"I was not raised colour-blind"

Poverty and Reconciliation in a white informal settlement in Johannesburg

By Eline Huiberts

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The photo on the cover shows the foundations of the church that is being built at the settlement.[1]

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[1] *Photo made by Hugo van As*

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank some people who have helped me making this project to what it has become now. I will do this by shortly explaining the creative journey that has led to this thesis.

This project started in January 2011 (over one year ago) when I talked with Viola who was the first to inform me about poor white people in Johannesburg, South Africa. After this, I came into contact with Zieg van Huijssteen in Cape Town who helped me realize the idea of doing fieldwork by finding the perfect setting to do fieldwork: The Oord.

Then, in December I started with the preparation of the project and since then, Nienke Muurling has guided me until this very day. She was always calm and patient at the right moments and always gave me good feedback that I could work with. Without her critical comments, this thesis would never have become what it is now.

When I arrived in Johannesburg in February, I was welcomed with open arms by Pastor Pepe and his wife Loekie. They made me feel right at home. In the following three months I have had fun, grieved, laughed and pondered with the people living at the Oord. Colin was an especially good companion during that time. And of course Hugo van As who helped me to sometimes 'get out' of the field.

Back in Holland I stayed enthusiastic about the project since so many people around me, especially at the Utrecht University, showed their honest interest in the subject of this study.

Over the whole period of this project, my family has always supported me and helped me whenever and wherever I needed them for help. Especially my parents, since they always made me a healthy meal when I needed one, and my cousin Clary, who borrowed her lap top without question when I most needed it.

I am very, very grateful for all the help at all the times from so many people during this journey. But I cannot stress enough how thankful I am to all the people at the Oord. By the end of my fieldtrip, I knew every single person (all 127) at the Oord by name, and this was only possible because all the 'Oord-people' were kind to me and eager to help me with this project. Without their help, this thesis would never have existed.

Contents

Introduction

It is a Thursday afternoon and I am sitting in the soup kitchen. It is lunchtime and there are some people entering to pick up a free lunch. At the table where I am sitting, there are several other women who are taking a break from their activities in the kitchen. Across from me is Riëtte, [2] a mother of three sons who is telling me more about the kitchen-activities. Then Cristina comes in and tells me that she came here by 'taxi'. That is a very brave thing to do since these taxis are rather dangerous. Cristina tells me that it used to be safer in Johannesburg. That she would need only one bus to go from one end of Johannesburg to the other. That it would take her only one hour, instead of two. Riëtte assents and tells me that it used to be so incredibly different years ago. That crime now is very high, everything is expensive and you cannot go out after it gets dark because it is too dangerous. She bursts into tears when she talks about how great things used to be and how things have changed so much. She tells me that she used to be safe, that things were cheaper, affordable and that she could go out and drink coffee late at night. That the crime rates were so low and that the streets were filled with happy people. Rape still meant the death penalty and therefore hardly ever happened. Things were much better taken care of back then. She tells me that in those times, black people were not allowed on the streets after ten o'clock at night. She said: "I am not a racist, but ever since the black people are in the government and they are back on the streets at night, things have gone wrong. Really, it is now reversed from what it used to be: Now we *have to be inside our houses before it gets dark (around 7 o clock) and* they *are out on the streets." She is still crying when she tells me these things. It is obvious how intensely sad she is with all the changes of the last two decades.[3]*

It was in the second week after my arrival when I had this conversation with Riëtte and Cristina. Riëtte used to work for a phone company in Johannesburg. Her life has never been easy but in the past she always managed to keep her head above water. In the last two decades she lost her job, lost her children, gained a job, got back her children and lost her job again. Since 2006 she lives at the Oord,[4] an informal settlement for white people, or as Riëtte called it: "a white township". Her nostalgic feelings towards the times of apartheid are no exception here. Many people told me how poignant their position and the position of South Africa is, especially compared to earlier times.

Since the end of apartheid in 1994 the white population in South Africa lost its privileges and the rest of the population became more included. There is now a growing middle class group consisting of

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[2] For privacy reasons, all names of the informants in my research have been changed to a pseudonym.

[3] Informal interview with Riëtte and Cristina February 8th 2012.

[4] In English they call it the 'Place of Refugee'.

African, Asian/Indian and coloured people.[5] But there is also a growing amount of poor white people (Schuermans 2005). Even though they are few, they are a significant group of people.

Apartheid was a time of suppression, a time of racist policies, when all non-white people fought for a better existence. It was a long period of conflict. In 1995, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to come to terms with the past (TRC report 2003). This commission was so successful, that it has often been used as an example for other post-conflict countries (Gray 2006). However, Teppo conducted research in a poor white neighbourhood in Cape Town and she explains that these white neighbourhoods have a reputation of still being very racist (Teppo 2004:209). Reconciliation is a long term process and apparently, not all people have reconciled (Bloomfield 2006; Teppo 2004).

Poverty can cause great tensions in a nation and many have argued that part of the process of reconciliation is the reduction of poverty and inequality throughout society (Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Bloomfield 2003; Rothstein 1999). The white people used to be privileged and now they are not. There is a growing part of the white population that is now living in poverty. How will this affect their attitude towards the rest of society? Will they hold a grudge towards the now equal 'Other' or will they accept the changes of this new South Africa?

In order to find answers to these questions, I organised to stay in an informal settlement for white people in Johannesburg called 'the Oord'. Informal settlements, or townships, are heavily impoverished areas just outside cities, where people live when they cannot afford normal, legal housing. I have stayed in the Oord from the beginning of February until the 18th of April 2012. During the period that I was living there I had the following question in mind: 'To what extent does the economic decline of white people in post-apartheid South Africa, Johannesburg, which led to poverty and habitation in informal settlements, hamper the process of reconciliation among the impoverished white people?'

The Oord is a small, rather enclosed settlement. And even though some people had a job, most were unemployed or living from a pension. Consequently, many people spent their entire day doing activities -such as small chores - and smoking cigarettes at the Oord. This proved to be an ideal setting to do anthropological research. In the three months that I spent in the Oord, I have come to know many of the people there and have gained a great amount of data. I have been able to conduct sixteen interviews with people from different ages and backgrounds. In addition, I observed and participated in many activities at the site. But the most valuable data came from the numerous informal interviews I

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[5] The South African society is usually categorized into five different population groups: Black African, Coloured, Indian/Asian, White and Unspecified. (See for example: http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P0100/P01002005.pdf). In this thesis I will use these terms in the theoretical framework. However, in the empirical chapters, I will use the terms for different population groups that the people at the Oord were using. That is: black, white, coloured and Indian. This, because it gives a better understanding of their reality.

conducted over the course of time. Practically every day I have been able to conduct one or more informal interviews. Data that I gained from the formal interviews, the informal interviews and the many observed conversations that inhabitants had at the Oord, were the main source of information when I was writing this thesis.

In this thesis I will first discuss the dynamics of reconciliation and poverty in a theoretical framework. I will show three aspects that are considered important for a successful process of reconciliation namely: 1) coming to terms with an imperfect reality; 2) change of formerly separated, hostile identities and 3) cooperation resulting in more positive and constructive relationships. In this framework, I will also elaborate on some processes that can hamper a process of reconciliation. The next chapter is about the context in which I have done my fieldwork. Some information about South Africa and more information about the Oord will be explained in this part. Following this will come three chapters where I will discuss the empirical data that I gained during my fieldwork. In these chapters I will focus on the three aspects that are considered important for a successful process of reconciliation. In the first empirical chapter (chapter 4) I will focus on how the people at the Oord are coming to terms with an imperfect reality. In the second empirical chapter, more about how the white people in the Oord identify themselves will be explained. In the third and final empirical chapter, I will elaborate on the level of cooperation between the white people at the Oord with people from other backgrounds in Johannesburg. The thesis will end with a short conclusion, where I will summarize all the findings and reflect on the main question.

1. Theoretical framework

How does poverty influence reconciliation? In order to understand this I will, in this theoretical framework, discuss several theories and concepts that directly concern this. I will start with a short explanation of the two most important concepts of this thesis; the process of reconciliation and the causes and dynamics of poverty. After this I will consider several processes that can hamper the process of reconciliation. I will do that by examining the direct opposite of reconciliation, namely conflict. I will end this theoretical framework with a short discussion on how poverty can influence reconciliation, or rather, how it influences non-reconciliation.

Reconciliation

There is no consensus on how to define reconciliation, or how it can be 'done' (Bloomfield 2006:4). It is a very broad, widely discussed concept and can be approached in a number of ways. There is a difference between the pragmatic (or 'thin') approach and a more idealistic, 'thick' approach. It is practically impossible to 'make' people forgive and forget. That, people eventually have to do themselves (Long and Brecke 2003; Bloomfield 2006; Rothstein 1999). The pragmatic, thin, approach to reconciliation therefore aims not to 'make' people forgive and forget but to promote the rebuilding of relationships between formerly belligerent parties (Bloomfield 2006). Pragmatically, reconciliation can be seen as a public discourse that is promoted politically, legally and through other (semi-)official tracks. The pragmatic approach is rather short-term, since it promotes reconciliation in the wake of civil war.

However, this thesis is about long-term, 'thick' reconciliation. Bloomfield argues that there is a difference between 'thin' reconciliation, as previously described, and 'thick' reconciliation. The latter being the 'moral or ethical, or particularly scholarly, standpoint' (Bloomfield 2006: 6). Bloomfield (2003) defines reconciliation in the IDEA Handbook,[6] as both an end-goal *and* 'a process that redesigns the relationship'. He asserts that this process involves *all* people and demands a change in beliefs, attitudes, and relationships and a coming to terms with an imperfect reality (Ibid). But this 'redefining of relationships' cannot be facilitated and can only be reached through time and at a more individual (psychologically) and communal (culturally, morally, socially) level (Rothstein 1999; Bloomfield 2006; Boersch-Supan 2008; Stovel 2008).

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[6] IDEA stands for 'Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance'. This institute publishes many handbooks, edited by many scholars. The aim of the IDEA is: 'to provide knowledge to democracy builders; to provide policy development and analysis; and to support democratic reform'. See http://www.idea.int/index.cfm.

In order to make this broadly defined process researchable, I have distilled three aspects that are crucial for a successful process of 'thick' reconciliation. First of all, people need to come to terms with an imperfect reality (Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice;[7] Bloomfield 2003). As long as different parties disagree on historical events, current events are differently explained. Consequently, this may result in that one or both of the parties feel denied and/or marginalized (Rouhana 2008:70). Coming to terms with an imperfect reality thus means that both parties need to reconcile with both an imperfect history an imperfect present and an imperfect future.

Secondly, this long term process involves a change in how people identify themselves and others. During conflict, people identify themselves in terms of 'us' and 'them', in racial, ethnic, class or other antagonistic terms (Rothstein 1999; Bloomfield 2003; Jabri 1996; Smeulers and Grünfeld 2011). These dichotomous identity-markers should change to a set of new identities that are more inclusive and less hostile (Ma'oz in Rothstein 1999: 70). This is not to say that differences between groups should be completely abolished or denied. I would argue that it is about a different *meaning* that is given to differences between groups; that instead of being mutually exclusive and antagonistic, it is both inclusionary and respectful towards each-'Other' and boundaries between groups are more fluid.

Third, it is vital in this process that formerly hostile relationship will change through more cooperation. When people are able to truly forgive each other and start to cooperate with each other, mutual respect towards each other can be reached (Bloomfield 2006; Kriesberg 2004; Stovel 2008). This cooperation and more positive attitude can change a formerly hostile relationship into a more positive, trusting and mutually respecting relationship.

Causes and dynamics of poverty

Poverty, like reconciliation can be explained in several ways. Greig, Hulme and Turner (2007: 23) roughly divide the possible explanations in two; the neoliberal (rational) explanations of poverty and the more structural explanations. The structural point of view will be my point of entrance for this research.

From a structural perspective, poverty is the result of multiple social processes over which people do not have control. Most importantly it is *inequality* in society, as a result of many social and historical processes, that eventually leads to poverty. (Greig, Hulme and Turner 2007; Nafziger and Auvinen 2002). Inequality concerns not only economic, but also the social and political inequality between groups, whether these groups are based on ethnicity, race, class, gender or something else (Greig, Hulme and Turner 2007).

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[7] From official Truth and Reconciliation Commission Website: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/.

In sum, the long term, 'thick' process of reconciliation involves the coming to terms with an imperfect reality, the transformation of identity, and the reformation of formerly hostile relationships through a more positive, inclusive attitude and cooperation. Poverty is mainly about inequalities in society. In the next part, it will become apparent that this inequality in a society can have dire consequences.

'Non-reconciliation':

In order to conduct research about reconciliation it is vital to also understand what I call *non-reconciliation;*[8] processes that can hamper the reconciliatory process. In addition, it is important to understand how poverty can influence these non-reconciliatory processes. I will now first focus on some general 'non-reconciliatory' social processes by analysing processes that contribute to the direct antagonist of reconciliation: conflict. After all, as long as causes of conflict are not addressed, tensions between groups remain and there is no true change of identity or change in the relationship between belligerent parties. Consequently, full reconciliation cannot be reached. Hereafter, more will be explained about how poverty and inequality specifically can contribute to conflict. This will be explained by first examining the consequences of exclusion of groups of people where after I will elaborate more on the debate about how poverty and inequality contribute to conflict.

Conflict

Reconciliation is a means to eliminate causes of violence in the future. It follows that causes of violence need to be understood and then eliminated for a successful process of reconciliation (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall 2009). I will now sum up several situational dimensions that are of importance in explaining causes of conflict. I will also elaborate on some socio-psychological theories that can explain why groups of people become violent. These socio-psychological dynamics are important to understand since these are important a causes of conflict.

Poverty, economic decline and high inequality are important dimensions that are considered as contributive to causing violence (Gleditsch 2007; Stewart and Brown 2007). Also, ethnicity and political entrepreneurs (the latter exploiting ethnicity and economic decline) are mentioned as factors in creating salient and antagonistic identities (Smeulers and Grünfeld 2011; Fearon and Laitin 2000). In most situations, it is an unequal relationship between parties by which one or another party is excluded from social, economic and/or political areas of society. As a result these factors might lead to political tension and violence in society (Nafziger and Auvinen 2002; Ballentine and Sherman 2003).

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[8] Most articles about reconciliation deal with 'non-reconciliatory' processes although this term is never used as such. Instead it is usually more about 'processes towards conflict'. I deliberately call it non-reconciliation since this term is, in my opinion a better, more covering term than 'the study of conflict'.

The situational dimensions described above create tensions. But that does not explain why people eventually become violent. In order to gain more insight into this, the socio-psychological process that makes people follow and become violent will need to be addressed. Jabri has clarified much about this process in her book 'Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered' (1996). She points out the importance of identity formation of the individual within a group and 'how this results in the emergence of and support for violent human conflict' (Jabri 1996: 121). She explains this by the "social identity theory' which assigns a central role to the 'natural' human tendency to partition the world into comprehensible units' (Ibid:124). Accordingly, through the demarcation of boundaries, people's identity is clarified through comparison with other individuals and groups (Ibid). Jabri asserts that as a consequence of these boundaries, 'an enemy stereo-typified as diabolical and inferior is presented by a leadership of a conflict party as a legitimate target of direct violence or discrimination' (Ibid: 127).[9]

Smeulers and Grünfeld (2011) argue that people often have a desire to belong to a group. This creates a process of polarization through increasingly extreme behaviour of group members (in order to show allegiance to a group) and through the scapegoating and exclusion of the 'Other'. This process of polarization can be accelerated in the presence of an inciting authoritative figure that people are prepared to obey (Ibid).

These are broad, socio-psychological processes that can lead to violence and conflict. But there is one more factor that can increase the above socio-psychological processes: fear. Bar-Tal explains several consequences of this emotion in his article 'Why does fear override hope in societies engulfed by intractable conflict, as it does in the Israeli Society?' (2001).[10] He asserts that fear is based not only on direct perceived threats, but also on one's history and culture. In addition, he notes that fear is not only an individual emotion but can be collectively experienced by a whole particular society or community. Decisions (both individually and collectively) influence people's opinions and decisions. He explains that fear leads to a psychological state that cuts the ability to reason and think of alternative solutions for a threat. This results in fear causing 'a collective freezing of beliefs' (Ibid: 609). Nadler and Saguy (2004: 30) add to this that emotions such as fear and mistrust between parties 'causes that post-agreement relations are likely to be fraught with misinterpretations and misperceptions of the rival's behaviour and intentions'. Bar-Tal explains that this state of collective fear and mistrust, can lead a society to act on basis of the past; with violence. 'The collective fear orientation is a major cause of violence' (Bar-Tal

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[9] For this thesis, I will borrow some terms from Nagel (2003). She calls the identity of the in-group the Self and the discriminated group as the Other. She asserts that this process of 'Othering' practically always happens hierarchically. So that, when compared, the Self is normal, proper and the Other is inferior and wrong (Nagel 2003: 9).

[10] Although his analysis is concerning a case of intractable conflict, he gives a very accurate description of how fear as an emotion can influence a society.

2001: 609). Fear can thus be seen as an emotional factor that only adds to the already existing social processes that can lead to polarization and conflict.

So, according to the social identity theory, people identify by creating boundaries and setting one or more groups apart as the Other. This 'Other' is negatively and inferiorly stereo-typified and can lead to the polarization of a society whereby the stereotyped group is used as a scapegoat. Fear is an emotion that can be individually and collectively experienced and amplifies already existing processes that can cause conflict.

<u>Poverty and inequality leading to polarization and conflict</u>

For more understanding about the just described processes, I will now show some more specific theories on how poverty and inequality can cause conflict. Again; by learning what contributes to a hostile environment, more can be learned on how to prevent it. In doing so, more can be learned about important aspects for a successful reconciliation. First some explanation will be given about how polarized groups reinforce inequality and poverty in society. Then a short review on the debate of poverty and inequality as a cause of conflict will be given.

Mogues and Carter (2004) show that since poor people do not have the financial resources to gain access to capital, their only means to gain access, are their 'social ties'. They point out that this social capital, as a means to access to financial capital, reproduces and reinforces inequality in socially polarized economies. They explain that a person's identity is a result of economic characteristics (wealth) and socially relevant characteristics (race, gender, ethnicity etc) (Ibid:2). One gathers its social capital from friends, family etc and identifies him/herself with the group that he/she is part of. When this group is excluded (such as in a polarized, unequal society where certain groups are excluded, see Jabri (1996) and Smeulers and Grünfeld (2011) as described above), the chances for success through social capital (or through *anything else)* is diminished (Mogues and Carter 2004: 2). Moreover, because of exclusion, a person becomes alienated from other, more highly endowed groups. The result is that a society becomes even more polarized, consisting of different groups who are associated with different cultural, political and economic traits (Ibid: 25). Accordingly, poverty is one of the results, *and* one of the causes that creates and maintains the existence of different groups, such as ethnicity or race. Tilly agrees with these arguments and adds to this that it is not only exclusion of poor people that leads to more polarization, but also the continued favouring of better-off people amongst themselves which he calls: "opportunity hoarding" and involves 'confining the use of a value-producing resource to members of an in-group' (Tilly, 2001 quoted in Mosse 2010: 1162).

The above described process alone already hampers the process of reconciliation because of a lack of cooperation between different groups. But how can this inequality and polarization lead to political instability and conflict? There are many different theories on how this dynamic works. Olzak for example argues that it is not necessarily inequality *itself* that mobilizes people into collective action but that 'ethnic conflicts and protests erupt when ethnic inequalities and racially ordered systems *begin to break down'* (Olzak 1992:13, italics mine). She argues that the breaking down of ethnic inequalities creates more competition between different groups in formerly separated areas, which exacerbates competition and thereby creates tensions. On the other hand, many have claimed that it is inequality itself that can cause tensions and even fully fledged conflict. Nafziger and Auvinen (2002:156) for example assert that it is 'objective grievances of poverty and inequality that contributes to war and humanitarian emergencies.' They add that especially in times of change, whether in a waning or a growing economy, discontent can arise through appearing inequality because of relative deprivation.

Olzak argues that it is the *breaking down* of inequalities that increase tensions between different groups and Nafziger and Auvinen (and others) argue that it is the increased inequality and resulting poverty that can contribute to war. Here, it is important to note that each conflict and each society has its own dynamics, causes and processes and that Olzak and Nafziger and Auvinen both have pointed out possible dynamics relating to poverty and inequality that can contribute to a violent atmosphere. Explanations of causes and consequences of poverty and conflict need to be analysed by looking at the interactions between cultural, political, economic and social processes in each *specific society* during different *periods* in time, at different *levels* of society (Sen 2008). A direct example of this is the case of white people in Johannesburg in South Africa. While at the national level, inequality is declining, inequality amongst white population is increasing. At the national level only the decline of inequality is experienced and can be studied which may give a different outcome of events and experiences (including the process of reconciliation) than when studies at the level of the poor white community.

The causes of poverty and their contribution to violent conflict may differ in each theory. Nevertheless, there is still a broad consensus on the idea that poverty and inequality do contribute to conflict. The fact that the reduction of poverty and inequality are one of the first things that are addressed in post conflict situations besides -and in accordance with-, the promotion of reconciliation (Bloomfield 2003:5) shows this.

Poverty and reconciliation

'Thick' reconciliation is a long-term process. It involves the coming to terms with an imperfect reality, the transformation of identity and in the end through cooperation, the transformation of the relationship between different groups. To study this, processes of non-reconciliation also need to be understood.

Through different socio-psychological processes, societies can become divided and even end up in conflict.

Poverty and inequality can contribute to a more hostile environment. One consequence of inequality is the exclusion of groups of people. In a highly polarized society, a mutually reinforcing dynamic by exclusion and continued identification of people with their own in-group is created. And as Mogues and Carter (2004) show, this exclusion can, in the end lead to persistent poverty and, possibly, conflict. Consequently, for a successful process of reconciliation, poverty and inequality need to be addressed. The reduction of poverty and the process of reconciliation could create a virtuous circle; decline in poverty and inequality improves the process of reconciliation, while reconciliation leads to less inequality and poverty through the change of attitudes and cooperation of different peoples.

And yet, according to Olzak, the decline of inequality can also lead to conflict because formerly better-off people now feel they are excluded since they do not have the privileged place they used to have. In addition, the risk in reducing inequality is that unequal relations could be reversed (Ershammar 2010: 36). This, is something that is argued to be happening in South Africa, where the poor white people are excluded and are a denied and 'silent problem' (Pharoah 2008; Ershammar 2010).

It is these dynamics that I have been interested in during my fieldwork. While in South Africa the national inequality is declining (Seekings 2007), the white people are becoming less privileged which results in a growing poverty amongst the white. In the eyes of the poor white, poverty and inequality have not declined but risen. How this affects the process of reconciliation has been the main question during my fieldwork.

In the next chapter I will elaborate more on the context in which I have conducted my fieldwork. Thereafter I will dedicate three chapters on the results of my fieldwork.

2. Context: Post-apartheid South Africa and the Oord

Post-apartheid South Africa

In 1994, the first free elections in South Africa were held which marked the end of the apartheid period and heralded a new period of democracy that would transform South Africa politically, socially and economically. The new South Africa started to promote itself as the 'rainbow nation'; 'One Nation, Many Cultures' (Barnett 1999: 275). After the elections the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in order 'to come to terms with the past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation' (Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice).[11] In addition, new policies were adopted to address the disparities that were inherited from the racially unequal and divided society during apartheid. One policy was the legal introduction of 'affirmative action'. This means that 'when two people merits are considered equal in every way a decision maker would choose the applicant belonging to a disadvantaged group or sex' (Ershammar 2010:19).

It is now eighteen years after the end of apartheid, there is a growing middle and upper class population consisting of African, coloured and Asian people, the formerly disadvantaged groups and overall inequality has declined (Leibbrandt, Woolard, Finn and Argent 2010; Badenhorst 2010; Seekings 2007 and others). Nevertheless, poverty is still very prevalent and inequality still persists. Even now, the great majority of the white people hold most of the money while the black population still contributes most to the high poverty levels (Leibbrandt, et al. 2010; Badenhorst 2010; Seekings 2007; Pharoah 2008; IES 2005/2006). But while the cause of inequality used to be because of inequality *between* racial groups, the inequality is now caused more by *intra* racial inequality and there is indeed a growing amount of poor white people (Leibbrandt, Woolard, Finn and Argent 2010; Badenhorst 2010; Seekings 2007).[12] Seekings (2007: 12) states that 'the basis of inequality has shifted from race to class'.[13] The increase in poverty amongst white people is partly due to the earlier mentioned 'affirmative action' policy (Schuermans and Visser 2005; Pharoah 2008).

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[11] From the official Truth and Reconcilation Commission Website: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/.

[12] The number of white people living below the poverty line has grown from zero in 1990 to over 400.000 (about ten percent of the white society) in 2004 (Schuermans and Visser 2005: 259).

[13] Often a discourse about a 'decline in inequality' only seems to suggests a *decline* of the amount of *poor people*. In this case, overall inequality does indeed mean a decline in the amount of poor black, Asian and coloured people but there is also a growing amount of formerly better-off white people. In other words; seen from the level and perspective of poor white people in Johannesburg, the national decline in inequality is not only the result of poor people becoming richer, but of rich people getting poorer.

Besides the fighting of poverty and inequality, South Africa is still in the process of reconciliation by trying to socially integrate a formerly racially segregated society through the promotion of physical desegregation of society (Lemanski 2006: 565) Yet, even though desegregation has led to more racially mixed areas, this has not automatically led to more social integration and reconciliation (Lemanski 2006; Ballard 2002; Teppo 2004; Oldfield 2004). Moreover, space is still regarded by many as racially defined and people still identify themselves by these racial and spatial qualities (Teppo 2004). Race, as a social construct, is still very much alive (Ibid:203).

The goal of reconciliation has not yet been reached and inequality still persists in South Africa. Space, race, wealth, poverty and inequality are still important issues. And, as has now become apparent, there is a growing and significant number of white people crossing the line of poverty. In the next section, I will explain more about the white poor people at the Oord where I have done my fieldwork.

The Oord

Most white informal settlements are not managed and crime rates are very high. However I have arranged to stay in a 'well managed' informal settlement.[14] This settlement is managed by Pepe van As, a pastor of a Pentecostal church.[15] He told me that he takes care of about 145 destitute households and in addition feeds over 2000 people a month. As I arrived here, I could hardly believe this place was an 'informal settlement'. It almost looked like a holiday resort. With a beautiful garden, three cute little '*houthuissies*' (garden houses), and a three storey building that used to be a school. To the east of this building was a grass field the size of a small football field, on which stood the foundations of what was to become the new church.[16] However, looks can be deceiving. In this 'holiday resort' live almost a

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[14] This settlement used to be a squatted building, but fifteen years ago it was bought by a pentacostal church. Although many still often called it a 'township' or an informal settlement, it is in fact more a 'semi-informal' settlement.

[15] Pepe van As was a most remarkable man. Most people at the Oord called him 'the Pastor' and I will do the same in this thesis. An informal settlement is a place where there are mostly people that are not well educated and bright and need structure and discipline. No one knew this as well as the Pastor. Since he started to manage this settlement (which was until then infamous for its drugs- and alcohol trade) he enforced a strict 'regime' where alcohol and drugs were banned (on penalty of being thrown out of the settlement), people were obliged to find jobs and if they were unemployed, they were obligated to work at the Oord itself. Every Saturday there is an inspection of the rooms. Most people there are not the kind to clean up their rooms if not told to do so. The Pastor can be compared to a 'social worker' in an 'assisted living'-house. The inhabitants had a great respect for the man because of his strict but just rules. Sometimes they could become rather mad at him when they found him unreasonable but whenever they had any problems, it was 'the Pastor' to whom they turned for help.

[16] This foundation was not build further because they had no money to buy a roof but tried to raise money for the roof of this church. By the end of my field word, they finally had enough money and could finally have the roof of the building built. Later I will tell more about this.

hundred people and many of these people do not have job, or live off a pension of about 1000 Rand, which is hardly sufficient to cover the costs of a daily meal for the entire month. Welcome to the 'Oord', the informal settlement where poor white people, if there is a free room available, can stay for a period of time until they have financially improved so they can find their own place to stay.

There are about 27 families living in the building. Some of these families are single mothers with one or two children, others are retired couples, but there are also some married couples with children living in one room. In addition, there are about 25 single people, ranging from the age of 18 to 71. In total over 120 people live at the Oord – in the building and in the *houthuissies*. About half of the adults never finished high school, the other half did but most of them never had any higher education.[17] The people that do have a job earn, on average, about 1500 to 4000 Rand a month and this is, for many of them, not enough to live anywhere but in cheap accommodation such as here in a semi-informal settlement.[18][19] The people do have to hand in a certain percentage of their income to the Oord to keep the place running.

There are three important social areas at the Oord: Seeing as the majority of the people here smoke, the 'smoking area' is one important social area. A second important place are the balconies in front of the rooms. Many people sit there in their spare time and catch up with each other about the newest gossip around. Third, there is the kitchen. Especially the women can often be found there, busy unpacking donated food. The food in the 'soup kitchen' is donated by several supermarkets in Johannesburg and every day, men go to the supermarket to load up a small pickup truck with food.

In the three months I spent at the Oord I have participated, observed and talked a lot. I have participated in picking up donated food from the supermarkets. I have spent a great amount of time at the smoking area, have been working in the kitchen and have been gossiping on the balconies. As mentioned before, the most valuable data came from the many informal interviews, observed conversations and the formal interviews. I will present the obtained data in the next three chapters.

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[17] At the Oord I only met two people (off the 120 people I got to know) with a higher education.

[18] The cost for the cheapest accommodation available is 3.400 Rand a month (Landman and Napier 2010). There are programmes from the state to subsidize housing but the people at the Oord are not considered as candidates for these subsidies (Ibid: 301).

[19] Many people at the Oord told me they considered themselves lucky to have found a place in the Oord. Otherwise they would have had to live in an unmanaged informal settlement or other, more 'dodgy' places.

3. Dealing with poverty

As explained earlier, for a successful reconciliation, people need to come to terms with an imperfect reality (Bloomfield 2006). During my fieldwork I have therefore paid attention to how people come to terms with their past, present and future by examining how they explain their history, cope with the present and regard the future. I especially took interest in how they explained and dealt with poverty in these settings by looking at how they explain their own poverty.

According to the social identity theory, people often explain their own identity and reality by comparing with other ethnicities (Jabri 1996; Nagel 2003). These groups are hierarchically stereo-typified and the 'Other' group often fulfils the role of the scapegoat (Jabri 1996). In addition, people have a natural desire to belong to a group and will become extreme in their behaviour and opinions, especially towards that Other (for instance by stereotyping and scapegoating) in order to show allegiance to their own group (Smeulers and Grünfeld 2011).

The people at the Oord grew up in a time of apartheid and during this time, reality was neatly divided into four understandable ethnic groups. Now, their own 'white' group no longer has a privileged status. Moreover, they are an excluded minority in their own country. Since their reality had always been divided into four different races, how will they explain their own ordeal now? To what extent will they feel responsible for their own poverty and to what extent will they use the Other as the scapegoat? If poverty and economic decline can lead to polarization and alienation, how will poverty and economic decline influence the 'coming to terms with an imperfect reality' amongst the poor white people at the Oord? In this chapter I will present the empirical data that I have found with these questions in mind. [20]

Responsibilities: "They are ruining this country"

I found that most people do regard themselves as being responsible for their personal decline. Alcohol-addiction, not having the right diplomas or a non-functioning boss (or colleagues) were often used explanations for losing a job and ending up here at the Oord. Gerrit (42) has been living at the Oord for about 9 months. When I asked him how he came to live at the Oord he told me:

> "Well, I first was a supervisor at another place. There were some guys stealing there and I never told about that. And then I drove out of the place with a lorry with some things in the back I didn't know about. And then they fired me because they thought I stole the things. After that, I worked for this guy but he got bankrupt. And that's when I went to the mine. And they told me

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[20] During the fieldwork I have interviewed many people at the Oord to find answers to these questions. The informants are from different backgrounds and different ages. What will become apparent, is that the information gained with observations and informal interviews are quite different from the information that I gained during the *formal* interviews.

that they could only hire me with a contract. And then they ended the contract and that's how I got here."[21]

Just like Gerrit, most people considered their own actions as mainly responsible for losing their jobs in the past when I asked them about it during the formal interviews.

However, they explained their *persistent* poverty as a result of the Affirmative Action, not being able to find a good job because the black people are favoured. 'Reversed apartheid' was an often heard term. When I asked Peter (56) why he had trouble finding a job he told me: "I have trouble because I have the wrong skin-colour. They just want to hire blacks now."[22] Connor (21) a young man who was at that time having a hard time finding a job explained his trouble by telling me:

> "It is the government that made it law that the blacks are hired first and we come last. This is the order of hiring for a job: First the blacks are hired, then the coloured, then the Indian, then the white women and only then the white men. Do you see now why I have such difficulty to find a job?"[23][24]

Connor shows how disadvantaged the white people (especially the men) feel; they are at the bottom of the ladder when it comes to hiring people. This is experienced by Connor (and by many others) as if they are at the bottom of the social ladder too. And just like Connor, many experience the government as being corrupt, greedy, favouring the black people and stigmatizing the white people. Moreover, the overall economic and social decline in South Africa was often explained as a result of this corrupt black government and the high crime amongst the black people. The fact that this was one of the first things they were telling me about when I arrived made me realise that this was something they were very frustrated about. In the third week after my arrival, I talked about this with Nellie (56). She has been living at the Oord for over three years and she told me about the bad conditions of the hospitals nowadays. Then she said with tears in her eyes: "It is since the black people are in the government that things are now really fucked up. They are ruining this country. Ruining it I tell you."[25]

In the first few weeks I wondered whether this explanation of the black government and the black people was subject to discussion. I found it hard to believe that everyone would agree with statements

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[21] Formal interview with Gerrit, 23rd of March 2012.

[22] Formal interview with Peter, 28th of March 2012.

[23] Informal interview with Connor, 15th of February 2012.

[24] An interesting note is that, when Connor finally found a job, two weeks after this interview, he became much more nuanced in his opinion about Affirmative Action. Also, he became much more friendly and open towards people from different backgrounds.

[25] Informal interview with Nellie, 25th of February 2012.

such as 'black people are just lazy, criminal and violent'. However, until now, I have only heard one discussion about this between Yvonne (40) and Thea (31):

> T: Everyone should pay because if you'd live in a normal house, you'd also pay for your electricity etc. Not everyone here does that. But they won't get away with it. The Pastor will find out.
> Y: The only ones that get away with that are the black people. Because they do it all the time. They do steal it. Illegal tapping of electricity. They don't want to work for it.
> T: No. Not only black people do that! Everyone is doing that now. Including the white people. Everyone who is poor does it now.
> Y: Really? I had no idea. [26]

People at the Oord talked about black people as violent, criminal and corrupt. I wondered how they explained these 'cultural traits'. Whether they explained this as natural, inherent (i.e. primordial, racial) to black people, or whether the people at the Oord had a different, more constructivist view. After all, if the 'traits' of the black people would be explained as a result from history (i.e. a constructivist explanation) it would mean that the people at the Oord realize that these traits are not 'static'. Consequently, they would find it more realistic (to some extent) that change in cultural traits is possible.

Apartheid and poverty: "If apartheid never existed, we would all be equal"

I asked people, during the formal interviews why they thought that the government is so corrupt and why black people are so violent. Interestingly, most of the informants explained apartheid as the main cause for the criminal traits of the black culture and the corrupt behaviour of the black government. I asked Wilma, an English woman of 43 who stays at the Oord with her two children, why she thought so many black people were criminal and violent. She said:

> "Well, I think that during apartheid, they just had to grab anything they could get. And now, they still have that mentality. They still grab what they can get even though things are now given to them. [….] The white people had everything then and the black people had to fight for what they wanted."[27]

Wilma, and many others did see apartheid as a major cause of the now criminal society. In addition many people told me that poverty in general (even today) causes people to take desperate actions to get food on the table (see for example the discussion between Thea and Yvonne described above). What is interesting is that many explained 'poverty', and 'apartheid' instead of 'race as a primordial trait', as a cause for the criminal behaviour in South Africa. There are some inhabitants here that think that the criminal behaviour is naturally inherent to black people but that is the minority view here. And indeed,

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[26] Observation made 22nd of March 2012.

[27] Formal interview with Wilma, 20th of March 2012.

when I asked my informants if, with the rise of poverty amongst white people, the white people would now also become more criminal, most admitted that that would indeed be the case.

Interestingly, this explanation of the violent, criminal nature of black people, with the white apartheid-government blamed for the current situation, shows that the people here are very aware of the negative consequences of apartheid. This leads to the idea that they are in a process of dealing with an imperfect past, acknowledging at least the role of the white people and the white government as being guilty. As Wilma told me:

> "Now I realize that, if apartheid would never have existed, our whole society would be different. There wouldn't be any kind of revenge, there wouldn't be any kind of… We'd just all be equal. There wouldn't be some people being 'better' then others."[28]

Besides the fact that they seem to be dealing with the past, this also shows that they realize that these negative traits are subject to change, which suggests that they are in the process of accepting a better future.

Nevertheless, these narratives during the formal interviews were contradicted during daily life, 'outside the interview room'. In daily life I noticed that most people talk negatively about black people and not about white people. Leona (43) for example once asked me if I had something like a '*kaffer*-problem'[29]: "You know, like, all these *kaffers* cause problems in South Africa, is there any group in your country that does the same?"[30] Leona was one of the most outspoken people at the Oord and I have often been provoked by her with questions like these. Since 1994 she has had a dramatic decline economically. While she used to live in a large house, had a maid and enough money, now she hardly has anything and has lived at the Oord for over five years now, with her husband and her teenage daughter. For Leona and many others, in daily life and during informal interviews, it is still the black people that are seen as cause of the social and economic decline. In addition, they talked in much more primordial, racial terms: once when Vera, who at that time was working for a catering company, was telling Yvonne about the laziness and sexual inappropriate behaviour of the black colleagues at her work, Yvonne said with a sigh: *"Well, hulle is so."*[31][32] "That's just how they are" implicitly suggests a static, natural (primordial) idea about how black people are, and that it will never change in the future. Many others used to say things like this too and it showed me how sceptical and hopeless they were about the black people.

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[28] Formal interview with Wilma, 20th of March 2012.

[29] 'Kaffer' is the term used to describe black people. More about this in the next chapter.

[30] Informal interview with Leona, 24th of March 2012

[31] 'That's just how they are'.

[32] Observation made 16th of April 2012.

So, while during the official interviews, *poverty* and *apartheid* is used as an explanation for the cause of more criminality, the everyday talk is still about black people being innately criminal. As a result, in daily life it is still *race* (or rather, 'blacks') that is regarded as the cause of social and economic decline and instead of accepting wrongs from the past, the past is not considered: race is seen as cause of criminality which indicates a more primordial way of thinking. So while there seems to be a coming to terms with the *past*, in daily life there is no acceptance and consequently no coming to terms with the *present*.

History, confrontation and fear: "We are being taken over by the blacks"

I see different, though related, explanations for why race is still such an important and often used, daily explanation for the social and economic decline: 1) having grown up during apartheid; 2) a daily confrontation with race and 3) fear.

Race (and separation of race) was an important identity marker in times of apartheid. And having grown up in such a time has caused the people at the Oord to still identify in terms of race, even in a society that is now –at least officially- not racially divided anymore. They were educated without black, Indian or coloured people which not only causes a lack of knowledge about them, but has also creates a deeply embedded idea of them being 'separate' from the white people. When I was talking with Leona about why she and her husband did not like it when black men were talking with their daughter she told me: "Maybe it's different for you, but I was not raised colour-blind"[33]. In addition, they are very nostalgic about the time during apartheid. Things were 'in order' then. Law was enforced more strictly and people had more respect for each other. In the conversation with Riëtte (43) this nostalgia became very apparent (see also beginning of this thesis). She told me that it used to be so incredibly different in the past. Having been raised in a time of apartheid thus created people to still identify as 'white' and gives the people a memory to which they compare their current situation, including all negative changes.

This brings me to the second reason for the negative attitude: The people at the Oord feel constantly confronted with race on a daily basis and not only when they cannot find a job because of the colour of their skin. After apartheid, they suddenly had to share their space with the other, formerly suppressed people. Formerly well demarcated boundaries suddenly ceased to exist. Black people, who were not allowed on the streets after 10 o'clock at night during apartheid were now allowed on the streets. Houses, clubs, libraries - in fact many public places - that were 'for whites only', were now available to everyone. Leona once told me: "We are being taken over by the blacks. I am not a racist, but I like my space. And they take over the space. I want them to be in their space and me in my own space. They must be there," She points with one hand in a 'frontier-kind of way'. "And we here."[34] As Leona's

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[33] Informal interview with Leona, 17th of March 2012.

[34] Informal interview with Leona 1st of March 2012.

comment shows, there is a feeling that all space suddenly has to be shared with more people. Jobs became available not only for white, but also (and especially) for black people. Crime rates increased and streets were no longer safe. In the eyes of the people here, the crime and economic decline came when the black people (including the government) came into the streets. For them, the conclusion is that the black people (both government and people) *caused* the crime. Most told me during the interviews that they felt that the 'black people are taking over'.

This leads to the third explanation for the still negative attitude towards and talk about black people: Fear. Fear is a powerful emotion that can seriously hamper a process of reconciliation. As discussed, fear can amplify a process of polarization and can freeze someone's beliefs (Bar-Tal 2001). And this is most certainly the case for the people at the Oord. Their fear seems to create an image of 'blacks' who are violent, corrupt and revengeful. Apart from being taken over, people here are very afraid because of the rise in crime. They see and hear about the crime amongst the black people, crime of black people against white people. And they have the feeling that the blacks are taking revenge. They feel they are 'paying' for something that they feel not responsible for. This fear also makes the people stay in their own environment, that is, in the Oord. They have the feeling that their space is being restricted more and more because of the crime and all the black people.

Race being deeply embedded in their history; nostalgia; constant confrontation; and fear seem to exaggerate and reinforce their ideas of blacks being violent, criminal and greedy and this gives them the idea that, even though they know it is cultural and subject to change, they feel they will never change. They do see that poverty, rather than race is a cause of the crime and during the interviews they seemed accepting and understanding about the causes of crime and causes of criminal traits in the black communities. But the black people are, for the people at the Oord, the 'natural' scapegoat for the economic and social decline in Johannesburg and South Africa. During everyday talk, they do not take into account that they lived in peace in earlier times because they 'owned' the streets and the houses *at the cost* of the suppressed people, who lived in shacks outside of the white areas (the townships) (sf. Madala 2000.) So, in daily life they are not as accepting and understanding and are more angry and frustrated and misunderstood. Consequently, the daily experience, explanations and talk about the economic decline is still very ethnocentric and based on race. This creates a daily environment where 'race' is still an important issue.

The future generation:"Not a big deal"

It is important to note that young people are entirely different in their attitudes towards people from any different background. Most young people I talked with were between the age of 14 and 20 years and were still in high school. In contrast to their parents, most young people are very insistent on graduating

high school (a lesson learned from their parents, who often regret not having finished high school). Most did not intend to go to college or university but aspired to work after graduation. These younger people less frequently talk about black people being lazy, but more about 'people in general' being lazy thus causing the economic and social decline in South Africa. They have more contact with black, coloured and Indian people. And during the interviews, race was not something that came up unless I explicitly asked them about it. Moreover, the young people hardly seemed to know anything about apartheid. When I asked them about what they knew about it I mostly got an answer like "yeah, something about black people not being allowed on the streets or something" or "I don't really know, history is boring". The more I was hanging out with the young people the more I realized that race is no issue at all for them. The only issue for them is that their parents are making such an issue of it.

It is interesting to see that young people are not explaining reality as much in terms of race. It does confirm all the more how history plays a central role to people's attitude and coping process. The children never grew up in a racially segregated society and they cannot compare the current situation with a (better-off) past. Consequently, they have no inherent tendency to see the black people as the scapegoat.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the people are aware of apartheid being wrong. This implies that they do see that the current situation is better, (at least for the formerly suppressed people). In addition, many people take responsibility for their own economic decline. They do seem to have come to terms with their own, and the nation's history. However, in daily life they are less understanding than during the official interviews. This is because people need to clarify their world and their situation through demarcated boundaries (Jabri 1996). These boundaries, when set, create a hierarchy through which the Other is stereotyped and negatively described in order to feel better out the Self. Having grown up in times of apartheid has caused the white people to explain their environment in terms of race. In addition, having experienced better-off times in a segregated society, makes the current poor situation more difficult to cope with and accept, especially since they are being confronted with race on a daily basis. And fear of these changes exacerbates this tendency to scapegoating the black people. The black people were used in the past and now as a logical scapegoat in order to explain reality by the white people at the Oord. Having grown up in a time with such separate groups of peoples has a great influence on how the people - at least the older generation - at the Oord identify and explain reality. Although they seem to have come to terms with their history, they are not coping with an imperfect *present* reality.

As may have become apparent in this chapter, most people at the Oord see themselves as 'white' people as opposed to 'black' people. The question may have come to mind why it is not about 'coloured'

people, or 'Asian/Indian' people. The South African society hardly consists of only 'black' and 'white'. Why it is so often 'the blacks' will be explained in the next chapter where I will elaborate more on how the people at the Oord identify themselves. For as discussed, the second aspect for successful reconciliation is a change in identities that is more inclusive and cooperative.

4. Developing Identities

According to the social identity theory, people have a tendency to identify themselves by comparing themselves with others. The Other is negatively stereotyped and consequently the Self-identity is the norm (Jabri 1996; Nagel 2003). After conflict, it is vital for different parties to change their identities. Or at least give a different, positive mutual meaning to the different identities (Ma'oz in Rothstein 1999; Boersch-Supan 2008).

The Oord is mainly inhabited by white people. Most have been raised in a time where their whiteness was the superior ethnicity in their country. Many were already not very prosperous, but because of their 'whiteness' they had always been able to cope. Now, they are not privileged anymore. Moreover, they have the most difficult time finding a job because of the colour of their skin. How does this affect their way of identifying? Will they identify easier with other people that are also poor, or will they hold on to their whiteness? What effect has almost two decades of post-conflict and a decline in their social, economic and political status on how they identify themselves?

In this chapter I will show how the poor white people in Johannesburg identify themselves and to what extent they include non-white people as part of the in-group. I will show that there are three important identity markers for the white people. They still identify themselves as 'whites' as opposed to 'non-whites'. However, this identity is crumbling down because of their economic status: Being poor. This new status has caused them to become part of, and identify with a group that does not only consist of white people. Another way of identifying that I did not take into account before I came here, but proved to be a very important identity to the people at the Oord, is their faith in God.

White, black and Afrikaans: "I have the wrong skin colour"

"When I was at the city hall to pick up my new ID, I was helped very good by this black woman, she was really quickly".[35]

"Do you know that women? The one that used to work in that little shop around the corner?" "Ah, yes I know who you mean, she was really nice." [36]

"Remember that little 'kaffertjie'[37]? Who got lost and found his way in the Oord and I brought him home?"[38]

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[35] Informal interview with Hetty, 5th of March 2012.

[36] Observed conversation between Lana and Tracy, 25th of March 2012.

[37] 'little nigger-child'

[38] Observed conversation between Minty and Jan, 17th of April 2012.

As may become apparent from the above quotes, I noticed that 'whiteness' is still the norm. When a black, Indian or coloured person is talked about in conversation, he is explicitly described as black (or 'kaffer')[39] or Indian (or 'koelie') or coloured. A white person is just 'a person'. Often, people, or groups of peoples, were labelled in terms of race by the people at the Oord. Only think of the description of 'the black government' which was often explained as dysfunctional because they are black. Also, as already mentioned, it is black people that are often considered to be violent, lazy and criminal.

Interestingly it is mainly the black population that they talk about negatively. Most do not see the Indian people as 'competition' for jobs and they are mostly respected because they are hard workers. Concerning the coloured people, they were more ambiguously classified by the white people. They never talked negatively about 'the coloureds'. Also, I found out that people were more comfortable talking with a coloured person. There was even a church-service at the Oord that was presided by a coloured man. There seem to be at least two reasons for this ambiguity: First of all, 'the blacks' seem to be a generic term for all non-white people, including the Indian people and the Coloured people. Think of the earlier used statements in this thesis like "It is since the blacks came that things changed" and "All these blacks are causing the trouble". It was not only the blacks that came into the streets, coloured and Indian people also came about. However, they only talk about 'since the blacks came'. Second, the identity and culture of the coloured people is not sharply demarcated; they are neither white, nor black. Therefore, they are not part of either the black, or the white culture. This explains why the coloured people are more easily accepted by the white people.

Besides the 'whiteness' as the norm, Afrikaans was also an important identity marker. Many call themselves 'Boeren' and have their own traditional dance and music (which they often listen to). Even the younger generation is still very fond (and proud) of their Afrikaans culture, dance and music. I noticed that many are afraid that the Afrikaans culture will disappear. Leona told me once:

> "They take over; there are so many of them. For every one white person there are nine black people because they get so many children. There are so many Africans that Afrikaners will disappear."[40]

Leona, and other parents at the Oord felt that it was all the more important to keep teaching their children and grandchildren the Afrikaans language, Afrikaans music and Afrikaans dance.

As already mentioned, race is probably still very apparent for several reasons. First, because of the apartheid history, second because of the daily confrontation with race and third, because of the fear for

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[39] The word 'kaffer' is a very demeaning word for a black person. It can be compared to the word 'nigger' that was used in the United States and is now considered to be a very offensive word. Interestingly, this word is a direct derivative of the word 'kafir', the Arabic term of 'non-believer'. See: http://www.etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/kaffer.

[40] Informal interview with Leona, 1st of March 2012.

'black people'. Especially the second reason, the daily confrontation with race, made people identify themselves strongly with white people. Both Connor and Peter made clear how they were confronted with their whiteness. Peter (56) lived at the Oord about fifteen years ago. After that he moved to Durban. When he lost his job there, he came back to Johannesburg again to live at the Oord. When I asked him why he could not find a job, he told me:

> "I can't get a job because I have the wrong skin colour." He pointed to the skin on his hand. "And you know why? These blacks, they are one big family. They only take care of themselves. It is really unbelievable. When two entirely strange black people meet, they say 'Hello' to each other. That is how they do. In that way, they are better than us whites. We, the whites, don't look after each other anymore. And now, these blacks are taking all the jobs and we are doing nothing about it. And the blacks will really mess up the companies because they have no idea how to run it."[41]

Connor had explained to me how he, as a white young man, is the lowest in rank to be hired. (See also Chapter 3). In this regard, he said:

> "It's just not fair! Why can't I have a job when I am better qualified than some other black guy? They only hire blacks, even if they are less educated than we are."[42]

Both Peter and Connor where confronted with their own 'whiteness' and as shows, they automatically compared themselves ('we') to their competition ('them').

"We, the poor"

Interestingly, even though the people do identify themselves as white (or Afrikaans), during the interviews, they also identify themselves as 'poor'. And with that identity they identify with *all* poor people, including black, coloured and Indian. This was noticeable when I interviewed Thea (31). She told me about poverty and how that affects the youth:

> "People, especially the young people have not got a job, no money. And it is true that people say that a poor person will go and do bad things. Steal and all that kind of stuff. It's not only black people, it is black, white, coloured, all of them. […] You see it's everybody."[43]

As mentioned before, poverty was seen as an important cause of crime during the interviews and most, though not all, admitted that with the rise of poverty amongst white people, there would also be a rise of crime amongst white people. This creates a double standard by which the people measure. They

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[41] Formal interview with Peter, 28th of March 2012.

[42] Informal interciew with Connor, 15th of February 2012.

[43] Formal interview with Thea 22nd of March 2012.

identify as white as opposed to black, but also as poor opposed to rich and as such, the stereotypical 'black person' seems to crumble down, to make place for the stereotypical 'poor person'.

Religion: "My father taught me not to hate another person"

One factor that I grossly underestimated was religion. Before I explain how this played a role in Johannesburg at the Oord, I will elaborate shortly on what effects religion can have on a community by expanding on the role of Christianity in South Africa. Religion has always played a significant role in South Africa (Ganiel 2007:3). Religion can 'give shape to group 'ideologies' or provide the content of group identities (Ganiel 2007:3). And indeed, Christianity was used to explain apartheid and its views. During apartheid many Christian worldviews saw 'humans as separated into races […], God as the ultimate creator […] and salvation as maintaining the purity of one race […] (Elsaesser 2006:2). The mixing of ethnic groups was considered as sinful (Ganiel 2007:3). On the other hand, Christianity has played a vital role during and after apartheid against separations of races through a Christian discourse of inclusion and respect (Ganiel 2007; Clark 2005). Only think of the widely known Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was presided by Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu, with his discourse about forgiveness and inclusion (Herman 2011).

These two contrasting discourses, one about segregations and the other about inclusion, resonates greatly with what I observed during my fieldwork. Riëtte told me once:

> "My dad was a Christian and would help everyone, whether you were black or white. He was very strict and did not allow me to have a relationship with black people but he also taught me not to hate another person. That's why it was for me easier to work with a black person because my kids are socializing with black children and I wasn't brought up to hate people."[44]

On the one hand, she had a 'love thy neighbour' attitude and was raised not to hate other people while at the same time, a strict regulation was put on dealing with black people. During the interviews I noticed that many found their faith in God very important. Many people consider themselves good Christians. But often I have heard people say that "in the bible it is written that different nations should not mix" which is interpreted as 'races should not mix'. In addition, some people believe that many black people are still often 'pagans', practising witchcraft and worshipping the devil. Their Christianity is thus both a means to include people from different backgrounds, and an excuse not to intermingle with other non-white people.

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[44] Formal interview with Riëtte, 20th of March 2012.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found three important identity markers; race, economic status and religion. According to Olzak (1992) a decline in poverty and inequality can create more tensions between groups because there is more competition. Considering the white people at the Oord, this seems a valid argument. After all, the white people at the Oord are constantly confronted with their whiteness, because of more competition for the same jobs. This has created a distance between the whites and the non-whites. As such, their economic decline which resulted in more competition between different groups, has fortified their racial identity. However, I found that their declined economic status also created a bridge between the white people and people from different backgrounds. Because of their now 'poor' status, people at the Oord have found a way of identifying with the Others.

The question becomes what identities are being carried out in daily life and what is more important to the white people at the Oord: their 'whiteness' or their economic status? How these different ways of identifying manifests in daily life, I will explain in the next chapter where I focus on the level of cooperation between the different groups and the kinds of (non-)relationships there are between different groups of people.

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5. Building bridges or maintaining boundaries?

I am walking from the building towards the smoking area that is next to the kitchen. It is quarter past ten in the morning and usually that is the time that most people that work at the Oord are taking a break to smoke a cigarette. Before I reach the smoking area, Vera comes towards me and calls: "The roof of the church-building has finally arrived! Now we can finally start finishing the church". She adds to this that it will only be a matter of time before the first church-service can be held here. I walk to the foundation of the church and see that there are more people staring at the church, now still only consisting of a floor, four walls and the skeleton of the roof. And indeed, there is a big truck and four black men loading off the metal plates that are to be the roof. That day, and the days thereafter, the church is a busy working place; the hired men are building the roof while the people who live at the Oord are busy painting the walls and window-frames. While I am helping and walking around, I notice something: There is hardly any contact between the black roof-builders and the white painters. Whenever coffee was made, it was for the people of the Oord. The black men were drinking their own cold drinks. The Oord-people only talked, worked and laughed with each other, not with the roof-builders. At first sight, it looked like there was a harmonic cooperation between black people and white people. But looked at closely, there was no cooperation at all. 'Black and white' cooperated at the same site and yet there seemed to be an almost visible boundary between the two groups. Why were the people who lived at the Oord not cooperating, hardly even talking with the other, black, men?[45]

Cooperation, with a resulting start of a relationship, is the third aspect that is important for a successful reconciliation process (Bloomfield 2003; Boersch Supan 2008). In the last chapter it became apparent that there already is a start in that direction, since the people at the Oord do identify themselves with other, less well-off people. However, I also discussed how race still does play a central role. They still identify themselves more as 'white' and as Afrikaners than anything else. First of all, because many people have been raised during apartheid, second because they are constantly confronted with the colour of their skin and third because they are afraid. In this chapter I examine how their history and the way they identify manifests in daily life. After all, through cooperation, relationships are changed into better.

It is important to remind ourselves at this point, how poverty affects the process of alienation and polarization. As Mogues and Carter (2004) explain, economically declined people are excluded from better off people and by exclusion reinforces their economic decline. They explain that people get their social economic capital from friends, family etc. When excluded they have diminished chances and become more alienated from better off people. This process is amplified by 'opportunity hoarding' by which one group is favoured over the other (Tilly 2001). In the case of the white people at the Oord, this process of alienation could be explained in two directions, namely by race, or by class. By race, white

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[45] Participated and observed 12ᵗʰ of April 2012 (and the days after that).

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people are excluded and alienated from other non-white people, by economic status they are now included within the group of all poor, including the non-white people and excluded from all better-off people. Through race, exclusion and fear, white people would not cooperate with black, coloured and Indian people, but through their economic status they would.

What plays a greater role in the lives of the people at the Oord? Their race, and their fear of 'blacks'? Or their economic status and resulting *shared* poverty? Or is there at least a shift in ways of identifying, from race to economic status visible? By focussing on the level of cooperation and the resulting relationships of white people with other people I hope to find an answer to these questions.

Building bridges: "I accept them, but..."

During the interviews, I found that many people told me that they do cooperate with their colleagues at work from all different kinds of backgrounds.[46] They told me that race doesn't matter much while working. In addition, most people I interviewed (both employed and unemployed) told me that they are willing to be friends (or already have friends) from different backgrounds. Also, many people have worked with black, coloured and/or Indian people in the past. And most explain they do not have much difficulty working with them. Most told me that black people could be good colleagues. When I asked about their children going to mixed classes, they told me that there was nothing wrong with mixed classes. Once I asked Thea (30), a young women who lives here with her husband and her three children, about the changed, racially mixed society and she told me:

> "Well… I accept them. As one of us. But, I won't go and make friends with them or go and eat with them, that kind of stuff. But I accept that they also need a chance in life, need work, need a place to stay. And children, whether black, white, any children, I will never be rude to children. If they're hungry, I'll give them something to eat. If they are cold… You know, children can't help the colour of their skin."[47]

And Leona, who has a daughter of sixteen years old told me:

> "As long as they leave my daughter alone. I mean. I will be friends with them, I will make him coffee, he can sit on my sofa. But that's it. Nothing further. He can even use my toilet, eat from my plate. But that's it."[48]

Like Leona and Thea, many told me they tolerated and accepted black people: Some told me they would become friends with them, some would share practically everything with them but some wished they

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[46] It must be noted though that there are many people that are unemployed, or work by themselves (e.g. as a trucker, tower, cleaning, etcetera). Only about 7 people actually work with other people of which I have interviewed 4.

[47] Interview with Thea, 22nd of March 2012.

[48] Interview with Leona, 27th of March 2012.

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would stay in their own space and place, as in the old times. This shows that there is always a boundary, although the *extent* of that boundary differs. Nevertheless, practically *all* of them, like Leona, would not want to have their children marry someone from a different background.

Maintaining boundaries: "They're not my class"

I do suspect there is a certain political 'correctness' in their answer about having (or rather, 'willing to have') a friendship with people from a different background. There is a difference between *saying* they are willing to make friends with them and *actually* being friends with them. While staying at the Oord I have not seen an obvious relationship between the white poor community and other communities. At the Oord there are mostly white people. (There were only four 'exceptions'; Joseph (20) and Julia (42) with her two children and Julia told me that she only 'integrated' after five awkward years).[49] [50] The people at the Oord do not have friends from work (practically all keep work separate from the Oord and they do not talk about work when they are here). During the picking up of donations, I found that even though they work much with black and coloured people at the supermarket, the men of the Oord had no relationship whatsoever with the black and coloured people they worked with at the supermarket. They knew them by face, but they did not want to talk with them. When I asked why they had no contact, they told me that those people were 'full of rubbish', slow and lazy. They did not want to talk with them.[51] In addition, some people I asked about their relationship with colleagues from different backgrounds during *informal* interviewing told me that they did not really interact with them. Simon (42) works as an advisor and reviser at a phone company. Although he does earn more than the average person at the Oord, he still lives here because normal housing is too expensive. He is one of the few persons here that works in a racially mixed company. When I asked Simon about his work and his colleagues he told me:

> S: "Yeah, they are alright. They like drinking a lot though. There is many black people there. They work hard but get drunk at the parties that are given by the company."
> E: "Do you hang out with them?"
> S: "Not with 'them' no. They are not my type...... Not my class you know."
> E: "Do you go to these parties of the company?"
> S: "Naaah, no. That is really not my thing. I don't drink you know. I don't do such kinds of things." [52]

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[49] Formal interview with Julia, 31st of March 2012

[50] Pepe told me that he has to be able to tell the donating institutions that he takes care of black people too so there has to live at least one black person here. I suspect that this is probably the main reason that Joseph and Julia with her two children live here.

[51] Participated and informal interview, 5th of March 2012.

[52] Informal interview with Simon, 2nd of March 2012.

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This enclosed, non-cooperative attitude is similar to the non-cooperative attitude during the building of the church. In practice they seem to have closed themselves off of all people from a different background and are living in an enclosed environment with practically only white people. This non-interaction and enclosure also becomes apparent in what they were concerned with and talked about on a daily basis: they were only concerned with what was happening at the Oord. Anything 'outside' was hardly talked about. I found it very, very hard to find any conversation *not* being about anything about the Oord. Most people also told me that they were very pleasantly surprised when they came to live at the Oord and most are rather reluctant about the idea of leaving. Gerrit for example told me during the interview: "I didn't know there were places like this. I had heard about white *platterskampe*.[53] But a place like this, for white people, no black people. I was very surprised to find this. Positively surprised." [54]

Later during this interview Gerrit told me about the changes in Pretoria, where he used to live before he came to the Oord. He told me:

> "It changed a lot! When I was in school I could go to town, at night, during the day. But now, everywhere you go, it's black! And you don't feel safe anymore. Because, they rob you, ladies come at you and you know. It's not safe. And… All the places where you used to go, like dancing, it's all black now. Even when you walk with a lady you're not safe."

As becomes apparent from this comment, it appears that with the changes of the South African society, the white people became afraid. This fear also makes people restrict themselves from the 'outside'. This only seems to enforce this enclosed, 'safe haven' with people they can relate to without difficult confrontations or questions.

What happens at the Oord is that they are not expanding their social capital through either race, or economic status, they are limiting it. They are limiting their world into a world they can understand, in which the chance for a confrontation with a new, imperfect reality is reduced. During apartheid they were raised with a strict idea about friendships and relationships. Having a relationship with a black person was at that time considered as inappropriate. And now their environment is mainly filled with white people. And even though they have limited material resources, they do have a roof over their head and food on the table every day. Most are willing not to have any more than this to stay here in their safe surroundings. In this way, they are not dealing with the imperfect reality. Instead they are actually *denying* the imperfect reality by creating their own reality; the reality of the Oord. The Oord is the micro-cosmos of their existence. But even though they live in an excluded, surrounded micro-cosmos, where there is a boundary between white and non-white, there are breaches in that boundary.

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[53] 'Platterskampe' is the Afrikaans word for 'squattercamp'.

[54] Formal interview with Gerrit, 23rd of March 2012.

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Breaches in boundaries: "They just need to get it off their system"

There are some places at the Oord where the boundaries are not so strict anymore. On a daily basis there are some black people going to the kitchen for food, during church-services some black people attend[55]. In addition, they are *willing* to cooperate and be friends with other people, so the idea of cooperating and relationships is not as inappropriate anymore. Also, they had the idea that if there would be a decline in crime and more employment (for *all),* things might become better.[56] Maybe with a decline in poverty, unemployment and crime, (either national or personal) the attitude towards other people can become more positive. After all, fear (and decline of fear for crime) seems to influence their attitude. Even though they are not creating friendships in practice, the fact that the *idea* of having interracial friendships is not inappropriate anymore, signals a change in their attitude. In that way, I would argue that there is a progress and borders are being crossed. However, even then, there will still always be some boundary that prevents the people at the Oord from being entirely intimate with Others. Only think of the most intimate relationship: Marriage. Interracial marriage is something none of the people (of the older generation) would agree with.

The most important breach in the micro-cosmos however, it the younger generation. Again, young people interact very differently, namely much more with people from different backgrounds. They bring their (black, coloured and white) friends home from school and hang out with them. They also agree much more with the idea of marrying someone from a different background. As already mentioned, most do not really see race as an issue. Rita, a fifteen year old girl once told me: "You know, my parents would never allow me to marry a black guy. But that's the thing, they make a really big deal out of it. To me, it's really no big deal. I have many different friends. I wish my parents would stop making such a big deal out of it".[57] It went so far as that *I* felt like a racist when I asked questions about it. A very illustrative example of this is when I interviewed Daniel, a sixteen year old boy who will be finishing high school in the next year:

> E: What do you know about the time in apartheid?
> D: Well, the blacks were treated bad by the whites. Things like that.
>
> E: And how do you think that has influence on how it is today?

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[55] It must be noted that it is a rule at the Oord that in order to get food from the kitchen, black people have to attend the church; only when a black person goes to church can they come to the kitchen to ask for food.

[56] I must note that whenever I asked about this hypothesis of a decline in crime and a rise in employment it was extremely sceptically received.

[57] Informal interview with Rita, 11th of March 2012.

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> D: Well, they are still angry with the white people, even though we didn't do anything, it was our grandparents and great-grandparents who did it.
>
> E: Do you think you are baring a burden because of them?
> D: Well, not really but it makes it harder for, say, a white man to find a job.
>
> E: What do you think of that?
> D: I think it's fair. I mean, we did it to them, now they do it to us. I guess that's fair. They just need to get it off their system you know.
>
> E: How do you think that will affect the future?
> D: I think they will eventually stop and we will all be equally equal. Once they get it out of the system. So yeah, there is progress.[58]

This I interpret as a true progress of reconciliation. Daniel realizes what South Africa has been through but accepts that this is the past. Moreover, he thinks that the behaviour of the black people is, to a certain extent, fair. And he expects that this will eventually stop. His ideas are mostly based on his reality of society, a society where he has friends from many different backgrounds who already 'got it out of their system.' It makes me conclude that even though the older generation is still very sceptical, quite negative and enclosed in their surrounding, it is the young people that make up the society of the future. And the young people that I have seen here can create a South African community where race is of no importance or at least too insignificant to 'make a big deal out of it'.

Conclusion

By looking at the level of cooperation and resulting relationships, a process of inclusion and reconciliation can be found. At the Oord there was hardly any cooperation or interaction between the white inhabitants and the black visitors. Even though they do say they are willing to cooperate (and some already do at work), they hardly seek out contact with other people when they do not have to. Again: fear, history and daily confrontation causes them to create their own reality by building their own micro-cosmos at the Oord. This world is comprehensible, easy and familiar and, as Leona calls it: *"Lekker"*[59]. Nevertheless, there are breaches in the composed walls. People from different backgrounds do visit the Oord. In addition, there is at least a *willingness* (however politically correct this is) to become better acquainted with others. Besides, they do realize that the chance is big that with a rise in employment, crime will decrease and difference will not be so salient anymore. Most importantly, they see their children getting along very fine with black, coloured and Indian children from school.

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[58] Formal interview with Daniel, 21st of March 2012.

[59] In this context *lekker* means "good"

Conclusion

The people at the Oord are living in a demarcated surrounding. About half of the people are unemployed and the people that are employed do not earn enough for a decent house. Most have experienced on a daily basis to be discriminated and disadvantaged because of the colour of their skin. They have, since the end of apartheid, become one of the most ignored and stigmatized groups in South Africa. This begs the question of how they are reconciling in the new South Africa.

In order to research this, I distilled three aspects that are considered to be important for a successful reconciliation: a coming to terms with an imperfect reality, a change of identities and more cooperation with resulting changed relationships. These three aspects can be hampered in a number of ways. An affiliation with a certain group through which one's identity is established and by which an Other is excluded and scapegoated is a process that can hamper reconciliation (Jabri 1996; Nagel 2003; Smeulers and Grünfeld 2011). Besides, living in a poor environment can cause exclusion and polarization (Mogues and Carter 2004). And fear can amplify all these processes (Bar-Tal 2001).

During the fieldwork I have focused on the three aspects of reconciliation and I have tried to find out to what extent these aspects are hampered in daily life. I will now summarize the results of my fieldwork by examining the three processes that are important for a successful process of reconciliation.

At the Oord I found that most people are still having trouble with dealing with an imperfect reality. This was evident in the way they explained the trouble they were in themselves, and it was evident in how they explained the social and economic decline in overall South Africa. 'The blacks' were often named as the cause of many problems. That 'the blacks' were used as a scapegoat also shows how they still affiliated and identified with being 'non-black', or rather, as 'white'. This way they still distanced themselves from any other group of peoples. This also manifested in daily life: There was hardly any cooperation between the white people at the Oord and other, non-white people. Moreover, the Oord consisted almost entirely of white people. They have closed themselves off in their own reality, in their own micro-cosmos.

There is a denial of at least an imperfect *present*, still a strong identifying with white, or Afrikaans, and exclusion into a closed surrounding. I found three relating causes for this: 1) having grown up during apartheid; 2) a daily confrontation with race and 3) fear. Being raised during apartheid makes many people think in terms of race, since that is the way they were taught. It also causes them to feel inappropriate to become friends with non-white people. Secondly, during daily life they are now constantly confronted with race. They do not understand the changes that came with the coming of other people into the streets and that contradicted with the values in which they grew up. Besides, they

are confronted with their own colour on a daily basis since they are being disadvantaged because of their whiteness. And third, fear, as last factor, also plays a vital role in their behaviour. Fear of black people (seen as the 'cause' of crime), fear of being disadvantaged and fear of change. Fear can freeze someone's belief and can cause great misunderstandings between two or more distrusting groups. This also happens at the Oord.

However, there are breaches. Although they often use the black people as the scapegoat for trouble in South Africa, they do see themselves as responsible for their own personal decline. And they realize that apartheid has played a great role in causing so much trouble in South Africa now. This shows that they are at least coming to terms with an imperfect *history*. I also found that, besides identifying themselves as 'white', they also identify themselves as poor. And this way, they identify with *all* poor, including black, Indian or coloured people. Lastly, and most importantly, breaches are appearing in their enclosed environment. There are black people visiting the Oord, there are meetings (e.g. in church) where they are not 'whites only', but with black people and coloured people. They are also open to an idea of cooperation, as long as unemployment can be lessened and crime-rates will decline. And lastly, the young people, never having grown up in times of apartheid, see race as a very insignificant factor in their lives. Their ideas are entirely different in comparison with those of their parents. Their open and including attitude towards others might also be of influence to the parents. It is these young people that make up the society of the future. If they will stay as including as they are now, this future might be better.

This leads me back to the question I proposed at the start of this thesis: To what extent does poverty and economic decline hamper the process of reconciliation? This question can be answered in twofold. Poverty and economic decline does hamper the process of reconciliation because the white people at the Oord are being disadvantaged in South Africa. This confrontation, and already having grown up with an idea of being white, makes it easy to scapegoat the Other, 'the blacks'. For them it is easier to enclose themselves in a safe surrounding and deny the reality of the new South Africa. On the other hand, their economic status does create a bridge towards other people: When they talk about themselves being poor, they often talk as 'we, the poor', thereby including all other groups into their own.

History cannot be undone, but there are ways that this closed-off attitude could be opened. As already mentioned, people were open to the idea of cooperation with other people, but were held back because they are confronted with race on a daily basis. Not at the least because they cannot find work because of their whiteness. In addition, fear holds many people back from a more open attitude. With a continues fighting of crime and a policy to create jobs for everyone, including the white people, this attitude might change. However, these conditions will still take at least a generation to take place. The

hope lies in the future, and especially in the future generation. After all, they *are* raised more colour-blind.

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Summary

Since the end of apartheid in 1994 there has been a dramatic increase of poverty among white people in South Africa. Before 1994 no white people lived below the poverty line and now, eighteen years later, almost 10 percent of the white people live below poverty line (Schuermans and Visser 2005: 259). Many of these people now live in informal settlements, or 'townships' which are heavily impoverished areas just outside the cities. What effect does this economic decline have on these people? To what extend do they reconcile with this new situation where they do not have the socio-economic advantage they had during the apartheid-regime?

In order to find answers to these questions I have conducted anthropological fieldwork in Johannesburg in a white informal settlement. The question I have had in mind during the time I was there (from February 2nd until April 18th 2012) has been: 'To what extent does the economic decline of white people in post-apartheid South Africa, Johannesburg, which led to poverty and habitation in informal settlements, hamper the process of reconciliation among the impoverished white people?'

Reconciliation can be explained as a short term process whereby people learn to live together without using violence or it can be regarded as a long-term, also called 'thick' process. For this thesis, I have focussed on this long-term process of reconciliation. I have distilled three aspects that are of importance for a successful long-term reconciliation, namely: 1) Coming to terms with an imperfect reality; 2) change of formerly separated, hostile identities and 3) cooperation resulting in more positive and constructive relationships. Besides focussing on reconciliation I have also paid attention to 'non-reconciliation', that is: processes that hamper reconciliation. I have especially looked for processes that can lead to the direct antagonist of reconciliation: conflict. After all, as long as causes of conflict are not addressed, tensions between groups remain and there is no true change of identity or change in the relationship between belligerent parties. Consequently, full reconciliation cannot be reached. There are numerous reasons why conflicts can (re)occur, but poverty, whether absolute poverty, or relative deprivation, is practically always on that list of reasons. People identify themselves in terms of 'us' and 'them' and in times of poverty, very often 'they' are made the scapegoat for the economic decline of 'themselves'. Besides, living in poverty can create a vicious circle in which people can exclude themselves, or be excluded. This exclusion can lead to the polarization of a society.

I have conducted my fieldwork in a semi-informal settlement in Johannesburg called 'The Oord'. At the Oord there are about 27 families and 25 single people. In total there live about 120 people at the Oord. The people at the Oord have economically declined to such an extent, that they can only afford to live in this settlement. About half of the people are employed, the other half is either unemployed or living off a pension.

During the time that I have spent at the Oord I have gained a great amount of data. In this thesis, the results of this data is presented in three different chapters. These chapters are in accordance with the three aspects that are considered as important for a successful process of reconciliation. In the first empirical chapter (chapter 3) I describe that the people at the Oord are still having trouble with dealing with an imperfect reality. This was evident in the way they explained the trouble they were in themselves, and it was evident in how they explained the social and economic decline in overall South Africa. 'The blacks' were often named as the cause of many problems. That 'the blacks' were used as a scapegoat also shows how they still affiliated and identified with being 'non-black', or rather, as 'white' which is described in the second empirical chapter (chapter 4). They still distance themselves from any other group of peoples. However, I also found that, despite this distance and affiliation with white people, they also identified themselves as 'poor'. And as such, they considered themselves part of a bigger group that also consists of non-white people. In the third empirical chapter (chapter 5), I describe how there is still hardly any cooperation between the white people at the Oord and other, non-white people. Moreover, the Oord consisted almost entirely of white people and they seem to have closed themselves off in their own reality, in their own micro-cosmos. But besides this enclosure, I have also found breaches in their boundaries. There are non-white people visiting the Oord. Also, the people at the Oord are not as disapproving on interracial friendships. Most importantly, the young people are not at all as closed-minded as their parents. The young children do not think in terms of race and they have friends from all different backgrounds.

Over the course of the chapters, there are three important explanations for the closed, non-cooperative attitude that so many people at the Oord have: First of all, most people at the Oord were raised during apartheid. This makes many people think in terms of race, since that is the way they were taught. It also causes them to feel inappropriate to become friends with non-white people. Secondly, during daily life they are confronted with race on a daily basis. They do not understand the changes that came with the coming of other people into the streets and that contradicted with the values in which they grew up. Besides, they are being disadvantaged because of their whiteness. And third, fear also plays a vital role in their behaviour. Fear of black people (seen as the 'cause' of crime), fear of being disadvantaged and fear of change. Fear can freeze someone's belief and can cause great misunderstandings between two or more distrusting groups.

This thesis ends with a reflection where I summarize the findings and reflect on the main question. The main conclusion is, that poverty can indeed hamper the process of reconciliation. The white people at the Oord are being disadvantaged in South Africa and they are confronted with this on a daily basis. Confrontation, and already having grown up with an idea of being white, makes it easy to scapegoat the Other, in this case 'the blacks'. For the people at the Oord it is easier to enclose themselves in a safe

surrounding and deny the reality of the new South Africa. On the other hand, their economic status does create a bridge towards other people. Being poor meant, for the people here, that they identified a group that did not consist of only white people.