



# Keeping you post-ed: Space-time regimes, metaphors, and post-apartheid

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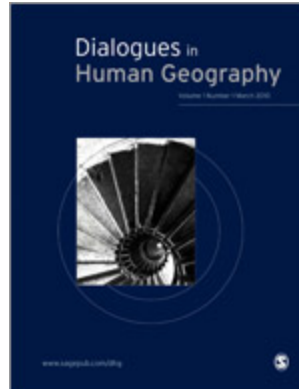
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### Keeping you post-ed: Understanding post-apartheid space and time

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Figure 1: The former Venda border. Photo by the author, 2016.

1411x1058mm (72 x 72 DPI)



Figure 2: Official memorial to the Gugulethu Seven. Photo by the author, 2010.

423x564mm (72 x 72 DPI)





Figure 3: Disused mirador next to Khayelitsha stadium, built for the surveillance of social events happening in the stadium, specifically the political funeral rallies of the late 1980s. Photo by the author, 2011.

1411x1058mm (72 x 72 DPI)



Figure 4: Gugulethu's buffer zone. Photos by Olivier Ninot, Martine Berger and the author, used with permission, a-2009 and b-2013.

162x121mm (300 x 300 DPI)



Figure 4: Gugulethu's buffer zone. Photos by Olivier Ninot, Martine Berger and the author, used with permission, a-2009 and b-2013.

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# Keeping you post-ed: Understanding post-apartheid space and time

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## Abstract

Societies that have undergone systemic change are characterized as “post” – post-socialist, post-colonial, etc. - to encapsulate the impact the past still has on their structure and functioning. Research on these societies has therefore tended to adopt a mostly temporal approach, investigating the tension between continuity and change. Using the example of post-apartheid South Africa, I make a case for a more balanced approach to post situations by including space as equally valuable. I draw my theoretical inspiration from Hartog’s notion of regimes of historicity and Massey’s space-time to show that we should investigate space-time regimes. I show that a space-time regime of entanglement, often passéist, with blurred temporal boundaries and messy, place-bound experiences of time, characterizes post situations. Finally, and as a first proposition, I again use South Africa as my empirical grounding to offer a set of metaphors to describe and analyze the concrete places that this entangled, post space-time produces.

## Introduction

Geography is history. Living in Cape Town means you travel through the past all the time. (...)  
Geography is learning how to step gently on the past, and walking from present into history and back with each footstep. (...)  
Geography is fantasy; it’s time and memory. (...)  
Sometimes geography is irretrievable sadness.  
G. Baderoon, *Geography and Memory* (2015)



What is a “post” situation? Post-colonial<sup>1</sup> (Raghuram et al., 2014), post-socialist (Tuvikene, 2016), post-apartheid, and other similar terms denote the messy situations of societies that have undergone a systemic change, but remain thoroughly entangled with their pasts. The previous system, having ended in a glorious bang or being gradually replaced, still informs and constraints a significant part of such societies’ day-to-day realities. In other words, just as Hannah Arendt (1963; 2006) taught us that revolutions confront us with beginnings, “post” situations confront us with the question of endings, i.e. has the previous system really passed? If not, who is still affected and who decides whether a situation has become “post”? When does a post situation end? Does it fade like a comet’s tail, progressively blending its debris with a new milieu? And how do we spot the end of something that is also an ending (Ilchenko and Dushkova, 2018)?

Further, any post situation tilts our analysis toward a temporal analysis and the well-trodden - but not less complex - avenues of continuity and change. These avenues offer geographers opportunities for research, especially if we draw inspiration from a set of theoretical tools and research practices that German and French historians, such as Koselleck (1979 [transl. 2004]), Hartog (2003 [transl. 2015]), and Offenstadt (2018), designed to renew our analysis of how societies relate to their pasts, and how space becomes relevant in this relationship. At the same time, as Massey (1995; 1992; 2005) has long taught us, we should be wary not to conflate space with continuity. Her insights into space as change and her notion of space-time need to be combined with historians’ renewed analysis of the relationship between societies and their pasts.

My primary ambition in this paper is to contribute to a more balanced understanding of “post” societies by including the spatial in depth and using the case of post-apartheid South Africa. Analyzing the contemporary South African case is therefore not an objective *per se*, but the empirical grounding of my theoretical analysis, an illustration, and an optical instrument (Appadurai, 1996). South Africa underwent systemic change at

<sup>1</sup> I follow Jo Sharp’s typographical suggestion to distinguish between the hyphenated, post-colonial historical era (following independence) and the unhyphenated postcolonial approaches.

the end of apartheid – the first democratic elections of April 1994 terminated a racist regime that had all too efficiently *systematized* racial segregation in respect of all groups and all social realms. Apartheid's prominent spatial dimension (Christopher, 2000) makes it especially apt to develop a more spatial understanding of the post. Twenty-five years after apartheid's end, South Africa is gradually shifting from being self-evidently described as 'post-apartheid,' to interrogating this term (Freund, 2010; Hayem, 2017), to plain 'contemporary' (Elder, 2003), or even 'post-post' (Dubresson and Gervais-Lambony, 2018; Guyot, 2015). Is its post situation indeed coming to an end? What kind of spatialities has the country's situation produced and what kind of language can we use to describe them? *I therefore explore how metaphors might help us speak about and, therefore, start thinking about some of the specific spatial configurations in post situations by not only looking at what has passed, but also at prefigurations of what might come.*

This paper is therefore not an in-depth South African case study, although I write it as a (French) geographer who has studied South Africa and the city of Cape Town since it became a democracy – a long-term, if long-distance, relationship. My particular positionality is not only that of a geographer belonging to another colonial metropolis, France, but this location has contributed powerfully by drawing my attention to issues of continuity and change: what remains, what has changed between my research stays? Moreover, a combination of what Raffestin (1980) called schizochronia, schizotopia, and schizoglossia characterizes my relationship with South Africa as a field. My fieldwork's time and space differ qualitatively from those of my everyday life, even though they take me back to a place where I've lived and that has shaped me as a scholar and a person. South Africa is the place to which I keep returning, although it is not my home. At the same time, I struggle to express myself in different languages in the field and in writing, since none of them is my own, hence schizoglossia: reaching to understand Afrikaans through German, resocializing myself toward English norms of scientific writing, and witnessing my feeble isiXhosa ebb away while I wait for time and funding to return to nourish it. This is, alas, a classic case of being "fluent-in-too-many-colonial-languages" (Phipps, 2019).

This paper is an attempt to think theoretically by means of the South African case in order to understand how systemic change “resignifies” time *and* space (Verdery, 1999: 39) or, rather, space-time; and to start characterizing the space-time regime of post-configurations. To do so, I begin with an exploration of the current, South African regime of historicity (Hartog, 2003 [transl. 2015]) – a regime I will define as *passéist*, namely understanding time with the past as the main frame of reference. Thereafter, I combine this *passéist* regime of historicity with Massey’s concept of space-time to suggest that space-time regimes are what we should look at, and that the post-apartheid’s one is one of entanglement. Finally, I offer a set of metaphors as a vocabulary to start describing and analyzing the concrete places that this entangled, post space-time produces.

Current understandings of the post in post-apartheid – it’s history, stupid!

A *passéist* regime of historicity

My starting point is the discussion between German historian Reinhart Koselleck and French historian François Hartog with the latter (2003 [transl. 2015]) trying to answer Koselleck’s question of “how, in a given present, are the temporal dimensions of past and future related?” (2004: 3). Koselleck characterizes the present as the tension between our “space of experience” (*Erfahrungsraum*, the agglomerated experience of what has happened and what we, individually and collectively, have learnt from it) and “horizons of expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*, what we dare to hope for or fear can happen). Hartog suggests that there are “orders of time,” namely ways, situated in history and space, of constructing time to make sense of it. He proposes that these orders should be called *regimes of historicity* (*régimes d’historicité*), that he defines “in a restricted sense, (...) the way in which a given society approaches its past and reflects upon it” and, in a broader sense, “the modalities of self-consciousness that each and every society adopts in its constructions of time and its perceptions.” He continues, characterizing several regimes of historicity: the heroic (in Ancient Greece), Christian (eschatological, and

1 chiefly shaped by Augustine), modern or futurist (based on a belief in “Progress” and a  
2 better future, characteristic of the West between 1789 and 1989), and “presentist” (the  
3 contemporary regime, at least for the West, that makes the present central to our  
4 experience of time). He insists that regimes of historicity are “a heuristic tool which can  
5 help us reach a better understanding not of time itself—of all times or the whole of  
6 time—but principally of moments of crisis of time, as they have arisen whenever the way  
7 in which past, present, and future are articulated no longer seems self-evident” (Hartog,  
8 2015: 16). Of course, regimes of historicity are themselves produced in specific  
9 configurations, and by specific actors. They convey agendas – political, social or  
10 scholarly.

11 The regimes of historicity notion is therefore a useful tool to understand how  
12 contemporary South Africa relates to its past, or, more broadly, how post societies,  
13 powerfully shaped by structural and far-reaching change, conceive themselves. While this  
14 notion has intrinsic limitations (mostly, for my argument, it’s the decoupling of time and  
15 space, see *infra*), it is a helpful first step to unpack what “post-apartheid” might mean.  
16 The expression itself makes the past central to South Africa’s contemporary experience  
17 and identity. In other words, and to mirror Hartog’s “presentist”/“futurist” terms, South  
18 Africa remains under a *passéist* regime of historicity, due to the depth of apartheid’s  
19 imprint on society, spaces, and psyches. Glen Elder (2003: 2-3) pointed out very early on  
20 that calling South Africa “post-apartheid” has reinforced this *passéist* regime of  
21 historicity by “anchor[ing] contemporary South Africa to the past: literally, rhetorically,  
22 symbolically and practically,” obscuring that “present-day South Africa is also much  
23 more than a shadow of things past.” This term also “suggest[ed] that there is a breakpoint  
24 after which everything changes,” namely April 1994 (Elder, 2003: 2-3).

25 In the following, I will build on post-apartheid South Africa scholars’ remarkable body of  
26 work as a “source of refined knowledge” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2011: 1) to show how  
27 this *passéist* regime of historicity has been deployed. This regime has celebrated the  
28 regime change, complexified the chronological narrative, and legitimated social and  
29 political demands by pointing out how little has changed. This is well-known by scholars



of South Africa, but perhaps not beyond, which is why I will devote some time – and space! - to summarizing their findings. I do so to engage in a tentative practice of Southern Theory: grounding the discussion in a specific, detailed case to show how post-denominations cover passéist regimes of historicity, how fruitful a detailed empirical engagement with the chronological limits of the post- can be, but also how post-apartheid (and other post- denominations), even as a floating signifier, remains a mostly temporal category.

Post-apartheid as marking a radical and systemic change

The end of apartheid ushered South Africa into an era of *change*. Post-apartheid change was crystallized at a specific moment, namely the first democratic elections in April 1994. The long lines of first-time voters and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first African president were captured in beautiful and triumphant snapshots that told the world: Apartheid is over; South Africa is “free at last!” The day seemed a radical turning point in history perhaps best exemplified by the case of the homelands. At exactly midnight on the day of the election, these native reserves forcibly turned into “autonomous,” even “independent” states by the Pretoria regime, but designed to control and exploit the African workforce, ceased to legally exist. The post-apartheid era could be said to have experienced its glorious and precise moment of birth at this moment. The term was widely used and reinforced as such in nation-building and media narratives. This reading of 1994 as a radical turning point was especially strong just after the elections and during the Mandela presidency. It was widely shared within South Africa and abroad.

If change was witnessed as sudden and radical, it was also *systemic*, because apartheid was a *system*<sup>2</sup> that cast the entire society and its spaces into racial segregation and discrimination’s rigid framework (Christopher, 1994). The difference between apartheid

<sup>2</sup> The idea of apartheid as a system does not imply that it was a fully coherent system. As Deborah Posel (1991), among others, has shown, apartheid was not coherent in time (from the 1940s to the 1990s), space, or in implementation.

and other kinds of racial segregation (e.g., in the rest of the colonial world or in the American South) is in degree rather than in nature, and lies in its systemic character, because segregation was applied to all races and to all spheres of existence. Residential segregation was also applied to the White population group, although to their advantage. Furthermore, influx control, job reservation, different school curricula, prohibition of interracial marriages and sexual relations, petty apartheid in transport and public spaces, different levels of political rights, and the restriction of entrepreneurial freedom for Blacks, etc. augmented residential segregation during apartheid. This racist ideology molded space (Western, 1996; Lemon, 1991; Christopher, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Consequently, the end of this systemic undertaking sparked wide-ranging societal change that also affected the social, economic, political, and personal fields, which all underwent massive transformations. All of these also have spatial dimensions.

Change in South Africa can be defined as a “systemic revolution,” since the notion of revolution clearly indicates a before/after temporal structure organized around a precise moment (Arendt, 1963). But when Bauman (1992; quoted in Beilharz, 2001: 52-67) defined systemic revolutions, he contrasted them with “merely political” ones (e.g., in Spain, Portugal, and Greece). Such political revolutions topple repressive regimes in order to express “fully developed bourgeois societies capable of self-sustained reproduction (...) and of supporting a democratic order.” In contrast, “systemic revolutions” (e.g., post-communist and, I believe, post-apartheid) are not completed after the toppling of the dictatorial, sometimes totalitarian<sup>3</sup>, order. A new, still-to-be-defined societal system is being born in a long and messy process, loosely summarized by the post prefix. In this sense, this prefix points to the difficulty of making a clean break with the past, to the coexistence of (not so) past and “post” logics, and to social dynamics’ messiness and entanglements.

### Post-apartheid: Blurred temporal boundaries

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<sup>3</sup> The totalitarian character of the apartheid regime has been long debated, as it fulfilled many, but not all of the criteria of totalitarianism. It suffices that apartheid’s hold on minds, its systemic character, and violent repression of opposition allow both it and socialist regimes to be discussed as systemic revolutions.

Taking Bauman seriously requires a more careful look at the changes being brought by the systemic revolution process. The sheer breadth of this systemic change was further complexified because it did not occur in isolation, but was accompanied by other, simultaneous changes. The most notable of these was globalization or, more exactly, South Africa's accelerated return to increasingly intense global flows. Such a temporal collision or *télescope* produces composite, sometimes contradictory, dynamics. For instance, apartheid's end and the democratization process fostered spatial and social integration, even nation-building. Conversely, the neoliberal globalization processes generated new fractures and consolidated old ones.

According to Grunebaum's (2011: 19): "Passing through the long, entangled moment of 'transition' one is compelled to ask, 'So, what's new?'" –Conversely, one could ask what's not new or what hasn't changed? As scholars explored the transition, politicians repositioned themselves, activists took up social issues, and people waited and demanded for their living conditions to be improved, a more refined and critical reading of South African history began to emerge in the 2000s. Scholars emphasized the change's messiness and the absence of a clear and unique turning point, while activists' claims focused on what had not changed fast enough. Political points were scored across the board through different interpretations of the past and of the change. While this merits an article in itself, let me evoke the **multi-faceted ANC** discourses deploring the remaining "multidimensional unfreedoms" (Manuel, 2010), **many of which** called for a second, **economic**, transition **and which were used as arguments to support** Jacob Zuma's rise to the presidency **as an apparently "pro-poor" candidate**. The **name** of the Economic Freedom Fighters - an opposition party founded in 2013 – **and its rhetoric reference explicitly limits the change that occurred: political freedom was acquired, but economic freedom, namely the end of inequalities and the return of the land, is a battle still to be fought, since the exploitation and dispossession past is still very present.**

Gervais-Lambony (2003) has long shown that these complex changes reveal multiple temporalities. First, one can distinguish a rapid, political temporality: once change began

at the political level, it developed relatively quickly. Nelson Mandela's liberation, the political negotiations, and the first democratic election in 1994 all led to apartheid laws being repealed, which dissolved the system's legal grounding. This political and juridical temporality is chiefly associated with 1994 being regarded as a radical turning point. Political change culminated in the 1996 adoption of the new Constitution, one of the most progressive in the world, which consecrated the *political* rupture.

Second, economic change has a different temporality. The transition from Fordism (here, racial fordism according to Crankshaw, 2008) to post-Fordism occurred in the 1970s, bringing major changes (e.g. financialization, internationalization, indebtedness, etc.), but without a clear turning point, because the capitalist system actually intensified under the "mining-energy complex system of accumulation" (Marais, 1998; Ashman et al., 2014; Ashman et al., 2013). Furthermore, affirmative action policies, such as BEE (Black Economic Empowerment), did not change the economically powerful's profile significantly. In other words, with the top 10% of SA's population earning 60% of all income and owning 95% of all assets, it is quite safe to say that power had not shifted in the economic realm – making the transition an "elite" one (Bond, 2005). Finally, neoliberal economic policies gained the upper hand in the government from 1996 onwards, validating structural evolutions (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Narsiah, 2002; Narsiah, 2013; McDonald and Smith, 2004; Hart, 2013; Morange, 2016; Williams and Taylor, 2000).

Third, social, cultural, and even psychological changes have long been deemed elusive. The elites are now racially mixed (see Nuttall, 2009; or, for a literary illustration, Matlwa, 2007), but the poor have remained overwhelmingly Black. Race remains salient (Seekings, 2008) and racism common, attested by the frequent flare-ups of crude racist language and behaviors, as well as by the persistence of systemic racism.

These factual discrepancies between rhythms of change might be one of the reasons for interpretative discourses changing with the field they describe. The field of politics is rife with discourse about temporality, while political economy focuses more on spatiality.<sup>4</sup> Temporality offers clean cuts, easily identified achievements (e.g. the adoption of the

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this idea to one of the reviewers – acknowledged with thanks!



1996 democratic and progressive Constitution), linearity, the measurement of progress, and proof of political agency. As such, temporality “serve[s] the political needs of the elite and the historically privileged” (Madlingozi, 2015: 1), whose ongoing privileges are secured by temporal distancing from their origin in colonial and apartheid times. By contrast, the persistence of structural violence, economic inequalities, and dispossession points to “temporal ossification” (Madlingozi, 2017: 125), making the continuity that often characterizes understanding of spatiality more relevant.

Under this closer scrutiny, the post-apartheid era’s beginnings become plural and blurred. This blurring is perhaps best illustrated by returning to “transition”, a term used very early on to analyze South Africa’s systemic change. The term initially depicted the first phase of change, which Hein Marais calls “the twilight zone of interregnum” (1998: 83). This “interregnum” was the intermediary political phase that started with de Klerk’s February 1990 speech unbanning the ANC and opening the way to democracy and which lasted until the first democratic elections. This “transition” was a complicated period that included the negotiations between the White government and the opposition parties, extreme political violence, and many significant events, such as the 1992 referendum and the 1993 assassination of Chris Hani, a communist ANC leader. The transition phase’s legal and political frameworks were still that of the old regime. Progressively, a broader definition of transition took root in the public debate and in academic texts. This new definition included the government of national unity period from 1994-1996, which ended with the adoption of the new Constitution. This definition, although mainly political, also makes sense from an economic perspective, as it included the redistributive Reconstruction and Development Program replaced by the far more neoliberal GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) policy in 1996 (Narsiah, 2002; Williams and Taylor, 2000). Less rigorously, this definition included the end of Mandela’s presidency in 1999, as he incarnated the democratization process. The transition era was also extended upstream; Marais incorporates more structural elements of change, especially at the social and economic levels. These structural elements confirm that the 1990-1994 events were not a “miraculous historical rupture,” but “the (as yet inconclusive) outcome of a convergence

of far-reaching attempts to resolve an ensemble of political, ideological and economic contradictions that had accumulated steadily since the 1970s” (Marais, 1998: 2).

The diversity of definitions of the “transition” period proves that the post-apartheid period can and should be divided into different periods with very different characteristics (Houssay-Holzschuch and Sanjuan, 2018; Michel, 1994). Currently, a rich literature is devoted to understanding these periods and how they shifted or morphed into one another. This article’s space constraints do not allow me to delve deeply into this, I therefore summarize this literature by saying that, after the transition phase (see above), a phase of normalization took over, combined with neoliberalization and developmental state policies (Marais, 2010), as well as the insufficient delivery of services. These policies reduced poverty and decreased interracial inequalities, but also produced persisting, even increasing, intra-racial inequalities, which the HIV/AIDS epidemic intensified. These characteristics differ profoundly from events during the transition and demonstrate that the post-apartheid era is in no way homogeneous.

Finally, the “post-apartheid” notion interrogates the idea of endings. Is it finished? If so, when did it finish and how? Authors’ answers to these questions differ, but several have suggested the idea of “post post-apartheid” (Dubresson and Gervais-Lambony, 2018; Guyot, 2020). With good reasons, public debate has identified the 2012 Marikana massacre, and the 2015 #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, which consecrated the so-called *born-free* generation’s entry into the political debate as turning points by asking for a “properly post-apartheid order,” namely a “decolonial” one (Makhulu, 2016: 257). Dubresson and Gervais-Lambony (2018), who approach these questions from a political economy angle, suggest that the 2007-8 economic downturn and Jacob Zuma’s election as president already signaled a period change.

“Post-apartheid” is therefore a floating signifier suggestive of a *passéist* regime of historicity. Once seen as radical, precisely dated change, it is now understood as a far more complicated periodization combining multiple temporalities, diverse periods, as well as blurred beginnings and endings. However, this much more sophisticated view still

understands “post-apartheid” as a strictly temporal analysis of continuity and change. But regimes of historicity are not only about how one interprets the past. Nicolas Offenstadt’s recent work (2018) on the German Democratic Republic, which he calls “the disappeared country”, has shown how a relationship with the past is materialized through artefacts, objects, ruins and, crucially for geographers, places. Consequently, post-apartheid should not be seen as a temporal category only: it is a “space-time” (Massey, 2005) and an especially entangled one at that.

Post-apartheid as entangled space-time

Doreen Massey wrote powerfully that the “interpenetration of space and time” (2005: 24) is such that we *have* to think of them together – offering her “space-time” notion to this end. Thinking of space and time together also means that “the imagination of one will have repercussions (...) for the imagination of the other” (2005: 18). This means that any analysis of regimes of historicity needs to be complemented with an enquiry into their associated regimes of spatiality – in fact, *space-time regimes* are what we should look at. Here, I want to show that a space-time regime of entanglement characterizes the post situation. I will subsequently initiate the complementary enquiry into this regime’s spatialities – taking care not to exclude time - through a set of metaphors, as this figure of speech is useful when speaking about such hybrid configurations. Moving to space-time uncovers how the post-apartheid experience never separates space and time, but configures them in specific ways for which we have to find a relevant vocabulary. This is just as true for other post-situations. Verdery (1999: 98), for instance, evokes how the circumambulating bones of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century prince Lazar simultaneously reconfigured space and time by “establish[ing] the territorial claims of a new Serbian state” and “compressed time, as if his death in 1389 had occurred just a few days ago.”

A spatial experience of temporal entanglements

Sarah Nuttall, building among others on Mbembe's postcolony (2001) as a "time of entanglements" (her words), regards this notion as central to defining what post-apartheid is (for a use of the notion of entanglement in geography, see Sharp et al., 1999). She defines entanglement as

"a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness." (2009: 1)

Contemporary South African spaces still bear the deep scars of apartheid's spatial planning. In this sense, wandering South African cities and countryside even today very often feels like a throwback to a different time. Spaces formerly demarcated as White or African still differ sharply with regard to their landscapes, density, uses, and income. Hard data vindicate this feeling – a national geography of poverty visibly maps the former homelands' contours as still impoverished areas. On the ground, the boundaries that delimited these homelands can often be identified in the landscape: a dirt road separates a commercial cattle farm's vast pastures from farm workers' informal settlement where Bophuthatswana's border used to be.

### **[Insert here Figure 1]**

Figure 1: The former Venda border. Photo by the author, 2016.

Further east (see Figure 1), road signs materialize the former border of Venda. Drivers entering the dense African settlement are warned to keep to the 60-km/h speed limit, while a car driving the other way can speed up to 100 km/h as it enters former White, "modern" space, here in the guise of an industrial tree plantation (Amilhat Szary et al., 2017). In other words, both the contours and the content manifest the phantom borders (*Phantomgrenzen*) of the previous, still visible spatial order on maps and in the landscape, in pretty much the same way as former imperial borders and the iron curtain remain visible on maps depicting voting patterns or even techniques of public lighting, such as night aerial photos of Berlin delineating where the wall was through the use of differently colored lights (von Hirschhausen et al., 2015; CityMetric Staff, 2015).



Contemporary spaces also reflect the multiscalarity of the apartheid spatial order. The Group Areas Act's precise demarcations<sup>5</sup> of African and Coloured townships still appear as urban apartheid *PhantomGrenzen* on contemporary maps tracing race or income distribution. This persistent social cum racial geography is only to be expected, as land reform has remained elusive. In short, and to paraphrase French political geographer Michel Foucher (1988), even in the post-apartheid era, apartheid is still visible from the air.

In addition, a distortion of the linearity of time and the continuity of space often characterizes post-situations: the (aptly-named) Lazar case evoked above illustrates this in respect of the post-Yugoslavian context, as does Nicolas Offenstadt's (2018) analysis of the GDR as a "disappeared country" – the apparent solid continuity of space totally disrupted here. In South Africa, this past, which cannot pass spatially and socially, is associated with a future that never materialized. This future would have included righting apartheid wrongs, eradicating racism, inequalities and poverty, and making "a better life for all," which ANC 1994 electoral posters pledged. Democratization held the promise of all of these, but they are still a distant, unlikely prospect. In spatial terms, such a future would mean decent housing, service delivery, land reform, environmental justice, etc. Many authors have identified this specific temporal and spatial configuration – according to Koselleck, a promised horizon of expectation that never materialized, but is still hoped and fought for - as a key feature of post-apartheid South Africa, or, as I claim, of post-apartheid space-time. Achille Mbembe (2011: viii), for example, wrote that:

"One of the main tensions in South African politics today is the realisation that there is something unresolved in the constitutional democratic settlement that suspended the 'revolution' in 1994 but did not erase apartheid once and for all from the social, economic and mental landscape. (...) Seventeen years later, the country is still caught between an intractable present and an irrecoverable past; things that are no longer and things that are not yet."

Adam Habib (2013) has likewise mentioned a "suspended revolution" that is not as yet accomplished. Such configurations are typical of Szacolczai's (2009) "frozen liminality,"

<sup>5</sup> The 1950 Group Areas Act was a key piece of apartheid legislature that assigned specific, demarcated residential and business neighborhoods to racial groups in urban areas. It was harshly implemented, including through forced removals and bulldozing.

which Van Gennep's rites of passage inspired, namely that social change can be analyzed by means of the liminality notion, which combines a phase of separation from the previous state, followed by a phase of liminality proper, or in-betweenness, after which a return to a "normal," but enhanced, state closes it off. However, the process can freeze over during any of the phases. The post-apartheid category designates the frozen liminality precisely at the in-between phase. It does not mean that nothing happens during this phase, quite the opposite. Anthropologists remind us that absolutely *anything* can happen there, but whatever happens does not move towards the desired, more just, future delineated when the process began.

Because it is stuck in this liminal stage in which apartheid wrongs have not yet been righted, post-apartheid is the space-time of ghosts. Again, this is not specific to South Africa: Marie Bonte has shown that in a post-conflict situation that might just as well be pre-conflict, Beirut teems with them (Bonte, 2017; Barthe-Deloizy et al., 2018). They might be haunting memories that persist and which one has to confront unexpectedly, or the phantoms of people forcibly displaced, kidnapped, murdered, and massacred. These memories and shades inhabit the ruins of what was destroyed – a neighborhood, a countryside valley now badly eroded; they show in the lasting scars of what was brutally implemented – the homelands policy, urban segregation, etc.; they emerge in the chilling or heartbreaking former use of everyday spaces – a neighborhood police station used as a torture center, a buffer zone, a "granny flat" that formerly housed the live-in maid, a church, etc. A staple, if problematic, trope in postcolonial and/or postconflict contexts (Maddern and Adey, 2008; Cameron, 2008; Hoelscher, 2008), ghosts were legion in the South African political discourse of the 1990s and 2000s. They haunted the words of Desmond Tutu who hoped the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would lay them to rest (Ramphele, 2008: 46). They are invoked as such in the hollowed-out forms of slain anti-apartheid activists (see Figure 2) in the memorial to the Gugulethu Seven (Houssay-Holzschuch, 2010). These ghosts rose from the ground opened up in Prestwich Street, Cape Town, to build an international hotel, revealing a slave graveyard (Jonker and Till, 2009). True, post-apartheid ghosts "have a politics" (Cameron, 2008: 383), both temporal and spatial. They manifest the entanglement of temporalities produced by persisting

injustice and reveal a **nation-wide** “topography of terror,”<sup>6</sup> by appearing at specific places to reveal past injustices, or when roaming a country full of “disappeared” activists’ hidden graves (Rousseau, 2009; Rousseau, 2016; see also Till, 2005 for an analysis of the original use of the expression in Germany). As such, these ghosts are the essence of the post-apartheid passéist regime of historicity and bear witness to Baderoon’s “irretrievable sadness” of post-apartheid geography.

**[Insert here Figure 2]**

Figure 2: Official memorial to the Gugulethu Seven. Photo by the author, 2010.

Nostalgia is a last, emotional, manifestation of temporal entanglements’ spatial experience. Gervais-Lambony (2012; 2017b) maintains that it is a “geographical sadness,” a sadness caused by space and that can in turn produce space. The term was initially coined to describe the illness that people, wasting away because a place to which they wanted to return was inaccessible, experienced. Later, nostalgia was used to describe the sweetly sad feeling of re-experiencing a past in the present while knowing it is inaccessible. Nostalgia is thus a longing for both space and time lost, and is an emotion that has been identified, even positively asserted, in countries that have undergone systemic revolutions. Yougonostalgia (Petrov, 2018), the German *Ostalgie*, and the feelings expressed by “the last of the Soviets” in Svetlana Alexievich’s *Secondhand Time* (2016) all document this emotion with regard to post-communist countries, **even when acknowledging or having suffered under these brutal regimes**. South Africa too has post-apartheid nostalgia, longing for a variety of pasts: the brutally destroyed pre-apartheid past (Buire, 2012), the apartheid past even if one was a member of the oppressed, which Dlamini (2009) described so poignantly in his remembrance of the Katlehong, a **Black township**, of his childhood, and even for the hopes and enthusiasms of the mid-1990s. **This does not mean that people are nostalgic for the regime, but that one can be nostalgic**

<sup>6</sup> The expression initially referred to the permanent exhibition in the museum with this name in Berlin, built on the site of the Gestapo headquarters. It connects the site and the system of propaganda and terror that the Nazis unleashed on the country and Europe. This original use and Rousseau’s extension of the term to South Africa point to places and spaces shaped by perpetrators (*Ort der Täter*) and to the comparability of cases.

for the moments of happiness, relationships, or places that happened during the time of apartheid. For instance, an important body of literature of a scholarly and/or autobiographical nature documents the nostalgia that seizes forcibly removed people when returning to the place from which they were displaced: Gervais-Lambony (2012) documents the case of Comet in Ekurhuleni, which is less famous than District Six, Sophiatown or Cato Manor. While walking the streets with former residents he recorded their nostalgic reminiscences: “Comet, it was the most beautiful place, it was well maintained, we had space”; “this was my street, we used to play here”; “that was my home, can you take a picture of me standing here?” These reminiscences conclude with a disenchanted comparison with the present: “It is very sad to see what this place has become.” Physical presence, perambulation, and the in-place experience of the discrepancy between the past and the present spark nostalgia.

Spatially experienced entangled temporalities that tend to be mostly turned toward the past constitute the key characteristic of post-apartheid space-time. However, this passéist régime of historicity and spatiality does not radically exclude other temporalities. According to Koselleck (2004), such remembrances, including the remembrances of hope even when (or because?) a better future remains elusive, shape expectations for the future. Consequently, post space-time, even when passéist, does not limit spatial experiences to continuity and permanence. Doreen Massey mentions that space also works as a marker of social change. But changing space in a post context takes on forms characterized by temporal entanglement, for which we need a specific vocabulary.

### Metaphors for post-apartheid space-time

Entangled post-apartheid space-time, while partially inherited from the past, is also shaped by “possibility” (Pieterse et al., 2004: 2). Pieterse et al. suggest that the end of apartheid opened up spaces of possibility rather than probability. Political and social changes have made it possible for people to aspire to the better life they were denied in principle under apartheid, even if the odds are not in their favor, as they act under strong



constraints, most notably economic ones. Examples of the post-apartheid possibilities include newly legal access to rights, resources, encounters, and places to which one can hope to return, decades after being forced out, or which one can finally access. As Julien Migozzi (2012) has showed with regard to post-apartheid school rugby, spaces of possibility can be very concrete. While structural inequalities persist and are revealed in the quality of the coaches, equipment, and even of the rugby field's grass, the match on the rugby field's space-time hosts (bodily) encounters between teams that race divided not so long ago. These possibilities have thus a spatial imprint and are combined, entangled with other, inherited spatial forms. Together, they produce places that are specific of post space-time, places for which our geographical vocabulary is currently being expanded.

Metaphors are especially useful, perhaps even necessary, to describe these specific places. Susan Sontag, excavating the work that metaphors do when speaking of illnesses such as TB, cancer, and AIDS, demonstrated how one thinks with, through, and thanks to metaphors:

"Saying a thing is or is like something-it-is-not is a mental operation as old as philosophy and poetry, and the spawning ground of most kinds of understanding, including scientific understanding, and expressiveness. (...) Of course, one cannot think without metaphors." (Sontag, 1989: 5; see also Sontag, 1978)

She demonstrates how powerful and pervasive metaphors can be, and how they reflect their time of use, evolving as social and scientific conceptions change. In turn, Johnston's *Dictionary of Human Geography* (Johnston, 2000: 456) reminds us that "metaphors are an indispensable part of both writing and theorizing" because they are ambiguous.

Noxolo et al. plead for metaphors to be developed for conceptual thought, echoing Pieterse's notion of possibilities:

"Developing new metaphors becomes an important way to open up [possibilities]. (...) Their 'open-endedness or inexplicitness' (Boyd, 1979, page 357) allows the expression (or at least intimation) of concepts that are not fully comprehended and for which a literal set of terms is not available. But metaphors also make that which is new or strange a little less intimidating by providing familiar concepts as bridges or steps. Thus, new disciplinary metaphors can provide 'hooks' into new ways of thinking, providing us with

the ability to move beyond our current discursive limits, and enabling us to reshape our geographical projects.” (Noxolo et al., 2008: 149)

They argue that metaphors are particularly powerful when used in a postcolonial approach as thinking in and through metaphors mobilizes a powerful linguistic tool that, by its very ambiguity, works against constructed binaries (e.g. past/present, or, in our case, apartheid/post-apartheid), allowing new constructions to be imagined (Noxolo et al., 2008).

Metaphors do not, however, come without caveats. First, let it be clear that they are not intrinsically better than other regimes of knowledge,<sup>7</sup> but that they are a complementary regime that might be particularly useful in post- situations. Second, and in Sontag’s (1989: 5) terms, “that does not mean there aren’t some metaphors we might well abstain from or try to retire.” We should pay careful attention to their nature, to their diversity, to what they designate, **to their spatiality and temporality**, and to the work they do in society: **do they exclude people or shut possibilities out; can they speak to the future?** We should also pay attention to the language in which they are couched and the power relationships embedded in that language – especially in a post-colonial context. Lastly, I do not claim that metaphors are the only way to grasp post- space-time realities. Makhulu (2004: 239) has analyzed other ways in which people make sense, through words, of this configuration: framed isiXhosa “ditties and proverbs, both new and old, invented and recycled” found in shacks on the Cape Flats weave together personal, situated experience and broader narratives of the past.

**However, metaphors have a lot of power to help us think about new situations, such as post-conflict time-space configurations.** Using a South African example, namely Cape Town<sup>8</sup>, as I believe South Africa resonates empirically and theoretically with many other

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<sup>7</sup> My thanks to the reviewer who suggested this idea. A caveat: **I use metaphors here in an exploratory and descriptive manner, although I did systematically try to include an overview of the possibilities they might open.**

<sup>8</sup> **In the same way as South African exceptionalism has been repeatedly debunked (see Houssay-Holzschuch 2010 for a summary of the debates), Cape Town is not an**

post places, I here offer a few metaphors to describe the spatialities of post-apartheid. Some of them are mine, but other scholars, inside and outside the South African context and post situations, have proposed most of them. I have chosen to classify these metaphors by the type of places they most aptly describe, which differ depending on their time of creation. This does not mean that they were built or vacated in just a single period, but that the direct temporalities that constituted them shaped their particular configuration decisively. Table 1 offers an overview of these “hooks,” the ways of naming and apprehending post-apartheid space-time.

Time of Creation	Metaphor and its source	Example
Before apartheid	Palimpsest (classic, see Marshall et al. 2017)	Cape Town City Center
	Spring	Khoisan place names
	Brecciation (Bartolini)	Prestwich Street Memorial
Apartheid layout	Tomasons (Akasegawa)	Miradors
		District Six Rubble Piles
	Hermit Crabs	Township Buffer Zones
After apartheid	Bubbles (inspired by Sloterdijk)	Summergreens neighborhood
		Leisure and shopping places

Table 1: Metaphors for post-apartheid space-time

The first set of metaphors, palimpsest, spring and brecciation concerns places with a visible heterochronia – places whose material structure and usage were constituted over a long period of time; they not only predated the apartheid era, but were actively produced after 1994. The past therefore appears in multiple and thick layers. Cape Town city center, the oldest witness to the colonial encounter and conquest, is a very good example of this type of places. The post-apartheid city thrives on a background of layers of the colonial, then the modern, and then the apartheid city. Remnants of these various eras come in diverse guises. The “Castle,” namely the fort established during the first decades

exceptional either. Rather, as Richard Poplak said (*Daily Maverick*, June 21, 2016): "For millions of South Africans, Cape Town isn't a sales pitch. It's an early warning system."

of colonization, old churches and mosques dating to the same period, and the Old Slave Lodge, where the enslaved working for the Dutch East India Company slept, are all monumental landmarks, while the Company's Gardens public park memorializes Cape Town's *raison d'être*, namely to provide fresh produce and water to colonial ships on their way to the East. The street grid evokes early modern town planning; Strand Street's name traces a disappeared shoreline, erased by reclamation. Further north, high-rise buildings are either office towers built after the post-WWII reclamation of the Foreshore, or post-1994 deluxe hotels for global tourists. Here, the classic metaphor of the *palimpsest* (see Mitin, 2018 for a recent take on post-socialist palimpsestic places) makes sense, as the Capetonian city-text has been rewritten several times, much in the same way as most other cities around the world. But, Marshall et al. (quoting Philpotts, 2014: 52) have recently maintained that

"... palimpsestic spaces specifically seek to: 'stabilize and disambiguate different temporal layers' as opposed to a 'more inventive' process of seeking out 'new relations between the non-synchronous layers'." (Marshall et al., 2017)

Owing to this limitation, the palimpsest metaphor needs to be complemented with others for more complex configurations.

So long and thorough were the dispossession and repression of indigenous Khoisan that traces of precolonial times are hard to identify in Cape Town. However, the way they crop up offer us another metaphor, that of the *spring*: forced deep underground for centuries, circulating through the cracks and fissures of oral history and colonial texts, Khoisan place names are now forced back to the surface by very different dowsers (Giraut et al., 2008). Table Mountain's indigenous name, Hoerikwaggo, now appears on trail names and tourist information. Marketing and tokenism certainly play a role, but there are also indigenous stories and traditional leaders' place-based ritual healing practices. For instance, a renaming ritual was performed to claim back the Rondebosch Common open space during the Occupy movement; cleansing rituals and indigenous stories of naming were part and parcel of the struggle to keep Princess Vlei a nature reserve (Ernstson, 2012; Houssay-Holzschuch et al., 2018; Houssay-Holzschuch and Thébault, 2017).

Furthermore, Nadia Bartolini (2013) has suggested *brecciation* as a very useful alternative to the palimpsest in order to describe space-time configurations where historical layers are neither horizontal, nor neatly ordered chronologically. In Rome, where her study is located, “soil and matter may shift, become nonlinear, be displaced and spatially disorganized” (p. 4). Breccia is a geological term that designates “coarse deposits of sedimentary fragments from different origins that are consolidated or cemented together.” Freud also uses breccia “to grasp the disparate concentration of elements of the past in the same space: the space of a dream” (Bartolini, 2013: 4-5). Not only does brecciation explicitly include messiness and entanglement to describe the space-time configuration, but it takes temporal dynamics into account. Past elements from a specific bygone period can therefore be brought back to the surface, here or there, or sink and disappear for a while. The above-mentioned Prestwich Street memorial in central Cape Town is a perfect example of such brecciation (Jonker and Till, 2009). In 2003, builders excavated an ancient slave graveyard while constructing a luxury hotel, digging straight into an early colonial layer of the past. The remnants were displaced and ended up in a memorial, but not on the site - the hotel was built on it -, a few hundred meters away.

My first set of borrowed or not metaphors for the post-apartheid space-time evoking the pre-apartheid past tends to be geological by nature. The set convey the weight of a heavy past and how hard it is to break through the sedimentary or chronological order, and the metaphors risk naturalizing or solidifying this order. Nevertheless, as my examples show, the space-time configurations that these metaphors describe also leave space for possibilities: excavating erased memories, and turning them into heritage – material, juridical, immaterial, and spiritual – contribute to healing what Karen Till has called “wounded cities” (2012). This holds specifically for brecciation, a metaphor that brings to the fore all that’s problematic with the linear view of the past lying at the heart of South Africa’s passéist regime of historicity.

The second set of metaphors addresses the post-apartheid space-time configuration in places of apartheid layout. In such places, apartheid’s spatial nature remains



overwhelmingly apparent, with space used to sustain and maintain the regime, and entire neighborhoods designed for spatial control (Christopher, 2000; Robinson, 1996; Houssay-Holzschuch, 1999). For instance, in African and ‘Coloured’ townships, the street grid, the layout of the buildings, the matchbox housing model, the surrounding buffer zone, and some strategically located miradors (or watchtowers) still echo apartheid’s segregation, control, and the violent containment of protest. Currently, some of these urban elements have very different usages.

**[Insert here Figure 3]**

Figure 3: Disused mirador next to Khayelitsha stadium, built for the surveillance of social events happening in the stadium, specifically the political funeral rallies of the late 1980s. Photo by the author, 2011.

Some are just abandoned (see Figure 3), having become what Japanese artist Genpei Akasegawa (1987) has called *tomasons* – built remnants, such as a passage or stairs, that no longer lead anywhere, signs pointing to disappeared places, objects whose very *raison d’être* has been forgotten. This metaphor refers to Gary Thomasson, a U.S. baseball player who infamously finished his career in Japan by missing every single ball thrown at him – “a pathetic shadow of his past self” (Gervais-Lambony, 2017b: 205, my translation). Akasegawa offers the *tomason* as a memory sign, a concrete hook that can spark emotions. Gervais-Lambony (2017a; 2017b; see also Vladislavic, 2006), who conceptualized the notion for geographers, believes that the *tomason* offers new ways of understanding the discontinuities in our space-time experiences. The miradors protruding from township landscapes, the piles of rubbles colonized by vegetation, and the faint tracks of disappeared roads in District Six, the cosmopolitan neighborhood demolished by apartheid, are such *tomasons*.

These apartheid-designed urban objects have been discarded. Others have been recycled, hosting new meanings and social uses in hollowed-out apartheid shells – becoming the *hermit crabs* of places. Buffer zones (see Figure 4) surrounding the townships, for instance, openly became traditional initiation sites, therefore reclaiming a spatial tool from white supremacist control for an African-centered practice of personal and

community accomplishment (Houssay-Holzschuch et al., 2018). Buffer zones are also important sites for constructing much needed, if low standard, social housing, as they offer vacant land both within the city and within immediate proximity of an existing community. These opening-ups of possibilities are rooted in urban practices and insist on people’s agency regarding changing what a place means: perhaps children will even reuse the tomason of a mirador as a playground. This fits metaphors from living beings – humans or animals - embodying the “loosening” and possible transfiguration of once rigid structures (Franck and Stevens, 2007).

**[Insert here Figure 4]**

Figure 4: Gugulethu’s buffer zones. Photos by Olivier Ninot, Martine Berger and the author, used with permission, a-2009 and b-2013.

Finally, places built after the demise of apartheid, or while it was crumbling, can be best described with a *bubble* or foam metaphor. According to Sloterdijk’s (2005) analysis of spheres, bubbles comprise a specific milieu. Such bubbles vary in size, but can contain a small world; they grow and might pop at any moment, or last much longer than expected; they are semi-porous to their environment, isolating a portion of the world, but still traversed by light; and they can be autonomous or coalesce into foam. The metaphor of the bubble can be used to understand how recent, racially mixed neighborhoods “foam over” a metropolis whose social and spatial layout was structured under apartheid. In Summergreens, middle-class and racially mixed new homeowners invented a post-apartheid suburban lifestyle for Cape Town (Broadbridge, 2001). Other bubbles of interracial interaction are leisure pursuits or shopping, that are politically potent *because* they are fleeting and gratuitous such as the above-mentioned rugby match (Migozzi, 2012; see also Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo, 2009). Bubbles are thus fragile space-time that harbor promises regarding what the future could be like.

In short, the entangled space-time of post-apartheid and other post places pushes us to think more deeply about how we, as geographers, can think of, speak about, and conceptualize the complex, situated configurations produced by the relationship between

time and space. Metaphors are a great help here – as long as we use them carefully, conscious of the work they do and of their nature and politics (Smith and Katz, 1993; Noxolo et al., 2008). The ones I propose here are by no means extensive and are simply aimed at sketching the possibilities of thinking post- space-time by means of a metaphorical, knowledge-generating regime. Furthermore, metaphors reflect the era in which they are used (Sontag, 1978; Sontag, 1989) – tracking them would shed light on the periodization of the post-period. They have clear limitations – most obviously linguistic, since mine tend to come from specific European languages. This doesn't imply that Western, former colonial languages are the only ones that can create meaning,<sup>9</sup> they simply reflect my own linguistic positionality and limitations (see above), as well as my inability to identify shared metaphors with which to designate post-apartheid space-time in the indigenous languages. The first discussions point to a conceptualization of post-apartheid time as the time of “freedom (*inkululeko/tokolloho/togologo*)-but”; that is, freedom, but persisting inequalities, the persisting denial of dignity and of access to land, jobs, and houses, all of which are consistent with the political and scholarly discourse identified in the first part of this paper.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have used the South African case to reflect on post situations and what they tell us about a society's relation to space and time. Post situations tend to be researched first and foremost for their relationship to time; I have therefore endeavored to include space in our understanding of them. By investigating what, and *when*, post-apartheid is (When did it start? Did it end or not, and, if it did, when?), I have shown that this systemic change has very blurred temporal boundaries, although it still powerfully informs contemporary South Africa's relationship to time, which François Hartog would have called a *passéist* regime of historicity. Blending this notion with Massey's space-time, I propose the notion of space-time regimes and show that their entanglement

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<sup>9</sup> Again, many thanks to the reviewer who pushed me to clarify this, and to Sheilla Bendile for linguistic discussions.

characterizes post situations. This regime combines a past that cannot pass and a radiant future that never materialized, and includes the presence of ghosts and nostalgia, namely place-bound experiences of entangled times. Entangled, post, space-time takes on different concrete and localized shapes, for which we need a specific vocabulary. I therefore propose a set of metaphors to describe and analyze these shapes.

This enquiry and the metaphors it suggests to understand entangled places, extend beyond the South African case and its post-apartheid situation, as other post-colonial configurations, as well as post-conflict and post-socialist societies, encounter similar issues. These configurations' relationship to the past should be neither oversimplified, overwhelm our analysis, nor bypass space. There is indeed much to be gained in theorizing all these different posts together, and metaphors, because of their very flexibility, could help spark this theorization. Identifying more metaphors, ones that are linguistically more diverse in order to decipher place-based, potentially inspiring, space-time meanings in various contexts, would be a worthy research project, as interdisciplinary in nature as space is indissolubly linked with time. Metaphors do not care for linearity, binaries or preconceptions, nor are they bounded by current conceptual understandings of space and time, or ossified ontological categories (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003 [1980]). They are inherently relational, which makes them especially relevant for us geographers, whom Doreen Massey convinced of place's relational nature. Metaphors are open-ended, "imaginative and creative," and conceptual (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003 [1980]: 139, 244) – in short, heuristic. A more concerted effort to share the metaphors we live and write by is therefore worth it.

Finally, in introducing this paper, I characterized the South African case as an optical instrument. Post- configurations are, in turn, another optical instrument with which to better understand the relationship between space and time from a geographical point of view, as they combine the sharpness of space-time contrasts with entanglements' messiness. The intensity of what is at stake in post- space-time regimes should not make them exceptional; rather, they should work as ideal-types for other, less stark, situations. They teach us to ask renewed questions, such as how do people engage with a space-time

regime? What is the materiality through which it manifests itself? How are places linked to time periods? Where are change and permanence located? Who does so and to what purpose? In short, post- configurations remind us of the importance of what lies in-between:

... the interval  
and what breathes there  
the jagged, the not-yet  
the core.

G. Baderoon (2018: 65)

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