

Lá há residências, aqui é a lixeira (over there are the residences, here is the waste dump) – Struggles over Space between Poor and Rich Neighbourhoods in Southern African Cities after Transition to Democracy (the case of Johannesburg and Maputo)

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While in African cities like Maputo and Johannesburg a big part of the urban population lives under the poverty line and struggles with basic questions like buying food and paying school transport for the children, there is, at the same time, a growing middle- and upper class whose lifestyle choices have a big impact on the development of these cities, e.g. through the building of shopping malls as places of leisure and the fast growth of luxurious suburbs, often walled off from the urban public. Urban space in its various aspects - space for housing, leisure, transport - becomes a sight of struggle between the residents of the poor and the rich neighbourhoods. This paper wants to analyse these conflicts and debates about urban space with regard to power/powerlessness and the theory of social capital by Bourdieu. While in some instances the residents of the slum or township seem to act as passive subjects, in others they articulate themselves as active citizens.

This comparative PhD project inquires both in Maputo and in Johannesburg two physically close, but socially distant neighbourhoods (a slum / township and an upper-class suburb). It describes the public life in these very different neighbourhoods, follows the residents on their trajectories through the city and pays special attention to the capabilities and tactics residents use in claiming and contesting access to public space. Attempts of “privatising” the street can unite the residents of the two suburbs (e.g. in the case of illegal car racing on public streets, where the upper-class youth (as drivers) and lower-class youth (as spectators) are united in their interest for fast cars) or separate them (e.g. in the case of an attempt to close the street that connects the two neighbourhoods). The configuration of the struggles on urban space will be analysed with regard to the spatial legacy of the previous regimes and the identities and divisions constructed by them (English and Portuguese colonialism, Apartheid, Socialism, civil war). The paper will present data of an ongoing research project currently being conducted in Maputo and Johannesburg.