Bendik Bolme

Riversdale, n' water skaars-area?

An Anthropological study of inequality, race and water discourse in the Western Cape

Master's thesis in Social Anthropology
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Preface

I do not think I would have been able to write this thesis without all the help I have gotten from a number of people these last two years. Therefore, I wish to extend my gratitude to:

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Contents

Abstract

This paper looks at the ways in which race and inequality affects the lives of Western Cape South Africans as well as how these social factors affect people's dispositions towards water consciousness in an area that is perceived as vulnerable to climate change.

Using mainly ethnographic fieldwork and the method of participant observation as the basis for its empirical evidence, the examples of informants actions and ways of talking are not random or anecdotal, but are examples of patterns of social interaction that repeats itself time and again and is, in my opinion, typical for the social structures of this society.

By analyzing this evidence in the light of social theory on identity and group negotiation, social inequality and class, as well as rights constructs, discourse analysis and theories on social conflict over water, it aims to show what kind of social structures are shaping the lives of South Africans in the Western Cape, and what effects, if any, these structures have on the actors' consciousness and discourse on water.

Conclusively it finds that social situation does indeed influence dispositions towards water and that we can see this in the interactions, and prevailing discourses that we find amongst the different social groups of Riversdale.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"As so frequently in social anthropological description, our task is to find out what kind of things there are to know about this society, rather than to attempt a rigorous recording of answers to questions that are already in principle known to the investigator." (Barth 1983:8)

As I exited the airplane I had been sitting in for what felt like an eternity while soaring across the African continent, the heat hit me like a wall. Even though it was late at night and all one could see was the shapes of a globally recognizable airport building, the air itself told me I was no longer in a Norway clutched in the cold grips of northern hemisphere January. I had in fact landed in Cape Town, and here it was late summer and swelteringly hot. My purpose was to make my way from there to Riversdale – a small town in a rural area and the municipal seat of the Hessequa municipality, some 300 kilometers east of The Mother City – in order to conduct the fieldwork that would serve as the basis for my Master's thesis.

After spending one night in Cape Town I got in a taxi and made my way to nearby Stellenbosch. Along the way there was further proof that I was no longer in a familiar place, as the vast townships of South Africa rolled past. The great amounts of rundown tin shacks lining the roads and continuing for as far as the eye could see, made a stark contrast to the sparkling skyscrapers of downtown Cape Town. Looking at the people there, going about their lives in an economic destitution that is hard to even imagine for anyone having grown up in a cushy western welfare-state like Norway, it was quite plain to see that the social differences existing in South Africa were huge and that large amounts of the South African population was living in poverty. Having done some research on the country beforehand I guess you could say that I knew that large amounts of poor people were the reality in South Africa, but seeing it with my own eyes really brought the depressing situation of extreme poverty to life.

Through my connection with SINTEF, I had been able to make an appointment with a professor at Stellenbosch University to hitch a ride with him from Stellenbosch to Riversdale a couple of days after my arrival in South Africa, as he was luckily going to a conference in George at the same time. Therefore, getting to Riversdale went as smoothly as one could hope for.

When we arrived in Riversdale, I was dropped off at the municipal building, and introduced to Stefan, one of the water department employees that just happened to arrive from a trip to the Kentucky Fried Chicken as we were standing in the parking lot outside the municipal offices. Stefan was a rather large young colored fellow with a big smile and a friendly demeanor. We went up to his office, which could have been any municipal office in any part of the world by the looks of it, and we talked briefly about my purpose in coming to Riversdale. I asked him if he had any suggestions as to where I might stay during my time there, and he was kind enough to call a lodge in the middle of town and get me a good deal on a room for the duration of my fieldwork. At first I was a bit unsure if I should jump on the first offer that came my way, but seeing as it was quite cheap and very centrally placed I decided to accept. Stefan then drove me down to the lodge and we agreed to do a more proper meeting the next day after I had had some time to settle in. I made a deal to stay for several months with the lodge people, was shown to my room and plunked my bag down on the floor, and myself on the bed. That's when I felt that my fieldwork had truly begun and it was time to start focusing on my research question.

Figure 1 The Main Street of Riversdale

The Research Thesis

As we were working on figuring out where to go and what to research for our master's studies during the autumn of 2014, I was made aware that SINTEF had inquired the institute of social anthropology if there were any master students that could be interested in working with them on an interdisciplinary study on the resilience of water resources against climate change in South Africa, and write a master thesis about it. This project was called SUWAM (Sustainable water management for resilience against climate change impact on society in South Africa), and had at that time only just begun with preliminary assessments of the situation in Riversdale, the site of the research project.

As I had not completely managed to decide on an area of study at this point I arranged to have a meeting with SINTEF to learn more about the SUWAM project. After talking to Sigrid Damman, the anthropologist attached to the project, about the possibility of going to South Africa, I decided it would be exciting to study the social significance of water in a rural community and so chose to go to Riversdale with the purpose of writing about water issues. The reason Riversdale was chosen for this project, rather than an area with more urgent lack of water, such as the nearby area of Ladismith in the western Klein Karoo, was because this research project, which was a collaboration between SINTEF, Stellenbosch University and the Hessequa municipality, was to determine if the Riversdale area was vulnerable to climate change in regards to water availability, as it was believed that it was, and to come up with a plan to decrease that vulnerability if that was the case.

Because social anthropology is ill suited to predict the future, and it would therefore be hard to figure out how the people in Riversdale would respond to possible loss of water resources as a result of future climate change, I decided instead to focus my efforts on finding out if the way water distribution works in Riversdale could reveal something about social differences. In that regard I figured it would also be productive to find out how people in South Africa utilize these resources in their daily lives and if they think about the future when doing so.

During the fieldwork this research question was initially changed more towards looking at how different social groups were affected by the availability of water resources in different ways, and how they solved these challenges based on their cultural dispositions. The reason why my

research question changed over time was because after spending some time in the field my original question started to feel a bit like putting the wagon before the horse so to speak. In other words, the way water was distributed did not have such a big influence on people's lives as the question seemed to imply. It was not the determining factor for a person's social situation simply because of relatively high standards of infrastructure that assured everyone access to water, as well as the fact that there were in place equalizing factors like subsidized water for the poorest.

After spending some time in the field I started to notice that most people in Riversdale did not care that much about water availability, it was rather more like a big soup of social grants, land rights and water subsidies that were part of a larger narrative about rights. Rights that were based on different factors such as, but not limited to, race. And so I began to let my informants partly steer my research in the directions that they were most interested in and so, what I would be focusing on during my fieldwork and subsequent analysis.

What my informants were most often talking about were racism and national politics. Opposition between different ethnicities in South Africa and the state of the nation in modern times, the global market, democracy, the aftermath of apartheid and so forth. But I still wanted to include the water perspective somehow. Partly because that was still a large part of the data I collected, having set out with the purpose of researching water in the first place, partly because I wanted to be at least slightly helpful to the SUWAM project, and mostly because I believe my inquiry into social inequality should be used to attempt to answer some sort of question, and any sort of answer that can say something about water is, in my opinion, highly relevant in today's climate.

In short then, my master thesis was to look at group dynamics and social differences amongst different groups in Riversdale in the Western Cape of South Africa, and examine what kind of impact that might have on how those groups think about water consumption and conservation. In this regard it will be important in this research to take into account the history of South Africa to understand how the current social structure came about and how people's perceptions might be shaped by it.

I will also look at the technical aspects of water distribution, such as the use of prepaid water meters that are as far as I know, unique to South Africa, and how these aspects influence the discourses about rights and water. Nevertheless, the main part of my paper will be about

mapping out social inequalities and to explain how these differences influence people's way of thinking, talking and acting.

I aim to show that the perception of how water is distributed differs greatly from social group to social group. As such, I will argue that solutions to water scarcity and water distribution requires local solutions that has to bring into account the unique social dispositions and the consequences of these in order to be effective. Thus the unique social and economic framework of the Western Cape must necessarily be considered when discussing actual measures for ensuring access to water resources in the future.

A Brief History of South Africa and the Western Cape

South Africa has a unique position in the continent of Africa as one of the most stable and economically successful countries in the region. I have heard it described as a 1st world country in a 3rd world continent for instance, or as even more westernized than some European countries. South Africa also faced massive criticism for a long time over a governmental system that was explicitly institutionalized racism, what we know as the apartheid system.

It is also unique as a country with large and influential ethnic minority groups, that used to have different rights based solely on heritage, during colonialism and apartheid. The population of South Africa is traditionally split into three larger ethnic groups who are referred to as Whites, Coloreds, and Blacks[1]. Whites being recognized as descendants of European colonists and settlers, Coloreds being people of mixed race or descended from the Khoi people from the western part of Southern Africa, and Blacks, sometimes referred to as Native Africans or just Africans, as being descended from African tribes from other parts of Southern Africa. According to the South Africans themselves there are social and cultural differences between these different ethnicities that mark them as distinct from each other, and these differences will be further elaborated on in a later chapter.

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[1] My informant's own, and the generally accepted terms of speech in South Africa

Even though there are massive social problems in South Africa due to for instance poverty, AIDS, and crime, it cannot be denied that South Africa is one of the most successful African countries in terms of stability and development.

While I was in Riversdale, South Africa was celebrating the 20-year anniversary of the end of Apartheid and the start of democracy in the country. Surprisingly enough, I found that several of the white and even colored informants that I spoke with were not particularly happy with the way the country had progressed in those twenty years, and that many of them believed that not much had really improved since the removal of the apartheid system. Especially the last couple of years and the current government were viewed in a negative light by many. For instance, one of my older colored informants, Jacob, said: "This country has gone to shit ever since Nelson Mandela died" (FJ 1:36)[2]. The negativity that I experienced towards the government might have been in part due to finding myself in an area that was mostly populated by coloreds and whites, while most of the government as well as the president himself belonged to the black South African ethnicity. But I do not believe that that was the whole explanation.

Because of the reasons already mentioned, and because my fieldwork – like all fieldwork – is frozen in time during the first half of the year 2015, I would like to take a short look at the modern history of South Africa and see if that can give some kind of framework to, and a better understanding of the situation today.

The history of South Africa as a nation begins at the Western Cape, close to Cape Town, "The mother city", where the Dutch East-India company in 1652 established a supply port to support the trade from Europe to the far east. From this port a number of settlers eventually started to establish farms around the area and more and more Europeans came to make their fortunes in this new land. The colonization of South Africa had begun.

According to Sampie Terreblanche, the modern history of South Africa is a history of forced black labor. (2002:6).

This forced labor and later the apartheid system and the creation of the Bantustans came about because there was an abundance of arable land in South Africa, and not enough labor to farm this land for the white settlers and colonialists who came from mostly the Netherlands and Britain to settle in this new colony (Terreblanche, 2002). In other words, the abundance of land

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[2] FJ Refers to my personal Field Journals numbered 1-3.

in the newly settled South Africa combined with a lack of sufficient labor to effectively cultivate it all created a sort of feudal system where the white colonialists robbed the natives of their land, and the African natives were turned into unfree laborers forced by superior military power to work on the colonialists newly acquired lands. White colonialists took on the role of a privileged land-owning class, that even though slavery was abolished in 1838 forced the black and colored South African populations to take on the role of unfree wage laborers (Terreblanche 2002:8-9).

This land-grabbing by the European colonialists that began shortly after the establishment of the first permanent settlement in South Africa in 1652 put the white elite in control of the most fertile areas of South Africa, and by extension also put them in control of the water resources. Dams were built to control these resources and put the authority over water in the hands of white farmers, a system that seems to still be in place today through water boards delegating quotas of water to farms throughout rural South Africa. At least that was the case in Riversdale, and I imagine the standard way of doing it wherever the farmers were not responsible for their own source of water.

During the transition from the 19th to the 20th century the fact that most of the viable land was occupied and the realization that some farmlands were not economically viable led to the creation of a new class of wage earning white laborers who had to compete with natives for jobs. This in turn led to the creation of a number of labor laws aimed at protecting the privileges of the whites, to the detriment of the black population (Terreblanche 2002:9-10). These laws eventually also led to a system of different social benefits for the different ethnic groups in South Africa. For instance, the fact that whites received significantly more pension money than blacks or coloreds during the apartheid (Ferguson 2015:5).

South Africa eventually managed to introduce real democracy in 1994 after a long struggle for equal rights by the ANC, as well as massive protests from the global community. With the transition to democracy and equal rights for all citizens of South Africa there has been a power shift to the black population since the majority of voters on a national basis are black South Africans. However, the promises of equality and a better living standard for all currently seems to have benefited only a small black political elite (Ferguson 2015:115), while the majority of blacks are still poor and unemployed "...entrapped in a new form of oppression: a state of systemic exclusion and systemic neglect by the democratically elected government and the

modern sector of the economy" (Terreblanche 2002:18). And most of the means of production are still under control of whites.

The transition to democracy led to a need for modernization of the economy in South Africa, which in turn increased the trend begun in the 20th century of less unskilled jobs being available. This trend of decreasing labor opportunities for un-skilled workers is evident in the massive unemployment in South Africa today, where the official unemployment numbers are at over 25% of the working force, and that is not counting those who have simply given up on finding a job in the formal sector. This massive unemployment that is mostly affecting non-white South Africans is, according to Ferguson, caused by a shift in the global labor market to a less labor intensive economy which leads to a labor surplus (2015:37).

While land reform, and Black Economic Empowerment (BEC) were meant to even the playing field between the people of South Africa and to help downtrodden blacks, in reality it has proven difficult to implement. Especially in the Western Cape, the BEC seems artificial to the people living there because the majority population in the Western Cape is historically whites and coloreds.

My point with all this is that with the liberation of blacks in South Africa and the transition to a true democracy, a great many people have gotten a great many rights in order to even out the historical inequalities that have plagued the country, such as rights to a home, and free water and electricity quotas for the poorest (Ferguson 2015:132). But unfortunately these rights have often not manifested themselves in actual quality of life improvements for the people that they were meant to help. And while the blacks of South Africa suffer under not being able to receive that which they have a right to, others such as the coloreds complain that they do not get the same rights as the blacks owing to the fact that they were not discriminated against to the same degree during apartheid. And as such, very much of the discourse of the present is undoubtedly impacted by the past.

Methodology & challenges in the field

".... anthropological fieldwork requires that one do something more than pass through. One must do more than conduct interviews, make surveys, or compose journalistic reports." (James Clifford 1997:191).

Like most anthropological work my fieldwork was going to be ethnographic in nature with a focus on participant observation. I set out with a goal of living with my informants and getting close to the society I was going to conduct my research in. The plan was that participant observation was going to be the main tool for gathering data with some interviews and survey data mixed in.

I tried to base my fieldwork methods on the book *Participant Observation* by James P. Spradley (1980) because it is a comprehensive guide to doing fieldwork. But as good as the guide is, I experienced that it was easy to lose focus whenever I felt like the fieldwork stagnated or things did not turn out the way I had envisioned.

The first challenge after arriving in Riversdale and settling in was to find a physical space where I could observe and interact with members of the Riversdale community – like Spradley recommends that one do when starting out in a field (1980). This turned out to be harder than I had anticipated. Although I was situated in the midst of town, with most of the daily life of Riversdale going on all around me, the water issues I had set out to research seemed far from my physical location. With the exception of some houses in an informal settlement outside the main part of Riversdale, almost every household had taps indoors. There was no focal point for picking up or using water among the general population of Riversdale, and therefore not a clear-cut area that I could move, observe and interact with people in their handling of water.

In part this was one of the reasons that led me to later pick up on and focus more on social differences between population groups and the interactions that took place between people from these different groups.

In the beginning I also thought about the possibility of staying at the municipality offices for some hours every day and observe the interaction between municipal representatives and people coming in with concerns or complaints about water. This could have brought my fieldwork into the field of organizational anthropology, looking at bureaucratic handling of essential resources and infrastructure, as well as public organization's interactions with individuals. However, it did not take long before I turned away from that idea. First of all, there was some confusion from the municipalities side as to exactly what I was doing there and what the municipality was supposed to provide me of assistance. Secondly the representatives for the municipality that I met and interacted with when I first got there did not seem very keen on having someone hang around their offices for extended periods of time. Things moved slowly, no one seemed very interested in spending their time trying to help me out, and in general I found it to be a bit difficult to navigate the social networks of the municipality. I did however get a tour of the town and the water treatment facility that supplied clean water to the town, as well as a couple of meetings with one of the people working at the department of water affairs, Stefan, before he unfortunately quit his job at the municipality a short while after I had arrived, in order to focus on a private venture. I would later learn from another informant situated in the department for water affairs that the municipality had trouble finding a suitably competent replacement for Stefan's position, and by the time I left the field, someone qualified for the job had yet to apply.

The last reason for moving away from the idea of using the municipal offices as my physical space for social interaction was that there simply was not a lot of water related interaction going on between the municipality and the community at the municipal building, and I would have been able to participate in even less of it because I did not understand Afrikaans, which was the language of everyday speech, well enough to follow a normal conversation between two native speakers. There were of course some people coming by from time to time, but not enough that I found it worth the effort it would take to be able to observe this interaction, given all the other hindrances already mentioned as well.

Therefore, I initially settled on going on walks around the neighborhoods observing everyday usage of water and social interaction as well as chatting with people out on the street and over their garden fences. I also frequented a local bar, that was called the Lodge bar, where both farmers and townspeople regularly came to have a drink. This bar was what the locals called a mixed bar, where people of all the South African ethnicities came. As opposed to bars where the customer mass was predominantly either colored or white, of which there were many. This

"racial" divide was not enforced in any way and anyone could enter any bar freely, but for some reason people usually did not go to a bar where a large majority of patrons were people of another skin-color.

When I asked why it was like that, people usually said it was because of cultural differences. For instance, on one occasion where I went with one of my colored informants to a bar in a poorer part of town, I found myself to be the only white person in the building. Another time when I was at a bar mostly frequented by whites, there was a sort of aggression towards the only colored person there, a young man who was relatively new to Riversdale. I was playing pool with him at the time and the other patrons were very much less forthcoming towards him than me, although there was never any open hostility or derogatory terms being used. These observations were also part of my decision to somewhat change my focus during the fieldwork. However, in the Lodge bar where I usually hung around, people of all occupations and skin colors met and talked and because of this I found it to be a good place to get in touch with many different people and to observe these people interact with each other.

The fact that I was white and had a beard during the fieldwork led to a couple of funny observations, for instance the fact that farmers were a well-regarded group in the area. When I talked to Jerry, a young colored informant of mine, about Riversdale, and how quiet and safe the town felt, I told him that I felt completely safe when out walking in the streets and that nobody bothered me. He then said that it was because of the fact that I was white and because of my beard people figured that I was a farmer.

> Me: "Yeah its really nice and quiet here. I always feel safe when walking around, even at night."

> Jerry: "That's because with your beard and everything people just think you are a white farmer so they won't bother you." (FJ 2:21).

This remark seems to imply that farmers are respected in the Riversdale community. But while people could mistake me for a white farmer out on the street, whenever I talked to anyone they quickly understood that I was not from South Africa at all, and my lengthy stay and the fact that I interacted with the locals excluded me from being branded as a tourist. As such I could not be put in any of the pre-existing social categories that existed in Riversdale, I was almost a non-person, and that opened up possibilities for interaction across ethnic groups and social

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categories. In that regard I believe my outsider identity in Riversdale was a strength that made my informants able to tell me things that they might not say to someone belonging to one of the established social categories of South Africa. Thomas Hylland Eriksen talks about the role of the anthropologist in the field in his introduction book to social anthropology, and claims that it is easy to find oneself in the role of a clown or an expert (1998:32). He also cites Finn Sivert Nielsen who writes in his book on fieldwork that the anthropologist is "like a child" while in the field (1996:192 in: Eriksen 1998:32). While I did not feel treated as a child, nor a clown, I was definitely something else than a normal member of Riversdale social life. And I believe this ambiguous role was a strength during my fieldwork as I was able to have informants among many different social groups and ethnicities.

As for moving around the area, I did go to a small number of farms, as well as Riversdale's water treatment plant. In addition, I went with an informant of mine to the Ladismith area, which is outside the project area for the SUWAM project, but which faces some of the same challenges when it comes to water, only that it is even dryer. To get data from other people than my closest informants and to represent as evenly as possible the different groups of people, or social classes, in Riversdale I did a qualitative survey which followed a semi-structured interview guide that I made. I managed to convince 20 people to answer my questions, 16 people in town as well as 4 farmers whom I met in town and who were willing to have a chat with me and answer my survey questions.

This survey was initially intended to be a quantitative survey with a lot of people filling out a piece of paper with questions and alternative answers. I quickly found out that that approach would be pointless though. The first problem was that I found myself unable to come up with a set of questions that my respondents would understand intuitively. The few times I tried to let people fill out the survey on their own I was asked about the meaning of every other question or the respondents would simply skip the questions and not give an answer. This led me to realize that to get the number of respondents that I would need to make this survey viable would take an inordinate amount of time, as I had to guide every respondent through the questions to make sure they understood what I meant by them. Secondly by talking to the respondents while they attempted to answer my survey questions, I was able to learn stuff I had not even thought about including in the survey. In other words, I got more in depth answers and could do follow up questions when talking to respondents, which I found to be a lot more useful than merely

numbers on a spreadsheet. That is why I quickly decided to abandon the quantitative survey approach and rather do a small qualitative, semi-structured interview survey based loosely on the initial questions I had in mind when making the first survey.

Although this survey was almost exclusively focused on water issues, as I had not yet realized at the time the extent that the social differences and inequalities of Riversdale would play a part in my project, I do believe that the information gathered from this survey gave me at least some amount of useful complimentary data.

As for note-taking I usually carried with me a small notebook when I knew that I would be interviewing people or thought I might observe something that could be relevant for the project. But only in the most formal of situations, like the aforementioned survey, did I find the time to write anything down in it. I usually just used my cellphone to jot down notes when I heard or saw something interesting, or thought I might forget something important. For my part, I found that it was more practical to do it like that since I carry my cellphone around with me at most times anyway and it was also less disturbing as I can make the notes under the pretext of writing or answering a text message during a lull in the conversation, something that I found was acceptable and not frowned upon. These short jottings have then been expanded upon in my notebooks when I have found the time for that. I also planned to use an audio recorder in my data collection work, but really did not have much use for it overall. I have used it on a couple of occasions, mostly while doing interviews of stakeholders for SINTEF, and a couple of other times during the small survey, but I believe I could have managed just as well without it. I found it to be a bit cumbersome to transcribe the audio, and that it also would be too disturbing to record the conversation in most casual encounters.

During my stay I kept a personal journal with entries for almost every day. These entries consist almost entirely of recollections of what I did each day as well as moods and feelings and stuff like that. I found it to be a challenge to be attentive at all times in the beginning, but later on I started to notice certain patterns of behavior that is reflected in my journal. The journal was kept primarily for me to process the day and establish a routine for writing stuff down. I thought that most of what I wrote down in this journal would be useless in writing my thesis but that it might come in handy to reread it just to get a feeling for how it was to be in the field, a feeling that I notice even now is easily forgotten. However, I found that it has been quite useful for me

in establishing when what happened and to recognize social patterns repeating themselves during the fieldwork. And so I found myself repeatedly going back to it during the writing of this thesis.

As a fledgling anthropologist, and as I was associated with the SINTEF project – even though none of the people who did not work in the municipality had ever heard of the project – I was always completely open about what I was doing in Riversdale. The people I met often asked if I was working for the government or the municipality, to which I explained the situation and how I was an independent student from Norway working on my project but also cooperating with SINTEF and the municipality. It should be noted that the fieldwork was conducted at the very beginning of the SUWAM project, and coupled with the fact that, let's face it, most of us are not very interested in what our local municipality is up to if we are not directly affected, it was not very surprising that few people had heard about the project. There was even a small news bulletin about the fact that I was in town, issued by the municipality, a little over a month after I had arrived. Despite the fact that my face had been in the papers, I was recognized very rarely, and I always had to explain my situation and what I did whenever I met new people. I found that my role as a researcher was usually the catalyst for talking about water among my informants. Which in turn led me to believe that most of the people of Riversdale, as of yet were not very worried about the water situation, unless they had a particular interest in it or belonged to a group that was directly affected already.

The ways I got into contact with different informants during the fieldwork were quite diverse. Some, like Stefan, I was introduced to through my contacts at Stellenbosch, some I often met out in the streets and talked to every other day, while others, such as Jacob, I met at for instance the bar and eventually struck up a rapport with. From the initial informants I was introduced to yet more people that they thought that I would be interested in meeting, or who might have a particular stake in something to do with my research and the ball was rolling so to speak. This "snowball method" way of getting in touch with informants could take the shape of either informants bringing people they knew well to me and we would have for instance a braai – a traditional South African barbeque – and a couple of beers, or informants would tell me about people that they knew of that I should try to get in touch with and would provide me with a number, an email, or some other way to make contact.

Some of these informants I would only meet with once or twice, and yet others I would see on a regular basis, typically for a game of pool, watching sports or a braai.

Regarding those I met during the fieldwork, who were mostly from the poor, working or lower middle class groups of Riversdale, I was often pleasantly surprised by how well informed my contacts were when it came to both social-sciences, my home country of Norway and the global world at large. Maybe it should not have come as a surprise considering how "developed" South Africa is, and how many tourists come and go through the country every year, but sometimes I was still amazed by their level of knowledge. I felt that this was a boon for me as I was able to bond with my informants over conversations regarding sports, our Countries' histories, pop-music, or other common interests. This in turn often led into conversations about things that my informants were particularly interested in talking to me about, such as the state of the nation of South Africa, and everyday racism. Such conversations turned out to be one of the main methods by which I gathered data during the fieldwork, in addition to observation of everyday actions and interactions.

In the project proposal that I wrote before I carried out my fieldwork, one of the aims during my stay in the field was to conduct a sort of continuous analysis during the data gathering process. I had envisioned a "circle dance" as Cato Wadel calls it, between theory, method, and data (1991:129-130), which means that one goes from having a theory to gathering data and then analyze those data to gain new insights that might yield new theories and make necessary new periods of data collection and so forth. I hoped that this would lead me to structure my data as I gathered them, as well as open up new fields for research as I found them. Although my continuous analysis was lacking in thoroughness and I did not afford it close to as much time as I later realized I should have, it did however succeed in opening my eyes for different fields of study and to realize what was important for my informants and subsequently make me pay attention to a wider range of subjects that I could observe, experience and then note down rather than just my initial research question of effects of water distribution.

What I did fail to achieve in light of this continuous analysis ideal was to keep my data organized while in the field. My previously mentioned lack of thoroughness led to a very broad focus that I did not quite manage to narrow down during the fieldwork, which in turn made my notes a mess. This again made it harder to analyze the data that I had gathered while I was in the field, and as such I probably did not pursue some areas of social interaction with the depth that I should have.

On the subject of language, one of the positives of my fieldwork was that because English is one of the eleven official state languages in South Africa, and the most widespread one in the Western Cape – besides Afrikaans – a large percentage of the Riversdale population spoke it fluently. This did not mean that I could easily follow a conversation between two natives that I was not a part of because the language of choice was usually Afrikaans when two South Africans spoke to each other, and as I wrote earlier I was not fluent enough in that language to understand it unless someone spoke to me in a slow, deliberate, and simplistic way. But the fact that most of those residing in Riversdale had a good grasp on the English language at least meant that I did not need a translator to get into a conversation with someone.

The only time language became an issue was when I got in contact with poor black newcomers, as many of them spoke either very little or no English at all. In effect this lead me to having much less contact with South African blacks than with coloreds and whites, which must be characterized as a weakness with my research. Even though it must be said that the population of Riversdale was primarily coloreds and whites with a small minority of blacks (Ch. 2). Therefore, I believe that the small number of black informants in my study cannot all be accounted for by the language barrier, but also the fact that I had less interaction with black South Africans than the other ethnic population groups.

As I previously mentioned that a lot of my data collection was through conversations with my informants on different subjects, I believe it will be necessary to address the concept of discourse. Basically a term to describe how people talk about something, discourse can be used to mean a particular exchange of words or meanings, or an interrelated set of texts (Philips & Hardy 2002:3), it can be expanded to encompass a whole school of speech and thought, or even used to talk about a complete social system, where the discourse denominates how one talks, acts and understand ones whole social situation. It can also be a way to construct the social world. Either way we can say that discourse is a way of creating context and social realities (Philips &Hardy 2002:5).

Humans are inherently social beings and to be social we need to interact with each other. Every interaction necessarily involves some sort of communication. Therefore we, as human beings, communicate all the time. Either if it is by speech, body language or through actions, we communicate something to our fellow humans. That is why being able to analyze this communication becomes so important. How is it that what words or actions we use can on one

side determine the legitimacy of what we are saying, and on the other exclude those who are not familiar with the discourse from participating in the interaction on the same grounds?

The Foucaltian definition of discourse wherein it is a total social system is in my opinion the most satisfactory way to use the term because it does not limit the usage to speech alone, and takes into account how communication can be non-verbal, such as expressing cultural identity through clothes or hairstyles, as well as include how speech can be a struggle for power. In this view when the coloreds complain about racism in South Africa, they are not only saying that it exists, and that they do not like it. They are also at the same time declaring their otherness from the white population, establishing their own identity and culture as colored and dispute the conception that South Africa no longer is a land divided by race.

Similarly, when whites say phrases like "And it's not a race thing" or "I am not a racist but..." (FJ 3:1), and then criticize for instance colored "culture", they are aware of the history and reputation that South Africa has, and take precautions with their way of talking in order to avoid being perceived as racist. Even though in this case the strategy might backfire. Discourse therefore can be seen as types of typical expressions and phrases that are part of defining and creating social realities.

While the subject of my research and my inquiries amongst the population of Riversdale did not seem to be a sensitive area for my informants, I have still made strides to protect my informant's identities, and it should be noted that all the names of persons appearing in this text have been changed.

Figure 2 Coloreds waiting to work.

Chapter 2

Riversdale

Description of the field

Riversdale is a quite small town in the Western Cape of South Africa, with approximately 16000 inhabitants. It is about a four-hour car drive east from Cape Town, and situated a short way inland at the westernmost area of what is called the garden route, a scenic and naturally beautiful area of South Africa that is popular with tourists. But despite of its location Riversdale is far from the most popular tourist spot in that area, in fact most tourists that come to Riversdale are either passing through or are looking to get out of big cities like Cape Town and into a more relaxed rural environment for a little while, and are not looking for typical tourist experiences.

The town is surrounded on all sides by farmlands interspersed by small thickets of trees, and in the backdrop you can see the mountains making up the eastern part of the Langeberg range that mark the borders of the municipality to the north. Easily noticeable next to the other mountaintops is the characteristic sleeping beauty mountain, a landmark of Riversdale and a popular hiking trail.

Figure 3 Sleeping Beauty Mountain

Riversdale is the municipal center of the municipality of Hessequa which came about through a merger of three smaller municipalities in 2005. As such the municipal offices are central to the town-scape of Riversdale. The name Hessequa means "people of the trees", and refers to the tribe of Khoi people who used to live in the region. Many of the colored inhabitants of the area still see themselves as belonging to the Khoi tribe, because they are descended from these native South Africans.

In addition to being the municipal seat of Hessequa, Riversdale has historically been a trading hub and supply center for surrounding farms and it still functions in that capacity today. The main street of town is lined with grocery shops and other convenient stores. Almost every day the street is bustling with activity from people going in and out of shops getting food and supplies, as well as street vendors selling fruit and vegetables from stalls on the sidewalk. Riversdale is also where the farmers' children go to school and where most of the seasonal workers live, so it's natural that the farmers from around town are often seen in Riversdale,

either doing one of the aforementioned tasks or relaxing with a bottle of beer in one of the bars in town.

Being part of the Western Cape area of South Africa, the demography of Riversdale is very different from the rest of South Africa. While on a national scale the percentages are approximately as follows for the three main ethnic groups of South Africa: 80% blacks, 9% coloreds and 8% white (Census 2011 2012:21), the majority in Riversdale are predominantly coloreds making up about 75 percent of the population, with whites coming in second at 15% and black South Africans third at about 9%. As the locals see it Riversdale, and the rest of the Western Cape, has historically been a white and colored area.

Riversdale is a town in growth and has been for some time. I imagine it grew somewhat during or after the municipal merger of 2005 due to more bureaucracy being centered there, but from what I could gather, most of the growth in population has been due to either pensioners moving there for a quiet and safe retirement, or poor South African blacks coming from other parts of the country looking for work.

The number of newcomers settling down in Riversdale had led to an informal settlement forming outside of town to the east. This settlement is mostly populated by black South Africans who have recently moved here. This informal settlement is very visibly poor judging by the houses, or rather shacks, and the less developed infrastructure compared to the rest of town. This stems from the fact that most of those settling down here in the hopes of finding permanent work are unsuccessful.

The fact that the area, like most of South Africa, is struggling with mass unemployment (Ferguson 2015), has not stopped people from trying their luck. Most of the jobs in the area are in the farming sector, as the Western Cape lacks the natural resources or industrialization of other parts of South Africa, according to my informants. As such, water scarcity in the area could have very adverse effects on the labor market as the farms would not be able to employ as many people as they are currently doing. Some farmers are even saying that during the summer months they are unable to work all of their land because of a lack of water.

That Riversdale is struggling with unemployment, the same way most of South Africa struggles with unemployment, is evident in the streets every day. One can daily observe several groups of men, and some women, standing around on the streets, sitting on corners talking and

drinking. As my informant, Jacob, told me: "When you are up at seven in the morning there are thirty men standing on the corners and maybe five or six of them are going to work, the rest are still there late at night, drunk." (FJ 1:127). Jacob called them lazy, but, as we shall see later on, the fact of the matter was that there were not enough jobs for them, and it could be argued that they really had nothing better to do than hang out in the street and drink alcohol.

But despite these problems with unemployment that Riversdale shared with much of South Africa, it was a very quiet and safe little town. That in itself was stated as one of the main reasons why there were a lot of pensioners coming to settle in Riversdale for their retirement. Unlike in Norway, even complete strangers would greet each other in the streets, and there was never any sense of being in danger of robbery or violence for my part while I was there. All of my informants were also in agreement that this was a very safe and quiet part of South Africa. There were for instance no sign of xenophobia in Riversdale during the short lived riots in Durban and Johannesburg in April of 2015. There were no reports of serious crime that happened while I was spending time there either, and even those who begged on the streets were much less aggressive than for instance in Cape Town. While in Cape Town the beggars would come up to you while you were sitting in a restaurant eating, or follow you for several hundred meters, or even subtly threaten to rob you if you would not give them anything, in Riversdale, the poor were much more pleasant greeting you with a smile and asking if you could spare some change, and if not then have a good day. I imagine this aggressiveness in Cape Town compared to Riversdale was driven by desperation, but the whole rural atmosphere out here in the countryside seemed to put people more at ease than in the big cities. I would think that this is due to the greater sense of community that one gets from living in a smaller more tight-knit place.

As a result of Riversdale being the municipal administrative center, a number of civil servants, politicians and municipal workers live here. This is evident in the northern parts of town where there is a distinctly upper middle class neighborhood that I will describe in greater detail later. But being a somewhat rural area, I got the impression that they did have some problems in attracting young educated people who wanted to settle down. So despite having growth in the form of unskilled laborers and pensioners, Riversdale might not be the most attractive spot for young, skilled South Africans, which might be due to its rural, more peripheral location compared to such nearby places as George or Cape Town.

The town itself is split into different neighborhoods that I will attempt to describe as thoroughly as possible next. There are not hard divides like fences or anything like that between these neighborhoods, or parts of town, and it's not as if one notices immediately as one crosses over from one area to the next. Despite of that I would argue that for the purposes of making social distinctions, they are quite distinct from each other when looking at the big picture, and easily recognized as belonging to different social strata.

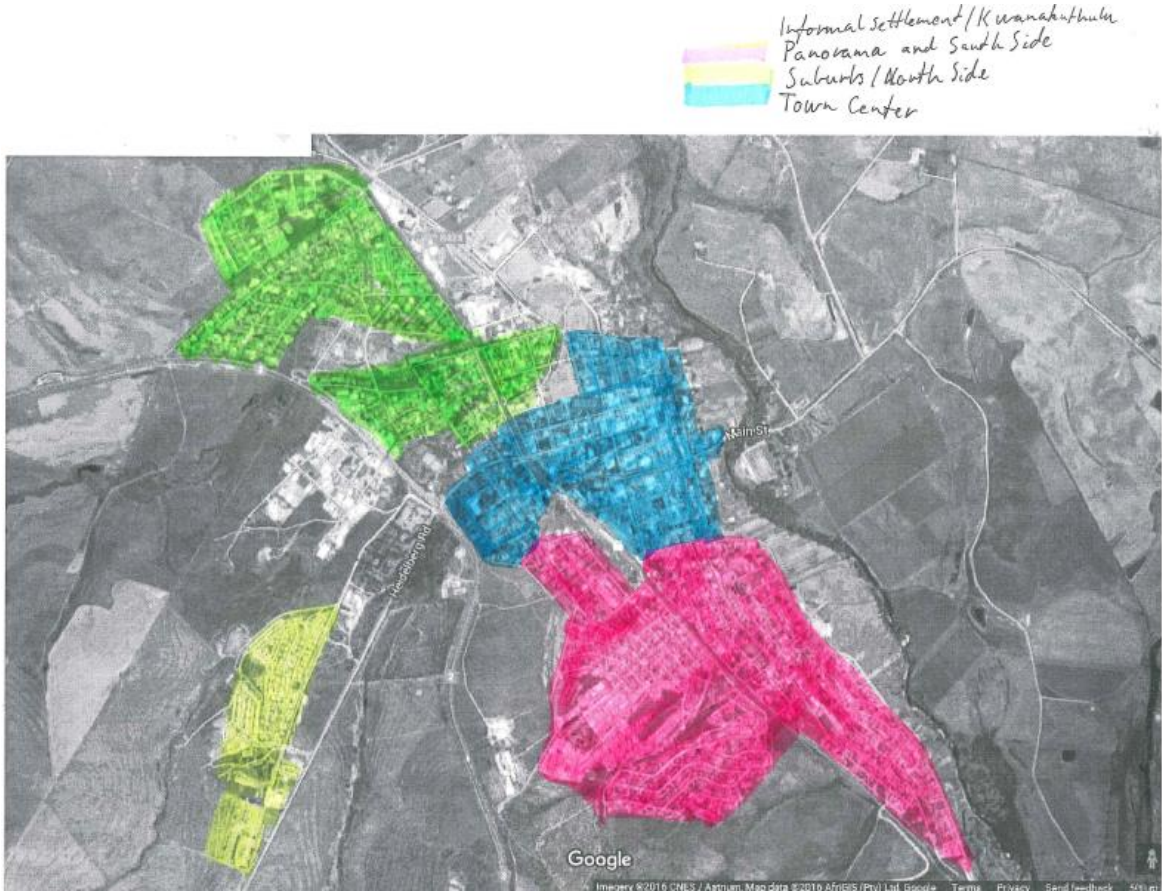# The Neighborhoods of Riversdale

Figure 4 Riversdale (The colors have been slightly skewed)

I. First there is the informal settlement outside of town. This area is populated mostly by poor South Africans, which one can see by looking at the state of the buildings, roads, and infrastructure that are not as well maintained as in the town proper. The electrical wires are often in a less than stellar state, all the roads are dirt roads, and most of the houses are small and rundown. Most of the people living here are, relatively speaking, new arrivals to town, and have received a small house from the municipality or are waiting to receive housing. As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 - Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, section 26.1 and 26.2, every citizen has the right to adequate housing, and it is the government's responsibility to provide that if a person is not able to himself. From what I understand, in South Africa this has come to mean that every person has the right to be provided with a house from the government at some point in their lives. But it is only a one-time thing. If you have already received a house somewhere, you are not entitled to one if you move somewhere else. I was told, this lead to some headache for the local official, as they often had a hard time figuring out if someone coming into town should be given a house or if they had already received one somewhere else. In any account it was not much that they were given, purely the bare minimum in the form of for instance a small two or three-room brick and mortar house. And besides, many people still live in small tin or wooden shacks, either waiting for their house or being denied one, having already received a house somewhere else.

This informal settlement is also the part of town that has the highest number of blacks. Hessequa is traditionally mostly populated by coloreds, but it is usually black South Africans who come from other parts of the country looking for work. There were always people out in the streets, as well as in the gardens and driveways of the houses in this part of town. People would work their gardens, growing vegetables, talk with neighbors and friends or just mill about in the streets. This is probably a result of the previously mentioned lack of jobs, that force those living there to fill their days with something else besides paid labor.

It was obviously rare that any white person would find themselves in that area, much less walk around alone, as I was met with quite a few stares when I was around, and a significant number of those I approached initially assumed that I was there to buy drugs. My guess is that they could not think of any other reason why a white person should be walking around in a poor area of town populated exclusively by blacks and coloreds. Despite that I was constantly met with friendliness and respect, and most people were more than happy to talk to me or provide any kind of assistance they could once I explained my purpose there. Some were even too eager to

help and wanted to arrange large meetings, work for me or even come with me to Norway when I returned there.

The people living here, being mostly new to town, seemed to keep to themselves and to their neighborhood. This resulted in these newcomers not making much of an impact on the townscape, at least from an outsider's perspective. It seems as though they were seen as somewhat of an outsider group by the people living in town as well, as I was told several times negative things about the people living there, for instance that you could not give them jobs because they would end up stealing from you (FJ 3:4). The fact that most of those living in the informal settlement were black, and the fact that there were very few jobs for them, and as a result most of them were poor and unemployed, seemed to reinforce the stereotypes that blacks are lazy and dishonest that already existed amongst the whites and coloreds of Riversdale. Living outside of the town center and not having permanent employment would likely make it hard for these black newcomers to develop social relations with other groups in order to rectify those stereotypes.

II. The Panorama, as the locals called it because it was situated in a hillside and therefore offered a view of the town, and eastern parts of town are also quite visibly poor, but has a better infrastructural standard than the informal settlement. A lot of the houses in this area are shacks or improvised homes, for instance I saw more than one old caravan with a mailbox in front serving as someone's permanent housing. Others are brick or wooden houses with various standards, some of them are really nice with beautiful decorations and sizable gardens, while others are rundown and missing doors, windows and so forth. I really enjoyed walking around in this area and look at how nice some of the people living there had made it with what little they had. Most of the people with gardens in this area were either growing vegetables in all or part of their garden, or they kept chickens. The ones who did not grow anything explained that the gardens were too small or the soil too bad to grow food there. The ones with gardens had water tanks for collecting rain water attached to their houses. I later learned that they got these water tanks through subsidies, and also that every new house that was built was required by housing regulations to have one of these water tanks attached.

There were several small shops scattered around, selling the most basic goods such as bread, cigarettes, canned food, and beer, as well as a couple of bars in the area who sold drinks and simple prepared food. These places were nodes of activity during the day and the bars were

natural gathering places for people from the neighborhood during the weekends. Like the informal settlement, this part of town also had a lot going on out in the streets. You could always see women, children, old people, and unemployed men, as well as a large amount of dogs, out and about.

Most if not all of the people living here were of the colored ethnicity of Riversdale, I never saw any local white South Africans in this area anyhow. Therefore, like in the informal settlement, they seemed to be unaccustomed to seeing white people walking around alone, as I was eyeballed constantly by the children running around in the streets, I imagine everyone not living in the area were mostly driving their car whenever they went there. As one could already have guessed a large portion of the people in this neighborhood were also unemployed. Especially the men were often without jobs as traditionally masculine jobs are disappearing, while the women could often get jobs in the service sector. Therefore, in a significant amount of households in Riversdale the women were the main providers who got money through working in the service sector and through child-support welfare. The men on the other hand, were begging, trying to sell salvage or were otherwise involved in the informal work sector.

I did mention that there were several gardens that were used to grow vegetables and other produce in, as well as some who kept chickens. From what I could gather this was purely subsistence farming on a very small scale to supplement the households' food budget. With large numbers of unemployed, the time that people could spend in their gardens growing produce were usually enough to provide them with some of the necessities that they did not earn enough to buy, provided they had large enough gardens, enough water, and good enough soil to do that. I would suggest that if a household could grow some of its own produce or not was the dividing line between poor but managing and miserably poor.

The Panorama area then could be seen as a predominantly poor – but not as poor as the informal settlement – and colored area. With a large amount of the people being able to work, but unable to find employment in the formal sector, depending on welfare payments and backyard gardening to supplement the little money they do receive through formal employment.

III. Moving north-east down the hill we arrive at what I have termed the town center, with the main street and the surrounding area which is what one could a working and lower middle class area with stores, offices, nice houses and apartments. The main street was where most of the grocery stores were, as well as other stores like the furniture store and the liquor store as well

as shops where one could buy hot meals to-go. Every day there was a lot of activity here as people from the town and the surrounding areas came shopping for supplies. The municipality buildings, the banks, and a plethora of other offices were also situated in this area, so the fact that there was a lot of activity and bustling about during the day was not surprising. The street was noisy and loud, with people talking, yelling and laughing, and cars driving up and down all day long. It was not unusual to see trucks loaded with sheep or cows, and loose dogs were prowling the streets looking for food. I also observed groups of mostly colored men, and also some women, standing around on the corners from early in the morning until late in the evening, seemingly doing nothing all day. These clusters of people were often centered around the liquor stores or bars in the area.

As for the houses in this part of town, they were mostly medium sized, with hedges or short walls. This was also the only part of town that had relatively tall buildings with apartments that people lived in, which gave it a more urban flair than the rest of Riversdale. These apartments, if built during apartheid could well have been part of the apartments Seekings talks about that were specifically built for whites during apartheid, but that are now available to purchase for anyone (2015). Apart from the apartments in the bigger buildings, most of the houses had decently sized gardens with either flowers and grass, fruit trees or vegetables inside their enclosures. Most people in this area were not rich enough to waste the opportunity to supplement their household with home-grown produce if they had the opportunity to do so on their property.

Unlike the informal settlement and the panorama area, which were predominantly occupied by blacks and coloreds, the town center had a mix of all ethnicities. Walking around in those other parts of town I was usually the only white person I saw the whole walk. In the main street however, there were all kinds of people walking in and out of the shops, talking to each other. Most of the shops or restaurants seemed to be owned by whites, with coloreds making up the majority of the working force.

The town center was naturally a melting pot area of Riversdale where everyone from all the different neighborhoods and the people living outside of town inevitably ended up interacting with each other in one way or another. But at the same time, one can still see that ethnic divides still exist even here, with some of the bars primarily frequented by either one or another ethnic group, and a significant part of the workers being colored while most of the owners were white.

The town center was also where the lodge that I was staying at and the bar I mostly frequented were located. The bar was a large room with plenty of seats around a long counter, a pool table in the middle of the room, a couple of small tables spread out, as well as a small stage set in the innermost part of the bar, at the opposite end of the bar counter. There were two TV's in the bar, one small TV over the bar counter, and a larger one next to the pool table. It also had a small outdoors area with some seating and a braai, and a tiny gambling room with five or six slot machines. During the weekends – and especially when there was a karaoke event – and whenever the Western Cape Rugby team – the Stormers – were playing, the bar was full of people. Most other days and evenings you would find a rotating cast of regulars coming in for a drink or a game of pool. This particular bar had a clientele that represented the population of Riversdale quite well, except for the fact that none of the very poor came here. Most of those frequenting the bar were coloreds, ranging from poor pensioners and working class people to middle class, but there were also a large minority of whites, both people from town as well as farmers. These people mixed freely and seemed to get along great, there was no open racism, hostility or anything of the sort that I witnessed during my fieldwork. This might be due to race loosing prominence to class in the post-apartheid South Africa, but this is a theory that we will return to take a closer look at in later chapters.

IV. Past the municipality building in the very northern end of the main street the houses gradually start getting even bigger and prettier looking than the ones in the town center eventually making way to what I have classified as "the suburb" – although it is not really a suburb- part of town, where the upper middle class and "elites" of Riversdale live. Here there are walled houses with big gardens and to be frank it looks quite like a western suburb – hence the name – and the sizes and standards of the houses are a world apart from the informal settlement. Walking around I rarely saw people out in the streets or in their gardens – those places where I could see over the walls or hedges – and whenever I did it was usually older white people watering their lawn or sitting outside reading the paper or just relaxing. Whenever I saw someone they were usually in a car, and the people in this area seemed to be fairly equally divided between the white and colored population with maybe a slight majority of whites, and a large minority of coloreds.

My assumption is that those living in this area of Riversdale were primarily occupied as civil servants, business owners or had built up a cushy pension for themselves. This area also included a couple of gated communities that were as far as I could tell, made for pensioners

looking for a quiet retirement. This strengthens the narrative that a significant portion of the towns growth comes from pensioners settling down because the town is quiet and safe.

This was maybe the part of town where I had the least contact with people, simply because there rarely was anything going on in the streets here. Whatever was happening in this area of town, was secluded inside of houses or behind tall walls. Therefore, my contact with people from this area was limited to meetings at the bar, which happened on several occasions, or those few times where I went for walks in that area and happened to meet someone who was willing to have a chat, which on the other hand was very rare indeed. Members of this upper echelon of Riversdale society were generally polite, but difficult to approach and engage in conversation with. They were in general not very interested in talking unless they were in an informal and relaxed setting, and as such I did not have many conversations with people in the suburb area of Riversdale.

The infrastructure of Riversdale

The infrastructure of Riversdale was at first glance comparable to a small town in any western country. Most of the roads were made of asphalt, and those made of gravel were decent enough. Most houses had built-in water taps, and almost all the houses were hooked on to the power grid. Mobile cellphone coverage was good and most people had access to the internet. There were even planned upgrades of the area's wastewater treatment facility, in order to make more wastewater reusable.

There are, however, challenges to the infrastructural quality in Riversdale. Load shedding, the rolling blackouts that are caused by national electricity deficiency, is affecting Riversdale just like every other part of South Africa, and power prices are soaring. To make matters worse, people are not allowed to have solar panels and be hooked up to the power grid at the same time, according to information I gathered from informants (FJ 3:5). There were also plenty of leakages in the water and sewage system, according to people working at the municipality, and large amounts of water was lost due to old faulty piping. One of the SINTEF scientists was actually surprised to hear how old the piping system is, and said that it was not up to the standard

that had been portrayed to them before their visit (FJ 2:47). The replacement of old pipes was apparently going on constantly.

There are also some differences in the quality of the infrastructure depending on the neighborhood. The poor areas were more likely to have gravel roads for instance, as well as electrical wiring that was less well maintained than that of downtown Riversdale. The poor areas were also the areas with the highest frequency of prepaid water meters, but a lot of the meters were broken or busted up at any one time. These differences in infrastructural quality are in all probability a combination of the remnants of considerably less investment in non-white areas during the apartheid, and cost efficiency politics in the development of free housing areas.

South Africa have a unique stance when it comes to providing its citizens with houses. The constitutional paragraph previously referenced in this chapter has come to mean that the South African government has a duty to provide those citizens who cannot afford it themselves with adequate housing. It is the local governments duty to provide these houses, and they are often placed on the outskirts of town or in remote locations missing other infrastructure such as schools or medical facilities. According to Sophie Oldfield, there are various requirements for receiving a government sponsored house depending on the region where the house is being built. For instance, in her case study of Delft South in Cape Town, the families who wanted a house had to earn less than 1500 rand a month and consist of at least one adult and a dependent child. In addition, the family had to be on the local housing waiting list for a certain period of time (2004:191).

There is however a massive backlog of people waiting for houses in South Africa, even though it is a constitutional right. This has made people frustrated with the government and their unfulfilled promises, as James Ferguson shows when he recounts a meeting where NGO workers teach South African poor about their rights to a house when suddenly an old man stands up and says that he "…don't want the right to a house. I want *a house.*" (2015:48). Such frustrations sometimes lead to organized civil disobedience such as the "Door kickers" organizing to take over government funded houses by force (Oldfield 2004:192). But despite the fact that many poor South Africans are still without "proper" housing, that South African are building free houses for its poorest citizens is still quite unique in a global perspective.

The surrounding farmlands

In addition to the relevant neighborhoods that Riversdale consists of, I should try to describe the area with a number of farms surrounding Riversdale as well. Unfortunately, I do not have extensive firsthand knowledge of the area, as I did not have access to a car while I was there and was therefore dependent on getting rides from my informants or walking wherever I wanted to go. As a result of not being very mobile, I did not move outside of town much except on a couple of occasions, and did not see as much of the surrounding area as I would have liked. Nonetheless I shall attempt to describe it, and the people living there in as much detail as possible. As I have already said, there were quite a lot of farmlands and quite a lot of farms surrounding Riversdale, as well as one of the best, I was told, agricultural schools in South Africa just a short way outside of town.
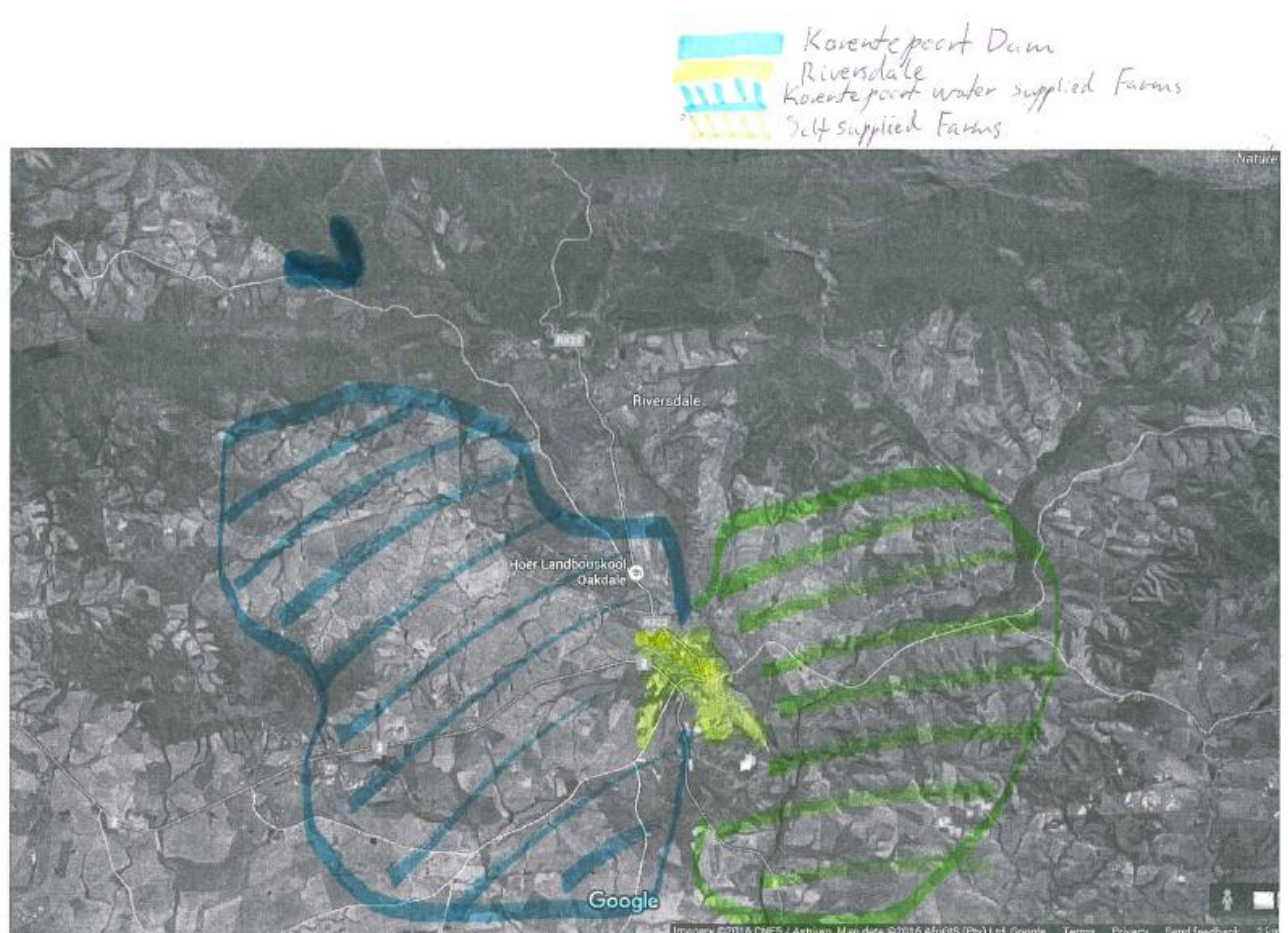

Figure 5 Map of Riversdale, The surrounding farmlands and the Korintepoort dam

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The farms were split up into two categories by geographical location based on water availability. The farms on the north-western side of town are part of the Korintepoort dam scheme and get water from the dam. The Korintepoort dam scheme farmers rely on water quotas from the dam, distributed by the Korintepoort dam water board. Despite giving high praises to the people working at the water board, these farmers say that they often do not get the amount of water that they ask for or need. This is partly because the water board is cautious with the water quotas, especially in the summer months or in periods of drought, as emptying the dam completely would have catastrophic consequences for the whole area, and secondly because the town of Riversdale are notorious at using more water than their quota, according to several of the farmers. In effect this leads to these farmers, either having to spend money pumping extra water from rivers, which is very expensive with the electricity crisis and load shedding currently in effect, and prices of electricity at an all-time high, or they can leave parts of their land uncultivated.

Those on the south-eastern side of the town, on the other hand, are self-sufficient and rely on water from personal dams and pumping water from rivers or "boor wells", which are basically water wells. They have much the same problems with water as the Korintepoort dam side, except that they do not share their water source with the town. In effect, irregular rain leads to more water going to waste because of a lack of storage capacity. The lack of storage capacity is caused by regulations to the dam-building of the farmers on their land. Basically they are not allowed to build bigger or more dams on their land in order to catch more of the water when it actually rains. The effect on farming, increased costs and less ability to farm all of the land is the same for both groups.

The farms range from small subsistence farms to rather large, almost industrial farms. What is produced on the farms is everything from wine to nuts, but the majority of farms produce dairy that go to the cheese factory in Ladismith. A decrease in water quotas to the farms would probably have serious repercussions in the labor market of Riversdale in the form of less jobs on the farms, less produce being produced, specifically speaking milk, which might further drive up the prices of milk and seriously affect the cheese factory in neighboring Ladismith. This was a fact that some of my informants made me aware of when we talked about possible adverse effects of less water in the region.

Regardless of what side of town the farm is on, and although the farmers may think that the town is using too much of what they might consider their water, they are still undoubtedly tied up with the towns-people through relations of employment, education, the market, and others.

On a side note, the large amount of pensioners coming to Riversdale has led to some complaints from farmers. While most pensioners live in town, there are some that live on farms outside of town. Some farmers are saying that these pensioners are claiming the water quotas connected to their land but are not using the water to farm anything, thus decreasing the potential output of the active farmers.

It should be clear to the reader by now that while Riversdale is a rural town with a high degree of relative peace and quiet, there are still social inequalities there just like in every other part of South Africa. Both economically and based on ethnicity people live under different conditions and the whole system is built on the relations between these different groups. These themes of race and inequality will be explored in the following chapters, before we finally analyze the significance of water in this system, and how these conditions affect and are affected by water, a resource that in this rural framework is the very lifeblood of the region both because it is an absolute necessity for human life, and because it is the basis of work and labor in Riversdale.

Chapter 3

The rainbow nation

Race in Riversdale and the Western Cape

> "Social systems differ greatly in the extent to which ethnic identity, as an imperative status, constrains the person in the variety of statuses and roles he may assume" (Barth 1969:18)

As I have made clear in both the brief historical overview and my descriptions of Riversdale, race is still an issue that sits right at the top of the heap in the collective South African mind. And since understanding how different dimensions of social systems affect one another is one of the most important means of being able to say anything when it comes to the field of social science, I feel that it will be necessary to analyze how these relations of race and race identities affect people's opportunities, limitations and behaviors in a Western Cape context.

During my fieldwork I became aware of how much importance my informants put in racial identity, and thus came to realize that understanding how these thoughts on race played a part in shaping people's lives would be important in order to explain how the dynamics between different population groups created narratives as well as affected behavior. I wanted to use this knowledge to understand how these narratives and possible discourses could affect how people thought and acted in relation to one another as well as how it shapes dispositions centered around rights. A natural starting point was then to begin mapping out the social, ethnic, and economic groups occupying the geographical area of Riversdale and discover what their relations were to each other. In other words: what were the dynamics of Riversdale's social groups to each other, and keeping to the original research question, how could that dynamic

affect and be affected by the politics of water distribution and the prospect of diminishing access to water resources in the area, if that was something that crossed people's minds at all.

I have decided to focus on two different parameters for group affiliation amongst the inhabitants of Riversdale. The first is race, because that is an issue that most South Africans are concerned with and they discuss it frequently and at great length. The second is economic in nature, "class" if you like, which is based on living standards and work situation. The reason I look at economic situation as a classificatory basis is because there are great amounts of poor people making up the South African population, people that are dependent on welfare to survive, and because the economic groups often run almost parallel to the ethnic divisions that exist in South Africa. While the next chapter will deal with these issues of class and inequality, this chapter will focus almost exclusively on race issues and how race identities affect social relations and dispositions in Riversdale and the Western Cape.

For the first categorization based on race I will use the South African terms of black or native, white, and colored, established during Apartheid under the legislative 1950 Population Registration Act (Seekings 2008:3). Blacks are defined as native or aboriginal Africans, and although there are historically and linguistically many different groups of blacks, they all go under the umbrella term. Whites on the other hand are defined as South Africans of European, mostly Dutch or British, descent. The last big ethnic group in the South African social landscape is the coloreds. They are classified as being of mixed descent and are therefore thought to be not entirely Native-Africans, even though many are descended from ethnic groups native to South Africa such as the Khoi people. Hottentot is a very derogatory term sometimes used about coloreds. I never heard it being used myself but was told by colored informants that they had been called Hottentots and that it was highly offensive to them; it can be likened to the American term "Nigger", used about African Americans.

I hope I have made obvious from my descriptions of Riversdale and the short introduction to South Africa's history that race is still a factor that at first glance seem to be the main determinant in many South Africans lives. From how good your education is likely to be, to what kind of neighborhood you are likely to live in. The question then becomes what kind of restrictions or opportunities are really related to one's ethnicity, and how does that play out in social interactions with other members of South African society. I will then begin this chapter by taking a broad view on how people usually negotiate such racial identities and the consequences that may come of it.

Racial identity negotiation theory

In social anthropology, it is often argued that the construction of social groups, boundaries, and identities are a series of conscious or unconscious strategic choices. Therefore, I believe Barth's actor-oriented processes analysis (1994) will be of use when analyzing the actions of my informants when they negotiate for instance group affiliation. Richard Jenkins' and Erving Goffman's theories on social identity might also be helpful when we take a look at what people do and say.

Many South Africans emphasize race when they talk about both personal and societal problems. Some people were in fact able to squeeze questions of race and culture into almost every topic. Like for instance when I had coffee with one of my older white informants he told me that one of the problems with water in the area was that the blacks and colored were wasteful and unable to save because they did not plan ahead, "even one day" he said. And so they used more than they needed, and that was one of the reasons why water could be a big problem in the future. So how do the people of Riversdale negotiate ethnicity and group affiliation in a diverse social environment? How are boundaries made and remade in the aftermath of apartheid, and what sort of social, economic or other consequences does negotiating these groups lead to?

On the topic of ethnic groups, Barth says that they rarely exist in isolation, rather they exist in relation to each other and are shaped by this group to group relation. A huge part of belonging to a group is to not belong to a different group (1969). In addition to the historical origins of the colored category, the fact that for instance South African coloreds talk so much about how they are faced with racism from whites and focus on the distinction of the colored culture as opposed to black and white is in my opinion an example that illustrates this very argument. They use the way other people treat them as a defining factor about themselves and thereby creates a stronger internal bond between those belonging to the ethnic group.

We should then look at how such social boundaries work. Barth in his introduction to *Ethnic groups and Boundaries* argues that ethnic groups can be seen as "a form of social organization" (1969:13). And that although ethnicity and culture are oftentimes seen as almost the same, we cannot assume that this is always the case (1969:14). For instance, the colored administrative workers in the municipality did not seem interested in or mentioned a specific "colored culture" whereas those who were less fortunate economically were often very outspoken about it. We

can imagine that the cultural differences between these two groups of people were larger than between the white and colored administrative workers. "The features that are taken into account are not the sum of objective differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant" (Barth 1969:14). One cannot determine a priori which cultural features are made relevant by actors to distinguish cultures from each other. Therefore, the features that define a culture may change to accommodate or exclude different people at different times. How then do people know who is part of the group and who is not?

Erving Goffman talks about something he calls prescribed structure of interaction (1959). In this lies the assumption that any interaction between actors should have a defined purpose, so as to not make people confused as to what their role in the interaction is. I would argue that the apartheid system in South Africa's past can be classified, amongst other things, as taking the form of a forced framework for social interaction, an explicit prescribed structure of interaction if you will. In other words, this structure used to be explicit during the apartheid in South Africa, but has since become implicit. Implicit in the form that there still exists a prescribed structure of interaction between actors that is unique to South Africa, but it is not enforced by laws or regulations, only social custom.

Barth says that if one ethnic group has control over the means of production at the expense of another, a relationship of inequality and stratification occur. (Barth1969:27). One could argue that this is the case in South Africa, since historically white South Africans own most of the means of production, in the Western Cape specifically this would mean the farmlands. The South African government have since the end of Apartheid attempted to somewhat even out these economic differences, in the form of the "land restitution" reform and other legislative acts. Unfortunately, these re-distributive efforts seem to be botched on account of being too harsh on the current white land owners, in their opinion at least, and because of that, leads to animosity between the ethnic groups in the area.

On the other hand, Barth argues that stratified societies are not always divided by ethnic groups. Rather, class, is what makes the different cultures. "In such systems cultural differences(...)grade into each other and nothing like a social organization of ethnic groups emerges" (Barth 1969:27). While South Africans largely use the terms race, black, white and colored when speaking about group differentiation, they usually take race to mean something else than a biological category, as we shall see shortly. It could be that what we see in South Africa today is a shift from a country divided by ethnic groups to a country divided by class.

Insofar as they both seem to matter at the moment, ethnicity more than class for some, and class more than ethnicity for others, but both existing at the same time. And as in most modern societies, class mobility exists, but as the social sciences has found time and again: few make the leap up.

> "The persistence of stratified poly-ethnic systems thus entails the presence of factors that generate and maintain a categorically different distribution of assets: State controls, (...), marked differences in evaluation that canalize the efforts of actors in different directions, (...), or differences in culture that generate marked differences in political organization, economic organization or individual skill" (Barth 1969:28).

Barth argues that the question of ethnicity is prone to debate because characteristics of membership among members will necessarily vary. As well as the fact that ethnicity is both a question of origin and current identity and thus in flux (1969). If membership in an ethnic group was based only on skin color or clothing, then it would be difficult to distinguish blacks from coloreds in South Africa but the natives did it easily enough. On the surface, the different ethnic groups of South Africa would seem to share a number of similar cultural distinctions, but as we shall see later, what determines one's racial identity is much more complicated than just external characteristics.

Reduction of cultural difference though, does not necessarily reduce the importance or relevance of ethnic identity and organization. (Barth 1969:32-33). In a society where actors are dependent on their community for either security or support, their contact with other strata of society is probably lessened. This might be why it seems important for less economically safe South Africans to communicate their ethnic identity more strongly than those who were economically better off. (The same is true of whites living in segregated communities in larger cities, although that is a question more of bodily security rather than economic). This leads to a strengthening of the boundaries between the different groups.

"However, most of the cultural matter that at any time is associated with a human population is *not* constrained by this [ethnic] boundary" (Barth 1969:38). So while in the context of a South African and more specifically a Western Cape social environment, the fact that actors emphasize their ethnicity and distinction compared to other ethnicities is understandable when taking into account the stratification that takes place there. On a global scale on the other hand the distinction between the ethnic groups would probably be less pronounced. As previously

mentioned the noticeable cultural differences between ethnic groups in a small geographical area are hard to pick up for someone not intimately familiar with the culture. We can expect these differences to be bigger as we move further away geographically, even between what is classified or generally thought of as the same ethnic groups, than between different ethnic groups that occupy the same geographical space.

Now how do individuals negotiate this ethnic identity? There are in social theory certain ways that identity is usually communicated to maintain group affiliation and boundaries.

Returning to the question of negotiating identity, Erving Goffman talks about the preserving of a social persona in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). He argues that in social interactions with others we play a role and that that role may change depending on the situation and with whom we are interacting. It would seem that this theory on role-playing is somewhat at odds with the idea of individual actors having distinct and unique identities. Here the terms backstage and frontstage, that Goffman uses to distinguish between the public image of oneself and the private actions and thoughts of a person (1959:114), become relevant. The act one puts on at the front stage, is most certainly affected by ones identity but also by external factors such as goals or social rank. And as we already know, our identity is a combination of different group affiliations and identity markers, and thus when putting on a performance we make a decision on what parts of our identity to emphasize in order to reach the goals of that specific situation or interaction. In other words, our actions are shaped by both external and internal factors when interacting out in the social world. Backstage on the other hand is where a person does not need to strategically choose their actions, where we can be "our true selves", if such a thing can even be said to exist.

> "Identity is produced and reproduced both in discourse – narrative, rhetoric, and representation – and in the practical, often very material, consequences of identification." (Jenkins 1996:201)

Richard Jenkins in his book *Social Identity* argues that identity can matter a great deal in our interactions with others (1996). Identity is often a case of recognizing similarity and difference between people, even if that similarity or difference is totally imagined. How actors identify is also often connected to groups and group mentality. How one identifies is closely related to what groups one are a member of. Jenkins says that one can only identify as a member of a group if other members also identify one as belonging to that group. (1996) Therefore other

people influence individual actors' selves; their perception of their own identity. This is very similar to Goffman's aforementioned theories on social interaction and presentation.

To understand how this might play out in a South African setting we can take a look at one example from Seekings article on the continued salience of race in South Africa. He argues that South African school kids renegotiate race around the dynamics of taste – in music, clothes and so forth – rather than reproduce the biological concepts of race that permeated apartheid (2008:15). While the race terms are still used to determine difference amongst the children, what the terms mean have changed over time. From meaning biological differences, race terms now mean culture. This shift will be elaborated on later in this chapter. For now, it is enough to state that other people's influences affect how people identify in relation to each other, and that in South Africa this identity negotiating takes on a racial aspect, although not in the biological sense that it used to.

"I'm not a racist but...."

The Western Cape perspective

One of the first things that I noticed coming to South Africa was how divided the country still seemed even after 20 years removed from the Apartheid. Most of the farmers were white, the wealthy areas of town were populated by large numbers of white South Africans relative to the demographic makeup of the region and, coloreds and whites went to different bars. That is not to say that there was a total separation of the ethnic groups of South Africa. As I have also previously mentioned there were bars where people of all colors interacted, and there were lots of colored South Africans living in the wealthier parts of town, occupying good jobs and a high standing in the Riversdale community. My initial surprise at this "natural" segregation was probably due to my lack of knowledge as to how South Africa had developed as a nation post-apartheid. Because rather than trying to develop a non-racial South Africa, the emphasis was put on building a multi-cultural "rainbow nation", where people of all colors worked together but retained their cultural distinctiveness (Seekings 2008:6). Seekings then goes on to argue that this official multi-culturalism maintains and reproduces the racial categories of the Apartheid era.

As 20 years is not that long a time, and the fact that multi-culturalism is something that has been emphasized in South Africa, it is not surprising that racism is something that people in South Africa talk frequently about. And I experienced that it could lead to some pretty heated arguments during my time in Riversdale. I believe that the reason racism and apartheid is such frequent topics of discussions in South Africa is because it is not only a part of their past, but also a factor in their present that helps shape their lives and social relations.

Ethnicities can be said to be social constructs, but once created are difficult to avoid because they are constructed as an inherently biological and culturally determined consciousness that one cannot choose to participate in or not (Vail 1997). In people's minds, either one has a certain ethnicity or one does not, in other words it can be classified as a form of forced participation. One can determine how much significance to put on one's own ethnicity, but you cannot decide the significance others place on it. On the other hand, when the focus on race has shifted from a biological standpoint to one who emphasize culture, as it has in South Africa (Seeking 2008), it again becomes interchangeable and fluid, and not fixed and permanent. The interpretation that focuses on culture instead of biological factors leaves a lot more wiggle room as to who is socially accepted.

One important point to reiterate is that the coloreds, who are a small minority on a national level, is the majority ethnic population in this area of South Africa (Ch. 2). According to Ian Goldin, the colored identity grew forth in the 1910s as a result of whites' efforts to alleviate a class of colored traders and craftsmen in order to make coloreds more strongly affiliated with the whites rather than the South African blacks (1991:251). As the "ruling class" the whites had a hegemonic power of definition, thus the Khoi people were defined as a higher "tier" of race than for instance Bantu, Zulu or Xhosa people. Coloreds therefore emerged as an ethnic class between whites and native Africans and this distinction between non-white South Africans were further elaborated on during Apartheid with the ethnic identities being made official categories under the Population Registration Act, and coloreds receiving more benefits and more freedom than blacks.

In recent times, as the ruling politicians are mostly from the national majority of blacks, and with whites still holding the position of land owning class, in the post-apartheid South Africa coloreds often feel marginalized which might explain why they are in the first place, so negative to the government and blame them for everything wrong with the country, and second, complain about being met with racism from whites.

Colored people I met were often concerned with their group affiliation. One night I was made aware of this on my way to a bar called Karen's Place with one of my informants, a large, young, colored man called Luke.

Luke and I have already had a couple of beers in my usual hang, the lodge bar, where a karaoke night was well under way, when he suggests we go someplace else. He asks me if I have been to a place called Legends, and I answer that I have not. He then suggests we go there. I later found out that Legends is a bar frequented almost exclusively by whites, and suspect that since I am white myself, that is the reason why he suggested it. On our way out to the street I mention that although I had not been to Legends, I did visit a bar called Karen's place not too long ago, but that the visit was quite early and on a weekday. Karen's place was in the poorer part of Riversdale, in the area previously described as the Panorama area. Luke seems surprised and almost incredulous that I had been there, but he suggests we go to Karen's place instead.

On our way there Luke told me about how he used to work as a security guard in Cape Town, but that Cape Town was no place to have a family, so he had moved back to the area he had grown up in. He also told me that he did not trust anyone except his wife and son. He could not tell me why he did not trust others, and it must be said that he was a bit drunk, as was I, but he was adamant about not trusting anyone but his very closest family. A lack of trust was a theme that seemed to pop up in many situations in South Africa. Lack of trust in the government to do the right thing, lack of trust in the police to be just and fair, lack of trust between social groups, and lack of trust in other people to follow through with water saving measures are all examples of situations where people have expressed distrust towards other people or institutions in South Africa.

While we were walking to Karen's Place I also tell Luke about an episode where I sat through a municipal meeting, and when the mayor was made aware of my presence, asked me if I had settled inn in Riversdale and joked that a young man like me should rather come live with her while I was there. Luke did not take the saying as a joke when I told the story and rather seemed genuinely annoyed with what he perceived as an attempt to stop me from experiencing colored culture. He said: "She is racist. She doesn't want you to see the colored culture, only the white Boer culture." (FJ 1:49) I tried to explain that it was just meant as a joke but Luke was not convinced, he was sure the mayor was trying to shelter me from the coloreds. I believe he was wrong in assuming that the mayor was racist, but on the other hand one should never take a

joke as only a joke for fear of missing out on the meaning behind it. In other words, there might be a grain of truth in his statement that the mayor wanted to shelter me somehow.

When we finally got to Karen's place, the bar was full of people and loud music. I was the only white person in the building. Luke said that I might not want to go to this place alone but that everyone knew him and that I was quite safe because I was there with him. He also stopped me from taking my cell-phone out while we were there. Regardless I never felt threatened in any way and all the people I talked to were quite friendly and polite. We did not stay for a very long time. We had a couple of beers and talked to some friends of Luke until he decided to buy some food and we went back to the lodge, played some pool and then I went to my room to sleep.

This episode really opened my eyes to the fact that even in as small a place as Riversdale, people from different social strata often did not mingle. It also made me aware of the strong identification that some South Africans have to the racial categorizations that still remain from the apartheid period.

I would argue that whites and coloreds talked about race and racism in different ways. From my colored informants I often heard complaints about racism. While these complaints could take the form of not being treated with respect by white South Africans or missing out on benefits that black South Africans received, they were just as likely to be directed at the fact that whites were not apologetic about the transgressions that had occurred during apartheid. For instance, one of my white informants argued that the west had been presented a very skewed picture of South Africa during the apartheid, and that the blacks had not been treated that badly at all. This point may be illustrated by a conversation that I had one night with one of my older informants, a colored pensioner called Jacob. He told me that he had had a big fight with Nina, who works at the bar. Nina had asked Jacob why blacks and coloreds still clamored about racism and why they could not "forgive and forget" the wrongs done to them during the apartheid. It had after all been 20 years she had argued. Jacob on the other hand said that it was not quite that easy, and that the feelings of repression and being discriminated against were so embedded in those who had grown up under apartheid that they could never forget. In an analytic moment, Jacob said that the apartheid had been internalized in the bodies of South Africa's population. "We who grew up with it thought that apartheid would never end. Never. Until suddenly one day it was over." (FJ 1:107).

One would think that this contradicts Seekings findings from 2008 that states that "Few people complain about racial discrimination, although many report everyday experiences that might be understood as discriminatory." (2008:1) But as there are no explanations as to what these experiences are, and as he states that racism works in what he calls "horizontal relations" meaning between people in social rather than economic relations, my findings on this matter might just be different based on the perspective of my informants. Since none of the complaints about racism from my colored informants were of an economic nature – except the ones about blacks having more benefits than colored – the fact that my informants were more outspoken about those experience being racist might actually be purely due to the research methods being used, as my information on these matters were gathered in friendly conversations with informants with whom I had established social relations and whom might thus be more outspoken about their opinions.

That same evening Jacob told me about an episode from when he was young during the apartheid that had really stuck with him and which he said he would never forget. "One time at the train station a small white boy came up to me and spat on me. Suddenly out of nowhere this little boy spat on me without any reason. Then he went back to his parents who said nothing. And I just felt sad because this little boy didn't know what he did" – Jacob (FJ 1:86). He told me again that he would never forget that, and that it showed how the young of South Africa had been taught racism through their parents' actions while growing up. While Jacob told his story I could see that this was a memory that pained him. It could seem like the positivity that had blossomed in South Africa during the early years of democracy had faded and I am sad to say that Jacob did not have much hope that South Africa's troubles would be over during his lifetime. Still, he had some hope that the new generations would be rid of the racism, xenophobia and division that even now plagued South Africa, when the memories of apartheid had become nothing but history lessons.

It is not hard to understand that Jacob could not very well just forgive and forget, and most non-white South Africans who grew up during apartheid probably have similar stories of their own. Growing up in a system where racial segregation is enforced by the nation state, where people are placed on a hierarchy based on socially constructed ideas about race, will undoubtedly affect those living under such conditions' ways of thinking in a profound and deep reaching way. One could say that the experiences and attitudes of apartheid have been internalized in people's personhood. To use one of Pierre Bourdieu's most famous terms, these kinds of experiences are

the social structures that are instrumental in shaping a person's habitus (1984). Expunging racial discrimination thus might take generations.

While coloreds complained about whites being racist, white people on the other hand usually downplayed racism and attempted to make it seem like racism was nonexistent in South Africa. "I'm not racist but..." was a phrase I heard more than one time while in the field, for instance, of my white informants once told me: "I'm not a racist or anything, but I just don't like them [the blacks]" (FJ 3:1).

This phrase was usually followed by some kind of negative remark about a particular group of people, but it usually explicitly stated that this negativity was not due to the race of this person or group, but rather the culture of this person or group was emphasized instead of biological traits. These findings are consistent with what Seekings argues when he says that the focus on race in South Africa has changed since apartheid from a being about economy and biology towards a social and cultural emphasis (2008:5-8). Nowadays it has become popular to say that culture is the new race term. It is no longer acceptable to criticize other people based on their race, and so the focus has changed to that of culture, as if culture is something unchangeable and immutable that completely dictates a person's behavior. So even though the apartheid terms that play on skin color remain the same, the meaning of the terms have changed to that of having a specific culture which is then used to explain differences and to criticize population groups.

The coloreds complaining about racism are at the same time sort of hypocritical because the same people who say that they are victims of racism are just as likely to brand black South Africans as lazy, untrustworthy, entitled or likely to steal. In Riversdale both coloreds and whites talked about blacks negatively. While white South Africans usually stressed that they were not racist when they talked down the blacks, the coloreds usually did not. But all of them spoke about blacks in roughly the same terms. This might be because blacks are still a minority in the Western Cape even though they are the majority population in every other part of the country, and while coloreds and whites in the Western Cape might have their differences and complain about each other on a regular basis, they seem to be in agreement that the blacks, being outsiders to their area, are worse still. "After apartheid, a racialised conception of colouredness has grown stronger, with renewed affinities to whiteness and deepened racism towards African people" (Seekings 2008:6). While Seekings fails to mention any reason for this renewed affinity towards whites amongst coloreds, I believe the factors previously discussed, that of being caught between two chairs so to speak, of economic power and political power, as

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well as the fact that both whites and coloreds look at blacks as newcomers to the Western Cape, are in my opinion adequate to explain the development of these dispositions amongst colored South Africans.

A third explanation as to why particularly coloreds were opposed to blacks coming to the Western Cape is that they are likely to compete for the same type of jobs that most coloreds currently occupy, which is unskilled wage labor. This will be further elaborated on in the following chapter.

Segregated neighborhoods

Riversdale is a town where neighborhoods and housing are still pretty much segregated into different ethnic groups, with all the black South Africans and most of the coloreds living in the poor areas and most of the whites living in middle class or wealthier areas, or outside of town on nearby farms. According to Sophie Oldfield, post-apartheid patterns of segregation have taken on different forms than during apartheid. In some cases, previously mixed areas have become more segregated than they were during apartheid, while other neighborhoods have desegregated racially, but segregated around class instead (2004:190). Although Oldfield's paper on racial segregation in a desegregated South African neighborhood, tackles the case of a specific neighborhood in Cape Town (2004), I believe many of the social processes she analyses will be applicable to our case.

In her case, she looks at how integration into the community of a desegregated free housing neighborhood works. This neighborhood consists entirely of houses which have been built specifically for the purpose of being handed over to poor families who do not own adequate housing under the Constitution of South Africa previously referred to in chapter 2. Those who are eligible to receive such a house are put on local housing waiting lists and then appointed a house when it has been built (Oldfield 2004:191).

As the whole neighborhood consists of new houses that have been delivered to the families moving in, all the people in the area are new, and community building has to start from scratch (Oldfield 2004). Those moving into this neighborhood are either of the black or colored ethnic group, with a majority of blacks (2004:192-194). Even though those who moved to this

neighborhood were economically similar – they were all quite poor – Oldfield found that in some cases integration and communication between coloreds and blacks were non-existent, while in other cases the people occupying the streets and sections of this neighborhood managed to find a sense of community through shared ideals or experiences.

In the case of the Riversdale neighborhoods, the informal settlement described in chapter 2 is probably the area with the closest similarity to the neighborhood that Oldfield is describing in her paper.

Because of the smaller scale and lower population numbers in Riversdale, the situation with whole neighborhoods of newly settled people is not the case, as even in the informal settlement, there is not a sudden influx of large numbers of new people. But the fact that most of the people settling in the informal settlement have their social networks in other parts of the country and therefore have to find new ways to make the neighborhood come together and interact. The fact that most of those living there share the experience of being new to Riversdale makes for a sense of communitas (Turner 1969) because of common struggles and shared life experiences.

The other neighborhoods of Riversdale do not share this same experience of being outsiders to a new place. On the other hand, they have the social structures of long standing neighborhood communities to rely on for unity, and as such they have good internal solidarity but might lack the inclusiveness and openness towards other people and ethnicities than those who have resided in the area for a long time. The fact that the segregation that exist in Riversdale still has the looks of racial segregation, although it is not forced, thus may lead to a strengthening of the racial identity narratives, and foster a racial divide mentality that might actually further hinder desegregation of South African neighborhoods based on an idea of cultural differences.

Although it may seem like there is still much racism and segregation in South Africa today, and while some may say that things have actually gotten worse since apartheid, the norms of South African society seems to have changed a lot in these last twenty years, and that for the better. Even though there are still divides, people seem to be much more open to "interracial" relationships for instance. One of my informants, a colored man in his sixties, told me that when he was young, dating someone who was not the same skin color as you were not only frowned upon but almost unimaginable, while now it had become quite accepted. And I also saw many people of different color talk, laugh and have great friendly relationships with each other, something that I suspect was rare during the apartheid.

The tribal aspect

Some of my informants in Riversdale sometimes mentioned tribes, either that they belonged to a tribe, in this case the Khoi tribe, or they used tribe association as one of the reasons why South Africa's president was seen as corrupt, in his case it was the Zulu tribe that was mentioned. It felt a bit strange to me that people still identified as belonging to different tribes such a long time after "westernization", and in the beginning I was wondering if it really had any function apart from some sort of identity marker. But at one point after being introduced to a local chief by a colored informant of mine, I realized that belonging to a tribe might have some function besides pure identity purposes, especially for poor people who might fall on hard times and whom were dependent on a network to survive.

On the concept of tribe Aidan W. Southall says that "according to Julian H Steward (1958: 44-5). "The concept of primitive or "tribal" is based on three fundamental aspects of the behavior of members of tribal societies". These are, in brief, that it is a construct representing the ideal, normative aspect of the behavior of "all members of a fairly small, simple, independent, self-contained and homogeneous society" … "Tribal society is not divisible onto genuine subcultural groups." Secondly, tribal culture has pattern or configuration, some underlying unity and overall integration, and thirdly, that it is "essentially relativistic" and unique in relation to other cultures with which it contrasted" (2010: 85) Southall does not think that this definition is very useful or accurate and problematize the whole usage of the tribe concept (2010). I tend to agree, because the way that tribe is talked about and acted out in modern day South Africa can hardly be squeezed into such a narrow definition, but the fact still remains that the natives use the term when speaking about themselves or others. Obviously Steward's definition of tribe does not apply to modern day South Africans, but still many of them consider themselves part of a tribe.

Southall's argument that we should stop calling "the others" tribal definitely has its purpose, but I believe the term still has its use in certain situations. Not for the purposes of outsiders to classify people but rather as an identity marker for those using it to describe themselves. Southall's arguments against tribalism are in quite a different context than what I am using it in, so his points, although well thought out and probably right, are moot in the context of the

construction of identity of self. He argues that ethnic groups should be used instead, and again I agree that this could be right, and I do in fact use that term as well, but to substitute the one for the other is in my opinion not necessary in this context.

The first function that invoking a tribe have in a South African context is that belonging to a tribe is a clear indication of which of the current ethnic categories one associates oneself with. The coloreds I talked to who mentioned the word tribe, all claimed to be of the Khoi tribe. I am unsure if that is referred to the Khoi San, or the Khoi Khoi or if it is rather a sort of umbrella term for both or even all the ethnically Western Cape Africans. It might also be a simplification made for my sake by my informants. What I did find out was that as the tribes designated as Khoi were being classified as belonging to the colored ethnicity, other tribes such as Zulu and Xhosa were included in the black ethnic category.

Vail Leroy talks in his article *Ethnicity in Southern African History* (1997) about how tribalism came about during the colonial ages as a new form of consciousness. As a side note Vail argues that the terms tribalism and ethnicity are basically the same and interchangeable depending on the individual disposition one has towards the phenomenon (Vail 1997:52). The ideas of ethnicity helped Africans retain a sense of legitimate control over land in a changing social reality (Vail 1997). "Ethnicity, insofar as it was a mechanism of such control, may be interpreted then, as a form of popular male resistance to the forces that were reshaping African lives throughout southern Africa" (Vail 1997:66). His conclusion then is that belonging to a tribe is important because of the economic and social stability it brings, in contrast to the dysfunction and inability of newly established nation-states to properly care for their citizens. Which in turn lead to trust and loyalty to the nation state being weak, further weakening the legitimacy of the government and thereby necessitating the need to keep strong relations with one's ethnic group (1997). I have already mentioned that I suspect it might have further value than purely as an identity marker, and that it could be significant when it comes to economic security, this aspect will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Considering the hegemonic power of definition that whites held in colonial and apartheid times, and the previously mentioned emergence of the colored racial classification in the 1910's (Goldin 1991), as well as the fact that coloreds are the majority population in the Western Cape, it is not surprising that tribal classification becomes important when negotiating identity. While the tribe term is not used in the classical sense in the South African context, it is rather a tool

for determining social classification and identity, as well as invoking an ancient connection to South Africa itself, and thus the right to share in the country's wealth.

Racialized rights

As race seemed to imply having certain rights in South Africa. I will briefly mention some of these rights here, but will analyze the theme further in the next couple of chapters.

I have already talked about the rights that all South African citizens have to a house, but they also have rights to adequate clean water and disability payments as well as other welfare "handouts". While these rights are not racialized, they are directed at the poor part of the South African population, and so the majority of people receiving these benefits are members of the black or colored ethnicities as these are the population groups that generally make up the poor strata of South Africa. As with any welfare benefits, those who receive them are often seen as undeserving of them.

For instance, one of my white informants who lived outside of town, mention one of the land reform proposals that the South African president Mr. Zuma had talked about that same year. It was a proposal that white farm owners had to hand over 50% of their land to their former employees if they had worked on the farm for a certain number of years – I cannot remember the exact number of years – and my informant was almost livid over what he saw as the stupidity of the proposal. He meant that if the proposal went through, it would only create more problems and more division between the different ethnicities of South Africa. Furthermore, my poor informants often complained that the government did not do enough to help them, while those of my informants who were working and providing for themselves and their families often meant that the poor already got too much welfare.

While most rights are not explicitly racial, there is however one implemented right that is highly racialized in South Africa – it could be classified as a duty rather than a right – and that is the Black Economic Empowerment program (BEE). It states that companies are required to employ a certain percentage of non-white South Africans, in order to even out the inequalities created during apartheid. All my colored informants with whom I spoke of this matter were certain that the government through this program forced companies to have a staff that mirrored the national

populations demographic, and that in the Western Cape where they lived, that meant that blacks could get jobs more easily than coloreds. It was not uncommon to hear complaints that blacks had plenty of benefits over coloreds, and that for coloreds, things had not improved that much since the end of apartheid, since now they were just like the majority of the South African population but without the benefits that black South Africans were perceived to have.

The BEC is an actual state-implemented right in South Africa, however, I would argue that the people of Riversdale felt entitled to a number of rights that were not necessarily official. These rights were often based on belonging and race, such as coloreds feeling that they had a right to available jobs in the area, or to be higher up on the free housing waiting lists, because of a historical connection to the Western Cape.

I previously said that race might have less importance than class in modern day South Africa, but the fact of the matter is that economic class is still very much divided by ethnic groups due to strong social influences such as parents' education, rural versus urban location, and others. This might hide this new prevalence on class under the guise of a continued focus on race. Still using Seeking's research, the fact that racial differentiation is no longer biological, and does not discriminate economically in post-apartheid South Africa (2008:19), then going back to the argument that class makes culture, I would argue that while South Africans still use the terms of the past, what they put into the racial terms are more likely to be determined by class membership than by ethnicity. We will be looking at this in the next chapter.

Figure 6 Socialization in the streets of Riversdale

Chapter 4

From sparkling skyscrapers to rusty shacks

Inequality in Riversdale and The Western Cape

> "What is really disturbing is that the precarious socio-economic situation in which large numbers of African coloreds find themselves has not improved during the post-apartheid period, but has in fact become more burdensome." (Terreblanche 2002:27).

As we have seen in the previous chapter race is still a factor in determining much of the behavior that can be observed in social interaction in the Western Cape, but although we have already established that wealth is divided unequally over ethnic divides; racism and differences of ethnicity itself is in my opinion not sufficient to explain the huge inequalities that exist in South African society. Therefore, it becomes necessary to look at why these inequalities of wealth and living standards exist and how they affect social relations, thoughts, and actions among people in Riversdale.

In the new post-apartheid South Africa, in theory, everyone has the same opportunities regardless of background, culture or race. In reality however, those opportunities do not seem to manifest, as economic standards and race seem to run parallel when looking at the big picture. According to Ferguson (2015) and Terreblanche (2002) the shift to equal opportunities for everyone in the post-Apartheid South Africa has not manifested in better living conditions for the majority of the black or colored South Africans. Only a small political elite have been able to reap the benefits of a desegregated system, while the rest of the non-white South Africans still struggle with unemployment and poverty.

In this chapter we will be looking mostly at inequality among people in South Africa. And thus for this categorization based on wealth and living standard I am making my own distinctions

between people to place them into four different groups based on income, geographical location and employment. These four categories are: 1) Poor, 2) Blue collar, 3) White collar and 4) Farmers.

1) The poor are unemployed people depending on welfare such as disability grants or old-age pensions, subsidies, and begging, to get by. They are living in the south side of town, the panorama area and the informal settlement outside the city proper. In Riversdale the poor are almost exclusively of either the colored or black ethnicity. 2) Blue collar are those who have various low paying jobs and get by without depending on or being qualified to receive welfare. They are usually living in the Panorama area or the town center and mostly belong to the colored population with a minority of whites. 3) White collar are those with relatively stable and well-paying jobs such as administrative workers, as well as white pensioners, living in the suburb like neighborhoods in the north parts of town. They are usually either whites or coloreds. 4) Finally, farmers are relatively well off depending on the size and quality of their farmlands and are living outside of town on their farms. Farmers are defined as those who own farms of various sizes, and not farmhands as I have placed those in the blue collar category. They are for the most part white, with a few exceptions.

I will first begin this part by roughly lumping together the people living in Riversdale into the four previously mentioned socio-economic categories and then give a more thorough description of their situation. This is of course a simplification of the actual social situation in the area, and I am sure you could make almost as many categories as there are people if that was the point. But for simplicity I have created these four broad categories.

This division is mostly based on work situation and therefore economic situation, but I have also included what ethnic group the majority of the members belong to because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, South Africans tend to put a lot of emphasis on ethnicity. In addition, I would argue that belonging to a particular ethnic group might in fact lead to different economic opportunities than another group. I could also have categorized the people based on where they live, as I did in the small survey I conducted, but I think the categories would look almost the same, since I found that the economic situation and the color of your skin for the most part could tell others where in Riversdale you were living, and vice versa. What is interesting for me here is to analyze social inequality and the dynamic of group interaction and

negotiation, and find out what kind of social environment these factors create. What sort of opportunities do the different social groups have to affect the situation that they are in?

As we have seen, social groups, belonging, and identity are complex matters that shift over time and under different circumstances (Barth 1969). What identity one has or what role one plays in a social setting can say much about the goals and purpose of the interactions taking place (Goffman 1959). Keeping that in mind will be useful when we now go into more detailed descriptions of the social and economic inequalities that persist between people in Riversdale and how these different groups act accordingly in relation to each other.

As previously hinted at, income and living conditions are as much a part of a person's identity and social standing or group affiliation as ethnicity, although it must be said that it can be easier to disguise one's own economic situation than say the color of one's skin. But most people do not really try to hide what "class" they belong to, because when you are poor, being recognized as poor might actually be more beneficial than to be perceived as well off. For instance, when you might be eligible for a social grant based on your income, as is the case with the free basic water in South Africa, or because you would want sympathy from more affluent people when begging, to increase the chance at receiving money. Or even for bodily security, as James Williams states in his paper "Poor Men With Money", where he argues that gains in prosperity for poor people living in Cape Town might actually lead to increased risk of being victims of violence, especially if one is perceived as a foreigner (2015:24).

I will now go on to describe these different socio economic groups and map out the dynamics internally within them, as well as externally between the different groups.

The Poor

Those that I have called the Poor and unemployed consisted in Riversdale, as far as I could tell, of colored and black South Africans. They as a group lived on small cash payments such as pensions and child support as well as begging, and collecting and selling salvaged goods or dealing drugs. I usually chatted with a couple of regulars on the corners whenever I met them on the streets and had change to give away. Some lived in small houses with a lot of relatives

and or children while others did not even have a roof over their heads. Most of those I spoke with blamed their misfortune on pure bad luck. For instance, one of the men I spoke to that sold computer cables and marijuana as well as begging for a living told me that he used to be a freelance reporter but that he could not continue when someone stole his camera one day, and he could not afford to buy a new one.

This group was friendly and contact seeking and I often ended up talking to someone standing around on the corners when I was out walking, usually we would only exchange general pleasantries. I do suspect that they were so friendly because of some ulterior motive that involved economic gain, but since I rarely used all the change I got, and because I hate going around with coins in my pockets. I guess you could call it a mutually beneficial situation.

Like in most parts of South Africa, in Riversdale this group of people whom I categorized as belonging to the poor strata of South African society are a large part of the population. Even in as small a town as Riversdale there were always people on the corners begging for money. Not as many as you would see in for instance Cape Town where the people begging for money and food were more numerous and both aggressive and persistent in their begging, but nonetheless the people begging on the street was an obvious part of the townscape. Most of the ones begging were also doing something else, or claiming some different role than beggar. Someone would try to sell electronic equipment or other stuff they had salvaged before resorting to ask for money directly, others would take a reflexive vest on and work as an unofficial parking guide, still others would claim the role of pensioner and therefore too old to work, before asking for money to buy a beer or some other trifle. Very few were content with just the role of begging without some other activity or role taking precedence.

Ferguson writes about the capitalistic "Breadwinner myth" in his book on distributive politics in South Africa, wherein lies the assumption that the man of working age is the one who is supposed to provide for his family, and as such it was shameful to receive assistance for the sole reason of being poor (2015:42). With the situation being as it is with few jobs available, the possibility of fulfilling this ideal of the working man has become increasingly difficult. That may explain why nobody wanted to be content with just being poor and depending on others for survival, and why there were so many more roles that one could take for oneself apart from the role of beggar.

There were both coloreds and blacks amongst the poor of Riversdale, and as we have already seen, they were quite insistent in retaining their cultural and ethnic distinctions from each other. Especially the coloreds did not want to be taken for or associated with the blacks. The colored classify themselves as historically coming from the Western Cape, which Riversdale is a part of, and have therefore, according to them, a legitimate claim to opportunities that are open to people in the area, be that jobs, social services or other things.

Several of the poor coloreds I talked to identified with the Khoi tribe, which is the tribe that historically occupied the areas today known as the Western Cape. The identification with native forefathers is just strengthening the discourse of belonging in the area that Coloreds are emphasizing even more.

This classification of Coloreds belonging in the Western Cape that was prevalent amongst the people of Riversdale, automatically classify the blacks as not belonging there. This in turn is used to make the coloreds claims to jobs and opportunities in the area even more legitimate.

It must be said that this is definitely true of the coloreds belonging to the Blue collar class as well, maybe even more so. We will get to this shortly.

The second part of the poor population is black South Africans who have come to Riversdale looking for jobs and better living conditions. I got the impression that the fact that these South Africans have a right to a house where they choose to settle means that they oftentimes settle down in a place regardless if they have much chance of getting a job or not. As there are few unoccupied job opportunities in Riversdale for unskilled laborers, these recently settled people are often forced to beg, sell junk, commit crime or a combination of these to make ends meet. As the blacks are a very small minority in Riversdale (ch.2) and are seen as outsiders to the area (ch.3), they had a bad reputation in general, and especially when it came to work ethics and employment relations. Some of my informants, both white and colored said that it was common for blacks to steal from whoever gave them a job. In other words, the discourse in Riversdale demonized the south African blacks when it came to the labor market.

Unlike coloreds, who were identified as belonging to the Khoi tribe, blacks were often identified as belonging to the Zulu tribe, which was also the tribe of the current president of South Africa, Mr. Zuma. As the president was being seen as corrupt and blamed for giving away the countries' money to his own people by many in Riversdale, to be associated with his tribe was probably

not such a good thing in the Western Cape discourse. For example, one of my older colored informants said: "The President is corrupt because the blacks let him. They are bandits who give all the benefits to their own people and friends when they get in position of power, and the blacks think the politicians are heroes because of it" (FJ 1:87).

That the poor could be distinguished into blacks and coloreds was important for the individuals belonging to the different groups, but for an outsider the differences between them were minimal at first glance. Personally it was difficult if not impossible for me to tell black and colored poor apart if they did not tell me what they considered themselves as or where they came from. In the beginning the most prominent distinction between them for my part was actually that the blacks more often than not were not very good English-speakers, which contributed in part to the fact that I had less interactions with black South Africans than coloreds, in addition to them being the minority population in Riversdale and thus my exposure to blacks were somewhat lessened. Their living conditions were anyway similar enough to justify grouping them together. But it was apparent that they were distinct in their own eyes and in the eyes of others and that although I have categorized them both under poor inhabitants of Riversdale there were some differences amongst them in regards to opportunities and limitations, such as the previously mentioned perceived rights to opportunities and jobs in the area.

It should be said that blacks were not the only ones getting bad mouthed in regards to work ethics and morale. Poor coloreds were just as likely to be criticized for not working. My informant Jacob, who was himself a colored pensioner, had no trouble branding the men who loitered on the street corners all day as lazy drunkards. Even though they were of the same ethnic group, my informant had no sympathy for their situation. Ethnicity then, could be attributed a lesser or larger degree of importance based on the other social factors in an actors' life. For some, like those who were poor and relied to a high degree on group support, racial identity might be very important to express. For others who are more self-reliant, racial belonging might not be as important as identifying with a particular class.

While the poor were often seen as lazy by those who occupied jobs or had worked their whole life, they seemed to help each other out and have strong internal ties with each other in the poor community. There was for instance an organization for backyard gardeners that organized people growing produce in their gardens to help each other with this small scale complementary backyard farming. In other words, those belonging to the poor strata of Riversdale seemed to

have good community relations despite the blacks being seen as outsiders. Being in the same social situation might lead to strengthened ties between people from different ethnic groups due to shared experiences and desires (Oldfield 2015:198-199).

Most of the people from this social stratum had the right to the free 6000 liters of water on account of them not having a stable income. This meant that the ones living in a small household used almost nothing on water, while those living with many children or relatives spent a whole lot more, or could not afford water by the end of the month because the 6000-liter allowance simply was not enough for a large family. There were some complaints about this matter because access to such things as water and electricity were seen as crucial commodities that everyone had a right to. This was also the group of people where the use of prepaid water meters was most prevalent. A much larger percentage of the poor that I spoke to had prepaid meters compared to all other groups.

Figure 7 Improvised housing

Blue Collar

The second group were what could be called blue collar workers, as well as pensioners who had occupied stable but low paying jobs for most of their lives. They were people with a relatively stable income, but were in no sense very well-off. This was perhaps the group that I had the most contact with while staying in Riversdale. They were both numerous, open, and often frequented the bar where I spent many of my evenings.

This might also be the most diverse group, as it comprises everyone who makes a steady living without making a lot of money. Retail clerks, farmhands, mechanics, pensioners who get enough to live on, as well as foresters and bartenders were all part of this group. I got the impression that many of them were aware that Riversdale could have a problem with water in the near future but some also seemed not to know or care about it. I guess most of them had bigger issues than worrying about some hypothetical future water crisis. But many of them did complain about the prices of water.

There were generally a lot of complaints about the government among this group, and a distinct lack of trust in government officials. People had no faith that the government or the president could fix the problems that South Africa were facing, and I often heard how the president was corrupt and the country had only gone downhill ever since Nelson Mandela died. I even heard once or twice that in some ways things were not better now than they had been during the apartheid.

If this is true or due to nostalgia I have no way of knowing; and of course, one must take into account who said it as I highly doubt most the black population of South Africa would agree that things were as bad today as they were during apartheid. Arguments such as these were typical of the Western Cape discourse. Since the coloreds and whites often felt alienated by the South African government as a minority on a national basis the people of Riversdale were quick to blame the government, who they did not see as representing their interests, for all of South Africa's problems.

White Collar

Well-off pensioners and white collar workers make up the third population group that I have defined. Municipality workers, small business owners, and white pensioners settling for a safe and quiet retirement seemed to be making up the higher echelons of Riversdale society. They had large houses with gardens and many of them had sprinkler systems to water those gardens as well. This was definitely the group that was hardest to get in contact with, and when I did, many did not seem very interested in talking to me

Many of these people, especially white pensioners came to Riversdale because it was a safe and quiet town. They made small communities and shut themselves out from the rest of social life in Riversdale. Of course this was not true for everyone, but the general consensus was that many of those in the upper class of Riversdale did this.

After staying in Riversdale for a while I started to notice that most small businesses were typically owned by a white person and staffed by coloreds. This is consistent with the observations made earlier as well as the current literature on the matter that states that even though work began to even out the inequalities between whites and blacks following the end of apartheid and the beginning of real democracy, whites still owned most of the capital (Terreblanche 2002:27). Whites are still mostly employers in South Africa while blacks and coloreds are prevalently employees.

What I would consider working class and upper class both consists of whites and coloreds. But considering the demographic of Riversdale, a larger percentage of whites belong to the upper class than working class, and the reverse is true of the coloreds. Considering that coloreds are by far the most numerous of the Riversdale population it seems obvious that they are to be found in all the different socio-economic groups making up the strata of the area. Percentage wise though there seems to be far more of the colored population that have, what one might call a strained personal economy, than whites. The rich and not so rich of Riversdale also live in different parts of town, as in most places in the world. The working class live mostly in the city center, in small, regular houses or apartments, of which there are a few in town. The rich on the other hand live in the northern parts of town for the most part. Their houses are large and so are their gardens, all of whom are fenced or walled.

There is no real, open, opposition between these groups, as people don't often talk in terms of different classes, there is a real possibility that class struggle might be overshadowed by the race discourse. But the term "rich people" is in use by those who belong to the poor strata of Riversdale. And since wealth and ethnic or race divides seem to run parallel in South Africa, I believe it is a worthwhile classification, as well as an area of interest to look at possible conflicts or opposition that may arise between them.

I did not get the impression that there was a sort of employers against employees relations in Riversdale. Those with jobs were in the same boat so to speak. The opposition between those with work and those without on the other hand seemed more strained. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, welfare rights were often a topic of discussion, and while those who received them often argued that they got too little, those who did not get these benefits often branded the poor as entitled and lazy.

Farmers

Farmers, the fourth group, I had to actively seek out whenever I spotted them in town, particularly in the bar. They kept mostly to themselves while in town but were friendly once I introduced myself and explained what I was doing in Riversdale. Even though most farm owners are white, they hire colored farmhands to help out, but there were some complaints that it was difficult to find good help. I suspect this might have something to do with keeping wages down or employees on their toes, as there seemed to be no shortage of people willing to work in Riversdale.

The farmers as a group are both part and apart from the people in town. They live on farms of varying size in the vicinity of Riversdale and almost all of the farms around Riversdale are dairy farms delivering milk to the cheese factory in neighboring Ladismith. There are some exceptions, for instance, one evening I met two farmers growing macadamia nuts one, but no matter the crops it seemed like the problems that they were facing were the same, not enough water for maximum output and bureaucracy stopping them from building dams.

The dam side farms have problems with town because they use too much. River side have problems with national bureaucracy because they cannot build more or bigger dams on their land. In addition, those responsible for distributing the water from the dam were not very happy with how the town managed the water through the year. I was told that they constantly went over their quota and that made balancing the allocation of water to the town and farms hard. As among the rest of the population in the Western Cape area the accepted discursive rhetoric was to blame the government, but in addition the farmers also talked about the town as one of the reasons why the water situation was balancing on a knives edge.

That the town is somewhat to blame for the farmers' problems with water may seem odd as even though farmers are living outside the town and therefore are not quite as strongly part of the community as the people living there, they are still important to the town and the town is important to them because of the many different connections that they maintain to the town. They get supplies there, it is where most of their workforce live, they send their kids to school there and so forth. To borrow a word from biology we could say that the townspeople and farmers have a symbiotic relationship.

Some of the more outspoken farmers viewed the black "immigrants" as part of the town's problem with water. According to these farmers, the blacks come to the Western Cape where they don't belong even though there are no jobs for them here. As a result, they have to get welfare money and are provided with free water quotas. This would, according to some farmers, result in blacks wasting water, and leads to a situation where precious water resources are thrown away by the poor.

The reason the blacks come to the Western Cape, they said, is because the black government politicians are shuffling voters around so that they will have majority in all the different parts of South Africa. This mindset was not entirely uncommon and shows even more pointedly that the people of the Western Cape saw themselves as somewhat different from the rest of South Africa and harbors feelings of alienation towards the people in charge of ruling the country.

While the farmers were generally well off economically speaking as well as respected in town, the problems that the area had with water, combined with the electricity crisis in South Africa at the time, made farming a less stable and secure prospect than it had been. As the farmers were also a part of the employer class of Riversdale, a drop in their production could have

further negative effects than a diminishing of their own prosperity. It could negatively impact the whole region when it came to the job market.

Segregation, rights & class dispositions

The inequalities that exist in South Africa today are directly connected to race, but they are not due to current racist attitudes. How can this be?

We have seen so far that there are stark contrasts in wealth among the population of Riversdale. While there are many people with good jobs, a large portion of the population lives in poverty, dependent on welfare payments and begging to survive. While it is true that racial divides run almost parallel with class, I have already shown that race alone is not enough to explain these social inequalities. There are other factors, implicitly tied to the racism of apartheid, that determines where one ends up in the social strata. The legacy of a segregated society is even now affecting South Africa because segregated communities and the lack of investment in the education of non-white South Africans have left the other ethnic groups so far behind in the class race. That is not to say that every black or colored South African are doomed to a life of poverty because of social factors that work towards keeping people where they are, we have already seen that there is a small elite of non-white South Africans that are doing extraordinary well in the new post-apartheid South Africa, but fact of the matter is that the majority of the non-white population in South Africa are still struggling with these problems. While non-white South Africans are no longer discriminated against in the job market if one has the same qualifications, some even say that whites are now being discriminated against because of the BEE (Ch. 3), the problem is for the black and colored South Africans to be able to get those qualifications. That is not such an easy thing when your parents are uneducated and you grow up in a poor neighborhood with an underfunded and understaffed school.

These are the social dynamics that Terreblanche calls the "poverty traps" set up by the apartheid (2002:30-31). Coupled with the fact that many whites refuse to acknowledge that apartheid was the cause of many of the problems that South Africa is still struggling with today, the chance for a reform that will better the situation of the vast majority of the South African poor seems slim.

I have already described how whites in South Africa still own most of the land and that the farmers in Riversdale were mostly white. But there were colored farmers as well. One night at the lodge-bar I met a colored farm-owner, and proceeded to get in a conversation with him. It was difficult to get anything serious out of him because he was very drunk and only seemed interested in finding me a girl. However, he did mention several times that he was a colored farmer and it seemed like a matter of pride to him that he was able to be a successful farmer despite belonging to the colored community. In contrast to the municipal workers who did not stress their coloredness, this farmer did. This might be due to feeling like an outsider in his own class, lacking a feeling of community with his fellow farmers, and so his ethnic identity became more important to him than his identity as a farmer.

That most of the poor in Riversdale are either colored or black is not unusual in a South African context, neither is the fact that they live separately from whites and each other. Class difference is often defined by physical segregation. The free housing development also plays a part in the segregation in South Africa. The free housing scheme is primarily aimed at providing poor people with houses, and as we have seen, the poor are mostly colored or black South Africans. These houses are usually set up in out of the way places, on the outskirts of towns and in areas with few possibilities for either farming or wage labor.

Oldfield's argument that economic differentiation is of growing importance when looking at where people live, as an effect of the post-apartheid government's policy of market based regulation (2004:190), shows us the significance of class for understanding why there is still a lot of segregation in South Africa. The market economy segregates the rich from the poor by simply pricing the poor out of the good neighborhoods, and the fact that most of the poor are either colored or black automatically makes this segregation racial in nature as well.

While the free housing policy is meant to help people out of poverty, the effect it has is probably limited due to the fact that that the areas that are being developed for free housing lack many of the institutions and services that could help poor people to better their own situation.

As I have already talked about the significance of the tribe concept in the context of Western Cape ethnicities I will not go into much detail about it here. I will only say that in the context of economic inequality, it was generally only poor men who talked about tribes, which leads me to believe that destitute men of working age realizing that there are no jobs and that the state is not going to be an adequate provider invoke the category of tribe in order to create a system

of relations that can provide for them in a situation where there are not enough available jobs. This particular aspect of belonging to a tribe can be seen in light of Ferguson's ideas of a "system of dependence" that is prevalent in southern Africa, where people seek dependence of others in order to have safety and structure (2015:143). It creates – in addition to the previously mentioned racial identities – a sort of communal safety for people who feel like their needs are not met by the government and their representatives.

Previously I mentioned specific types of talking that repeated themselves in Riversdale discourse. I will attempt to elaborate and analyze that aspect of the social dimension of the Western Cape further.

That the people of Riversdale is outspokenly negative about the government must be seen in the context of how the Western Cape is markedly different from the rest of South Africa. But even so, the negativity towards particularly the president of South Africa, Mr. Zuma, has only been increasing, even amongst his core voters, the poor blacks of South Africa. When I was conducting my fieldwork there were much talk about the corruption of the President and how he had stolen money from the people to build his own palace. Less than a year after I concluded my fieldwork Mr. Zuma was actually sentenced guilty in using public funds on his private estate, and so it seems that the accusations against him by my informants were justified.

The wealthier population of Riversdale were usually content with how things were solved and who was in power. The poor on the other hand were much more outspoken and openly critical of authority figures and government policies. While a lot of the discourse on politics, and national as well as local problems and challenges had a definitive racial aspect, it usually boiled down to a question of economic inequalities and the social challenges that comes with it.

For instance, the idea that the towns problems with water stem from blacks coming from other parts of the country is talked about in terms of race, but when my informants are allowed to elaborate on this stance, they arrive at the conclusion that the problem with this internal immigration is a lack of jobs in the area. As the area is already struggling with poverty and a lack of jobs, people settling in Riversdale with no hope of getting jobs are only going to increase the challenges that comes with having a large unemployed population such as crime and loitering.

So while the discourse of Riversdale is anchored in the race categories of the apartheid, the dispositions of the actors belonging to these categories are more heavily dictated by class membership and social stratification based on economical standards, creating culture. The reason why race is still so important in this discourse is caused by the vastly differentiated investment in the different ethnic classes during the apartheid, which can now be seen in the fact that even though there is no economic discrimination in South Africa in the present day, the majority of the poor population are non-white South Africans because this population group has had less access to good quality infrastructural services such as education and social security.

As Ferguson writes in his book (2015), and as I have already mentioned several times so far, South Africans already have the rights to receive a great number of things from the government. I will now attempt to make clear how these rights affect people's attitudes and actions.

I have already mentioned for instance rights to housing, as well as the right to be provided with water. This right to water is based on household income and provides every household with 6000 liters of free water if the household income is less than 3000 rand each month, in order to ensure everyone with water for drinking, cooking and cleaning.

While the people of South Africa have gained equal and far reaching social rights since 1994, the expectations of a better future and equal opportunities for everyone that came with the end of apartheid have not materialized for most of the non-white population of South Africa. While many things are better, blacks and coloreds have access to better education, and many more people are being provided with clean water and electricity, a lot of things have not improved, and some are even worse than before apartheid such as rolling nationwide blackouts and less available jobs (Terreblanche 2002).

As we have already seen, some of these rights also fail to materialize as actual benefits, as in the quote from Ferguson: "I don't want the right to a house. I want a house." (2015:48). In my conversations with informants in Riversdale, and during my observations I have seen that when the governing bodies fail to deliver on these rights, the people of South Africa often take it upon themselves to appropriate equal value in any way they can. For instance, the door kicker movement that was mentioned earlier, appropriating other people's houses when there did not seem like they would get their own any time soon (Oldfield 2004), or the fact that many of those doing backyard farming in Riversdale took water from rivers that they were actually not

allowed to, or made their gardens a tiny bit larger every year by cultivating the municipal land next to their gardens.

This tendency to appropriate what the people of South Africa feel entitled to and consider a right as members of the nation, can be seen in the light of the ideas of equality and the perceived end of injustice that came about with the fall of the apartheid system. The turn towards democracy should have brought equality and better living conditions to the majority of the South African population, and when this has not happened the way people envisioned in the last 20 years, people rather take what they think they deserve than wait for what is seen as a corrupt government to provide for them. In this view, when people in Riversdale wash their cars or water their lawns even though they know that there is a water restriction in effect, as we shall see in the next chapter, it might not be because of a disregard for the environment, but rather an idea that they have the right to do it. An idea that the government is supposed to provide basic goods in order to live for all its citizens (Ferguson 2015:137), and when that fails, the citizens have a right to provide for themselves, even if that means operating in the grey areas of the law. This idea of rights is in my opinion the basis for many South Africans dispositions towards both the social and the economic, and especially when it comes to the distribution of resources and necessities.

Chapter 5

"There is always water in the taps"

The role of water in the social system of Riversdale

We have thus far established that issues of race and inequality are important factors in determining how we can expect people to think and react in terms of their relations to both the nation state and their fellow man, and that these relations shape everyday life in Riversdale. But what does all of that have to do with water? As I have already argued elsewhere, water is both a necessity of human life and one of the most important factors in keeping the economic system of the Western Cape afloat. So how does the issues of race and social inequality that we have already discussed determine how people in Riversdale think about water issues and securing access to water in the future? In that regard we will have to take a step back, review the initial research question that started this whole project, look at some general theories regarding resources in a social perspective and see how this, combined with what we have found out about Western Cape society so far, can tell us something about what we can expect to find out about the significance of water in Riversdale.

A look back at the initial starting point: Like previously mentioned the reason that I chose this research question initially was because SINTEF inquired the institute for social anthropology if there were any master students that would be interested in working with them on an interdisciplinary study on the resilience of water resources against climate change in South Africa, and write a master thesis about it. I thought the project seemed exciting and chose to go to Riversdale with the purpose of writing about water issues. Before the fieldwork started I was told that Riversdale did not have a problem with water supply at the moment, but that they were living on the edge of what was sustainable for the area and that if nothing was done they would

probably have to little water in the near future. How one determines what is or isn't too little water is something that we will be getting back to.

The SUWAM project is a collaborative project between SINTEF, Stellenbosch University and Hessequa municipality. I was told that the municipality was responsible for facilitating the research done by SINTEF and Stellenbosch, by providing them with data, allow them access to the water system and put them in touch with stakeholders in the area such as farmers and environmental organizations. Stellenbosch and SINTEF on the other hand was going to eventually write a report on the state of the Hessequa Municipality water systems resilience to climate change and suggest a plan of action for continuous development to the municipality. While I have moved somewhat away from the original research question that I started out with in the beginning of my fieldwork, the issues of water were still a topic that engaged me throughout my period in the field and one that I will attempt to tackle in this chapter.

The main reason why the municipality had decided to cooperate with Stellenbosch and SINTEF on this research project was to be able to keep development going in Hessequa. Further developments of the area would in all probability increase the size and population of Riversdale and therefore put more strain on the Korintepoort dam, which is the only water supply that Riversdale has at this time. It is obvious that a goal for the municipality is to have a plan for furthering development in the area, and to prevent stagnation in the economy in case of climate change. In addition, I believe that the project could help the municipality appear climate conscious and forward thinking, mindsets that are popular in government administrations in the climate conscious environment of today.

According to Patrick Bond & Jackie Dugard, a great amount of people in South Africa are lacking sufficient access to water services and rural areas were more often than not found lacking in this regard (2008B:3). While this might be true for much of South Africa, it was not so in Riversdale, where the infrastructure, although old, was maintained regularly. None of the people I talked to ever expressed concerns over inadequate water services, even though many knew that the water supply could be considered precarious. If there were any complaints about water at all, they always concerned the price of water.

In addition to being a necessity for human life everywhere on the planet, water is also important for the economic prosperity of Riversdale because the area of South Africa that Riversdale is situated in is an agricultural area that depends on farming for its prosperity. Farming accounts

for a great number of the jobs in the region, and if it should be less viable to do as a result of water deficiency, the number of jobs in the area would in all probability decrease and the number of unemployed would further increase. As such it will be necessary to find good solutions to future challenges to water preservation caused by climate change in order to avoid the possible social consequences of lack of water to the agricultural sector.

Resources in social science

 ".... with man the prisoner at hard labor of a perpetual disparity between his unlimited wants and his insufficient means" (Sahlins 1972:1)

In this section I will attempt to answer the question: why do resources matter in a social perspective? It is a common perception that resources are always in demand, that they are always scarce. The economic man, the growth of capitalism in the west and so on are ideas connected to this perception. There are however conflicting views that this is not necessarily true. Tor Benjaminsen & Hanne Svarstad in their book: *Politisk Økologi: Miljø, Mennesker og Makt* say that scarcity is relative and is a socially constructed term. (2010). They argue that the scarcity term is so wide and loosely defined that it is basically devoid of meaning, and that it is a constructed term that is consciously used by politicians, bureaucrats and others to achieve political goals (2010). This stance, although a bit too close to a conspiracy theory in my opinion, does make a point in saying that the word scarcity is difficult to define, and can mean any number of things depending on the context it is used in.

Marshal Sahlins also talks about this in the first chapter of his book *Stone Age Economics* (1972), the chapter called *The Original Affluent Society*. Western capitalist thoughts assume that man wants much, always. What Sahlins calls Zen thought assumes, on the other hand, that man inherently wants little. The western capitalist view that people always wants more is apparently not the only world-view out there, and it seems to be at odds with the dream of an affluent society as well. Affluence (to have all that one desires) may be achieved by either producing much or desiring little (Sahlins 1972:2). The path to affluence may therefore be achieved by two different means, if it is achievable at all.

Sahlins talks about how scarcity is a relative size, a relation between means and ends, but it could seem like for this relativity to exist one must not be able to obtain or even have knowledge of the kind of goods that exist in a typical global society, particularly consumer goods. With the globalization and interconnectedness of the world, so few people are unaware of the massive amounts of consumer goods that exists that we must assume a general awareness of these goods in all populations. So is Sahlins arguments no longer valid now that the hunter gatherers without contact with the modern world are all but extinct?

> When Herskovits was writing his Economic Anthropology (1958), it was common anthropological practice to take the Bushmen or the native Australians as "a classic illustration; of a people whose economic resources are of the scantiest", so precariously situated that "only the most intense application makes survival possible". Today the "classic" understanding can be fairly reversed- on evidence largely from these two groups. A good case can be made that hunters and gatherers work less than we do; and, rather than a continuous travail, the food quest is intermittent, leisure abundant, and there is a greater amount of sleep in the daytime per capita per year than in any other condition of society. The most obvious, immediate conclusion is that the people do not work hard. The average length of time per person per day put into the appropriation and preparation of food was four or five hours. Moreover, they do not work continuously. The subsistence quest was highly intermittent. It would stop for the time being when the people had procured enough for the time being. Which left them plenty of time to spare. (Sahlins 1972:14).

Sahlins argues here that scarcity is a relative value that is often socially constructed and is dependent on people's wants and relative needs. People's wants are in direct relation to what is available. Therefore, we can say that: "The Market institutes scarcity" (Sahlins 1972:4).

On the other hand, regression might be harder to cope with than not having plenty of resources to begin with, and might lead to a feeling left behind by the rest of the developing world (Ferguson 2002). And furthermore, the risk of having your water supply cut off is not quite the same as never having had a plentiful supply of water. To feel like you suddenly have less than what you used to or should have compared to your neighbors are likely to cause a certain level of discontent. In a modern society like South Africa, there is not only expectations that there is enough water for drinking or cooking, but people have also come to rely on enough water for washing and cleaning for a minimum standard of living.

Arjun Appadurai's theory on -scapes (2002:50), the flows of different global dimensions, like for instance mediascape and financescape, may seem to argue for this view. It states, amongst other things, that grievances and unrest springs from dissonance between what you know exists and what you know you could possibly acquire (2002). For instance, the knowledge that luxury goods such as sports cars exist, and the picture painted of them in the media and commercials, combine to make someone want to own these luxury goods. When the possibility of ever owning such luxury goods are naught, that creates a disjuncture between the expectations and reality of life. For example, a Brazilian farmer might be considered poor by modern standards because he is unable to ever acquire the luxury goods associated with wealth, and his knowledge of the fact that he can never buy these goods, could also make him consider himself poor as well. If he was poor or not was never a question before, but because he is excluded from the global dimension of luxury goods, he is classified as poor in relation to others of which he might not have had any knowledge before, and whom might never have any impact on his life. His happiness is made less, simply from knowing that these things exist. Where someone was not poor before, someone is now poor simple because of the knowledge of the existence of the global world. Or as Sahlins says: "Poverty is(...) a relation between people" (Sahlins 1972:37). That one cannot be poor if no one is at the same time rich.

We see then that resources are relative and that poverty is something that happens in relations to others. If one does not have knowledge of the richness of others one would not consider oneself poor. But is it really so that knowledge of other people, other goods, other ways of life immediately sparks a hunger in the human soul for what others have? Can one not, as the Zen-philosophy talked about earlier states: inherently want little, even though one knows that there exists much? I believe it is possible, and many of the arguments Sahlins makes in his chapter points in the same direction.

For instance, Sahlins draws on an account by Lorna Marshall to describe how the !kung people have never had the need or desire to hoard material artifacts because of their living situation, and how this have resulted in a society where objects have not become associated with status. (Sahlins 1972:9-10). Sahlins writes about the need for mobile hunter groups to not get over-encumbered: "A necessity so obvious to the casual visitor must be second nature to the people concerned" (1972:12). It has become natural to not own many possessions because of the reality of their lives, that of the nomad. And even when presented with the opportunity the receive convenient items from westerners it was likely that the nomads would decline because for them,

mobility had more value than any items that they might have (Sahlins, 1972). For the nomadic hunter-gatherers imminent diminishing returns leads to the attraction of moving from area to area. The same with items, when the need for movement is established, hoarding is inconvenient. When, as in these examples, objects have never been the symbols of status, it seems unlikely that in a short period of time they suddenly take on the same kind of significance that they have in western societies. Part of the nomads' disposition is to be free of unnecessary things, and so they do not think about goods in the same way that a person from a modern western country like for instance Sweden would. "It is not that hunters and gatherers have curbed their materialistic "impulses"; they simply never made an institution of them." (Sahlins 1972:13-14). They might not have a reason to since by Sahlins arguments many people depending on much more modern methods for obtaining subsistence are no safer from starvation caused by drought or environmental disasters than hunter-gatherers even though the hunters do not plan for the future. This paradox is Sahlins whole point. (1972).

In a similar vein Pierre Bourdieu argues that the French working class have no desire for finer foods for instance, finding it flimsy and not to their taste, simply because it is not within their grasp. They have developed an internal subconscious taste for what is available to them. In other words, they have learned to like what they have (Bourdieu 1984). Here we see that even in a European country like France the people do not necessarily want what is out of their reach, instead they make do with what they have. Like the nomads that refuse items out of a need to be mobile and a disregard for material goods, the working class' disposition is to appreciate the things that are common to them, what they are used to, and not yearn for what is not part of their world. They have developed a culture of appreciating what is familiar.

The study of resources in a social perspective are, as we have seen, significant for understanding in what ways and how societies may change, and also for understanding why people act the way they do. The fact that resource scarcity is a relative term is also important for how we use the resource term itself, and it implies that not everyone might think about resources in the same way. Now that we have given an account of resource use and why they are significant for social analysis, let's move on to mapping out water resources in Riversdale, how they are utilized, and how they are distributed.

Knowledge & sharing of the water-system in Riversdale

In Riversdale, the town and a big portion of the farms were both dependent on the Korintepoort dam for their water supply. This dam was the only water supply that the town had except for rain-water, and so the state of the dam was quite important for the welfare of the town.

Despite this, most people were not really talking about water if I did not ask them specifically about it. While I was in Riversdale, South Africa was in the midst of a power crisis, one that people were much more aware of than a hypothetical water crisis in the future. That is not to say that water was not an issue for several people or groups of people, which we will see. But rather that the energy crisis was much more current, affected more people and was more talked about. The power crisis was a common denominator for a lot of people and therefore a more frequent topic of discussion than water.

On the other hand, the possible problems of too little water that might affect the region in the future could probably have worse effects than the national power crisis that was taking place, because of the effects it would have on the job market.

I believe that how the South African people were coping with frequent loss of power could possible tell us something more general about how they handle loss of resources, and so how they would react in the event that they would have to cut back on water usage. The fact that the power cuts or load shedding as they are called, affected everyone equally is probably one of the reasons why people took it so well. But the very visible ways in which the power disappeared for an hour or two a couple of times a week at its worst, at least told everyone in a very real way that Riversdale had a problem with power supply. The fact that the dam was low, and farmers did not get as much water as they asked the water board for during summer on the other hand, was not something that most people could observe for themselves and so that made the problem less visible for the townspeople.

We have already discussed Sahlins ideas of scarcity, and his theory that it is relative. On several plains, that theory holds true in Riversdale, but it entirely depends on who one asks. The factors determining people's ideas about the scarcity of water were mostly related to money. And while

farmers and townspeople were divided when it came to the question if there existed enough water in the area or not, they agreed on the fact that cost was what it came down to. The problem was rather not the amount of water in the area, so much as water storage capacity. This was something that most of the farmers were conscious of. The Korintepoort dam was old, and constructed with a much smaller town in mind at the time of the construction. With increasingly irregular rainfalls the past couple of years, the amount of water that could be stored was the main issue for securing a steady supply of water to the farms and town.

Whether one could actually see the challenges with water or not were a major factor in determining what dispositions one had towards water preservation. Several of the farmers that I got in touch with were acutely aware of the fact that during the summer months they could not utilize their entire farmlands, and that they rarely got as much water as they asked for because the water board had to be cautious with their quotas.

This was a serious issue in their minds and influenced the way they looked upon the townspeople. In the sense that farmers often suggested that the townspeople were ignorant of the problems with water availability that the area faced.

One example of this view is was my informant Gunther, who while not a farmer worked with water distribution to the farms. He claimed that, "as long as the region lacks water storage capacity, it is up to the residents of the town to save and reuse water. But such things usually don't catch on" (FJ 2:23)

The townspeople on the other hand, saw that there was always water in the taps, there was never a time of year where the taps dried out or anything like that, and people watered their lawns if they could afford to. As my informant, Luke, told me one night that I was pestering him with questions about the water restriction notice that had been in the newspaper a couple of days earlier: "I don't care about the fucking water restriction" (FJ 1:70).

As a result of this different perspective and ability to actually observe the flow of water, differing views on the situation emerges. From some people's perspective there was already too little water, from others point of view there was clearly enough.

The amount of knowledge that people had of the water system in Riversdale was thus very varied. It would seem that many knew that there was not an abundance of water in the area, but on the other hand, very few seemed to care about such things as restrictions to water

consumption. The consumption of water was for most people purely dictated by their relative wealth, those who could afford it used as much as they liked, while those who had to consider every rand spent, were conscious to not use more than what was absolutely necessary.

The ones who were definitely most knowledgeable about the water situation were the farmers of the area. This is not a surprise as these people are dependent on a steady water supply for their livelihood. They had consistent and in depth knowledge of streams in the area, levels of rainfall as well as water levels in the Korintepoort dam and how much lower the levels in the dam could get before the situation would get critical. It seemed like several farmers had the manpower and arable land to be more productive than they were during the summer months but the amount of water available was holding that productivity back. In other words, if the point was to maximize the productivity of farming in the Riversdale area there was already too little water to go around. Neither farmers or politicians nor scientists from Stellenbosch categorized the challenges in Riversdale as a water crisis yet though.

A lot of people in town on the other hand did not seem to know or care that the town might lack a stable water supply. Many said they knew of it when asked specifically, but did not seem to remember the water restrictions when it was time to wash their cars or water their gardens. This was especially true of the affluent.

The exceptions to this rule were the people who simply could not afford to use a lot of water. Although there is subsidized water called Free basic water (FBW), consisting of 6000 liters of water for every household making less than 3000 South African Rand (zar) a month, there are those who still struggle to pay their water bills. These are mainly the people who earn just above 3000 rand a month and therefor does not qualify for the free water, or those who live in large households, for instance with many children and old parents, and are very poor, because the amount of free water is not sufficient for the monthly use of that many people and they can simply not afford to pay for more. Patrick Bond & Jackie Dugard writes in their article on water rights in South Africa that Peter Gleick – the president of the Pacific Institute for studies in Development – considers 50 liters of water per person per day to be the minimum water required to meet the human needs of drinking, sanitation, bathing and cooking (2008:9). Which means that any household with more than four people would not have the necessary basic water required for healthy living unless they could afford more than the free 6000 liters.

The awareness of the state of water resources in the area could thus be seen on a continuum of people where different groups where placed based on a number of criteria. The biggest difference in knowledge was between the farmers and the townspeople, where all of the farmers I spoke to had a very good knowledge of the system, while for the townspeople as a whole only a small percentage had in depth knowledge of the issue. Besides, for them, the question was rather about money, than water itself.

The way the water system was talked about was also different depending on the person. For instance, farmers were quicker to say that there were already problems in the area than for instance politicians or people working in the municipality. I also noticed that my older informants were much more interested in questions of the environment and preserving water, than the informants closer to my age. This view was probably due to having a longer perspective on things, having lived through apartheid and seen the changes of the last 30 to 40 years. As one of my older colored informants told me: "We have to think about what we leave for the next generation" (FJ 1:84).

Those people who were very interested in water and talking about it, and had great knowledge about the system in Riversdale and how to preserve water definitely were the exception rather than the rule. I imagine that I attracted those who took an interest in water preservation because of my role of researching it.

I would argue then that the dispositions that people had towards water, were very much influenced by class membership, economic situation and other such social factors. Because relations towards such things as environmentalism cannot be isolated from the complex social beings that people are, the way people talk about, in this case water, must be seen in relation to a total social habitus that is influenced by a myriad of various factors such as race, class, age, and the social system that actors live in.

Challenges to water preservation

Many of the factors that might make water scarce in Riversdale has already been discussed, but in this section I will attempt to make a complete list of what different challenges my informants

mentioned when we talked about this issue, before going on to explain why these particular narratives were chosen as the explanation for the areas potential problems with access to water.

While I was in Riversdale I talked to a number of stakeholders in the water distribution area as well as people who had no particular stake in it apart from normal usage of water. A common complaint on how the system was working was a lack of communication between the decision makers and the people affected. While the municipality claimed that there was good communication between them and stakeholders like farmers for instance, the sentiment was not shared the other way around. When I asked around about the state of communication on important water matters between the municipality and others, I was often told that it could be better. One informant who worked in a wetlands protection organization told me that she believed the municipalities intentions were good, but that they often did not consult the people with knowledge about the matter when starting a project. Therefore, when something got done, it was not done quite right and often did not lead to the wished for result. This might be a case of miscommunication leading to suboptimal results, reminiscent of the case study on guinea pig farming in Ecuadorian households made by Eduardo Archetti (1986). I doubt that this lack of good communication is caused by failure to understand culturally significant practices, as is the case in Archetti's study, and while I do not want to simply blame it on bureaucratic inefficiencies either, I was unable to observe and study any actual cases of communication between the municipality and stakeholders while I was in the field, and as such I find it difficult to form an opinion on the matter.

In most of my conversations on water and the challenges associated with it, climate change was also mentioned as one of the factors in why the area might have trouble with water, as well as the lack of capacity. However, this was rarely the narratives that were given prevalence in these discussions because, as people said, there was nothing to do about it. All one could do was react to it, and as such any blame was lain on those who were seen as not reacting in the proper way. Who was to blame changed depending on who one asked and which socioeconomic group this person belonged to.

As a starting point I will begin with the expert opinion. As I was there, in the very beginning of the SUWAM project, one of the suggestions from the professors at Stellenbosch was to change the area of agriculture from mostly dairy farming to something less water intensive such as tea farming. In other words, one of the challenges to water preservation in the area was that the farming being done was too water intensive. As farming in general is quite water intensive,

according to Bond & Dugard, farms, usually owned by white South Africans, use more than half of the country's raw water (2008:6), this might seem like a plausible solution to diminishing water resources.

The farmers however did not seem very keen on this idea of changing the way they were farming and argued that it would not be possible to employ the same number of people on the same area of land with any other type of farming. As we have seen that there is already a great deal of unemployment in Riversdale, and considering the social consequences associated with having a large unemployed population, the number of people that are able to be employed in the agricultural sector should definitely be considered when looking at possible solutions towards saving water.

Other people such as many of the farmers and the people in charge of allocating the water quotas from the dam, says the growth of the town is the main reason why they have problems with water. The dam is old and was not built for a town of the size that Riversdale has become now. As we have seen, the farmers also claim that the people living in the town are not conscious of the problems, and are therefore spending too much water.

> "Part of the problem is the municipality who asks for more and more water for the town, the other part is that regular people do not have knowledge enough to know that they should save" Gunther (FJ 2:24).

Those working in Riversdale's water department naturally had excellent knowledge of the piping and water infrastructure in the area. They meant that one of the biggest challenges with water was leakages in the old pipes. At the same time, they also talked about how people were not aware that they should try to save or how to do it, and that they often tried to teach people to save water.

The Basic Free Water was also mentioned as a cause for concern when it came to water management. As I have already mentioned in chapters 3 and 4, those who did not get welfare benefits often criticized those who did receive them, and this was true for the free basic water as well. On the other hand, as I have argued, the free basic water was not really enough for most of the poor households, and I found no evidence whatsoever, apart from some of my informant's statements, that those who received free water were wasteful with it. Nevertheless

In addition, people in town often blamed the national government for unwilling or unable to fix the problems, and thus the challenges with water were somehow also their responsibility. When I asked one of my white informants if she thought something would be done to prevent Riversdale from having problems with water supply in the future she scoffed and said: "Not with this government" (Fj 1:32). This narrative adds to the anti-government discourse in Riversdale that we have already discussed in previous chapters (Ch. 2 & Ch. 3).

While close to everyone I interacted with in Riversdale were positive to measures for expanding water supply and saving water. Both on the part of communal steps taken by the municipality such as expanding the dam, reduce loss of water in pipes, and improving the reuse of water, as well as individual measures like water-saving shower-heads. Still, there was quite a large amount of skepticism about whether it would really amount to much, and if most people would buy and use these shower heads, if the municipality tried to go through with such a policy. It was obvious to me that the willingness to save water was there, regardless if it was motivated by the possibility of saving money, or the wellbeing of the environment and continued prosperity of Riversdale. But what made so many people doubt that the strategies, particularly the ones who relied on everyone doing a little bit of saving, would work?

I was presented with a number of reasons why this could fail by my informants. For instance, people cited the initial cost as an issue. They argued that it would be too expensive for most people to buy and install water saving devices or systems for recycling water in the household. Especially if the benefits of the investments were very long term. The poor were also accused of just selling the equipment again in the event of being given state subsidized utilities. I would argue that this is not so surprising as the need for cash amongst the poor of Riversdale is probably a lot more urgent than saving water in the long run. Ferguson also talks about this need for cash when he argues that the poor have better knowledge of where to spend the money than those providing the welfare (2015:13-14).

One example is the solar water heaters that are quite common in Riversdale. Although it is not directly related to water issues we can use it as an example of how something meant to help people living in poor conditions might be more trouble than it is worth. The water heaters consist of solar panels on the roof of a building connected to a hot water cylinder that gets heated up by sunlight, providing hot water for domestic use. As a social measure, poor households in Riversdale has been provided with these solar water heaters to provide warm water and lower the use of electricity and thus save money. This measure might not work out

as well as it should though because the heaters easily broke, and besides, poor families, I was told, often sold the heaters in order to get cash instead. If you are not sure how to be able to pay for your next meal, you really have no use for hot water for showering.

These were the most prevalent narratives to explain challenges in the water sector that I heard while I was in the field, but I do not doubt that there are others as well.

Rights to water and prepaid meters

The basic free water right, was something that was frequently up for debate whenever I talked about water with my informants.

Surprisingly, many of my informants who did not benefit from the free-water scheme were outspokenly negative about how it was handled. They said that it was often a waste of water, because the people who got the free water always used it up regardless if they actually needed the full amount or not. In this regard it did not teach people to save, they argued, and people got lazy and entitled because of it. "It's not good that someone gets free water, because they don't start to save until they have used up all the free water." (FJ 1:127).

Only those who did not get free water was of this opinion though. Every one of my informants who were actually poor enough to be eligible to receive the free 6000 liters of water each month complained that it was usually not enough. The biggest issues that most recipients of free water had was that it was a flat allowance per household, with no regard for the number of persons living in that household. As a result, large households with many children or more than one family living under the same roof usually ran out of free water long before the end of the month, and could barely afford to pay for more.

As one informant of mine who was very engaged in recycling and environmentalism also suggested, this issue could be resolved by calculating the water allowances based on the number of people in the household, but again, this brings with it new challenges such as finding out how many people actually live in a certain household.

On the other hand, not a single one of the people I met during my stay in the field thought that water should be a commercial commodity. They were all of the opinion that water was and should remain a basic human right, but based on their living situation, there were many differing opinions on how this access to water should be solved.

When it comes to ideologies related to distribution of water, there are different views as to what is the best way to manage this resource. According to Terreblanche, the post-apartheid South African government were forced into a neo-liberal policy by the corporate sector (2002:29). Which entails an idea that privatization and commodification of all goods and resources, such as water, is the best way to manage these resources. On the other side of the ideology spectrum is what Bond & Dugard calls "the socio-economic rights discourse" (2008B:4). Which means that in the case of water management, everyone has a right to use as much water as they need, within reason. Bond & Dugard also mention a third ideology that is situated between these two extremes and is based on the principle that "…water is a scarce good with dimensions of economic efficiency, social equity, and environmental sustainability" (2008B:4). While we can see traces of the neo-liberal policy that Terreblanche claims the South African government have adapted in distributive policies of electricity and water.

For instance, one of my white informants who was a retired architect was almost up in arms about the fact that it was not possible to have a solar panel installed and be hooked up to the electricity grid at the same time. Or the case of prepaid water meters where one must pay for the water before one can use it. Full commodification of these resources however, and especially water, had yet to occur. Most likely because of long standing traditions of water rights discourses.

 So we see that when it comes to rights to water, one has to take into account both that in most people's minds, it is a basic human right, as well as the fact that it is a scarce resource that must be managed in order for everyone to get a rightful share.

Antona von Schnitzler writes about the case of water management in South Africa and the role of prepaid water meters in her paper *Citizenship prepaid* (2008). In Schnitzler's descriptions of the prepaid water meter systems in South Africa she mentions that the prepaid meters were mostly installed in poorer regions and households. These households did not require as much water to begin with as wealthier white middle class households with large gardens (2008:904), something that shows us that the rhetoric the local government in Johannesburg were using

about the goal of saving water might not be as important as forcing citizens to pay their utility bills.

> "While Johannesburg Water framed the project in an environmental discourse of water conservation that, coupled with nationalist exhortations of water as a scarce national asset, resonated with an increasingly global environmental discourse of 'sustainability', this framing of the problem elided the more complicated calculations and targets of the project." (Schnitzler 2008: 905).

The official goal of the project was to save water by fixing leaks and get control over where the unpaid water went, and in that way save both valuable natural resources and money for the water company. Many residents had until now not paid anything for water and so it was in essence free. The introduction of prepaid water meters and the reasoning behind it made a huge political issue into a technical issue (2008:906). According to Schnitzler, what was being coined a "Culture of non-payment" (2008:906) is why the notion of prepayment became so attractive to municipalities and water utilities. "This shift towards prepayment technology, as a means of solving non-payment, simultaneously turned the political question of defining the parameters of rights and civic obligations into an administrative question, and inscribed them within the technology itself." (Schnitzler 2008:907-908).

Foucault says that part of the art of governing is to put economics into the domain of politics, in other words to make political matters into economic or instrumental matters, which we can see in the case of the prepaid meters (1991). While I found that in Riversdale, like in Schnitzler's case, it seemed to be primarily poor areas that had been equipped with prepaid water meters, from what I could gather in conversations with municipality employees, they did not have a big problem with people not paying their bills. I was told that there were a few that they had problems with, but if it was a big issue for them or not, it was not something that anyone in the municipality were very keen on talking about. They were also, I was told, in the process of switching out the prepaid meters with some other type of water meters because the prepaid ones had a habit of breaking more often than they should have, and that it was very expensive to maintain or replace them.

I imagine that the actual water and money saved from installing the prepaid meters were lost in the process of installing and maintaining the meters themselves, and besides, it can very well

be imagined that the poor people of Riversdale themselves were one of the reasons why the meters broke so often, considering the prevalent views that water should be a basic human right.

The perceived rights to water were even more prevalent amongst farmers, not least because the farmers followed old agreements on water rights that were made a long time ago. Water is often tied to land, and especially for the farmers it is actually quite a distinct connection because owning the land actually gives rights to use the water in the area. This is probably why some farmers complained about pensioners living on lands with water rights and not doing any farming. The water rights not being used were seen as wasted resources and potential, and as the farmers themselves noticed that they lacked the resources to utilize all their land, seeing others not using the resources available to them must be frustrating.

In addition, the water board in Riversdale was unable to deny the town water, and had to distribute the water as best they could, which they seemed to be quite competent in doing, based on feedback from farmers getting water from this organization who all had kind words for the head of the water board and meant that he did a great job. But the town itself, as we have seen, were often criticized as being wasteful of the regions water, a wastefulness that was attested to an ignorance of the actual water situation in Riversdale.

As we can see, a rights discourse is prevalent in the area of water distribution, and people invoke different factors, such as water being a human right, or longstanding water sharing agreements, within this discourse to argue for their own right to water.

In this chapter, I have shown that there are many different narratives to explain water challenges, and many different dispositions when it comes to water consciousness. I would argue, based the theory presented here and my own fieldwork that these dispositions and narratives are largely determined by social factors such as racial identity, group affiliation, occupation and class.

Figure 8 Prepaid water meters

Chapter 6

Concluding thoughts

In this thesis I have set out to discover how the lives of Western Cape South Africans are shaped by social factors such as race identity and inequality, and how this framework affects people's dispositions towards a discourse of water consciousness.

Riversdale is a very interesting case in this regard, as the clear dividing lines between farmers and city dwellers, as well as between rich and poor, makes it easier to determine whether there exists a particular discourse and choice of narrative connected to each socioeconomic group.

Like Ferguson (2015: 18) I have found that the social inequalities in South Africa are for the most part color coded, but I also claim that they are not based on an explicit racism, but rather social structures that make and determine class. The reason why race is still so interrelated with class is because during apartheid the socially constructed racial categories were subject to massive differentiation in investment on such things as education and healthcare, and so, post-apartheid South Africa still struggles with the aftermath of these differences in investment made amongst the people of South Africa. While the race terms in use in South Africa today are still the same as they were under apartheid, the meaning that people put into these terms has changed, and culture and class are now much more important in group and identity negotiation than biological characteristics.

I would argue that class, cultural dispositions and social relations are important factors for determining people's attitudes toward water and in extension, general resource use, and especially the rights to these. These rights, constitutional, perceived or otherwise, in South Africa are inexplicably tied to social status. In this regard race and social inequalities become important factors for understanding how people act, think and talk about these matters. The prevailing discourse of rights are tied to ethnicity through a history and current politics of differentiating between the racial categories of Blacks, Coloreds and Whites, and therefore these dimensions of social life will be important in grasping the full picture when it comes to systems of water distribution and social consequences of climate change.

The Western Cape is uniquely positioned in South Africa because of its history and demographic, but despite its uniqueness and peculiarities, many of the social dynamics are surprisingly similar to what we find in other parts of the world. The agricultural aspect of the area, makes it an area that is vulnerable to climate change and reduction of available water resources, and the interrelation between urban and rural life in Riversdale, are part of informing the dispositions that determine people's attitudes towards preservation of these natural resources.

On the other hand, dispositions and opinions about rights, that are peculiar to South Africa, also have to be accounted for when trying to figure out how people think and act in these regards. The fact that South Africans have a great deal of social rights that often fail to manifest because of the great number of poor and social inequality of the country, must be seen as informing and shaping frameworks that affects the different South African group's perceptions of a large number of matters.

When it comes to the distribution of water resources in particular, I have shown that the prevalent discourse in the different social groups is that the blame for the problems with water usually lay with different socioeconomic group than their own. In other words, they focus on those narratives that put the responsibility for any lack of water on other groups.

As we saw in chapter 4 and 5, the farmers and the people working with the distribution of water, generally thought that the people living in town were wasteful with the water resources, and that a lot of the water problems facing Riversdale would be solved if the town started managing this resource more carefully. Some of the farmers also argued that the water issues of the town were connected to the poor black immigrants, and that the reliance of this group on subsidies and welfare led to a situation where water started to get scarcer.

The poor often thought that they should get more subsidies and that water was a basic human right that the state should provide them with. We have for example seen how the use of prepaid meters in Johannesburg led to vandalism and destruction of said meters (Schnitzler 2008), and while none of my informants admitted to the destruction of their own prepaid meters, the fact remains that the meters in Riversdale, according to municipal employees (chapter 5), also seemed to break down more often than usual. There are also the instances that I mentioned where poorer members of the community disregard local legislation and water from the river, in order to add to the amount of water they have access to.

The people belonging to the "blue collar" group were often complaining about the government and the subsidies that the poor group benefitted from. However, for this group the complains seemed to be connected more to the distribution of resources in general rather than water specifically. There also seemed to be less concern with water resources in this group than what we found to be the case among the farmers and the poor of Riversdale.

Finally, I often heard from my affluent informers that they thought that the poor were ignorant, uneducated and often lazy, but paradoxically, the affluent often seemed more ignorant about the issues related to water than the poor did. In general, water was not something which the richer citizens of Riversdale seemed concerned about.

Despite the differences in narrative, the different groups also held some beliefs in common. First, it was generally accepted across groups that the state expanding the region's capacity for water storage would help alleviate the problem, and second, that climate change had negatively influenced the availability of water, and would continue to influence it in the future. As we can see the people of Riversdale were fully capable of agreeing on issues that were mostly connected to external factors.

What we see then, is that the socioeconomic group one belong to clearly determines which narrative one would adhere to and which dispositions one would have to policies concerning water distribution.

This may seem self-explanatory, but one's dependence on water, and one's capacity to procure it heavily influenced whether one had strong opinions about the issue. The farmers who depended on water for their livelihoods generally held strong views on the matter. Similarly, the poorer members of society who needed subsidized water were often more knowledgeable about water issues than those who could easily afford to buy it.

While few of the town residents of Riversdale took a particular interest in the issue of water conservation, I believe that the consequences of markedly less available water in the future could have significantly negative effects on social stability and the interaction between the different social groups in the area.

Even if Sahlins argues that the idea of scarcity is relative, in a globally connected country such as South Africa, a regression in the amounts of water available, which would in all probability lead to less jobs, less wealth and thus an increase in the amount of poor people, would be seen

as an actual decline for the area. Even though people would probably manage in such a situation, the decline in wealth compared to other parts of the world or even other parts of South Africa would have a negative effect on people's perceptions of the area, and probably also the government for failing to hinder economic decline. Scarcity is relative, but when it is put in relation to what others have, rather than what is available to oneself, social frictions can occur. This is especially true in a society where perceptions about water resources are as divided along socioeconomic lines as they are in Riversdale.

While water scarcity is a global problem, in that it appears in many different locations all over the globe, I have shown that the perception of how water is distributed differs greatly from social group to social group. As such, solutions to water scarcity and water distribution requires local solutions that has to bring into account social dispositions and consequences in order to be effective. Thus the unique social and economic framework of the Western Cape must necessarily be considered when discussing actual measures for ensuring access to water resources in the future.

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