville

'Behind the Market'

Muller Street Park

The Market

Church

Sports grounds

Picadilly

Time Square

Recreation Centre

'Behind Shoprite'

Rockey Corner

Swimming Pool

Yeoville Park

Night Clubs

Tennis Courts

'Snake Road'

Water Tower

Police Station

'By Police Station'

Park

Concrete Structure

Clinic

Norma Jean
Leneance
Rodreck
Lorraine
Yolander

Norma-Jean

In her own words, she maintains "someone of my caliber is not meant to be in such a dirty place". Norma-Jean is very critical of the condition of public spaces in Yeoville, their deteriorating state such as the pollution, degrading nature of buildings, streets and parks. She also appreciates social ammenities such as the Yeoville Clinic, where she maintains it is good as poorer residents can have access to such facilities. She also shows concern for her three younger brothers who she feels responsible for, talks about how dirty spaces could affect their health.

Leneance

Is concerned largely about the kind of image Yeoville sends out as a neighbourhood in Johannesburg and to the rest of the world (especially during the World Cup period), the aesthetic qualities of public spaces in the area. He makes a reference to Rockey Corner and holds that if buildings in Yeoville would be renovated or kept in a condition such as Rockey Corner, the neighbourhood would be able to attract more people and he would also be proud to tell people he is from Yeoville.

Rodreck

Rodreck makes interesting comparisons between Yeoville as his neighbourhood and Harare, Zimbabwe where he has born. He talks about the different socialization processes evident in both the urban areas and maintains that there is a higher level of discipline in Harare and this can be seen in public spaces as well. He loves Yeoville [and Johannesburg] as there are more opportunities here. Personal growth is therefore his core concern and he is glad that public spaces such as the Yeoville library/Hotel Yeoville facilitate his desire to be successful in life.

Lorraine

Lorraine appreciates the fact that public spaces in Yeoville are able to support and enable relationships to emerge. She maintains that this is particularly good in a neighbourhood such as Yeoville where there are migrants coming here, having to start a new life with new people. Hence public spaces are there to help with that, ensure that one does not always have to be alone and in their own private spaces all the time but that they are provided with a opportunity to engage with other people in the community.

Yolander

Shows a profound concern for the youth generation and how they conduct themselves, they kind of things they are exposed to in different public spaces – particularly the female youth. She maintains that although it is a positive thing to have a variety of activities, people in spaces, and some people always have ulterior motives to exploit the youth because some of them are vulnerable. According to her, this makes it easier for the youth to make mistakes that often affect their futures. She is therefore vigilant in public spaces and the way she interacts with them, as se does not want to find herself in a compromising situation.

What is common?

All participants emphasized the importance of both places of entertainment (Times Square, Recreation Center and Park, Bedford Game Shop, Swimming Pool, Tennis Court) and places of learning (School, Library). While this does not come as a surprise, I did not expect to see a facility such as the library to be perceived as a friendly and comfortable space in which one can just be: all were acutely aware of how crucial education is for them as they grow up.

Yeoville was unanimously seen as a place of social encounters and rich diversity: these features were understood as key elements enhancing individual freedom. Compared to other places (in South Africa or in Zimbabwe), Yeoville was described as a place where one can walk and interact freely, feel at ease in the street, speak one's language, expose and explore one's identity. But this freedom comes with a cost – bad encounters, lack of social discipline, a degree of violence and crime ('vandals'). These negative aspects of Yeoville life were experienced either in isolated areas ('Snake road', vacant lots, place 'behind Shoprite'), or in the very same entertainment places most participants enjoy (Times Square, Game Shop, clubs). These risks were more important for female participants.

Despite a shared feeling that Yeoville is degraded in many aspects, needs a serious revamp and better management, it appears that the youth enjoys a variety of facilities in Yeoville, encouraging self and collective development.

What differs?

Broadly, the male participants are more explorative of Yeoville as their neighbourhood. They have a larger variety with regards to the place they have photographed and these spaces are scattered over Yeoville, not necessarily around the recreation centre as the core.

Time Square

Len: I like this place, this is where I groove, have fun and meet new people. I leave when people start to get drunk because out will never what can come out, some people will be looking for trouble.

Yola: I would totally remove this place, I do not like it. It exposes young, vulnerable girls to things they should not be doing at their age.

Game Shop

Yola: A game shop should not have alcohol inside it. I went there once, and I was scared of going in. that time there was also a lot of vandals and I don't like that because they always talk to you in a threatening way. Now if I want to play games I go to the courts, not the game shop. At some point there was a kid that was injured there, hit by a bottle inside the game shop. That frightened me even more.

Len: this is my favourite place because I get to play my favourite game – pool. I also like it because of the jukebox, there is music.