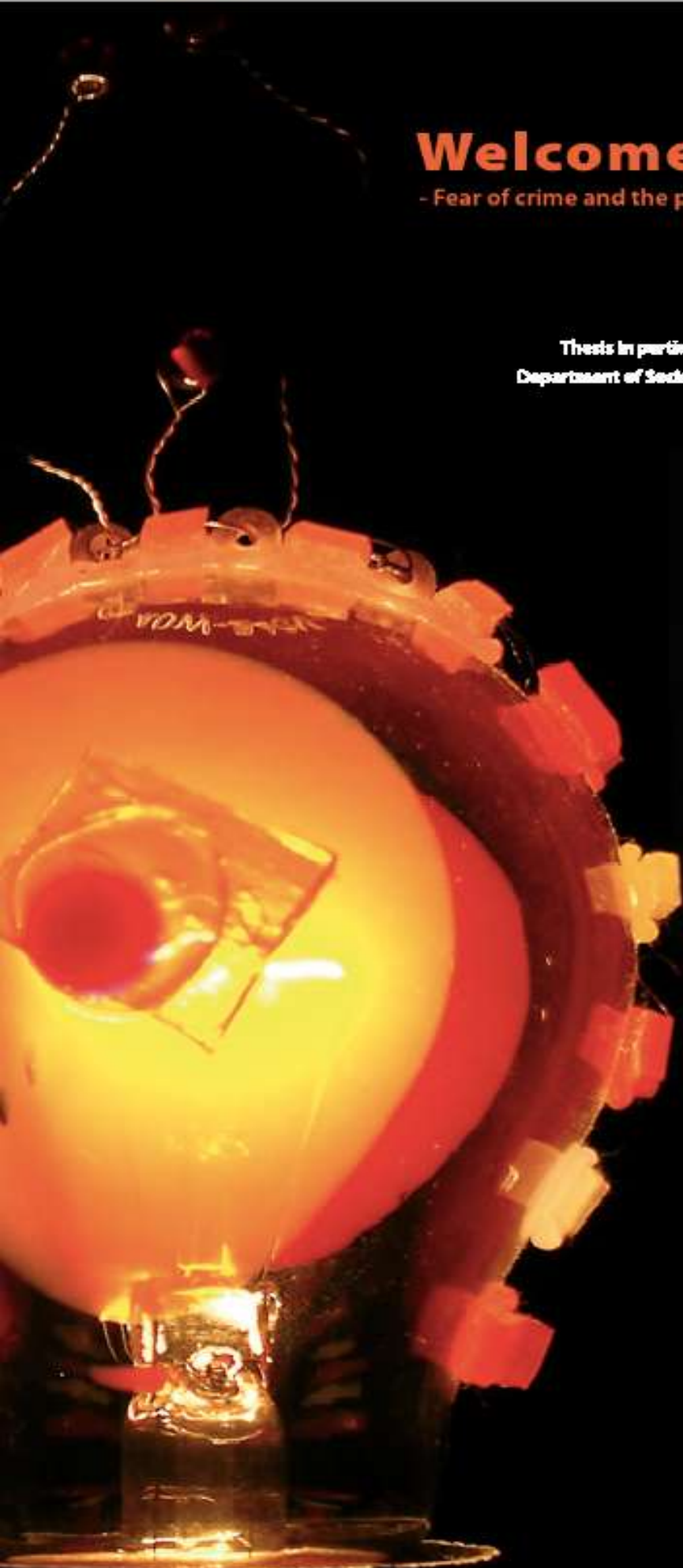


# Welcome to the village?

- Fear of crime and the power of identity in Observatory, Cape Town.

Espen Unneberg

Thesis in partial fulfillment of the Cand.Polit. degree in Human Geography.  
Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, May 2005.



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## List of abbreviations etcetera

### *General*

CBD: Central Business District

SA: South Africa

Shoprite: Huge South African cooperative of supermarkets

### *Currency:*

1 South African Rand (ZAR or R) was equal to around one Norwegian krone, about USD 0,15 at the time of my fieldwork

### *Organisations and institutions:*

SAPS: South African Police Service (<http://www.saps.gov.za/>)

CAPS: Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy

OBF: Obs Business Forum

OCA: Obs Civic association

### *National crime victimisation surveys*

NCS: National Crime Survey (in the US)

BCS: British Crime Survey (in the UK)

NVCR: National Victims of Crime Survey (in SA)

### *Policing strategies and theories*

ZTZ: Zero Tolerance Zone

ZT: Zero Tolerance

POP: Problem Oriented Policing (<http://popcenter.org>)



# 1. Introduction

This thesis examines how fear and crime is experienced, interpreted and coped with in one local urban place, that is Observatory, Cape Town.

South Africa has achieved an international reputation for being one of the world's most violent and criminal countries. Surely, the country's history under the violent rule of the Apartheid regime to a certain degree is to blame for this. From the political violence during the uproar against the Apartheid regime in the Eighties, the transition to democracy changed the political, social and economic structure of South Africa, and thereby also the nature of crime and violence. Today the consequences of crime, both perceived and the actual incidents presents a threat to South Africa in many ways. On an international level it might affect the interest of tourists and investors, on the national level it might hurt the country's new and fragile democracy. On the ground level crime and violence, and the fear it creates seriously affects the quality of life for every South African. Ten years after the transition from Apartheid only 23 percent of the South Africans feel safe when walking home at night (Burton, 2004). Despite a measured decline in crime since 1998, the feelings of safety were “much worse” in 2003 than five years earlier (Mistry 2004). People's feeling of safety when walking in their own residential area was “well below” that of people in Asia and Latin America<sup>1</sup>.

Not seeming to be the result of increased victimisation, the reasons for this elevated fear stands unexplained. I believe that these explanations are to be found not in the (hardly available) statistics of the police or other authorities, but rather in the study of feelings of fear and anxiety in the local place. This is where crime related phenomena originating on all geographical scales, are perceived, interpreted and dealt with on the basis of the everyday life and talk of each and every person.

Research in this field, applying a critical perspective on such badly understood and little theorised phenomena as 'fear' and 'crime', how their meaning is constructed and reconstructed in the local place has gained popularity during the last twenty years. Scholars in the US and the UK have re-theorised these contested concepts in order to situate them closer in the local place, leaving behind attempts to map institutional and social change on a grand scale, exchanging scale for sensitivity for place<sup>2</sup>.

## Motivation

How I came to write about such a complex theme as fear of crime, is in itself important for how this

<sup>1</sup> These comparative statistics may only “serve as an illustration”, since the data from Asia and Latin are conducted in one city, compared to the South African data which are national and gathered from both urban and rural areas.

<sup>2</sup> See for example (Pain 2001a)

thesis turned out in the end.

Coming to Cape Town in early January (mid-summer) 2003, I returned to a country I first visited as a traveller in 1998, and instantly fell in love with. Mostly because of its stunning nature, good transportation infrastructure and open attitude towards tourists which made travelling a pleasure. Even though my primary goal was to travel, and my pre-knowledge of South Africa was limited to that of other tourists, my eyes were not blind to the country's fascinating and problematic history. I visited the most popular historic tourist sights, and every day I heard the stories almost of fellow backpackers being mugged and harassed by kids with guns and knives. At one point, the girl I travelled with, a coloured Norwegian girl, and myself took a stance not to be affected by the stories. Coming home from the Waterfront at night, we decided to walk to our hostel in upper Buitenkant, a walk through the Cape Town CBD which includes going through some dark, silent inner city areas with a reputation for being rather dodgy at night and absolutely not recommended for tourists to walk in. But to us it became important not to be hindered in our goal, which was to experience Cape Town in what to us seemed the "real way". From sheer luck or the power of our determination, we got through without accident.

Arriving in Cape Town in 2003, I got located by the foreign students office at UCT in Observatory, which was all good, I had heard the place's reputation for being a student hang out and party place, both were to my taste! I settled down quickly in a house full of other international students. It was a three minute walk to pleasant bars full of other students, talkative locals and cheap booze, and Obs in general showed its best side as a relaxed, diverse and cosmopolitan place to be. This in spite of the stories we heard from other students about muggings, car jackings and gangsters coming in from the Cape Flats and the bordering suburbs.

By the workings of the human mind, a person is not really influenced by things happening before it happens to yourself or those close to you, and I didn't really worry before one of my flatmates was mugged, then there was a carjacking on my block, and then the stories of a barman in Obs having been killed by robbers. The latter incident, which I have heard described a hundred times in a hundred different versions only came to me as rumours, as I were not in Obs that day, but soon it was cited in the newspapers, and later we met and got to know the people behind the story, those who were the friends and colleagues of the man who was shot through the head by robbers, coming from the toilet in the bar he owned. The incident got to all of us, and like many others travelling to Cape Town my experience with the everyday brutality of the city affected me in such a way that it gave me an urge to work with it in some kind of way. Sitting on the floor in one of Obs' many venues of entertainment, drinking a beer and talking about the latest incidents with a flatmate, I decided it had to be my field of

study.

### **Research Question**

*What is important for how people experience, interpret and cope with fear of crime in the local place of Observatory?*

My research will investigate a social phenomena which I perceive to be of vital importance for the people with which the thesis is concerned. As I will describe the phenomena as they are perceived by my informants, large parts of the thesis will be concerned with how to extract interesting information that to such a degree has been subjected to the interpretations of the human mind. In order to succeed with such an challenge, the researcher needs to be open-minded, and the research methods need to be open-ended. My research question is thereby a very general one, open to many kinds of answers.

### **Disposition of this thesis**

The thesis contains the following chapters:

#### *Background*

The background chapter is meant to supply the reader with sufficient knowledge about the case and its context to be able to read the method and theory chapters in relation to the case. The case is presented in three contexts: Historically, relationally through different perceptions of the area and geographically through a map of different areas and points-of-interest.

#### *Theory*

In the theory chapter I explain the theoretical background for the thesis, discuss some important concepts, and introduce an analytical model for use later in the thesis. In the first part I take a critical approach to the key phenomena 'crime' and 'fear of crime'. In the second part I make clear my position on some fundamental questions regarding the quest for truth and meaning in complex social relations. I do this through discourse theory. Thirdly I present my model of analysis, where I try to situate 'fear of crime' in the local place and in relation to wider geographical scales. The goal is to create a 'holistic approach' incorporating as much as possible of the experience and stories that go into people's perceptions of fear of crime. The model thus incorporates both experiences, interpretations and different kinds of coping strategies.

#### *Method*

In this chapter I account for the method and methodology of the thesis. My first concern is my personal approach to my case, with special attention to the consequences of my intimate relation to the area as a

resident. Thereafter I describe the challenges of the various steps of the research process. In relation to the collection methods I take special attention to the selection of informants and considerations to their privacy and security. A separate part is left to the proofing of the quality of the data with focus on the trustworthiness and transferability of data. Concerning the analysis of the collected data I have applied an approach of discourse analysis and (critical) hermeneutic interpretation. Last, I apply these methodological concepts to the model of analysis that I introduced in the theory chapter.

### *Analysis A-C*

During the three analysis chapters, I will approach three different aspects of living with crime and fear. In the same way as I told my history of Observatory above, my collected data will primarily be presented as narratives told by my informants. I find these personal stories to be the most trustworthy and meaningful recollections of crime and fear in Obs. Chapter A contains personal stories and coping strategies and reflects over the interpretations that give them meaning. The primary goal of the chapter is to shed light on personal identities as the basis for these interpretations. Chapter B investigates the importance and meaning of place identity, how it is constructed through inclusion and exclusion, accessed through sense of place and what it means for experiences of crime and fear in Obs. Chapter C investigates the power of different coordinated coping strategies, their influence on life in Obs and how access to them is controlled by their relation to identities.

### *Conclusion*

In this last part of the thesis I answer my research question based on the conclusions of my three analysis chapters and seen in relation to the theoretical model of analysis from the theory chapter.



## 2. Background

### Introduction

In many ways Obs is an arch-typical urban place, incorporating many of the characteristics that have inspired research in the field of urban studies all over the world. It is geographically placed in the tension between suburbia and inner town, it is very densely populated, it has obvious elements of urban decay, and it is extremely heterogeneous, both in means of ethnicity, age groups, religions, socio-economic resources and sexual identities. When it comes to the identification of Observatory as a high crime area we are moving into a more blurry area. As mentioned earlier, the crime statistics in South Africa have been the subject of secrecy and debate to an extent that makes them unusable in my (or any) research. My description of Obs as a high crime area is hence based on my own observations and interviews as well as bits of statistics gathered by and made available to me by Obs' community policing project (ObsWatch). These data must be seen more as examples than a complete description. But, I do trust my qualitative material to be trustworthy enough in its description of the area to lend validity to the assumption that I am describing a theme that is ever present and vitally important to the people of which I write. Mark that relatively to other parts of Cape Town the area is not very crime ridden. Huge areas further from the city centre have through the history of Apartheid been developed into areas of such poverty and related social problems that they literally have belonged, and still belong, to another world.

The rest of this chapter will give brief historical and geographical descriptions of Observatory.

### A brief history of Observatory

The “old” history of Observatory makes itself visible today as a reservoir from which people pick symbols and narratives for use in the understanding and description of the place today.

#### *The beginning*

Observatory was given most of the shape it still has today on the turn of the nineteenth century, during the dynamic years of the mineral revolution when thousands of immigrants arrived in the Cape. It then got its small (and small plot) Victorian houses, narrow streets, and (inadequate) utilities. Its original shape belonged to a sophisticated world of street lighting, shops and elegant façades with big balconies, inhabited by equally elegant people with the huge dresses and top hats of the time.

The settlers were mostly British lower middle-class; shop-keepers, artisans and clerks. They made Observatory into a colonial home-from-home, copying many of the conventions and mores of the

English bourgeoisie.  
(Young 1998:64)

At this time the area actually was a village, it certainly was different from the much more industrial Salt River to the North, dominated by its “great ugly Railway Workshops”, but neither closely related to the more affluent areas further south. What made it so special? John Young explains the Observatorians (the inhabitants of Observatory) claim to differentness as being a result of their culture of organisation. The area had many clubs and churches (Obs used to be nicknamed “The Holy City”), their need to get up in the world, and their concern with appearances. Many boarded in Observatory and took the train to the city.

Today this old reality lives on in countless descriptions of Obs as “a village”, “a town in the suburbs” etcetera I see this as the beginning of the construction of Obs' Identity as different and in some way socially self-contained, hence its ability to create such a strong identity for itself and, not least, against other areas.

Later on the class structure of Observatory changed when industry got started after 1920, the middle class people moved “out and up”, and were replaced by working class people. I don't know much about how these people perceived Obs' identity. My claim will be that this is less significant than the next great demographic change in the late eighties when gentrification hit Observatory with full force (Montoya-Pelaez 1987). The identities brought up from this time onwards, are mostly the same old, in what may be understood as a taking up of pre-modern values and realities to construct a safe environment, what post-structuralist writers such as Nan Ellin calls “Retribalisation” or “Nostalgia” (Ellin 2001). This is where my analysis of Obs' place identity starts.

### *Apartheid*

During Apartheid Observatory was defined as a “white” area, and thereby given priority by the government. This applied to all areas of social politics including housing, social benefits etcetera Most important to this thesis is the inflated police attention given to the white areas compared to those designated to black or coloured groups in order to protect them against “the black danger” in the townships.

As a result, the white areas, including Observatory, functioned as fortresses, their boundaries guarded by policemen wielding guns and the Apartheid laws. I will argue that the protected environment of these white enclaves was another factor in the construction of place identities still important today. The physical separation was perfect for the growth of identities based upon the exclusion of a (physically)

constructed “other”<sup>3</sup>.

What deferred Observatory slightly from other areas was its somewhat liberal carry-out of Apartheid law, which resulted in Obs often being described as a “gray” area, an area where different races, otherwise segregated by Apartheid law, notably white and coloured, lived together in the same community. Not saying that the coloureds in Obs went by with their lives un-bothered by the razzias of the Apartheid Police, but at least some were able to stay. Obs thereby gained a reputation of being somewhat a stronghold for the resistance against Apartheid and the home of some of its leaders. This may also have affected the outside opinion of Observatory.

The integration of the former race segregated areas has been one of the main challenges of the post apartheid governments of South Africa. The resulting increased interaction between the Townships and Obs resulting from this will also be taken into account in this thesis.

#### *Gentrification*

Being a lower middle-class/workers area populated by liberal people and filled with attractive, cheap housing, Obs was an obviously interesting place for marked interests. Little is written about this phase in Obs' history, but the results today are both typical and overwhelming. Many of the inhabitants are young students passing through, there are many more shops than just a few years ago, some shops that used to be retailers of various consumer goods have been changed for bars and designer shops, today there are four real-estate agencies in an area of 3500 households.

#### *Crime wave 1996-1998, creation of ObsWatch*

In the late nineties, Obs received a lot of attention from criminals. In February 1997 alone, reported crime included 30 residential burglaries, 12 business burglaries, eight street robberies, 54 thefts from vehicles, nine cars stolen, nine assaults and one rape<sup>4</sup>. The reasons for this are not clear, still, I'd like to identify three plausible factors for this seemingly blooming up of crime. As mentioned above, Obs was (and still is) hit by a wave of gentrification including a great deal of social filtration resulting in a wealthier population and a more tempting target for crime against property. Secondly, there is the absence of police in Obs. The suburb has never had a police station, The closest one is located in the neighbouring suburb Mowbray, but Observatory's policing is not based here, but rather in Woodstock police station, which is three kilometres away, and responsible for one of Cape Town's largest precincts. Due to the democratisation of police services after Apartheid, the SAPS (South African Police Service), experience great problems supplying Obs with sufficient security to gain any trust from

<sup>3</sup> See Edward Said “Orientalism” {Said, 1978 #50}

<sup>4</sup> Reported in *The Helen Suzman Foundation's* quarterly magazine *Fokus*. [http://www.hsf.org.za/Focus\\_11/f11-obs.html](http://www.hsf.org.za/Focus_11/f11-obs.html)

it's inhabitants. Thirdly, Obs' location is in the middle of everything, between different areas, and close to all kinds of transportation. Lots of people travel through Obs on a daily basis to get to work, university etcetera Others come to Obs in the evening for entertainment. This huge “flux” of people makes it easy to move in and out without suspicion, making the area ideal for snatch-and-go type crime. Many other factors are being pointed to by inhabitants, I'll come back to this later, my reason for mentioning these three here is their focus in the medias, and their role in a general description of Obs. Also at least the first two factors are important for understanding the further history of Obs. In 1997 some of the “concerned residents”, among them some business owners, had had enough, and sat down to establish an institution that was to be extremely important for Obs' future. They created ObsWatch, a community-policing project employing SAPS reservists as patrolling officers, financed by inhabitants' and businesses ' contributions and directed by a locally elected board<sup>5</sup>. They are visible through their office in the Observatory train station and by patrolling on foot and on bikes. In principle, they are not armed with firearms, but rather batons and hand radios. ObsWatch have also organised several poster campaigns. Most notably when they first started up, featuring their “Watching-eye” logo and the text “Obswatch is here now”, which has also been displayed in graffiti. Last year they had a massive campaign associated with a general upgrade of the their service.

#### *Crime wave 2003 (My case)*

In little more than a month during January and February 2003 three restaurants in Observatory became the scenes of armed robberies, resulting in one bar owner being shot and killed<sup>6</sup>. These consequences may not seem to bad, but the impact on the local community were horrendous .

One of the consequences of the incidents was a large upgrade of communal security precautions. Opposed to original setting-up of ObsWate, this process was not initialised by the inhabitants themselves (organised in the Obs Civic Association, OCA), but rather by the Business owners (organised in the Obs Business Forum). During this upgrade, twenty new guards were hired to watch the CBD of Obs on a 24/7 schedule and the area was declared a Zero Tolerance Zone (ZTZ). This zero tolerance was supposed to include the picking of trash and the removal of graffiti in addition to the additional security. And this is where my case starts, my focus will be the time from the security upgrade in march 2003 to the next autumn (which corresponds with the time I spent in Obs).

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<sup>5</sup> Historical details from the founding of ObsWatch gathered from minutes of meetings and newsletters

<sup>6</sup> Cape Times on February 25, 2003, <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=271&fArticleId=52141>

## **A map of Observatory**

This paragraph is meant to give geographical references to those not familiar with Observatory. All areas and points of interest mentioned will be referred to later in the text.

Observatory is an Inner City suburb to Cape Town, South Africa. It is situated on a “String” of suburbs, commonly known as “ The Southern Suburbs” (even though they are more east than south of The Cape Town CBD). From Cape town outwards the suburbs are Woodstock, Salt River, Observatory, Mowbray, Rosebank, Rondebosch, Claremont. There are more, but these are the ones that will be spoken of in this thesis. Generally the suburbs become more affluent the further you get from down town. The reason I mention them here, is that their relative positioning to Cape Town CBD and each other often is mentioned as an explaining factor. The Southern Suburbs are also caught in the middle of Cape Towns main transport artery. Moving along these roads in any direction will take you through the poor suburbs known as the Cape Flats, the Townships of Cape Town. This puts Observatory in a position to gain a lot from being central, but at the same time having to cope with the problems associated with inner-city living, and the closeness to the poor suburbs further out.

Observatory itself can very roughly be divided into two main functional areas, that is the CBD located around Lower Main Road and Station Road and the residential areas around. I will divide the residential areas into four: the central area, the Salt River side, the Mowbray side and finally the station area (see Illustration 1 and Map 1).

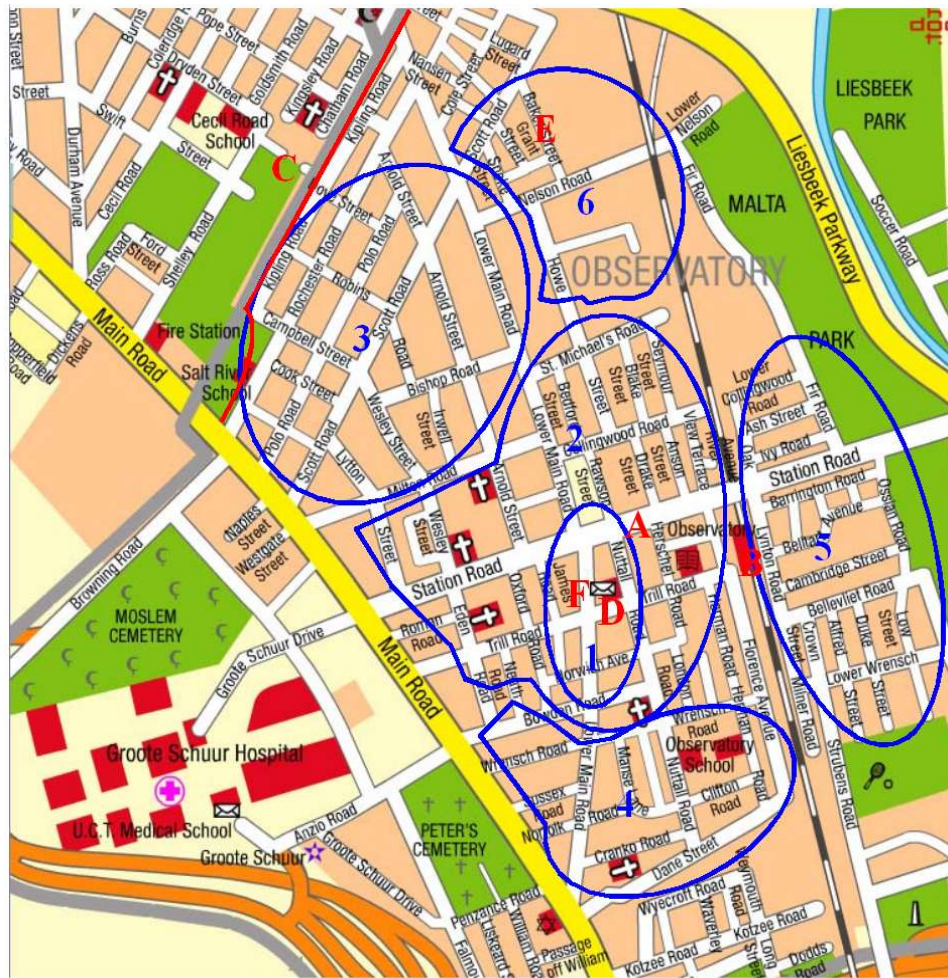


Illustration 1 Map of Observatory

Area	Map Ref.	Streets	Description
CBD (corresponding with Zero Tolerance Zone)	1	Generally along Lower Main, centered around intersection of LM and Station.	The functional and social centre of Obs, important features include most bars and restaurants (including Carté Blanc, Diva's, Touch of Madness, Cool Runnings, Scrumpy jacks's, Obs Café), stores (including the liquor store, the design shops, the super marked, the hardware store, the butcher), the post office and the ATM.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Map Ref.</i>	<i>Streets</i>	<i>Description</i>
Central residential area	2	Station, Lower Main, Trill, Nuttall	
Salt River side residential area	3	Campbell, Kipling, Rochester, Scott, Polo, Baker, Cook	My home part of Obs, also home of informants
Mowbray side residential area	4	Sussex, Nuttall, Dane	
Station side residential area	5	Lynton, Kipling, Rochester	
Salt River side commercial area	6	Kipling, Rochester	
<b><i>Point of interest</i></b>			
ATM	A	Station	
Observatory Station/ObsWatch offices	B	Station	
Wall against Salt River	C	Kipling	
Carte Blanc (bar)	D		Scene of murder
Baker Street	E		Area with obvious physical decline
Obs Café	F	Lower Main	Popular café and bar, scene of Pagad bombing in 2000.
Subways			

Table 1





### 3. Theory

#### Introduction

This chapter will lay down the theoretical foundation for this thesis. I will start by presenting the two key phenomena 'crime' and 'fear of crime'. I will do this through a short review of relevant literature. Second, I will explain my approach to truth and meaning in complex social relations through discourse theory. The main section of this chapter will present concepts which I understand to be important parts of how people experience crime and fear. In order to bring these concepts into the analytical part of the thesis I will present a model of how they relate to each other and the local place in which they exist.

#### Crime and fear -An introduction to the phenomena

##### *Crime*

What is a criminal act? According to any standard dictionary definition, crime is an act that is illegal and punishable according to present law. Further, legislative bodies who claim to represent a democratic regime will most probably present the law as an expression of the 'common good' of the members of the given society. However, this official definition will often express the views of only parts of the population. Additionally, those who are able to get their perceptions of right and wrong expressed through the legal system will often be powerful people of society, people belonging to more marginalised groups may have much harder access to the protection of law (Pain 2001a). A famous example of the exposure of such power structures is Foucault's description of the criminalisation of the mentally ill (Foucault 1967). Another example of a state abusing the rights of huge parts of its population by the rule of law is South Africa during the apartheid years (Terreblanche 2002). Now, very few violations of human and social rights have been as gross as those of the Apartheid regime, but in most societies there are disputes concerning what should be classified as 'crime', and several discourses may exist at the same time, separately from the the official law. The importance of interpretations of crime for this thesis is their impact on feelings of crime and fear.

##### *Fear of crime*

This thesis is concerned with the phenomenon 'fear of crime'. Commonly this has been perceived as an effect of acts of crime, as a result of being made a victim of crime, or of anxiety in relation to certain situations or places that a person believes promotes the chances of becoming a victim of crime. Since the late seventies, initiated by the analysis of United States National Crime Survey (NCS) the phenomenon has been recognised as being distinct from, as well as related to, the problem of crime

(Smith 1987). Since then much work has been done applying different theoretical and methodological approaches and emphasising different structures as creators and shapers of fear of crime. In this first part of the chapter, I will very shortly review some of this work. This will serve as broad horizon of understanding for discussion around analytical concepts later in the chapter.

What the different writings have in common is a mutual acceptance of 'fear of crime' being related to other phenomena besides crime itself. Apart from that they differ on several points, notably on the origin of these phenomena. Smith who “(...)first demonstrated the situation of fear of crime in the spatial organisation of social relations.” (Pain 2000:1) recognises that there is a *psychology*, but also a *sociology* and a *geography* of fear (Smith 1987). This thesis is mainly concerned with the last two.

In order to create an initial understanding of 'fear of crime', there is a need to make distinctions to the feeling itself.

It is conceivable, therefore, that emotions such as terror, panic, unease and annoyance may all be subsumed under the banner of fear.  
(Bannister & Fyfe 2001:808)

This range of feelings reflects a quantity of everyday-life situations, from the intense rush of panic from being mugged at gunpoint, to the light annoyance when some stranger has thrown garbage on your lawn. I will also argue that certain self-imposed states of mind such as elevated awareness when walking a dark street at night is a feeling closely related to 'fear of crime'.

Having established that our special kind of 'fear' may have many emotional variations, the next question is what shapes these different feelings. What role does the physical attributes of a place matter to how people experience it? A great deal of work has been laid down by geographers to describe how certain kinds of built environment coincide with certain amounts of crime. In the Seventies attributes like where housing was situated and to what degree it would be possible to surveil and defend it, was seen as vital, and efforts were made to 'design out crime'<sup>7</sup>. Mike Davis (Davis 1992) and others have criticised these kinds of strategies for creating more problems than they solve through the creation of exclusion zones, and the following exclusion of marginalised groups. Among politicians and the media environmentally deterministic discourses are still very much alive, but from academics they have been widely criticized for assuming that the built environment in *itself* creates crime. Rachel Pain exemplifies the essence of the critique: “...poor building design may simply coincide in space with a range of social and economic problems, which have far more important roles in the causation of crime”(Pain 2001b). The cultural turn might have taken some attention away from these questions but,

<sup>7</sup> See especially (Newman 1972)

as with the traditional 'objective' attributes of social identity, their role must not be overlooked. Lynn Hancock (Hancock 2001) describes the consequences of degeneration of physical space, or “neighbourhood decline” this is often the result of economic structural changes in the form of disinvestment, changes in land-use de-industrialisation resulting in loss of jobs etcetera

Moving from spatial and structural to social relations, the next question concerns how fear is experienced differently by different people. If we made no considerations concerning variations in different people's perceptions of fear, that is considered everyone to be perfectly *rational*, all fear could be calculated with regards to the amount and seriousness of crime a certain person had experienced, and to the actual statistical crime rate within a certain area. Such is, however, not the workings of the human mind, we do not walk through our lives deducing from statistics. Many have written of how different people, differed by different physical and social indicators, react differently to ((felt) risk of) victimisation, Bannister and Fyfe exemplifies:

For example, young men are most a risk for victimization, yet they appear relatively fearless in comparison to older women who are far less likely to be victimised.  
(Bannister & Fyfe 2001:809)

This point is simple, but important: The relationship between *occurrence of crime* and *fear of crime* is a relative one. The most important consequence of this realisation is that fear itself deserves attention as a subject for research, and serves as a place to start looking for explanations, and thereby solutions to social problems. In some governmental and media discourses, the relation between different perceptions of crime is reduced to a binary categorisation between “rational” and “irrational” fear (Levi 2001). I do not see this as an appropriate way of measuring the usefulness of people's perceptions for academic research. Such an endeavour would, firstly, make claims of objectivity in perceiving crime (and other social phenomena). I do not make such a claim. Secondly, it would be a very simplified way of understanding social behaviour. I will develop these concerns of social differences later in the thesis under the banner of 'social identities'.

In addition to the social and spatial context of 'fear of crime' described above, these two merge into a social/cultural geographical perspective. Crime does happen in a certain place, and this place is again located in a national and a global setting, the local 'sense of place' is originated from these different 'scales'. In the further I will understand the local place as the site for the creation of both the meaning of 'crime', 'fear of crime', and strategies for coping with crime. This situatedness of fear and crime will be the focal point of my analysis.

## The quest for truth and meaning

“...there was no 'fear' of crime in Britain until it was discovered in 1982”  
(Ditton et. al. 1998)

In this thesis there is no intention of looking for any *one*, uncontested “truth” about any (non-trivial) phenomenon, neither are people seen to be of one, specific, “real” meaning of any (non-trivial) thing. All meaning is situated in a certain (social) context and shaped by the power structures that necessarily will exist in all human interaction. This meaning is not seen as being shaped only by a person's mental reflection of the world but also as being a shaper of this more or less randomly chosen construction. Thereby my quest is not for whether anything is “true” or “false”, but rather questions concerning the context where expressions are made and thereby meaning constructed, and further which functions the expressions fill in a certain time and place.

These comprehensions make important conditions for how I interpret the basic phenomena of this thesis, notably the relationship between language and materiality and philosophical background for understanding 'identity'. I will understand the first relationship through Critical Discourse Theory, and the construction of identity through Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory.

### Identity and group formation

In the same way as with other meaning, identities are social constructions, according to Laclau and Mouffe, they are not determined by economical and material factors, but rather by discursive battles, hence the primacy given to politics (Jørgensen & Philips 1999). These constructions are never fulfilled, but are under constant change, and they may be multiple. Althausser describes the process of *interpollation* (Jørgensen & Philips 1999) where an individual gets “appointed” to a certain identity through the use of language, and thus expectations of certain behaviour are assigned to the person. Assigning someone with the (double) identity 'old woman' creates expectations, maybe of some degree of physical weakness. Calling someone 'a criminal' may create expectations of acts described as criminal by some crime discourse, for example a country's legislation. In the same way collective identities are constructed through the use of language. The picture is complicated as people may inhabit several identities at the same time, and personal identities may be blurred by broader group identities and the meaning of all identities may be further complicated when they come in to political play. This political power of identities may rise both from the “inside” and from the “outside” of a group, respectively as a discursive “attack” for example to create a stigma about a certain group, and as resistance, for example to gain political empowerment (Body-Gendrot 2001). These discursive

practices of political power will often take the form of 'othering', that is the process of defining someone in opposition to yourself, for example in order to socially exclude the person or group.

In discursive group formations one partly shuts 'the other', the one that that one identifies oneself in opposition to, out, and partly one ignore the differences that exist inside the group -and thereby all other ways in which one could have created groups. Group formations are in that sense political. (Jørgensen & Philips 1999:57)

I will treat these specific acts in the further.

### Critical Discourse Theory

While identities are understood through the theories of Laclau and Mouffe, I find other social relations to be better explained by theories allowing for social praxis to be understood less dependent on language. For this I find Critical discourse theory to be purposeful.

According to Jørgensen and Phillips (1999) different takes on *Critical Discourse Analysis* share some distinctive marks, of which four are relevant for this thesis: (i) discursive practices are important forms of social praxis, they contribute to the construction of the social world, including social identities and social relations. (ii) There is a dialectical relationship between discourse and other social dimensions (iii) discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of different power relations between different social groups and (iv) Critical Discourse Analysis does not consider itself to be politically neutral, it is politically involved in social change.

These realisations about the relationship between different kinds of social praxis are suitable for my kind of case where linguistic and non-linguistic practices are part of the same social relations.

### **The situatedness of 'fear of crime'**

As described above, expressed fear of crime *might* be caused by actual risk of being victimised. But having found that 'fear of crime' covers *more* than this, we need to understand what shapes the "difference between the actual risks and the total amount of fear". To identify this *something*, we need to consider both social and geographical processes. I will focus on processes related to identities and argue that we may understand these as a "filter" through which we interpret experiences of incidents which we perceive as criminal, and of the place that surrounds us. Our approach must encompass both discursive and other social practices. I hope that the identification and analysis of these more socially and geographically complex reasons for our fear will reveal aspects of both our own preferences, fears and hopes and local social and geographical phenomena, that will shed light to the social and geographical situatedness of fear of crime.

## Analytical concepts and a model of analysis

To be able to encompass concepts and approaches that relate to 'fear of crime' through different perspectives, shedding light to different facets of the nature and causation of fear of crime I will apply an analytical model. This model is meant to imply the relations between the analytical concepts that I intend to use in the further analysis.

In the model I hope to show the integration of different phenomena on different scales, varying from those concerning individuals, to those existing in the local community. By creating a model so all-encompassing I hope to include into my analysis as much as possible of the impression that Obs gave me, thereby creating what Rachel Pain calls a “holistic” account of 'fear of crime' as “influenced by a whole range of processes and relations scaled from the global, national and local to the household and the body, and which is rooted in place and variable between places” (Pain 2000:33). The last point about being “rooted” is crucial, in the further I will use the term “*situated*” to refer to context where all phenomena on all these scales influence the 'fear of crime' of people living locally.

Further, I realise that the model is constructed by me, and thereby represents my, view of the world I am researching. I will interpret this fact to be an advantage rather than a limitation as it enables me to stylise the research process. I thereby hope to create a sound distance between the analytical tools I apply and the world that is being researched.

In the further I will discuss the main components of the model, their theoretical background, and the consequences they create in the form of strategies created and applied to cope with everyday experiences of 'fear of crime', the model itself will be presented in the conclusion.

## Identity

My point of departure for discussing identity is the “natural” identities of observable or measurable signifiers such as sex, age and race. The earliest findings of the NCS in The States and later BCS<sup>8</sup> in Britain identified certain social groups as being more worried about crime than others, specifically women and elders (Smith 1987). These findings created some pretty stiff-necked myths concerning the spread of fear amongst these different social groups, which supported common stigmatizations of for example men and women (or masculinity and femininity) along a dualism of fear and boldness. Men have been perceived as “fearless but fear provoking”, women as “fearful and passive”(Pain 2001a : 899). In the later years, these myths have been challenged by findings from more sensitive research

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<sup>8</sup> British Crime Survey

conducted through qualitative methods<sup>9</sup>. Not only have the stout dualities concerning sex, age and colour been challenged, but new approaches seeking answers to new questions have been implemented, where 'fear of crime' is being explored as multi faceted and dynamic, and situated in local societies and personal biographies as well as the risks and hazards of the late modernity<sup>10</sup>(Hollway & Jefferson1997). To get this discussion started, we need a more including definition of these identities, as opposed to seeing them as simply physical signs identifying people as members of different groups, I will see them as social roles, linked to way of life and being important ingredients in the everyday struggle for power and resources (Pain 2001b).

Within the sphere of human geography that calls itself “social geography” everything begins with the individual and its role in society and in trivial, daily situations. This is where the social reproduction, of place and of identity, takes place. Social geographers tend to focus their attention on certain social relations, particularly class, gender, sexuality, race, age and disability (Pain 2001b:chap 1). What makes these relations so special? The easy answer is that they are part of every person's life, and this gives those who control what it means, how it is interpreted, to be a man or woman or a homosexual or a black person, great power. How we interpret these roles, our own and others' varies, both in time and space. They are “...strongly underpinned by power relations and given material circumstances...”(Pain, 2001b:5). In the further I will show how this power may be used, but first we need to establish on what basis these identities are constructed in the first place.

### Sense of place -our interpretation of place identity

Social processes related to identity exist not only on the personal, but also on higher social and geographical scales. In this thesis I will pay special attention to the local place. I will argue that our local place is a crucial part of our personal identity, and a locale for our interpretations. The way we relate to the identity of our local place is through our sense of place.

Place identities will, as with personal identities, be based on relations to others. The starting point is that we need something to identify *with* and *against*. Questions might be raised of what inspires or controls this need, and, further, what the alternative “objects” (in lack of a better word) of identification might be, where or who these come from, and how stable or changing they are.

Our local place is an important object of identification for our personal identity. A place which is called home, and which creates a feeling of comfort, of *belonging* has the ability to make certain qualities of

<sup>10</sup> (Beck 1992)

that place become part of your own identity “(...)the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them” (Rose 1995). This view emphasises the importance of place and feelings related to a certain place, and also the social relations that exist *in* and *across* the place, any place (and maybe especially urban places) do not exist in a vacuum.

First, what is specific about a place, its identity, is always formed by the juxtaposition and the co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce. Moreover, and this is the really important point, a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider than and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place.  
(Massey 1995:168)

Thus, the social practices and relations in a local place will always be situated in a bigger context, but the awareness of our own place in the world, our representations of what a place is, used to give meaning to places close and distant, are created in a the local place. The local place in which we live must be considered as a locale where the individual experiences and participates in discursive and other social praxis that has crucial influence upon her sense of place, which becomes a vital source for social identification. I will argue that this social identity provides possibilities and limitations when “choosing” strategies for coping with 'fear of crime'.

### Coping strategies -Their background and consequences

We have established that fear of crime has a many-faceted background, and that it to a large degree is created by how people perceive and talk about crime, how 'fear of crime' is used as a metaphor for other anxieties.

In the further I will try to exemplify what consequences and other practical implications these realisations may have, especially concerning coping strategies that people may develop. In so doing, I also hope to tie the abstract theory I have presented so far closer to my model of analysis.

If we measure the increase in fear during the he last half of the 21<sup>th</sup> century by the number of security devices or the (increased) number of reports of crime from the mass media, the increase certainly is obvious (Ellin 2001). Answering to this perceived increase in the threat of crime and violence the public, in the form of single individuals or communities on different levels, have steadily constructed new social practices as means of defence.

Protection of private property vary from installing personal security devices of all kinds, from security gates, burglar bars in windows, alarm systems, barbed wire and the like, to flame-throwers on cars to



fight of car-jackers<sup>11</sup>. On the community level, there is a big trend of fencing off whole communities<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand, means for feeling safe do not necessarily have to constitute physical barriers. The feeling of safety might as well have to do with knowledge or some feeling that in some way contributes to a persons well-being, such as self-respect or a sense of belonging. The next few paragraphs will describe a few of these strategies. It is difficult to categorize coping strategies, but Smith (Smith 1987) sums up types of reactions as ranging from the individual to the communal, from 'private' to 'public' minded, from personally protected 'target hardening' to collectively oriented territoriality. In academic literature it is also common to *describe* personal strategies (and evaluate their consequences) as opposed to give *advice* for social and policing policy. From my point of view I would also like to add a distinction between discursive and purely material social practices.

Again I will make my point of departure in a short literature review. I will start with what has been the “traditional” strategy, namely policing. I will then move on to those involving personal initiative, last I will go into collectively initiated strategies.

### ***Policing strategies***

From a governmental perspective strengthened policing is often the most obvious reply to intensified demand for protection against crime. Even though this thesis not is concerned with or capable of giving policy advice, I will still comment upon two issues concerning policing. Namely what impact different kinds of policing may have upon fear of crime, and how different (strongly) 'branded' policing strategies may find their way into the civil society and re-emerge there in the form of different quasi-police projects.

### ***Policing theory***

To create some perspective for the following discussion, I need to shortly describe these strategies in their “original setting”, that is in “official” literature that is being thought in police academies and implemented by police forces around the world. The first distinction we need to make is between “traditional” and “progressive”/“new” policing tactics, very often being under the umbrella of 'community policing'. The traditional strategy (and perception) of police work is described by Clifford Shearing as “bandit catching”, involving the following characteristics:

They [the police] get reports of crime (typically from victims), which they then attempt to 'solve' by identifying, and bringing before a court of law, the person(s) who committed the crime. They do this by gathering information from victims and 'informers'. If the court finds the person guilty, some

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/9812/11/flame.thrower.car/>

<sup>12</sup> See for example (Landman et.al. 2002)

form of punishment is typically imposed. This work of the police typically requires the use of, or at least the threat of physical force.  
(Shearing 1998:1)

From this point of view policing is simply about order maintenance, and the means to create and measure the success of good policing concerns the effectiveness in which this task is fulfilled.

The one alternative police strategy given most attention since the beginning of the nineties must be New York City's Mayor Rudolph Guilliani's *Zero Tolerance*. Through a massive crackdown on all crime, with a special attention on petty (or 'quality of life') crimes such as urinating and drinking alcohol in public, loitering and walking dogs unleashed, the Mayor's office claims to have reduced crime by 57% in Guilliani's time as mayor<sup>13</sup>. Critics raise questions over the policy's actual responsibility for this number and, more importantly, even though the crime reduction has happened, the policy have also severely increased the public's mistrust in the police, particularly among minority communities (Della Guistina & Silverman 2001).

The question that raises is what this may teach us about fighting crime and at the same time fighting fear of crime, or at least not worsening it. The answers usually involve civic participation in some way. Silverman and Della-Giustina (Della Guistina & Silverman 2001) proposes that a focus on the fine balance between crime reduction and community satisfaction is the right way to go, writing of zero tolerance, but agitating for foot patrols and *community policing*. Les Johnston points out problems with illegal vigilantism becoming more prevalent in a world where there is a steady increase in the competition between different suppliers of security services. To avoid these kinds of activities we must apply what he calls 'optimal policing', where the police are held to account for conditions of accountability, effectiveness and justice, and at the same time allowing the public to engage in informal/autonomous actions as long as this is deployed within this same model (Johnston 2001). From others the increased heterogeneity of policing has received criticism. In Loader's view not only the fortified suburbs of Mike Davis's Los Angeles (Davis 1992), but also other parts of private security, such as private guards do more harm than good, in that "they are defensive, individuated responses to a host of structurally generated public insecurities" (Loader 1997:156). Meaning that defending one self with fences, security gadgets and private guards may very well be a rational response to actual threats, but that the following consequences of escalating social differences, and breakdown of social life by far out-weights the gain. He concludes that 'private security' actually is an oxymoron.

The most consistent, most ambitious project which is based upon thoughts related to these is the

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/rwg/html/bio.html>

Chicago Alternative Policing Project (CAPS). The goals and means of this project are as follows: Patrolling officers have been given relatively long-time assignments in each beats to be able to relate closer to the different areas. The entire department has been trained in “problem-solving”, which includes a focus on crime not as isolated incidents, but as larger problems which demands focus on both victims, offenders and the locations of crime to be “solved”. Other deliverers of city services are involved to support the police in these problem solving efforts. The whole project is related to the community through meetings between police and the communities in beat meetings and district advisory committees. These projects are again supported by the CAPS Implementation Office, and the whole project is evaluated by an academic team led by Professor Wesley G Skogan (Hartnett & Skogan 1997) The project has by its own latest evaluation (of which there have been ten), been most successful in agency partnerships and reorganisation, less successful on public involvement, and least successful in problem-solving (Consortium 2004).

Concluding from this we might say that fear of crime is not well combated by reactive/“bandit-catching” policing itself. I claim so not because of a lack of initiative or ideas, but because the whole idea of fear of crime being something which may be combated, lacks understanding for and solutions related to greater social problems. Resulting from this, the whole body of policing and theory related to police work is imbued with new reasons for fear of crime.

Another point is how police ideas intrude into civil life, there to be implemented by civil actors (for example, but not only, private guard companies) that may lack the necessary knowledge and awareness of public responsibility for the intrusion into the socio-spatial life that policing inevitably is. Again, the best example of such strategies are those involving, or being inspired by, Zero Tolerance (ZT) thoughts. This is not one uniform strategy, the inspiration sources for these kinds of strategies are as manifold as their interpretations and practical implementations. From it's beginning in Wilson and Kelling's “broken windows” theory<sup>14</sup> it's meaning have been reproduced so many times that today it is most useful to understand it as some sort of slogan, being very popular among some politicians and private security providers. Those who advocate ZT, “argue -and make no excuse for doing so -that the police must be much more assertive, confident, even aggressive in maintaining order and supporting communities wracked by crime, fear and insecurity” (Dixon 2000:3) Having “defined” ZT in this way, the next question is how these strategies have gained such impact and popularity. Related to South-Africa, Dixon asks:

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<sup>14</sup> See (Kelling & Wilson)

Why then has zero tolerance become such a feature of the debate about policing in South Africa, a country with vivid recent experience of policing motivated by policies of the most extreme racial and political intolerance?

(Dixon 2000:4)

His answer is that ZT works as a “silver bullet solution” for some prominent politicians and police officials who need quick solutions to South-Africa's major crime problem. I will argue that other actors in need of quick solutions to their own acute problems reach for the same solutions, I get back to this in the analysis chapter.

### ***Personal strategies***

Responses to personally felt fear of crime come in eternal varieties. What they do have in common is that they all in some way has an impact on the use of space. In the further I will apply Pain's (Pain 2001b) classification scheme of spatially related impacts of fear on crime. She makes divisions between *avoidance*, *resistance*, *precaution* and *communal impacts*. I find this model to be useful since it situates the reactions/strategies in spatial and social contexts. I see these in relation to the social identities discussed earlier.

#### *Avoidance*

The two groups most often stigmatised as being frightened have also often been related to strategies of avoidance, as Smith points out “Consistent with their generally higher levels of fear, it is the elderly and (especially) women whose lives are the most restricted by anxiety about crime. The main reaction of the frightened elderly is often simply never to go out” (Smith 1987:1). Other less drastic strategies of avoidance may include staying indoors at night, seeking alternative routes when going out to avoid certain places, or seeking alternative ways of transportation such as driving a private car instead of using public transportation. What all these strategies have in common is their limiting effect on the use of space for groups commonly perceived as “weak”, adding to their social exclusion, in the worst case leaving them “spatially impaired”. Such a limitation will most probably seriously reduce the quality of life for these people, since it robs them of many possibilities of social participation. The impacts on local society should also be calculated in, a depression of community action caused by a reduced involvement of the certain groups may drastically weaken local democracy.

#### Precaution

Strategies of precaution may involve a less drastic limitation of social and spatial expressions than completely avoiding certain situations, but some measures still lead to serious changes in a society. I have mentioned personal strategies involving fortification and private policing and the consequences

they may have for societies. Other strategies of precaution like dressing modestly and avoiding eye contact with strangers may have less collective consequences, but all the more for the individual.

### *Resistance*

Some writers have challenged the view of certain groups as “weak”, criticising the stigmatisation as (intentionally or unintentionally) created by society. Hille Koskela (1997) challenges the “normal” interpretation of women as fearful by studying what she labels the 'spatial boldness' of women in Finland, asking not about what they fear, but about why they are *not* afraid, basing this assumption on (i) that women's fear partly is a reflection of gendered power structures in the wider society and (ii) that there exists a relatively high level of gender equality in Scandinavia. She does find that many women in Helsinki do express a great deal of courage, and she identifies four main categories of expressed boldness: reasoning, cultural relativity, taking possession of space, and social skills. *Reasoning* involves convincing oneself that there is nothing to fear. *Cultural relativity* requires the person to have experienced other places or cultures to be more frightening than the person's home or everyday locality, and thereby creating a contrast which sheds a comparatively positive light on the place called home. *Social skills* are social abilities which enables the person to have confidence in other people, resolve her own situations by being able to interpret who is dangerous and who is not, be able to act bravely in order to help others, increasing her own courage in the process. *Taking possession of space* is closely connected with feeling at home in a place, to know your environment, and to actively use that space. I find this last category of expressions of courage to be especially interesting for two reasons. Firstly it most clearly is a case of (re)defining and (re)producing *local* space, leaving it safer and more “homely”. Secondly it is heavily dependent on the local (home) place's community spirit, which may result in astonishing results:

Accordingly, feelings of safety and boldness are connected feelings of strong community spirit and empowerment. When the sense of of empowerment is strong, people may even feel safer in an area where they know the risk of violence is higher than in surrounding areas(...)  
(Koskela 1997:304)

This leads us on to strategies that involve the power of collectively produced place identity.

### ***Coordinated and identity based strategies***

Coordinated reactions may draw upon powerful resources, namely those of collective identity and the strong discourses of belonging and exclusion.

A feeling of ownership over local and personal space, strong local ties, and community spirit among neighbours all enhance people's sense of local belonging which can offset fear of crime.  
(Pain 1995:10)

Applying this local sense of place charges the local place not only with symbols of identification, but also constitutes a forum in which to vent one's fears and anxieties, and also, very importantly, a basis for the construction of the 'dangerous other', which constructs the place where one lives into somewhere relatively safe, and identifies the outsider which needs to be excluded. In the further I will describe two main types of strategies that may be constructed on the basis of the political power of these identity constructions.

Of course a coordinated reaction to fear of crime is not necessarily good or right. As with all other reactions, it requires the chosen strategies to be based upon socially sensible and sensitive reasoning. An example of the opposite happened outside Durban in South Africa, and has been described and commented upon by Richard Ballard (Ballard 2004). Reacting to informal settlements and vagrants bordering to their suburb, the male inhabitants turned their area in to fort, applying guns, radios, trenches and roadblocks. Ballard identifies their object of protection not only as the value of their houses, but as their "suburban sense of place". They rallied around certain perceptions of themselves as defenders and the homeless people as "attackers". These perceptions certainly involved bad judgements of the relationship between the actual risk and applied strategies, and it shows the power of collective identity.

*The need to know and tell*

One way to try to render harmless the feelings of insecurity we meet in our daily life, may be trying to understand how local incidents find their reason in a bigger context. Sparks, Girling and Loader writes:

“(...) we need to discover a vocabulary and a way of inquiry capable of tracing the connections between situated experiences of fear (or uncertainty or precariousness) and the larger transformations of culture and economy that surround and penetrate the locale and render it more or less safe or dubious for us as a habitat.”  
(Sparks 2001:886)

This creates a connection between local practices and historical background and economical and political structures. More than that, the realisation is crucial in understanding how talk about crime works. Talk about crime, as mentioned before, very often involves talk of places, often with a certain stigma, more than that, it involves stories about things far away, often with references to bigger structures and times in history, often being second hand, or inspired by other stories communicated through the media or other public broadcasters (Sparks 2001). The interesting aspect of these stories, they being local or taken from a bigger setting is the amount of trust people put in them to explain crime in the given local setting. Together with the feeling of fear being so strongly locally embedded, this gives the stories great power of explanation. To listen to such a story or, even more important, to

construct and tell your own story, is an extremely important way of venting fears, anxieties and frustrations about fear. Thus crime-talk is dense with these stories and, not least, prospects of a better future and strategies about how to get there.

The complex structures of meaning created in this kind of text creates obvious challenges for analysis, discussed elsewhere in this thesis. But, taking the effort, crime-talk holds enormous amounts of information about the values, priorities and constructions of inside-outside of people in a given society.

### The local identity as basis for inclusion and exclusion

Place identity also becomes part of important political processes, it becomes a political act to claim belonging to a certain group, and furthermore, and more importantly it becomes a political act to define who is *not* part of a certain group (Rose 1995).

Pain (Pain 2001a) investigates the possible results of identity politics through a theoretical framework that emphasises *social exclusion*. The point being that one might both exclude and be excluded on the basis of these constructions and interpretations. They might affect both actual criminals, people perceived to be criminals and people being victims of either crime or fear of crime. I will argue that this social, and at times also spatial, exclusion of certain groups serves as a strategy to cope with crime. Who become the victims of the exclusion varies, if they are truly criminal individuals posing a real threat of victimisation to the people who excluding them, or if they are excluded because of their belongingness to certain constructed groups.

The basis for the construction of 'the other' may be even more politically loaded than identities we belong to ourselves. In Edward Said's concept 'orientalism', the identities we construct are not based upon any real attributes of the groups, but rather they are constructed as opponents to our own identity, and loaded with our emotions, fear and fantasies, thus the construction adds to our own sense of place (Said 1978). This sense of place tends to be relational and comparative, specially about the fragility and relative peace and order of one's own place (Sparks et.al. 2001).

Stories of crime told in local places are loaded with the identification of perpetrators, it seems imperative to find someone to blame for experienced crime. Different 'folk devils' may be identified both inside and outside a community.

### **Towards a model of analysis**

The superior goal of this chapter has been to show how fear of crime is related to more than incidents than those that by current law are "criminal". I have described different social and geographical

processes that are part of the individual's identification and interpretation of incidents, people etcetera as possible threats. Further I have tried to imply how these processes are interconnected with each other and situated in the local place. I will bring together these connections, and in the process of this outline a model of analysis.

### *Experience*

The experiences that we relate to crime and which constitutes the basis for our fear of crime, may far exceed incidents “officially” defined as criminal, or for that sake described as crime by the individual herself in the first place. Such experiences might include different annoyances, impressions of certain places as scary etcetera. Many of these experiences will happen in our local place and be given flavour by our experience of that place, which is interpreted through out sense of place. Experiences may also be relayed to us as stories told by others.

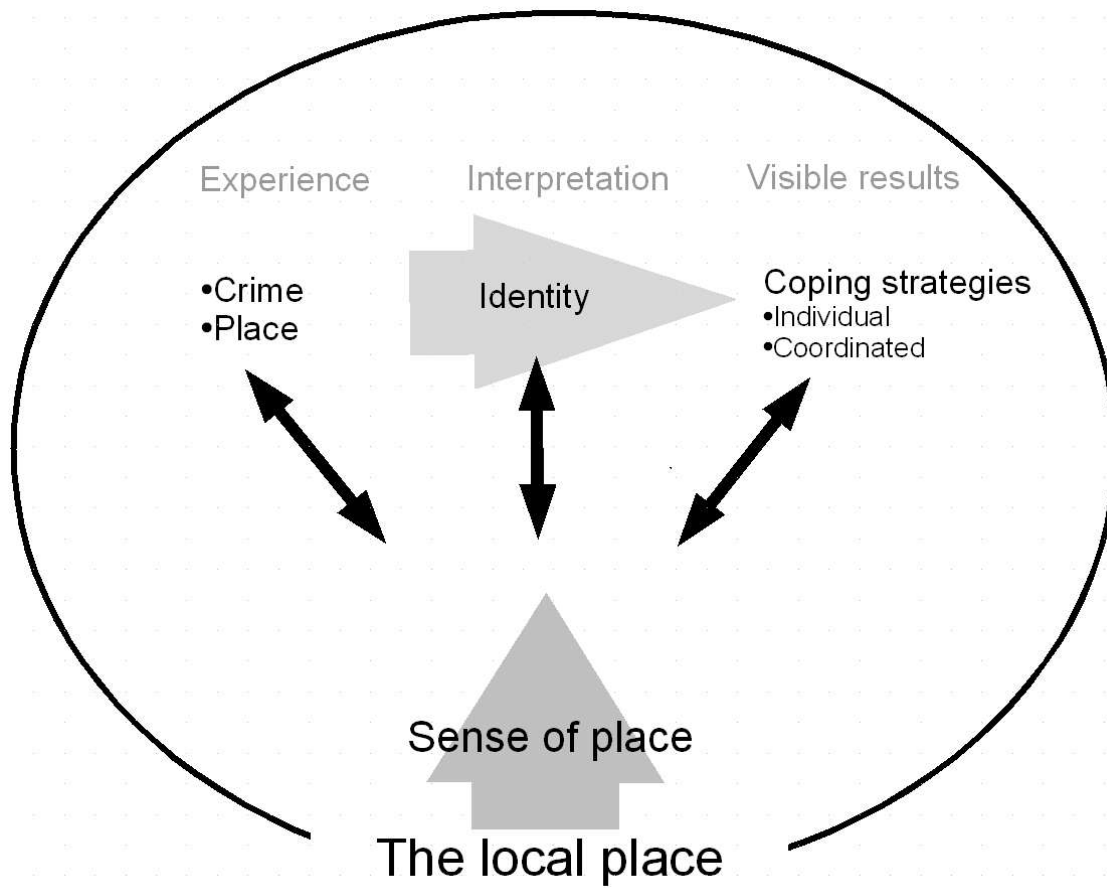
### *Interpretation*

All experiences are interpreted differently by every individual. This interpretation explains the “difference” between the “actual” risk of being victimised and the experienced fear. I have tried to highlight identity as a very important agent in these interpretations. It is through our identities that we interpret our world. One very important shaper of our personal identity is our impression of the place in which we live, that is our sense of place.

### *Visible results*

The result of our interpretations are the coping strategies that we choose to implement. The strategies might be purely personal, or coordinated in some way. Further, they might be purely physical, or include devices based on language or identity. The strategies are the clearest visible results of people's assessments of their experiences of crime and fear. The acts carried out here are expressions of this whole process. Following these acts will in the further be my point of access to people's considerations which I understand as expressions of parts of their identities.





*Illustration 2 Social and geographical phenomena related to fear of crime, their interconnectedness and how they are situated in the local place*



## 4. Method

### **A critical approach applying ethnography and discourse analysis**

Due to the characteristics of my case, I have chosen to use a qualitative methodological approach in this thesis. Doing a study on 'fear of crime', my main concern is not with phenomena that are objectively observable, not to say quantifiable. The social practices for which I seek explanation find their meaning in the complex social relations created by the actions, thoughts and feelings of my informants, situated in a particular place. My access to this social world is through the stories I have been told, and the things I have seen during my time in Observatory. I will interpret my collected data through the use of reflexive, interpretive methods and discourse analysis.

Doing academic studies based on close social relations creates certain responsibilities. Towards the academic society, my responsibility is created by me leaving my data so submitted to interpretations on all stages. I realise that this thesis is nothing more than my interpretation of other's stories, and the reader will necessarily add her own filter when reading. This makes the control over and transparency into all stages of the process through transparency of fieldwork and methods vital.

The nature of my research also creates a responsibility towards my informants who's willingness to open a small part of their lives to me, has made possible the collection of such complex data. It is of my primary concern to make all efforts to protect the privacy and safety of the people involved in this thesis.

Based on these realisations the main focus of this chapter is on the role of the researcher, his background, his relation to informants and case and how to make these kind of highly subjectively filtered data available and useful as research results, to create a trustworthy local ethnography. I do realise that compared to better resourced research projects my ethnography will be very limited when it comes to gathering of data, and that this may brake with the ideal idea of such a study. My study will not be able to encompass the multitude of methods that often hallmark descriptions of ethnographic method (see for example (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994)). I hope I can compensate for this by limiting my research to questions and concepts that may be answered through the material that I have been able to gather.

The structure of this chapter is associated to the chronology of the research process. I will start with the background for my choice of case, before I go into the different ways I have been collecting data, including considerations around the use of the different collection methods. Further I will consider my

responsibility towards the receivers of this thesis, that is proofing the quality of my work. The next part describes and discusses the my methods of analysis, with emphasis on the use of multiple level analysis and the use of discourse analysis as a pragmatically imported tool of analysis. In the final part I will summarise my methods and conclude on the issue of their usefulness for my thesis.

## **Choosing my case**

### **A place called home**

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I did not choose my case out of a certain theoretical approach or -interest. My concern with the issue was awakened when I spent a semester in Cape Town doing studies at the university and living in the area that turned out to be my case. During this time I got to know the area and I recognised that amongst its specific issues and problems was a society controlling phenomenon that I, as a white, middle-class, heterosexual man from a peaceful area in a rich homogenic society never before had experienced in a place I called home: Fear of crime. In Observatory the most certain part of everyday conversation is concern about the protection against crime. Stories about burglaries, muggings and car brake-inns are as everyday as buying bread and milk, “everyone” has a story to tell about themselves and ten more about people they know or have heard of. From time to time worse stories come about, when someone experiences violence. The story that got my interest started was, as described closer elsewhere in this thesis, when a man got killed during an armed robbery in his workplace. This approach of getting to know the area through living there and creating the emotional links and expectations of safety and familiarity associated with a place called home constitutes a large part of the background for my choices concerning method. Most notably it relates me closely to my case, something which has created a lot of possibilities, but also limitations and problems, more about this in the further.

### **A small case with common characteristics**

In addition to the challenges of getting access to a culturally unfamiliar field, my research is faced with the difficulties of being based on the widely contested phenomena of 'crime' 'fear' and 'fear of crime' (which are further discussed in the theory chapter). In order to grasp these phenomena researchers doing case studies on fear, such as Girling, Loader and Sparks (2001) relates them to place, and then takes the advantage of limiting themselves geographically to one (small) place, and there specifically studying people's responses to crime.

The best means of cutting through the staler polarities into which the discussion of fear has so often decended is to reflect upon the modes of participation and avoidance that people practises in the

ordinary settings of their lives.  
(Sparks et.al. 2001:886}

This being an argument for the limitation of the size of the case, other characteristics of Obs are similar to those of other studies concerned with researching neighbourhood change, crime and disorder. Some of them being: High level of transience and a heterogeneous population, both resulting in a lack of stability. I find these characteristics to be interesting in three ways. Firstly, they are probably typical for areas that also experience an amount of (fear of) crime, secondly it is a point in itself that they are similar to those of other case studies<sup>15</sup>, creating possibilities for comparative research, that by researchers such as Lynn Hancock (Hancock 2001) is seen as purpose fulfilling in this kind of small-scale studies. It also adds to the general transferability of research. Thirdly these characteristics creates an awareness around issues of belonging that I find to be vital in the construction of Obs' (strong) local identity.

### **Collection methods -their possible results and consequences**

Many studies concerned with fear and crime have used diverse collection methods when collecting data, large scale studies have benefited from the possibility of using both quantitative and qualitative collected data to run studies. Some studies have compared the different kinds of data with the goal of testing the “correctness” of informants' qualitative statements (as mentioned in the theory chapter). Since this thesis have no ambitions of researching such relationships, because of both academical interest and the limited resources of the project, my data is limited to text, collected as interviews, observation and newspaper articles. In this paragraph I will describe the particularities of my fieldwork, and further asses these methods' results and consequences for different involved parties.

The close relation to the field which I developed through my first stay in Observatory has been the basis of my motivation in the later work. This has given me advantages in way of easy access to the field through the many people I got to know during the first stay, but I realise that it also entails certain limitations. In the next paragraphs I will describe the different limitations and necessary considerations. I will discuss them in relation to contexts where I found visible, but this does not mean that I don't find a certain consideration applicable to other aspects of data gathering. For instance the ability to be granted access into a society may be most obviously related to observation, and will hence be discussed in that paragraph, even though considerations resulting from this discussion may also be necessary when considering issues concerning Interviews.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example (Sparks et.al. 1998) or (Hancock 2001:kap.2)

### Qualitative interviews -Conduction of interviews and Selection of informants

During my fieldwork I have conducted 17 semi structured interviews with 18 persons (some interviews being follow-ups, some being multiple-respondent interviews). These were conducted in homes and public spaces, mostly lasting between thirty minutes and one hour, one interview lasted for one and a half hour and one was done during and after dinner with the informant's family (closer described as observation below). Some interviews were shorter, with the intention of information gathering, mainly in the early phases of the fieldwork. Most of the interviews were recorded on an MD recorder, transferred to a computer, and transcribed fully. After completing the fieldwork, I imported the text, complete with observation notes, into QSR NVivo (see note below) for analysis.

I found my informants through the “snowball method”, helped along by a few “gatekeepers”, who typically were leaders of different groups in community. The aim has been to identify representatives of differences and particularities. To achieve this I have been looking to find people representing different identities understood in the “traditional” way, that is defined by observable or measurable signifiers such as sex, age, race, physical (dis)abilities, sexual preferences, religious backgrounds, level of education etcetera And further who represent different roles in society reflected in different interests and varying levels of involvement. My greatest problem being to establish contact with people representing those completely without involvement.

Six of my informants are business owners and/or are affiliated with the business' interest organisation in Observatory, called the Obs Business Forum (OBF). These are the people with whom I conducted my first interviews. Most of them are highly visible characters both through their presence in Obs' small and tightly packed CBD and otherwise in society. The CBD is a vital part of Obs' image outwards, with its many characteristic shops offering life-style products, designer clothes, arts and crafts and music, concert venues, variety of bars etcetera, it is the most obvious factor that makes Obs seem special and worth a visit. This means that these people represent something that is special to Obs and thereby may play an important role in the construction of its unifying power. At the same time their commercial interests may interfere with of Obs' place identity in other ways. The reason I first got in contact with this group was that both part of the reason for, and the initiative to, the intensified presence of security personal in observatory (see the background part of this thesis) happened within this group, and their level of involvement in security an other matters in local society was very high at the time when I arrived. These partly collective strategies were and are still the most visible strategies in Obs. Thinking of this group collectively is possible and probably also purpose fulfilling to a certain degree, but the

strategies described above will also at least partly be the fulfilment of their personal strategies. Many of them live in Obs and in this regard security matters that concern others are also part of their everyday lives.

My second big group of informants consists of ordinary citizens. Of the nine people I have interviewed from this group, six are not at all involved in organized community work. This is a low number and may be a weakness in my selection of informants, I tried to get hold of more uninvolved people, but this proved difficult. In the end this might say something about the society in Obs, even though I do not have this documented, a large part of the population are involved in their community.

In addition to these two groups, I have interviewed the leader of Observatory Civic Association, the leader of Obs Business Forum, the councillor of Observatory (and other central areas) and a senior officer in ObsWatch.

Out of my complete selection of informants nine are women, fifteen are white, while four are coloured and one is black, three are international students, one is disabled, four are under thirty, one is over sixty, three practise Islam in their daily life, approximately two are homosexuals, they are pretty equally spread on different types of households (alone, cohabitants, communes), and their material and educational standards vary widely.

This selection of informants is not meant to be representative of the population of Observatory in a statistical way. What I do hope is that it serves as an illustration which includes as much as possible of the heterogeneity of Observatory. Some of the distinctions I have made between people concerning personal “identities” needs further explanation. The proportions of different races, age groups, economic and educational level and the sexes are characteristics that cover all human beings. Even a qualitative study including only twenty people, will probably gain from a certain representativeness with the complete population in the case area concerning these attributes. Subsequently, the relative numbers of informants here is probably not too far from the reality of Observatory, even though I have not been able to verify this, since the Statistics South Africa<sup>16</sup> does not release data on any lower level than the municipality of the City of Cape Town. The available numbers would be totally uninformative for Obs, since the city includes parts not at all representative of Obs and at the same time including a much greater part of the total population.

Concerning the other identities, of which the variations are endless, they are picked for other purposes. My reason for mentioning sexual preferences/identity is partly the homosexuals' visibility in Obs, being

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.statssa.gov.za/>

a pronounced part of the shopping and design scene. Another characteristic which they share with other groups, specifically elders, women and the disabled is their tradition for being perceived as especially vulnerable to criminal victimisation (Valentine 1996), (Pain 2001a). The elders do also have another quality that should interest any researcher doing studies on small places, namely the ability to be aware of changes over time (Pain 1995). The international students were picked because they also are part of a very visible group in Obs, and for their contribution to the heterogeneous culture of Obs. Together with this groups relative wealth, this adds to the night life and bohemian lifestyle of Obs. The Moslems are an important group to understand because they stand out in Observatory by being clumped together in a certain part of the suburb, to a small degree integrating with the rest of society, and living by other familiar and community institutions than the rest of the local society.

I realise that my selection is far from perfect. It lacks the presence of at least one group of people that have gained attention from scholars of social geography about during the nineties, namely those who for some reason are socially excluded (Pain 2001a). In Obs, I would identify the two most obviously excluded groups as the homeless people, or the “Bergies” as they are nicknamed locally, and many young coloured boys. They will both have to play a role in my analysis, but than as they are perceived by others.

Having chosen my informants based on these visible signifiers, I hope to gain more insight into the background to and results of their social identities in the analysis chapter later in this thesis.

### **Observation -Getting access and my attachment to the field**

Observation has been a less organised part of my fieldwork, seldom seeking answers to direct questions, but rather seeking to identify questions for further research through interviews. Especially my first visit to Observatory during the autumn of 2003 (February through June) consisted largely of observation, as well as some interviews with key informants with the purpose of gathering general information about the field rather than interview text meant for further analysis. Six times did I participate in situations which I defined strictly as observation. One was dinner with an informant which is also a leading figure in a certain geographical section of Obs. Another time I spent an evening on patrol with the officers of ObsWatch. Two times did I participate in the meetings of the Obs Business forum, and one with the Obs Civic Association. One evening was spent walking the streets of Observatory with the councillor of the area, getting his narrative of what we saw on the way.

Another type of observation that needs mentioning is my general presence in Obs. Since Obs was not only my field, but also my home for almost a year, some of the time I spent there was inevitably “spare-



time”. After doing interviews at day time, I left my role as a researcher back home, and went “down-Obs” for a beer, a concert or etcetera. In these situations I was a regular citizen of Observatory, not presenting myself as a researcher unless the conversation went in the direction of crime-talk (which by the way happens quite frequently in Obs) and it felt naturally to talk about my work. Since this (going out) crowd in Obs consists of pretty few people, most people after a while knew of my work, and on two occasions this resulted in interviews being scheduled, on both occasions yielding very good results. Apart from that, these trips resulted in no formal data being recorded. Inevitably I received a lot of information and hints that played an important role in my further data collection and work, but since my role as a researcher was blurry, any formal taking of field notes for later reference would be ethically dubious, especially since hidden observation would add nothing important to my already good access to the field (Thagaard 1998).

As mentioned above, I achieved good access to the field, and in all situations where my role as a researcher was clearly defined, I was easily accepted. The background for this generally high level of acceptance surely involves many factors, and all of them were probably not visible to me. The primary reason I have been able to recognise is my role as both an insider and outsider in Obs' society. Getting integrated in the social life of Obs proved pretty easy to me because many cultural aspects belong to a repertoire of cultural and social particularities that apply to societies to which I normally belong or relate to, some of which are more typical to western cities and Observatory alike, than to other parts of the South African Society. On the other hand I was still an outsider when it came to local political interests and agendas (of which there are many), and was probably not perceived as a political or otherwise threat by anyone. This may also be due to me being quite young (25/26 at the time) and appearing even younger. I often felt I was perceived as somewhat naïve, but this may actually have had a positive effect on the degree of access I was allowed into people's lives and stories.

Still, there are many aspects of South African culture (some particularities of which is discussed in the “Background” chapter of this thesis) to which I am completely estranged, and even though many of these may be less visible in Observatory than other places in Cape Town and the country in general, their institutions are still there. An example is the degree of physical force many South Africans are willing to apply when it comes to fighting crime, which in cultures I know better would be much less accepted.

Observation involves an even closer relation to the informants than Interviews, and this in its turn creates particular possibilities and limitations. Notably, it drastically reduced my capabilities of

observing my case with the detachment of an outsider, creating both emotional ties to people and places and also becoming personally involved in issues of local politics. Apart from this, consequences of this loss of detachment should not be misinterpreted:

Most importantly, this should not be taken to mean that because of this one will knowingly distort the data that one is collecting. If one does so, then we are no longer speaking of loss of detachment, but of research fraud.  
(Dowler 2001:158)

What the intensive nature of my fieldwork does require of me is to make *reflexive accounts* (Altheide et.al. 1998) of my own role concerning my background and in relation to Obs That is to constantly reflect over my own thoughts and feelings towards field and informants, and over the social processes in which I participate, being aware that these elements do inform the data generated, as well as their interpretation and analysis (Punch 2001). Some general remarks about this reflexivity are being made in this chapter, more specific considerations will follow in the analysis.

Weighting the limitations and responsibilities against the possibilities I gained in terms of good and relatively easy access to the field, I do consider myself lucky to have been given the possibilities I achieved. In retrospect I also consider my trip home between the initial and the interview part of my fieldwork to have been a sound measure against “going native”, meaning that “(...)the scientist doesn't get the distance to the culture necessary to be able to assess the culture from the outside.” (Thagaard, 1998 :71, my translation).

### Getting close -Privacy and security of informants

The two main issues that must be assessed here are the privacy of my sources and the impact which my work may have (had) on their lives. Both issues created problems which demanded attention during my fieldwork.

During my interviews I told all informants about my project, and at the same time asked if they had any problems with having their real names displayed in the thesis, also informing them of my plan of “publishing” the finished product in Obs by sending a copy to the local library. The overall reaction to this included two things: Firstly none initially had reactions to me using their names. Secondly quite a few urged me to make a copy available. I found this reassuring until one day after an interview there was a message from the man I had interviewed on my answering machine. He sound upset, and asked my to give him a call as soon as possible, which I did. He had though through his statements and was afraid he would sound racist, which to him would be severe since racism is a very sensitive issue in Observatory and South Africa. There and then i promised to give him a false name in the thesis, but

after thinking it through I concluded that since Observatory is so small and transparent, all efforts to anonymise the man would be useless, even if anonymising the rest of my informants as well. On two other occasions interviews towards the end turned into more informal conversations, resulting in the informants forgetting my role as a researcher, and suddenly realising that the recorder was still running and regretting things they had said, finding them inappropriate or plainly irrelevant. Leaving this sensitive information out of the thesis would remove very interesting stories. I have therefore decided on two measures to ensure the anonymity of my informants. This thesis will be produced in two different versions. One full version over which I will keep strict publication control, and one censored version for uncontrolled publication through the Internet. In this last version certain paragraphs will be removed, replaced by a note announcing that information has been left out for the privacy and security of my informants. Secondly I will have to brake my promise of publishing the complete thesis in Observatory, and rather consider a shortened article when the work with this thesis is complete.

I do recognise the ethical implications of these measures, considering both the trustworthiness of the research and my informants' feeling of being included in the process, but considerations of privacy and security must be the primary priority.

### Secondary sources

Not all relevant issues have been covered by the information I have been able to gather through interviews and observation. On issues that demand an outside view of Obs, I have used newspaper articles as illustrations and statistical material as documentation. I assume that these secondary sources add to the trustworthiness of my thesis when the information they present correspond with my interview data.

### **Ethics towards the academic society -Proofing the quality of qualitative data**

Qualitative data may not be measured along the conventional lines of *validity and generalisability*. These measures are based upon the idea that the researcher has direct access to observe and describe the world she is studying, such is not the ontological approach of this thesis. How then, do we proof the quality of qualitative data? Some *poststructuralists* such as Foucault<sup>17</sup> have chosen to leave behind the possibility of creating anything more than stories, perceiving science as “just another” discourse. By that we achieve to deprive science of it's capability to produce knowledge of any higher value than any other storyteller, I find this nihilistic view unfit for science. Other scholars of methodology have developed different alternatives to the positivist concept of validity. Some have used the concepts of

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<sup>17</sup> See for example (Foucault 1980)

*trustworthiness* and *transferability*. This model is dependent on the researcher making explicit account for the foundation of the knowledge (Thagaard 1998). It makes open-ended research and permits the researcher to focus widely on other themes in her methodology, such as ethics. Yet other models have created standards of *purpose* of scientific results. To be valid in this way we must ask if knowledge is useful, if it serves any (political) purpose. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (1994) this *Critical Theory* combines an interpreting approach with “a pronounced interest for the for critical questioning of the realised social reality. It is sometimes referred to as Critical Hermeneutics” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 1994:176, my translation). This creates goals for science, not in finding any objective truth, but rather in being political, in serving the better good of society. In this thesis the validity (in lack of a better, general word) of collected data, is understood as serving a purpose, but I agree with Altheide and Johnson that:

However, there will be no satisfactory view about quality ethnography without a clear statement about validity that goes beyond the researcher's purpose or ideology.  
(Altheide et.al. 1998:290)

Hence, validity will in this thesis be understood along two lines. In addition to the critical theorist's demand for purpose, I will, as earlier mentioned, strive for transparency in all stages of my project and be aware of my own situation in the process. This also constitutes my claim to possible value of my work for other scientists, I do not strive for generalisability since my selection of informants not is chosen with that in mind. I rather hope that the information I provide about the different stages of my work supplies readers of this thesis with the necessary background to determine it's transferability into their work.

### **Discourse analysis and hermeneutic interpretation**

Before I start my account of the tools I will use in the further analysis, I need to clarify one thing, namely: What is it that I'm looking for? What is the nature of the social and cultural structures and praxis that constitute the society of my case? And how will I get access to meaning of these different structures and praxis? In my model of analysis I place them in relation to each other in time. In this chapter I will assess my *access* to them. I will look at different levels of interpretation to achieve this access, and connect these levels to the different structures and practices mentioned before, dividing them by their social and discursive characteristics. But first I need to clarify my methodological and practical approach to the concepts of *discourse analysis* and *multiple level analysis*.

#### **Discourse analysis -conditions for use and practical implications**

In the theory chapter I positioned this thesis in the the huge and complex theoretical landscape of

discourse theory through reviewing my take on concepts of imperative importance for this ontological view, such as:

- Is language constituting of and/or constituted by materiality?
- What is the relationship between discursive- and other social praxis?
- What is the role of the subject and its identity?

The answers to the first two questions are positioning in relationship to major debates within academia that are results of what is often called “the linguistic turn”. The position taken in these two questions decides whether the philosophical and theoretical foundation for a certain academic work is compatible with the use of discourse analysis (DA), and further what direction of DA.

In discourse analysis *theory* and *methodology* is chained together, and you have to accept the foundational philosophical premises to use discourse analysis as methodology in empirical research.

(Jørgensen & Phillips 1999:12 my translation, emphasis in original)

As soon as these basic premises are accepted, Jørgensen & Phillips suggests that elements not only from different takes on discourse analysis, but also from other perspectives on methodology and other social theory may be imported and used (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). In order to use theory that describes social phenomena that are not discursive though, you need to apply a kind of DA that accepts that meaning exists outside of the linguistic sphere. Since discursive praxis in this thesis is considered to be but one kind out of many kinds of social praxis, and social praxis to consist of both purely social *and* discursive elements, my further creation of an analytic tool will be based upon this pragmatic view. This allows me to pragmatically create a powerful tool adapted specifically to my case. In the further I will base my construction of this tool upon (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999 Chap.5}, which again is based upon *Critical discourse theory*, strengthened with analytical tools and other concepts where Jørgensen and Phillips' find this direction to be underdeveloped. Elements are taken from other directions such as the *discourse theory* of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and the *discourse psychology* of amongst others Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995). I will be especially interested in Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of the discursive construction of social identity.

In this thesis I will also interface discourse analysis with hermeneutic method, to be able to achieve access to meaning of social praxis that are not commonly perceivable.

I will also import theory on a substantial level to create a “backdrop” for further analysis. I will view this backdrop as a kind of “structures” consisting of discourse orders that constitute a (though

changeable) universe that the participants in the discursive battle may draw upon in their construction of meaning in their social world. I will compose this backdrop especially for this thesis, and I will base it upon secondary literature, in the form of the academic literature describing the field of “fear and crime” that I present in the theory chapter. Against this backdrop I will I will seek to identify different discourses to see how they are used to give meaning to different social praxis, so as to identify the spheres of the fiercest discursive battles and thereby be able to identify different outcomes from this discursive battle.

### Interpretation on multiple levels

Of the complete amount of social praxis that constitutes my case, a lot is not of such a nature that it would be purpose fulfilling to analyse it discursively. To make sensible interpretations of this, I need to apply a method that seeks to uncover meaning of actions that is not obviously visible to either observers or even the person doing the action herself.

According to Fangen (in (Thagaard 1998:36-38)) who's theory is rooted in hermeneutics, interpretation of actions<sup>18</sup> is possible on three levels. *Interpretation of first degree* is the researchers interpretation of action through participation. Through participation the researcher has the possibility to experience feelings and atmosphere around a case. On this level the researcher and the informant will have equal possibilities to interpret different kinds of action. Exemplifying from my case, I have observed and been told about in interviews different strategies used to cope with crime, such as installing burglar bars in windows, avoiding certain areas at certain times etcetera *Interpretation of the second degree* implies to reveal the symbolic meaning of actions. In my case this may be that the strategies applied to fight of burglars more correctly are meant to help the person to cope with *fear* of crime. *Interpretation of the third degree* implies the uncovering of the actions' real or underlying meaning, in order to find reasons for actions not acknowledged by the informants themselves. Looking for these hidden reasons for the need of protection is, from my point of view, crucial to create understanding for the phenomena which I research. Therefore my enquiry will be into aspects of the social identities of my informants, as mediated by and as creator of discourses. To describe and understand these identities, I will look at both their symbolic meaning as expressed in interviews (as text) and also through the strategies used by my informants. It is crucial to consider both these sides of social praxis to, as Fangen points out, action must also be analysed as praxis with severe consequences, Thagaard writes:

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It is therefore important that actions may be assessed both from their communicative meaning and in relationship with the consequences which the actions may lead to.  
(Thagaard 1998:37, my translation)

### **Applying methodological concepts to my theoretical model of analysis**

How will discourse analysis and interpretation on different hermeneutical levels help me understand the social structures of fear and crime? To explain this, I will apply them to the model of analysis which I outlined in the theory chapter of this thesis.

The first level of analysis is applicable to the observable social praxis which I in the theory chapter identified as the (though not final) *result* of the social praxis related to identity and Fear (of crime), namely *strategies* constructed to fight fear of crime.

The processes which constitute the *background* to these strategies, are related to the second and third level of analysis, and often have the nature of discursive praxis. The most easy accessible of these two is the expressed fear of crime. What separates concerns *with fear of crime* from concerns with *crime itself*, it that it is more seldom expressed, and therefore deeper hidden, and followingly is much more a product than a producer of fear discourses. The fear visibly exists in everyday talk, but how it is expressed varies widely from person to person. The question which then emerges is: What decides the importance of fear for the social praxis of different individuals? My answer to this is *social identities*. They are, as described in the theory chapter, deciding for the construction of fear of crime in every individual, and, as mentioned above, they must be interpreted on the third level of interpretation. I see them, “hinge concepts” of the whole model. In real life I think they are vital in the construction of how people experience crime and further what kind of strategies they develop to cope. This level is also where (fear)discourses are most potent, since these identities generally are less conscious than other shapers of fear.

Identities themselves are also interpretable on different levels As mentioned above I used a “shallow” interpretation of identities to identify informants for interviews, in the analysis part I will seek to identify more hidden levels of identities through analysing their causes and effects.

Importantly, I do not claim to have equal access to the three levels of interpretation, rather my access to “deeper” levels will be through the more “shallow” or “direct” levels.

### **Summary**

My goal in this chapter has been to create a tool suitable for analysis of “fear of crime” situated in a particular community. I have tried to focus upon two imperative choices which has to be made to

successfully complete such a study. The first one being the choice of the case itself, concerning both particularities about the case, and the access which the researcher is able to achieve. The second one being to select methods suitable for the identification and study of the meaning and relations of social and discursive praxis, and the reproduction of such.

To face the challenges created by these two questions I have chosen to study a small case with characteristics which I recognise from places that are part of my everyday life. I have done my study through a prolonged field study, applying qualitative methods, selected to be sensitive enough to reveal the social and political causes of fear. I have been looking for the reflections of these causes in people's narratives and the power structures of society. To gather my data I have chosen to do an ethnographic study, to interpret the data I have applied hermeneutics and discourse analysis as my tools. Through the the interpretation that these methods allow for, I hope to have gained insight into a small piece of what I see as the primary movers and shapers of social praxis in any given society namely *social- and place identity*.

What my chosen methods have in common is an interest in, and capabilities to perform *critical research*, that is an awareness of an and willingness to use science's ability not only study, but also change the social world.

#### **NOTE: Qualitative Data Analysis -An index-based approach with QSR NVivo**

Early in my research I saw the advantages of using a computer to help me handle my data. More specifically, I realised that a program made for such use might help me to keep track of the huge amount of categories that my complex and partly messy data after a while constituted. After fiddling around with a few different programs (looking for an open-source<sup>19</sup> alternative) I ended up with QSR's program NVivo. QDA programs exist in a many variations with different functionalities and possibilities (and limitations) for qualitative research that I will not go deeply into here. I will stick to my chosen program, and quickly outline the methodological features and consequences of using it.

At first glance, the most smashing effect of such a program is the possibility to “code and retrieve” data in a very effective way by giving pieces of text labels that my later be retrieved through different kinds of search tolls. Or, from my experience, often better through the visual impressions that NVivo creates of the data. The possibility to work in multiple windows showing different pieces of text, coding trees

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<sup>19</sup> By “open-source” is (usually) meant a program where the source code is open to anyone interested, reflecting the developers' willingness both to give it (and working ready-compiled versions of the program) away for free, and also to participate in and contribute to the “community work” of the global open-source community. For further information see <http://www.opensource.org/> or <http://www.fsf.org/>.



and search results is a very effective way of getting different impressions of the material which I find to be very useful indeed when looking for identifiable concepts, for example in the form of discourses, in large amounts of data. Performing such operations brings the research into another phase than simply organising text, namely conceptualisation. NVivo offers the possibility of combining these two layers (textual and conceptual) together, through further organising the labels (or “nodes” in QSR terminology) into trees and ordering these into hierarchies that may be linked to other pieces of information (text, pictures, sound etcetera) or labelled further. This creates an “index system” that, according to Richards and Richards (Richards 1998:236) , will “(...) *allow the user to create and manipulate concepts and explore and store emerging ideas*” creates a link between the the organisation of data and the construction of theory. The methodical and methodological consequences of QDA will not be discussed at length here, let me just remark two things. I found the efficiency the program allows for the organisation of thoughts to be not only convenient, but almost essential when analysing large amounts of text containing meaning on many levels. At the same time I see the possibility that the program might create a “black box” effect, if the researcher is not concious enough about about all steps in process, notably when it comes to sorting data, and from time to time leaving something behind.



## 5. Crime and Fear in Observatory

In this analytic part of my thesis, I will describe everyday relations to crime and fear in Observatory. I have chosen to do this through three different chapters, each giving descriptions and reflections on different aspects of this everyday life. In the conclusion, I hope to combine these three aspects and show their relevance for how crime and fear of crime is situated in the local place of Observatory. The three chapters stand in close relation to the model of analysis which I presented in the theory chapter. Chapter A describes personal experiences of crime and fear, chapter B describes the importance of the local place as a locale for all the three main processes experiencing, interpreting and implementing coping strategies. Chapter C deals with coordinated coping strategies. The chapters all deal with the thesis' main point: The social and geographical processes that shape our fear of crime, most vital amongst those identity.

The aspects I have chosen include both personal experiences and certain important (and much researched) communal phenomena, such as social and cultural differences. I have chosen them all for their visibility and seemingly high relevance for my case, and the attention they have been given by other researchers and policy makers. What all the narratives have in common is a situatedness in the local place, where they all are given meaning and acted upon. Since the stories and descriptions I have been able to gather necessarily are far from exhaustive, I will include my own observation where I find this to add necessary or useful information to the stories.

In line with my theoretical and methodological assumptions, different kinds of social practices, that is discursive and other non-linguistic ones will be taken into account, they will be analysed both as autonomous entities and as related phenomena.

I have chosen to tell six of my informants' stories as personal accounts of feelings related to crime and fear and resulting strategies. In the following chapters I deal with more thematic, less personal narratives based on the first six informants and more. This sorting of information does of course not reflect a sharp division between people applying strictly personal or strictly communal strategies, but is rather done according to my impression of the illustrating, representative power of the different stories. Since one story may represent many different aspects of life, the same stories may be part of several parts of the analysis. I could have chosen to present all my informants by one narrative each in the first chapter, but this would have been to place consuming, I have rather chosen the six which provided interesting stories in the most "complete" or reproducible narratives.

A challenge in these chapters has been to deal with the problems of the privacy and security of my informants. All real names are left out of this thesis, and replaced by letters of reference, to be able to refer them to the list of informants in the appendices. For those that I am unable to make anonymous, due to them being possible to recognise from the context, and at the same time being quoted on very personal or “dangerous” information, I have left this information out of the versions of the thesis that are published.

## **A. Individual experiences, their interpretations and resulting strategies**

This section examines how crime and fear is experienced by some residents of Observatory, both as perceived and described in the first instance, and deeper and wider reflections that have surfaced through inter-views. I will seek to show what a wide spectre of perceptions and feelings may be related to fear of crime. In these descriptions the variations in how phenomena are interpreted differently by different persons, related to personal biographies and other aspects of personal identities, are essential. The purpose of this chapter will be to say something about the relationship between personal identities, experiences, interpretations and coping strategies.

In line with the theoretical perspective of this thesis I do not believe that there exists any essential “truth” about who people “are”, identities are impossible to describe as static values. Since the following chapters at length will deal with identities and related phenomena I need some way of “working” with these, to capture their meaning at a certain time and in a certain place, related to certain issues. Two measures have been applied to deal with this in the analysis. Firstly, people's applied strategies against fear of crime will be understood as the clearest expressions of their identity in this context. I believe these strategies are loaded with otherwise hidden preferences and capabilities that together express a part of people's personalities that is useful for the analysis in this thesis. These strategies will thus be my point of access to personal identities. To make these facets of personalities or identities even clearer for the purpose of analysis, some of the informants will be presented through “labels” in the headings of the first six narratives, representing crude simplifications of their identities. These will further be used as reference later in the text. This as done in full awareness of the labels simplifying something not only extremely complicated but also fluid. They are the results of my unreflected early impression of my informants. The labels have been created for two reasons. Firstly, a tool is needed to start describing and discussing my informants, the labels are meant to make the text easier readable than simply letters or fictive names would have done. Secondly, I hope that later discussions around strategies applied by the persons that the labels represent will mediate the impressions created by the labels in the first place. Hopefully the result will be improved understanding of the dynamics of identities in my case.

As described in the theory chapter, social geography takes its analytic point of departure in the individual and her relations to other individuals, as well as her identities. The describing part of this

chapter will have a similar starting point. Talking to people in Obs, it is striking how differently they talk about the crime that has hit them, some burst directly into stories from their own life, but most need to be asked before they get into it, in almost every case the stories get worse, and their anxiety gets closer to the surface the longer we talk. It might start with garden furniture being stolen, this is part of the ordinary, daily chat. For a community as imbued with crime as Obs, nothing is a more natural part of the daily chat than small incidents of crime. The more serious and personal incidents (either personal because it happened to you, or because it otherwise has affected you mentally) are more difficult to come across in people, either because it is buried deeper down in their consciousness, or because it is embedded in the persons everyday life in such a way that it has become “to obvious to mention”.

To be able to compare the actions of my informants in a systematic and sensible way, and also draw parallels to things described and theorised over elsewhere, I will reflect over my findings in relation to Rachel Pain's scheme of spatially related impacts of fear of crime (Pain 2001b), where she analyses strategies as consequences of crime and fear, and distinguishes between strategies of avoidance, precaution and resistance.

### The understated woman

This first narrative is the story of The understated Woman. She lives in a part of Observatory (the Salt River Side residential area) which has a reputation for being crime ridden, something that by many is seen in relation to the area's closeness to Salt River. This perceived high frequency of criminal incidents is confirmed by both the security initiative of the OBF (ObsWatch) (pers. comm., Informant B) and the chief of security of Obs Armed Response (pers. comm., Informant G) who both describe it as a crime hot-spot. The Understated Woman tells me she generally feels pretty safe in Observatory She moved over from the wealthier suburb of Rosebank to be able to put her children through university, and is pretty happy about living here.

I mean there is more of a community thing, you do walk through the neighbourhood, you do see people, you do say hello and you do chat, people make a point of saying hi (...)  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

She relates this community feeling to the lesser wealth in Observatory, an assumption that many people own instead of rent their houses and that few people drive cars, resulting in them meeting each other in the streets instead. If someone suspects trouble in a neighbour's house when the inhabitants are away, they will assist each other in summoning ObsWatch to sort the problem out.

When I ask her if she has been the victim of any kind of crime, she tells me of minor incidents involving laundry and garden furniture.

But, you know, all of us has had our garden furniture stolen, when I first moved here I put the washing outside at night, now you can't, you must take it in (...)  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

Later in the interview, answering to a question concerning whether she has heard about any incidents from others, she tells more serious stories:

The only one that really knocked me sideways was when two people were standing chatting down in Robbins road, and one guy came up to the guy and asked "have you got any money?" and the guy said "sorry I haven't got any money", he didn't have any money on him, and the guy just put a bullet through his head, just standing like, you know, with a friend just stand and chat. And then another one was when a guy who was driving a shuttle, returning someone from the airport, he came to fetch someone here in Obs, and he was killed and the shuttle was stolen from him,  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

These stories seem to be important for her perceptions and strategies. She also perceives the situation as worsening, when she moved to the suburb things were more quiet, she tells me how she has altered her behaviour since she first arrived:

I mean when I first came here, I didn't have an alarm, I didn't have a second lock on the door, I kept the back door open, things like that, I used to sleep with the back door open, no alarm (laughter), then you of course put up a second line of defence. But I think, I go for more than what I have. But I'm not getting a gun, I don't see the necessity for a gun.  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

Her chosen strategy has been to equip her house with alarms, which she is able to arm individually, giving her the possibility of walking around parts of her house while others are armed.

(...)Ja, that's why I have alarm on my back, at night it's all alarmed, and here is also alarmed, I've got two detectors, there is one behind you, I can arm that one at night, an I can still sit here and watch TV and I can move up and down the passage, But I'm armed, the very back is armed, so I can sleep at night, and I keep a panic button with me 24 hours a day.  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

Apart from that she tries to keep her head down, understating herself, leaving the offensive, violent strategies to others:

Ja, some people go into attack, and some go into prevention, I'd rather go to prevention, I mean, the only thing I can aim at something is a Sunlight Liquid bottle (laughter). Someone will have to push the bullets, I'm not going to push the bullets.  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

The understated Woman finds peace of mind in her neighbourhood, despite her perception of the area as an area of crime. Despite the modest impression she makes, she also carries out her clearly chosen









I mean, I've heard stories about UCT students, were held at gunpoint, down on the ground, their car was stolen, I don't know if this was maybe the same incidents, but I also heard that someone was forced to strip naked and get in a trunk and was then driven to Khayelitsha, and dropped out of the car, and the car was taken, I mean i never saw that or read about it in the newspaper, so, I mean who knows?

(pers. comm., Informant C)

He also seems to be upset about the uncontrollable factors of crimes that have happened to him, like when his car was broken into while he was inside his house for just a few minutes. He reasons from this that someone must have been watching him and his house to be able to commit the crime at the exact right moment.

I became very sort of nervous, anxious, to the point where for a solid month or so after that, I always, while I was getting out of the car, I was constantly looking around, sort of looking into shadows, looking behind every car, to see if anyone was standing around, and I would even do as much as to, when I went inside the door, I would wait and look through the window for a few minutes to see...

(pers. comm., Informant C)

For many of its residents, an important part of life in Obs is the night life in the CBD, not so for The Fortified American What eventually keeps him in the suburb is rather the private space of his house, which he rents cheaply, and the landlord who does not live in the country at the moment has entrusted Hunter with the care of it while he is away. It's a big, nicely furnished house, which to Hunter is very preferable compared to the communes of most other students. He has further equipped it with security hardware in the form of security bars, electric fence, and an alarm system which includes an outside sensor beam across the front perimeter of the house, which triggers the alarm as soon as anyone gets close to the wall. The alarm warns an armed response company which shows up within five to ten minutes.

In addition he tells me that he does not find his part of Observatory to inhabit any kind of good community spirit, *“people kind of lock themselves in, and they isolate themselves”*. This also seems to be his own strategy, as he after all the incidents have acquired a similar behaviour pattern himself.

(...) it's like “stop bothering me” cause I kind of got around to like, I've got the alarm, I've got the huge door, steel bars, electric fence, I'm inside , they're outside, I'm inside, stay out there, I'll stay in here (...)

(pers. comm., Informant C)

He generally thinks Obs lacks a sense of ownership, which results in badly kept houses, thrash and debris in the streets, neighbours being unfamiliar with each other, a lack of *“any real sense of community”* and finally the spread of crime, violence and lack of order.

### The bold woman

The Bold Woman, a black girl in her early twenties has been living in Obs for the last two and a half years after moving down from Soweto in Johannesburg. She works at a call centre for government information. I interview her in her home in the Mowbray side residential area, on the very border of Observatory. I met her climbing, and she actually speaks a bit Norwegian after having had a Norwegian girlfriend for some time. When I ask her about her impression of Observatory and crime, she answers as follows:

It's funny actually. When I think about Obs, I don't think about crime at all, it's the last thought, cause it's such a warm environment, it's like a little town of it's own. Well, I've been robbed, well I can't say robbed, cause I gave the guy the money, I just didn't want to fight, so it was like, you want something, I give you something, there has been people that, my house mates has been robbed outside the gate at gunpoint on two occasions.

(pers. comm., Informant R)

Her appearance generally is brave, she talks of all kinds of crimes, including rape, without expressing any great fear of such incidents happening to her, but further into the conversation she admits to laying down pretty strict spatial limitations for herself.

So any area after the, what should I say, the Green Elephant Backpacks, I wouldn't go there (laughter), it's very scary, and yeah, I wouldn't walk under the tunnels, the subways, even during day, that's really scary (...) I like Lower Main and the areas just around Lower Main, I think, It's a city, you know, that's the centre of Obs, that's where I like to go.

(pers. comm., Informant R)

These limitations rules out at least half of Observatory's total area for her movement, added to not walking outside alone at night, her limitation is not to far from The Fortified American's, but from The Bold Woman's point of view, it seems plainly natural. Areas she does exclude are the Salt River side residential area, and the Station Area, she finds them too quiet, and she does not believe that ObsWatch, in which she otherwise puts great trust, goes very far in the direction of Salt River. The Station area has the tunnels which she says she wouldn't even use at day time. When we talk about her home in Soweto, she describes it as a totally different place, a crowded, brutal place, which is “*completely different world*” from Cape Town. She tells me the crime is different, when in Cape Town they will break a car window to steel your car, in Johannesburg they would just shoot you, and do what ever they want to do. She also tells me that the township in which she used to live in Soweto, there was nothing staying outside after dark, she would mainly stay in her house. Maybe because of this, the most important things she wants to talk about when describing Obs are the things that makes her want to stay:

(...)there's a culture of people that live here, very important people in society, but because it's such a warm place, you know, it's easier to meet people in Obs than it would be in Rondebosch, it's high walls, but you know it's so easy to come in to someone's house and know people in Obs then anywhere else around the areas. That's why I'd rather live here, I have an option, I could live in town, a big house somewhere, but, it's easier in Obs, you know, there's so many students, so much culture, and really that, doesn't make crime more important, that makes meeting people more important for me, so it kind of takes the bad thing away, you know crime, and you know gives it something good about the area, that's the people and the culture, it's easy to run away, I would miss out so much if I left, I would be alone behind the walls somewhere (Laughter), yeah, it's better to be here instead.

(pers. comm., Informant R)

In this way she describes the relative social openness of Obs as an important reason for staying, while at the same time the social possibilities no doubt are seriously limited by the spatial limits of her movement. Still it seems, the ability of social participation seems to keep her put, she makes a more or less rational weighting between the dangers of crime and the joys of a social life and concludes that she takes the good with the bad and decides to stay. What she does find disturbing, or negative, is the changes she has experienced in Observatory since she arrived.

So it's really strange, we used to go jogging, around the station, cause we used to live very close to the station, and it was a very nice jog, but now, the minute you see someone, something it's like “ja, okay, I'm turning back”, you don't, I don't trust anyone any more (...)

(pers. comm., Informant R)

She associates her perceived increase in crime with the forthcoming festive season, and the arrival of new students in town who do not “*understand how it works*” and leaves valuables laying around in open bags, leaving their bags in their cars etcetera She also mentions what she perceives as an increase in stories of crime lately, and at this point she also makes a reflection over her own perceptions:

(...) but yeah it think it is because two and a half years ago I was in such a strange place, we didn't have that many friends or people to talk to, so we didn't hear the stories, maybe, now that we have more people that we are interlinking with and socializing with, you hear more stories, and you get to be more aware about things, I think that may also be another thing, so maybe it wasn't so safe, but maybe it was, so I don't know which perception of mine is right, but yeah, initially, how I saw it, it looked much safer, than it is now

(pers. comm., Informant R)

### The stayer

Being the one of my informants who has been living in Observatory for the longest time (52 years), The Stayer has been living his adult life through Apartheid, the transition to democracy and beyond. During this time he has seen the changes that have happened in Observatory, to the population, the business community and the crime rate. During the three years after the first free election, from 1994 to 1997, he was robbed twice. Because Observatory under Apartheid was under the strict protection of the

Apartheid Police, he perceived it as a part of a radical change, the police resources were redistributed between areas which earlier were denied the protection of police and Obs all of a sudden was a much easier target than earlier.

Observatory from 1994, Observatory had a sudden, a sudden lack of policing, big lack of policing, and the criminals all got wind of this, they all got to hear about this, "Oh! White areas, observatory especially, it is easy to commit a crime here, not much policing, so let's come and see what we can do!" So, they came in to Observatory, and there was a lot of muggings and burglaries, every day in Observatory, from 1994 up to 1997. Ja, in that three year period, I was mugged twice.

(...)

In Observatory, where I was never ever mugged before, and eh, a person always thinks, it won't happen to you, but it did happen to me, and it came as a shock, and it came as a shock to many other people in Observatory, who have been regularly robbed and mugged and their houses broken into.

(pers. comm., Informant O)

Describing the incidents happening to himself, my informant blames his own lack of alertness, and tells a story of violent force:

It was carelessness, it was my own fault, I was walking down the road at ten o'clock at night, on the pavement, eating an ice cream, and thinking I would never be mugged, it will never happen to me, as I was walking down the road, I saw five guys coming up the road, five walking together, coloured guys, walking together, so I stepped off the pavement, but I never thought that they would mug me, but as we eh, drew closer together, two of them grabbed me and pulled me up against the wall and they took my watch.

*Were they armed?*

The one had a gun, yes, and pointed the gun at me, and they took my keys to the house, all my keys, a bunch of keys, they took that, and my purse with a hundred Rand, and my watch, and... they got in a red car, and of they drove, the red car was on the corner, and of they went. That was the first time, and I thought it would never happen to me, and then a month later it happened again along the Liesbeek River...

(pers. comm., Informant O)

Reacting strongly to these incidents of crime, The Stayer tells me how he changed his personal behaviour, becoming much more observant. The rest of his story includes a vivid interest in security questions, involving both changes to spheres of his own life and strong involvement in the community security projects. He now perceives Obs as a safe place, as long as you follow certain rules of precaution and avoidance. His first set of rules deal with the protection of your own property. Since most people in Obs live in houses with small gardens or courtyards separating them from the streets, a popular means of protection is to fence this area off, to avoid people coming up to your door.

Yes, Observatory is a very safe place, but then you must follow the rules!

(...)

You must be safety and security conscious, you must secure the perimeter of your property, in other words, your fence, your front gate must be locked, you must not allow a stranger easy access on to your property

(...)

You must have thick steel burglar bars bolted to all the windows, and the doors, that I've got. Number three, you must have a security alarm system, an electronic alarm system, linked to a monitoring room plus armed response.

(pers. comm., Informant O)

Secondly he describes the precautions you must take when being in public space, how important it is to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Ja... and when you walk in the street eh you must take precautions, you must walk fast, you know, don't walk slowly like a sick old man, because then you are going to be mugged you know, ah, you must be aware of your surroundings when you walk in the streets, be aware of who is around you, you know, be security concious, be safety concious at all times, it must be uppermost in your mind  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

He is also very aware of his own behavioural changes. He has made a concious choice to do these changes, not choosing his strategies at random, but rather learning from the existing “do it yourself“ security literature.

But since that happened twice, I'm now very aware of being robbed, being mugged, or being a victim of crime, and that's uppermost in my mind all the time, I always think about it, I lock every door and every gate behind me, I lock it, I'm very security concious, I've read this book, I've studied this book thoroughly

(...)

That mugging changed my behaviour over night, totally, it changed my behaviour, I'm very suspicious of people now, and, eh you see I've been hurt, now I'm suspicious, and I threat everything and everyone with suspicion

(pers. comm., Informant O)

As a direct result of these incidents he also participated in the initiation of ObsWatch in 1997. After that he has not been a member of the board, but rather contributed by making responsible people aware of incidents and his worries. He regularly posts notes and observations to the chairman of ObsWatch and the Councillor of the area.

### The women on the border

I interviewed these two women, Sara and Majba together in Sara's house. Of the two, Sara by far speaks most and most loudly, most of the quotes I have chosen to include are hers. Majba mostly comments on Sara's statements. Still, I feel that the social dynamics of the interview served the result well, I think Majba's presence made Sara even braver in her statements, because she knew she would be moderated. Majba on her side was provoked into opposing Sara. Lots of information was thus brought up.

The homes of these two women are located in a street that used to be part of Salt River before the city council decided to move the border one block further in to Salt River. In many ways the area still feels

very much part of Salt River. This division is, at least partly, explained by differing values between this strict, Moslem area compared to the very liberal attitudes regarding to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco that are dominant in the night life in the CBD. Nevertheless I made a decision early in the fieldwork to include the area since it provides a very interesting contrast to other areas in Obs, and understanding it may be helpful in unravelling myths related to Salt River and the border area. The street they live in, Rochester Road, gives a first impression of peace and quiet, few houses have alarms and burglar bars. Still, there is no lack of stories of crime:

Sara: My daughter was sitting in a car, right outside my door, a man came past and said “uh, you've got a nice chain”, wanting to admire, making as if he was admiring, and then as he approached, like through the window he took the phone, while she was speaking on it!  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

The interesting difference is the way crime is handled in this part of the suburb. The impression given by the lack of physical security devices is strengthened by what my informants tell me:

Sara: You see here people live like a community, this side is also more Moslem people, and the Moslem people are a community of their own, Pagad is also mostly consistent of Moslem people, I mean they didn't say other people were not welcome, but they started it and they were religious people who did they're thing you know, and did it properly, and they were very successful.  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

Religion is mentioned as an important, gathering factor, and an institution, Pagad, is described as an important vehicle for this solidarity and common identity<sup>21</sup>. On the personal level, they talk about people owning their houses, there always being someone at home, and possibility of contacting each other for help if needed:

Sara: Alone, yeah, but my other children always come and go, her house (Majba's), is active, (...) her husband is there, her sons are there, so they look out for me, if anything happens here, I can actually just knock on the wall, and they will come out you know, it's the understanding we have here, so other than that, I don't have an alarm, and I don't have a dog, but I still worry (...)  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

The people who are identified as the perpetrators also vary from the rest of Obs, in Rochester road the proposed criminals are identified by their hang to lifestyles that are perceived and described as immoral, the abuse of drugs is very often mentioned as the breaker of moral in opposition to good family life.

Sara: I think it's the youngsters man, the drugs, there is to much drugs, people are always looking for drugs  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

<sup>21</sup> For a closer description of Pagad, it's history and means, see own paragraph in the “Coordinated coping strategies” chapter of this analysis.



Drugs are seen as a wider social problem, because kids steal their parents' possessions in order to buy drugs. My two informants describe the foreigners in their area as the big problem. Illegal immigrants, especially from Nigeria, are perceived to be criminals.

Sara:...And people will, do , if they are on drugs... the foreigners in the country... I don't know if I should speak about colour, (laughter), that's not really nice, but it is so, especially the Nigerians, they do a lot of crime...  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

At the same time talk of races is a very charged subject in South Africa:

Sara:One doesn't want to speak about races end stuff, but people have different cultures and different styles money is sometimes very important to certain people, more than other things, so it depends on how you are, if you are just up for the money, you don't care about hoe people live, you get that kind of landlords (a bit more about landlords)  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

Moral is also seen to be an important question in other issues than drugs. Different aspects of society are described as having changed for worse, such as the rule of law, which used to be more strict towards the criminals, as opposed to “these days” when the victims of crime gets further victimised by the system if they try to defend themselves against crime.

Sara: You know, I can't figure out how things are happening now, you know, I get puzzled, I can't figure out how things are happening now in our time it wasn't like that, right was right and wrong was wrong, but now, you are the person who are in trouble, but you get charged, you get victimised you get, you know... You're not even boss in your own house any more, you can't tell people to leave, who are living with, they're making things very complicated for us, that's all I can say, I'm not very active, but I'm glad I've got no debts, no bonds, I keep a low profile, that's the best way for me.  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

When compared to the situation today, even the time under Apartheid rule seems preferable. Sara describes a situation where people were segregated and happy about it. She perceives the situation of her own race group to have been better then.

Sara: No it wasn't, but funny, a lot of people who lived in that time, they would rather live in that time again, to hell with mixing with the white, they weren't interested. People were happy to be with their own people, people were satisfied because there was a job for everybody, there was food on the table every night, and nowadays most people don't have work, because having an open democracy, but there is lots of sad things that are happening now.

Majba: It's apartheid in reverse, because now you can't... now when you are white you can forget about a job, If I am a black man, they will sooner give it to me, than give it to you, cause even though I've got no brains, I'm black, it was before the other way around, that's exactly the same bloody thing.  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

## Reflections

To start reflecting over how crime and fear is experienced in Observatory, I will summarise the different experiences, interpretations and strategies of the persons above. I hope that this process will shed some light to the relation between certain aspects of my informants' identities and their opted strategies.

Judged from their stories and their implemented strategies, all my informants seem to some degree to experience fear of crime. Their fear also seems to differ, from person to person, and related to different sources and places. None of these findings are spectacular, it is neither surprising to find that their degree of fear doesn't seem to be decided by their experiences of victimisation. These trends are rather perfectly in line with research results from other parts of the world, such as Wesley G. Skogan in the US (Skogan 1997) and Pain (Pain 1995) and Sparks (Sparks et.al. 2001) in the UK. The findings of the NCVR show that these trends also exist in South Africa. They show that fear is rising, that this fear varies between the population groups, while at the same time, the level of actual crime has levelled out or dropped (Mistry 2004), (Burton et.al. 2004). These findings forces us to leave behind the belief in a causality between actual crime and the fear it creates. This opens up for new and interesting questions related to the experience of crime and fear which show a deeper sensibility for the social and geographical place where these experiences take place.

Trying to relate the different stories to the more general observations of how crime and fear is experienced and coped with reviewed in the theory chapter, the first thing revealed is the utter complexness of real stories. Fitting real persons into strict categories will never yield fruitful results. A dilemma is constituted by the fact that to identify the special and interesting parts of stories, we need to somehow make their interesting details stand out. I will try to resolve this by contrasting the stories against each other in the following discussion. As a tool I will use the labels I created for the narratives above. Taking my point of departure in Rachel Pain's (Pain 2001b) scheme of spatially related impacts of fear of crime which I described in the theory chapter, I will try to fit the different narratives into her classifications Avoidance, Precaution and Resistance.

### *Avoidance*

Practical ways of avoiding places and times that constitute a threat may include staying indoors at night, seeking alternative routes, avoiding particular places or taking a taxi instead of walking or taking a bus (Pain 2001b). Some variation of these strategies of avoidance seems to be part of all my informants' strategies. No matter how positively and bravely people describe their area, they all seem to lay down

some spatial restrictions for themselves. The only one describing the details of her limitations is The Bold woman. This may, of course, be a coincidence, and rather be a result of our good relationship than reflect her actual preoccupation with such issues. This must also be noted as a strong case of intra subjective relativism through her story, which begins with a very relaxed attitude towards incidents of crime. The fortified American avoids situations by staying in his house at night, even though he applies other, more offensive strategies as well. The Women on the Border prefer to stay in their own street, Majba does walk to other parts of Obs, but certain roads, close by their own “home street” seem to be no-go.

### *Precaution*

I understand precaution as a slightly more proactive, or bold, way of dealing with perceived threats than avoidance. Practical implementations may include the fitting of security hardware such as locks, burglar alarms and car immobilisers, dressing modestly, and avoiding conversations and eye contact with strangers (Pain 2001b). In addition to this I would like to add defensive cooperation with neighbours, for example in the form of watching out for each other and each other's properties. These kind of strategies are clearly most popular among my informants, the reason for this might be that adding precaution allows you to keep living your life more fully than avoidance, while at the same time creating a layer of security against perceived threats. Creating this layer physically by installing different kinds of security hardware protecting the perimeter of your house seems to be perceived as effective. The Fortified American is the heaviest user of this kind of equipment, being the only one of my informants who have installed outside sensor beams and an electric fence. He is the one of these informants who is least integrated into the society of Obs, due to his status as an international student. This seems to make sense in relation to his strong implementation of defensive strategies. The understated Woman and The Stayer have also installed such protective equipment of a smaller degree of technical sophistication. This is probably in line with a big proportion of the rest of Obs' population, according to my observations of security-bars, razor wire and signs signifying subscriptions to diverse guard companies around Obs. The Women on the Border have less sophisticated gadgets, but are so much more dependent upon their tightly knit community, So also The understated Woman who combines the advantages of technical and human surveillance. All these five people also make a point of (they all mention it during interviews) dressing and/or acting modestly, avoiding conflicts rather than facing them.

### *Resistance*

Adapting one's behaviour in an even more proactive direction opens up for resisting situations otherwise perceived as dangerous. Such strategies may include carrying some sort of weapon, or a rape alarm, meeting and moving around in pairs, or “simply” adopting “fearless” behaviour (Pain 2001b). In the case of this last option, the idea is to discourage or intimidate possible attackers by appearing confident and in control of the situation. The Witness has opted to remain put on the scene of one of Obs' most traumatising criminal incidents. This may not consciously be a strategy of brave resistance, she also combines it with precaution by inviting a crowd of people to the pub, and installing a remote switch for the security bar door. Nevertheless the results in ways of not giving away to the crime and fear, both in ways of keeping the business going and acting as an example for others are still the same. I also think her behaviour tells a lot about her strong feeling of behaviour to the area and it's people. Her strategies include actions that tie her even stronger to the area that she has strong reasons to loath, when she has the alternative to leave. The point being that leaving would remove her from the area that seems to constitute such an important part of her identity. She decides to stay and fight where she is, which leaves her able to continue nurturing the strong symbiotic relationship between her own and the place's identity. The Stayer has also made very conscious choices of strategies, which obviously has affected his earlier way of life. He has made security consciousness a very important part of his everyday life. He is the one who has been living in Observatory for the longest time, and this may be seen as the reason for his brave resistance, by adapting his habits he is still able to describe and treat Obs as a safe place despite having become the victim of violent criminals two times, and having seen friends falling victims to even more brutal crimes and reacting to this by leaving Observatory.

### *A short comment on Blaming*

Not all strategies created to cope with crime need to be spatial, the process of telling stories itself, especially those of *blaming* or *interpolation* may provide comfort. It is easier to cope with a situation when one has identified a perpetrator or a danger, and thereby “know” with what one is dealing. I relate this coping strategy to the discursive process of *interpolation*.

My informants' possibilities for participation in the planning of collective coping strategies also seems to be important. The understated Woman is happy to be on familiar terms with the councillor, for The Stayer it is imperative to have been part of the initiation of ObsWatch and to still be able to communicate his concerns to people with influence, The Councillor himself is the bravest of them all, seemingly untouchable by any concerns of crime.

I will get back to these reflections in the chapter concerning collective coping strategies.

### Concluding remarks

The most obvious and easiest identifiable basis for implementation of strategies is people's actual experiences of crime. If someone brake through your front windows you alarm them, if someone steals your laundry you seal of the rest of your house from the back yard, if you get robbed on the street you make sure you pay more attention to your surroundings. These are very "direct" actions which include a small degree of interpretation, and thereby to a small degree are influenced by any hidden agendas or related to other complicated social phenomena. Thus, as commented upon earlier, my interest lies with the "amount" of feelings and interpretations that make up the "difference" between the actual incidents and reactions to them, and the the "sum" of my informants' reactions. In the further I will relate this "difference" to issues of identity.

Relating the choices of strategies to "natural" identifiers such as age and sex does not seem to make very much sense. The degree to which my informants are "offensive" in their strategies (studied along the scheme applied above) is spread widely across traditional signifiers such as age and sex. This is in line with the findings and theory related to new understandings of identities which I review in the theory chapter.

When this is said, the choice of strategies seems to be very personal. My findings show that who people are influence how they react to fear of crime, closely connected to how they are able to relate to their local place. So, identity does seem to matter, but it takes a sophisticated approach to understand how.

From my findings a lot more seem to be hidden in my informants relations to their own, and surrounding places, how these are interpreted and constructed. I will leave this discussion till after I've presented my findings related to the sense of place in Obs presented in the next chapter.



## **B. Place identity -Inside and outside Observatory**

As shortly commented upon in the last chapter, social and geographical sense of belonging seem to matter for how my informants cope with crime and fear. In this chapter I'll go closer into how this sense of belonging creates Obs' place identity. Of course there will be as many perceptions of this identity as there are inhabitants in Obs, but I will stick to a few aspects that I understand to be important, my point of access to these will be how my informants perceive it, that is, their *sense of place*. As discussed in the theory chapter, the most important processes in the construction of identity is identifying with and, not least, against a construction of something, that be a place, a group of people etcetera In this chapter I'll illustrate my informants' participation in and perception of processes of inclusion and exclusion and reflect over what they mean for how crime and fear is experienced in Obs.

I will start out with a short historical background, followed by descriptions of different areas, all given by “outsiders” of the areas that are described. In the two last paragraphs I will reproduce descriptions of some contested groups of people in Observatory.

### **The legacy from Apartheid**

Discussing processes of inclusion and exclusion in South Africa without the historical backdrop of Apartheid would make no sense at all. Nevertheless the time scope of this thesis does not allow for any historical recollection of Apartheid times. It is worth keeping in mind that during Apartheid, which terminated only ten years ago, the segregation in South Africa was close to total. The following paragraphs are some findings of recollections of Apartheid times used by my informants as basis for comparison when commenting upon the situation today.

Knowing Obs' historical role during Apartheid as one of multiracial resistance, one would think those times were loathed memories. On closer inspection I found to my surprise that such is not the case. Among Obs' heterogeneous preferences and recollections of history, there also exist those who remember the days of Apartheid rule as a time of order and control, contrasted to a lack of rule by law and loss of public benefits today. Governmental ideals and programs, such as Black Economic Empowerment, implementing positive discrimination, seem to attract longing to the “good old times” for those having lost their benefits.

During a conversation concerning the reasons for today's problems, contrasting them with Apartheid times, I raise a critical question concerning democracy during Apartheid. Sara and Majba's answer illustrates their critical attitude towards the existing situation.

*But it probably wasn't very democratic, eyh?*

Sara: No it wasn't, but funny, a lot of people who lived in that time, they would rather live in that time again, to hell with mixing with the white, they weren't interested... people were happy to be with their own people, people were satisfied because there was a job for everybody, there was food on the table every night, and nowadays most people don't have work (...)

Majba: It's apartheid in reverse, because now you can't... now when you are white you can forget about a job, If I am a black man, they will sooner give it to me, than give it to you, cause even though I've got no brains, I'm black, it was before the other way around, that's exactly the same bloody thing!

(pers. comm., Informant I)

Of special concern is the reduction in the amount of resources that used to be spent on public security, now reduced in Obs due to the redistribution after 1994. Obs then lost a large amount of the prior attention and protection of the official police, and The Stayer sees this in relation to the system change.

*Has it always been like this, has gone for better or worse?* Well, up to 1997, let me tell you, up to 1994, 1994 we got the new government came in power, well up to 1994, it was still the so called Apartheid Police, you know, and the so called Apartheid Police, they were responsible for policing Observatory up till 1994. And Observatory was very safe up till that time, very safe, you hardly had a crime taking place in Observatory, it was regularly patrolled by the police, but after 1994, when the new government came in power, then it was no more the so called Apartheid Police, then it was the new South Africa, and then the police, they were, our police system was restructured throughout the country, and uh, and the police was spread more out into the black, so called black and coloured areas, and the white, so called white areas had less police, so then suddenly, Observatory had less police. We fall under Woodstock Police Station, Woodstock Police Station suddenly was very understaffed and unequipped, cause they were taking all the resources and spreading them throughout the country, to the previously disadvantaged areas (...)

(pers. comm., Informant O)

Very few Observatorians reflect over the ambivalence between the wish for the lost benefits and the political uncorrectness of demanding them to come back in today's political situation. An exception is the Councillor. He meets these problems everyday in his political work. He comments upon this answering to a question regarding the fear living in post Apartheid times generates.

*So there is some amount of post Apartheid fear?*

Definitely, the perception is that, you know, we weren't Nationalist party, we definitely were anti-apartheid, but we do want our roads swept everyday, we do want a police station, and we want and we want, those were benefits of apartheid, yes you didn't support it, but you enjoyed the benefits of it, and now you can't demand, I mean, Observatory demanded a police station, and I met the police commissioner, the minister says, "the rules is this, twenty murders a month, or more, you get a police station", twenty a month. Now there's something like seven areas that get that. Of which two don't have police stations. I understand the national priorities saying "Shit (The Councillor), you can't have the White suburb with 186 voters, arguing about a police station, when I've got twenty murders a day in Khaylitsha and Langa".

(pers. comm., Informant A)

From this it is no doubt that the memories of Apartheid are vivid in people's minds. It must be commented that the people expressing their concerns here all are veterans of Observatory. The issues



are not commented upon by any of my younger informants.

### Obs seen from the outside

OBSERVATORY boasts a multicultural society in which young and old, rich and poor, are accepted no matter their race or religion.

Despite the crime, its unique and relaxed character is popular with visitors who enjoy its friendly, cross-cultural atmosphere.

(Williams 2003)

Because of its large amount of shopping and night life, many know Obs only by brief visits or even just by reputation. Descriptions of Obs seen from the outside are therefore often characterized by simplifications and stigma. Since I have not interviewed anyone outside the suburb, this paragraph will have to be based upon newspaper articles and the reflections of inhabitants. This section will be less part of the further analysis, but I think it is worth including since it, at least partly, is a result of strategies described later in the chapter. The newspaper quote above is a good example for how Obs normally is described in the daily papers. During the period of my fieldwork, the two regional daily newspapers The Cape Times and the Cape Argus described Obs through feature articles with this angle, as a small charming, heterogeneous, relaxed place with a crime problem, and through reports when above normal violent crimes happened, often accompanied by cries for strengthened police protection or compliments to Obs' own initiatives.

The resident in which I put most trust on these issues is again The Councillor, with his long experience of disputing Obs' often negative crime-stigma he is well reflected on the issue. Explaining Obs' reputation he takes his point of departure in the area's history during Apartheid. He tells me that many prominent characters of the Struggle<sup>22</sup> used to reside in the area, due to its status as a dormitory suburb for students. Obs was thus, also because of its "gray"<sup>23</sup> population, never under the complete control of the Apartheid laws. Today, he tells me, these perceptions of Obs being 'dodgy' prevail. In addition to the history of resistance against the established society, Obs has issues of a racially and otherwise heterogeneous society, widespread use of illegal drugs in addition to crime.

First of all we have the fact that we are racially mixed, and then secondly we have this reputation of being long time dagga<sup>24</sup> smokers. Dagga smoking continues in Obs, if you speak to all of the residents, 80 percent of them, either have plants or smoke on a regular basis. And you can add that to your perception, so here we've got this perception of Obs as this really strange place. With that perception comes the perception that it is not only dodgy, but has crime.

(pers. comm., Informant A)

<sup>22</sup> "The Struggle" is a common phrase referring to the fight against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

<sup>23</sup> Notion from the Apartheid times meaning "not racially homogeneous".

<sup>24</sup> The local South African word for marijuana.

He continues by explaining what he perceives as Obs' real problems, which is a health problem with HIV/AIDS, according to The Councillor because of the huge gay and lesbian population in Obs. According to his statistics HIV/AIDS by far is Observatory's biggest killer, homicide is number two, but the number is still far lower than other areas in Cape Town that he has numbers for. He also describes crime as a problem, but then crime against property.

But where we do have a problem is the brake ins of motorcars, and the brake ins of houses. Add the reason for that is we are very sympathetic to the homeless (...) the problems that we come out with are car brake ins and petty theft is high, and there is reasons for that, together with Observatory is... freedom of marijuana, people don't take marijuana to serious, we also have, the highest in Cape Town incidence of heroin addiction, heroin and crack.  
(pers. comm., Informant A)

The Councillor paints a picture of Obs which differs from both that of the media and the inhabitants of Obs, being his own reflections and also part of his agitation as a politician, it should be understood as such.

#### Different areas seen from the inside

Moving on to the perceptions of the Observatorians, different areas within the community are also contested.

Some areas are mentioned more often than others when it comes to being related to danger, and some places a felt need for protection against these has also resulted in physical manifestations. One obvious and visible example is the steel fence that has been built between Obs and the neighbouring suburb Salt River (see illustration 3). The area towards Salt River is also by far the most frequently mentioned area when it comes to places where people feel uncomfortable walking. Answering to questions concerning in which areas they feel safe enough to walk at different times of the day, these are the answers I get from The Bold Woman and The Stayer:

Yes, ye by Salt River, I wouldn't walk there at night, that Salt River part, the part of Observatory closest to Salt River, I wouldn't walk there at night, that would be dangerous.  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

What makes it safe for me is if there is people around, there is people, and the number of burglar bars, the more you go towards Salt River, the more, a lot of burglar bars, and dogs, and (laughter) but more towards our side it's still free, we don't have a burglar bar at the back, and you know, it's still safe and we still park our cars outside, even though once in a while it gets broken in, but it's you know, compared to the other side I know a lot of friends that get robbed, towards the Salt River side of Obs, almost every time, I don't think ObsWatch goes that far towards that side...  
(pers. comm., Informant R)



*Illustration 3 A house in Baker street*



*Illustration 4 The fence towards Salt River*

Another area is Baker street, being the centre of the area in Obs that show the clearest signs of urban decay, and also is part of the industrializing Obs, here many former private homes are turned into businesses of different kinds. Together these two factors distinguish the area from the rest of Obs. During an interview with the councilor of Obs, he described Baker street as the most scary area in Obs, the decaying houses there are continuously occupied. The area is inhabited by Nigerians, they are responsible for much of the drug business in Obs. The properties are owned by a woman in Durban who visits every now and then to collect rent, bringing with her some big, white guys for protection (Pers. Comm., Informant A).

The perceptions of different areas vary geographically in Obs, with the clearest difference being between people in The Salt Rives residential area and closer to the CBD. Both The Stayer and The Bold Woman reside on the Mowbray side of the CBD. Their perceptions of the area given here explains their patterns of movement described in the last chapter.

### Areas outside Obs

I have already described how crime in Obs is seen as originating from the neighbouring suburbs of Salt River, Woodstock and Mowbray. Other areas further away include other suburbs, both poorer areas like the coloured suburb of Athlone and the black township of Khayelitsha, and affluent suburbs on the “southern suburbs” axis like Rosebank and Kenilworth.

Many of the descriptions I have been given exist in stories of criminal and/or scaring incidents.

Sara talks of her cousin who lives in Athlone, how criminals gassed her family before they broke in to the house.

Sara: They did that to my cousin, but that was in another area, in Athlone, coloured area, through the window, some chemicals through the window, they couldn't wake up you know, they couldn't wake up, and then they came in like that, without braking any doors, they just sort of opened the door, I don't know how they... they used instruments and the way they go in, but I feel we should have more police protection.  
(pers. comm., Informant I)

Other describe areas in comparison to Obs, A Business owner describes two affluent areas not far away. According to him the people there represents values that strictly opposes what he describes as the most positive sides of the mentality of Obs. He perceives them as less tolerant of racial diversity and more occupied with ensuring their own security through personal means of protection.

The minute you go out of Observatory, go to Newlands and Rosebank, I mean those are predominantly white areas, so the attitude is more predominantly white as well, and that's quite scary, so I do have a lot of hope, and I see a bigger future for areas like Observatory and

Woodstock, people living in those areas have already gone one step ahead, and very seldom find people from Constantia or Newlands who would actually come in to Observatory, and they blame it on crime, but it's not that it's because it's such a lot of racial diversity, and tolerance of people with different backgrounds and things like that, and... I mean, who are they trying to kid? It is that that puts them of more than anything else, they still live in their little houses, and, you know, think that nothing has changed, and are spending absolute fortunes on security, their own security, not security for people walking in their streets, it's on their own, very selfish attitude(...).  
(Pers. Comm., Informant A)

Serious worries surface when there is a chance that people from areas seen as dangerous may intrude into the turf of Observatory. For some time there has been talk of building a huge, new soccer stadium at the Hartleyvale sports stadium, a few minutes walk from the Observatory CBD. To understand many Observatorians' reluctance against this, it is necessary to have some basic knowledge of the importance of sports in South Africa's race identities. During the Apartheid times the different important spectator sports were strictly bound to the different race groups, with the most important divide between soccer, which was practised and enjoyed by people of the black race group, and rugby which was the sport of the whites. Despite the effort of official nation builders (among those Nelson Mandela himself) to rid the country of this divide, it still very much prevails today. The practical result of this for the case of the Hartleyvale stadium is that it would bring thousands of black spectators into Observatory to see the matches. The Stayer is very preoccupied with this, and comments without me asking:

Ja, the community of Observatory does not want a soccer stadium at Hartleyvale, because, if there is a soccer stadium at Hartleyvale, it's going to attract more crime to the area, soccer stadium will mean that there will be played big matches at Hartleyvale, in a residential area, there will be thousand of spectators, and spectators won't come from Observatory, they'll all be coming from the Cape Flats, and... eh the great majority of spectators will be coming from the Cape Flats, and there will be more crime in Observatory, more muggings, more robberies, more burglaries, more broken bottles lying in the road, more car brake inns, and they blow on trumpets as well on soccer stadiums, so they'll be blowing trumpets here at night, before the game, and long after the game has been stopped they'll be walking through the streets blowing trumpets, when a person, residents, are trying to sleep, the soccer supporters, soccer supporters are the most, are the worst behaved of all the sports, of all the sports soccer supporters are the worst behaved, they do not respect other people's rights,  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

I find descriptions of areas outside of Obs to be of two different “types”. They may be described as dangerous, or the base of dangerous people. Secondly, they may be described as oppositions to Obs. Both of these types of descriptions may be understood as the describers perceptions. Especially the fear of “dangerous” people intruding into Obs, seems like “honest” expressions of concern. They may also be analysed as the results of certain interpretations. Both may be seen as personal coping strategies, respectively with the purpose of “moving” the dangers out of Obs, and constructing Obs as better

relatively to other places.

### Flux/transience

A very frequently mentioned factor in Obs is the “movement of people”, the fact that lots of people move through Obs every day, and every semester. People pass through on a daily basis to go to work, something that is perceived as creating a possibility for criminals to mix in with the crowd and do their business without being detected. (pers. comm., Informant K) mentions this as one of the reasons for starting ObsWatch in the first place.

One of the problems we've had in the past, this was one of the reasons ObsWatch was started in fact, you get criminal activity places like Mowbray, places like eh, Woodstock, and the criminals will come through Observatory to escape and it's amazing, when we first started ObsWatch, the number of guys we picked up, at Observatory station, because we were doing something we were not officially allowed to do, saying “Eyh, what have you got in that bag champ?” (laughter).  
(pers. comm., Informant K)

There is also a less frequent, but more structural movement of people emerging from the demography of Obs, where many people move to the area for limited periods of time due to studies or just to stay for a short period of their life, often until they decide to set up a family and for that purpose move on to another, “safer” suburb. A wide range of problems are related to this, by several of my informants. The Fortified American worry about students neglecting the property which they occupy, spreading thrash and debris which may lead to worse problems.

I think Obs has the potential to be a very quaint, very exciting community to live in, but ah, the combination of it being such a fluid community (...) I mean someone who is just renting here for four months might just say “It's not my thrash, I didn't put it there, I don't really care, I'm not going to bother and pick it up, that seems to invite a lot of other problems.”  
(pers. comm., Informant C)

The Stayer is afraid the fact that many people only stay in Obs temporarily affect the way they are committed to the area.

I've seen things come and go, people don't live in Observatory for very long, (...) people come here and they stay here for about five-six years, and then they move on again to another area, I would say, at any given time, only half the people in Observatory are intending to stay here permanently, you know, the other half of people are here temporarily, they are not here permanently, they know they are here temporarily, cause they are at university, or they are working somewhere, so they rent a house out you know, so I say only half the people in Observatory are committed to the area.  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

A business owner has worries that newcomers to the area won't be able to mix in and thereby will stick out as soft targets, which will present them as easy targets to criminals and increase the crime rate of the area.

(...)the criminals are watching the soft targets, and that's it, you know you can't be a soft target, especially people coming here on holiday and studying and foreigners and that, those are the people that actually gotta be protected first.

(pers. comm., Informant B)

Further, the housing market created by this unstable situation is exploited by opportunistic landlords who rent out property without taking the proper responsibility for keeping the houses in acceptable shape, or the activities going on inside them.

Well this is a major problem with our ObsWatch setup actually, that the majority of houses in the Observatory area are owned by absentee landlords, and yeah, as a result we can't get people to pay because the majority of students are not in a position to pay, but the landlord should be, he should be interested in taking care of his property, but it doesn't seem to work that way

(pers. comm., Informant K)

The movements of people that bring changes to the population of Obs, thus seem to be perceived as dangerous by many. Some people are perceived as threats themselves, while others are understood as attractors of other dangerous groups. This last group seems to be tolerated, or even appreciated, because the students and others are seen as part of Obs' heterogeneous society. The groups perceived to be criminals themselves are perceived as a problem, and efforts have been done to exclude them.

### The Bergies

One of the most difficult groups to grasp in Observatory are the “Bergies”. These people, mostly men, are marginalized. Their backgrounds vary, but the councillor and long time resident of Obs, who I perceive as most trustworthy on the case tells me that an important part of the explanation of the many homeless people in Observatory is a mental health reform which returned many mentally impaired people to the care of their families some years ago. Since many families lacked the possibilities for this kind of responsibility, many of the mental patients ended up in the streets. The provincial health institutions that are supposed to take care of them do not manage their job either. Observatory has a mental health station, and every month or two weeks these people meet up there to get their medication and at the same time receive their pensions. In many cases the money are instantly spent on alcohol. The combination of drugs and alcohol creates quite a lot of bizarre antisocial behaviour in Obs. At the same time Observatory serves as a kind of free haven for many of these people, since they, after all, are allowed to stay, opposed to the praxis in many other suburbs. Through the combination of these factors, they have become a daily element of life in Obs. More or less every block “adopts” one special Bergie. This “chosen” person is to a certain degree cared for, by small allowances of food, clothes and a certain degree of access to public and private space, as long as his/her's behaviour doesn't deviate to far from

what is allowed as “normal”. Outside of their “own” neighbourhood, they will not be tolerated and are often accused of various crimes, such as breaking in to cars or observing and giving information to criminals.

When we do occasional walkabouts, people will say, “I want Flip and Chip arrested, but not John, John is a good guy”, and you go to the next street, and they say “arrest John and Chip, but not him, he's the good guy”, the result is that each one of the homeless have their zone of comfort where they do sleep, so my one is Patrick, Patrick sleeps on my stoop, and gets his water and his dog food and God knows what, but in the other areas they tell me that Patrick is a burglar.  
(pers. comm., Informant A)

This way they are in some way integrated and accepted in the society, but at the same time their abuse of alcohol and other drugs, uncared for mental illnesses and the antisocial behaviour resulting from these combined factors make them hard to grasp for many residents. Thus their actions are given all kinds of different meanings. For some they are an important part of Obs' identity as many inhabitants of the suburb like to perceive themselves and their area as inclusive and tolerant. By others, such as people who been living in the area for a long time and those involved in security business the homeless people are described as a problem, often as being plainly annoying.

Those people don't make me very nervous, their consultations, and their askings can be annoying, when I'm trying to get out into my car to get somewhere, or to get out of the car to get into the house, and you feel in some way obliged to stop and talk, and I'm not really sure what the solution is. I have given them money and empty bottles on occasion  
(pers. comm., Informant C)

Of whatever kind and whatever scale the acts of the homeless people are perceived to be, they are normally perceived to be getting worse, and are seen in relation to certain important historic dates and events in South African history. 1994 was the year of South Africa's first free elections, which involved some degree of political “trouble”, and massive changes to the distribution of rights, among these right to the protection of life and values, resulting in the earlier described redistribution of the SAPS's resources.

Well, it's got worse, much worse, before 1994 there was probably about 3 or 4 vagrants in lying here in Observatory, regular vagrants you know, before 1994, all these Bergies and vagrants, this whole thing blossomed, mushroomed, after 1994, we never had it before, before 1994 it was on a very low scale, but from 1994 it mushroomed, then we got... suddenly got a lot of vagrants, people came from other areas, and then we got people pushing these trolleys, Shoprite Trolleys, we never had it before.  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

Concludingly, the Bergies do present a challenge in Observatory, perceived in many different ways, there is little “right” and “wrong” here, the point is that the troubles the Bergies pose for different



persons is decided by the person's perception. This way they may be seen as a problem or cause for worry themselves or they fear they are blamed of creating my be a part of deeper, social problems. This way fear of other phenomena may be projected on to the Bergies, constructing them as something they do not really “deserve”. This may again be the source of confusion around fear-related problems that need solving, and how this should be done to strike the “real” reason for the perceived fear.

### **Cultural differences**

Talking to my informants in Obs, differences are described in various ways, often implicitly, even more often intentionally covered up or talked about in hushed voices, South-Africa's history has created some hard to come across taboos when it comes to talk of races! I think it's worth mentioning that I never explicitly asked any of my informants of their view of differences, what is quoted here has come up asking other questions. I understand this interest to show some of the importance of the topic.

#### *Celebration of differences*

One way in which differences are described in Observatory is as an important and positive aspect of the local society. This way of talking is obviously is very outspoken by people having (economical) interest in the promotion of Obs, but also by people for whom the racial inclusiveness is part of their own place identity in Observatory. Here the differences are seen as positive and important, and what more, the positive way in which they are perceived is seen as a strength of its own. A dominant representative for this discourse is one business owner who the time of my fieldwork he was the chairman of The Obs Business Forum, there being an eager advocate for their new ZT based security strategies<sup>25</sup>, and also the owner of the local curio shop and hairdresser “Just Because”. He describes as a role model for the future South Africa, where people have learned to live with differences.

To me Observatory is an example for Cape Town on, basically, how areas should be developing towards, on the diversity of people and, sort of, attitudes... just on basically how I expected the new South Africa to be moving, in which direction, and you don't find that in many areas, I mean Observatory is, Woodstock is, what areas could be. It's not many where you can actually say it's moving ahead, the attitudes are positive and things like that,  
(pers. comm., Informant A)

#### *Differences are dangerous*

Others, who do not have an interest in how Obs is perceived from the outside, generally focus on the negative views of differences, the two groups of people most often identified as different and trouble causing are those who are colored and those who are not from Obs, but from the nearby areas of Salt River and Woodstock. Differences are seen not only as something dangerous but something to identify

<sup>25</sup> See paragraph about ObsWatch further down..

danger by and something that should be excluded and segregated where possible (pers. comm., Informant O). A woman working as senior patrol officer in ObsWatch talks about Obs' crime problem:

But then ja, and then also eh, nightlife. Obs, I would say is, because it's multiracial, you see all kinds of people living in Obs, you know, obviously, you know guys from wherever, like Salt River surround us, Salt River, Woodstock, Mowbray, they would come here, I would say coloreds, we do experience a lot of whatsoever of, you know, crime, crime basically in the sense of serious crimes we seldom get, but still. We experience most of the time is coloreds, but coloreds from Salt River, Woodstock whatever, most are gangsters, now they come, and they need to earn something and they come and grab a bag, or brake a car, steel a car, and then go back to Salt River.  
(pers. comm., Informant F)

The assumption that perpetrators belong to the neighbouring suburbs is well known, and for some it seems obvious that it, at least to some degree, this as a stigmatisation that doesn't necessarily correspond with the real world. The Bold Woman comments upon the issue of who the perpetrators may be, and moves some of the blame from the 'local thugs' to illegal immigrants who live in South Africa but are not part of the system.

*Who commits the crime?*

I would think it's people from Salt River And Woodstock (laughing) who else? I really think it is, well the person that mugged me, was not South African, so I would assume it is a lot of immigrants that we are getting in South Africa, that don't have identification, you know they can kill you, you can identify them, but they will never be found, because they don't have formal identification, so they take advantage of the system, in that regard they can do anything, you know if they leave fingerprints anywhere no one will know who they are in any case you see, you know what I'm saying (...)But yeah, not only to push the blame in to refugees, there are a lot of local thugs, there might be the Bergies, I don't know, they might want some money for wine, or something, but I generally think, there must be people that don't care, cause when my car was broken into, there was fingerprints everywhere, of people, you know, but they couldn't identify, so there must someone who hadn't got any kind of identification, in South Africa.  
(pers. comm., Informant R)

When strangers are described as dangerous elements, their ability to mingle easily into the heterogeneous picture of Obs is described as an advantage to the suspected perpetrators.

(...)it would be unusual to see a black or a colored man, especially a colored man walking through an upmarket area, they, you will immediately attract suspicion, someone will phone a security company, and they will stop him and want to know what he's doing there, so, but here in Observatory it wont happen because there's a lot of blacks and coloreds walking through Observatory all the time you don't know, and you don't know... you can't, no one will attract suspicion, cause it's a common thing, you understand, so it is easier to commit a crime in Observatory than it will in an upmarket area  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

The identification of Nigerians as a problematic group is common, to me they seem to be the clearly most stigmatised group, not only in Obs, but in the wider South African society, but do not have the

resources to comment any further upon either the truth of this claim or the diffusion of this belief here.

## **Reflections**

After having seen how processes of inclusion and exclusion work in Obs, this analysis will seek to illuminate the question: *How do processes involved in the construction of sense of place/place identity shape people's perceptions of crime and fear in Obs?*

In many ways this actually are two different identity creating processes. One initiated by the individual to create a place with which the person can relate, and one created by institutions with (economical) interests in the surrounding world's impression of Obs. Together these processes create both spatial and social results in Obs.

The most interesting aspect of these stories of social and geographical phenomena is not necessarily the direct story they tell, but rather the meaning phenomena and places are given through the stories and the reasons *why* and *by whom* they are told, revealing the feelings and interests that they cover. A very important purpose of stories of places and people will always be to define who and where is inside and outside. As argued in the theory chapter, I see this as important means of protection against fear of crime. Obviously the telling of stories may in itself present value to the storyteller. I'll try to describe how stories of inclusion and exclusion are especially important for the constructions of sense of place.

### *Insiders and outsiders*

In the stories different people are described as being more or less part of, or not at all part of, the society of Obs. Criminals who enter from other places are obviously outsiders, since they come to do things that are negative for the society, of which most of my informants feel apart. What is less clear is who these people are, different groups are identified when describing criminals, such as 'coloureds', 'gangsters', 'immigrants', 'foreigners' and 'nigerians'. None seem, though, to have any clear perception of who they are. Following from this we can probably gather that these cases of "blaming" rather are expressions of something else than the identification of criminals. The focus upon race groups may be interpreted fear of or antipathy against this special group, resulting from stories of the group heard from other people or the media. It might be a sign of hidden racism, or at least fear of other races. It should be noticed that the informants identifying people of special races as the perpetrators are of different races themselves. Another paradox related to the blaming on the basis of race is highlighted by The Stayer, as he comments upon the less easy blaming of races in Obs, due to the areas racial heterogeneity, this in opposition to other, more racially homogeneous areas. Motives of this kind of blaming may be the exclusion of Persons or groups because they are seen as a threat to the existing,

hegemonic identity, such is the case for the young people of Salt River.

Even more difficult to place according to borders between inside and outside are the Bergies. Geographically they definitely are part of Obs, but the suspicion of being criminals that tend to be part of their description, and especially their cooperation with criminals from other areas seems to distance them from the accepted groups of Obs. Others characterise them as strange, but tolerated people of the local society. This partly inclusion is strongly related to certain people in certain areas. Some people taking a wider perspective on the area, such as The Councillor goes beyond this narrow geographic perspective and talks of the Bergies as a part of the wider society of Obs. This way the Bergies become an important part of Obs' inclusive culture and thereby sense of place.

#### *Inside and outside*

In the same way as people, places are not easily qualified as “good” or “bad” areas. What is clear is that they often are described *relative* to Obs, or other areas in Obs. I have found that certain areas inside Obs by many are described by strong stigma. It varies if areas are described equally by “the rest” of Obs, or they are given different stigma by people in different areas. This whole process of stigmatisation is probably catalysed by the spatial restrictions of many Observatorians, since this limits their knowledge of areas apart from those they perceive as “safe”.

When talking of areas outside of Obs, the stigmatisation is even clearer, Obs is perceived as a very special place, no other areas are seen to inhibit the same combination of positive characteristics as Obs. This seems to be the belief of all my informants, despite their various perceptions of social differences etcetera I find this to be a special and important quality of Obs, and important contributor to its sense of place.

#### **Concluding remarks**

By many, both insiders and outsiders, Obs is perceived as a very special place, in many ways deviating from its neighbouring suburbs, the rest of Cape Town and most of South Africa for that matter. The most common of all characteristics of Obs is that of inclusiveness and heterogeneity. This seems to be a facet of its identity in which everyone has a common interest. On closer inspection Obs' openness towards different groups cracks. Many groups, often identified by their ethnicity or belonging to certain areas are stigmatised as criminals and excluded from Obs. As a part of the identity building process this exclusion probably strengthens many of Obs' residents sense of place, something which seems quite ironic, keeping in mind that this identity is built on discourses of inclusiveness and heterogeneity in the first place. Those who loose are those who find themselves on the outside of the

constructed identity, these consist of two groups. Those who are excluded, such as many coloured boys, immigrants perceived to illegal, and by some, the Bergies. The second group are those who are unable to identify with the ruling discourse of Obs, such as The Women on the Border who live in an area which many doesn't understand as belonging to Obs, they feel very little relation to the rest of the area. The Stayer who has seen all the changes going by in Obs and doesn't really feel part of what it has become, The Fortified American who doesn't want to walk down town.

For the people being excluded from “the good company” of Obs' “main” identity, which far from includes everyone, there are fora and institutions in which they are not able to participate. I will get back to this in the next chapter about coordinated strategies.



## C. Coordinated coping strategies

An important part of Obs' coping with crime are the coordinated coping strategies. Strategies of protection against crime that are coordinated differ from personally constructed ones in that they have the resources to influence people and places in a much more powerful way than strategies implemented by single person. This creates many interesting questions concerning who has access to such strategies, and what the consequences are of the strategies for other people. In order to shed some light to the influence the coordinated coping strategies have on people's experience of fear and crime in Observatory I will start by describing how they are implemented. Further I will have a look at their background for power and authority. In order to get access to this background I will try to identify how they apply to people's identities and sense of place, and implement ideas from elsewhere. I will investigate how their attention to identities matter for people's access to and interest in using the strategies, and how the influence by other ideas from other places and other kinds of structures influences the power they wield.

In the reflections part I will investigate the consequences of the results of these practices for how crime and fear is interpreted and acted upon in Observatory.

### Policing and quasi-policing

The implementations of police-like security institutions in Observatory are many and heterogenous. Their strategies differ from what ideas and discourses they are based upon and influenced of. The three main actors are the SAPS, the ObsWatch, and the various commercial security companies such as ADT, Barney's/Obs Armed Response and Chubb. In the theory chapter I described important discourses within the discursive field of policing, I will bring three of them into this analysis under these labels: Zero tolerance policing, vigilantism and what I will refer to as community policing. These three issues have had their relevance well proved by both academic interest and the power of their impact upon diverse private initiatives. Both as results of academic initiatives Such as Skogan's CAPS project in Chicago<sup>26</sup>, and as the discursive and otherwise use of strategies in privately initiated policing projects, such as major Guillian's use of Zero Tolerance. In this part I will try to show the relevance of these concepts for my case through people's talk (and thereby participation in the construction and reconstruction of the different discourses) about these different concepts. The concepts obviously have varying sensitivities for fear and other social relations related to crime.

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<sup>26</sup> See (Skogan 1997)

### **The SAPS**

The perceptions of the work of South Africa's public police force is pretty homogeneous in Obs, they are not seen as very significant. The Fortified American comments in a Way which I find to be representative of most others.

How could the police do anything? Back in late January, early February gunshots were fired down the block, and I set of the alarm, called the police, and I'm not sure the police ever came, I mean, in terms of the public police, I think they're, they have no impact whatsoever, I mean If there was a murder, or a robbery, they would have to be the ones who came and gathered the evidence and did the prosecution, but in terms of just everyday safety, patrol to deter to control criminals, I have never actually... I never actually recall seeing a police vehicle driving down this street  
(pers. comm., Informant C)

In their absence the scene is left to other actors, often the police is brushed aside to the advantage of other alternatives. This reflection is done by one senior ObsWatch officer:

(...) unfortunately, ehm, the police station we fall under, is, they're not equipped enough, they don't have enough manpower and stuff to put cars on a permanent basis in Obs, i fact since, since we're here, I would say, they just say "Listen here, ObsWatch is here, so we don't have to go along to Observatory", they basically come because we don't have authority yet to take statements and stuff like that, so they basically come to pick the suspects up from us and stuff (...)  
(pers. comm., Informant F)

The official police force of South Africa doesn't seem to have any significant role in Obs apart from their absence, which is commented on by some, but which mostly is so "normal" they are not even missed. They will not be an important theme in the further,

### **The commercial, private guard companies**

In addition to the police and ObsWatch, Observatory has become, and is steadily becoming even more, a interesting/profitable area for private guard companies. For South Africa in general there is a big trend, the same way as in The US and the UK, that the private guards increasingly outnumber the government's police officers. In 1999, the ratio of private security personnel to uniformed police officers was approximately 4,4:1 (Schönteich 1999). I have not been able to get hold of more resent data concerning this relation, but I don't find any reason to believe that the numbers have changed in favour of the SAPS since. At the time of my fieldwork there were three commercial actors in the security marked in Obs; Obs Armed Response, which is run by a former leader of ObsWatch, and the two big, multinational companies Chubb and ADT. All of these have as their main product reactive responses, mostly initiated by alarms, activated by either sensors or by "panic buttons". They also do occasional patrolling, but this is not a prioritised activity. These companies of course only serve their paying costumers, but may still play a role for the general crime rate and feelings of safety. Mostly



people realise and reflect over the limitations of these companies due to their economical interests, but still their services are increasingly popular, their “armed response” signs keep appearing in front of houses. They are generally perceived as being better equipped and more effective than both ObsWatch and the SAPS, they turn out as some kind of necessary evil, or just plain necessary.

(...) there's four companies active in the area, that's professional companies, Obs Armed Response, Chubb, ADT, plus ObsWatch, plus SAP, you'd think we had the highest homicide rate in Cape Town, but we don't, part of their marketing is to push up the, or to make it appear as if this is essential, but I don't think it is.  
(pers. comm., Informant A)

I think that the people that run these private security companies they have their own interest of heart ninety percent of the time, that's normal, it's your own business, you know ...the different companies, the more their control the bigger their business is.  
(pers. comm., Informant M)

A woman tells me why she changed from ObsWatch to a private guard company:

They [ObsWatch] went through a slack period, and also the alarm was more important to me than ObsWatch, and the ObsWatch didn't always come, end then the alarm company offered us to drive by, and, you know, checking the streets and things like that, so for an extra fifty, ObsWatch is seventyfive rand, I have the alarm and the same people, so I will just stick with the alarm people.  
(pers. comm., Informant Q)

Even though there is little visible enthusiasm for the private guard companies in Obs, their services are widely popular, judged from the amount of sign signifying affiliation with different companies spread around on walls.

### **ObsWatch**

As earlier mentioned ObsWatch is the result of an initiative from a group of “concerned citizens” and business owners, reacting to what they in 1997 perceived as rising crime in the neighbourhood. The initiation of the organisation must also, no doubt, be understood and analysed as a reaction to the lack of policing in Observatory.

What makes ObsWatch stand out from other initiatives, is the variation in its methods and promotion. Both it's creators, clients and other citizens seem to have more than one story to tell about ObsWatch and its work. Sometimes these stories even seem to be slightly contradictory. I understand this a result of ObsWatch being based upon several police-work theories.

I will describe the influence of two important theories' on ObsWatch. Both are concepts described and discussed in police-work theory described in the theory chapter. These two being “Zero Tolerance policing”, and “community policing”. Talking of them as reactions or alternatives to “traditional

policing”, they both react to the ineffectiveness of this, but provide different answers. Since both theories have played important roles in much-discussed projects elsewhere, their ideas now holds substantial discursive power, and this is utilized and visible both in the promotion and applied strategies of ObsWatch.

The effects of the “community policing” theory (or discourse) are most visible through the ObsWatch Officers' pure presence. By posting guards on every corner in the CBD, they “visually” participate in the community, working as a proactive force to prevent crime and create a feeling of security for the people living in or moving around the business area, and to a lesser degree other places in the suburb. It is also possible for them to provide an escort, for example to get safely home from the bars to the outer residential areas. These are presentations of ObsWatch's work, one quoted from a newsletter published at their initiation in 1997:

Observatory residents and businesses have become involved in a scheme to put bobbies on the beat all over Observatory, so that the suburb can be a safe and secure place again.  
(ObsWatch 1997)

These are some points collected from another paper released by ObsWatch. Presenting the company's nature and ways of work:

- Obswatch provides a 24-hour visible policing service in the form of regular bicycle patrols. There officers are in constant radio contact with the ObsWatch office. On many occasions the officers will use their own vehicles to get to a crime scene faster. This is just one example of how committed they are.  
(ObsWatch 1998)
- We respond to all call outs and complaints from residents, working in close contact with the SAPS “Flying Squad” and Woodstock Police Station. Our officers have assisted in arrests and prosecutions of any number of suspects and have recovered many items of stolen property.  
(ObsWatch 1998)
- Once we have this [ObsWatch] in place we hope to rid our lovely village of all drug dealers and other unwanted elements. If we remove the drugs we will automatically reduce the car and house brake-ins, as we will be getting rid of the reason for those crimes. (By removing the supplier we get rid of the buyer, and the buyer is the one who requires the money to support his/her habits and therefore steals.)  
(ObsWatch 1998)

ObsWatch also participate intensely with the business people, even more so since the increase of security guards during the spring of 2003, which mainly was paid by the businesses. They also do communicate and work with other groups in Observatory. They have for example tried to use the Bergies as informants, though with little success:

That didn't work to well, because they then became vulnerable, the criminals used to get hold of these guys and say "Eyh, you give us away, and we'll make hell for you!"  
(pers. comm., Informant K)

These quotes and stories all draw heavily on language and practices related to policing projects elsewhere known as "community" or "progressive" or "alternative" policing. I presented some of these in the theory chapter. Some examples are: The cooperation between different policing institutions, the close cooperation and contact with civilians, the officers serving a small beat and thereby getting close to area and residents, the existence of fora where police, civilians and organisations may meet and the search for solutions to crime problems that involve "problem orientation", that is to analyse the crime as a wider social problem than just isolated incidents. It must be noticed that some of these strategies, and especially the last one concerning problem orientation probably exists on paper only. The one signifier they seem to lack from the "most progressive" other projects is the close contact with academical resources for the purpose of planning and evaluation

During the time of my fieldwork ObsWatch also got inspiration from Zero Tolerance policing. This included hiring enough guards to be able to crack down on any kind of crime 24 hours a day in the CBD, the removal of litter and graffiti from the streets, and a major clean-up in bar and restaurant businesses. This last strategy mainly done through razzias, assisted by the SAPS and even the army, and following closing of bars and restaurants(pers. comm., Informant A). This new strategy was less promoted to the public, but all the more spoken of and applied resources to inside the business society, and it also received substantial attention in the media, one of the initiators of the Zero Tolerance project is interviewed in one of the regional newspapers:

The State has abdicated its responsibility to protect its citizens, say 76 businesses in Observatory which launch their own R35 000-a-month protection service today.

(...)

"It won't be long before we are accused of being vigilantes," predicted Peter Wells, owner of Obz Café and organiser of what has been named the "zero tolerance security zone" in and around Lower Main Road, Observatory.

(...)

"It is being launched in response to Justin Underwood's murder," said Wells, referring to the death during a robbery in February of the owner of Café Carte Blanche just off Lower Main Road.

(...)

"We are supplying our own security service in the absence of police ability to do so."

(Marud 2003)

In these quotes the lack of protection by the state is described as the reason for reinforcing ObsWatch. He mentions the ZTZ and he predicts the project may be accused of being vigilantes. Both the use of ZT phrases and the expected criticism shows that he is very aware of the origin of the implemented

ideas and the reaction they have met elsewhere.

Since this new ZT based initiative was pretty new in Observatory during the time of my fieldwork, I have not been able to investigate deeply the reactions of the public. Here is one comment from The Bold Woman on the increase of security officers:

Mm, ah, what proves to me it has gotten worse is the number of security cars, that and the number of people that have been recruited into ObsWatch, before it used to be like two people standing outside the Spar and one attending in the corner, and they would knock off at eight o'clock, you wouldn't see them, but now you see security almost 24 hours a day, that says, you know something is really wrong, there's a lot of crime in the area, you know.  
(pers. comm., Informant R)

Her reaction is similar to reactions seen in other scenes of increased security, and much discussed in theory, increased amounts of visible means of security tends to have a negative impact on people's experiences of fear and crime.

The descriptions I have been given of ObsWatch's level of success are subject to great variations between my different informants, and their stories must be seen in relation to the informants' place in the society generally and their relation to ObsWatch specially. A man who has been living in Observatory for 52 years and was a co founder of ObsWatch tells me of the time when it all got started in 1997:

Their [ObsWatch's] presence was a deterrent to the criminal, the very presence of the ObsWatch office and the people patrolling on their bicycles, the very presence even though they were not armed, with firearms, their very presence was a deterrent, it kept the criminals away, because they knew ja, they would get competition, ja, they were not going to get things their own way, ja, these people are gonna stop them, within four months, it already became apparent, there was a huge reduction in crime up till sixty percent  
(pers. comm., Informant O)

Others talk about ObsWatch as being undermanned, not being able of or interested in guarding their special part of the suburb. Others again take a deeper look at this favouring of certain areas, and especially the CBD, a woman who runs a bar in the CBD and lives a bit further out tells me of the change when the businesses restructured and strengthened ObsWatch the last time:

When they instituted the business watch, the ObsWate, the crime moved to our area they tried to steel my motorbike a couple of times, and they broke in to cars further away, I think it came to a ripple effect, the crime goes out of the business area and then just goes into the surrounding areas, but it hasn't been for a couple of months now, it has been quiet.  
(pers. comm., Informant H)

Following from these descriptions being coloured to such a degree by own interests and internal politics these data act more as descriptions of certain social relations, responsibilities etcetera in Observatory







Obs, I will also comment shortly upon their level of success, since this is decisive for the extension of their work in Obs and following the “volume” of their influence of people's perceptions of crime and fear.

*The SAPS and the private guard companies*

Apart from participation in the Police Forum (Which hasn't been studied in this thesis) The public police does not seem to participate significantly in any policing beyond traditional, reactive police work. They are “bandit-catchers”, without any ambitions of further participation in the local society. Adding this to their lack of resources, they become nothing more than the “mandatory” institution for any national state, and a completely impotent one at that. Their arrests are usually carried out by collecting suspects from ObsWatch. As in many other big cities around the world the official police are seen to be helpless against a an onslaught of criminals. I detected little aggression or antipathy against the police, but their situation is generally described as hopeless. They are perceived to be under resourced, badly organised and under the yoke of corruption. Resulting from this their visibility is low in Obs and their impression on the inhabitants is limited to expressions of dissatisfaction concerning this lack of presence.

The private guard companies do, as far as I have seen, act inside the expected *modus operandi* of such institutions. They do what they do for the purpose of making money, their strategies reflect this and their operational goals of creating the desired security for the individual costumer. As described earlier such privatisation of security and space often affects people's democratic right to the use of public space, usually affecting the weakest groups the most (Mitchell 2003). From my findings this does not seem to be the case in Observatory. This may be due to the lack of perceived criminals among my informants, but I think the most important reason is the division of the security tasks in Obs, limiting the role of the private guard companies to guarding private homes, and leaving the public space to ObsWatch, this makes their role stand out as even more interesting.

Thus, the private guard provide a service that meets an expressed demand, and which is available to anyone who have got the money to pay.

*ObsWatch and Pagad*

ObsWatch and Pagad are the initiatives which apply more to people's hearts, in the vocabulary of this thesis that is their identities, than their brains and wallets. This make them more interesting when trying to identify and analyse the interpreted part of the reason for people's choices of strategies.



Pagad is clearly the initiative most tied to one special identity. It's members are overwhelmingly Muslim, and the Observatorian members are all from the Salt River side. The Women on the Border which are the only representatives of its members in my selection of informants seem extremely loyal. The Councillor describes their methods in a way that probably makes them PC for the very few. Because of this Pagad is an institution for the few, unavailable, and probably pretty scary to the rest of Obs.

ObsWatch is the biggest consumer of external discourses. In the theory chapter I identified and commented upon three different groups of theories or discourses concerning policing strategies in addition to “traditional”, reactive, public policing. That is *Zero Tolerance (ZT) policing*, *private policing* and *community policing*. This last category involves a group of “new” theories, closer described in the theory chapter, interpreted and implemented by different police forces around the world, both public and private<sup>28</sup>. ObsWatch, as illustrated above, consumes both ZT policing and community policing. These discourses create expectations of both similar and different outcomes, so their combination in one institution is very interesting. It seems that the incorporation of community policing has created a lot of involvement among some of Obs' population, for some of my informants both the participation and protection of ObsWatch means a lot. It must be said, though, that the people feeling involved in the project beyond protection, and are empowered by this seem to be long time residents of Obs. It takes some local knowledge to be able to identify with the institution and thereby achieve the full advantages. The ZT ideas in Obs are of newer date, and imported in order to cope with new problems. They no doubt have resulted in better protection against actual threats by the increased amount of guards around the CBD, but they also face Obs with a lot of problems of which one is challenges to the local democracy. The actual fora where strategies are planned based on certain meaning given to social phenomena are seldom public, but rather open only to people representing certain interests, in my case the Obs Business Forum is an example of such a forum with restricted access for the general public. This may present a serious democratic problem, contrary to goals of the general ideas of democratisation of the police in South Africa which have a long history since the birth of democracy in 1990. At least as it is described in the model of Community Police Forums (CPF) where “*the police were to be democratised and legitimised by enhancing oversight and accountability generally, and particular by enhancing interaction, consultation and accountability at the local, or police station level*” (Pelser 1999) of course these ideas and goals can not be taken as binding for all

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<sup>28</sup> See (Skogan & Hartnett 1997)

policing initiatives in South-Africa or anywhere else, but ObsWatch does participate in an CPF of this kind, and apart from that they do seem to me like sound principles any democracy.

An initiative extremely dependent on personal initiatives and local social/political relations. To a certain degree not dictated by the rules of the market, but more so since the larger “ownership” by the businesspeople. At the same time the initiative implementing strategies carrying most of the signifiers often related to community policing projects, seems to create a lot of safety.

### Concluding remarks

In this analysis of the coordinated coping strategies in Obs, my goal has been to describe the different strategies that exist in Obs and their consequences for how fear of crime is interpreted and acted upon in Obs. The differences in their applied strategies certainly seems to make a huge difference in the amount of people that have access and chooses to take advantage of the different strategies. The police and the private security companies are the easiest to relate to for most, but the police has a very low degree of presence in Obs. The privates are available to all, as long as you can pay. Obs, at least in its pre 2003 version seems like the initiative that according to studies other places should serve its community best by means of involvement and democracy.

Still it seems like, it's identity based initiative works best to create sympathy, when it comes to solving the problems, people stick to the actor with less identity and more efficiency, that is the private guard companies. The low level of influence the people has on such organisation may create serious democratic problems.

## 6. Conclusion

The task of this thesis has been to describe and understand the ways in which some people in Observatory cope with their everyday fear of crime. To be able to analyse this I have identified and analysed the three interrelated processes experiencing, interpreting and implementation of coping strategies (see illustration 2). A main point of my theoretical framework has been that the relations between these three may be seen as partly uninterpreted, partly interpreted. The interpreted reasons for choices of coping strategies have been the main field of study in the analysis. I have studied these interpretations, and identified the preferences and agendas that are expressed through personal identities as their most important shaper. In order to access relevant fragments of these identities, I have taken my point of departure in the “result end” of my model, and analysed the implemented strategies as the clearest expressions of the identities.

At the beginning of the thesis I asked *What is important for how people experience, interpret and cope with fear of crime in the local place of Observatory?*

In order to include in my answer as many as possible of the factors that have been mentioned throughout the thesis, I will combine my model of analysis presented in the theory chapter, and the three chapters of analysis. In order to visualise which parts of the analysis that sheds light to which relations between the processes, I have added coloured arrows representing the findings of each of the analysis chapters in the model and marked them with letters corresponding with the analysis chapters (see illustration 5).

### *A. Actual crime and important, complex identities*

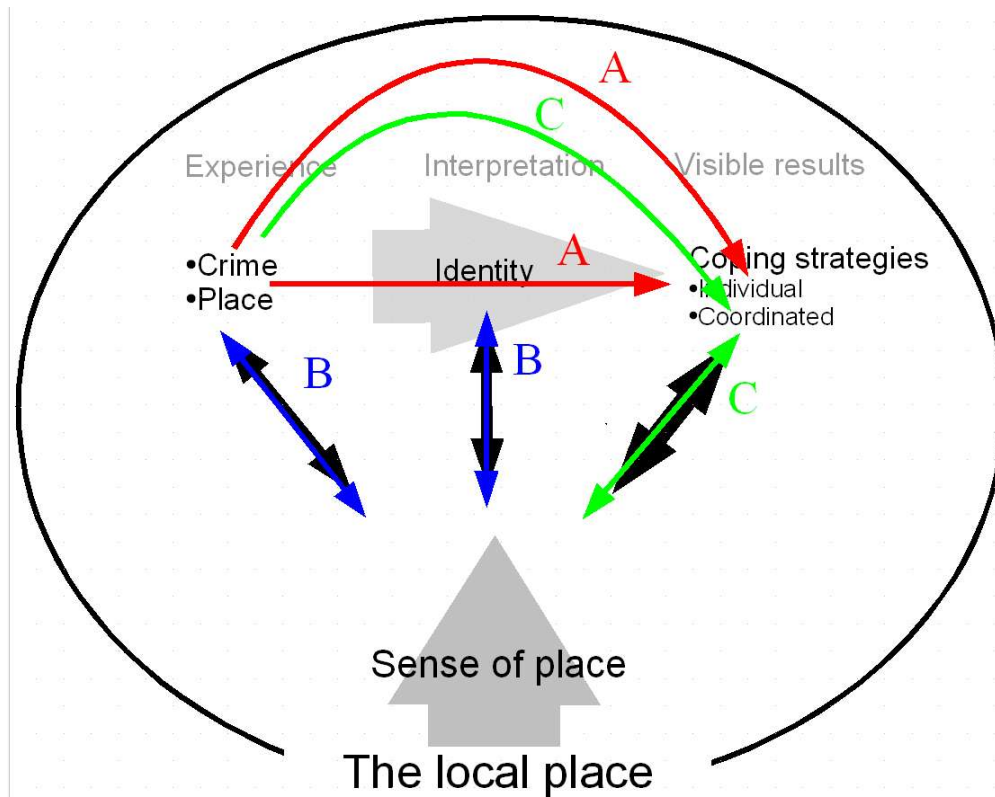
I find that my informants' implemented strategies may be understood as the results of experiences which to varying degrees have been the subject of interpretation. My focus on the more difficult to explain strategies which are the result of higher degrees of interpretation have revealed interesting facets of complex personal identities which in their turn are the foundation for choices of strategies.

### *B. A strong, advantageous local identity, but not for everyone*

For many, a strong sense of place is a vital part of living in Observatory. The place identity which is the base of this sense of place is utilized by both private persons and business. Strong, conscious moves are done to construct it and reproduce it. Resulting from this, some are able to participate strongly in the local society, while others are excluded and denied the full participation in the local society.

*C. Identity segregates, cash is king*

I identify two of Observatory's important coordinated coping strategies to be strongly identity based. Due to this, the varying access to place identities described in the last chapter is reproduced in the access to strategies. This also influences the success of the institutions that are identity based, especially ObsWatch. The purely commercial private guard companies are unaffected by this, people's interest in their services is exclusively dependent of their cost/effectiveness ratio.



*Illustration 5 The findings of my analysis mapped over my theoretically constructed model of analysis.*

Concluding from this, my informants' choices of coping strategies to a large degree seems dependent on their participation in the local society. Their level of their participation is subject to many processes, spanning from results of personal biographies and preferences to political decisions taken by important and powerful players in the local society. Many of these processes on both the personal and local society scales are related to identity. Personal and place identities and the way they are interwoven seems decisive for both how people are able to utilize social and geographical structures in personal strategies, and participate in identity based coordinated strategies. This leaves great power to the processes of Inclusion and exclusion and the people behind them. This power is unequally distributed among the inhabitants of Obs, giving a raw deal to those who are able to give meaning to important

identities, and define strategies according to these.

### **The future of Obs -Commercialism vs. local identity**

In Observatory the access to certain identities thus becomes very important for its inhabitants. The wider consequences of a lack of participation by groups of inhabitants have not been studied here, but we have seen that the success of the identity based institution ObsWatch is influenced by the attachment that people feel to it. An unsolved question is the importance of such an institution for the future of Obs. The clearest alternative in a place where official police are of little or no importance seems to be the private, commercial security companies. Studies other places have showed negative consequences of commercialising of security. Community policing have showed better results for both democracy and the satisfaction of the public. I would think the symbiosis between Observatory and ObsWatch is vital for Obs' future. If the powers of identity are abused and too large groups are excluded from participation, the gathering force that made ObsWatch possible disappears.

At the time of writing the sad news reached me that ObsWatch have been forced to terminate their operations because of a legal issue. Their place has been taken by the commercial company ADT. This may prove fateful for how crime and fear is coped with in Obs.

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## **Appendix 1: Newspaper and newsletter articles**

ObsWatch. 1997. *Obswatch!*

ObsWatch. 1998. *What is Obswatch.*

Marud, Maureen. 2003. *Observatory firms give up on police.* Cape Argus, April 16.

Williams, Katharyn. 2003. *One suburb, many cultures.* Cape Argus, Cape Town, March 6.

## Appendix 2: List of interviews and formal observation

<i>Code</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Informant(s)</i>
B	Business owner/resident	May 2003	Short interview	1
N	Business owner	May 2003	Short interview	1
E	Leader of Obs Civic Association	May 2003	Short interview	1
A	Councillor/resident	Oct 2003	In depth interview	1
H	Business owner/resident	Oct 2003	In depth interview	1
B	Business owner/resident	Oct 2003	Follow up interview	1
M	Business owner	Oct 2003	In depth interview	1
L	Residents/int. students	Nov 2003	In depth interview	2
E	Leader of Obs Civic Association	Nov 2003	Follow up interview	1
N	Business owner/initiator of ZTZ project	Nov2003	Short interview	1
P	Chairperson ObsWatch	Nov 2003	In depth interview	1
G	Officer Obs Armed Response	Nov 2003	In depth interview	1
D	Business owner	Nov2003	In depth interview	1
C	Resident/int. student	Nov2003	In depth interview	1
J	Resident/Business owner	Nov2003	In depth interview	1
K	Secretary ObsWatch/resident	Nov 2003	In depth interview	1
T	Chairman Salt River Coordination Council, Resident and family	Nov2003	Observation	7
F	Officer ObsWatch	Nov 2003	In depth interview	1
I	Residents	Nov2003	In depth interview	2
S	Officers and guards ObsWatch	Dec 2003	Observation	6
R	Resident	Dec 2003	In depth interview	1
A	Councillor/resident	Dec 2003	Follow up interview	1
Q	Resident	Dec 2003	In depth interview	1
O	Resident	Dec 2003	In depth interview	1

## Appendix 3: Interview guide

- What are your relations to the area?
  - Do you live here?
    - How long? Where?
  - Do you use the businesses in the area? Which?
    - Shops? Cafes/restaurants? ATM? Bars?
- How would you describe Obs as an area? What are the first characteristics that come to your mind?
- What do you think of the crime rate in Obs?
  - What do you think has been the development lately?
- Have you ever been the victim of any kind of crime?
  - Mugging, burglary in your house, car theft etc?
- Do you feel safe in Obs?
  - In your house, walking outside day/night time etc?
- Can you mention any special events that has altered your behaviour in Obs?
  - Last march One Justin, the owner of the bar “Carte Blanc”, was killed, have you heard of this?  
What where your reactions?
- How do you feel that crime is handled in Obs?
- Which of the following makes you feel more or less safe (or doesn't mather/havn't heard of)? Why?
  - Police
  - ObsWatch
  - Private guard companies (ADT, Obs Armed Response)
  - Obs Civic Acociations work (Public meetings, website)
  - Poster Campaign
  - Means to protect private property (Fences, barbed wire, dogs)
  - Cultural happenings like “Christmas In July” and “Walking the street”.

- Would you like anything to be done differently in Obs?
- Do you feel part of the community of Obs? Do you feel that your voice is being listened to?
  - By who?
    - The councillor?
    - Obs Civic Association? (Have you heard of them?)