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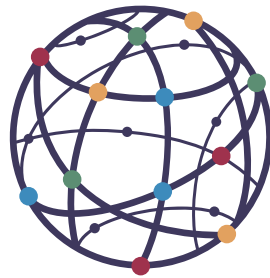
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

ENDING THE CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

GANGS, PROTEST AND RESPONSE IN
WESTERN JOHANNESBURG, 1994–2019



July 2019



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Cover photo: Members of the Westbury community walk on the streets with placards during a protest on 28 September 2018, after a woman was killed in a crossfire incident in Johannesburg's Westbury suburb; Wikus De Wet/AFP/Getty Images.

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'The vast majority of democracies that face serious internal violence [...] are not too weak to fight back, as conventional wisdom holds. They are instead complicit. They are specifically organized to enable corruption, privilege and impunity for a few while allowing the rest of society to fester.'

– Rachel Kleinfeld, *Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries can Forge a Path to Security*, New York: Pantheon, 2018, 43.

Introduction: Three cycles of violence

Johannesburg's western neighbourhoods of Westbury and Eldorado Park¹ have long experienced serious problems derived from the presence of drug gangs and other forms of organized crime, resulting in a cyclical pattern of violence and criminality, followed by backlashes in the form of community protests and state responses. Law-enforcement interventions have generally only temporarily quelled the violence before another cycle of gang activity, violence and protests flares up once again. Such continual cycles have been the pattern defining this urban area since the early 1990s. The costs of crime borne by the citizens of western Johannesburg are high and it is essential to reverse the cycle of violence and despair for these communities to thrive.

This report focuses principally on gang-engendered violence in the city's western suburbs of Westbury and Eldorado Park (and, to a lesser extent, Newclare), although other neighbouring urban areas that fall within the Johannesburg metropolitan area are also briefly analyzed.

Broadly, in this urban area there have been three cycles of violence, and accompanying periods of protest and responses by community leaders and the state since the start of South Africa's post-apartheid democratic era in 1994. The first, from 1994 to 1999, coinciding with the early years of the country's new democracy, was marked by extremely high levels of conflict as a fragmented set of gangs attempted to establish market dominance over the burgeoning drug trade. This cycle ended with a formative peace process brokered between gang bosses, but the short-lived truce collapsed under the pressures of an influx of drugs into the area and new aspirant gang leaders seeking to gain a share of the illicit-drugs market.

“Although there was a dramatic increase in police activity in early 2013, the strategy did little, if anything, to curb instability.”

The second cycle of criminal governance in western Johannesburg lasted for over a decade, from 2000 to 2013. This period was characterized by a more stable pattern of violence, with homicide rates at lower levels than pertaining previously (and with fewer peaks). At the same time, these urban areas saw strong growth in the drug trade – the consequence of an emerging set of criminal leaders filling the vacuum left by the earlier peace process mentioned above. Growing drug use and its detrimental impact on communities, combined with the continued, generally substandard economic and social conditions under which citizens lived in these communities that were created during apartheid, led to demonstrations of frustration and protest.

Although there was a dramatic increase in police activity in early 2013, the strategy did little, if anything, to curb instability, and there were marked increases in violence, as demonstrated by the spiralling homicide rate from 2014 onwards (see Figure 1). Ironically, the high-profile nature of this law-enforcement response went some way to undermine state legitimacy by raising expectations of improvements as conditions in western Johannesburg actually worsened. It is likely, too, that concerted police action may have fragmented the control of the drug



economy and led to higher rates of violence. There are also strong allegations of police corruption and complicity with some criminal actors.

The third, most recent, cycle of violence has its roots in events that occurred since 2014 as the drug economy began consolidating in the area. This led to rapidly escalating levels of violence and the tragic deaths of a number of innocent people who got caught in the crossfire. The intensity of violence increased steadily to 2017 to levels not seen since 1994/95, and, in October 2018, the government responded again: this time the front man was the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele. The focus of this response was weighted towards a law-enforcement crackdown. It is too early to tell whether it will succeed. There were, however, significant shifts in criminal control as the police operation unfolded, and the pattern of gangs both fragmenting and reconsolidating, seen in the earlier cycles, may be once again occurring, although with some key differences. That suggests that the violence will in time spiral again.

The state has intervened on various occasions during these cycles in an attempt to respond to the high levels of drug use and gangsterism in the area, including a sustained police attempt to break the local drug economy. Notably, in 2013 President Zuma visited the communities in person, an indication of the gravity of the problem in the eyes of the state. These interventions, however, proved to be largely ineffective in providing an enduring, sustainable remedy to the gang- and drug-related violence.

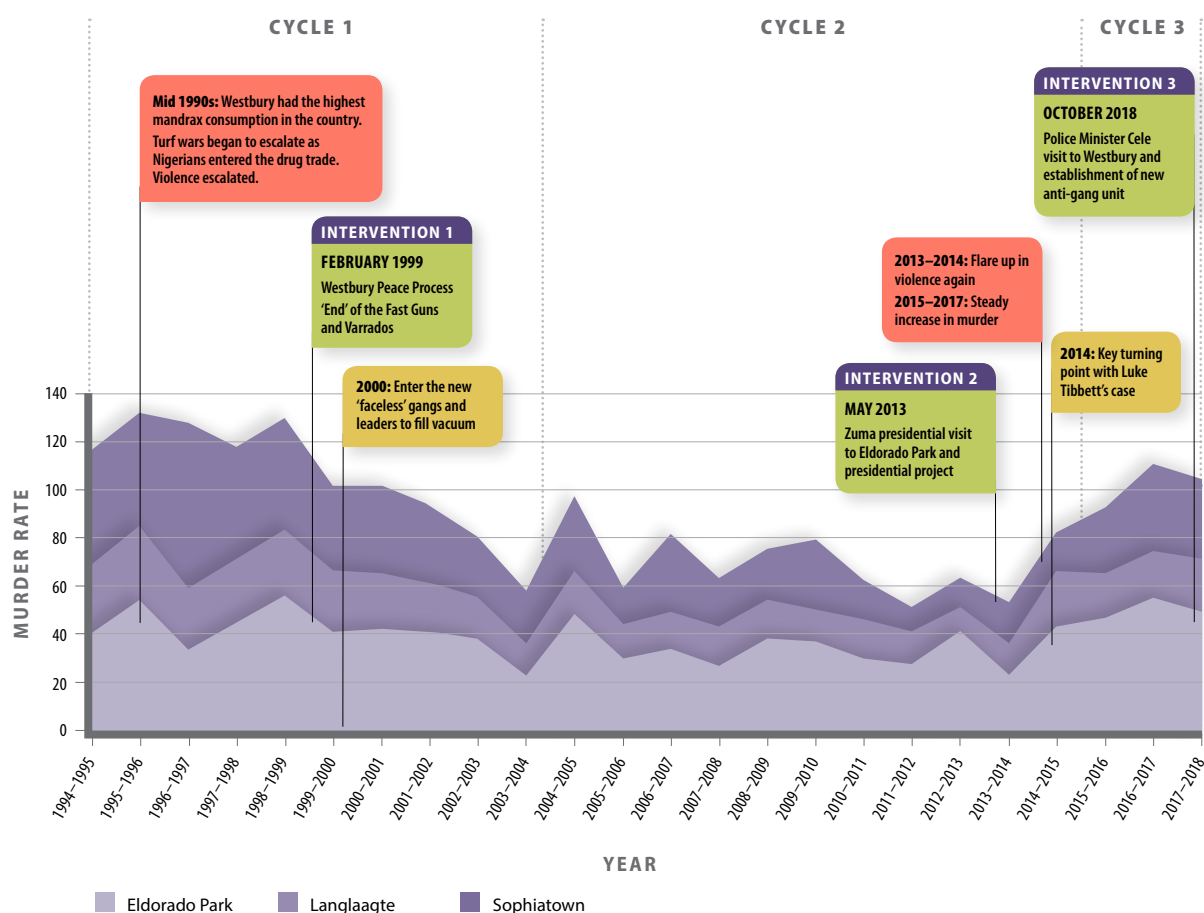
This report provides an overview of the origins of gang formation in western Johannesburg during apartheid and then examines each of the three subsequent cycles of violence, criminal governance and protest, beginning in the mid-1990s, before concluding with a set of policy lessons. The report is based on extensive interviews conducted in the areas under study, most notably Westbury, during and after the latest round of violence, protest and state response. The interviews, for the most part, were conducted in confidence and the authors have not identified the individuals by name; identifying participants would also have compromised their willingness to speak openly to us, and in some cases would have put them at risk. Those interviewed included community members, civil-society representatives, police, municipal officials, and gang members and gang leaders. Although it was not possible to confirm the allegations made by members of the community, interviewees on several occasions claimed that some of those who portray themselves in a good light are not actually what they seem and are in fact often still alleged to be involved in illicit activities.

We have used homicide numbers as a broad proxy for the level of violence in the communities concerned, recognizing, however, that the raw numbers themselves (particularly in the second cycle) do not adequately demonstrate levels of frustration or community impact.²

Figure 1 provides a longitudinal overview of homicide numbers in parts of western Johannesburg under study here from 1994 to 2018. Significant events and the broad outlines of the three cycles of violence and protest are also shown.



Figure 1: Homicide numbers, western Johannesburg, 1994–2018



Source: South African Police Service Annual Crime Statistics, 2018, <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>; data on the murder numbers before 2008 was provided by Anine Kriegler

Background: Origins of gang formation in western Johannesburg during apartheid

The Group Areas Act, introduced in 1950 as part of a raft of apartheid policies of racial segregation, had a significant impact on the lives of so-called non-whites, including Indian and Coloured communities (racial categories allocated to certain ethnic groups under the apartheid system). The Act was one of the main policy instruments for the forced removals and economic dispossession of people of non-European ethnicity, including those of Indian and mixed-race background.³

Map 1: Greater Johannesburg, showing western neighbourhoods



In western Johannesburg, this forced segregation led to the creation of the suburbs of Lenasia, Eldorado Park, Westbury and Riverlea (among others) designated by the apartheid authorities as residential areas for Coloured or Indian communities. These are neighbourhoods that have been long known for high levels of crime and gangsterism. One town planner has described this area as a ‘collage of disjointed urban experiments’.⁴ Forced removals of people from their original residential areas across the city and, later, the increasingly violent confrontations between the apartheid state and local communities in the 1980s fostered over the years a strong community sentiment of alienation from municipal and government authorities. Like other urban spaces in South Africa at the time, segregated along racial lines, residents were cut off from economic opportunities and faced soaring unemployment.⁵

The apartheid-era forced removals and resultant social – and geographical – exclusion of citizens from the mainstream political, social and economic life of the city were a major influence on the development of street gangs in the western areas of Johannesburg.⁶ Gangs, many of which had been present in communities for generations before the Act (some can be traced back to the 1920s), were seen as providing forms of social solidarity and protection. For example, before the forced removals, gangs such as the Americans, Berliners, Gestapos and Vultures operated in Sophiatown, one of the first black suburbs of Johannesburg, which was later destroyed during apartheid and rebuilt. Sophiatown is a part of the city long associated with violence, poverty and resistance, as well as for being a black cultural hub. These early-20th century gangs were largely established as robbery and protection rackets, or they specialized in petty crime, and would regularly fight each other over turf.

In the absence of other forms of normative social organization during the early years of apartheid, gangs performed a function as providers of identity, belonging and social networking, especially for marginalized young men, and as a result they often enjoyed high levels of social legitimacy. The Americans, one of the prominent Sophiatown gangs, were considered by some to be worthy social bandits (despite the interpersonal violence they meted out to rivals), and gained a reputation as South African Robin Hood-type characters, redistributing the wealth accumulated by the colonizers and handing it down to the needy of society.

The Vultures were known to recruit youngsters into their ranks. When interviewed by award-winning South African photographer and political detainee Peter Magubane, the Vultures leader, Don Mattera, described the rationale behind the appeal of the gang to young people: 'The boys could be somebody at a time when society did not help them to be somebody,' explained Mattera.⁷ In a context of racial and geographical segregation, and lack of economic opportunity for race groups disenfranchised by the apartheid regime, the gangs were capacitated by a willing 'recruitment pool' of alienated young men and youths, who found the social acceptance and a source of livelihood they sought, but which were denied them by the society of the time, within the street gangs. There was a ready supply of young people in these urban areas who were drawn into gangs through a process of 'natural attrition'.⁸ Some ex-gang members interviewed for this report spoke of how sports clubs were also environments for recruiting young people, a pattern remarkably similar to elsewhere in the world.⁹ Many young people who were recruited by the gangs as drug runners would become drug users.

The gangs became seen by aspirant members as symbols of prosperity; they were able to accumulate resources through their criminal activities, bolstered by violence or the threat of it. One former gang member described the socio-economic attraction of the gangs for some: 'I grew up on the streets,' he said. 'My biggest dream was to become leader of the Fast Guns. They had power and authority. They dressed nicely and had nice cars, girls and money.'¹⁰

From the 1980s onwards, a few of the older gangs survived, but gang members took their knowledge of the criminal economy with them into the designated areas that would become their new homes, and new gangs began to emerge.¹¹ During the 1980s, as is the case in the new South Africa today, gang formation was a dynamic and fluid process, with loose alliances often knitted together by the skills and personality of the gang leaders, and their ability to source violence. Various gangs emerged during apartheid, the most significant being the Fast Guns and the Spaldings (which later morphed into the Varados), who had been present on the streets of Westbury since the 1950s, and who were later to develop as key players in this criminal underworld.¹² The Majimbos operated in Eldorado Park. All were involved in robberies, car theft, small-scale drug dealing, mainly in Mandrax, and they extorted protection from small community businesses, such as shops.¹³

“ The sale of Mandrax was a significant milestone, as drug dealing, over time, would empower the gangs – to the great detriment of the communities in which they operated. ”

The gang's emerging economic livelihood from the sale of illicit drugs led to drug turf wars with other gangs in the area. The sale of Mandrax was a significant milestone, as drug dealing, over time, would empower the gangs – to the great detriment of the communities in which they operated. One ex-gang member explained that Mandrax was 'readily available' and that the drug was sourced through connections in Soweto.¹⁴

In western Johannesburg, over the course of two decades, these gangs terrorized the streets and communities, fighting a bloody turf war that would drag on for decades, with a variety of drugs readily available on the street corners.¹⁵ Some neighbourhoods, such as Westbury, descended into widespread crime and brutality. The senseless violence was captured in a press interview with a former leader of the Fast Guns: 'We stood in front of an open grave every week, burying our brothers. These were boys, [they] were family members or friends, we went to school with them and still we killed each other.'¹⁶ And the fact that innocent citizens have been killed in recent years by the stray bullets of warring gangs suggests that state interventions in the form of an increased police presence in the affected neighbourhoods have not been successful in deterring the gangsters. Alleged police complicity with the gangsters has furthermore inevitably eroded the efficacy of the state's policy response in the form of cyclical law-enforcement crackdowns.



Some gangs had strong links to other parts of the country, most notably Cape Town, and to a lesser extent Durban and Port Elizabeth. There have always been affinities between the Coloured communities living in the Cape and those residing in the western part of Johannesburg. It is therefore not surprising that gangs operating in these two distant parts of the country formed linkages that would become of great significance later as the Cape gangs grew in strength and reach from the late 1990s.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, as the transition to democracy in South Africa beckoned, the Cape Flats, given the population size of this urban area and the presence there of gang-controlled drug-distribution networks, were seen as a potentially very lucrative market. During the political transition years, Johannesburg-based drug traffickers, partly because of that city's growing external criminal connections, were well placed to supply the Cape market. A significant amount of Mandrax would be trafficked from Johannesburg to the Western Cape for sale on the Cape Flats. One Gauteng ex-drug trafficker, referring to this marketing pipeline, said, 'In the 1980s if you [i.e. a Gauteng dealer] managed to get a piece of the Cape Town market and were part of this supply route, you would be set, because we all knew how lucrative this market was.'¹⁷ At the same time, drugs were sold in greater quantities in Johannesburg's western areas.

The growing drug markets, mainly for Mandrax, heralded a period of gang consolidation and violence. This was relatively constrained, however – partly because, at the time, gangs did not possess firearms. The gang-related violence was also masked to some extent by high degrees of political conflict in the country's violent run-up to democracy. Nevertheless, as violence became a growing characteristic of the gangs in the 1980s and early 1990s, particularly in Westbury, a number of attempts to initiate a peace process between the warring gangs were initiated by civil-society bodies that were well networked as the political transition proceeded. In one such attempt, a priest from the Methodist Church reportedly tried to negotiate a peace pact between the gangs, although it did not hold. One reason for that was the profits now being accumulated by the growing drug markets meant few incentives for immediate peacemaking. As a result, a broader raft of changes were being set in motion by the country's transition to democracy, beginning a process of transformation among the gangs, first slowly and then at an increasingly faster pace. As the communities celebrated the advent of democracy, gang leaders were identifying new criminal opportunities.

The first cycle, 1994–1999: Extreme violence followed by a gang truce

Figure 2: The first cycle of violence



A defining feature of the period from the early to mid-1990s in Johannesburg – and several other cities in South Africa – was a sudden upsurge in the availability of illicit drugs. This was a function of both the opening of South Africa's borders to the world as a result of the country's newfound constitutional democracy and an increase in global drug production. South Africa at the time provided an ideal destination market for illicit drugs as drug traffickers searched for new markets. In Johannesburg, a flood of drugs into the city transformed the western areas of the city and marked the beginning of a set of vicious drug turf wars. The Cape gang bosses were also to play an important part in this, as they sought to establish foreign-based connections to source drugs.

As the Varados, who had morphed out the Spalding, moved into the drug trade it brought them into conflict with gangs, like the Fast Gun, who were already involved in the drug trade. The fast-growing gang-controlled drug trade resulted in Westbury becoming notorious for having the highest Mandrax consumption rate in the country during the mid-1990s.¹⁸ *The Star* newspaper published an article in 1996 showing just how lucrative the drug trade had become for senior members of these gangs. In the report, the mother of slain Varados gang member Sam Jacobs was reported as claiming that her son was making as much as R1.2 million¹⁹ a month selling Mandrax.²⁰

There was no room for independent dealers in this rapidly consolidating drug trade in the area. To control this market necessitated the kind of physical territorial presence and protection that could be found only in a gang. The accumulation of capital in the drug trade also allowed a diversification of criminal activities. The bigger gangs, such as the Varados and Fast Guns, spawned offshoots, such as the Coloured Kids. These new gangs and the younger members of the established gangs were deployed to operate the lucrative market in stolen-vehicle 'chop shops'²¹ and the trade in stolen goods. But these smaller gangs needed to operate under the protection and control of the bigger gangs.

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A former gang leader explained the gangs' various activities during this cycle: 'In the past, the different gangs had different functions. Some guys would be involved in shoplifting and others in housebreaking. These goods were then often sold within the area. Matre Street was a place where you could buy [any stolen goods]. The bigger gangs, like the Fast Guns and the Varados, not only controlled the drug trade but also ran protection rackets. The leaders made a lot of money.'²² As this suggests, gangs were diversifying, improving their organization and focusing on profit, and these factors brought new tensions into the gang ecosystem, particularly as new and foreign entrants pushed their way into the drug trade in Johannesburg.²³

Turf wars began to escalate during this cycle as new groups, including Nigerian immigrants, started to enter the drug trade, adding to the competition and impacting the market dynamics.²⁴ Before this, the Westbury dealers had cornered the market for drug supply. However, when Nigerian drug dealers began to emerge in this fast-growing market, gangs in Westbury had a set of alternative sources from whom to buy drugs. The new Nigerian suppliers also pushed down market prices and this forced existing gangs to expand their territory in a bid to sustain profit levels. The disruption led to violent turf wars, which peaked in 1996 (see Figure 1). The deaths that resulted from these drug wars triggered more violence and a cycle of revenge killings.²⁵

By the mid-1990s, the Fast Guns, considered to be the most organized gang, controlled most of the drug territory in Westbury, followed by the Varados. The gangs were changing; they were becoming increasingly violent, but at the same time eager to try to buy themselves social legitimacy in the areas where they operated.



Former gang members interviewed as part of this research provided contrasting reflections on how gangs operated during this time. They emphasized codes of honour – if they can be called that – that the gangs observed and, ironically, a certain sense of respect for the community that they are said to have upheld. One interviewee said, 'Although gang wars were about territory, and violence erupted as a result, there was also respect back then. If a father of a Fast Gun got intoxicated in a rival gang's area, the members of the rival gangs would ensure he got home safely.'²⁶ The same former gang member recalled how they would help old ladies carry their groceries home, boy-scout-style. Yet, in the same breath, he spoke of how seemingly every weekend they would attend the burial of one of their fellow members.

The lines of control were increasingly being drawn. One ex-gang member admitted that, even ten years later, he still avoids certain areas because he fears he could be killed in revenge for some of his gang crimes: 'I have even had to miss certain family weddings because of where they were taking place. If I go to that area, I could be killed because of what I was involved in when I was in the gang.'²⁷

Market diversification and criminal consolidation

While gang bosses try to paint a picture of gangs as community providers of social solidarity and philanthropy, community members are quick to point out that by 1996 a virtual curfew was necessitated in some areas by the sheer levels of violence as drug turf wars accelerated. In July 1996, the *Mail & Guardian* reported that the outbreaks of violence appeared to follow a cyclical pattern. They erupted 'roughly every six months – and [were] linked inextricably to drug trafficking. At its peak [in 1995], nine people were gunned down in one week. This year's tally stands at nine murders, five attempted murders and numerous others wounded.'²⁸

The Eldorado Park gangs, dominated by the Majimbos, also appear to have had carefully defined territories and carved out certain niche trade activities for themselves during this period. Some dealt in stolen vehicles or cellphones; others ran chop shops. During this cycle, Eldorado Park became notorious as a hotbed for stolen goods, which were sold in the area and in other suburbs of Johannesburg.

Operating within the gang structures, car thieves began segmenting a niche by specializing in procuring stolen vehicles for clients, and even providing particular specified models of cars, on the basis of client orders. For an additional cost, gang bosses would provide the buyers of these stolen vehicles with the necessary registration paperwork. These documents were secured through their contacts in the traffic departments and the police service.

As with the gangs in Westbury, the allure of money to be made from drugs resulted in many of the Eldorado park gangs moving into the illicit drug trade as a core activity during this phase, while retaining their links to other less lucrative criminal markets. They initially dealt in Mandrax and cannabis, and later diversified into other drugs, such as methamphetamine (known in South African markets as tik), cocaine and heroin. This diversification into the drug trade escalated the turf wars and violent conflicts as the western Johannesburg gangs sought to maximize their share of the profits in an increasingly competitive, contested market.

Behind many of the Eldorado Park gangs was a group of crime bosses known as Makweras, who would deploy gang members to act as their foot soldiers. The Makweras were considered the 'dons' of the township and seen by many young people as symbols of prosperity in a deprived area where there were few, if any, economic opportunities available to young people. For some, criminal activity was seen as the only livelihood. The Makweras would launder their takings by starting up businesses, such as taxi services, spaza shops,²⁹ real estate and hair salons.³⁰ One of the infamous Makweras who operated in Eldorado Park, until he was killed in November 2011, was William Pappi Jones, who had a major influence on the local criminal economy from the mid-1990s onwards and became very wealthy.³¹

In the late 1990s, the Majimbos gang splintered into two factions; the split led to violent conflict between the two splinter groupings.



In Riverlea, the Spartans dominated the area. One gang member explained how the gang had started out as a group of young friends hanging out on the streets. The gang members began to involve themselves in gambling and dealing in stolen commodities. Like the gangs in Eldorado Park and Westbury, the Riverlea gang also became involved in the drug trade and it was not long before drug dealing also dominated much of the gang activities in the area.³²

From around 1997, growing levels of gang-related violence in the area attracted the attention of the authorities and community leaders. Community elders were concerned about the increasing violence, and the gangsters shared the sentiment: violent drug wars on the streets were seen as bad for business, and an internal gang-initiated peace process emerged.³³

The Westbury peace process

In the late 1990s, discussions started to take place between leaders of the different gangs, who would later end up being incarcerated together, and after the release of some of these leaders in 1998, the discussions continued. In early 1999, 12 gang leaders from the Vultures, the Fast Guns and the Varados met at the Southgate Mall, a shopping complex west of Johannesburg, along with three pastors. The meeting proved to be a success, and at a subsequent meeting some of the gang members showed how they had agreed to shed their gang loyalties and break down barriers by swapping cars with one another. This was clearly meant as a sign of trust and commitment to the process of brokering a truce.

On 28 February 1999, a public meeting was held at the Cecile Payne football stadium in Roodepoort. At this meeting, gang leaders informed residents of Westbury, who had attended the event in their thousands, that a peace deal had been agreed to by the opposing gangs. In a public display, gang leaders burnt their flags, the insignias of their gang affiliation, symbolizing the end to their mutual hostilities.

There had been earlier attempts at peace: in the mid-1990s, the Fast Guns and Majimbos had agreed to a peace process. But, one former Fast Gun member explained that although the two gangs had agreed to end the conflict, it was a tenuous deal: 'Even though we agreed to stop fighting each other, it was not possible for members of the different gangs to be seen on the other gang's turf. People say they forgive but never forget.'³⁴

“ Whatever the reasons, the peace process did, however, seem to bring some relief to Westbury residents, who had had to live through the extreme disruption and violence of constant turf wars. ”

Exactly why the Westbury peace process was different from previous attempts at peace is not entirely clear. The motive behind the different gang leaders' agreeing to this process is also opaque. One gang member interviewed claimed that because the gangs were incarcerated together, they had had a chance to engage with one another and this then catalyzed the peace process. There does also seem to have been some frustration with some of the older gang members and bosses who appeared to want to exit the trade, a number of these key gang figures used the peace process to openly distance themselves from any future involvement in gangsterism. The fact that gang leaders began negotiations in prison also highlights how important state action may have been to shifting incentives for engaging in gangs and the drug trade more generally.

Although this may have had some influence on the peace process, the motives behind it are likely to have been more complex and nuanced. One former gang leader, who had been a key role player in this peace process, explained



how his time in jail had had a sobering influence on his views regarding gangs: 'You learnt on the streets how gangs would protect you but when I went to prison, the gang was not really supportive and I started asking if the gang was really there for me.'³⁵ Other interviews suggest, however, that some gang bosses believed that they would no longer be able to operate should the violence continue: gangs needed acceptance among the community and a modicum of peace for an environment that was conducive to keeping the drug trade working.

Whatever the reasons, the peace process did, however, seem to bring some relief to Westbury residents, who had had to live through the extreme disruption and violence of constant turf wars. Running parallel to the peace process, several gang members sought to invest in the taxi business, a move that would become important in later cycles of violence. This move, by gang members to diversify into the taxi sector was also not unique to Westbury, and in Eldorado Park, Pappi Jones had early on in his criminal career entered the taxi business in the mid-1990s and continued to be involved in it until his assassination in 2011.

Perhaps because it was driven by gang bosses themselves, the Westbury peace process seemed to prove to be effective. While certainly not ending completely, the violence diminished significantly in the first few years after the 1999 truce: the number of annual reported homicides in the area dropped from a high of over 120 in 1998/99 to a low of just under 60 in 2003/04.

The declining levels of violence in the wake of the Westbury peace agreement masked, however, a number of important changes in the area's overall criminal economy. Most significant of these was the exit of several older gang players, because of retirement, death or imprisonment, and the quiet and behind-the-scenes emergence of new ones. A new criminal economy was gradually forming after the fleeting optimism engendered by the peace process and, once it had taken hold, it would trigger a major community outcry followed by a subsequent response from the state.

The second cycle, 2000–2013: Protest, response and shattered hopes

As the peace process was unfolding, several new criminal actors are said to have moved into the vacuum created by gang leaders who had committed themselves to peace, or exited the illicit economy for other reasons. New criminal groups also began to form, led by people previously unknown to the community.³⁶ One former Fast Guns member described these new gang leaders as 'faceless';³⁷ another said that the new emergent entrants in the gangland economy tended to be younger.³⁸

According to a number of the older gang members interviewed, the peace process resulted in the previous iteration of the Fast Guns and Varados ceasing to exist and the emergence of new criminal drug lords controlling the illicit drugs market,³⁹ although they rebranded themselves with the names of the older dominant gangs. Within this newly reconfiguring environment, the gangs that emerged as prominent in Westbury were the rebranded Fast Guns and the Varados, while the Majimbos expanded their influence from their home territory of Eldorado Park into Westbury. These gangs dealt in a broad range of drugs, including tik, cocaine and heroin. They also extended their operations into Newclare. On the surface, little had changed since the gang truce.

Furthermore, some former gang members who had participated in the peace process later returned to the gangs, despite opposition from the newcomers to the criminal market. Former Fast Guns members spoke about how the financial impact of leaving the gangs was the driving force behind their decision to return to the illicit economy after the peace process.⁴⁰ The financial pull of drug dealing proved difficult to resist, as it had provided a livelihood for many in the area. And, among the Westbury community, there had been scepticism over claims made by previous gang members to the effect that they had transformed and reintegrated into society.⁴¹

One ex-Fast Guns member said, 'Although there was a peace process, tension still existed. The process was extremely tenuous because of the cycle of violence linked to revenge. It is not possible to break this cycle; bigger people have tried and failed.'⁴²



Figure 3: The second cycle



Although some of the former gang members genuinely sought a new life outside of crime, there was a ready supply of new, younger, recruits willing to step into their shoes because they had few alternative economic opportunities. One ex-gang member explained that poverty and housing shortages made young people particularly vulnerable to recruitment by gangs,⁴³ while another, who had been part of the peace process, lamented its failure to provide alternatives for young men on the street: 'The peace process was hijacked by certain people. For it to succeed, you needed to put young people into work programmes, but this never happened.'⁴⁴

Arguably, therefore, the Westbury peace process had not curtailed the criminal economy or its associated violence, but merely recycled and repopulated it by opening it up to new entrants and new gang bosses.

A renewed drug surge and its social repercussions

In the period of declining violence and gang re-formation following the Westbury peace process, drug sales increased in the area. The gangs were becoming more powerful, and, at the same time, an indirect economy developed around the larger gangs. Some Westbury residents who are not directly involved in the gangs have benefited financially from their existence through the social economy that sprang up around the local criminal economy. The ex-Fast Guns leader explained that women are paid by drug dealers to prepare food for them after their shifts; others provide ancillary services by storing drugs for the drug lords.⁴⁵ Another ex-gang member said that drug dealers also 'hand out favours', such as hampers, to the local community.⁴⁶

As the illicit drug economy once again consolidated, it was accompanied by spurts of violence, most notably in 2004 in Eldorado Park, although these received little coverage in the press.⁴⁷ The renewed peaks of violence appeared, however, to be short-lived and, at least as measured by the number of homicides in the area, violence remained stable, with a generally declining pattern to a historic low in 2011/12. But, simultaneously, levels of social unease and protest were growing within the community, a reaction to the dire socio-economic conditions that had prevailed in the area even after many years of democracy, coupled with the dramatic growth of the local drug economy. Community leaders were eager to point to the challenges they faced.

In Eldorado Park, for example, the housing backlogs that had existed during the apartheid era continued to impact on the community almost two decades into democracy, with multiple generations of the same families living in overcrowded flats and houses. It is estimated that there are currently 30 000 people requiring housing in the area. Some homes in Eldorado Park have two dozen occupants, forcing them to sleep in shifts due to space shortages. Residents complain that many of them have been on the state housing list for more than 12 years. Shacks have also been built in backyards to accommodate people who are unable to find alternative accommodation.⁴⁸

One man told a reporter, 'My grandmother died living in a shack. I'm most probably going to die living in a shack. I don't want my child to also have to live their entire life in a shack with no electricity.'⁴⁹ Joblessness and poverty are also high in Eldorado Park. According to Statistics South Africa, more than 60% of adults are unemployed and rely

on social grants to survive, while only 36.5% of adults and young people over the age of 18 have completed matric or any equivalent level of education. This makes their chances of finding work even more difficult.⁵⁰

Drugs have become a pervasive feature of life in the area, especially for young people, with the biggest demand appearing to be for tik. One doctor working in the area explained: 'Tik makes money more quickly. Unfortunately, this means drug dealers are constantly looking for new markets for their tik, and now they target schools in the area.'⁵¹

A sinister, and socially destructive, repercussion of the drug trade in the communities of Eldorado Park and Westbury has been the establishment of what are locally known as 'lolly lounges' or '*suiker-huise*'.⁵² These are private homes where people go to consume drugs. ('Lolly lounge' is derived from the lollipop-shaped glass container used to smoke drugs such as crystal meth.) However, these establishments have also become notorious for drug dealing, rape and emotional abuse. Young children are often lured to them. An episode of *Special Assignment*, a South African TV documentary, broadcast in 2015, revealed how several young women who had been forced into prostitution and drug abuse in such establishments were reported as missing by their families. Allegedly, they are sexually exploited by criminals in these drug dens. The documentary refers to girls being lured into the lounges, where they become addicted to drugs, and have to pay for them through sex work, leading to a spiral of entrapment.⁵³

There have been numerous reports of raids on lolly lounges, where children as young as nine have been rescued from their clutches.⁵⁴ The extent to which such establishments are controlled and run by the gangs and drug syndicates is not entirely clear. For example, one ex-gang member from Westbury described them as places where users simply gather to consume drugs, out of sight of the law-enforcement authorities.⁵⁵ His view was disputed by other gang members, however, who said that the lolly lounges are part of a broader criminal network, and are environments linked to drug dealers and gang bosses. One described how drug dealers would recruit women – referred to as 'madams' – to run the lolly lounges. Some of these, he said, may be young girls and 'they work for the drug bosses'.⁵⁶

The theory that gangs and drug dealers have direct interests in lolly lounges also surfaced in June 2013. After police began working with the community of Eldorado Park to close down lolly lounges, drug lords allegedly sent out a warning to the community through an anonymous email. The message not only appeared to threaten parents, but indicated that lolly lounges would continue operating with girls as young as eight..⁵⁷

Eldorado Park is said to have the highest concentration of lolly lounges in the metropolitan area, but they are rapidly spreading to other parts of the province too, including Soweto, Crown Gardens, Fordsburg, Florida, Bosmont, Springs, Ennerdale and Westbury. One gang member from Westbury said that, in his area, there was a lolly lounge on each street: 'They are everywhere, and each morning guys go out and "spin" [steal] to get money for a fix and then head for a lolly lounge'.⁵⁸ During an interview with the Sophiatown Community Police Forum (CPF), one member said a major deterrent to reporting a lolly lounge to the police was that the person would be required to sign an affidavit, and many residents are unwilling to do this out of fear that they will face reprisals.⁵⁹

The president steps in: Zuma's tardy and ineffectual response

In this area of Johannesburg, besides the deleterious social problems caused by the drug markets and the continued presence of gangs controlling them, there have been ongoing protests by residents over the failure of the various spheres of government to deliver adequate social services and infrastructure, and this, coupled with allegations of civil-service corruption, have led to serious mistrust and anger towards the state apparatus.

In 2013, the situation in the communities capitulated. Desperate mothers in Eldorado Park had had enough of the violence, drugs and squalid living conditions, and wrote to President Zuma explaining how their children were struggling with addiction. The women said that the term 'future generation' was a cruel irony and meaningless because even sending their children to school in the Johannesburg ganglands was like 'sending them to the lions' den. ... Drugs peddlers parade and sell daily to our kids'.⁶⁰





President Zuma, accompanied by cabinet ministers, visiting Eldorado Park in May 2013 in response to a letter written to him by mothers of drug users. Photo: Gallo Images/The Times/Vathiswa Ruselo

Following a spate of citizen protests, initiated particularly by women, a stepped-up police response ensued in early 2013. In March of that year, police raids and arrests seemed to have the gangs on the defensive, and the police told the media that they would ‘camp’ in the area until ‘all the drug lords were rooted out.’⁶¹ In response to an ongoing community outcry, and to review the actions that had been taken in the preceding months, Zuma, accompanied by several cabinet ministers, visited Eldorado Park and neighbouring Kliptown in May 2013.⁶² The presidential visit was billed as a high-profile engagement to discuss the drug problem and the crime and violence that had terrorized residents. The presidential visit was unique, in that its purpose was to focus solely on crime and drugs in a selection of communities, the only such intervention during Zuma’s tenure.

Following Zuma’s visit to the affected communities, an intergovernmental task team was established to address the problems of drugs, gangs and violence being experienced by residents of Eldorado Park. Subsequently, additional police contingents were deployed to the area, and raids were conducted on a number of drug dens, some of which were closed down. The upswing in police activity in the area was palpable. The available data does indeed show a dramatic increase in police activity, as measured by registered drug cases, usually an outcome of raids, road blocks, or stop-and-searches. Between May 2013 and April 2015, police arrested and charged 2 844 people for drug-related crimes.⁶³ Earlier in 2013, police had informed the media they had arrested six of the 12 biggest drug dealers in Eldorado Park.⁶⁴

Shortly after the visit by Zuma and the establishment of the task team, which rolled out more police operations, a threatening message was sent to the community of Eldorado Park. Gangsters warned that they would punish the community once the police had withdrawn from the area. The last sentence of the message stated: *‘Julle sal met julle girls moet span toe gaan tanies, ons sal jule wys wat maak ons met hulle from 8 years old.’* Translated, this warns parents to keep a close watch on their girls because the drug lords would show them what they do to eight-year-old girls. The message was sent through mobile apps and allegedly originated from two drug dealers known as Malla and Bonga.⁶⁵

The combined resources and focus of a presidential visit and the subsequent law-enforcement response, including allocating significant police resources, should, arguably, have had an immediate impact in terms of reducing violence. However, it seems, remarkably, to have had the opposite effect. From 2014, the number of homicides in the area began to increase again, most notably in Westbury. A major state intervention following a presidential visit had raised hopes that the situation would finally improve. But the community’s hopes were to be dashed and several interviewees suggested that government credibility declined as a result.



The third cycle, 2014–2018: Criminal consolidation, complicity and links to the Cape

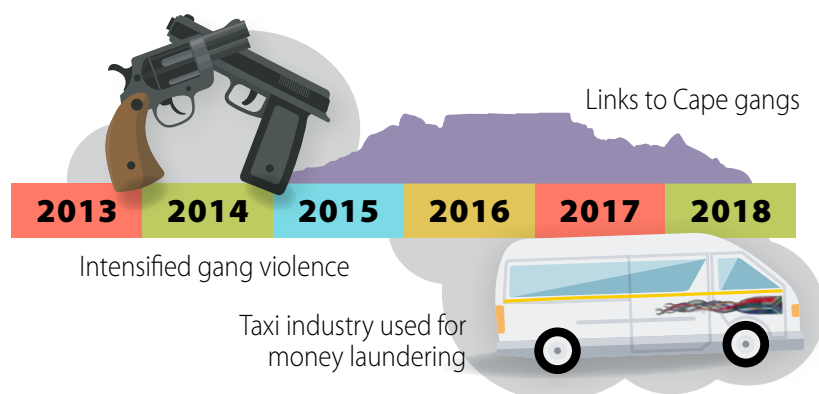
Just a year after the presidential visit and subsequent heightened law-enforcement interventions, Johannesburg's western suburbs were poised once again for huge increases in violence. The main factors that appeared to spark these were a consolidation of the drug trade into the hands of a small number of gangs and the complicity of the police in their activities.

Some community members claim that two prominent figures, widely known by their street names, Keenan and Finch, are behind much of the drug trade and gang violence that has ravaged Westbury and Newclare since 2014.⁶⁶ Keenan is Keenan Ebrahim; Finch is the street name for Leroy Brown.⁶⁷ Both are also allegedly linked to protection rackets, and both have become involved in the minibus-taxi industry servicing Westbury and the surrounding areas.⁶⁸ Keenan and Finch were arrested and appeared in court in June 2019 on separate murder charges. At the time of writing the outcome of these cases is still to be determined.⁶⁹

A relative of Finch is said to have been a member of the Fast Guns and, according to one source, Finch was able to take over much of the territory previously controlled by that gang.⁷⁰ By 2014, reflecting the degree of criminal consolidation, Finch apparently controlled large sections of Westbury's drug territory.

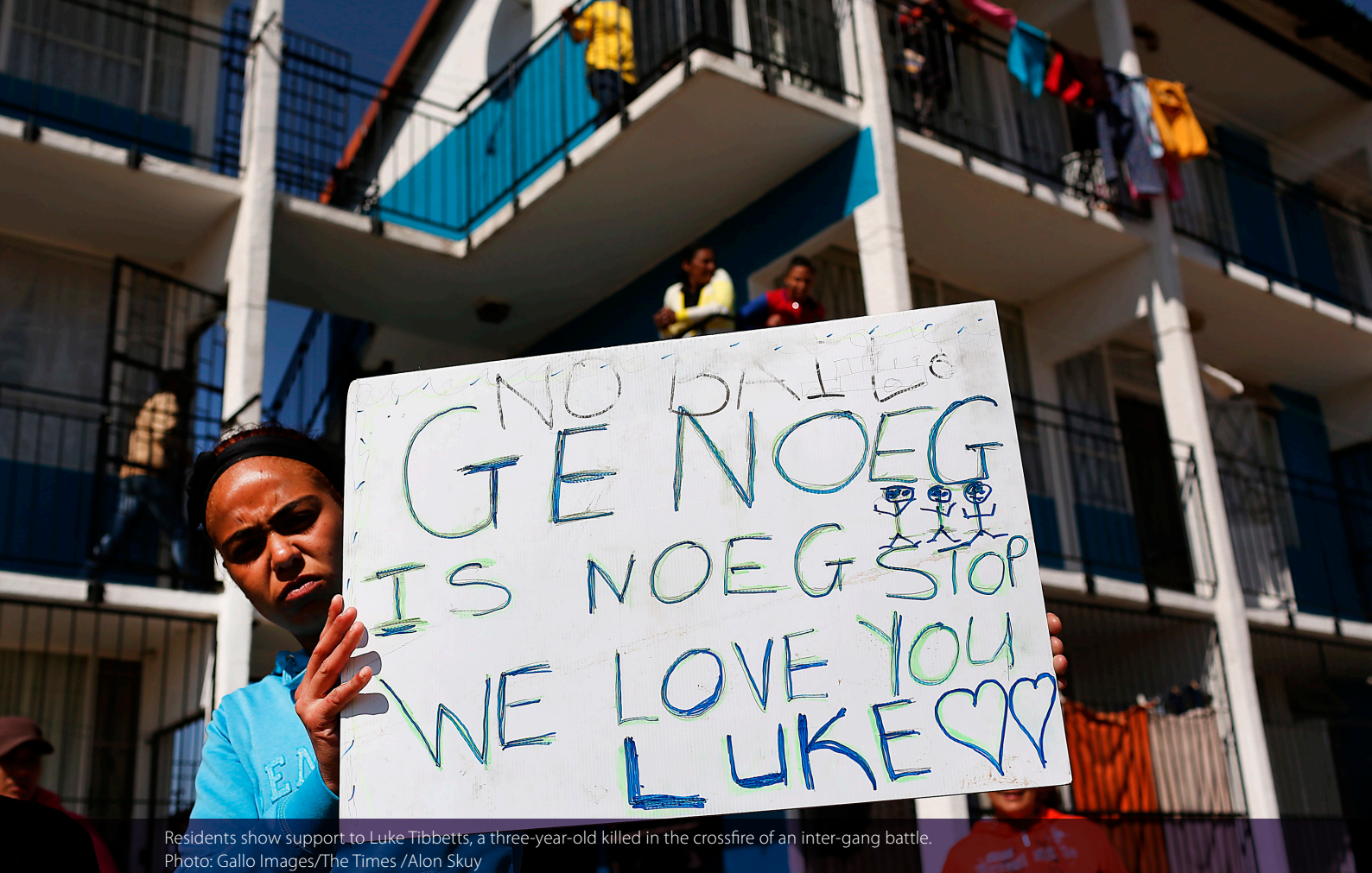
Finch, allegedly linked to the Varados and Majimbos gangs, is said to run a sophisticated network of drug dealers.⁷¹ According to a police officer, 'Finch knows exactly what revenue he can expect from each corner. If revenue at a particular corner drops, Finch will expect answers. If he is not satisfied with the answers, the corner operator will be repurposed or even taken out.'⁷² He makes visits to his territory accompanied by body guards, who are thought to be off-duty police officers.⁷³ Finch is also purportedly involved in the property business, which he may use to launder the proceeds from his drug sales.

Figure 4: The third cycle



Keenan is alleged to have entered the drug market in Westbury around 2013. Some gang members claim he invested an inheritance from a family member to establish himself as a player in the area. He appears to have linked himself to the Fast Guns and one of their leaders, known as Bahad. According to one resident, once Keenan moved into the drug trade in Westbury, friction emerged between him and Finch, leading to an upsurge in inter-gang violence.⁷⁴

For community members, and the public in general, a milestone event that sounded new depths of violence in the community occurred in August 2014. Luke Tibbetts, a three-year-old boy from Westbury, was shot in the head while sitting on his mother's lap in a car; the toddler was hit by a stray bullet that had been aimed at another car



Residents show support to Luke Tibbetts, a three-year-old killed in the crossfire of an inter-gang battle.
Photo: Gallo Images/The Times /Alon Skuy

being driven by a local gangster, one Keenan Mokwena (not to be confused with the Keenan referred to above). Luke was the victim of a shootout between rival gangs. He spent six days in hospital on life support before finally succumbing to his injuries. While seemingly an isolated incident at the time, this death was in fact a potent symbol of the nadir that had been reached among violent criminal factions competing for territorial control, and the sign of things to come.

Mokwena was arrested in connection with the shooting of the young boy. The state alleged that Mokwena and another suspect, gang leader Lindray Khakhu, had had a disagreement on the day of the shooting. Mokwena had pointed a firearm at Khakhu, who retaliated by firing more than 20 shots at Mokwena's car. It was one of these bullets that would kill Luke Tibbetts.⁷⁵ Mokwena was sentenced to 12 months in jail or to pay a R3 000 fine; he opted to pay the fine and was released, and was apparently later killed during an armed robbery in Vosloorus, to the east of Johannesburg;⁷⁶ Khakhu was sentenced to life imprisonment (for more on how the Tibbetts case was later decided in court, see the section below on police complicity).

A failed attempt at peace

In 2015, in the wake of Luke Tibbetts's death, the gang violence in Westbury and Newclare spilled over into Bosmont, another suburb in the West Rand of Johannesburg. In July 2015, residents of Newclare reported that shootings had become a regular nightly occurrence: 'It's as if they are working night shift ... It happens every week – sometimes twice a week. We are used to it.'⁷⁷

Shootings became a regular feature of the area during 2016 and 2017, when many innocent people were caught in the crossfire. In one incident, in December 2016, Tyron Willett, 37, was shot and killed. The shooting happened during a Christmas Day celebration at a park in Westbury. As children in the community were gathering to receive Christmas gifts, a car pulled up and gunfire ensued. The children were forced to run for cover. The car then drove to an adjacent street and shot Willett twice in the head. He was not known to have had any gang affiliations and the culprits have never been arrested.



Amid the escalating violence, a former gang leader attempted to initiate peace talks between the gangs in Westbury in mid-2016. Meetings were scheduled for gang leaders to take part in, but, according to the ex-Fast Guns leader, none turned up to the meetings. One gang member said it was futile to draw gang bosses, such as Finch, into such peace negotiations, saying they would not participate because they believe they are 'untouchable'.⁷⁸

During an interview with the media in September 2017, the councillor for Westbury described the deteriorating situation: 'This entire neighbourhood has become a crime spot,' he said. 'Things have got out of hand in the past two years. We have daily shootings and drive-by shootings being carried out by people we don't know.'⁷⁹ One CPF member from Sophiatown explained that, during this cycle of violence, it had become too dangerous, or even impossible, to place volunteer community patrollers in Westbury.⁸⁰ He explained how the gangs and drug lords had been able to take advantage of tools used by crime fighters to help them in their criminal activities: the CPF discovered that the drug lords were making use of an anti-crime WhatsApp group established by the Sophiatown CPF.⁸¹

In Eldorado Park, the Majimbos' home turf, similar patterns emerged, with gang violence linked to the drug trade ravaging the community in that neighbourhood and spilling over into Westbury. In 2017, a suspected gang member was arrested for at least four murders committed in Eldorado Park and Sophiatown in 2016 and 2017. According to the media, these killings appeared to be linked to rivalry between drug lords.⁸²

Links to the Cape

Supply chains for illicit drugs have cemented relations between gangs in the Western Cape and those operating in the Western areas of Gauteng. Often, taxi and courier services are used to transport contraband from the Cape to Gauteng and vice versa. In a trial in 2000, Rashied Staggie, the leader of the Hard Livings gang in the Cape, was charged and subsequently convicted in relation to his involvement in the 1997 theft of weapons from the police barracks in Faure, Cape Town. During that trial, the link between the criminal gangs in Eldorado Park and those in the Western Cape was highlighted in the testimony of one of the state witnesses. Jerome Louw, who said he was a member of an Eldorado Park car-theft gang, testified that while he was visiting Cape Town in June 1997, he had seen the accused transporting arms from Kraaifontein to Atlantis, suburbs in the Cape. During his testimony, Louw admitted that he was testifying as a state witness to avoid being charged for drug dealing and gun running from Cape Town to Johannesburg.⁸³

“More recently, there have been strong indications that gangs from the Western Cape and those from Eldorado Park and Westbury have formed even closer ties, forging relationships that are used to acquire an upper hand over rivals.”

More recently, there have been strong indications that gangs from the Western Cape and those from Eldorado Park and Westbury have formed even closer ties, forging relationships that are used to acquire an upper hand over rivals. For example, reportedly, Johannesburg gangs have used gunmen from Cape Town to carry out hits for them in Johannesburg.⁸⁴

In 2017, a police officer (with informants within gangs in Westbury) confirmed to *The Star*, a newspaper distributed in the Johannesburg area, that the Fast Guns had hired five shooters from among their Cape Town associates to eliminate Majimbos and Varados gang members in the area.⁸⁵ Finch also appears to have links with Cape gangs, and allegedly makes use of their gunmen.⁸⁶ Another ex-gang member from Westbury claims how Finch deploys two



armed women, both from Cape Town. It is not clear if these women are his girlfriends or 'part of his protection,' he said.⁸⁷ A senior Cape Town police officer also claimed that links allegedly exist between Finch and Ralph Stanfield, an alleged Cape Town gang boss.⁸⁸

It has been reported in the press that Staggie has allegedly arranged hits to be carried out in Johannesburg on drug dealers. 'Staggie would send maybe two or three guys to kill someone and the same day they will be transported back. Nobody would notice them.'⁸⁹ A police officer said that shootings taking place in the area were part of a war between rival gangs, who were contracting hitmen from Cape Town to do their killings.⁹⁰

The links between Cape Town and the Westbury gangs have also led to the emergence of a new gang in Westbury calling itself the Disciples. The gang has its roots in Elsie's River where they are considered to be a small but violent gang and are known for their involvement in hits. They were originally brought in by the Varados to complete a hit, but have since stayed, complicating the already violent and contested gang dynamics of Westbury.

Our interviews also suggest that a complex pattern of drug supply and turf competition may have developed in western Johannesburg. A single, prominent drug supplier from Cape Town allegedly supplies both Keenan and Finch's gangs. Competition between the two is said to benefit the supplier, who supplies Cape hitmen to both factions, ensuring that no individual achieves ultimate dominance in the area – the gangster's equivalent of divide and rule.⁹¹ But this is also a reminder of how powerful criminal figures from elsewhere in the country are central to what is often seen as a localized set of gang conflicts, indicating the increasingly consolidated nature of organized crime in South Africa.

Gangs, taxis and laundered drug money

In Eldorado Park, at the time of Pappi Jones's death, his nephew, Ralph Jones, was the chairperson of the Johannesburg Southern Suburbs Taxi Association. A 2009 news article claims that Jones had been running a 'mafia-style' operation, including allegations of fraud and intimidation.⁹² At the time, Jones denied any wrongdoing and claimed it was propaganda by people wanting to discredit him. Although various interviewees accused Jones of questionable practices in the taxi industry, we were unable to independently verify these claims. Jones later became the chairperson of the United Taxi Association Forum (UTAF), which represented some 30 taxi associations in Gauteng and played a central role in opposing the bus rapid transport system, which was being introduced. Whether or not the allegations concerning Ralph Jones have merit, it is clear is that, over time, and using the profits that they have accumulated from drug sales, key individuals within the Johannesburg criminal community have diversified into a wider set of legitimate or grey business sectors, most notably the minibus-taxi industry.

In Westbury, like many other areas where gangs operate, several drug lords and gangsters are believed to have invested in the taxi industry, including some of the older gang members who participated in the 1999 peace process and, according to community members, Keenan and Finch have allegedly done likewise. To understand how these dynamics have played out, it is important to look at developments in the Westbury taxi business since 2015.

Westbury taxis operate as part of the Johannesburg Community Taxi Association (JCTA), which services the Westbury, Coronationville, Newclare, Claremont, Delarey, Greymont and Slovo areas. The association was established in the 1960s by a group of local Coloured businesspeople who had a strategy to provide commercial transport services to Sophiatown and surrounding areas.

In 2010, when the City of Johannesburg introduced a new bus rapid transport (BRT) system, the Rea Vaya bus service, the new public-transport plan was met with resistance and outright violent opposition from certain elements of the taxi industry, including some of the members of the JCTA. Taxi owners, whose businesses were threatened with competition with the introduction of the Rea Vaya, argued that the taxi routes were intellectual property and that the state did not have a right to usurp them.⁹³



The opposition to BRT culminated in mass taxi strikes, during which commuters and drivers were intimidated and shot at, buses vandalized and bus lanes obstructed. However, in 2015, an agreement was reached between taxi owners and the City of Johannesburg. Fifty JCTA members signed the Bus Operating Company Agreement, under the terms of which they agreed to participate in the roll-out of the Rea Vaya BRT route.⁹⁴

However, around the same time as agreements were being reached between the metropolitan authorities and the taxi association, alleged drug lords and dealers are said to have begun targeting the taxi sector in Westbury as a potential business opportunity. They ostensibly took advantage of the decommissioning from service of 50 taxis under the agreement as an opportunity to replace them with their own vehicles.

These new entrants seemed to have substantial resources to help bolster their move into the taxi industry and it was not long before they had managed to assert significant influence over the JCTA, allegedly using a combination of buying votes and intimidation. At least one older gang member, who had been part of the Spaldings gang before the peace process in 1999 and who had earlier entered the taxi sector, appears to be assisting the alleged drug lords and dealers with their plans for their taxi operations. These developments have served to fuel community perceptions that some of the older gang members never completely extracted themselves from their previous activities (as mentioned earlier).⁹⁵

Another prominent JCTA member allegedly has (or had) a strong relationship with Finch, providing Finch and the Varados with control of the taxi rank, resulting in an increase in conflict in the taxi industry. Recent interviews explain how Finch is currently using force to obtain direct control of the taxi rank himself, resulting in a fallout with Finch and the JCTA member. This relationship is illustrative of many others operating in illicit business, as quests for more power and turf often overrule loyalty.⁹⁶

A faction within the JCTA also seem to have been able to influence certain provincial government officials in the Gauteng Transport Department. Through these government contacts, they have seemingly been able to obtain permits to replace the 50 vehicles removed from the roads as part of the Rea Vaya processes. According to one city official, the issuing of these permits is illegal – the official said that it not only violated the agreements reached between the city and taxi owners, but has also led to an oversupply of taxis in the area.⁹⁷

This view was supported by other taxi owners who have long been part of the JCTA. They claim that the issuing of new permits has resulted in a major loss of income for taxi drivers and owners as a result of oversupply.⁹⁸ Another taxi owner told the authors that they were disappointed because, at the BRT meetings, government had said there would be strict enforcement measures and that taxis without permits would not be allowed to operate; this turned out not to be the case.⁹⁹

“ The suspicion that drug lords and dealers in the area allegedly use the local taxi industry to launder proceeds from drugs was raised by city officials and taxi owners. ”

The suspicion that drug lords and dealers in the area allegedly use the local taxi industry to launder proceeds from drugs was also raised by city officials and taxi owners. One taxi owner claimed that the JCTA has effectively been turned into a ‘drug dealing group’, saying that ‘none of the members of the JCTA are making money through taxis any more’ – other than those who are ‘making money through drug dealing’.¹⁰⁰

Commenting on the current situation, one city official said that it appeared that ‘drug lords’ become members of the association, seemingly so that, in the event of an investigation into their activities, they would be able to produce documentation to prove that their revenue is derived from their taxi operations.¹⁰¹





Police Minister Bheki Cele addresses the Westbury community, October 2018. Photo: Gallo Images/Netwerk24/Felix Dlangamandla

Fuelling suspicions that the JCTA is being used to launder drug money are allegations that the financial statements of the JCTA are not available to members.¹⁰²

Interviews also suggest that private armed security from KwaZulu-Natal has been hired to protect the JCTA chair and the taxi rank.¹⁰³ There are also allegations that a faction within the JCTA has recruited people from KwaZulu-Natal as drivers and taxi owners, and that they are operating with fake permits.¹⁰⁴

The 2017/18 protests

In recent years, mounting anger over conditions in Eldorado Park, Westbury, Riverlea and Newclare have culminated in a number of service-delivery and crime-related protests. On 8 May 2017, simmering resentment at increasingly unbearable social conditions exploded into the biggest demonstrations held in Eldorado Park since the end of apartheid.¹⁰⁵

The protests descended into two days of looting and destruction of property. The then Minister of Police, Fikile Mbalula, blamed the violence that accompanied the protests on drug kingpins. However, municipal economist Karen Heese argues that, although the protests may have been taken advantage of by criminal opportunists, they had not been planned by criminals.¹⁰⁶ This view seems to be supported by residents, who felt the need for protests but did not agree with the criminal opportunism that ensued.

A year after the 2017 protests, residents of Eldorado Park again took to the streets demanding better services and housing. These demonstrations also spilt over into nearby communities as residents demanded housing, work, free education, electricity and land. In May 2018, a media report highlighted the squalid conditions endured by residents of Westbury, including unscheduled power cuts, poor sanitation, rat infestations, expanses of sewage and uncollected refuse.¹⁰⁷

The local-government response to the protests of 2017 and 2018 was to acknowledge the problem. However, Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba (who represents opposition party the Democratic Alliance) also blamed the ANC for a legacy of poor service delivery and failure to have apportioned sufficient budget to address the problems experienced in Eldorado Park.¹⁰⁸

The residents of Eldorado Park, Westbury and surrounding areas have grown increasingly angry over conditions in their areas. Their trust in government structures to resolve the issues they face has been eroded by broken promises



and corruption. Statements made by ministers and politicians have done little to restore residents' confidence in the spheres of government. Many of the participants spoken to during this research project have lost confidence in government's willingness to address the social and infrastructural problems bedeviling these urban areas. However, at the same time, these community protests have also been motivated by the inability of the tiers of government and police to deal with crime, gangsterism and drugs. Many residents cited the social conditions that prevail in these urban areas as major factors in the escalation of drug dens, gangsterism and spiralling violence.

In September 2018, in an echo of Luke Tibbetts's death, a woman from Westbury, Heather Peterson, was killed in alleged gang-related crossfire while walking her niece to school – yet another innocent victim in the violent battle over Westbury's drug turf. In the aftermath of her death, Westbury flared up once again in violent protestation. Residents took to the streets to voice their frustration with law-enforcement authorities for what they saw as failure to arrest drug lords. By early October 2018, the situation in Westbury resembled that of a war zone; on some days, the air was filled with smoke and streets were blockaded. Police responded to violent protesters with rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades.

In October 2018, Police Minister Bheki Cele visited Westbury and pledged police support to deal with drug lords and promised to investigate allegations of police corruption in the area.

For residents of Westbury, violence has become an everyday reality over the years – but it is a situation that, as they told the media and our researchers, they are no longer willing to accept.¹⁰⁹ Peterson's death was the latest symbol in that trail of violence going back to the apartheid era.

In this context of ongoing cycles of violence and failed responses, community consensus is that the priorities of the police do not align with those of ordinary citizens, and that some police officers are more concerned with the financial opportunities presented by crime networks than with protecting and serving citizens.

Police complicity

There have been media reports over the last few years linking police officers from Eldorado Park and Sophiatown¹¹⁰ to gangs.¹¹¹ Police have been found in possession of stolen and/or hijacked vehicles, running businesses for stolen vehicles and even playing a part in the manufacture and distribution of drugs. A prominent example was the arrest, in October 2015, of a senior officer at the Sophiatown police station who was alleged to be linked to drug dealing in Riverlea, Westbury and Newclare. He was reportedly helping drug dealers evade arrest and arranging raids on their competitors.¹¹²

Keenan Ebrahim together with several others was arrested for the kidnapping and murder of Bradley Sauls in July 2018. At the time of the killing Sauls, who was not linked to any particular gang, had been fingered for being involved in the killing of a Fast Gun member. Following these arrests, two police officers were also arrested and were charged and appeared in court alongside Keenan and the others accused. The two police officers are alleged to have concealed and tampered with crucial evidence at a crime scene when Sauls's body was found. The accused are facing multiple charges of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, corruption, possession of illegal firearms and ammunition, and kidnapping. The case is currently being heard in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Courts and Keenan and his co-accused have all been granted bail.¹¹³

In May 2019, Finch together with one of his prominent lieutenants was arrested and charged with the murder of Regan Jacobs who was killed during a drive by shooting in April 2016. The two have been charged with one count of murder, one count of attempted murder as well as unlawful possession of firearms. Following their first court appearance, police arrested a police officer for his involvement in the drive by shooting carried out by Finch and his lieutenant. The trial is currently underway in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court where the state is opposing bail. During the states opposition to the bail application, the investigating officer told the court that initially the docket related the murder had gone missing in what he believed was deliberate attempt to hide evidence.¹¹⁴



Although the arrest of police officers involved in drug- and gang-related corruption has to be seen in a positive light, the police response to such cases is, more often than not, that they are merely isolated incidents. It is often the case that the official, institutional line on corruption within the police is that there is a small group of 'bad apples' that taint the otherwise untarnished reputation of the force. The police response tends to deny the extent to which corruption has become systemic within the police service. One police officer interviewed said that corruption was rife in Sophiatown and that it would be easier to count the number of officers who were *not* corrupt.¹¹⁵

For many criminal gangs and drug dealers operating in Westbury and Eldorado Park, paying off police officers is just part of the overhead cost of doing business. One gang member in Westbury said, tellingly, that all the major gang bosses have police on their payroll. Some, he said, 'are considered expendable because they can easily be replaced. Detectives are considered more important because they have access to dockets and decide who gets charged and who doesn't.'¹¹⁶

In his book, *The Street*, Paul McNally refers to police corruption as a kind of operating cost for drug dealers, a debt entry on a drug dealer's ledger. The risk for the drug kingpins is if a corrupt officer is replaced by a clean one. However, according to McNally, gangsters are confident in this operational status given that incorruptibility is an unlikely scenario; for the gangsters, police corruption is therefore evidently also systemic, rather than a case of 'one bad apple'.¹¹⁷

It is of little surprise that gangs in Westbury consider complicit detectives to be an important factor in their operations. This symbiotic relationship also explains why there is so little information about cases involving gangsters and drug dealers. Detection and prosecution of key drug dealers and gangsters would cause significant disruption to the gangs' activities, particularly if backed up with sound intelligence, information and follow-up. In one particular high-profile case in Westbury, had the police conducted proper investigations, the gunman behind the shooting of Luke Tibbetts would have already been in jail at the time of the shooting.¹¹⁸

Lindray Khakhu, who was arrested for the shooting of Luke Tibbetts, was already well known to residents of Westbury and had been linked to other shooting incidents. When Khakhu finally went to court over the Tibbetts case, he faced 18 prior charges, and what emerged in court was that he was a criminal 'who could move from one crime to another without facing consequences'.¹¹⁹ In court footage shown during the trial, Khakhu was apparently shown shooting Anton Mooi outside a nightclub in Westbury in 2013. Mooi died on the scene or shortly thereafter. Yet this evidence was presented in court only after the murder of Luke Tibbetts. The question that has been asked, then, is, why was Khakhu not arrested and charged in 2013, almost a year before Luke Tibbetts was shot and killed, especially when there was evidence directly implicating him in Mooi's killing?¹²⁰

“ Perhaps the most significant factor that impeded a breakthrough in disrupting the cycle of violence in western Johannesburg – at least on the basis of community accounts – was that members of the local police became complicit in the drugs trade. ”

Whether this was just incompetence on the part of the police, or whether Khakhu's impunity was linked to a more sinister motive among local detectives is unclear. However, in the event, the National Prosecuting Authority and the provincial office of the South African Police Service had to take over the investigation into Luke Tibbetts's murder. It was only after these higher authorities became involved in the case that Khakhu was finally found guilty on 17 of the 18 charges he faced, including two of murder; he was sentenced to life in prison in 2015.¹²¹ Police successes are also difficult to monitor or measure, as there are frequent media reports



of police statements about the arrests of key drug kingpins or gang leaders, but no information is provided as to who these individuals are and what is happening to their cases.¹²² This makes it impossible to determine if these are, in fact, successes.

Breaking the cycle of violence

The three broad phases of violence that have been described here demonstrate the enormous difficulty of implementing successful state interventions in communities that often consider themselves marginalized and 'forgotten', and where gang formations have wielded important social influence over time. Ironically, the most successful intervention to reduce the violence over the two and a half decades that this research analyzes appears to have come from the gang bosses themselves (although there is evidence to suggest that their initiative was partly in response to police arrests and other actions).

Perhaps the most significant factor that impeded a breakthrough in disrupting the cycle of violence in western Johannesburg – at least on the basis of community accounts – was that members of the local police became complicit in the drugs trade. In Westbury and Eldorado Park, the bigger gangs had police officers on their payroll. These officers would raid rival gangs and bring drugs seized during these raids to the gangs they worked with; the police would also warn the gangs of raids in advance.¹²³

The distrust between Westbury residents and the police seemed to have reached a head in 2014, when some residents threatened to burn down the Sophiatown Police Station because they believed the police were doing nothing but colluding with gangsters and drug dealers.¹²⁴ However, nothing was really done to address the community's anger and, in 2016, residents again marched on the police station and demanded it be closed down for the same reasons as those given in 2014.

Recently, reports show that residents of Eldorado Park are increasingly resorting to mob justice to deal with criminal elements because they feel the justice system is failing them. One community leader, speaking after an incident of mob justice in March 2017, told a reporter, 'They [referring to the people involved in mob justice] are sick and tired of the service received from SAPS [the South African Police Service]. If the police did their jobs it wouldn't have turned out this way.'¹²⁵

The result was that the best choice for the state was to respond with externally driven, and increasingly paramilitary-style 'fireforce' interventions, which came to be the centrepiece of government strategy in the areas under study here. The most important of these, launched in 2013 and continuing through 2014 and 2015, was a sustained attempt by the state to disrupt the local drug economy. If this strategy's measure of success was whether violence was reduced and community satisfaction increased, it failed miserably.

There have been numerous initiatives by residents of Westbury and Eldorado Park to collectively respond to gangs and drugs: residents have taken to the streets to protest over the gang violence; they have also made continual appeals to the various spheres of government to intervene; meanwhile, some residents have also established community-based forums and organizations aimed at combating drugs and gangs.

In 2018, a group of Eldorado Park residents marched to their local police station to demand the police attend to the drug-related violence experienced by the community, and community members have called on the president to work with the community and police to rid the area of drugs.¹²⁶

Unfortunately, residents who take such initiatives have been threatened by the gangs. Some of the threats have been directed at the whole community in an attempt to intimidate them into not cooperating with the police. Other threats have been aimed at specific people seen to be driving anti-crime and anti-drug initiatives. Activists and community journalists in Eldorado Park have reportedly received threats about what would happen to them if they continue to blow the whistle on drugs and gangs.



For the gangs, respect is often critically important and has real currency.¹²⁷ This respect is often based on the principle that the more violent you are, the more respect you gain. This, together with the need for the drug lords to protect their existing turf and expand it, means the violence associated with these gangs is likely to continue.

In this context, it is essential that we seriously advocate more sustainable and effective approaches to policing of the gangs. However, to do this, the police would need to acknowledge what has gone wrong with their previous approaches. The police also need to ensure that all interventions are properly monitored and evaluated throughout their implementation.

Any new police and government operation in the area would need to take account of the lessons of the past. Failure to do so will result in the cycle of violence continuing. We believe five major conclusions or lessons can be drawn from past experience:

1. Gangs aim to outlast police operations

A key challenge is that police operations are often short-lived, and do not have a long-lasting effect on gangs. The police often have to respond to community and political pressure, and that response often takes the form of temporary emergency relief to a crisis. Police tend to revert to such temporary operations as their default response. In the final analysis, the gangs and drug lords in the period under study were essentially able to outlast the police, with law-enforcement interventions scaling down once the spotlight on the area had been removed.

Briefing the media in Eldorado Park in 2013, the police promised to remain in the area until the drug lords had been dealt with. Instead, they withdrew before the task was completed. Such actions can often leave residents in a more vulnerable position than before the operation. It also creates the impression that the police are merely conducting a public-relations exercise. A number of Eldorado Park residents referred to the ad hoc nature of the police operations where, once the cameras were turned off and the publicity had died down, the police lost interest.

One police officer said that the problem with the task team set up for Westbury is that ‘nothing lasts forever – the interest and resources of the police soon move on to other issues and then what is promised doesn’t get delivered.’¹²⁸

There is little doubt, though, that policing gangs through bigger police operations does have some benefits. It increases police presence, promotes awareness and provides a platform for the recruitment of informers. However, such short-term operations are not accompanied by any evaluation that focuses beyond the number of arrests made.

“ Whatever strategy is implemented by the police, its success will hinge on whether the police openly and honestly address the issue of systemic corruption in the police service. ”

Many gangs are well aware of their ability to outstay these police operations. In 2013, when criminals in Eldorado Park issued a threat to residents, they made this point abundantly clear. One threatening message said that police operations are bound to end. The message described in gruesome detail how residents who cooperated with the police would be dealt with after the police had left.¹²⁹

The short-term nature of police operations and the gangs’ ability to outstay the police not only limit the long-term impact the police can have on gang and drug violence, but also erode confidence in the police’s ability to address crime.



2. Arrests, communication and the numbers game

Linked to the issue of the sustainability of police operations, residents have complained that police, during high-visibility operations, seem to arrest drug users, and have not really dealt with higher-level dealers. Cheryl Pillay, a member of the Local Drug Action Committee, speaking at a town hall meeting in Eldorado Park in May 2017, emphasized this point, saying, 'There are more than 200 arrests made by the police per month but these are mainly users, not dealers.'¹³⁰ Irvine Kinnes, writing about the policing of gangs, refers to the police defining their success based on the number of arrests made, arguing that this is a questionable indicator to use when measuring success.¹³¹

The figures released by the police related to the 2 844 drug-related arrests made in Eldorado Park between May 2013 and April 2015 also raise similar questions. Of those arrests, the police have reported that only 510 people have been convicted; 17 were found not guilty; 179 were referred for diversion programmes; 543 escaped after receiving bail; 429 cases were withdrawn; and 902 cases are still pending. Nearly 3 000 arrests may look good on paper, but they don't necessarily have the impact required.

The police have on numerous occasions reported having arrested key people involved in gangs and drugs in Eldorado Park, such as the arrest of seven of the 12 top drug dealers in 2013. However, the police are opaque on the details of who these people were, making it impossible to verify whether they indeed arrested the top gang and drug operators in the area. Furthermore, it is difficult to track what happens after such arrests and whether there were any successful prosecutions linked to them.

Greater police transparency around who has been arrested and what happens after an arrest are essential information given the deficit of trust that exists between the police and residents affected by gang and drug violence. This is especially important given that communities of Westbury and Eldorado Park have concrete experiences of criminals being arrested for serious offences only to find the same people have been released back into the community and no further action seems to be taken.¹³²

High-profile arrests accompanied by effective communication around the police response to such arrests would go some way in rebuilding community confidence in the police. The recent arrests and court appearances of Keenan and Finch show the potential for a better state response and a break in the cycle of violence.

3. Corrupt and inefficient policing is at the heart of lost state legitimacy

Police corruption is a highly emotive issue for residents living in areas like Eldorado Park and Westbury. Members of the community have continually complained that the police have a duplicitous relationship with the gangs. They allege that the police cooperate with key gang leaders in raids on rival gangs and donate drugs seized to the gangs they work for. They claim the police tip off gangs about planned police operations. Finally, they allege that the police can be seen openly taking bribes from street dealers.

The perception, often created by the media, is that residents in areas like Eldorado Park and Westbury support the gangs, either tacitly or actively. The police have at times played into this narrative. Perhaps the best example of this was after Luke Tibbetts's death. Not only did a senior police officer claim that residents were protecting those involved in the shooting, but police appeared to blame the residents of Westbury for the emergence of murderers, such as Khakhu.¹³³

This stance adopted by the police is not only wholly inaccurate,¹³⁴ but also negates the serious risk that members of the community put themselves at to stand up to the gangs. It is not surprising that residents were angered by such comments.¹³⁵ At the same time, the approach adopted by the police when commenting on the Tibbetts case widened the existing trust deficit between the police and the community of Westbury.

Whatever strategy is implemented by the police, its success will hinge on whether the police openly and honestly address the issue of systemic corruption in the police service. This cannot happen as long as the police continue



to pass corruption off as a case of a few isolated, unconnected examples. Both the gangs and the police recruit people from each other's ranks. The police recruit informers from gangs, and the gangs recruit members from the ranks of the police. Today, given the levels of corruption within the police, the gangs seem to be winning this recruitment race.

The communities living in the western areas of Johannesburg, profiled in this report, have experienced a string of broken promises and 'blame gaming' – and they are understandably angry and frustrated. There is a trust deficit between them and the authorities. This deficit cuts across all the spheres of government and party political lines. It not only makes it more difficult to implement programmes and initiatives, but also makes frustrated residents more susceptible to the implementation of mob justice.

4. Failed policing of drug markets and access to firearms have contributed to gangs' criminal control over other markets

As this report has outlined, the growth of the drug economy in western Johannesburg has been a defining feature of gang consolidation and growing levels of violence as gangs battle for control and drug turf. The illegal drug trade has, however, also meant that gangs have access to considerably more finances, allowing them the financial foundation to expand into numerous areas of the legitimate or grey economy. The proceeds from the drug economy provide the means to bribe state officials and to allow gangs to exert a wider influence over criminal markets. This is most evident in the criminal control of the taxi industry in the areas where the triangle of guns, drugs and gangs are predominant.

One critical area where profits from the drug economy have empowered gangs is their ability to access firearms. All the evidence suggests that, today, the influential gangs have more access to firepower than in days gone by. As one older gang member said, 'During the old days, if you had a gun you were the main man. Now everyone can get a gun. Even myself, who served nine years in prison, I have been able to get a licence for a firearm.'¹³⁶ This licence was issued by a police station outside the former gang member's area of residence, and not his local police station, he explained.¹³⁷

Drug profits have enabled the gangs to procure more guns, and the guns enable control of more drug turf and higher profits. It is a vicious spiral that must be broken if the overall challenge of gangs and their influence is to be solved.

5. Gang operations across the country are now strongly connected

Our research suggests strong interconnections between events in western Johannesburg and the role of powerful criminal actors from the Cape. Although these criminal relationships are not new, what does seem to have emerged is the degree to which the supply of drugs (and thus the control of the local criminal economy) is relatively centralized. Even major criminal players in the gangs in western Johannesburg are reliant on outsiders for their survival. If no drugs can be delivered, then the local criminal economy of profit will be broken. Unless state investigations make an impact in arresting and prosecuting key players, the cycle of gang control and violence will continue to repeat itself.

The links that have developed between gangs operating in different part of the country also require the police to move away from some of the narrow geographical approaches and start looking at more nationally linked opportunities for cooperation. In the Western Cape, the gangs that have historically operated on the Cape Flats have begun to move out their historical bases of operations into other areas, including neighbouring townships – and even into the city centre and, over the past couple of years, rural towns. Much of the state response to gangs has been localized, but, increasingly, a national response is needed to tackle the problem.



It is not inconceivable that similar patterns will emerge with the gangs based in areas like Eldorado Park and Westbury. Residents in Soweto have reported the emergence of criminal groups from Eldorado Park moving into parts of the townships, where lolly lounges and drug dens are starting to become a serious problem. Equally, there are unconfirmed media reports that link drug lords and criminal figures to involvement in criminal networks attempting to capture and control nightlife venues in Johannesburg, in a manner not dissimilar to what has been observed in Cape Town.¹³⁸

The problems linked to drugs and gangs, including the socio-economic factors that contribute to this situation, should not, and cannot, continue to be seen as solely a Westbury or Eldorado Park problem: it is a broader national, societal problem that crosses municipal, urban and even metropolitan boundaries.



Notes

- 1 Although the Western Areas of Johannesburg comprise the municipalities of Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare, Westbury, Waterval and Kathrada Park, our research also covers the south-western area of Eldorado Park. For the purpose of this report, 'western Johannesburg' is therefore used to refer to the specific areas that are the main focus of this research: Westbury, Eldorado Park and Newclare. The areas covered in this report fall under the policing precincts of Sophiatown, Langlaate and Eldorado Park, from which the homicide data presented in Figure 1 are drawn.
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- 8 Amanda Dissel, In *Youth, Street Culture and Urban Violence in Africa*, proceedings of the international symposium held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 5–7 May 1997.
- 9 See, for example, Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- 10 Interview with former Fast Guns leader, Westbury, March 2018.
- 11 Irvin Kinnes, From urban street gangs to criminal empires: The changing face of gangs in the Western Cape, ISS monograph No. 48, June 2000.
- 12 The Fast Guns were named after the movie *The Last of the Fast Guns*, and the Spaldings after a basketball equipment producer.
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- 14 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, March 2018.
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- 16 Ibid.
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- 18 All is not Quiet on the Westbury Front, *Mail & Guardian*, 22 May 1998.
- 19 Approximately US\$280 000 at the 1996 exchange rate.
- 20 Johannesburg's Boyz in the 'hood', *Mail & Guardian*, 26 July 1996.
- 21 The local name given to facilities that disassemble stolen vehicles.
- 22 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, March 2018.
- 23 Mark Shaw and Simone Haysom, Organised crime in late apartheid and the transition to a new criminal order: The rise and fall of the Johannesburg 'bouncer mafia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42, 4 (2016), 577–594.
- 24 Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016.
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- 26 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, March 2018.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Angella Johnson, Johannesburg's Boyz in the hood, *Mail & Guardian*, 26 July, 1996.
- 29 Small grocery and food shops in South Africa's townships and informal settlements.
- 30 Ferial Haffajee, Crime is the only business providing jobs, *Mail & Guardian*, 15 May 1998.
- 31 In November 2011, Jones was shot eight times in the upper body and head as he arrived at his home. The attack occurred at about 10 pm in the evening and the suspects of this killing have never been arrested. At Jones's funeral he was praised throughout for his dedication to his businesses, family and golf. See Eldos taxi owner mysteriously shot dead at front gate, *The Star*, 11 November 2011.
- 32 Interview with gang member, Riverlea, 18 May 2018.
- 33 This process was also supported by community members, NGOs, churches and the police. See Noor-Jehan Yoro Badat, From pangas to guns to peace, *Saturday Star*, 26 May 2007.
- 34 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, 10 March 2018.
- 35 Interview with ex-Fast Gun leader, Westbury, March 2018.
- 36 Westbury and gangsterism, then and now: What has changed?, *Mail & Guardian*, 31 September 2016.
- 37 Interview with ex-Fast Guns leader, Westbury, March 2018.
- 38 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville March 2018.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Interview with ex-Fast Guns leader, Westbury, March 2018; interview with ex-gang member, Melville, March 2018.
- 41 Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016.
- 42 Interview with ex-gang member Melville, March 2018.



- 43 Interview with ex-gang member, Riverlea, May 2018.
- 44 Interview with ex-gang member, Sophiatown, April 2018.
- 45 Interview with ex-Fast Guns leader, Westbury, 10 March 2018.
- 46 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, 10 March 2018.
- 47 The authors did various searches in the media for 2004 with key terms such as, 'violence'; 'gangs'; 'drugs'; 'shooting'; and 'murder', along with area qualifiers such as 'Johannesburg'; 'Westbury'; and 'Eldorado Park'. These searches were done on Google and on Sabinet, a South African news database.
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- 49 Ihsaad Haffejee, Eldorado Park explodes over lack of housing and Jobs, News 24, 9 May 2017.
- 50 Statistics South Africa 2011 Census data.
- 51 Interview with doctor specializing in drug and substance abuse, Florida, Gauteng, April 2018.
- 52 Directly translated from Afrikaans as sugar houses.
- 53 Lolly Town, *Special Assignment*, SABC broadcast, 9 February 2015.
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- 55 Interview with ex-gang member, Melville, March 2018.
- 56 Interview with resident of Eldorado Park, Eldorado Park, June 2018.
- 57 Aarifah Nosarika, Eldos drug lords issue a threat, *The Citizen*, 11 June 2013.
- 58 Interview with gang member, Westbury, April 2018.
- 59 Interview with CPF members, Sophiatown, 30 April 2018.
- 60 Letters to Zuma from 'desperate moms, sisters', IOL, 30 April 2013, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/letter-to-zuma-from-desperate-moms-sisters-1508278>.
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- 63 Figures released to the media by Major-General Phumzo Ngela, March 2014.
- 64 Drug ring bust, *Sowetan*, 30 January 2013.
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- 66 Various interviews, Johannesburg, 2017 and 2018.
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- 78 Interview with gang member, Westdene, April 2018.
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- 87 Interview with Westbury gang member, Westdene, April 2018.



- 88 Stanfield is alleged to be a general of the notorious 28 gang and has also been linked to what has now become now as 'the guns to gangs saga'. Stanfield and 23 others (including three police officers) are currently facing a total of 109 charges, including charges of corruption, fraud, racketeering and unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition linked to guns being supplied by the three police officers to Stanfield and other gang members. Interview with senior police officer, Cape Town, 22 November 2018.
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- 91 Interview with a gang member, November 2018.
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- 94 Under this agreement, the taxi owners who signed the agreement became shareholders in the new company that would take over phase 1B of the Rea Vaya expansion. A new company, Litsamaiso, which would operate alongside another company, Piotrans, would be granted their own concession routes. Litsamaiso would be run and owned by taxi owners, and taxi drivers would be employed to drive the buses. Taxi owners would also be paid R2.6 billion, or R221 million annually, to operate the bus system over a 12-year period. To make way for the Rea Vaya buses, taxi owners who agreed to remove their vehicles from the road would be paid out R830 000 per vehicle that they took out of service. Under agreements signed between the City of Johannesburg and the JCTA, the taxi association agreed to remove 50 of its 150 vehicles from the road.
- 95 Interview with Westbury taxi owner, November 2018.
- 96 Telephonic interview with Westbury resident, 24 April 2019.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Interview with taxi owner, Johannesburg, November 2018.
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- 100 Interview with local police officer, Johannesburg, November 2017.
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- 109 109 Various interviews, Johannesburg, 2017 and 2018.
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- 115 Interview with police officer, Sophiatown, April 2018.
- 116 Interview with Westbury gang member, Johannesburg, April 2018.
- 117 Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016. McNally's book deals with drugs dealers in western Johannesburg, including areas like Westbury.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Ibid
- 120 Ibid. In October 2018, reports surfaced in the media that Khakhu, who had started dating a police officer after his arrest, had managed to obtain out-of-the-ordinary privileges while in custody at a Johannesburg correctional facility. Pictures were produced showing Khakhu with a cellphone and laptop inside a personalized cell. It was also alleged that Khakhu runs a drug ring in the prison and bribes officials for special benefits, including illegal conjugal visits. See Simnikiwe Hlatshaneni, PICS: Westbury toddler's killer 'living the high life in jail', *The Citizen*, 5 October 2018.
- 121 Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016.
- 122 New Initiative in Eldos drug war, *The Citizen*, 28 March 2013; Drug ring bust, *Sowetan*, 30 January 2013.
- 123 The gangs also could, and did, access and recruit other state officials beyond the police. In 2008 a senior registry clerk in the Johannesburg High Court was arrested after it was discovered she was a key member of a syndicate involving other clerks in the courts. The syndicate was behind the unlawful release of hardened criminals, including people who were members of the Majimbos gang. The syndicate was believed to have been operating for about ten years. Members of the syndicate who worked as clerks in the courts would falsify documents; the documents would be sent from the High Court to members of the syndicate in the Johannesburg magistrates' court, who would fax them to the Department Correctional Services. The documents would state that a prisoner's appeal had been granted. The prisoners would therefore be released.
- 124 Alex Mitchley and Ernest Wolmarans, Westbury residents threaten to burn down police station, *The Citizen*, 6 August 2014.



- 125 Maxine Becket, Despite violence, Eldorado Park residents unite, News24, 23 March 2017.
- 126 Residents want drug dealers out of Eldorado Park, call on Ramaphosa for help, Eye Witness News, April 2018.
- 127 Irvine Kinnes, Contested governance: Policing and gang interactions, Department of Public Law, PhD dissertation, University of Cape Town, June 2017.
- 128 Interview with senior metro police officer, Sophiatown, April 2018.
- 129 Aarifah Nosarika, Eldos drug lords issue a threat, *The Citizen*, 11 June 2013.
- 130 Presentation made by Cheryl Pillay at Radio 702's town hall meeting, 31 May 2017.
- 131 Irvine Kinnes, Contested governance: Policing and gang interactions, PhD dissertation, Department of Public Law, University of Cape Town, June 2017.
- 132 One concrete example of this relates to a case in mid-2014 in Westbury, when police discovered the bodies of seven young boys in an unmarked grave in a house. The house allegedly belonged to a well-known drug lord; the boys were alleged to have worked for him. The drug lord was arrested but was subsequently seen at large in the township. The raid had been executed by Cape Town police. This was because earlier, a black note book belonging to the drug lord had been found; it contained names and phone numbers of a number of Sophiatown police officers. According to interviews with people in Westbury, attempts by the community to glean more information about what happened to the case have hit a brick wall. Four years later, the drug lord is still actively involved in drugs and violence in the area and no one knows what happened to the case. See Ruth Hopkins, Westbury languishes under a reign of its drug lords' terror, *Mail & Guardian*, 31 October–6 November 2014.
- 133 Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016.
- 134 In his book, McNally details how it was the police who made investigative errors during the Khakhu investigation and points to the fact that the NPA and Provincial Police Headquarters were forced to take over the investigation to ensure a successful prosecution. See Paul McNally, *The Street: Exposing a World of Cops, Bribes and Drug Dealers*, Pan Macmillan, 2016.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 Interview with gang member, Westdene, April 2018.
- 137 Applications for firearms should be made at applicants' local police stations, but often people apply for licences at stations outside their areas of residence because police officers at these stations can – for a price – bypass requirements and ensure a licence is issued to a person who should by law have been prohibited from being issued with a licence.
- 138 Angelique Serrao and Caryn Dolley, Exclusive: Underworld tobacco and drug war sparks shootings and protests, News24, 12 May 2017, <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/underworld-tobacco-and-drug-war-sparks-shootings-and-protests-20170512>.





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