

Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing “tell” a Different Story?

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Abstract

This article considers the potential of drawing for studying subaltern architectures. The subaltern architectures under discussion are a series of markets in Cape Town, South Africa, which are occupied by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from across the African continent. These are spaces that would usually fall outside typical architectural studies, as they are contested sites, often difficult to access and not found in formal spatial archives. This article asserts that these markets have a particular spatial value to their populations. It proposes that postcolonial studies and the concept of mimicry offer the potential to recognize the spatial value of these markets while remaining cognizant of the power dynamics at work in the process of researching subaltern spaces. One of the primary methods discussed is the use of architectural drawing as a means to study the often overlooked and unseen spatial practices of refugee markets.

Drawing and fieldwork are both central processes of architectural production. Yet despite their centrality, there has been limited critical questioning of their relationship, and how drawings and the knowledge they contain move between the field and the world at large.¹ This paper looks into the particular potential of architectural drawing methods related to fieldwork, with a focus on the spaces of marginalized populations. Drawing on subaltern and postcolonial studies, it raises several methodological questions around the research and representation of marginal spaces. In particular, it questions the potential of orthographic conventions of architectural drawing and mapping to talk about these spatially. The paper asks whether orthographic drawings can tell a different story, and looks to the potential of mimicry to “tell” the narratives of populations and their spaces otherwise rendered invisible within academic research.

The sites of focus are a series of markets largely run and established by refugees in Cape Town, South Africa. As a country, South Africa has seen drastic

changes since the 1990s which marked the end of Apartheid. One of these many significant changes has been an influx of asylum seekers from other parts of Africa. Due to limited options in formal employment for these groups, many of these new entrants work in various scales of informal trade.² The importance of the resultant informal markets extends beyond their transactional nature, as they become the central sites of income provision, access to services, and social spaces for these particular populations. As such, these markets are vital and important spaces for those who inhabit them. However, these spaces have not been the subject of spatial studies, namely within architectural or urban studies, and are therefore absent from formal spatial records of Cape Town.³ They are further rendered invisible due to the subaltern nature of the populations who inhabit these markets. Caroline Skinner has noted that as few new-entrants are in South Africa with the appropriate documentation, they are a particularly difficult group on which to gather data on. Skinner therefore argues that even within studies on informal trade, the activities of non-South Africans are often largely unknown.⁴

This paper asserts that these markets have a spatial value to their inhabitants, despite their absence from spatial research, and notes that this become particularly evident through fieldwork. Yet, while ethnographic fieldwork was key to understanding these markets, it raised several key concerns and questions. The first part of the paper discusses the question of ethics raised in the field, by drawing on the writing of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. In different ways, both theorists point to the importance of recognizing the unequal power relations between the researcher and researched. They argue that this is a particular concern when undertaking research with vulnerable or subaltern populations, and in different ways they both suggest that this relationship has a direct impact on the research itself. The first part

of the paper engages with their questions relating to the position of the researcher, and reasserts the importance of these questions to spatial studies. The second part of the paper turns to the research methods that I have developed, some of which were in direct response to the ethical questions raised, with a particular focus on the use of orthographic techniques of drawing. As mentioned, the markets under discussion are central spaces to refugee populations, yet largely overlooked in spatial research. This second part draws on Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry along with bell hooks' concept of the margin as a space of radical potential, to argue for the importance of architectural drawing techniques, albeit modified, in order to offer an alternative way of representing the spaces of subordinate groups. The final part of the paper locates these approaches within a broader context by drawing on existing debates relating to architecture and ethnographies, and therefore offers a wider discussion of the use and potential of drawing as a research tool through a focus on drawing out the temporality of these practices. As a whole, the paper proposes that a considered and reflective approach to architectural ethnographic drawing offers an alternative way of "telling" the spaces of marginal and subaltern populations.

Fieldwork and ethics

In 2014, I undertook ten months of fieldwork in Cape Town in an effort to gain a better understanding of the landscape of migration and the architectural spatial negotiations of migrants in the city. During the course of fieldwork, the importance and complexity of market spaces was made particularly evident through the personal spatial biographies of individual refugees in the city. Haseena is based in one of the new refugee markets that have emerged since the 1990s. Her experience of Cape

Town is one example that points to the centrality of these informal market spaces. Haseena is a Somali refugee who fled to South Africa in 2004, initially on her own. She spent her first few years in Cape Town working as an informal trader in various markets around the Peninsula. In 2007, Haseena⁵ and her family moved into a shack in Khayelitsha, Cape Town's largest township.⁶ She lived and worked in the informal settlement, where together with her husband she ran a spaza shop, an informal grocery store. In May 2008, while living in Khayelitsha, rumours started gathering and spreading about potential violence, mob attacks and killings particularly targeting African foreigners. In the months running up to May, fellow Somalis received frequent threats from customers and passers-by, and shared their sense of insecurity with each other. One night in May 2008, she received a call from her brother who said that his spaza shop had been attacked and that he had fled to the area of Bellville for safety, leaving everything behind. Realizing that danger was imminent, Haseena and her family started packing their things to leave Khayelitsha. While in the process, a mob began gathering outside. They managed to flee the area, and as with her brother, fled to Bellville for the night, and to a temporary refugee camp the next morning. Their place – at once home, space of work, and primary source of income - was completely destroyed that evening. Haseena described how on returning to see the damage a few days later, they found that everything was gone. The beds, fridge, all their clothes and groceries had been taken, and even the walls were demolished and removed. Few remnants of where they had lived and worked remained.⁷

Haseena's experience occurred at the time when xenophobic violence in South Africa had reached a peak. From May 11, 2008, South Africa saw nation-wide violence that particularly targeted Black Africans from other parts of the continent.

Many of those attacked were refugees and asylum seekers, yet they also included migrants, immigrants, and some South Africans who “looked” foreign. Around sixty-two people were killed. This spate of violence began in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, and within two weeks had spread throughout the country to Cape Town, and left around 150, 000 people displaced, many permanently.⁸ This period marked a significant moment as the attacks resulted in a level of spatial displacement not seen since the end of Apartheid.⁹

I first met Haseena in the northern suburb of Bellville, the area of Cape Town where she had initially fled to on the eve of the violence, and where she and her family had later settled. She told me this story several months after our first meeting, in her small shop in the corner of one of the numerous new informal shopping arcades in the area. Haseena’s story points to both widespread destruction and violence during and following 2008. This narrative illustrates the precarious position of being an African refugee within the broader South African public sphere, and points to the subaltern nature of this population in general. In her description of fleeing Khayelitsha in 2008, she described the unmaking of a home and place of work in Khayelitsha, yet simultaneously pointed to the making of a new home in Bellville. Speaking to her in her small shop in Bellville revealed this informal market as a site of refuge and care within a highly contested urban realm. In our conversations, she articulated the importance of the space of her shop, the market and the site of Bellville. Yet in describing her displacements, she also described South Africa as a space of possibility. Her narrative pointed to the post-Apartheid promises enshrined in the constitution as a space for education, freedom of movement and access to the continent and globe; for her, these promises were realized from her small space in the informal market.

Haseena's story and spatial experiences in Cape Town point to the subaltern nature of the populations and their spaces, and raised several questions around the voice of the inhabitants, assumed transparency of the academic researcher and the archive.¹⁰ As noted, these were not spaces that have previously been the subject of spatial studies. This is a result of the nature of these spaces as informal sites occupied by refugees, the contested context in which they exist and due to their recent nature in that they were formed in post-Apartheid South Africa. The primary research approach was therefore based on ethnographic methods of participant-observation techniques combined with in-depth interviews. Other sources that I draw on include news reports and legislation in addition to relevant literature.¹¹

This approach was informed by the field of everyday architectures.¹² However, noting the contested nature of the context and the subaltern nature of the refugee population, these markets exceed the everyday. Instead, they are marginal spaces. This understanding of the marginal draws on the writing of bell hooks, who asserts that the margin should be understood as both a physical and a metaphoric space. hooks argues that while the margin may be a site of very real deprivation and oppression, it is simultaneously a site of resistance and possibility.¹³ hooks' interpretation of the margin as a space of potential points to the importance and centrality of these markets for their inhabitants. Haseena's story points to the complexity of these sites, where in a similar relation to hooks' analysis, they are spaces that are linked into limited alternative choices, yet simultaneously sites of possibility for earning a livelihood and building a future. The importance of the markets as central spaces led to a particular interest in the spatiality of these sites. They were characterized by a density of objects, practices, services and spatial narratives, which together formed sites of refuge for their inhabitants. Therefore,

beyond understanding the sociality of the markets, the central question of how to represent the spatiality of these sites remained.

The contested and complex nature of these spaces had a direct impact on the research, and while my initial intention was to document the markets with photography, this proved largely unwelcome on site. This led to an adaptation of the methods to include sketching and note-taking as a way of writing and drawing these spaces. The unwillingness of many interviewees to be photographed raised key ethical questions about the research process. Initially, I did not anticipate the extent to which a combination of cultural sensitivities, the fear of being documented and photographed, and a general suspicion of researchers would impact upon my fieldwork.

The question of representation is central to postcolonial and subaltern studies. Gayatri Spivak, in particular, has questioned the assumed transparency of the academic researcher and associated institutions, asserting the importance of recognizing the impact of unequal power relations on the research process.¹⁴ Spivak argues that there is a contradiction in the researcher's valorization of the very real experiences of subordinate populations, while remaining uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual. She argues that this contradiction is maintained through the conflation of two distinct forms of representation, namely the proxy, or "speaking for" (Vertreten) and the portrait (Darstellen). While recognizing that these are not mutually exclusive, Spivak argues that they are distinct, as the first relates to political representation, while the second to the theory of the subject. Spivak argues that in conflating the terms, the subaltern is assumed to be a complete "sovereign subject" and the researcher and associated institutions are assumed to be neutral

and transparent. As a result, the subaltern is attributed an agency that she does not necessarily have.¹⁵

Edward Said raises a related critique in “Representing the Colonized” where he argues that no researcher exists outside of his or her context.¹⁶ “There is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality.”¹⁷ Said is referring here in particular to the concept of Orientalism which he developed elsewhere, yet in this article he reasserts the importance of recognizing the implications of the context of both the researcher and researched, and that “epistemologies, discourses and methods” should not be brushed aside as irrelevant as they are often related to a world view which has an associated political force.¹⁸ Said further articulates that part of recognizing one’s position as a researcher is to take into account the subject of research. He asserts that a “kind of scrubbed, disinfected interlocutor is a laboratory creation with suppressed, and therefore falsified connections to the urgent situation of crisis and conflict that brought him or her to attention in the first place.”¹⁹

These questions raised by Spivak and Said were particularly pertinent in relation to my own position as a researcher in these refugee markets. In starting the fieldwork, I was immediately made aware of my position as South African in areas that in many ways could be described as being under attack from various South African publics, due to both impending evictions and xenophobic violence. Encounters on site highlighted that the position of a researcher is not a neutral one. The need to build a relationship of trust was therefore particularly important, and essential to gaining access to certain spaces. Beyond noting the importance of recognizing the context of the researcher, Said further questions what the

scholarship does, asserting that the relationship between researchers and the researched is not necessarily an innocent one.²⁰ For Said, central to this critique is the “thunderous” silence of the voice of the author and the position the author occupies. Said goes on to ask, “who speaks? for what and to whom?” noting that these questions are neither pronounced nor in many cases even asked.²¹ Yet, as Said points out, it is this silent author who speaks for and mediates between the reader and the subaltern Other in a subordinate position.

In an encounter with a Zimbabwean refugee in a market in Cape Town the salient nature of these questions was made evident. In a direct confrontation, she said that:

“there used to be students who come and talk to us, they ask us questions, they say ‘these foreigners are easy to talk to’, they say they are just students, and then the next thing, the police are raiding the market.”²²

This confrontation pointed to the presence of these concerns in the various markets. The issue of my position as a researcher was therefore not simply a distant academic question, but related to the daily reality of the market sites. The suspicion associated with talking to “so-called” students was not necessarily unfounded. I was subsequently told that the reason for this particular response was that this trader had been detained at Lindela Repatriation Centre for several months.²³ The fear and suspicion I initially encountered in fieldwork abated over time as people got to know me better, yet the question of representation remained a concern and led to an adaptation of my research methods in response.

The initial suspicions were specific. One of the first assumptions was that I was working for an official organization, in some way linked to the government or City of Cape Town. A related concern was around whether I would publish specific personal details about individuals, which might compromise their anonymity.²⁴ The apprehensions raised in the course of fieldwork were not about talking to me as a researcher or having the stories or spaces written about, but rather, the primary concern was that I might not be who I claimed to be. This in turn, led to a suspicion around what I would do with the material.

These concerns were largely abated through introductions by individuals who could vouch for me, along with assurances that all individuals' details would be anonymized.²⁵ I soon realized that the seemingly mundane act of carrying my student identity card was important, along with not assuming that I would be trusted on my word. Previous experience had taught interviewees to question researchers, and carrying an identification card openly was a clear indication that I was not working for a government organisation and instead was willing to reveal and be transparent about my own identity. Many of the initial introductions to interviewees and sites were through the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Scalabrini and PASSOP, both of whom aid refugees in Cape Town and were particularly trusted as they provide assistance to both registered and undocumented migrants. During the course of my research, I volunteered as an English teacher for Scalabrini and a Somali NGO in Bellville. News of my volunteer role quickly spread throughout the area, and lent a further credibility to my position as a researcher and student. Through volunteering, I also explicitly positioned myself as someone who was willing and interested in helping refugees where I could, as opposed to assuming that my location in the field was neutral. These specific suspicions raised the pertinence of

Said's question around what scholarship does.²⁶ The contested nature of the markets leads into the contested nature of the scholarship itself, along with the importance of responding to these ethical questions around how to write about and represent these spaces.

These various questions led to an adaptation of my methods of representation involving decisions about what to include and what to leave out. Instead of photography and voice recordings, I increasingly relied on taking notes and drawing spaces.²⁷ The adoption of drawing and hand-writing as primary methods positioned me as active within the field and research, as opposed to being an "invisible" author. They are directly related to my personal encounter with the sites. Drawing and re-drawing was an initial response to conversations during fieldwork. Yet the choice of the type of drawing relates directly to my training as an architect, while their generic and imprecise nature maintains their ambivalence. John Berger suggests that drawings may "sketch maps of an encounter."²⁸ Many of the drawings included, and their detail or lack thereof, are a direct reflection on my relationship with the space and inhabitants. To return to Spivak's suggestion of recognizing the distinction between different forms of representations, the imprecision of these drawings renders them explicitly as "portraits" of the site as opposed to a form of "proxy", or speaking for inhabitants.²⁹ Rather than being read as singular representations of the site, they should be understood as representative of the particular relationship between researcher and researched, in other words myself and the interviewees. The manner in which the drawings are done talks to interactions on site, tours given of certain spaces and relationships developed with interviewees over time. Where photographs were taken, permission was obtained and they were all of interior spaces, without any faces or names. The drawings, in turn, are based on estimates,

approximations and mappings, to create a contingent representation of these everyday and yet contested architectures. The contingent nature of the drawings also reflects the contingency of the spaces themselves. In the drawings, any particular details that pointed to individuals was omitted in response to the understanding, following both Said and experiences in the field, that academic institutions are not neutral and that the dissemination of the research which included personal details of individuals could have real very real consequences for those involved. Instead and in response, the drawings are based on a combination of site sketches and written notes.

Ways of Telling the Margin

In his discussion in “Representing the Colonized”, Said extends his critique of academic encounters into questioning alternative “ways of telling”. He adopts this phrase from Berger’s seminal text, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), where Berger asserts that seeing is a politically engaged and social act.³⁰ Said, in turn, further questions whether the crossing of boundaries, physical and disciplinary among others, could lead to new narrative forms. Spivak, in contrast, has asserted that the subaltern cannot speak. Yet, similar to Said, she suggests that the silence of the subaltern does not need to be understood as disabling for researchers. Instead, she puts forward that researchers should learn to “speak to” as opposed to “speak for” the subaltern. As Spivak notes, “speaking to” is an active gesture, which involves a transaction between a speaker and a listener.³¹

While Said draws attention to possible alternative “ways of telling” these sites, Homi Bhabha and bell hooks, in different ways, have similarly suggested that the margin may be a site of potential. These approaches were taken up in the research

process in Cape Town where interviews, conversations and sketches necessitated an active exchange. In representing these interactions, the use of complementary methods of drawing and writing these spaces was adopted. These methods were therefore both complementary to each other and to the spaces being researched. As such, the site sketches were treated in a similar manner to fieldwork notes, and were later developed in a process of thinking through the spatial processes evident on site. These in turn led to a conceptual spatial analysis of the market sites, and as a result, led to a critical reading of these sites. I suggest this is key to an alternative way of “telling” these subaltern everyday architectures.

Central to this alternative way of “telling” is the process of drawing both on and off site. Thus, while the drawings are intended to be read in relation to the writing of these spaces, they also play a distinct role. The drawings all follow the architectural orthographic conventions of plans and sections. The use of conventions lends the drawings an apparent authority as they mimic precision and rationality. Particularly relevant here is Bhabha’s concept of mimicry. Mimicry is the practice of imitating someone or something. Bhabha suggests that mimicry was one of the tactics that subaltern populations in colonial India used in order to subvert the tools of political power. The result of this mimicry was an inherent ambivalence and doubling, the same but different.³² Following Bhabha, the drawings can similarly be understood as a potential tactical tool.

They are detailed drawings that show the density of occupation of the spaces, and as mentioned, follow certain architectural conventions. Yet, they include goods, furniture and crockery, in other words, everyday objects that are not always depicted in architectural drawings. These same objects suggest an everyday centrality of the space to the inhabitants. The drawings are hand drawn, not precisely scaled or

measured, and they lack the authoritative details that would give the drawing a legal weighting. Instead they illustrate a tension between detail and imprecision. It is in this sense that I suggest that they could be understood as a form of mimicry, following Bhabha, in that they use architectural drawing conventions to talk about spaces overlooked and rendered invisible by these same conventions. This relates directly to bell hooks' assertion of the margin as a site of potential. hooks articulates that despite material deprivation the margin is often a site for subordinate populations to imagine in. These drawings, and the attention to their ordinary detail, suggest a space of home and refuge, despite the marginal position of the markets as a whole.

Figures 1 and 2 are two examples of site drawings done in Cape Town. The rough sketches vary from highly detailed drawings such as Figure 1 to less detailed annotative drawings. In some cases, the sketches captured markets as a whole, while in other cases they were specific to individual spaces (see Figure 2). The process of redrawing the markets was done alongside the reviewing of interviews and field notes. Details were added to the drawings based on the written annotations, while the drawings, in turn, led to a reassessment of the written parts. Figure 3 is one example of a re-drawn sketch of an individual shop. It illustrates the relevance of the particular space of the shop and the furniture and goods within. The centrality of these smaller items was made particularly evident through numerous conversations, interviews and time spent with interviewees. The drawings should therefore be understood in direct relation to the writing and my experience on site, and are indicative of spatial practices that occur within these spaces. On the one hand, the lack of certain details maintains the anonymity of interviewees and inhabitants. Yet simultaneously I suggest that the use of architectural drawing

conventions both emphasizes the importance of these spaces as worthy of being drawn, and points to their importance as sites of spatial studies.

Figure 4 is a drawing of Haseena's trading space- the space from which she narrated her various displacements in the city of Cape Town as above. As with many other similar spaces, she occupies a subdivided area within a larger shop space. Her corner is approximately four to five square meters in the bottom left hand of a larger area. The drawing indicates the relative scale of the space, and points to the importance of small spaces for refugee populations in Cape Town in general. Her neighbours include a barber, photographic studio, NGO and *hawala* money exchange. Figure 5, similarly points to the importance of multiple small spaces, yet through a diagrammatic contrast between the formal built rooms (right) and the inhabitation of the space (left). In this building, as rooms were acquired, larger spaces were subdivided and partitioned to create a series of smaller stores, shops, service spaces and workshops. These include a small prayer room, restaurants and social spaces. The comparative drawing illustrates that it is primarily through use and makeshift subdivisions that the space has been transformed, with every available surface occupied. The drawings enable a reading of the sites that reveals certain patterns of spatiality that are similar across seemingly disparate sites.

For Bhabha, mimicry reveals no originary presence and therefore does not show a single truth. Instead the practice of mimicry acts to destabilize and point to the ambivalence of colonial discourse.³³ In a similar sense, following Bhabha, the drawings are both analytical and representational, not only of the spaces, but also of a certain position adopted. On the one hand, this is a position that articulates that these drawings are contingent, and therefore a fragmentary representation of an encounter with the site. On the other hand, the drawings therefore form part of an

argument for recognizing the importance of these sites as spatial and important as a subject of spatial research. This is particularly important for the kinds of sites that are studied as they are more often the focus of research in refugee and developmental studies, rather than architecture. To return to Said, it therefore recognizes the absence of this kind of research in architectural academia. This, in turn, recognises the importance of these sites to inhabitants. The importance of these particular kinds of spaces to inhabitants was made particularly salient through the description of other similar places elsewhere. As a result of the use of architectural conventions, while the drawings depict a particular space and encounter, they are simultaneously read as generic. While the particular markets are highly localized as informal sites, they are also closely related to spaces elsewhere. For example, the description of familial trade networks by interviewees in places such as Dubai and Minneapolis along with existing research on similar informal shopping arcades in Nairobi from refugee studies, all attest to the simultaneous particularities and lack of uniqueness of these spaces. It therefore highlights the particular location of these markets in Cape Town, while also recognizing the existence of similar kinds of places in other parts of the world.³⁴

The use of ethnographic research methods is, however, not new to architecture. Noeleen Murray has argued that architects in post-Apartheid South Africa have continued working like colonial anthropologists. Murray suggests that the result of this research is a supposed “recovery” of lost African traditions. She points here to the adoption of these traditions in post-Apartheid architectures as a way of representing the diverse South African populations in notable public projects.³⁵ While Murray focuses on the use of ethnography by practicing architects, and the appropriation of certain symbols and signs to represent “Africa,” her critique remains

relevant here. It draws attention to the longer history of these techniques, and their association with colonial institutions. In a related approach, Suzanne Ewing points to a broader late twentieth-century ethnographic turn within architecture. Ewing argues that architecture is a “gleaning discipline”, and has historically appropriated habits and repertoires from other disciplines. In the anthology *Architecture and Field/Work* (2011), several essays point to the overlap and debate between ethnographic fieldwork and architectural site work, discussing the similarities and differences.³⁶ For Ewing the adoption of fieldwork points to a recognition of fluidity and unfixed conditions. Ewing suggests that “site” in architecture and urban design is associated with established ways of acting, recording, and building, with associated ideas of fixed conditions. “Field” in contrast suggests “a place to learn from, to research, to draw from.”³⁷ However, Ewing, in contrast to Murray, does not recognise the longer or critical history of this approach, along with its associated power relations. The adapted research methods discussed in this paper draws on this longer history of ethnographic approaches by architects, while remaining critical and reflective of the unequal relationships embedded within ethnographic research processes.

An example of the ethnographic turn and its particular relation to drawing can be found in the work of Wajiro Kon. Kon developed the field of Modernologio which used drawing as a way of representing and recording various facets of life in Japan.³⁸ These extended from representations of private spaces and domesticity, to pottery and sites of disaster. Modernologio aimed at a comprehensive record of the “present,” and a systematic study to record and analyze material culture in a rapidly changing Japan, particularly following the 1923 earthquake.³⁹ As such, unlike my own study, Kon’s drawings intended to be a complete and accurate record. However, in a similar approach, Kon’s drawings offer a record of a particular time and place,

and the drawings employ a combination of text and image as a way of recording the spaces. They include objects and items associated with the intimate details of everyday life such as clothing, furniture and utensils. Thus, as with my own drawings, they point to the importance of these items to spatiality of daily life.

An additional, and contemporary example of the use of site hand-drawings is evident in Swati Chattopadhyay's research.⁴⁰ Chattopadhyay has employed measured hand-drawings and sketches to document architectures and subaltern spatial practices in Kolkata, India. Through both drawings and her narration of these sites, Chattopadhyay too creates a record of spaces absent from formal spatial archives. While they share certain similarities and these examples have been important precedents, the drawings included in this paper are, however, distinct from both these approaches in that they do not attempt a recovery of lost spaces or a complete representation. Rather, through the process of writing, drawing and re-drawing they point to the contingent nature of these markets as precarious spaces while recognizing their spatial value for their inhabitants. Thus, returning to Spivak, they should not be understood as a complete or "sovereign" representation of either the subaltern or her spaces, and should rather be read as a partial and situated record.⁴¹

An Alternative Temporality

One of the ways these drawings can be understood as a partial record is through their temporality. The act of drawing and writing on site took time and therefore required a level of engagement with inhabitants. The practice of drawing and hand-writing as a key research method therefore introduced an alternative temporality into the research process. A photograph can be taken in a few seconds, while even the quickest hand annotation involves a more visible act and requires a longer presence

in the space. This was particularly true of the sketches. Drawing on site therefore led to numerous conversations and questions about my research with inhabitants of the markets and became a way of actively “speaking to” inhabitants, following Spivak.⁴² This was therefore an active gesture that involved my presence on site.

Berger, Michel de Certeau and Tim Ingold have all argued for the importance of recognizing spatial practices as ephemeral and temporal practices. De Certeau asserts that the mapping of spatial practices can only refer to what has passed.⁴³ For de Certeau, it is not possible to map the pedestrian practices of everyday life. For Berger, in contrast, drawings have the ability to respond to this fleeting nature directly as he argues that drawings can “map an encounter”.⁴⁴ In a similar vein, the anthropologist Tim Ingold, argues that drawing is a way of “following the world.” For him, drawing brings together three distinct parts of ethnographic research in a single gesture: namely, observation, description and participation. Ingold suggests that drawings, unlike written descriptions, remain “open to the changing present.”⁴⁵ Lesley McFadyen extends Ingold’s argument into the field of archaeology, where she argues for understanding archaeological site-drawings as a creative practice as opposed to a simple record-making process.⁴⁶ The drawings included in this paper can be understood in a similar vein, as a personal encounter with the materiality of the site and inhabitants, where the result is not an impartial or direct record, but a partial representation of the site.

The approach discussed in this paper similarly recognizes the creativity involved in drawing these spaces along with the improvisational nature of site research in general. For McFadyen, drawing and the practice of excavation are closely related, and archaeological drawings are both about the act of excavation, and following the material in the excavation. As such, and again in contrast to de

Certeau, McFadyen too articulates the potential of drawings as “something for the future as much as something for the past.”⁴⁷ The refugee markets are highly mobile with populations constantly in flux and the generic nature of the drawings aim to recognise this. They follow and annotate the furniture, goods and objects which make these sites, and as noted, these items point to the centrality of these markets as spaces of care and refuge. In addition, Ingold suggests that drawings are open ended because another line could always be added.⁴⁸ My practice of re-drawing emphasizes that these drawings are only one possible telling of these sites: a telling that is directly related to my personal interactions with the site and inhabitants.

In redrawing off-site, first in Cape Town, and later in London, an additional temporality is introduced into the drawing process disrupting the linearity of the research process. In this sense, the site sketches can be understood in a similar manner to fieldwork notes. The practice of redrawing offered an analytical distance, both physically, through the displacement to London, and temporally, as the redrawing happened later. The process was not intended to remove myself from the context and association with the inhabitants, but rather the physical and temporal distance enabled an analytical spatial reading of the sites. Following Said, this “crossing of boundaries,” physical and temporal, offered an alternative way of seeing and therefore “telling” these spaces.⁴⁹

As noted above, the process of drawing was, however, complementary to a practice of writing. The drawings of the markets coincided with detailed descriptions of the spaces. While the drawings suggested the generic nature of the spaces, in their use of conventions and as black and white productions, the writing instead highlighted the material and social specificity of these spaces as narrated by individuals. While I am not working within anthropology, in researching subaltern

architectures, I am not working with an existing archive of drawings, but rather constructing one through the process of writing and drawing. As discussed, a key element of the invisibility of these market sites is related to the absence of them in architectural and spatial archives. Drawing and writing therefore offers a way to respond to this absence, while remaining reflective of the power dynamics at work.

Drawing and writing about these refugee markets has been a process of constructing a fragmentary archive while remaining cognizant of the broader context. This is not an objective response, but rather part of a process of drawing-out meaning from the various spaces, objects, people and spatial acts. These representations offer a translation of the active process of “speaking to” inhabitants in these markets and paying close attention to the happenings. They are also part of the process of recognizing these marginalized spaces and spatial practices as relevant to spatial studies. It is in this vein that I suggest that the complementary reliance on drawing and writing may offer a possible response to Said’s critique, as a way of “telling” these sites. These representations do not only trace an observational gesture, as noted by Ingold, but also a remembered gesture of my encounter with the space. As such, they explicitly position me as the researcher in the field by revealing my architectural training, while presenting alternative ways of inhabiting the city and thus, as suggested by McFadyen, point to “something *for the future*”.⁵⁰ The drawings discussed offer a representation of marginal sites as spaces of complexity, where despite material deprivation they remain central to their inhabitants as spaces of care and refuge.

¹A particularly salient exception is Suzanne Ewing, Michael J. McGowan, Chris Speed, and Victoria C. Bernie, eds., *Architecture and Field/Work* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 4.

² This was a point mentioned in numerous interviews throughout the course of the research, where asylum seekers and refugees noted the importance of informal trade to their ability to earn a livelihood and sustain themselves in South Africa.

³ There are no records of these markets in national or municipal archives, and they have not been the subject of studies in architectural or urban histories in Cape Town. The spatial and urban practices of African migrants to South Africa has emerged as a subject of study in Johannesburg in recent years as particularly evident in Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, eds., *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). Cape Town however has largely evaded focus with a few exceptions: similar kinds of spaces have been mentioned most notably in a study of cross-border traders by Sally Peberdy and Jonathan Crush and the edited volume *Imagining the City* (2007); Sally Peberdy and Jonathon Crush, "Trading Places: Cross-border Traders and the South African Informal Sector," South African Migration Project, Migration Policy Series 6 (1998); Sean Fields, Renate Meyer, and Felicity Swanson, eds., *Imagining the City* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007). However in both these cases the emphasis is on the social dynamics rather than the spaces themselves, and they do not focus on the particular spaces discussed in this paper.

⁴ Skinner is referring to a broader context of studying informal trade on the African continent, yet this is a pertinent comment in relation to this study as it points to a further reason why these markets are absent from formal records; Caroline Skinner, "Street Trade in Africa: Review", *School of Development Studies Working Paper* 51 (2008), pg. 1- 38.

⁵ All names of interviewees mentioned in this paper have been changed, and all the interviews were conducted with written consent.

⁶ A "township" is the term used for an informal settlement in South Africa.

⁷ Haseena, Interview (2014).

⁸ "South Africa: Xenophobic Attacks Spreading" in *IRIN* (May 3, 2008); Loren Landau and Aurelia Segatti, eds. *Contemporary Migration to South Africa*, (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2011), 10.

⁹ Ugen Vos, "Foreigners Fear Violence," *Citizen* (Johannesburg) (2010), 6.

¹⁰ The definition of the subaltern used in this paper draws on Ranajit Guha's understanding of the subaltern as a subordinate figure in comparison to elite populations, yet simultaneously recognises that subalternity is heterogeneous and a relative construct; Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" in *Subaltern Studies 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 44.

¹¹ The newspaper archives that I drew on were primarily the Press Clipping Collection at the National Library of South Africa, which include articles from the *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus* and *Die Burger*. These date from 1955 up until 1996. More recent articles were found using the digital archive database Sabinet.co.za. Throughout the research I conducted 62 interviews, and engaged in numerous other conversations. In addition to these sources I also drew on the artwork of Berni Searle, in particular *Mute* (2008), a video-art piece that was created in direct response to the xenophobic violence of 2008. It is a piece that responds to the complexity of the time, and is also one of the few visual analyses of the xenophobic violence; Berni Searle, *Mute* (2008).

¹² Most notable are the following anthologies: *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, ed. Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr and Alicia Pivaro (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000); *Architecture of the Everyday*, eds. Steven Harris and Deborah Berke, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); *Everyday Urbanism*, ed. Margaret Crawford, John Chase, and John Kaliski (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2008).

¹³ bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 145- 153; The framing of these sites as marginal is also in opposition to an emphasis on the popular within the field of everyday architectures; Dell Upton, "Architecture in Everyday Life", *New Literary History* 33 no.4, (2002): 707-723.

¹⁴ Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988).

¹⁵ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 69.

¹⁶ Edward W. Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15 no.2 (1989), 205 - 225.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210; also: Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

¹⁹ Said, "Representing the Colonized," 210.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 213

²¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

²² Fieldwork Notes, 2014.

²³ The centre is South Africa's only dedicated detention holding centre for undocumented migrants in the country. It was opened in 1996.

- ²⁴ Haseena, Interview, 2014.
- ²⁵ All of the names of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees have been changed.
- ²⁶ Said, "Representing the Colonized".
- ²⁷ Where it was agreed, I recorded interviews. Yet, in some cases, particularly among women, although they agreed to talk to me, they did not want their voices recorded. The concerns were similar to those raised around photography.
- ²⁸ John Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook*, (London:Verso, 2015).
- ²⁹ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
- ³⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. (London: Penguin, 1972)
- ³¹ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 91.
- ³² Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994).
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 131.
- ³⁴ Neil Carrier and Emma Lochery, "Missing States? Somali Trade Networks and the Eastleigh Transformation," *Journal of East African Studies* 7 no.2 (2013): 334 – 52; Mulki Al-Sharmani "Contemporary Migration and Transnational Families: The Case of Somali Diaspora(s)," in *Migration and Refugee Movements in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2007), 1-6; Elizabeth Campbell, "Economic Globalization from Below," in *Cities in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Martin J. Murray and Garth A. Myers (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 125 - 147; Kenneth Omeje and John Mwangi, "Business Travails in the Diaspora: The Challenges and Resilience of Somali Refugee Business Community in Nairobi, Kenya," in *Journal of Third World Studies* 31 no.1, (2014): 185- 217; Lorenzo Rinelli and Sam Okoth Opondo, "Affective Economies: Eastleigh's Metalogistics, Urban Anxieties and the Mapping of Diasporic City life," in *African and Black Diaspora* 6 no.2, (2013): 236-250.
- ³⁵ Noeleen Murray, "Critical Architecture and the Spatial Humanities," presented at Faces of the City Seminar Series (2013). Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1 -15.
- ³⁶ Paul Emmons, "Drawing Sites: Site Drawings." In Ewing et al. *Architecture and Field/work*, 119 - 129.
- ³⁷ Ewing et al., *Architecture and Field/work*, 4.
- ³⁸ Izumi Kuroishi, "Visual Examinations of Interior Space in Movements to Modernize Housing in Japan C. 1920 – 1940," in *Interiors* 2 no.1 (2011): 95 – 123
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*, (London: Routledge, 2005); Swati Chattopadhyay, *Unlearning the City: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
- ⁴¹ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 69.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 91.
- ⁴³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- ⁴⁴ Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook*, 10.
- ⁴⁵ Tim Ingold, "Drawing Together: Materials, Gestures, Lines." In *Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropology*, ed. Ton Otto and Nills Bubandt (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); In addition to Ingold's writing, the field of visual ethnography engages with drawing. The majority of this work is however through audiovisual means or photography. Notable exceptions include: Anna Grimshaw's *The Ethnographer's Eye*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Ana Isabel Afonso, Laszlo Kurti, and Sarah Pink, ed., *Working Images* (London:Routledge, 2004).
- ⁴⁶ Lesley Mcfadyen, "Practice Drawing Writing Object." In *Redrawing Anthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 33 - 43
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Ingold, "Drawing Together: Materials, Gestures, Lines."
- ⁴⁹ Said, "Representing the Colonized," 225.
- ⁵⁰ Mcfadyen, "Practice Drawing Writing Object," 42.

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