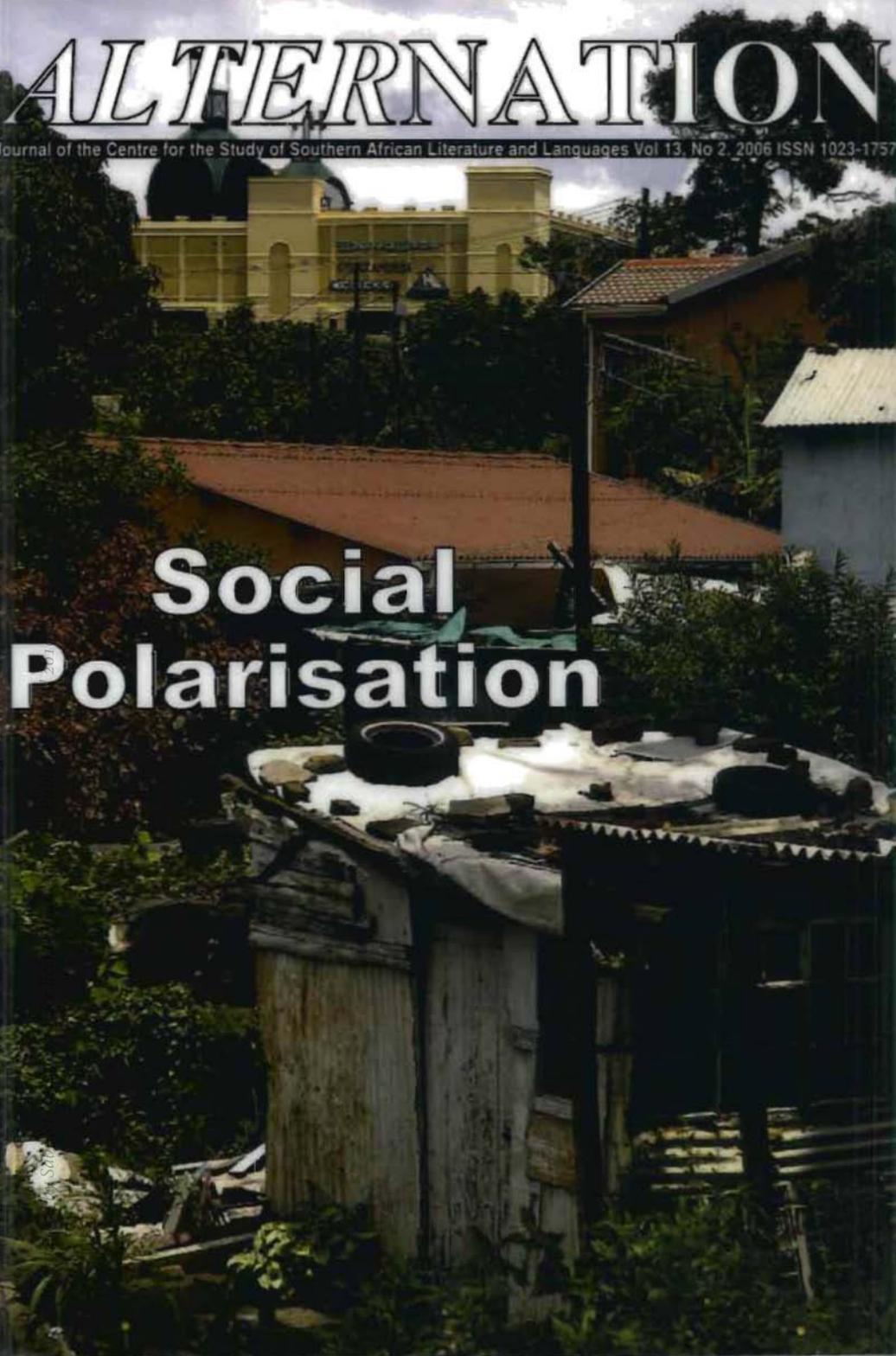


# ALTERNATION

The background image is a photograph showing a stark contrast between two types of housing. In the upper portion, a large, multi-story yellow building with classical architectural features like domes and arched windows sits on a hillside. Below it, a dense area of shanty town is visible, with several makeshift shacks. One prominent shack in the foreground has a roof made of white plastic sheeting and is cluttered with tires and other debris. The overall scene suggests a theme of social inequality and urban development.

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## Social Polarisation

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The Editor: *Alternation*, Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal, Priv. Bag X10, Dalbridge, 4014,  
DURBAN, South Africa; Tel: +27-(0)31-260-7303;

Fax: +27-(0)31-260-7286; e-mail: [smitj@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:smitj@ukzn.ac.za);

CSSALL web-site: <http://www.udw.ac.za:80/~stewart/>

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# *Alternation*

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Southern Africa**

## **Social Polarisation**

**Guest Editors  
S. Khan and R. Pattman**

**2006**

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# Introduction

**Sultan Khan and  
Rob Pattman**

South Africa, given its long history of colonialism and apartheid became one of the most racially polarised countries in the world. Institutionalised racism served the economic and social well being of the minority white ruling class through the systematic marginalization of the black majority. In 1994, the ascension to democracy abolished all forms of institutionalised racism giving previously disenfranchised blacks new opportunities and correcting the most blatant social injustices of the past. However, thirteen years into democracy, not all South Africans share equally in the promises made in the liberation manifesto as the gap between the have's and have-not's is increasingly widening. Furthermore these inequalities are still racialised, and while obvious forms of racism may no longer be tolerated in the post-apartheid era, lack of integration between 'racially' defined groups remains a pertinent feature in contemporary South Africa. While the post-apartheid era has raised opportunities for so many in employment and education, large numbers (mainly black Africans) stagger in the stupor unleashed by poverty with little hope of it abating.

Given its history of 'racial', social, physical and economic fragmentation, it is perhaps hardly surprising that South Africa in its post-liberation phases is still characterized by structural inequalities and contestation. New forms of struggle are an inevitable reality as people compete for the fruits of democracy. Some have managed to harvest more than their fair share; others take from those deserving it most whilst for many the tree of democracy has remained sterile for more than a decade. While 'race' continues to be a key dimension of power and inequality in the post-apartheid era, it is by no means the only one. Inequalities are more

complex, opportunities are skewed along the lines of social class, gender and age as well as 'race'. Inequalities in power, as Weber argued, take very different forms – economic, political and social, and in the post-apartheid era one source of power is by no means a guarantor of another.

In this edition of *Alternation*, the articles focus on polarisation in contemporary South Africa. They are diverse, reflecting the wide ranging and complex forms polarisation takes in the post-apartheid era. 'Race' features in all the articles as an important dimension of power, and in this sense, then, the articles take issue with the popular rhetoric which characterises South Africa as a 'Rainbow Nation', with equal opportunities for all 'races'. But rather than simply taking 'race' as the determinant of social inequalities, some of the articles address how 'race' intersects with social class (in often complex ways) and with gender and ethnicity. Some of the articles deal with social, political and economic forms of polarisation and their relations, while others tend to focus on only one particular form of polarisation. While we do not pretend to provide an exhaustive account of the various forms of polarisation in contemporary South Africa we do hope these diverse articles will convey something of the variety and complexity of polarisation in the post-apartheid era.

Mokong Simon Mapadimeng in his article titled 'Organisational Culture, Productivity and Performance in the South African (SA) Workplace: Increasing Polarisation or Cohesion? A Case Study of Cranco Metals Ltd' argues that workers in the post-apartheid factory floor are increasingly marginalized from the means of production. Through a case study analysis, he compares working conditions on the factory floor in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. He highlights that during apartheid the labour system was characterised by job reservation in which highly skilled and highly paid work was reserved for whites while black workers were excluded and marginalised; the inadequate apartheid Bantu education system for blacks which neglected vocational and general education; the over dependence on the exploitative migrant labour system, the racially skewed consumption market; and high tariff barriers which blocked external competition making low productivity levels a norm. In his case study of industrial relations in a factory in the post-apartheid era he found that attempts at promoting worker participation in decision making with a view to promoting productivity failed. He attributed the general failure of these

participatory schemes to a wide range of factors including sharp conflicts around management's lack of good faith when introducing them as evidenced in unilateral tendencies towards decision making and to use the schemes to by-pass workers' trade unions. The situation is aggravated by the neo-liberal cost-reduction environment that promotes management strategies at the expense of conditions that promote worker satisfaction and increased productivity. In this case study Mapadimeng concludes that even though management has introduced programmes to enhance worker participation and productivity, the use of imported models and extensive use of consultants resulted in no meaningful financial gains to the company, resulting in huge loss in profits. An underlying reason for not achieving desired levels of productivity is the lack of transformation at a management level and reduced participation of workers at a shop-floor level. Referring to the fundamental maxim of apartheid which says '*whites are better and blacks are backward*' has militated against the production culture. This suggests that the past continues to impact on the present and this legacy needs to be addressed.

In the article 'Contradictions in the Construction of Difference and Polarization in Chinese/Taiwanese Industries in KZN: Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle' Sithembiso Bhengu compares three industrial zones using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to illustrate how both during the apartheid and post-apartheid era Local Economic Development was promoted by compromising workers' rights. During apartheid, Chinese and Taiwanese investors served as the political instrument of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) to suppress workers' rights by preventing them from associating with progressive labour movements (COSATU) which they deemed troublesome. However, in the post-apartheid era, the alignment of labour laws in keeping with international standards had a reverse effect of lowering investor confidence. Many of these Asian companies fell short when it came to complying with statutory standards of minimum wage, better working conditions and industrial safety. Like Mapadimeng, this study highlights the negative perception held by investors about workers. The majority of investors complained about '*low productivity*' in their companies which they attributed to laziness and ingratitude of workers to employment. At the same time the study highlights that industrial relations amongst Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists tend to be acrimonious, exploitative

and beset by frequent industrial conflict. The increasing polarization of these industrialists from workers, trade unions and their inability to come to terms with the new labour relations policies and practices is a source of ongoing industrial conflict and strife.

In contrast to Mapadimeng and Bhengu's articles which look at labour issues in a formal organisation, Ercüment Çelik examines the unprecedented and increasing levels of casualisation of work involving women in the context of global restructuring. His concern is with the polarisation and marginalisation of workers, and notably women, in the informal economy. In 'Informalisation of Women's Labour and New Types of Labour Organisations: The Cases of Sewa and Sewu' he argues that the informalisation and feminisation of labour carries important implications for new ways of defining and organizing labour. Drawing on the experience of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and the Self-Employed Women's Union in South Africa, Çelik argues that in both cases, the traditional trade union movement, and its organizing strategies are inappropriate. Since the informal economy is far from homogenous and workers are widely differentiated in terms of type of work, location, gender, culture and 'race', recruitment to traditional labour unions based on assumptions of common collective labour interests is problematic. The article strongly calls upon traditional labour unions to rethink their 'social movement unionism' agenda to restructure themselves in order to include informal and vulnerable workers who traverse both the streets as their workplace and in the community. Çelik concludes with a call for further research to define a space for informal workers within traditional union spaces.

Fazel Khan's article on 'The Clash of Economic Interest' examines how the post-apartheid government's emphasis on Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) has promoted the self enrichment of Black elites to the detriment of the unemployed and poor (who are largely black). BEEs are one of government's platform programmes to help redress the inequalities of the past by redistributing resources from whites to blacks. Having studied 122 BEE companies in KwaZulu-Natal, using a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews the study highlights that this initiative has benefited only a few wealthy blacks, while women, youth, rural residents and small entrepreneurs (Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises) have been

largely left out of these initiatives. Corruption in the form of political connections in securing government contracts is cited as one of the major flaws in the implementation of BEE policies and excludes those that chose to do business with honesty and integrity. The study concludes with a call for stricter monitoring of the implementation of policies so that the redistributive principles intended by BEEs do not marginalize those it is intended to serve.

In the struggle for liberation women played an unstinting role although apartheid policies marginalized most disenfranchised black African women to the rural homestead and monolithic townships whilst their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers sold their labour in the urban production zones of the country. In the article 'No Women Left Behind: Examining Public Perspectives on South African Police Services' Handling of Violence against South African Women' Nirmala Gopal and Vanitha Chetty argue that despite a very progressive Constitution on gender issues, the criminal justice system and its management of women victims of crime leaves much to be desired. In more than 50% of reported cases of crime the victims are women who are often alienated and marginalized through the very processes of so-called criminal justice. Using a convenience sample of 50 males and females comprising different race groups in focus groups in the suburb of Adelaide, Eastern Cape, and in-depth interviews with law enforcement officers, the authors confirm that informal legislative processes are often experienced notably by women victims of crime as gendered and discriminatory. The study also highlights how 'race' and social class influence the workings of the law enforcement agencies and the distribution of justice. Law enforcement officers, they found, often responded to crime situations in elite white suburbs to the exclusion of poor black suburbs. Interestingly, the study highlighted that Black law enforcement officers show scant respect for black victims of crime saying '*that they deserve it*' compared to white law enforcement officers. Overall, white female victims of crime were accorded more respect and were much less likely to be short-changed than black female victims in the protection espoused in the criminal justice system.

An effective criminal justice system not only brings perpetrators of crime to justice by appropriate sentencing, but also ensures that their incarceration is humane, appropriate to the crime committed and provides conditions for redemption. In the article titled, 'A World of Darkness:

Polarisation of Prisoners' Shanta Singh argues that prisoners, most of whom come from relatively poor backgrounds, are highly polarised and marginalised, and that their rights and freedoms, as enshrined in the Constitution and endorsed by the South African Human Rights Commission, are habitually violated. Based on four case studies with post-released prisoners and in-depth interviews with prison officials (prison managers, social workers and psychologists) in the Westville Correctional Services, Durban, she examines the human rights abuses and exploitation of prisoners. The study highlights inappropriate living conditions, especially with inadequate hygiene and ventilation, overcrowding in cells, high-risk sexual behaviour, violence, gang activity and corruption within the prison. Drug use, sodomy and rape were reported as regular and normative occurrences in the prisons. These human rights violations became '*an accepted part of life*' within the prison, and the study argues that the incarcerated were excluded from exercising their human rights by virtue of their status as prisoners.

Shanta Singh's article points to an acute disjunction between the rehabilitative aims and intentions of prisons, as set out in the Constitution, and the dehumanising reality of prison life. Focusing on a newly 'racially' merged university (the University of KwaZulu-Natal, UKZN) Elias Cebekhulu, Evangelos A. Mantzaris and Eugenia N. Cebekhulu argue that this also falls desperately short of an envisaged and rhetorical ideal, in this case a site of knowledge, hope and transformation for everyone irrespective of 'race', gender or class. In 'Not yet Uhuru! Power Struggles in a Neo-liberal University', they argue that the merging of universities in South Africa has proved to be a source of disillusionment. Taking UKZN as an example, they assert that increasing levels of corporatisation at UKZN has resulted in institutional failures that are played out in conflict on matters related to good governance. The article concludes by a warning signal that at UKZN deep-seated historical problems are carried over to the newly merged university and these are compounded by the imposition of ideas and values of management on the workers. These, they argue, need to change, and universities such as UKZN need to be run on much more democratic lines, if broad-based transformation and equity are to be achieved.

If governance is such an issue at a merged tertiary institution with different cultures and histories, how do traditional and modern systems of governance fair at a local government level? In 'The Clash between

Traditional and Modern Systems of Governance in the Durban Metropolis – A Tale of Two Administrative Civilizations’, Sultan Khan, Benoit Lootvoet and Evan Mantzaris examine the case of Durban, which is the only metropolitan government in the country to experiment with co-operative forms of governance with tribal authority systems. The article examines ideological and political polarisation between traditional and democratically elected leaders, and questions the effectiveness of such a bifurcated government in advancing the basic service delivery needs of citizens and subjects. It focuses on what it views as an uneasy alliance between traditional and elected leaders, characterized, for example, by the opposition of traditional leaders to the draft Traditional Leadership Bill for being too heavy and for usurping their powers.

Taking seriously the voices of citizens and subjects must feature as a key concern in any participatory democracy, according to Kirsty Trotter. In ‘The Importance of Narratives in South African Policy Work: How to Hear the Voices in a Participatory Democracy’, she argues for the use of narratives as a way of encouraging such voices, and, based on these, formulating ‘bottom-up’ approaches in social policy. She proposes that the failure of technocrats and politicians to engage with narratives from below, when framing and implementing social policy, leads to polarised relations between them and the rest of the population who become like ‘passive spectators’. Drawing on literary analysis and critical theory, she argues for policy makers to encourage and give structure to the ‘voices’ of (often marginalized) groups of people through public participation processes such as those offered by narratives. Consequently, it is argued that polarisation between policy makers, politicians and technocrats and the public can be reduced by the rich sources of information provided by narratives. This approach is in contrast to current policy practices in which policy experts and technocrats draw on particular types of information, ‘data’ which is presented in research reports in the form of survey results and statistics in a manner conducive to making measurable ‘count, cost, deliver’ decisions.

In their article titled, ‘Hostel Re-development and Emerging Conflict for Housing Tenure within the Umlazi Tehuis in the eThekweni Municipality – A Study of Key Social Polarisation Indicators’ M.L. Ngcongco and M.N.G. Mtshali points out that Hostels in South Africa were used to curb the influx of Africans into urban centers only in so far as to minister to the needs of the

white capitalist class. It was a system of housing built around the needs of migrant labour. The system was designed to extract cheap labour that was exploitative and socially polarizing for the majority of the urban disenfranchised African labour force. In the post-apartheid South Africa, the state committed itself to provide a new sense of vitality by upgrading hostels that are conducive to family needs, humane and socially acceptable in the reproduction of labour. Whilst some advancement has been made in the redevelopment of hostels, this group of urban community continues to live in squalor on the periphery of South African society. The case of Umlazi Tehuis hostel examines in-depth the real and potential social polarization indicators that are likely to affect development processes and dynamics in the redevelopment of hostels within the eThekweni Municipality.

Ruth Hoskins is also concerned about the lack of voice and participation of substantial numbers of people in the new democratic South Africa. In 'The Potential of School Libraries for Promoting Less Polarised Social Relations in the Post-apartheid-Era', she focuses on the lack of access to school libraries for those previously disadvantaged by apartheid, and argues that this constitutes a key basis of social polarisation since it restricts the flow of different types of information to the community, and is disempowering. She asserts that the provision of library facilities in black schools should be viewed as part of a process of democratising educational resources, and promoting a society which is less 'racially' polarised in terms of opportunities and resources. Drawing on secondary sources of research data (both national and international), Hoskins highlights the paltry investment made by the state in this important educational resource, especially at a time when expectations of young learners from disadvantaged social backgrounds have been raised by democracy. Policy on the transformation of the school library system dates as far back as 2001 and to date very little has been achieved by way of social investment for those historically excluded from this vital learning resource.

In 'Black Boys with Bad Reputations', Rob Pattman and Deevia Bhana address disadvantages experienced by black pupils attending historically black schools. They elaborate not only on lack of resources at these schools, but also the lack of jobs in the communities, and examine how black boys attending an all black township school cope with these disadvantages and how they view school, work, forms of authority, relations

with girls and envisage their futures. The article focuses mainly on an in-depth interview with a small group of such boys, drawn from a wider study of the lives and identities of Grade 11 pupils in different schools in Durban. Pattman and Bhana found that the black boys in this interview in this school were very pessimistic about their futures, and felt cut-off from the job opportunities they associated with a good education. They also expressed anxieties about not being able to live up to the role of breadwinners. Ironically, given their desire to achieve in terms of these conventional norms, they had reputations as 'bad'. This, argue Pattman and Bhana reinforces their sense of marginalisation, and draws on deep-seated racist fears and assumptions in South Africa about black males as bad. In the interview which Pattman and Bhana focus on, teachers were specifically asked to select boys with bad reputations, yet the interview suggested that these boys were surprisingly 'good', displaying conscientiousness and concentration and deep commitment to the school's work ethic. The findings are similar to studies in Latin America and Africa with boys from 'low income' communities with little or no prospect for employment 'for many young men'. This is not only problematic for them economically but also because it undermines their very identities, making them less attractive as potential 'long-term partners' for females and more likely to be seen as bad and irresponsible. The article argues for ways of thinking about and researching black boys which do not polarise black masculinity as bad and as Other. It also critiques the absence of supportive and caring adult models of masculinity at the school and the polarisation of gender identities, as well as the impoverishment of black townships.

In 'Seasons of drought have no rainbows – An Experiential Note on Poverty and Survival Networks in South Africa' Ari Sitas provides two ethnographic accounts on the plight of black working class leaders of the 1980s in the liberation of the country. This article is not only a tribute to all black working class liberation activists, but highlights the plight of those whose charisma and intellect no longer carried the same significance in the process of democratic and neo-liberal transition as it had in the struggle against apartheid, and were not given anything approaching the recognition and respect they had achieved as activists in the struggle. The article documents the profound contribution made by these liberation activists who succumbed to restless deaths. Their pre-liberation voices resonate with

*Sultan Khan and Rob Pattman*

expressions of discontent about poverty and marginalisation in contemporary South Africa. Drawing on a poem from one such working class leader, Sitas concludes that poverty and survival networks in the new democratic dispensation is like *'seasons of drought for some, rainbows for others'* – a new sociological drama that is unfolding in South Africa's transition.

# **Organisational Culture, Productivity and Performance in the South African (S.A.) Workplace: Increasing Polarisation or Cohesion? A Case Study of Cranco Metals Ltd<sup>1</sup>**

**Mokong Simon Mapadimeng**

## **Introduction**

Organisational culture and/or corporate culture constitute a core of the employers and managements' strategies aimed at creating an organisational and workplace environment conducive to profitable and productive running of business enterprises. This it aims to do by seeking to foster a common vision of the organisation amongst workers and employers, to create a sense of common identity, interests and belonging, and also the promotion of cooperative relations and commitments to the successful achievement of key organisational goals. As Hill and Jones (2001) pointed out:

Organizational culture is the specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization and that control the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization. Organizational values are beliefs and ideas about what kinds of goals members of an organization should pursue and ideas about the appropriate kinds or standards of behaviour organizational members should use to achieve these goals. From organizational values develop organizational norms, guidelines or

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<sup>1</sup> The name of this case study i.e. the factory studied is fictitious due to ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality.

expectations that prescribe appropriate kinds of behaviour by employees in particular situations and control the behaviour of organizational members towards one another (from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpo-rate\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpo-rate_culture) accessed on 3rd October 2006).

Informed by the labour process theory, especially Cressey and MacInnes's (1980) contribution, organisational culture and other related workplace strategies would thus be understood as an effort by employers and managements to overcome a historical challenge to capitalist enterprises i.e. how to convert workers' labour power into an actual productive force. This challenge is attributed to the limited nature of control that capital has over labour in the production process owing to the contradictory and dual nature of the capitalist labour process (see Cressey and MacInnes 1980). The dual nature of the capitalist labour process, Cressey and MacInnes (1980) argue (in Maller 1992), is due to the fact that 'not only does capital employ labour to create exchange values (commodities which are exchanged on the labour market), but labour also concretely employs capital in the sense that labour utilizes machinery and equipment ... to create use values'. Hence, while capital has formal ownership, in giving over the use of the means of production to labour, it needs to ensure that there are co-operative relations with labour so as to enhance the maximization of the social productivity of labour. It further follows that it is not in the best interest of capital to seek absolute coercive domination and control over labour (see Cressey & MacInnes 1980, in Maller 1992:5).

This has compelled employers and managements to move away from coercive measures towards consensual approaches and strategies in order to secure workers' co-operation and stabilise working relations. These strategies, Maller (1992) argues, can be traced to as far back as the 1920s' Elton Mayo's informal work groups in Chicago which have since then evolved in various forms such as the 1940s Scanlon plan and profit-sharing schemes. In later periods, further experimentations in industrialised countries manifested themselves through the autonomous workgroups in Britain in the 1950s; the introduction of the co-determination system in Germany in the 1960s; job-enrichment programmes in the U.S. in the 1960s; quality circles in Japan in the same period; the 1970s Germany's 'humanisation at work'

movement; and the 'employee share ownership trusts' in the US; all of which were introduced to promote and achieve greater worker motivation and involvement in productivity improvement (see Maller 1992).

SA, having strong industrial capitalist presence, has not escaped productivity and performance challenges experienced by industrialised countries. According to Maller (1994) productivity problems in SA are deeply rooted in the country's apartheid capitalist political economy that was characterised by the migrant labour system. In this system, black workers were considered as being employed on temporary, contract basis with minimal training. The system was also characterised by job reservation in which highly skilled and highly paid work was reserved for whites while black workers were excluded and marginalised; the inadequate apartheid Bantu education system for blacks which neglected vocational and general education; the racially skewed consumption market; and high tariff barriers which blocked external competition making low productivity levels a norm (Maller 1994: 4).

In response to these problems, especially at a workplace level, employers and managements of industrial enterprises developed and introduced productivity and performance improvement strategies. These took mainly the form of Japanese lean production techniques in the form of participation schemes such as green areas, quality circles, suggestion boxes, briefing sessions, and Quality of Working Life Programmes (see Joffe 1995; Von Holdt 1993). While there was some great support and enthusiasm expressed in favour of participatory strategies as appropriate for productivity and performance enhancement prior to the 1994 political democratic change (see Anstey 1990), their implementation has however not yielded much positive desired results. Amongst such enterprises are the Premier Milling Group (see Barret 1993); Jabula Foods, Volkswagen SA, and Cashbuild (see Maller 1992); Harmony Gold Mine (see Mapadimeng 1998); Ngodwana Paper Mill (see Bethlehem 1991). The general failure of participatory schemes was attributed to a wide range of factors including sharp conflicts around management's lack of good faith when introducing participatory schemes as noticed from unilateral tendencies towards decision makings and attempts to use the schemes to by-pass workers' trade unions (see Maller 1992; Barret 1993; and Mapadimeng 1998). Lack of a regulatory framework to both guide co-operation efforts between the management and workers, and

ensure that jointly made decisions are adhered to and implemented as agreed upon also contributed to the failure of the schemes. As Webster and Macun (1997) have pointed out, the absence of an institutional framework left the participatory schemes ambiguous, providing only consultative representation falling short of real co-determination. Hence, the schemes typified Pateman's *partial participation* which refers to a situation whereby two or more parties influence each other in making decisions but the final power to determine the outcome of decisions lies with one party (see Mapadimeng 1998:97). This led to lack of mutual trust and racial tensions between managements and trade unions, which in turn gave rise to workplace conflicts over discipline, racism, democracy, management prerogative and authority (see Von Holdt 1993).

Although in most cases participatory schemes in SA constituted part of the broader organisational and/or corporate culture and in some other cases were envisaged as part of efforts towards developing a particular organisational culture, as evidenced by Maller's (1994) study of the Carlton Paper plant and Koopman et al's (1987) text on Cashbuild's culture; there has however not been much greater effort to systematically study organisational culture as the main strategy aimed at improving productivity and performance. In fact, the above cited two studies are the only ones whereby such effort was made. As can be noted, both studies were conducted prior to democratic change in S.A. Maller's study was completed in January 1994 (S.A.'s first national democratic elections only took place in April 1994) and Koopman et al's was published even much earlier in 1987, suggesting a gap in this area.

This study is an attempt to move towards closing this gap and should thus be seen as well timed given that it has been conducted in 2003, almost a full decade into democracy in S.A. This is critical when considering that in the past, the failure of workplace participatory strategies could not be adequately understood without locating them within the broader context of apartheid capitalism which was mainly characterized by the absence of societal democratic values and practices. Within the workplace, this has been aptly captured by Von Holdt (2003) through the concept of *apartheid workplace regime* to describe the racial structure of power in the S.A. workplace characterised by the racial allocation of skills and power as well as racial insults and racial assaults. The question therefore is whether or not

the post-apartheid democratic environment has enhanced the effectiveness of organisational culture in terms of the latter's ability to create an environment conducive to the improvement of productivity and performance in the workplace – that is whether or not organisational culture in the post-apartheid S.A. helps in overcoming the historical social polarisation while helping to forge greater social cohesion in the workplace.

This study therefore provides a closer examination of organisational culture in the post-apartheid S.A. workplace, assessing its impact on productivity and performance. This is done through the empirical study of Cranco Metals Ltd, a base metal producing factory located approximately sixty kilometres outside of Johannesburg. Given the broad nature of the concepts of productivity and performance which not only cover a wide range of areas such as purchasing, stock-keeping, distribution, customer service, marketing and research, but also are determined by a wide range of factors such as government policy (as external factor) and certain styles of management (as internal factor) (see Maree and Godfrey 1998; Joffe 1995); this study will only concern itself with work performance and labour productivity as component of total productivity and performance. According to Macun (1995:51) central to work performance and labour productivity is the question of 'effort' of individual workers as it determines 'how much activity workers engage in, the pace and the quality of work that goes into various activities'. This, he argues, is dependent on the conditions under which it is undertaken i.e. the relationship between workers and employers and incentives given to workers for their effort in improving performance. It is therefore necessary that in examining the issue of work performance and labour productivity, attention is paid to production and working relations between both workers and management as key players in the process of work. Also to receive attention are issues such as house-keeping, levels of absenteeism, communication and worker's know-how, as well as satisfaction levels.

In the next sections, I will first provide an outline of the research methods used during the field work at the Cranco Metals factory for data gathering. This will be followed by a further outline on the factory's background and the workforce profile. Then a shift in focus will be towards the presentation, discussion and analysis of the findings arising from the field work whereby the Cranco Metal's organisational culture is outlined and

its impact on productivity and performance is examined through analysis of shop-floor attitudes and perception. The analysis also draws from other sources like the company's weekly and monthly productivity records during the period of the three month field work. Based on the analysis, some concluding remarks will be drawn. Key to this would be argument that the effectiveness of organisational culture in improving work performance and labour productivity is constrained by amongst others the neo-liberal market environment, the apartheid legacy of racial inequalities in the workplace, and authoritarian practices of line managements as well as perceived non-commitment by management to addressing inherited inequities.

## **Research Methods**

The primary research methods used in this study are qualitative. At the factory floor, relations between production, workers and line management were investigated. This was done through in-depth interviews with both shop-floor production workers and management (both senior and junior or line management levels). In addition to several other smaller units that constitute Cranco Metals factory, there are seven large main production plants. It is from these seven production plants that I drew the sample for this study, following five days of orientation to the factory and all its plants by the Communications Manager. This gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the factory's layout and the production process, to be introduced to workers on duty and their shop-floor representatives and line managers, as well as to brief them about my study and its objectives. This turned out to be a really helpful exercise in terms of enhancing co-operation from the workforce and line management in my study. What made this even much easier was the Communication Manager (a black African male's) incredible fluency in all of the 11 South African official languages (i.e. to be precise in Tsonga, Venda, Pedi/Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Swati, and Tswana).

Given the interlinked nature of the main production plants, whereby the production process starts in the first plant in which raw material first arrives to be prepared for subsequent processing in the other plants and ends in the last plant (the seventh in the row) where the final metal product ready for the market is produced, I decided to conduct interviews in all of the

seven plants with the same number of production workers. Although the number of production workers varied depending on the number of workers per shift and per plant an average of 8 workers including team leaders and section leaders (who are basically production workers but tasked to represent workers in their sections) were interviewed. Since all the workers were exposed to more or less similar working conditions and could capably carry out work anywhere in the plant (this is attributable to both the workers' multiple skills and deep knowledge of work due to long job tenure as well as the integrated nature of the plant), I decided to use a random sampling technique to select respondents for the interviews without neglecting the methodological concern of the dangers of non-representativity. All interviews were conducted during both morning and afternoon shifts and none during night shifts. The advantage however was that all permanent production workers and some casual workers interviewed have worked in the night shifts. Thus the workers were able to reflect on night shift experiences as well and the implications thereof for performance at work. Interviews were conducted in English, Northern Sotho, and Zulu. In most cases, code-switching was used between either of the two latter African indigenous languages and the English language. Interviews with workers aimed to establish their social profile and their attitudes and perceptions of shop-floor relations; organisational culture and its role and relevance to their lives; and the culture's influence on shop-floor performance, productivity, and shop-floor relations.

Similar questions were investigated through interviews with management. Foremen for all the seven production plants were interviewed including where possible and available some supervisors (in total 2 supervisors were interviewed). Like the workers, foremen did work in both day and night shifts before. It was vital to interview all the plants' foremen as they are the main line managers with supervisors falling under their authority as subordinates. At senior management level interviews were conducted with the production manager, the human resources manager, the communications manager, and the general manager. Also interviewed were workers' representatives from all the three trade unions organising at Cranco Metals i.e. the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), a majority union whose membership is predominantly black production workers; the Mine Workers Union Solidarity (MWU) with predominantly white production

workers as members; and the United Association of South Africa (UASA), with white-collar membership. A representative from each of these unions was interviewed. Thus in total, 70 production workers, 7 foremen plus 2 supervisors, 4 middle and senior managers were interviewed making a total of 83 interviews conducted. Due to confidential and anonymity reasons, I refrained from using the correct names of the interviewees but only identified them in terms of their occupational level within the company as well as trade union and/or workers' association affiliations. Other complementary methods were also employed for data gathering. They included observations as non-participant both at the shop-floor level during the production process and also in meetings on safety and health programmes and social investment programmes. I also analysed some of the company's relevant documents such as on productivity and performance levels, grading systems and wages, safety regulations, and newsletters.

### **Cranco Metal's Background and Workforce Profile**

First founded over five decades ago, Cranco Metals has gone through various phases influenced mainly by the changing conditions in the markets for the base metals and mining products. In response to the competitive market conditions and varying customer needs, the base metal product is now being produced in a wide range differing in terms of the size and quality and/or metal content. This followed the recent technological innovations aimed at enhancing the production process whereby Cranco Metals replaced the old furnace facility used to cast its base metals with a new modern furnace through which various metal products are cast to meet customer needs. Its production process is continuous, semi-automated, labour intensive and integrated.

Demographically, although Cranco Metals's workforce is diverse in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, its shop-floor production workforce is however predominantly black African and male with the average age distribution between 30 and 49 (of the 60 workers interviewed; only 11 are in their late 20s and 5 are in their 50s). These workers have generally a long employment service with Cranco Metals varying between 5 and 15 years and 15 and 30 years. This rather long service with the company is however not matched by high job mobility and high wages. Most of the workers are in the lowest grades.

The literacy levels should presumably be high as the majority of the workers have both primary and secondary school education (of the 60 workers interviewed, 35 have completed grades at the primary schooling levels and 29 secondary schooling levels). Only one has completed standard ten (Grade 12) and is now pursuing university studies, and 2 have had no formal schooling at all. During interviews, the socio-linguistic background of the workers was investigated. This revealed that the majority of the workers at Cranco Metals are from rural areas of three provinces of the Republic of South Africa i.e. Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. 23 respondents said they were from the Eastern Cape and speak Xhosa, 22 are from Limpopo Province and speak Northern Sotho, Tsonga, and Venda, and 13 are from KwaZulu-Natal and speak Zulu. Only one respondent said he is from the Mpumalanga Province and speaks Swati. This linguistic diversity has however not generated tensions and conflicts amongst the workers. This could partly be attributed to the fact that most of the workers can speak more than one African indigenous language. The majority of black workers however cannot speak either English or Afrikaans well.

As the workers are mainly migrants, they view their stay in urban Gauteng as temporary and all are planning to settle at their respective rural homesteads at retirement. For their temporary stay, they reside in the nearby townships as tenants in the back rooms and/or *mikhukhu* or *iZozo* (i.e. shelters made of corrugated iron) and also in informal shack settlements within the vicinity of the factory while the remaining few stay in hired rooms at the nearby a middle class suburb residential area. Cranco Metals' management is predominantly white and is multi-layered. While the top level is comprised of only white managers, both the top and line management levels, although predominantly white, have some black presence and this is particularly so in areas of senior management such in the areas of Employment Equity, Human Resources and Communications. Of the seven production plants in which I conducted interviews and made observations, only two are headed by black line managers and the rest by whites.

The factory's General Manager acknowledges these racial disparities at management levels but mentioned that Cranco Metals is in the process of addressing the situation in line with the legislative equity requirements. He mentions that Cranco Metals has introduced a mentorship programme for junior black managers in order to prepare and equip them with the necessary

skills to enable them to take up senior positions. Arguing that Cranco Metals is committed to the Mining Charter and aims to make great strides towards achieving equity goals in the next five years, he mentioned that progress has already been made as there is already  $\pm$  30% black representation.

Notwithstanding this proclaimed progress and commitment to equity, the management's view is however not shared by the NUM, which believes that management is in fact dragging its feet on addressing the equity question. Note, for instance here, the response by NUM's senior representative at Cranco Metals:

The management's approach to employment equity shows lack of commitment to employing black managers. This is a white place. Cranco Metals should employ black capable people from both outside and internally. I agree that Cranco Metals is trying to appoint black people into senior positions, but there is a ceiling. All four business units and other senior positions such as marketing management, procurement management, and general management are occupied by whites, and this is where crucial decisions are made. In the appointment of Closed Corporations (CCs) for sub-contracting of work, blacks are not considered.

This led to a protest action led by NUM in March 2003 against Cranco Metals' failure to comply with equity requirements as well as consult fully with the unions.

### **Cranco Metal's Performance Enhancement Culture (PEC)**

Cranco Metals' management has set as its main goal to ensure that Cranco Metals becomes a leading global producer of affordable cost base metals and a dominant player in the base metals' markets. This goal, it aims to achieve through its high performance culture which rests on the following key principles and values: *Care; Mutual Respect; Fair Workplace Practices; Accountable Working Behaviour; and Integrity as well as Team Work Spirit, Belief in People, and Excellence*. This Performance Enhancement Culture (PEC) was developed to promote the living of these values, to achieve operational excellence and improve systems, as well as to ensure safety and

empower workers partly through regular recognition and rewards (interview with General Manager, 05-12-2003: 15h00). To promote PEC, management has embarked on a number of strategies. Amongst such strategies, is the use of the services of outside experts and consultants whose primary role is to assist in getting employees to internalise and live the guiding PEC values and principles as well as with diversity and equity management. At the time of my study, the consultant at work was a white motivational-type speaker and life strategist, Dr London<sup>2</sup>.

Also used to promote PEC are industrial theatres and a so-called Wall of Fame in the Main Hall on which pictures of workers are mounted and the parent company's corporate group values are written. Notice boards, outside walls of buildings used as venues for meetings on which regular updates on productivity and performance levels are highlighted, and weekly and bi-monthly internal newsletters and/or publications are also used to promote the PEC. The internal weekly and bi-monthly newsletters and publications developed and used by Cranco Metals to promote its PEC are the *Weekly UpDate* and *Cranco News*, the latter is a quarterly publication, and both are used to inform and update the Cranco Metals community about latest developments and issues affecting them. Also used but as a complementary strategy to promote and live the PEC values is the Occupational Health and Safety Programme comprised of safety trainings; the factory-wide Safety Committee which meets regularly to discuss and address safety questions; the Occupational Health and Safety Department with staff that specialises in safety questions.

Over and above the PEC but seen as complementary, senior management developed the Business Enhancement Programme (BEP) known as *Sebenza Project* (a Zulu name for Work). According to the *Weekly UpDate* reports, the BEP or *Sebenza Project* was developed as a response to

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that this is not the real name of the consultant. Once again, ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality had to be observed and the real name was thus omitted for a fictitious one. The contracting of Dr. London followed the termination of the contract with one of the acclaimed black African consultants on organisational culture and change, whom I also just call Dr, Afrika for similar ethical considerations of anonymity.

profit declines owing to extremely competitive business and market conditions, which are said to have been exacerbated by both the strengthening of the South African Rand against the U.S. dollar and the high prices of raw materials. The *Sebenza* Project is thus aimed to cut costs and improve revenues. Cranco Metals' General Manager expressed optimism about *Sebenza* while the project's implementation in 2004 may be a painful and challenging exercise (here referring to anticipated retrenchments), through everyone's co-operation, it was however seen as to be a success.

Although the PEC initiative was welcomed by everyone at Cranco Metals, management's enthusiasm about it and the BEP is however not fully shared by the majority union, the NUM, which represents mainly black production workers. This lack of enthusiasm stems from dissatisfaction with the management's approach in formulating and implementing the PEC and the BEP or *Sebenza* Project as a business enhancement strategy. When asked about the PEC, the NUM's representative and full-time shop-steward, stated that while they are not opposed to the PEC in principle, they are however unhappy with the approach used by the management. This is reflected in the differences between management and NUM over the hiring of consultants. While, according to the General Manager, both Dr. Afrika and Dr. London, were hired in their different capacities to assist Cranco Metals with diversity/ equity management and PEC-related performance management respectively, for NUM, the appointment of Dr. London shortly after Dr. Afrika was seen as a racially unfair substitution of the latter for the former. NUM also expressed concern about lack of transparency and full consultation. As a result, and to register its unhappiness, NUM embarked on industrial action in the form of after working hours protest against non-compliance with the Employment Equity Act and racism. NUM was also opposed to the BEP or *Sebenza* Project, especially its emphasis on labour cost cuts through lay-offs.

This clearly shows that while both management and NUM believe that it is essential to address the challenges of low performance facing Cranco Metals, they however differ significantly in how those challenges should be addressed, resulting in the hampering of implementation of the PEC. Poor communication and generally tense relations between management and trade unions seem to also explain these differences, which in turn further exacerbate the tension. This is confirmed by evidence arising

from interviews with both management and workers as outlined in the next section.

## **PEC and Impact on the Shop-floor, Performance and Productivity**

Having outlined Cranco Metals' workforce and management profile and its performance enhancement strategies i.e. the PEC and BEB, the focus will now shift to the evaluation of the implementation at the shop-floor level, where these strategies are aimed to have maximum impact. It is thus necessary to examine how the Cranco Metals' management has communicated the PEC, Occupational Health and Safety Programme and *Sebenza* Project to both workers and line managers, to establish whether or not the workers and line managers are familiar with these interventions, and whether or not they have embraced and are living them or are guided by them in their daily conduct and activities. This section is therefore aimed to examine, on the basis of the findings from interviews with both workers and line managers, the impact that the PEC and its values have on shop-floor relations and work performance. In so doing, both the enhancing and hindering factors will be examined.

One area investigated through interviews with workers and line managers was that of production and working relations on the shop-floor. Both workers and line managers were asked to describe their working relationships. Interviews with shop-floor workers in all production plants of the factory revealed that the relationships with line managers are generally strained and conflict ridden. This is attributed to poor line management, racial practices and perceptions, and poor communication. Of the 60 workers interviewed, 14 described the relationships with the line managers (i.e. both the supervisors and foremen) as good and 30 described them as bad. Out of the remaining 16, 8 workers reported that while their relationship with the supervisor could be described as good, the same could however not be said of the relationship with the foreman. Similarly, the other 8 workers said their relationship with the foreman could be described as good but with the supervisor as bad.

The 14 workers who reported good relationships with their line managers would not however elaborate on reasons for their responses, but on

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the whole felt that the improved relationships with the line managers is due to the new political environment in S.A. of democracy and labour legislations and policies. Note, for instance, this response by one of the workers:

There are no problems with the foreman and the superintendent. The new laws are great. Before, a white person was a white person. The new laws help to guide relationships here at work. We respect each other.

The 30 workers who described relationships with their line managers as not being good cited racial tensions as straining the relationships on the shop-floor due to what they perceived to be racially biased treatment by foremen and poor communication. One worker's response went like this:

Whites are harsh when they speak to blacks. For instance, they would shout loudly saying that I cannot do my work properly.

The response below highlights not only racial practices inherited from the past apartheid system, but also authoritarian practices by the foreman. These strained working relationships impacted negatively on workers' morale and performance. In fact this worker felt that they perform well when the foreman is absent but as soon as he is back to work, the performance slacks down.

The foreman does not treat us well. When working, instead of appreciating and praising us, he would say to us *kom kom kom*. If he tells you something, he does not expect you to respond or ask questions. He says that if he is not around, we do not do our job and that is the reason he always follows us when we are busy working. It is not true that we are lazy. When he goes on leave for 30 days, work goes faster than when he is around. If he is around, we do not work as we are always scared. You (referring to himself and other workers) might get injured. *O sa swere mokgwa wa dipolaseng wa apartheid – maburu a dipolase ba be ba tlwaetse go sala batho morago go re ba kgone go ba gatelela* (this is a response in Sepedi

language – one of South Africa's indigenous ethnic language. In English, it could be translated like this: *He (i.e. the foreman) still behaves as in the past under apartheid – white farmers used to always be behind people just to oppress them).*

Workers are also unhappy with the method of control employed by the management in the form of the clocking system. The system uses an electronic card for clocking in when reporting to work and when leaving at the end of the shift. It is installed at the main entrance gate and in the change rooms. It records the time at which a worker arrives and leaves work. While, according to the General Manager, the system was installed with the view to protecting workers from intruders into their change rooms, the workers see it as being used to monitor and control their movements. They argue, for instance, that once they are at work, they are not allowed to visit the change room as that is considered loafing, and would lead to penalties such as wages being docked and cut. Note the responses below by one of the shopstewards:

The clocking system is used to control workers to ensure they are not going up and down while at work. It is able to tell whether you were at work or not and workers are not happy with it. It is used in the change rooms and in toilets. The longest time a worker can take in the change room is 10 minutes. If you stay longer, the foreman calls you and asks you why you have been away from work for so long. He would warn you and say in future further steps will be taken against you.

Other worker responses revealed inconsistencies between senior management and line management's approaches to worker management, and thus the failure of the latter to manage in line with the company policy and values. Note here their responses:

The foreman gives us his instructions but not as required by the company e.g. the company requires that two workers be posted there at each production point, but he instead only places one worker. That makes the job really difficult and tiring. The job itself suffers because the pressure is only on one person.

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The company has policies that guide relationships between workers and foremen, but the foremen have their own personal instructions which make us uncomfortable and unhappy as workers.

Other workers felt that relationships with line managers are constrained by the latter's lack of prompt response to their reports of faults on the production line, which they feel exposes them to health risks and work-related injuries. This is testified by the following response:

We do not work well with them (i.e. supervisors and foremen). If we report faults to them such as leakages, they would just ignore and instead tell us that they would call someone to come and fix it but that never happens. For example, there is now a problem with the forklift but nothing has been done about it as yet.

Owing to the perceived bad treatment by line managers, workers developed survival techniques as a form of covert resistance to what they perceive as harsh, unfair and racially-biased treatment by line managers. Note here this worker's response:

Foremen behave as if they own the job. We developed tactics to defend ourselves. When he approaches, we pretend to work hard. In the end we end up not working properly - just like soccer players performing poorly not because they can't perform but simply because they do not like the coach.

This suggests that the unfair, racially biased treatment by white foremen has, contrary to the spirit of commitment that the *Sebenza* Project is trying to promote, driven the workers into a situation in which they become less committed to cooperation with management to improve production and performance. This also surfaced during interviews with supervisors who complained about workers' lack of commitment at work.

As I have indicated earlier on, the breakdown in responses revealed that the remaining 16 workers interviewed were divided in half with one half (i.e. 8) reporting better relationships with foremen than with the supervisors and the other half reporting that relations with the supervisor were better

than with the foreman. Here are some of their responses:

We do not cooperate well, especially with the supervisor. He does not show us respect. When he speaks to us, it's as if he is speaking to children. The foreman is fine. Well sometimes when he gives instructions, he may sound like he is shouting at us but he is ok. The supervisor usually pretends when the foreman is around but once he is gone, he changes.

We are used to the foreman, if you do not know him; you may think he is bad. There is however a *boeremag*<sup>3</sup> supervisor here. We clash with him but he does not have power. We ignore him. He has a bit of an apartheid problem.

Clearly, from the above findings, the overwhelming majority of workers are unhappy with their current relationships with their line managers. They attribute this poor relationships to racial bias on the part of line managers in their treatment of workers; authoritarian and unilateral practices in decision makings on work-related matters by line managers inconsistent with the top management's PEC-based approach which, although implicitly so, promotes joint-decision making; and to poor response from line managers to work-related problems reported by workers such as faults in the production process. This remains so despite the fact that this undermines performance and also exposes workers to work-related accidents and injuries. Hence persistent occurrences of minor injuries called Less Serious Injuries (LSIs), undermine the Occupational Health and Safety programme. While the *Weekly UpDate* newsletters show Cranco Metals' impressive success in achieving targets in terms of reducing and eliminating hours and days lost to injuries, they however also show that LSIs continue to occur. For instance, the Newsletters of between October 2003 and February 2004 show that a

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<sup>3</sup> This is a term normally used to refer to rightwing white Afrikaners who are considered to be racist and are opposed to the democratic dispensation of black majority rule. They have been supportive of the apartheid system and were resistant to democratic change in South Africa.

total of 22 LSIs occurred over this period. In fact, in my reading of these Newsletters, there has not been a week without a LSI.

Also constraining production relations is poor communication owing to the language factor. It was discovered that, while most black workers can speak more than one African language, they however lack proficiency in English and Afrikaans. Similarly, white managers both at the senior and line management levels, can only speak either English and/or Afrikaans but none of the African languages. The result here is that the two parties find it difficult to communicate effectively on work related matters leading to not only delays in action – therefore poor work performance – but also to tensions and conflicts due to misunderstandings. This could be seen from responses of some of the white line managers, in which they express frustration with the situation. Note, for instance, the following responses:

Performance is not satisfactory. This is not only due to engineering-related problems but also a problem of communication. We (i.e. white line managers) do not understand the culture and problems of our colleagues (referring to black workers). English is incomprehensible to black workers. This results in soft issues that could be easily resolved turning into hard issues. You say something and they would interpret it in a different way. It creates lots of misunderstanding which cause tensions and divisions. Because of all these, the next thing the union is on your doorstep. We have excellent people and even section leaders but Cranco Metals is not using their full potential. People on the lower level (i.e. supervisors and other foremen) do not recognise that potential.

When giving instructions, I do so with hand signals to show workers what to do and how to do it. I have been here at Cranco Metals for many years; I have now learned how to communicate through hand signs with workers which really helps. Someone who cannot speak English, Afrikaans or *fanakalo*, would normally use hands to communicate.

This problem of poor communication is also evident in workers' responses to the question that sought to establish their familiarity with BEP or *Sebenza*

Project and their perceptions thereof. While some workers showed understanding of the Project and its objectives, the majority however revealed either total ignorance or partial understanding. Of the 60 workers interviewed, 19 showed a good knowledge and clear understanding of the BEP or *Sebenza* Project, 16 showed no knowledge nor understanding thereof, and 25 have a vague idea and understanding of the Project, and are concerned that it would result in retrenchments.

Those with knowledge and clear understanding of the BEP or *Sebenza* Project made responses such as this when asked about it:

I heard about it. Management sent out BEP people throughout the plant to tell us about it. They said that Cranco Metals is not doing well financially due to the Rand/Dollar exchange. They said we as workers should bring forth ideas and suggestions on how to improve production and performance to enable Cranco Metals to realise its revenue increase target.

Those ignorant of the BEP or *Sebenza* Project made the following responses:

I know nothing about it. They never came to us to explain about it. We only hear about it.

I do not know about it. I jus know about a certain school in the township called *sebenza*.

I just know about in the township when they distribute pamphlets saying *abantu ba sebenze* (i.e. *people should work hard*) but I never heard of it here at work.

Lack of clear understanding and knowledge of the *Sebenza* or BEP Project amongst most of the workers is revealed in the following responses which signal limited communication:

*Sebenza* means work. We heard about it from the superintendent. It came because of the need to retrench. If a worker is working, they monitor him. To us, it means '*indoda ifanele sebenze, uma inga*

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*sebenze, I ya hamba* (This is a switch to IsiZulu language which when translated to English would read like this 'Each and every man should work. Failure to do so, would lead to retrenchment or dismissal'). Management does not say so to us, but that's how we as workers interpret it.

We were told about it at the meeting, but we do not know how it works. *Umlunku* (the Zulu word for the white person) told us about it and how Cranco is performing in terms of the Rand/Dollar exchange rate and then he urged us to work hard. As workers, we told them we can't because the company employs casuals or contract workers. According to us, production is fine.

Strangely, these workers' responses stand in contrast to senior management's view that prior to the introduction of the *Sebenza* Project, there was an extensive process of consultation with workers. According to the General Manager, all the trade unions organising at Cranco Metals were consulted for two weeks and that there were road shows whereby each and every employee was invited and given an opportunity in his/her own language to discuss and ask questions. He further argues that a memo written in three languages outlining reasons for the implementation of the project was distributed to all. He also argues that the *Weekly UpDate* newsletters, morning meetings, and a storyboard were used to publicise the Project, helping to reach up to  $\pm 80\%$  of the workforce.

The responses on shop-floor relationships are consistent with those on the question that sought to explore the extent to which Cranco Metals' values, especially the Caring Value, are lived and practised on the shop-floor and the effect thereof on production relations and work performance. Of the 60 workers interviewed, only 16 felt that Cranco Metals cares about their (workers) welfare and 24 felt that it does not care. The remaining 20 workers agreed but had some reservations.

Those who felt that Cranco Metals cares for workers cited amongst others the management's supply of workers with safety clothes, milk for those working in the plant where there is high concentration of acids, food for overtime workers, tea, first aid medical services, and safety courses as signs that show that Cranco Metals does indeed care for its workers. This

can be seen in the following responses:

Cranco Metals does care for its workers because they provide us with safety clothes and equipment to prevent us from getting injuries.

Yes it does care. There are courses on safety provided to workers. We also get regular medical check-ups at the clinic.

On the other hand, those who felt that Cranco Metals does not care for workers cited low wages; fears of being retrenched, management's failure to provide transport; racism; and non-recognition of worker's value, experience, input and skills by line management. Note here this response by one of the worker respondents:

According to policies written on paper, yes, but in practice no. There is no implementation. There are so many examples that show lack of care for workers. For instance, those working shifts that end at 10pm have to organise their own transport. What matters to the management is that you pitch up to work on time. They don't care whether you may get killed by *tsotsis*<sup>4</sup> or not. Cranco Metals does not care. We do not have time to rest. We work throughout, we only get about five days off. When there are family functions, you can't make it. Days off are not enough. I cannot request for a permission because, let's say a relative passes away, it's difficult because when you come back, they will demand that you produce a death certificate, which creates problems. Maybe *ka sekgowa but ka setso it is impossible (this is a code switch from Sepedi to English – when translated into English it would read like this: 'maybe in Western culture it is possible to ask for death certificate but in African culture it is not')*. If you fail to produce a death certificate, they would not pay you for days that you were absent from work.

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<sup>4</sup> Tsotsi is an indigenous Sotho language word referring to someone who commits crimes such as muggings or robbing.

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The workers who felt that Cranco Metals cares for workers but expressed some reservations had this to say:

Yes, Cranco Metals care about workers but it pays low wages.

Yes and no. The General Manager says it cares and says we should always wear safety clothes to prevent work-related injuries but on the shop-floor that is not the case because we get charged by line managers who always fill our names in on the pink form<sup>5</sup>.

The company cares because they give us a half day training on safety to ensure that we are safe at work. But we hear that Cranco seeks to retrench in January next year. This does not show it cares. We end up working unfreely and could even get injured.

### **Analysis of Findings**

The above discussion was meant to evaluate and establish the extent to which the PEC values and other initiatives by senior management aimed to enhance productivity and performance at Cranco Metals have penetrated the shop-floor level, and influenced production relations as well as performance of work. In seeking to improve performance at work, the PEC strategy promotes collective team spirit and co-operative working relations. Shop-floor relations were thus examined to determine the degree of the impact of these values. The findings presented above suggest that the virtues and values promoted in the PEC have had both a limited desirable impact as well as a contradictory impact on the shop-floor relations. Shop-floor production relations are strained by racial tensions due to what is perceived as racially biased treatment of black workers by white line managers.

Also straining shop-floor production relations are authoritarian, unilateral practices by line managers on decision makings on work related

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<sup>5</sup> A pink form is a charge sheet form that the foremen use to record all incidents that occur on the shop-floor during work which may require further attention by the Human Resources Office for action to be taken such as disciplinary measures or warnings being issued to identified workers.

matters. The majority of the workers interviewed are unhappy about line managers would not allow them to have an input in decisions over work related matters, and feel that this not only undermines their intelligence and knowledge of work but also shows disrespect for them. They also complain of poor, delayed responses from line managers to reported faults on the production process such as gas leakages and machine break downs, which in turn not only undermines work performance but also puts their lives at risk of sustaining injuries and falling into accidents. Shop-floor relations are further strained by the repressive system of control i.e. the clocking system that results in wages being docked and restrictions imposed on worker's movements. These strained production relations, together with the workers' reaction through output restriction i.e. reduced commitment to working hard in order to cope with harsh treatment by line managers, not only undermine the PEC values but also impact negatively on production and work performance. This is evidenced in the *Weekly UpDate* in-house publications which reveal consistent failure to realize production targets. Between October 2003 and February 2004, Cranco Metals fell short to achieve its production target of 57 167, 1 tons of base metals by 4 396.1 tons. Only 52 771, 0 tons was achieved. It was noted that, contrary to the objectives set out by the Occupational Health and Safety programme of eliminating injuries at work, less serious injuries remain a common occurrence with consequences for work performance.

Strained shop-floor relations are compounded by the language factor, which impacts negatively on communication. While the majority of black workers are non-proficient in either English or Afrikaans, both of which languages are spoken by management, with English being used for formal communication; the predominantly white management, especially line managers, cannot speak any of the indigenous African languages. The result is that while communication amongst the workers is smooth since most can speak more than one African language, the same cannot be said about communication between themselves and management. This fuels the existing tensions between white line managers and black workers by creating too many misunderstandings and tensions. As evidence shows, effective communication between white line managers and black workers was hampered by the inability of both groups to speak each other's language. This has in fact led to social distance on the shop-floor, the escalation of

racial perceptions and attitudes, tensions and disputes, and mistrust. This, together with the unilateral practices, resulted in the 'us' and 'them' scenario which undermines team spirit and team work promoted by PEC. Language also hampers the effective implementation and living of the PEC values. As one of the foremen pointed out, *soft issues* are easily turned into *hard issues* due to poor language communication. This, as was noted, also tends to be time consuming and negatively impacts on production, performance and work process. Poor communication between management and workers became evident when the majority of worker respondents either showed complete ignorance or a limited knowledge and/or understanding of the management-initiated BEP or *Sebenza* Project. Although workers were generally willing to co-operate with management to ensure that Cranco Metals remains a viable and profitable company, notwithstanding their disapproval of the dominant management style, especially the line managers', they are however deeply concerned and discouraged by the 'rumours' that the Project aims at cutting down costs by laying off some of them. This depleted morale amongst the workers and created fear, uncertainty and anger that it is simply aimed to intensify exploitation and further marginalisation of workers and shows that management does not appreciate their effort and commitment to ensuring that Cranco Metals remains viable and profitable.

Thus, what *Sebenza* Project seems to have been able to achieve is the creation of further distance and division between workers and management as well as fuelling of the feelings of alienation amongst workers rather than helping to forge a common shared vision as well as a sense of collective identity, team spirit and team effort. This division and alienation is clearly discernable from workers' responses in which there is a strong sense of an 'us' and 'them' feeling such as, in their reference to the *Sebenza* Project, they use phrases such as 'They...' and 'Their *Sebenza* ...', clearly distancing themselves. Owing to this and the unfair treatment that workers are receiving from line managers, the majority felt that Cranco Metals does not care about their wellbeing and welfare contrary to the PEC's caring values. Workers developed survival tactics and resorted to collective resistance to management's authoritarianism.

What the *Sebenza* Project (a cost-reduction strategy at Cranco Metals) reveals is the negative effect that the broader neo-liberal

macroeconomic framework and its principles are having on the workplace, and in particular on workers - managements relationships as well as on productivity and performance improvement strategies. This confirms Von Holdt and Webster's (2005) observation, based on case studies-based evidence, that in the post-apartheid period, strategies embarked upon by the state and companies are characterised by reduced autonomy due to the pressures exerted by competitive, cost-conscious and quality-conscious global market forces. This, they argue, has been facilitated by the state through trade liberalisation, fiscal conservatism, and state assets restructuring through privatisation (Von Holdt and Webster 2005: 7). The consequential effect of this has been increased adversarialism between trade unions as working class representatives, business, and state. Workers' resistance to these market-driven restructuring processes has taken the form of annual nation-wide protests and marches. An example of these protest marches was the May 10, 2000 national strike led by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) at which urgent steps were called for in order to proactively resolve the unemployment crisis in S.A. – the results of retrenchments. During this march, the following demands were tabled: making retrenchments a mandatory issue for negotiations; protection of workers in the event of liquidation; halting the unilateral restructuring of government assets; an end to accelerated reduction of trade tariffs; and a lack of job creation (see *The Star* 11 May 2000:1 & 5). Cosatu's president, Willie Madisha, also called for a halt to capital flight which he saw as being encouraged by the South African Chamber of Business's (Sacob's) affiliates which he claimed had invested R80 billion outside S.A. between 1994 and 1998 (*The Star Business Report* 11 May 2000:1). Cosatu's chairperson is reported to have described this action as not a strike but 'a war against poverty and joblessness' and the South African Communist Party's (SACP's) media officer viewed the action as 'a conscious offensive against capitalism'. This evidence suggests that the gap between employers and trade unions remains wide and is thus likely to remain a major obstacle to workplace co-operation and possibilities of joint decision makings on issues of common interest.

This environment constitutes an obstacle to management's ability to recognise and take advantage of opportunities presented by the post-apartheid democratic dispensation. The evidence presented from the findings

above based on the case of Cranco Metals supports this observation as management has failed to recognise and utilise opportunities to improve relations with workers to promote co-operation, especially around issues of common interest such as productivity and performance enhancement. Amongst such opportunities, which have so far not been fully exploited, is a clear evidence of a changed attitude on the part of the historically militant black workers organised by NUM from adversarialism to the expressed willingness and desire, in line with the new democratic dispensation, to co-operate with management and make South Africa a winning nation. This is consistent with Von Holdt's (2003) earlier findings that led him to argue that workers and unions in S.A. are willing to move away from the culture of resistance towards the culture of productivity. This changed attitude and culture is also necessitated by workers' material and socio-psychological needs. Workers stated that, in spite of the harsh treatment and unpleasant working conditions, they were happy to work at Cranco Metals as it not only enables them to earn a living for themselves and their families, but also keeps them busy and away from boredom. As was noticed, most workers are in their 30s and 40s and are married, thus implying that they have family responsibilities as bread winners. This suggests that there already exists, amongst these workers the zeal and commitment to work, which needs to be built upon and be further expanded to enhance the creation and promotion of a common vision and objective to strive to make Cranco Metals a viable and profitable company.

Another opportunity lies in workers' long tenure at Cranco Metals, which suggests that the bulky number of the workforce is tacitly skilled and highly experienced. This constitutes a skills capacity which has evidently not been fully and creatively utilised. This is a historical problem in S.A. whereby in the past black workers and their tacit skills did not receive any recognition from employers and managements owing to racially stereotyped attitudes held towards black people. Blacks being considered indolent, lazy, incompetent, unworthy, incapable of working with abstract concepts or numbers, colour-blind (meaning that they cannot draw distinctions between different colours), unintelligent, hidebound by culture and so forth (see Silberbauer 1968 and Becker 1974 in Webster 1976; Maller 1994; and Cock and Bernstein 1998). Wilson and Klaaste (1996) refers to this generalised situation with the fundamental maxim of apartheid which says 'whites are

better and blacks are backward'. This suggests that the past continues to impact on the present and this legacy that needs to be addressed in the interests of the whole country. The present skills capacity can also not be fully tapped without addressing workers' concerns such as remaining in the same grade for far too long without being adequately rewarded with promotions, improved remuneration, and other incentives such as profit-sharing schemes. This, Macun (1995) argues, is necessary if workers' effort is to be fully realised. Although, and as evidenced in the *Weekly Update*, the management regularly expresses recognition of workers who are showing commitment to upholding the Cranco Metals' PEC and Occupational Health and Safety values and principles through their actions; this is clearly inadequate to motivate workers without material incentives and better treatment by line management. Furthermore, the Cranco Metals' case suggests a need for senior management to monitor the situation on a daily basis to ensure that line managers do not wield unilateral powers and control over decision makings around work-related matters. This could be complemented with training for line managers to ensure that they are adequately equipped with the relevant people management skills.

At Cranco Metals, the above opportunities could however be offset by some potential constraints and challenges such as the apparent lack of co-operation between top management and NUM due to, amongst others, the union's view and feeling that management is not fully committed to equity. This perception runs in contrast with management's view that Cranco Metals has made headway towards achieving equity targets. These different views on the equity question has in fact become the matter of dispute between NUM and management, and generated tensions and conflicts, which are likely to continue to occur and further strain labour relations as well as hampering performance and productivity improvement efforts.

The BEP, rather than securing workers' co-operation and commitment, only served to aggravate the situation by further alienating them through creating uncertainty, instilling fear of losing their jobs, and aggravating tensions.

## **Conclusion**

The organisational culture at Cranco Metals, the PEC, has only had a partial desired impact on production relations, productivity and work performance.

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This is attributable to a complex web of factors including authoritarian, racially biased line management practices; the repressive clocking system of control which leads to wages being docked and restrictions being imposed on workers movements during working hours; poor communication due to language constraints; and low wages as well as lack of job mobility as workers stay in the same grade for extended periods of time. The perceived lack of commitment on the part of senior management to genuinely address equity problems for redress of past inequities also serves as a constraint. The past thus continues to have a negative impact on the present. The overall impact has been the straining of working relations, low motivation and job satisfaction, reluctance on the part of generally de-motivated and disgruntled shop-floor workers to put effort into work for improved performance and productivity; persistent adversarial attitudes; and a growing distance between the management and shop-floor workers. The situation is aggravated by the neo-liberal cost-reduction environment that promotes management strategies such as the *Sebenza* Project. The latter project at Cranco Metals fuelled adversarial attitudes and feelings of mistrust as workers felt increasingly insecure due to threats of retrenchments. The result has been the management's failure to recognise and exploit opportunities available for improving shop-floor relations and work performance as was evidenced by failure to realise production targets and eliminate the work related injuries. It is clear that the ability of strategies anchored in the organisational culture aiming at improving work performance and productivity within S.A. enterprises to overcome the historical capitalist challenge of converting workers' labour power into an actual productive force, are inhibited by a combination of a global neo-liberal capitalist environment and the inherited legacy of apartheid capitalism, especially as it still manifests on the shop-floor. Thus, workplace relations are characterised mainly by greater polarisation rather than social cohesion, constraining efforts to work jointly on matters of common interest for mutual benefits. This remains so despite the new democratic environment in S.A. and the opportunities that it presents for genuine transformation of workplace relations and for joint worker-management strategies.

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Industrial, Organisational and Labour Studies Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
mapadime@ukzn.ac.za

# **Contradictions in the Construction of Difference and Polarization in Chinese/Taiwanese Industries in KZN: Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle**

**Sithembiso Bhengu**

## **Introduction**

This paper is a reflection on findings from an early warning systems research on Chinese and Taiwanese investment in three industrial zones of KZN, viz. Isithebe (Ndondakusuka), Ladysmith-Ezakheni and Newcastle-Madadeni/Osizweni. The research was commissioned by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN), an investment monitoring and aftercare public entity under the KZN provincial Department of Economic Affairs<sup>1</sup>. This research was undertaken towards the end of 2002-3 as baseline of early warning systems on problems and challenges facing these investments and industries in KZN. This study was undertaken against the backdrop of numerous cases of vagrant breach of occupational health and safety measure that were reported in Bronkhorspruit and in Newcastle between 2000 and 2002. These cases attracted both national and international news coverage, a specific case in Newcastle was a textile/clothing factory in which the owner used to lock-in women working night shift. This resulted in one of the workers giving birth inside the factory

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<sup>1</sup> A clause in the Memorandum of Agreement between TIKZN and researchers gave the researchers authority to use data sources from this research for academic publication. Data sources were put under embargo for any other purpose.

and losing the twin babes because of being locked-in. There were subsequent cases of abuse of workers, which culminated in massive deployment of inspectors from the Department of Labour, who uncovered and confirmed these atrocities, which resulted in fines and wide outcry and condemnation of these practices.

These atrocious events coincided with increasing pressure that TIKZN and respective industrial zones were facing as more investors were relocating or threatening to relocate their business to cheaper and more receptive locations in the region. What transpired from the interviews with chairmen of their respective chambers of business was that investors were disgruntled by the new legislation, specifically the 1999 Sectoral Determination on Minimum Wage for the clothing and textile sector. Investors were also unhappy with what they called '*government protection of trade unions to the detriment of investment*'. Lastly, investors were unhappy with diminishing incentives, e.g. real estate cost benefits, investment subsidies and other incentives that were gradually eroded as investment financial and industrial zone bodies like Ithala (formerly KwaZulu Finance Corporation, KFC) were facing increasing pressure to corporatise, restructure and meet cost saving imperatives.

TIKZN wanted a baseline study of problems and challenges emanating from these investments, in order to formulate proper after-care policy for these investors, which were regarded important for growing the respective local economies and employment. From this research appropriate intervention, e.g. training, facilitation and integration of Chinese and Taiwanese investors was to be ensued to integrate them into the economy and industrial relations framework. During the initial discussions with senior people from TIKZN, they acknowledged that there are problems with these industries, some were even arguing for ridding themselves of these investors. Yet, on the other hand they accepted that these investments represent the largest economic investment and employment in these areas<sup>2</sup>. The Chinese and Taiwanese investments represent an interesting yet contradictory epithet of globalization and neo-liberal economic agenda that proceed from it. Yet,

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<sup>2</sup> Senior managers from TIKZN and Ithala estimated these industries coalesce up to R100 million per annum and approximately about 40 – 60 000 jobs.

in South Africa, Taiwanese investments should not be limited to globalization trajectory. Taiwanese investments date as long and as early as the 1980s during the high times of apartheid's Bantustan independent industrial development zones. These investments were both cumulative international collaboration of the apartheid system with the internationally non-recognized Taiwanese state (Hart 2002). This was an ideological pact and collaboration between what seemed like-minded states, both anti-communist (Taiwan pressing for secession from communist China, while South Africa was fighting to defend apartheid system against what they conceived as communist ANC).

These investments were also on the backdrop of increasing isolation of apartheid regime from international community as pressure from the ANC and other anti-apartheid voices were increasing in influence on the international scene. In line with the policy of separate development, which demarcated South Africa into four racially defined spatial categories of whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans, homelands were established, which were areas of self-rule for Africans. These were instituted to entrench long established dispossession and proletarianisation of blacks and the migrant labour system (Department of Economics, 1950; Hemson, 1995; Maylam, 1995; Sitas, 1990, 1997). Bantustan homelands established decentralized industrial zones, which were in proximity of black townships, as areas of industrial development, to limit the demand for blacks to come into 'white cities' and were regarded by homeland leaders as avenues for creation of the black bourgeoisie. These industrial zones were established in the 1970s across all the homelands, but by the 1980s numerous of these zones were dysfunctional, amidst cases of mismanagement, lack of capacity and corruption (Clark 1994). Iscor, a steel and iron ore manufacturing firm in Newcastle was one of the few successes of this project during the 1980s leading to the 1990s. It was during this time that the KwaZulu homeland began to make trips to Taiwan through its investment financial corporation then called KwaZulu Finance Corporation (KFC). At the same time the white town council of Newcastle also identified Taiwan as the destination for investment attraction. During one of the interviews with the town council clerk who has been on this portfolio since the 1980s, he intimated how he had visited Taiwan and China more than 35 times over the past 20 years.

These Taiwanese industrialists were lured by promises of cheaper real estate, investment subsidies in the form of tax rebates, less-than market electricity and water rates and Bantustan investor friendly and anti-trade union attitude in these three zones. They were promised the homeland state will rein in trade unions and investors were assured cheap and ready to work employees (Sitas 1990; 1997). These promises were indeed fulfilled during apartheid mostly through Bantustan KFC which also provided start-up capital for investors. By 1990s Taiwanese investors owned a significant amount of land (real estate) in Newcastle (Hart 2002). The Bantustan regime in KwaZulu reined in on trade unions, and related popular resistance to apartheid and racial Fordism (Kaplinsky 1993; Sitas 1997). In the aftermath of the launch of COSATU, the KwaZulu Bantustan mobilized through Zulu nationalism to establish a counter trade union federation UWUSA, which mobilized against strikes, industrial action around the slogan '*half a loaf is better than nothing*'. This opposition to militant trade union and related civil activism translated in KwaZulu Bantustan sponsored violence in these areas (Bennett 1988; Howe 1989; Ruff 1993; Bonnin 1997). Firstly in Ladysmith-Ezakheni during late 1980s and early 1990s, moving to Newcastle-Madadeni/Osizweni in early 1990s lastly to Isithebe just prior 1994 elections. These tensions and violence were compounded by Inkatha's opposition and thwarting of the ANC aligned United Democratic Front (UDF).

Most of these investors were small-scale industrialists, none of which commanded international operation of any major scale. Hart (2002:2) asserts that these (small-scale) Taiwanese investors were driven out of Taiwan by rising wages, rents, and escalating exchange rates, conditions created by the stunning pace of their own industrial investment and export drive. Similar growth and rise in wages, investment and exchange rates were synonymous across the Asian Tiger economies, viz. South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. These investors were also driven out by quotas on Chinese exports to USA and Europe initially imposed in GATT and subsequently WTO. Most of these saw South Africa as an opportunity to bypass these limitations, especially after the AGOA trade deal. Others also saw South Africa as a door to the rest of Africa.

One of the factors highlighted in Hart's (2002) argument of contradictions of disabling globalization is the mere fact that while these

investors were attracted by Bantustan surrogates of apartheid regime and authorities of white towns during apartheid, post 1996, especially in Ladysmith and Newcastle it was the ANC controlled municipal councils that continued to attract these investments. This represented contradictions in the trajectory of movement politics, especially in the aftermath of government's neo-liberal economic framework which was arbitrarily adopted by government despite serious opposition from its alliance partners COSATU and the SACP. The first democratic local (municipal) councils were elected in 1996, just after the adoption of GEAR. Government had also just promulgated new legislation and policies on local government functions and operations. This neo-liberal framework also saw the shifting of service delivery from national government to local councils. Service functions such as provision of water, electricity, employment, poverty alleviation and infrastructural development were now the functions of the local state. Hart (2002) argues this coupled with the view of a South African future as metropolitan, which dichotomized desired urban versus and backward rural, formal versus informal, city versus countryside problem. The municipal areas of Ndongakusuka, Ladysmith and Newcastle represent the intertwined and embedded nature of rural-urban, city-countryside, formal-informal discourse.

It was argued by SACTWU's research director and other former local activists in Newcastle that in the heydays of apartheid and Bantustan oppression, Inkatha warlords received financial support from Taiwanese businesses during their campaigns to thwart any militant trade union activities. By the 1994 elections, ANC aligned organizations and activists saw and regarded these Taiwanese not only as ruthless and exploitative employers, but also as surrogates of Inkatha in support of apartheid violence against them. Yet, after 1996 local elections, ANC councilors in Ladysmith and Newcastle were in this contradictory euphoria of jubilation from finally wielding local power after such struggles on the one hand, while they were now faced directly with the brunt challenge of fixing their respective municipalities mostly with very little resources, with problematic local state apparatus from the previous order and most fundamentally with the new mammoth task of formulating LED strategies, IDPs, sorting imbalanced infrastructural and service allocation, while also having to source investment for local economy stimulation and employment.

It has been shown in research (Nattrass 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003; Bhorat 1999, 2000; Field 2000) that the main assumption behind GEAR was that fiscal austerity, liberal economic framework will attract investment into the country (economy), these investments will create jobs; grow the economy, which will create even more jobs as demand grows. This will trickle down to every town and growth of every local economy, translating in employment for all and poverty reduction. The reality on the contrary shows that these assumptions were not well founded. The bait was not effective in catching 'big international investor fish'. Such promise of a better future was far from materializing and local authorities in these towns were faced with having to resort to balance ideology with practical demand for their local councils. By 1997 onwards until 2000 municipal elections, it was ANC led municipalities of Ladysmith and Newcastle that visited Taiwan and mainland China to source investment into these respective areas. It was also these councilors who had to offer incentives and stimulus for prospective investors to bring investment in their respective industrial zones. Ladysmith saw from 1997 onward growth in mainland China and Hong Kong investments, while Isithebe and Newcastle were still largely Taiwanese investments.

### **Conceptualising Polarisation: Difference and Conflict as Social Construction**

The history of South Africa is intricately embedded in social polarization, divisions, animosity and hostilities by race, class and gender. These vestiges which continue to manifest themselves 10 years into democracy reflect legacies of dispossession, expropriation, proletarianisation, exploitation and discrimination. Racial polarization became institutionalized through apartheid legislation, separating people and dividing communities along constructed racial categories.

The functionalist view presents society as a social system in which every part has a role to play to maintain social equilibrium (Colomy 1990). Along this postulate, institutions of society, viz. the economy, education, religion, family, politics, etc, all have various functional distinctions within which roles are allocated to different groups. According to this view, distinctions in social class, social stratification is functional for the social

system. In the social system some roles and functions have more value to the system than others because of either their specialised attributes, because of expertise of those roles and because of high demand for those roles in society. On the contrary, other roles are not accorded high value because of their general value (Parsons 1967).

The conflict perspective on the contrary sees society as an ensemble of contradictions and conflict of interests (Giddens & Held 1982). Taking from Marxist view, this thesis sees social structure represented by conflicting interests between those at the top and those at the bottom (Rex 1981; Scase 1989). These divisions in society ramify themselves in race, class and gender. Lately these would include religion, sexual orientation, educational level, etc. This perspective takes from Marx's analysis of historical materialism and class conflict, in which Marx viewed society from slavery leading to capitalism as embedded in class contradictions and conflict between slave and master during slavery, between aristocracy (landlord) and peasant during feudalism, ultimately culminating into conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat under capitalism. In his theory of value, Marx saw workers as exploited by capitalist which he explains as alienation. As forces of production progress, so do the conflict, polarization between capitalist and worker as their interests increasingly conflict with each other (Marx 1971/2/3). Braverman (1976) developed this view and attempted to adapt Marxism to be a critique of monopoly (modern) capitalism. Braverman (1976) saw monopoly capitalism resulting in even more alienation, more conflict and more polarisation of worker from capitalist because of scientific management and mechanisation of work. Monopoly capitalism, he saw as increasing managerial power. Burawoy (1979; 1985) in his discussion with Braverman's thesis saw increasing contestation of power on shop floor, with managers increasing their power through scientific management, yet workers contesting their power through trade union action, absenteeism, and what they call games workers play on shop floor.

Social polarization is a discourse widely used in urban studies to conceptualise separation and differentiation in world cities. Most of the engagement with social polarization discourse is in conversation with Sassen's (1991) notion of looking at the city as separated by occupational status. This is what Mollenkopf and Castells (1991) call 'dual city', referring to disproportionate rates of growth between upper strata vis-à-vis lower

strata in any given society. The initial arguments of social polarization looked at the widening gap in occupational wages between managerial positions vis-à-vis blue-collar positions. Other contributors in this debate have shown that the social polarization discourse should not be generalized and singularized. Hamnett in his critique of Sassen (1991), Beauregard (1993) and Mollenkopf and Castells (1991) argue that by uncritically accepting the existence of social polarization is not a general, catch-all process, we may fail to see the existence of different forms of polarization in different cities (1996:1408). He argues that polarization is not a single, homogenous, process which operates in the same way in different places. Hamnett (1996) tries to understand varying forces, different contexts and structural formations in which different forms of polarization play-out in different cities.

I find this analysis of social polarization a very useful tool in understanding how relations of Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists with other stakeholders in respective areas of their investment played out in interestingly different ways. From this analysis one can argue that the contradictions and the conflictual nature of capitalist modes of production in the workplace and society result from socially, politically and economically constructed difference. As a result, race, racialism, ethnicity and the discourse of difference are socially constructed identities, constantly reconstructed, produced and reproduced in different forms in time and space. As Hart (2002) shows in her work how the Taiwanese industrialists often constructed notions of difference between Taiwanese work-ethic and managerial culture versus South African white managerial culture. How they constructed difference depicting Taiwanese workers as hard workers versus South African women workers depicted as lazy and ungrateful. These constructions of difference are articulated simultaneously with constructions of singularity with Zulu nationalism, exemplified by the myth of synergy, harmony and unity between Zulu values of *ubuntu* and Chinese values of *guanxi* purported by Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists in their support for Inkatha in Newcastle.

This analysis also leads one to attempt to explicate how Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists insulated themselves away from local communities, yet how Taiwanese simultaneously integrate their children into Model C schools in the respective suburbs. Social polarisation is mediated in everyday

life through perceived cost-benefit analysis of people as actors, structural formations and other contingencies in actual lived experiences. The findings will show that relations between respective local council authorities and Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists were mediated by perceived financial benefits of both parties, structural formations of whether investment was sought by the municipality or Ithala, level of financial support the Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists contribute to the political hegemony, and the financial gain of individual officers in some municipalities.

The findings will show that industrial relations characteristic of Chinese and Taiwanese industrialists tend to be acrimonious, exploitative and full of industrial conflict. The findings will show a wide gap in relations between industrialists and their workers due to poor working conditions and below minimum wage levels. The findings will also show that these industrialists are polarised not only from workers and trade unions, but also from the Department of Labour, especially the Inspection and Compliance business unit, because of their gross violation of labour laws. Construction of difference is also in context of contingent, institutional, and associated benefit levels assumed to be gained or lost. This analysis is important to consider in explaining the dynamic nature of relationships between various social formations in space and time.

## **Methodology**

This research was conducted through the use of a survey. The survey consisted of two phases, viz. qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative survey was conducted through in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders in three industrial zones. The stakeholders interviewed included municipal managers, councillors and senior local officials in investment procurement function, SACTWU's national research director, the Unit Manager of inspection and compliance in the provincial office of the Department of Labour. Other stakeholders interviewed were Ithala senior managers at the head office and Ithala managers in the respective zones and chairpersons of Chinese and Taiwanese Chambers of Business. These qualitative interviews were conducted to determine perceptions of various stakeholders on problems around Chinese and Taiwanese investments and to solicit potential remedies to these problems. These interviews also attempted to probe

stakeholders suggested possible questions that they felt were important to be included in the quantitative research instrument prepared for Chinese and Taiwanese investors.

The quantitative survey was aimed at making a descriptive situation analysis of industrialists, their firms, their understanding of South African labour legislation, labour practices in their respective firms, as well as their perceptions on operating business in South Africa. A quantitative research instrument was developed and piloted (tested) in Isithebe. The instrument was then surveyed through a stratified random sample of three areas, Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle. The sample was stratified by number of firms in the area of investment. The sample size was 56% of total population with confidence level of above 95% and error margin less than 4%. Data gathering was not without problems, mostly related to refusal of access into industrial areas sampled and firms having relocated from specified areas in between the sample selection and time of data collection in the area.

## **Findings**

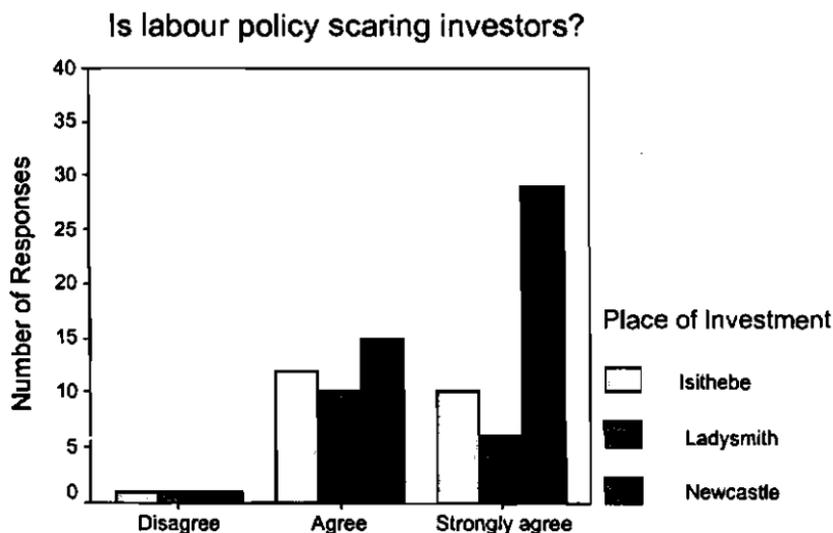
The findings show both convergence and divergence in perceptions of various stakeholders on the challenge as one respondent stated 'of balancing the desperate need for economic investment in these three industrial zones and standards of industrial practice that have been hard fought for by workers, now enshrined in our legislation'. Data show a clear divide on the perception of stakeholders on how to work out this balancing act. Municipal representatives of Ladysmith and Newcastle, local chambers of business and Chinese/Taiwanese chambers argue that attracting and securing investments should be prioritised above demands for minimum wage and working conditions. Their best case scenario is relaxation of labour laws, i.e. making amendments on the 1995 Labour Relations Act (LRA), 1997 Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), 1993 Occupational Health and Safety Act (OCHSA) and specifically scrapping the 1999 Sectoral Determination on Minimum Wage (SMWD). A councillor in Newcastle intimated during the discussions and is quoted (Hart 2002) to have urged (in some cases coerced) workers in Newcastle to accept their working conditions and wages because *'half a loaf is better than nothing'*. This intimation dates back to 1980s from Inkatha aligned UWUSA, a trade union

federation that opposed COSATU's mobilisation in the former Kwazulu homeland.

This perception is also dominant among these industrialists, with more than 70% of interviewed industrialists either showing negative perceptions on labour policy and legislation, the 1999 Sectoral Minimum Wage Determination and on trade union strength in South Africa. Graph 1 show that many industrialists thought that the labour policy scares away investors from South Africa. This is collaborated by graph 2 which shows that investors perceive high labour costs (high wages) and SMWD as main factors causing investors to relocate from South Africa. They also felt that government policy is too weak to control trade unions, saying that '*labour policy should give more power to investors instead*'.

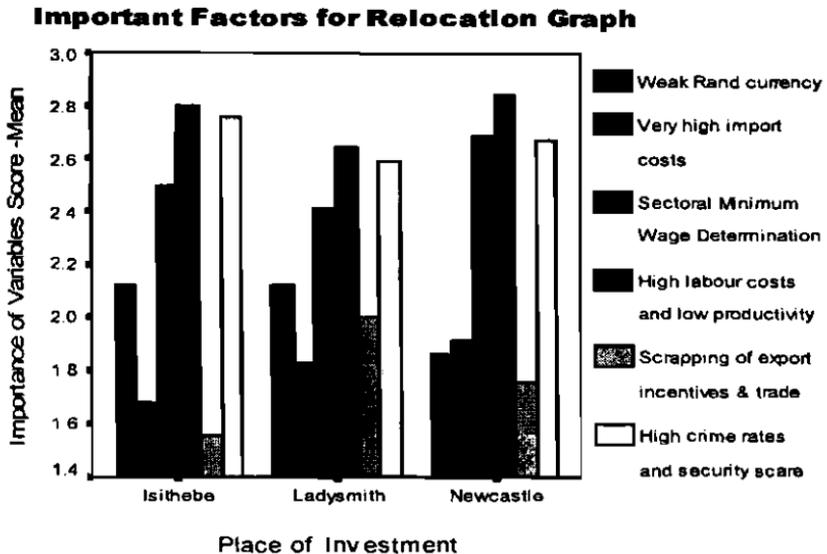
*Graph 1*

### **Perception on Labour Policy**



Labour policies in SA are scaring away investors

Graph 2



The unit manager of inspection and compliance in the Department of Labour (DOL), COSATU and the municipal manager at Ndongakusuka municipality (Isithebe industrial zone) assert that the need for investment and demand for safe and healthy working conditions and living wages are inseparable. In a television interview in 2001 the DOL spoke person Dr Zikalala, presenting the department's response to workplace tragedies in Newcastle intimated, *'often workers feel if they do complain they will lose their jobs. This must be balanced against the fact that they might die if they don't complain'*. The municipal manager at Ndongakusuka municipality presented the balance between need for investment and workplace health and safety and living wage this way, *'at the beginning people want jobs, but in reality people want to make a living... this is why after getting a job people demand good and rewarding jobs'*.

These stakeholders also had divergent views on the nature of problems revolving Chinese/Taiwanese industrialists in the three industrial zones. While the former group identify the rigidity of the South African

labour market policies and too much strength in trade unions as a major shortcoming and negative factor to investor confidence, the latter group place the problems at the failure of the Chinese/Taiwanese industrialists to follow and, or comply with South Africa's internationally acclaimed policies and legislation. The former group also asserts that the 1999 SMWD is too high. They argued that this centralised bargaining agreement was pushed by well established clothing and textile firms and SACTWU from Western Cape to the detriment of SMME and starter firms in KZN. This claim is repudiated by officials from DOL. The inspection and compliance unit manager clearly showed proof that the SMWD made two categories of standards, viz. established industrial areas classified as A and developing industrial areas classified as B. the minimum wage standard for these categories differed by more than 70%.

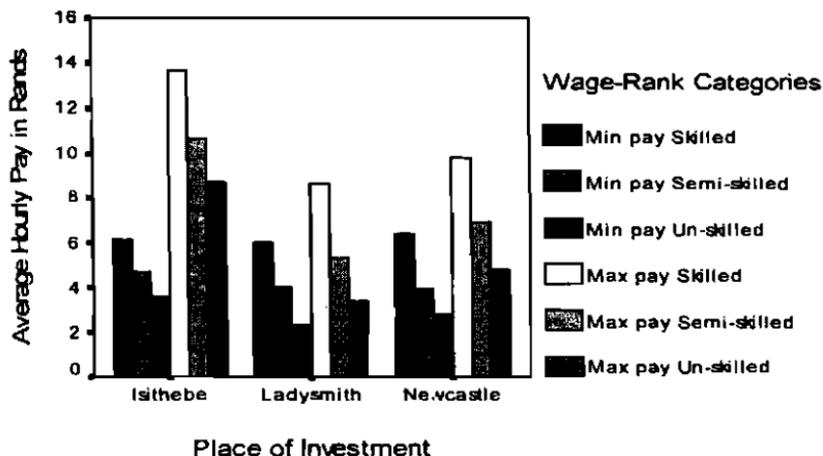
On a broad level findings show a wide gap of separation, disengagement, isolation and polarization of Chinese/Taiwanese industrialists from trade unions and labour formations, from local communities (business, social and political) in respective zones, from legislative framework in South Africa (labour legislation in particular). Interviews with Chinese/Taiwanese chambers of business highlighted a deep sense of frustration these industrialists have with trade unions in South Africa and their accommodation by the democratic state. This view was corroborated in the quantitative findings, with the majority of respondents lamenting that trade unions are given too much power. Trade union representatives from SACTWU reciprocated this frustration and animosity towards these industrialists. The national research director spoke passionately about the union's indignation toward these industries. He lamented the long working hours, unhealthy working conditions and below poverty line wages these industrialists pay to their workers. This claim was corroborated by evidence from findings on hours worked per day as well as hourly wages. Graph 3 shows that the highest paid skilled worker earns R12 an hour (at Isithebe), while there are unskilled workers who earn as little as R2.93 an hour (at Newcastle) and R3.29 (at Ladysmith). Both these figures fall below the SMWD standard of R3.63 an hour. These findings reaffirmed claims published in current affairs television program special assignment on SABC, as well as work by Hart (2002). Researchers also experienced the problem of low response rate from industrialists on questions of working

hours and all questions pertaining minimum wage in their firms. Almost 50% of respondents ignored these questions on the questionnaire while they responded to others. This leads one to translate their failure to give details on these two variables to be their failure to comply either with working hours per day (8hrs) and, or weekly working days (6). On the minimum wage questions it indicates that these employers pay less than the stipulated R3.63 minimum wage for category B in SMWD.

Graph 3

**Wage Distribution Graph**

Wage Distribution by Rank & Place of Investment



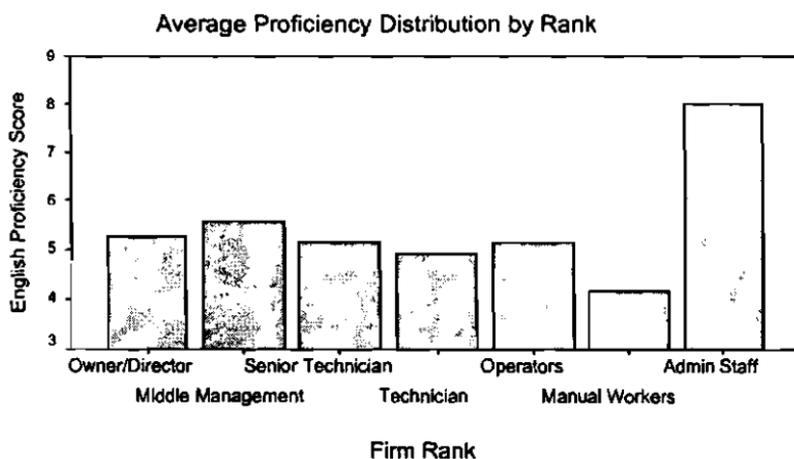
An area of major concern to some stakeholders compounding the problems with Chinese/Taiwanese industrialist was their inability to integrate into communities within which they operate their business. All municipal representatives highlighted the failure of these investors to participate in local activities, either respective local business chambers and, or involvement in community networks in the three municipalities. This point was also confirmed by senior managers at Ithala, who highlighted that *'these investors insulate themselves from communities within which they operate'*.

SACTWU and DOL representatives added that these industrialists also do not acclimatise themselves with labour policies and legislation governing productive activity. These issues further widen the gap between these investors and their respective local context and national priorities.

These gaps were corroborated by quantitative findings. The vast majority of investors have little or no interaction/communication with local stakeholders, beside the municipality (in Ladysmith and Newcastle) and Ithala in Isithebe. The findings show an interesting array of factors that explain these gaps. Data show that the majority of these investors do not have a good command of English. Graphs 4 and 5 show that most owner/managers only average less than 5 in English proficiency, far below their administrative staff (who are mostly South African white and, or Indian employees). Graph 5 also show a variation in proficiency by area of investment, which indicates that investors in Isithebe have slightly higher proficiency than Ladysmith and Newcastle. We found from the instrument that industrialists in Isithebe have the longest stay in the country and are largely Taiwanese investors, whereas Ladysmith and Newcastle have a large contingent of investors from mainland China.

*Graph 4*

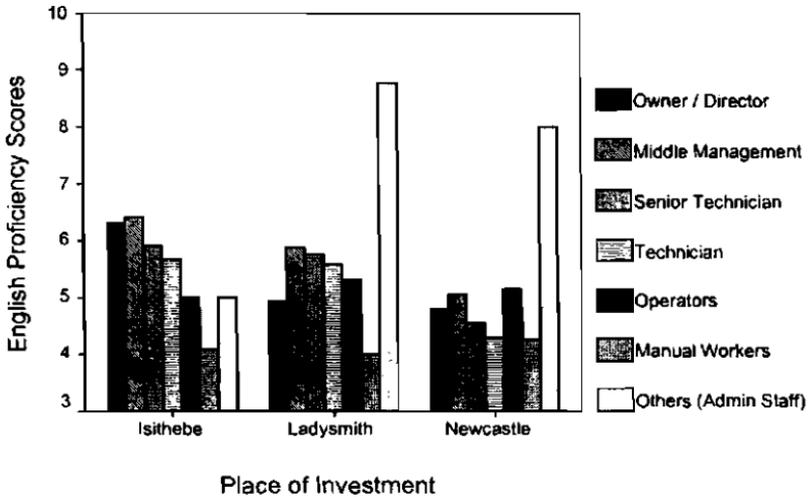
**Language Proficiency Distribution Graph**



Graph 5

**English Language Proficiency Graph**

Proficiency by Rank and Place of Investment



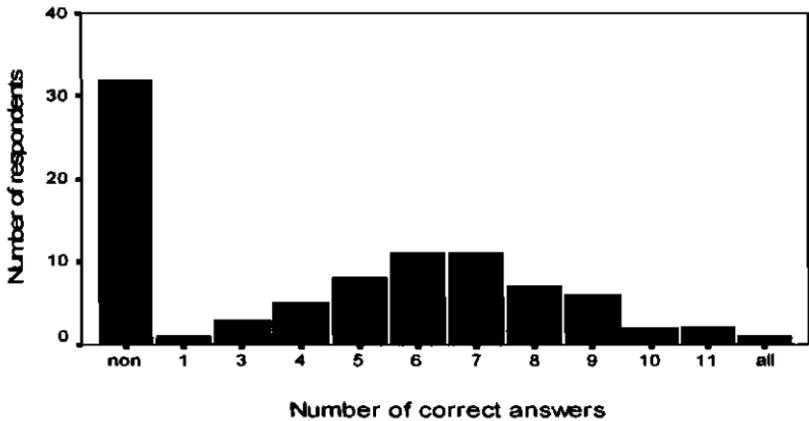
These industrialists acknowledged the limitations caused by their lack of English proficiency in communication with their employees, with community stakeholders, even with DOL. They also agreed that the language barrier is a factor that cause their insulation and supported the idea of having English communication classes as part of investor orientation programme when they come to South Africa. The language barrier was also identified as a factor hampering their understanding of South African labour legislative framework. Graph 6 and 7 indicate that almost 40% of all respondents failed to answer any of the questions listed in the multiple choice test we developed to test their awareness of labour legislation. Graph 7 shows a variation in multiple choice test by area of location. Isithebe industrialists score the highest in the test, confirming the relationship between English proficiency level and awareness/understanding of legislative framework. Many industrialists highlighted that language barrier negatively affect their relationship with employee because of poor communication. Graphs 5 and 7

show some correlation between length of stay in the country, language proficiency and knowledge of labour legislation.

*Graph 6*

### Multiple Choice Test on SA Labour Legislation

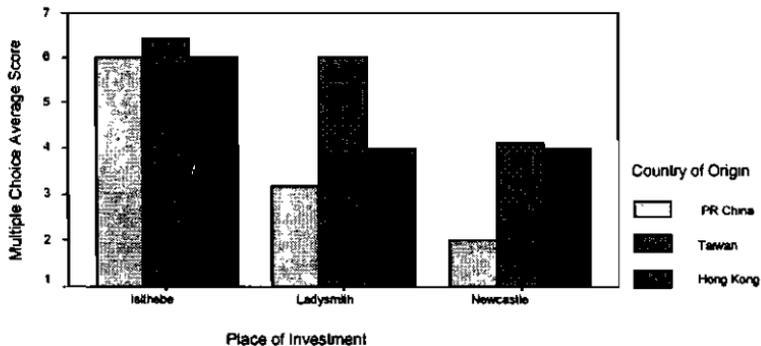
How many questions did respondents answer correctly?



*Graph 7*

### Multiple Choice Crosstable Graph

MCQ by Place of Investment and Country of Origin



We made an interesting observation during these visits to Newcastle and Isithebe. The majority of Taiwanese industrialists live with their families here in South Africa including their children. While the parents remain insulated from local integration, they send their children to Model C schools in the area. Some representatives from Ithala as well as SACTWU representative claimed that these industrialists view and use South Africa as a launch-pad into the USA and Europe. As a result many send their children to the USA (particularly) either after completion of school, or later after completion of first degree. They send their children to study here because of high education levels of Model C schools, yet cheaper costs of education in South Africa comparatively.

The vast majority of investors are frustrated by mixed messages they received from government departments. This point was also highlighted by the inspection and compliance manager at DOL. The chairmen of Chinese/Taiwanese chamber of business in respective zones bitterly complained that when representatives from South Africa, viz. the Dti, trade and investment agencies and various municipal representatives (especially from Newcastle) come to China/Taiwan to source investment, they presented a picture of flexible working and business environment which contradicts labour legislation and policy enforced by the DOL. Some industrialists lamented that had they known of the legislation post 1994, they would not have moved their business to South Africa. On a general observation, people highlighted lack of integration and the silo organisation and program mentality in government's functions and departments. Industrialists as well as managers at Ithala highlighted inefficiencies in government functions, which manifest in mixed messages which confuse investment prospects into the country. They also lamented about the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) inefficiency in formulating and processing permits for investors. These managers mentioned that these inefficiencies are not specific to Chinese/Taiwanese investments. They mentioned that in some cases they (Ithala as investment and industrial zone financing agency) have to wait long periods for permits to be processed at DHA. They highlighted that these delays contribute in their failure to secure high level investors, who prefer to invest in more efficient locations.

The findings also highlight contradictions in global neo-liberal discourse. A considerable number of investors have been operating in the

region prior 1994. It has been intimated above that during 1980s and early 1990s the Bantustan authorities offered numerous investment incentives to lure these investors into South Africa. As early as 1991 some of these incentives and subsidies were scrapped during prior to South Africa's reception into the global economy. South Africa's continued insertion into the global economy was further strengthened by liberalisation, deregulation and the sale of state enterprises to market forces. Ithala investment and finance agency, which used to be an agency of KwaZulu Bantustan was forced to transform itself into a corporate agency similar to Eskom, Telkom and Transnet. This process of privatisation and corporatisation of organisations signified a shift in the organisation of these institutions. The chairman of the Taiwanese chamber of business in Isithebe intimated that the restructuring of KwaZulu Marketing Initiative into TIK, as well as of KFC to Ithala has had negative repercussions on their investments. He states, *'when Ithala was still a government entity, things used to be easy, everything and every support we needed, we were given. But now, as a private organisation, Ithala has to ensure that they balance their own books, and when we ask for anything they require us to pay for it. We no longer receive the support we used to'*. As Hart (2002) argues 'Chinese/Taiwanese industrialists in their narration of 'Taiwanese miracle', in which they presented themselves as producers of it, they continually argued for natural market mechanisms to be given free reign in South Africa. They argued for elimination of trade unions, for relaxation of labour policies, for deregulation and liberalisation (Hart 2002:172). Similar claims were also intimated in our interviews in 2002/3. Hart (2002) argues that it was only six months later that the same industrialists were decrying the influx of cheaper imports from China, which affected and destabilised the clothing and textile sector in KZN. In our study in 2002/3, assertions of supremacy of market were made simultaneously with complaints against government's cut on investment incentives, cut of import duties and imposition of stringent monetary policies by Ithala and other investment and financing agencies.

Investors also highlighted crime as an area of great concern to them. They raised major reservations about what they consider as unacceptably high crime rates in their respective industrial zones. Some even mentioned that they would not have moved their business to these areas had they known of security risk here. Investors also felt that they are easy target for criminals

## *Sithembiso Bhengu*

because they are foreigners and some investors cannot even report criminal cases to the police when their business permits have expired or having a visit (tourist) permit. They claimed that some investors operate on tourist visa and, or expired visa because of delays from the department of home affairs in processing and issuing permits. They repudiated the claim made by Ithala and respective municipal representatives, who asserted that these investors compromise their own security because they use their operation premises as living premises, some don't acquire best security in their business premises because it attempts to cut costs.

While in general these industrialists have been accused of not integrating with local communities within which they operate their business, a few have sought to use political office to participate in local and national political landscape. Hart (2002) makes a specific reference to a Taiwanese investor, who had acquired South African citizenship. Hart (2002:165) states,

... at the end of 1994, Liu attached himself to the IFP in an effort to take over the local state. Confronted with intense labour conflict, he intended to using his political clout to transform Newcastle into an export-processing zone in which unions were banned.

Ironically, the IFP lost the inaugural local government elections in 1996 in Newcastle. By the second local government elections, Mr Liu had crossed to the political opposition (ANC), mostly offering needed financial muscle to ANC local election campaign. The ANC lost the elections in Newcastle in favour of the IFP, which was argued by some trade unionists to be the community's reflection of its rejection and protest to the ANC's embracing Mr Liu who was then Chairman of the Chinese/Taiwanese chamber. In late 2003 Newcastle was revisited with the aim of facilitating workshops with trade unions on financial education and awareness. During discussions on political developments leading to the 2004 national elections, trade unionists lamented the imposition of Mr Liu and another Taiwanese industrialist on the national and provincial lists of the ANC by the provincial and national offices, even though local and regional structures were opposed to these names being listed. One of these trade unionists stated that,

we have fears that people might still not vote for the ANC in Newcastle because of its association with these exploiters.

Organisational anthropology, dating from Hofstede (1980) has developed a cultural discourse of work and organisational structure. This discourse gained ground in their explanation of dominance of Japan in the world markets during 1980s and increasing encroachment of world market dominance by Asian Tigers and China in the late 1990s. The thrust of this discourse is that Asian flat management structure, improved lead time, and familial organisation of work reflects Chinese cultural heritage and use of Guanxi (familial reciprocity). The discourse on new forms of work that fundamentally changed productive activity was coined by Piore & Sabel (1984) into what they called flexible specialisation. Zuboff (1988) called this new form of production organisation informative work. Mathews (1989), Best (1990), Zeitlin (1991), Woods (1989) called it post-Fordism, which was seen as a trajectorial move and, or shift from Fordist mass production to flexible post-Fordism. Flexible specialisation, post-Fordism, neo-Fordism (as people like Hirst 1992; Ewert 1993; Kelly 1993; Tolliday 1992 concluded in their research) analyses unanimously saw the new forms of work (or production organisation) as result of both technological and organisational innovation. The cultural discourse developed on the basis of organisational innovation and competitiveness of Asian firms and economies. Hart (2002) states that 'network production' has become a metaphor for organisational logic of contemporary capitalism, and part of a recognition of the rise of the Asian Pacific region as a major locus of industrial dynamism in the global economy. In this discourse, cultures are seen to manifest themselves fundamentally through their embeddedness in institutions and organisations (Castells 2000). The rise of Asian economies and their network production is associated with Confucian values, imbued in images of good Chinese, timeless traditions of familial collectivism, harmony and hard work (Hart 2002:168). Nonini and Ong (1997) note that idioms of Chinese culture, family values, forms of reciprocity (called *guanxi*) and Confucian capitalism do not merely explain Chinese identity, networks and economic activity, rather these discourses and their connections to power in large part constitute Chinese identities and transnational practices. These values, either be strong familial ties, loyalty

and respect for elders, discipline, frugality and work ethic are used as raw material to critique western modernity, yet simultaneously they contain many elements of western discourses since they are produced in negotiation with western domination.

The cultural discourse presents these values as panacea and as trans-culturally transportable globally. Numerous research during the 1980s and 1990s was dedicated to researching what was mostly called 'Japanisation of work', in US and German auto industry. These values were widely chanted, specifically in the 1990s, with specific reference to Asian Tigers, which were invoked to chart the way forward for globally competitive post-apartheid South Africa. SALDRU's industrial strategy projects on various manufacturing, construction and telecommunication sectors pointed our firms and economy to these Asian miracles and became narratives for dealing with labour conflicts and global competition. In Newcastle, these paternalistic relations found political currency in Zulu nationalism as represented by the IFP. Similar to Hart's (2002) findings, these investors presented themselves as more successful than their South African industrial counterparts on the basis of hard work, more efficient forms of management structured around familial relations, with ties of trust and reciprocity (*guanxi*) with technicians (most of whom are also Taiwanese) and other industrialists. This self-presentation of success as Hart (2002) argues is closely consistent with those of academic interpreters (like Hofstede 1984, 1991, 2001; Piore and Sabel 1984; Castells 1996, 2000) who accord primacy to familial and network forms of industrial organisation.

This discourse ignores some important points, especially in relation to Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle. Firstly, these forms of production are gendered and they operate very differently for women and men. These relations are paternalistic with owner/manager assuming a father (paternal) figure and workers assuming children figures. These investors assert that these values succeed because everyone in the organisation has the same goal, which is to gain a competitive urge. Both managers and workers commit to this goal because of reciprocal benefit accrued from it. If the firm succeed, the success is reciprocated to everyone in the family. The application and enforcing of these values in the context of Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle intersect with local and national histories of race and gender difference. While in the workplace investors want to impose familial values,

expressions and politics of difference are prevalent in these areas, fermented by lack of integration and insulation of these investors from community integration highlighted earlier. On the other hand these investors present discourse of difference simultaneously with familial obligation and demand of loyalty from their workforce. During our interviews these investors expressed their management and organisation superiority above South African factory owners and workers alike. There was also deep sense of resentment and tensions on the factory floor, with a few exceptions as indicated by Hart (2002:166). The majority of investors lamented about 'low productivity' which they attributed to laziness and ingratitude of workers to employment they are offered. Hart (2002:167) indicated that women workers also expressed deep resentment not only of low wages and poor working conditions, but also because they felt treated like animals by these industrialists. While Confucian values promote familial and reciprocal relations, they were contradicted by a simultaneous discourse of difference perpetuated between Chinese/Taiwanese men to African women.

The cultural discourse is also gaining ground in South Africa under the auspices of *'ubuntu/botho'*, asserting African values of *'a person is because of other people'* (*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*) and what is argued as African value of consensus decision making (Christie, 1993; Lessem, 1996; Mbigi, 2000; Ntoane, 2002). Still missing in this discourse is analysis of capitalist class contradictions and conflict. But this discourse is continually being contested on the meaning of African values, *ubuntu/botho* and the social conditions and social structural configurations within which these values are asserted. There are also sociological engagements with this discourse, critiquing ascendance of a bourgeois Africanism, or Africanism seen through a neo-liberal perspective, privatisation, unbundling and such concepts from Bretton Woods model (IMF and World Bank), and linking working class struggles within the African philosophy of *'ubuntu'* (Ntuli, 2002; Sitas, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

Both previous research by Hart (2002) and our research show discourses of difference, divergence and separation in the operation of Chinese/Taiwanese industrialists in Isithebe, Ladysmith and Newcastle. The most significant

gaps are between industrialists and their factory floor workers. The deep sense of resentment is reciprocated by both industrialists towards their workers and visa-versa. Industrialists make claims of workers being lazy and having ingratitude, while workers lament poor (unsafe) working conditions and very low wages. As indicated above, this gap is also accentuated by how discourses of race, culture and gender difference are continually constructed in the workplace, in the respective local, social and political arenas. This is contradicted by apparent imposition of familial relations, expectation of loyalty and reciprocity on the factory floor by industrialists on their workers. Some of these industrialists also make attempts to gain political currency either through IFP or ANC to push their agenda. The success of these political manoeuvres is complex and varies according to local dynamics. The change of local political power in Newcastle and Ladysmith was influenced by several factors, including but not limited to ability of respective political parties to mobilise support for local elections, ability of political parties to utilise state power to mobilise the local electorate as well as local demarcations of these local municipalities which altered local composition of each of these municipalities between 1996 elections and 2000 elections.

The research also highlights the contradictions in post-apartheid South Africa. As highlighted in Hart (2002) and from this research. The first democratically local authorities in Ladysmith after 1996 elections were faced with challenge of resolving employment problems in their localities, provision of services and demand for increasing municipal revenue in the light of fiscal austerity and neo-liberal agenda of national government. Former trade unionists that fought Taiwanese industrialists in bitter battles now had to 'kiss and make up' with them, even attempt to attract more investors to increase employment and local revenues. It was interesting how politics were played as Hart (2002:18-26) asserts it as 'replacing of power in post-apartheid South Africa' as well as what she calls post-apartheid paradoxes, especially after the embrace of neo-liberalism. This point is significant because a generalised argument and conclusion seems to place Chinese/Taiwanese collaboration only with Zulu nationalism in the form of IFP. This point highlights Hart's (2002) notion of articulation in South African political and economic development. Post 1998, the IFP although was still the dominant party in the province, it was clear that the ANC was consolidating political power and advancing even to areas historically known

as IFP strongholds. This explains the shift of Taiwanese investors in support from IFP to ANC as calculation of those developments.

On the other hand although it is beyond doubt that Taiwanese industrialists found commonalities with Zulu nationalism espoused by the IFP, the collusion between these groupings in Ladysmith and Newcastle had specific preconditions that explain it. Our research was conducted when all three municipalities were controlled by the IFP, yet only Ladysmith and Newcastle councillors and managers colluded with industrialists against trade unions and labour legislation. The municipal manager and councillors in Isithebe had a more ambivalent attitude towards investors similar to Ithala estate in Isithebe. Earlier, the paper highlighted that investors in Ladysmith and Newcastle were sought and attracted by the municipalities themselves, of which one of the municipal managers (town clerk in Newcastle) happily mentioned that he had been to China and Taiwan more than 35 times in the last 20 years. On the contrary, investors in Isithebe are brought by Ithala estate and finance agency independent of the municipality. Ithala is the client of the municipality, which also raised tensions between municipality and Ithala over payments of rates for water and electricity and cases of improper conduct of some investors being brought to the municipality.

Lastly, our research highlights the contradictory nature of post-apartheid South Africa as seen also by the investors on the bases of opportunities and threats that simultaneously present in South Africa today. While they complained about government's policies on labour and trade unions, they also enjoyed measurable incentives on competitive rates and property costs as well as tax incentives, although these have been gradually been scrapped as South Africa fully embraced global market standards. Of specific interest was the observation of Taiwanese industrialists, who brought their families to South Africa, especially their children to get what they regard as high grade education at much cheaper rates than in England and USA. Acquiring education in South Africa is regarded as an important step in opening doors to entering America (there are a few who send their children to Europe, but the general trend is US). Industrialists from mainland China on the other hand viewed South Africa as a gate to the continent, with superior infrastructure, finance, and technological capabilities. Many of these industrialists use South Africa as marketing and head offices while actual production and operation is moved to Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi.

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Industrial, Organisational and Labour Studies Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **Informalisation of Women's Labour and New Types of Labour Organisations: The Cases of SEWA and SEWU<sup>1</sup>**

**Ercüment Çelik**

## **I. Introduction**

Informal economy, which has a historical existence all the way through the development of capitalism, has recorded an unprecedented growth in all parts of the world, particularly in the developing countries, in the era of new global restructuring. Informalisation and feminisation of labour has become one of the most crucial aspects of the changing labour system, which has transformed through decentralisation of capitalist production and the new international division of labour. These processes have simultaneously created new dimensions in defining and organising labour. The exploration of changing patterns of work and accordingly, the emergence of new types of labour organisations, organising informal workers, became crucial for the future of the labour movement. As Assef Bayat (2000:533) argues,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on research conducted in 2003 and 2004. It includes semi-structured in-depth interviews and an online interview done by the author. The author also completed an internship and joined some workshops at SEWU in 2003. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 16. ISA World Congress of Sociology, RC 44: Research Committee on Labour Movement, Session 5: Gender and Labour, Durban, South Africa, July 2006. The paper was revisited after the feedback received during the congress and another interview with Pat Horn, the founder of SEWU in September 2006.

a major consequence of the new global restructuring in the developing countries has been the double process of integration, on the one hand, and social exclusion and informalisation, on the other. These processes, meanwhile, have meant further growth of a marginalized and deinstitutionalised subaltern in Third World cities. The new global restructuring is reproducing subjectivities (marginalized and deinstitutionalised groups such as the unemployed, casual labour, street subsistence workers, street children and the like), social space and thus a terrain of political struggles that current theoretical perspectives cannot on their own account for.

The inspiration for this paper comes from the situation of the informal workers as being one of the marginalised groups in the era of new global restructuring. How do the informal workers organise as a response to their marginalisation in the new global restructuring? Though Bayat considers them as deinstitutionalised, this paper focuses on their institutionalised aspects, such as new type of labour organisations that are run by informal workers. My argument is that 'the rise of informalisation of women's labour has created a need for new ways of organising, which is leading to the emergence of new types of labour organisations'.

The informal economy in almost all developing countries is growing. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) reports that 25% of the world's working population are active in the informal economy and generate 35% of global GDP<sup>2</sup>. In Latin America, more than 57% of all non-agricultural workers were in the informal economy at the end of 2000. The informal economy in Sub-Saharan Africa employed more than 72% of the urban workforce. Particularly in South Africa it rests at 51% of non-agricultural employment. In India, 90% of workers, and in Thailand, 70% are in the informal economy<sup>3</sup>. A crucial character of the informal economy is

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<sup>2</sup> ICFTU 2004. *The Informal Economy: Women On the Frontline. Trade Union World Briefing No. 2*, March 2:1.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank 2001. *World Bank Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty: Opportunity, Empowerment and Security*. New York: World Bank.

that the vast majority of workers are women. The ILO estimates that 60% of women in developing countries are in informal employment<sup>4</sup>.

Women's labour force participation in the informal economy is an integral aspect of this paper. From the early 1980s onwards, the increasing importance of export oriented manufacturing activities in many developing countries had been associated with a much greater reliance on women's labour. Flexibility of production and the flexible use of labour force increased the informalisation of women's labour. A substantial proportion of sub-contracting in fact extends down to home-based work. Many women became self-employed by doing home-based work or street vending. Briefly, the informal character of women's labour is highly increasing. As women's labour share became one of the main characteristics of the informal economy, its leading role in the new types of labour organizations also became critical.

The changes in the labour market resulted in reducing the size of the formal sector labour force. Accordingly, the organised workforce is shrinking and trade unions are becoming weakened as their numbers decline. What used to be called 'a-typical work'-i.e. part-time, casual, temporary, seasonal, contract, home-based, piecework and unpaid family labour- is becoming increasingly typical in the labour market. The existence of the informal sector is being used as leverage against trade union demands in the formal sector. Trade unions confronted with such problems have tended to concern themselves only with protecting the rights and positions of their existing constituencies in the formal sector rather than attempting to extend their aims and constituencies and addressing the problems and needs of labourers in both sectors. This was a strong reason for the emergence of new types of labour organizations, organising informal workers. There are different ways of organising workers in the informal economy: According to Horn (2001), one way is, still, for formal sector trade unions to change their constitutions by broadening their definitions of workers, so that they include workers in the informal economy in their particular industry, in their scope of organisation. South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union

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<sup>4</sup> ILO 2001. *Reducing the Decent Work Deficit: A Global Change*. Geneva: ILO.

(SACTWU) is an example to this kind of organisation<sup>5</sup>. The other way of organising workers in the informal economy is to start new organisations specifically for particular sections of the informal economy. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in South Africa are examples for the second type. This paper examines the latter, which reflects the initiative of informal women workers in organising informal workers in new types of labour organisations<sup>6</sup>.

## **II. Informalisation of Women's Labour**

First of all, I agree with leading scholars who argue that the dualistic labour market system is replaced by an informalised labour system, which points out the informalisation process in the totality of the capitalist production system. It is an integral part of global capitalist production and marketing chains (Breman 1976; 2001; 2004, Devey et al, 2006; Gallin 2001). In other words, as Unni and Rani (1999:626-628) remark, informalisation of the labour force takes place broadly in two ways, which cover both informal and formal settings:

- 1) There is an increasing trend towards subcontracting of work whereby work is pushed out of the factories and formal work establishments into small workshops (sweatshops), the homes and informal situations. This has resulted in an increase in informal work, often in home working.

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<sup>5</sup> The Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, and UNITE in Canada also organise home-based workers. Timber and Woodworkers' Union and The General Agricultural Workers' Union in Ghana are other examples. Many other unions in different countries also assist informal workers to establish organisations or bargain for them.

<sup>6</sup> In the coming sections, the relations between informal workers' organisations and trade unions will be discussed. As it is mentioned here the focus of paper is on the latter, and not includes the organising strategies of the former. Especially on 'social movement unionism' remarks, this focus should be kept by the reader to prevent misunderstandings.

- 2) The workers, who remain in the factories or in formal work situations, are governed by looser contracts and obtain fewer social security benefits.

This goes along with the employment-based definition of informal economy used by ILO (2002). The informal economy is seen as comprised of informal employment (without secure contracts, worker benefits or social protection) of two kinds: the first is informal employment including employers, employees, own account operators and unpaid family workers in informal enterprises. The second is informal employment outside informal enterprises (for formal enterprises, for households or with no fixed employer), including: domestic workers, casual or day labourers, temporary or part-time workers, industrial outworkers (including home-based workers) and unregistered or undeclared workers.

The informalisation of women's labour was most marked over the period 1980 to 1995 in the high-exporting economies of East and South East Asia, where the share of female employment in total employment in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and export oriented manufacturing industries typically exceeded 70 %<sup>7</sup>. In South East Asia, women have made up a significant proportion of the informal manufacturing industry work force, in garment shops, shoe factories and craft industries. In Thailand it has been estimated that as many as 38% of clothing workers are home-workers and the figure is said to be 25-40% in the Philippines. A substantial proportion of sub-contracting in fact extends down to home-based work. Thus in the garments industry alone, the percentage of home-workers to total workers was estimated at 38% in Thailand, 25-29 % in Philippines, 30 % in one region of Mexico, between 30-60 in Chile and 45% in Venezuela (Chen, Sebstad & O'Connell 1999).

Home-based work provides substantial opportunity for self-exploitation by workers, especially when payments are on a piece-rate basis. Also these are areas typically left unprotected by labour laws and social welfare. In India, 96% of the informal workers are women. Self-employment

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<sup>7</sup> The research of a Washington based coalition of women economists lobbying for Third World women estimates that 70% of the labour in EPZs is provided by women. *Ford Foundation Report, 2000.*

as percentage of non-agricultural informal employment is 52%; women constitute 57% of the self-employed. 44 % of total home-based workers in India are women. In South Africa, women's share of non-agricultural employment in the informal economy is 53% according to the data between the years 1997 and 2000. Women's share of self-employment as percentage of non-agricultural informal employment is 27%. The year 2000 Labour Force Survey estimated that there were 323,000 food vendors and 122,000 non-food vendors in the country. In Durban, 61% of the street vendors were women<sup>8</sup>.

Women workers are preferred by employers primarily because of the inferior conditions of work and pay that they are usually willing to accept. Thus, women workers have lower reservation wages than their male counterparts, are more willing to accept longer hours and unpleasant and often unhealthy or hazardous factory conditions; typically do not unionise or engage in other forms of collective bargaining to improve conditions and do not ask for permanent contracts. They are thus easier to hire and fire at will. More flexible working conditions in which women work on a casual and temporary basis mean that women earn less and forego benefits. When retrenchment of workers in secure, permanent jobs has taken place, often women have been retrenched first. As both men and women have been retrenched from high income secure jobs, it has been largely women who have tried to eke out a living in various ways in informal sector. At the same time, many women have gained employment in insecure, low-paid jobs, particularly in EPZs. As Moser (1993) argues,

It is generally recognized that there has been a feminisation of the labour market as a result of neo-liberal globalisation; however, this has been at the expense of secure high-paid jobs, as low-paid atypical jobs with no security benefits have become the order of the day. As social spending has been rolled back in many countries, women have borne the brunt of this, as they have had to increasingly take responsibility for the care of the sick; the aged and disabled as state services disappear. Having to take on these responsibilities

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<sup>8</sup> See ILO ( 2002). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy*. Geneva: ILO. This document presents the data in the year 2000.

interferes in women's ability to make themselves available for full-time employment and further relegates them to part-time, casual, temporary, seasonal or other atypical work. Briefly, gender is frequently used as an essential element in the division of labour. In addition to flexible work, with the intense competition in the informal economy women are forced into less lucrative areas.

At this point, the general idea of feminisation of labour/work seems to be recognised by many researchers. But for my concern, the triangle of flexibilisation, feminisation and informalisation processes need to be clarified in order to fill in the gap in the theoretical framework, which may be a significant contribution of this paper. Firstly, according to Mies (1994),

the feminisation of labour that has resulted takes place in four areas: the formal sector in relocated large-scale manufacturing industries in Export Processing Zones; the informal sector in small-scale manufacturing in home-based work, sweatshops, so-called income generating activities such as ancillary jobs for industry; agriculture where subsistence farming is being converted to production for export; the service sector particularly in the sex and tourist industry.

However, in her categorisation, the first category is presented as formal sector, which may be taken as women's labour force participation in the formal economy. But, conversely, I would like to emphasise the *informal* working conditions in EPZs, which refers to the informalisation process in the formal industry. Thus, one point must be clarified: neo-liberal globalisation has not been accompanied by a significant increase in the participation of women labour force in the formal economy internationally. Women's labour force participation has only risen by 2% in 19 years from 39% in 1980 to 41% in 1999<sup>9</sup>.

Secondly, the prevailing 'feminisation' of labour/work is conceptualised by Guy Standing (1989, 1999). His main argument is that the changing character of labour markets around the world had been leading to a

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<sup>9</sup> U.N.D.P. 2001. *Making New Technologies Work for Human Development*. New York: Oxford.

rise in female labour force participation and a relative if not absolute fall in men's employment, as well as a 'feminisation' of many jobs traditionally held by men. The growing labour market flexibility and the diverse forms of insecurity have encouraged greater female labour participation and employment<sup>10</sup>. He uses the data from five-yearly Population Census<sup>11</sup>, where one can find the general female labour supply and interpret the rising labour force participation rate of women. But there is a need to distinguish what kinds of women's labour force are there and which form of women's labour force is leading to this rise. He also says that the informalisation could be expected to be a major factor stimulating the growth of female employment across the world.

I try to emphasise, instead, is that the informal character of women's labour force is explaining the current phenomenon of feminisation of labour. It is not an aspect that can be left aside but obviously the primary aspect of the women's labour force in this regard. *The contemporary concept should be informalisation-centred, since the growth in female employment is mainly due to the growth in women's work in the informal economy.* According to Casale & Posel (2002:2-12)

the continued feminisation of labour in South Africa is associated with rising rate of female unemployment and feminisation of low-paid insecure forms of employment. More than half of the growth in female employment between 1995 and 1999 can be attributed to the growth in women working in the informal economy. The number of informal self-employed women has increased 173,5 % between these years.

Thus, I prefer to use 'informalisation of women's labour' instead of 'feminisation of labour/work' in order to understand the process precisely. Furthermore, he explains global feminisation through flexible labour. Hereby, we see a kind of direct relationship between flexibility and

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<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that only women effected from the flexibilisation process. But this paper focuses particularly on women's labour.

<sup>11</sup> See Casale, D & D Posel 2002. The Continued Feminisation of the Labour Force in South Africa. *South African Journal of Economics* 70,1: 156.

feminisation. However, *informalisation should be included in the whole process, since flexible production leads to feminisation through informalisation*. Neetha (2002) takes a similar position - that flexible production leads to the feminisation of work through the informalisation of the production structure and casualisation of the labour process. Departing from flexible specialisation, Balakrishnan (quoted in Neetha) uses a 'pull-push' framework to elaborate feminisation of labour through informalisation of production. Banarjee (1999) also remarks that increased feminisation in India is a part of the general increase in the size of the informal workforce following the flexible specialisation process which is central to the export led development. Briefly, the informalisation of women's labour is one of the most important aspects of the informal economy debate that is an integral part of globalised capitalism. As the women's labour share has become one of the main characteristics of the informal economy, its leading role in the new organizations of labour is critical as well.

### **III. New Types of Labour Organisations**

It is important to mention that new types of labour organisations in this paper refer to informal workers' organisations, despite the fact that traditional trade unions have started to change their structures in order to include informal workers. Although this debate, to some extent, has been developing within the sphere of 'social movement unionism' in order to reorient or restructure traditional trade unions, it is crucial for the informal workers to legitimise their call for recognition and broader definition of needs of 'broader working class'<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The relations of informal workers' organisations with trade unions will be held in the later section. Nevertheless, some assumptions on social movement unionism can be discussed here: It may be assumed that 'social movement unionism' already covers the interests of a 'broader working class' or multi-issues. This theoretical perspective mentions that trade unions in South Africa struggled against apartheid in alliance with community organisations, or in other terms, social movements. This includes not only a focus on workplace issues but also broader needs of communities. This can even be traced back to Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in

The new organisations in the informal economy are called 'membership-based organisations' (MBOs) by Jhabvala (2003). MBOs, which have been successful, tend to be different from traditional trade unions in that their agenda is 'multi-issue and multi-activities' (p.214). They are intensively involved in the core issues affecting informal workers, i.e. unemployment and earnings, but at the same time, they also take up other social as well as economic issues. They tend to be multi-faceted, dealing with multi-issues and intervening both in the economy at various levels as also in social and political processes. Furthermore, they employ methods of struggle as well as of development. One of the most important of these issues is the empowerment of women. There is a fact that women workers and

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1920s. Though this argument is accepted by many intellectuals – including myself – it is questionable whether trade unions in South Africa are still following this perspective fatefully. First, it will be misleading to think that there is no need for other types of organisations, since the trade unions have social movement unionism perspective. Secondly, informal workers are missing in this conceptualisation. They have neither been mentioned significantly within the labour movement side nor other social movements' in 'social movement unionism'. Despite the fact that informal workers and their organisations are promisingly bridging the unions and social movements, i.e. 'World Class Cities For All Campaign' launched by StreetNet International in 2006, COSATU has still no clear policy on organising them or building an alliance with them. If this conceptualisation gives them space to consider informal workers either in labour movement or as a social movement, informal workers and their associations will most probably appreciate it. But their bridging role between the two needs noteworthy attention. Whatever the case may be, informal workers continue to open up the space for themselves and their organisations independently, whereas believing that they are part of the working class. Moreover, they carry social movement unionism may be more than the traditional trade unions.

For 'social movement unionism', see Lambert, R and E. Webster 1988 'The re-emergence of political unionism in contemporary South Africa?', in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R (eds). *Popular Struggles in South Africa*. London: James Currey.

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leaders in the trade unions have been marginalised. Despite some efforts to change this situation from the trade unions themselves, the trend largely remains the same as the larger political sphere continues to be patriarchal. MBOs controlled and run by the women workers themselves; moreover, their concern is wide ranging from employment and wages, to health, childcare and redistribution of land, etc.

Horn (2001) calls the new organisations as 'the new unions specifically for particular sections of the informal economy'. In Kannan's (1999) categorisation, they are the 'empowerment groups among rural and urban poor'. According to Kannan (1999:765), what differentiates these empowerment groups from conventional trade unions are quite critical from the point of articulating a common agenda for the labouring poor. These are:

- Their simultaneous engagement in what Bhatt (1997:214) calls 'joint action of struggle and development' thereby advancing their bargaining power through, among others, enhanced staying power,
- The conscious attempt to bring together a cross section on the labouring poor irrespective of their work status (casual, regular, piece-rate, waged or unwaged),
- A conscious attempt to organise the poor labouring women by addressing their specific problems and situations,
- A conscious effort to overcome the organisational segmentation by not aligning with specific political parties and refusing to become 'their' organisations.

In this frame of new types of labour organisations, I focus on SEWA in India and SEWU in South Africa.

### **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)**

The SEWA was born in 1972 as a trade union of self-employed women. It grew out of the Textile Labour Association (TLA), India's oldest and largest union of textile workers founded in 1920 by a woman, Anasuya Sarabhai. In 1981 SEWA became independent from TLA. SEWA moves in the direction of two goals: Full Employment and Self Reliance. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security,

income security, food security, and social security (at least health care, child care and shelter). SEWA organises women to ensure that every family obtains full employment. By self-reliance they mean that women should be autonomous and self-reliant, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability. SEWA organises workers through the strategy of struggle and development to achieve their goals of full employment and self-reliance.

The struggle is against the many constraints and limitations imposed on them by society and the economy, while development activities strengthen women's bargaining power and offer them new alternatives. Practically, the strategy is carried out through the joint action of union and cooperatives. Gandhian thinking is the guiding force for SEWA's poor, self-employed members in organising for social change. They follow the principles of satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), sarvadhama (integrating all faiths, all people) and khadi (propagation of local employment and self reliance). Thus, SEWA is both an organisation and a movement. The SEWA movement consists of the labour movement, the cooperative movement and the women's movement. The following 11 points are of SEWA's vision of a new society: *Employment, Income, Nutritious Food, Health Care, Child Care, Housing, Asset, Organised Strength, Leadership, Self Reliance, and Education*. SEWA members are workers who have no fixed employee-employer relationship and depend on their own labour for survival. They are poor, illiterate and vulnerable. They barely have any assets or working capital. But they are extremely economically active, contributing very significantly to the economy and society with their labour. SEWA has a membership base of 704,166 women workers in seven states of India. The majority of SEWA's members 469,306 live in the state of Gujarat in North-western India and almost two third of SEWA's members come from the rural areas of India. In Gujarat, 4.76% of members are producers; 9.11% are hawkers and vendors; 22.47% are home-based workers; and 63.66% are manual labourer and service providers<sup>13</sup>. SEWA movement consists of cooperatives, DWCRA (rural producers') groups, social security organisations, saving and credit groups, and federations.

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<sup>13</sup> A detailed membership profile can be found in SEWA Annual Report 2003, available at [www.sewa.org/annualreport](http://www.sewa.org/annualreport)

SEWA has adopted Campaign Approach for organizing; and through the campaigns, it has so far organized self-employed women from 74 trades. While organising women and supporting them in building their own workers' organisations, the need for mass mobilisation through campaigns became evident. This mass mobilisation strengthens the SEWA movement and at the same time highlights their own pressing issues. SEWA has been being part of many national and international initiatives, such as National Centre For Labour (NCL), National Alliance of Street Vendors in India (NASVI) and Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), HOMENET, STREETNET. In 1985 SEWA became a member of the IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations) and some years later of the ITGLWF (International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation) and the ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions). As a turning point in 2006 it has been admitted as a member of ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions). There has been a long and fruitful relationship with both these Global Federations which were in the forefront in SEWA's efforts to pass the Home Workers Convention in the ILO in 1996 and the Resolution on the Informal Economy in the ILO in 2002.

### **Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU)<sup>14</sup>**

SEWU is an independent trade union that represents the self-employed and survivalist women engaged in the informal economy in South Africa. With the inspiration from and assistance of SEWA, SEWU was launched in 1994<sup>15</sup>, originally in the Durban region, and later as a national organisation. SEWU was registered as a non-profit organization, although it operates very

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<sup>14</sup> In August 2004, one year after my research, SEWU was liquidated following a financially crippling lawsuit.

<sup>15</sup> It is the same year as South Africa took its first democratic elections. In other words, this is exactly the time of political transition in the country, which opened up possibilities for SEWU to shape the transition process through its own agenda.

much like a 'general workers'<sup>16</sup> union that organises across different sectoral activities in the informal economy. As SEWU writes in its pamphlet,

*the trade union is not a small business development scheme. It is a union to make women workers strong through their unity. The union is run by democratic structures which are controlled by the members themselves.*

SEWU defines street vendors and home-based workers as workers as their work is survival and they don't have access to key productive resources. SEWU aims, primarily to build unity between women whose work, which they do for a living, is not recognized, and to develop their collective self-empowerment; to make visible the work which women are doing in the economy; to secure for women working outside the formal economy an entitlement to all powers, rights and benefits which are due to workers in the formal sector of the economy, and to secure social justice for women workers engaged in all kinds of economic activity; to inculcate a spirit of trade union unity and solidarity among members of the Union and among all women workers, and to build leadership among women in the lowest strata of the wider working class. SEWU is a membership-based organisation whose constituency is composed of women in both urban and rural sectors of the informal economy.

It has a vision, which recognises the importance of women as key agents of change in South African society. SEWU's activities are aimed at providing the means for the self-empowerment of women in the informal sector, so that they may realise their potential and activate change in their lives and in society. It also functions as an outreach programme for female workers in the informal sector who are excluded from South Africa's national economy. SEWU is both a women's organisation and a trade union – it adopts trade union strategies, such as building unity and collective bargaining, in order to empower women economically. SEWU is committed to peace, and promotes non-violence in building unity and a common

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted from Mark Bennett 2003. *Organising in the Informal Economy: A case study of the Clothing Industry in South Africa. SEED Working Paper*, Geneva: ILO, p.38.

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purpose between women across political divisions. A survey done by Lund et al. (2000:12-13) shows that 75% of the members are the main breadwinners of their household; 50% are married and 33% have no other earners at home. Half of the members of SEWU who are over 65 years old have no formal education, but one in five under 35 years has never had formal education.

In October 2003, SEWU had 2295 members; approximately 1200 of them are manufacturing clothing and 90% of these members are in Durban. As most of its members are self-employed, SEWU differs from more traditional trade unions in that it does not use the conflictual employer-employee relationship as a primary recruitment tool. Instead, SEWU stresses a different category of benefits that will accrue to workers who are members of the organization. This can be called as organising through services. SEWU has developed a number of programmes to attract and retain members. These programmes aim at: building solidarity between women whose income-earning work is not recognised; developing negotiating skills; assisting women with legal advice; assisting women to solve problems in issues such as childcare, access to credit, and lack of benefits (maternity, sickness, disability); developing lobbying skills; developing leadership skills among women who work outside of the formal economy.

In terms of relations with the traditional trade unions, Pat Horn, the founder of SEWU, specifies that the reaction of unions operating in the formal sector, towards SEWU, was very uneven. She mentions two aspects of trade unions' negative stance. Firstly, trade union movement had some very bad experiences with organisations formed by the government that were in many cases used against them. Although SEWU is an independent union, the particular structure and aims of the organisation created negative prejudices against SEWU. Secondly, trade union movement strongly believes that the state should create job for its citizens. This rigidity of some members of trade union movement implies dissatisfaction towards the organisation of the informal economy.

To counter these reactions SEWU keeps on encouraging members of the trade unions to support their movement. On one hand, SEWU has the specific experience of creating women's leadership that the labour movement does not have. Thus it has a strong strength in terms of human resource capacity. She further points out the importance of a probable merge

of SEWU in trade union movement, which would be beneficial for both sides. On the other hand, labour movement can also assist SEWU with its critical mass of members. SEWU has partnership and close relationship with, National Women Coalition, - STREETNET, some COSATU affiliates, KwaZulu Natal Government, University of KwaZulu Natal, and with WIEGO, HOMENET, STREETNET at the international level.

#### **IV. Creating a Room for the New Type of Labour Organisations**

The main discussion on the new type of labour organisations, including SEWA and SEWU is on the identity of these organisations, whether they are trade unions, or NGOs. The challenge is to create a room for defining new organisations between the two, since their structure is based on trade union forms, while their activities has a developmental scope. Moreover, their struggle refers to 'movement type struggles'. This form is also creating more questions on the perspective of these organisations whether it is 'class' or 'community' based. Chowdhury (2003:4) argues that these organisations occupy a space in civil society that is distinct from both the so-called NGOs sector and traditional trade unions. NGOs which work with deprived or disadvantaged sections typically do so with a conception of benefits rather than of rights. Functioning methodology of NGOs, most often, is project based, engaged with time-bound programmes of opportunity creation in specific spheres. Secondly, most NGOs work closely with and are dependent for funding upon state agencies, international development agencies and multilateral organisations. Thus although many NGOs have a critical understanding of the impact of globalisation on the lives of the poor, at the level of functioning there is a certain sharing of the dominant developmental paradigm, rather than a questioning of it.

New trade unions on the other hand, have a defined focus on the issue of rights, and often use movement type struggles. These organisations claim to create entitlements where previously, there were none, and thereby to change the rules of the game. Insofar as their struggles frequently pitch them against private capital or against the state, these organisations are positioned to challenge dominant developmental practices. Kalpagam (1994) notes that worker-related activism which adopts a non-conflictual mode, and

develops outside the factory, is an emerging phenomenon. Kalpagam's study of the discourse and practice of informal sector politics remarks that for both SEWA and Working Women's Forum (WWF) in India, the fundamental philosophy is a distancing from political parties, a developmental approach (that is thrift, entrepreneurship, and credit) rather than a confrontationist approach, belief in a self-help approach, and using credit as an entry point for mobilization.

In another research, Chowdhury (2004:1) argues that a studied distance from political parties characterise the activities of new unions, such as SEWA. Their activism is frequently expressed around issues that do not have the sharp edges of the capital-labour conflict. Thus, the emphasis is on a range of issues, not only employment and wages, but housing, health, education, street lighting, water, sanitation and so on. One significant feature of this activism then is that the community, rather than class, has become protagonist and the potential recipient of welfare. Also, in the context of casualisation, where employment is scattered, decentred and frequently self-generated, it is the state, rather than private capital that becomes the sole target of welfare activism. One important reason for this change has been that a large number of women in the informal sector are self-employed, and as such the exploiter-exploited relationship is not obviously visible. It has underlined, on the one hand, trade union indifference to the informal sector. On the other hand, this understanding has to an extent, justifies the use of developmental activism rather than confrontational struggles.

At this point, it is crucial to mention that distancing from political parties is also related to their relations with formal sector trade unions. In SEWU case, COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) affiliates are mostly ANC oriented, and for the collectivity of their members, SEWU cannot be directly ANC oriented, though its founders and many members were involved in the struggle against apartheid through ANC. It is one of the barriers before SEWU to be a COSATU affiliate<sup>17</sup>. In SEWA case, some of

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<sup>17</sup> In the last year, COSATU's leadership involved in big discussions about their relationship with the ANC (in the real sense ANC leadership), and the tripartite alliance. It divided the COSATU leadership into two according to their support to different ANC leaders. This is related to 'social movement unionism' debates held in different pages of the paper. It can be strongly

the constituent units of the NCL, are affiliated to a trade union, which is close to the CPI (M), Communist Party of India-Marxist. However such unions are frequently unable to get the support of unions that represent regular workers within the same firm. Thus their ties to the parent party remained unformed. Briefly, distancing from political parties results in distancing from formal sector trade unions.

It is interesting that SEWA is a registered trade union, but is an 'association' by name, and SEWU is not a registered trade union, but a non-profit organisation, having 'union' by name. However, throughout my research, the leadership of both organisations clearly stated their trade union identity, and stressed that they are not NGOs. Jhabvala, the national coordinator of SEWA basically mentioned structural aspects, such as elected representation, and embeddedness of the leaders in SEWA institutions, which is not the case in NGOs<sup>19</sup>. She further emphasised that the cooperative movement aims the worker ownership of the means of production, which fits to the perspective of the historical labour movement. SEWA believes that employment created through cooperatives not only provides women income, but also becomes a very important part of their identity. She argues that when trade unions first started, their strategies were very similar to SEWA's; the trade union and cooperative movements were interlinked; trade unions offered a variety of services to their members, in a form of 'friendly societies'. Trade unions also organised the community; they advocated for full employment and self reliance just as SEWA does.

In terms of the class dimension, she thinks that classes are not clear like in the 1960s. Production happens through a chain of contractors. The challenge is to identify who has economic control. In SEWU case, the founders had Marxist standpoints and trade union backgrounds while establishing the union. They have been eager to become a part of the entire labour movement in the country, and have had relationships with formal sector trade unions. To register as a non-profit organisation was only for practical reasons, mainly because of financial benefits.

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argued that COSATU's perspective is becoming closer to 'political unionism' than to 'social movement unionism'.

<sup>19</sup> Communication based online-interview, conducted by myself in January 2004. The following statements from Jhabvala are based on this interview.

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The struggle aspect in SEWU is internalised by the leadership. SEWA mentions the need of formal sector unions' support, but it seems that practically, they are not willing to come together. This is mainly because of the political party links of trade unions. SEWA is following the Gandhian ideas that suggest community as the beneficiary. This is also an ideological barrier and it has an influence on the movement and its scope. The South African recent history is also influential in terms of SEWU's circumstances, since post-apartheid period has been targeting a 'rainbow society' that eliminates all discriminations. SEWU leadership follows this ideological perspective along with challenges to be integrated in the entire labour movement.

As an example to these challenges, SACTWU, a COSATU affiliate, attempted to organise home-based workers without cooperating with SEWU. Unfortunately, this attempt hasn't become very successful. SACTWU has ignored the existence and organising experience of SEWU, and this became one of the reasons of declining power and membership of one of the strongest unions in the country. The former leadership of SACTWU regrets and questions the union's decision as a failure, but the present leadership still doesn't seem to do so. Moreover, in the last years COSATU has declared its intention to organise informal workers more strongly. In 1997, the September Commission on the Future of the Unions recommended that the federation commit itself to organising informal workers and begin a process of interacting with existing organisations in the informal economy<sup>19</sup>. In 1998 the federation launched what they called the 'Autumn Offensive' to organise the unorganised, but it appeared that the campaign did not target vulnerable workers but instead unorganised core workers (Webster, 2005:392). COSATU's 2000 National Congress identified the recruitment and organising of informal and atypical workers as a major and necessary challenge. It committed each affiliate to develop a strategy for recruitment of informal and atypical workers<sup>20</sup>. In 2005, COSATU held the Informal Economy Organising Workshop with the participation of representatives of some COSATU affiliate trade unions, STREETNET International,

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<sup>19</sup> See Goldman, Tanya 2003. *Organising in South Africa's Informal Economy: An Overview of Four Sectoral Case Studies*. Geneva: ILO, p. 37

<sup>20</sup> Goldman, Tanya. i.g.e. p.38.

researchers and former leadership of SEWU. It was proposed that a project should be established towards the establishment of a new union-to be launched in June 2006. But nothing appeared on this date. It is thought that this union could be an associate member of COSATU rather than an affiliate. In COSATU's approach, informal workers must not be organised in a general workers' union<sup>21</sup> structure. It must be rather a particular union for

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<sup>21</sup> This debate is linked to footnote 10 on social movement unionism. Throughout my research it came out that some unionists and academics have an understanding of unidirectional development of trade unions. They believe that South Africa has reached industrial unions and can not go back to general unions. Hypocritically, when it comes to social movement unionism or the multi-issue agenda of trade unions, people can even go back to ICU to support the strength of traditional unions. When it comes to transition of general unions towards industrial unions, the ICU becomes an old experience of general unions, and that kind of model is not acceptable anymore. First, in the 1970s and 1980s, throughout the formation of FOSATU, and then COSATU, general workers unions brought the connections with the popular movements to the federations. At times, industrial unions in the federations tended to focus mostly on workplace issues, keeping distance with the community struggles. This caused also exclusion of general workers unions from the federations. The more the industrial unions needed to move towards an alliance with the community organisations, the more they included the general unions. This has significance when we discuss social movement unionism. Building industrial unions has developed not only by transforming the general unions, but also adding their power into federation structures. General unions developed simultaneously as well. Secondly, it should not be misunderstood that I support general workers' unions against industrial unions, but it must also be answered what industrial unions today can give to the informal workers? If it is a technical matter of organising in a sector, i.e. street vendors will fall under the retail sector – what does SACCAWU, or any other retail sector union have to give informal workers? Do they have any organising strategy focused on informal workers? Or what can a general workers union do for informal workers in our time? Therefore, what will be the following type of trade unions in South Africa?

the particular sections of the informal economy, i.e. street vendors. The problem at the core is to find the best way for such unions to fit into the COSATU structures<sup>22</sup>. In fact, after the ICFTU membership of SEWA, COSATU shouldn't be sceptical anymore.

Unlike COSATU's developing approach to informal workers' organisations, the membership process of SEWA has been challenged by Indian trade union federations both in India and within the ICFTU. A Mission from ICFTU visited SEWA and discussed the objections<sup>23</sup>. These objections are actually a good summary of trade union approach on new types of labour organisations. The first objection was that SEWA is a trade union of small employers. They explained that their members do not employ others. They either work for contractors or employers directly or indirectly; or they are own-account workers, like street vendors or marginal farmers. The second objection was that SEWA does not partake in collective bargaining. SEWA executive committee members listed 102 collective bargaining agreements that they had undertaken with *bidi* manufacturers, incense manufacturers, tobacco processing factories, municipal corporations, forest corporations and many more. The third objection was that SEWA organised only in one state of India and not truly national. In response, SEWA executive committee members from Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh talked about their extensive membership and activities. The Mission asked about SEWA finances, whether they are truly sustainable. They showed them that over 55% of their total costs were covered by membership fees. Grants and donations accounted for the other 45% which were used mainly for education and publications. At times financial matters seem to be very challenging for these organisations. Both SEWU and SEWA survive with the help of international donors. According to SEWA Annual Report 2003, 60.61% of SEWA's funds were from institutional donors, most of which are international. In spite of the fact that SEWA is the largest informal workers' organisation, its income from own fund is only 5.24%, and increased to 8.05% in 2004, which seems contradictory to the information presented to the ICFTU. SEWU's self fund is also 5%. SEWA has 7.49%

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, Pat Horn, September 2006.

<sup>23</sup> For more details see SEWA's electronic Newsletter *We the Self-Employed*, No.8, July 2006. <http://www.sewa.org/newsletter/enews8.htm>

income from the central government, and 24.3% from the state government. This characteristic opened the way to criticisms indicating the potential of these organisations to be dependent on international organisations and operate like NGOs.

Another characteristic of these organisations is that the local authorities are the main negotiation partners of informal workers' organisations. The achievements of both organisations show us that these have been possible through negotiations with the local authorities. Instead of negotiating with the central state or the capital, or pursuing collective bargaining with employers, they negotiate with other authorities, such as municipal, police, traffic etc. SEWA and SEWU act, in this regard, primarily at the local level for the rights and benefits of the informal workers.

We can also interpret this aspect in relation to workplace change. The traditional understanding of labour organisations is based on an employer-employee relationship. Beyond this relationship, 'the workplace is traditionally the site of labour organisation. It is often only in the workplace of the employer that labour rights can meaningfully be exercised' (Theron 2005:304). Who controls the workplace? The answer of this question explains the changing concept of work and workplace for the informal workers. The workplace ceases to be the factory. It is rather home and streets. The street vendors' workplace is public space, the streets, which are under the control of the local authorities. It can strongly be considered in this frame that the new type of organisations are organising in the public space, hence negotiating mostly with the local authorities. They do also collective bargaining and having these local authorities as their counterparts.

Locality of these organisations can also be discussed in relation to community, which is to a great extent rural. SEWA Annual Report 2002 shows that rural membership has been developing significantly. In the early 2000s in fact the majority, 69% of SEWA's membership was rural. Organising in the rural areas for SEWA has an aim to make cooperatives working with their own resources and creating their own leaders in their locality. But this seems that a new organisation in a new village means only one more organisation in another locality. Though they come together in the structure of federations, these federations basically provide marketing facilities in a larger geography. In terms of struggle and power of informal workers it does not appear to be increasing the power of the union as a

labour organisation at the society level. The biggest cooperative, SEWA Bank is very helpful in providing financial resources to its members. However, socio-economic benefits have reached 150,000 members out of 120 millions as the total informal employment for women in India. It means that SEWA Bank has reached only a small amount of the total women's informal employment in India, and this is mainly in Gujarat, where SEWA organises. It should be mentioned that SEWA knows its limitations at this moment, and aims to go forward. It is valuable to remind Petras's (1997) emphasis in this context, since there is always a danger of *NGOisation* of these new organisations:

The local nature of NGO activity means that 'empowerment' never goes beyond influencing small areas of social life, with limited resources, and within the conditions permitted by the neoliberal state and macro-economy.

The main challenge of the new unions is how to bring the livelihoods of the poor at a common ground with the working class perspective. Hereby, a basic question appears: what is the aim of organising informal workers? In SEWA's broad agenda, the livelihoods of the poor have been improved through services provided by cooperatives. Cooperative ideology is presented as an alternative form of work by SEWA, but it reminds us of the debates in early phases of the European labour movement. Thus the question, 'community' or 'class' stays. SEWA's main argument is the change of 'work', and they think that their strategy is a response to this change. It can be said that community is obviously SEWA's choice. In the last analysis, SEWA seems to create its own 'SEWA welfare-state' for the community. Livelihoods are connected to the workers' perspective within this context. SEWA seems to have a little interest with the rest of the labour movement. It may be discussed in a way that SEWA's connections with organisations in the international level support its position, since their agenda on women and poor, etc. coincide. Hence, community at the local level is the main beneficiary.

Therefore, it cannot be surely said that SEWA's developmental agenda challenges dominant developmental practices. Accordingly, Padilla (2004) indicates the problem of independency of these organisations. She

shows the link between government's developmental actions and SEWA's programmes, some of which are also supported by World Bank, and some institutions, such as Ford Foundation. In addition, the work of the SEWA Bank is also bounded to government rules; interdependency more likely exists. Being independent from political parties is not enough to be also independent from the government.

However, Jhabvala stated that SEWA's approach to working with the government is straightforward. SEWA is autonomous (it is not affiliated with any political party) and does not endorse any party. However, SEWA will work with government programs to benefit their members. While it is true that governmental policies and regulations have favoured more often industry than the non-desirable informal sector, SEWA's policy work and programmatic work tries to change these to become more amenable and effective for the informal sector. In SEWU case independency is put in another context.

According to Pat Horn<sup>24</sup>, the founder and the former general secretary, to remain independent as an independent union with a small number of members is not viable. This could change if SEWU become part of the wider labour movement, without disappearing. South African society is in a period of transformation, in which SEWU also takes the responsibility for the new vision of society. SEWU's cooperation with the government should be considered in this condition.

In terms of organising informal workers, both organisations have some challenges. Since the informal economy is not a homogenous entity some difficulties are present such as the type of work and the location, the gender, the culture or the race of the workers, the income of the workers or even the political orientation of the trade union can be seen as difficulties to recruit members and to organise the informal economy.

As Bennett (2003:26) states,

the demands of informal workers are far greater than those of formal workers. The issues are not that big, but the demands are more intensive that the union has to deal with it immediately; if not, informal workers quickly lose interest in their membership.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview conducted by myself in October 2003.

The legitimate question asked by potential recruits is 'what can my membership to your organisation do to improve my situation?' SEWU's response with services also becomes the way of organising these workers. But without an ideological background that makes members aware of their power to bring social and economic change in the society, short-term benefit packages increase the pragmatism of the informal workers. If the organisation cannot provide them a stall to sell their products, they can easily have a tendency to withdraw their membership.

Similar to my research findings Bennett (2003) and Lund et al. (2000) point out that one of the first difficulties is the economic situation of the workers. Since their income is precarious, time necessary to organise and sustain organisations, is a synonym for the potential loss of income. This factor is major obstacle for a lot of workers to get involved in the organisation and if they do, their presence at meetings and other gatherings is not regular. In order to respond to this problem, SEWU, through negotiations, succeeded to convince some workers to hire an assistant that will watch over their business whenever they attend an activity. A second barrier to recruit membership is the previous experience of certain workers. The common experience of unscrupulous 'fly-by-night' organisation has been a major incentive for a lot of street vendors or home based workers to avoid any future membership to any kind of organisation.

Furthermore, a trade union in the informal sector has a lack of resources to sustain the organisation and to serve the members since the income of the organisation is based on a low fee. Full-time organisers are the key to the maintenance and the growth of the organisation; since new members need to be recruited and existing members need to be serviced. But the extreme low income of certain organisation through membership fees makes it difficult to expect any financial self-sustainability. In addition, the location of activities is one main problem that some organisations encounter. A secure and quiet place close to the workers' workplace or home is needed. In some cases the local authority creates a hall in the heart of the trading community where traders can have access to organize their meetings. Finally, the political orientation of the trade unions can be an obstacle to enrol new members. For instance, the conflict in KwaZulu Natal between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party has created a real fear among street vendors, in the sense that SEWU would exclude one side.

The role of women in new labour organisations is a proper criterion to emphasise their particularity. In traditional unions, feminisation of work started to reflect on the union structures. The most common solution has been to set up women's committees and separate structures for women, but the question is whether it helped. As SACTWU organiser Rachel Visser (1992:78) remarks, these committees have been only advisory committees; therefore they lack the power to influence policy effectively within the unions. Women's problems and building campaigns around these issues have been discussed in isolation in women's committees rather than in the decision-making bodies of the unions and federations.

These issues have been treated as side issues and not as important as the real trade union issues. But in the case of new labour organisations, such as SEWA and SEWU, the profile is different. What should be emphasised is not to be at the leadership position, but to be able to create and maintain women leadership. Gender issues are at the bosom of their structure and aims. This is not because of having only women members, but of taking it as mission and purpose.

A very good example to women leadership is former SEWU KwaZulu Natal Regional Secretary Thandiwe Xulu. She was a self-employed dressmaker when she joined SEWU. Her experience in praxis brought her to the leadership of the organisation. SEWU was closed in 2004, but Thandiwe didn't stop her organising activities. She started a poultry project and founded SILWA NOBUPHOFU<sup>25</sup> Co-Operative in her neighbourhood. She is leading the cooperative voluntarily and using her house as an office. Her project got a grant from the Department of Social Welfare, and attracting even international institutions for cooperation. Similar to Thandiwe Xulu, Pat Horn a former COSATU trade unionist, then the founder of SEWU, is now the international coordinator of STREETNET. Their maintaining leadership also reflects how these organisations created a stable room for organising informal workers. Thandiwe and Pat visited Stanger on the North Coast of Durban in South Africa, to see the situation of their former members two years after the closure of SEWU. It was amazing to see that their former members still continue to organise themselves under the name of SEWU. In SEWA case, every local cooperative creates its own

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<sup>25</sup> It means 'Fight against poverty'.

leadership as well. In other words, SEWA and SEWU have the specific experience of creating women leadership that the labour movement doesn't really have. Thus, the position of women in these new organisations may help all the other unions to define clearly the mission and purpose of gender structures. This is a persuasive reason for traditional trade unions to work together with informal workers' organisations.

## V. Conclusion

In this paper I argued that the rise of informalisation of women's labour creates new ways of organising, which leads to the emergence of new types of labour organisations. I suggest that the contemporary concept should be informalisation-centred. This results in moving from the conceptualisation of *feminisation of labour/work* to the *informalisation of women's labour*; since the growth in female employment is mainly due to the growth in women's work in the informal economy.

Through the experience of SEWA and SEWU, I underlined that the new type of labour organisations have been creating a room for themselves with their own ways of organising. This room is neither outside the entire labour movement, nor the other social movements of the marginalised. But it is far from NGO or business type associations. Hence, traditional labour unions should think about restructuring themselves in order to include informal workers. The form of their inclusion can still be open to discussion. But it must be understood that this is a necessary part of their respond to the needs of the working people in a changing labour system. In such a process, the unions will benefit from the experiences of new organisations in the informal economy, especially from the power of women workers and their leadership, and their ties with the movements of the marginalised. The traditional labour unions have the historical experience and necessary resources to organise the broader working class. In fact, the new organisations need their cooperation to have sustainable democratic structures and activities. Similarly, the community-based new type of labour organisations should be more open to issues of the entire working class. The demands of the broader working class have the necessary power to break down the political party barrier. In the new structure, multi-issues can be dealt with without leaving the working class perspective out.

Informal workers are creating a new social movement themselves—both as being the most vulnerable workers and as the poor. Their vulnerability brings their demands close to those of other social movements. They are both at the workplace and in the community. Public space, street is workplace for them as their home is both a place of production and reproduction.

Trade unions should rethink their 'social movement unionism' agenda. I believe that informal workers can be a bridge between the social movements of the marginalised and the labour movement, namely the trade unions. This link provides a very valuable reason for further research.

This era of making livelihoods in various forms of informal economic activities is called by Sitas (2001) as 'new hunter-gatherer type societies'. I think livelihoods struggle seems to proceed in a polarised way. In an analogy of his conceptualisation, women continue their gathering activity in an informalised labour process and try to make their living. Men are mostly, in declining numbers, in formal labour systems and try to do hunting. Is there still something left to hunt?

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Doctoral Fellow  
Sociology Department  
University of Freiburg  
Germany  
[ercumentcelik@gmail.com](mailto:ercumentcelik@gmail.com)

# The Clash of Economic Interest: BEE's and the Exclusion of Emerging SMME's in KZN

Fazel Khan

## Introduction

This paper is a continuation of an earlier project done by the author. The earlier overall objective of that project was to undertake an in-depth assessment of the status of BEE in KZN since 1994 with a special emphasis towards Black owned small to medium enterprises (SMME). Within that context that project provided an analysis of the impact of the government's BEE policies since 1994 on black owned SMMEs by investigating – (1) the impediments to their success or expansion? (2) the sectors of the economy BEE companies were likely to thrive? and (3) what BEE companies thought government should do to help them contribute meaningfully in the country's economic growth?

Before conducting the research the answers seemed fairly obvious i.e. lack of financing, skills/experience shortages, the reluctance of big business to accommodate new Black entrants and so forth. Quite correctly, those were the answers mentioned by the respondents but the research also stumbled on something quite unexpected. It was a more deep-seated resentment by small BEE companies towards big BEE companies rather than established white owned companies.

In 2004 the newspaper, *This Day*, published an article attacking the *nouveau riche* black businessmen. However, that critique was conveniently dismissed as attacks from conservative sectors of the economy lamenting the loss of business that would otherwise have been there in an earlier period. Some even 'played the race card' by suggesting that it was racism on the part

of the white business establishment and white working class males excluded from a transforming economy. Those who suggested these reasons, tended to overlook the complexity of the problem, and precluded a critical examination of a phenomenon were few Black businessman dominated much of the highly publicised BEE deals post 1994. This paper investigates the reasons of the resentment that small scale BEE players have towards those whom they perceive as having unfairly benefited from BEE deals since 1994. In other words, the paper calls for a broader based BEE strategy.

## Background

The *Sunday Times* reported that the combined wealth of millionaires in South Africa is approximately US\$25 000 million. It further reported that the increase in these millionaires is a 'thanks to the scores of upcoming Black businessmen in the country' (*Sunday Times* 7:07:04). Empowerdex, the BEE research consultants, reported that Patrick Motsepe, Saki Macozoma, Cyril Ramaphosa, Mzi Khumalo and Tokyo Sexwale are some of the richest and most influential businesspeople in the country. Ntombikanina Malinga, in her article entitled 'A growing gap between the black elite and the black masses: Don't confuse a consumer elite with a capitalist elite', eloquently says that,

... the BEE programme has managed to accelerate to the capitalist class a few black people (e.g. Cyril Ramaphosa, Mzi Khumalo, Patrice Motsepe and Tokyo Sexwale to name but a few examples). As Zolisa Soji put it [*Business Report Contributor*] '.... for the black masses, the BEE programme is a fantasy that is lived out by those with the right political connections'<sup>1</sup>.

In December of 2004 the *Sowetan* published an article headlined 'Fat cats take the loot' in reference to the small number of a few very rich 'tycoons' that were apparently monopolising most BEE deals. Southall using more or less the same argument as Malinga that the current outrage by BEE critics

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.busrep.co.za/inex.php?fSectionId=553&fArticleId=2335831>

*Fazel Khan*

had been provoked by a number of ... transactions [which] would promote elite enrichment at the cost of broad-based empowerment ... (Southall 2005:175).

Southall points out that what particularly incensed the general public, and started the debate on 'elite' BEE, was the two major bank deals that were done in 2004. Till then public sentiment had been supportive of such BEE deals. However, it became sceptical of their value in transforming the economic landscape so that more Blacks would be in charge of the 'commanding heights of the economy'. The two deals in question involved Standard Bank and ABSA, the two largest banks in the country. The first deal involved Standard Bank,

whereby it would sell a ten percent stake in its South African Operations to Black partners in what would be one of the largest BEE deal concluded so far .... What attracted most attention was that ... 40% [of the 10%] would go to consortium led by Saki Macozoma and Cyril Ramaphosa (Southall 2005).

And the second deal,

involved the R20 billion purchase of 50.1 per cent shares in ABSA which would directly involve the Batho Bonke consortium, led by Tokyo Sexwale and indirectly, the Ubuntu-Batho consortium, led by Patrice Motsepe (Southall 2005).

As mentioned above, these individuals are some of the richest businessmen in the country. In fact all four appeared in the *Sunday Times* Rich List published in September of 2006. *The Sunday Times* Rich list ranked Patrice Motsepe as the 4<sup>th</sup> richest South African with an estimated wealth of R7,9-billion that is after the British/Indian Tycoon Mittal of Mittal Steel (formerly ISCOR) at R14.6 billion, Nicky Oppenheimer (R14-billion) and the Rupert family (R8.5 billion).

Many have lamented the close relationship between senior politicians/retired government officials and major empowerment deals. In recent months the media has begun to refer to the phenomenon as the

'revolving door of business and politics'. For example, in late 2005 Andile Ngcaba, former Department of Communications director general, who a couple of months after leaving his post, a company that he was involved with, Data's Internet Solutions, was chosen as the government's sole Internet Service Provider (ISP). In fact, he was the chairperson-designate of Data's Internet Solutions it had won the contract. He subsequently became the chair of the DiData, an established Information Technology company with the expertise to execute the contract but lacking a credible BEE partner, which eventually merged with Data's Internet Solutions through a BEE deal. The insidiousness of the whole deal raises the question of ethics because

[Andile] Ngcaba's arrival at DiData reignited debate around the revolving door between the government and business.[Because] before quitting the government, he played a significant role in constructing legislation in the technology and telecommunications fields that directly affected DiData and Internet Solutions and the profits they can make (*Mail and Guardian* 29:08:05).

Other personalities are of course Cyril Ramaphosa former ANC Secretary General, Tokyo Sexwale is a former premier of Gauteng, and Saki Macozoma is still a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Many others are also related to people who hold senior positions in the ruling party, one example is the former Director of Public Prosecution, Bulelani Ngcuka, husband of the deputy president of the country, who also recently secured a tender to buy a 31 percent interest in Lancewood Cheese, a leading player in the dairy industry through a BEE deal.

As public anger increase because of what was perceived as cronyism senior figures in the ruling and government like ANC secretary general Kgalema Motlanthe, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, and Zwelinzima Vavi also echoed the public sentiment. Jeremy Cronin deputy general secretary of the SACP was quoted criticizing 'the greed of [these] BEE-llionaires' (Southall 2005: 177). The anger, suspicion, and the perceived close relationship between business and politics is not misplaced considering that in the National Executive Committee of the ANC has at least five members that were mentioned in the Sunday Times Rich List. For example Saki Macozoma was ranked 35th on the list; Cyril Ramaphosa, 36th; Popo

Molefe, 64th; Mohammed Valli Moosa, 65th; and Smuts Ngonyama, the head of President Thabo Mbeki's Luthuli House office, whose Elephant Consortium is ranked fifth on the list (*Mail and Guardian* 06:08:06).

Moreover, these perceptions (of cronyism, corruption etc) should be understood in the context of the material conditions in which the majority of Black South Africans still find themselves living. The criticism is better understood in a climate where the national unemployment rate is 40%, in black townships it is sometimes as high as 70%.

The intellectual elite also had much to criticize about those BEE deals. Their criticism though a more sophisticated was no less damning. For example, financial reporters at *Finance Week* criticised some of the BEE deals made in the last eleven years because:

- *Most of the deals were not broad-based.* Again the gist of this argument was that these deals only involved high profile individuals from Gauteng, with close business and political ties with the elites running corporate South Africa.
- *JSE based deals.* They involved equity of large mining companies and mining houses, yet did not meaningfully involve small to medium enterprises that are more dynamic and contribute to employment creation.
- *Leveraged Buyouts.* These deals were essentially leveraged buyouts, in that the BEE partners essentially bought into the business without putting up capital. Thus, partners were more likely to be chosen for their closeness to powerful politicians who could grease the ways to lucrative government tenders (*Finance Week* 13:04:05).

Shouldn't we step back a minute and consider whether the BEE concept itself is important to South Africa? Or rather should the government spend more time 'redistributing the cake' instead of making more cake? The answers are obvious. In fact, this paper assumes that it's imperative upon government to implement strategies that ensure that the majority of South Africans are involved in the mainstream economy, especially for population groups that were previously systematically excluded. The debate around 'Affirmative Action' and/or BEE has been explored before by many thinkers, giving various perspectives, and none have clearly argued against

the moral underpinning of ensuring that policies to redress the inequities of the apartheid should be pursued.

Therefore, if BEE is not 'broad-based' – not seen to benefit as many people as possible and only benefits a few individuals – those left out are surely to feel that their historical grievances have been unfulfilled. History is littered with examples of newly independent states that neglected the aspirations of a rising middle class much to the nation's detriment. In Uganda Idi Amin kicked out Asian businessmen so that his army cronies could help themselves to the spoils and recently in Zimbabwe, where disgruntled war veterans, illegally took over white-owned farmers then proceeded to plunge the country into an economic abyss. It can be argued that the root causes of the strife mentioned above are a result of a black elite that marginalised other emerging entrepreneurs. The anger and resentment of this marginalised group posed a threat to the government and thus scapegoats had to be found in the form of minority groups i.e. whites or East Asians. In other words, the unrealised expectations of the majority of the people are a political time bomb.

### **Theory of 'broad-based' Empowerment**

This article assumes that it is imperative upon government to implement strategies that ensure that the majority of South Africans are involved in the mainstream economy, especially for population groups that were previously systematically excluded. Therefore, if BEE is not 'broad-based' – is not seen to benefit as many people as possible and only benefits a few individuals – those left out are surely to feel that their historical grievances have been unfulfilled.

The question is if it is imperative for BEE to be part of the national policy then how should it be implemented? Steven Friedman (1993) provides an appropriate conceptual basis for an understanding of empowerment. He defines empowerment as '*an alternative development, which places emphasis on the improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood of the excluded majority*'. He further argues that empowerment is an alternative development because it aims to redress the historical process of systemic disempowerment or exclusion of the vast majority of people from economic and political power. He believes that disempowerment denies the majority of

'human flourishing' as their lives are characterised by hunger, poor health, poor education, backbreaking labour, a constant fear of dispossession, and chaotic social relations. For Friedman, empowerment aims to humanise the system that has shut out the majority, and its long-term aims are to fundamentally transform the whole society including the structures of power (in Sibeta, 2005).

Friedman (1993) has pointed out that 'although empowerment is centered on people rather than profit, it faces a profit-driven development as its dialectical other'. This further exacerbates the situation since the global economy is driven by the notion of liberalism, which makes an emphasis on the market as the primary actor. Liberalism is the strong proponent of a free market system. That is, it argues that, markets in the interest of efficiency, growth and consumer choice should be free from political interference. This is in conflict with empowerment since it places development of people as a primary goal rather than broad accumulation of profit. Hence as BEE pans out, it was important for government to balance profit, economic growth with the broad-based aspect (see Sibeta 2005).

### **BEE Legislation and BEE Charters and Codes**

The ANC-led government's first task after taking power in 1994 was to eliminate discriminatory laws and regulations that prevented the growth of a Black capitalist class. The blueprint for the transformation of the economic system is set out in the Black Economic Empowerment Act (No. 53 of 2003). There are also other Acts that form an integral part of BEE especially those that promote preferential procurement for BEE companies and skills enhancement for the previously disadvantaged, etc. The acts are as follows:

- Employment equity Act
- Skill Development Act (No.97 of 1998)
- Preferential Procurement Act
- Tourism Transformation Act
- National Treasury Private Public Partnership Project
- National Small Businesses Development Promotional Programme
- Integrated sustainable rural development programme.

However, besides these Acts, the Strategy for Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (Strategy) document published in March 2003, and the BEE Code of Good Practice noticed the inadequacies of the above Acts. The Acts failed to make BEE as broad-based as possible because their primary focus was only on the BEE share structure regardless of who owned them. In fact, there was a danger, and the government finally recognized it, that BEE as it were would simply replace the old elite with a new black one, leaving fundamental inequalities intact. For that reason 'broad-based' became to precede the abbreviation BEE.

Furthermore, the Acts also were not specific to various sectors of the economy which might differ on their specific concerns, impediments and available resources to become BEE compliant. Therefore, the government together with business and other stakeholders came up with BEE charters for different sectors of the economy. The charters are not complete, and the development of industry-specific black economic empowerment (BEE) charters in South Africa is an on-going process. At the moment the following charters have been finalized:

- Mining charter
- Petroleum and liquid fuels industry charter
- Maritime charter
- Tourism charter
- Financial services charter

Although each charter is tailored to suit a particular industry, the common thread in all the BEE charter is that they have a scorecard that have to be met by each company in their different sectors. Furthermore, the charters generally stipulate a target of 25% black ownership over the next 10 years.

'When we achieve that goal by 2014, we will have substantial levels of empowerment in the economy of about 25 to 30 percent', said Department of Trade and Industry director-general Lionel October. 'That is the critical mass one needs to create a non-racial and de-racialised economy which can grow on a sustainable basis'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.southafrica.info/doing\\_business/trends/empowerment/ charters.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/doing_business/trends/empowerment/ charters.htm)

## Methodology

An analysis of the data was based on the responses (both quantitative and qualitative) provided by 122 respondents from 122 BEE owned companies who were first briefed on the aims and objectives of the study. The respondents were in positions of responsibility (i.e. owners, directors or managers). The 122 BEE companies were selected from the 12 magisterial districts of KwaZulu-Natal. However, the drawback was that the majority of the respondents were situated in the eThekweni municipality (68), as the municipality is the 'hub' of BEE in the province. Nevertheless, it was ensured that all municipalities in the province were represented.

The study used a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (semi-interview) because, it was felt that the two methods complement each other, in that it improves the objectivity of the findings and improves the analysis.

The sample was not stratified by any particular sector such as service since the remaining questions in the research brief is directed towards finding growth patterns within BEEs i.e. to ascertain the extent to which BEEs have grown over the years in terms of their staff composition, productivity and financial outputs. However, the sample was stratified in terms of locality and in terms of the spatial distribution of economic activity across the province's districts. This ensures that the study was exploratory in nature, as it was intended to be, and provides indicators only.

Hence the research instrument included aspects pertaining to the demographic profile of the company, their composition, ownership and control of the company, the number of people employed in the company, the skills of these employees, the financial turnover of the company, the number of tenders secured and the strengths and limitations confronting BEEs in an environment of tight economic competition.

The primary research instruments used in the study were semi-structured interviews. Thus the interviewers made appointments, and during the interview filled in a standardised questionnaire from the responses of the interviewee. By their very nature the interview schedule, as mentioned earlier, contain both qualitative and quantitative data. Interview schedules were designed in keeping with the primary research questions posed by the study.

Qualitative data was categorized into themes relevant to the answering of the research questions. Although qualitative data is known to provide a rich texture to the understanding complex phenomenon, where possible these were quantified in order to form statistical distinctions in the interpretation of the results of the study.

## **Results and Analysis**

As mentioned above, a study was conducted by the authors to evaluate the growth of a broader-based BEE in KwaZulu-Natal. The analysis below does not include the results of the entire project. The results shown below were selected for their relevance to the topic above. This is justifiable because the department gave a wide mandate to the research team to obtain as much information about BEE in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, regurgitating all the information from that earlier report would be pointless and irrelevant to the current topic. Therefore, the results and analysis only pertains to the reasons and impediments thereof, of the broad-based BEE as perceived by owners/managers of BEE SMMEs. This sections first provides the demography of the participants of the survey and then proceeds to the analysis of the results.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

The respondents who (70%) were males and (30%) were females do not present a true picture of the gender of the KwaZulu-Natal population. The gender distribution of the respondents in the study does reflect that females are still lagging behind in the private sector.

### **Race Distribution of Respondents**

Of the 122 respondents, there were 62% Africans, 33% Indians, and 4% Coloureds. One respondent was White because he runs his business with an African partner. This shows that a substantial majority of the respondents were African because it was felt that they constitute 81.75% of the province's population.

### Age

The majority of respondents were below 40 years old but most of them between 30-40 years. This fact indicates clearly that good numbers of younger people believe there are dividends to be gained from being entrepreneurs. This augurs well for the future BEE in the province because the young have always been known to be optimistic and zestful in their endeavours. Furthermore, it seems a starting point in alleviating youth unemployment in the province.

### Educational Status of Respondents

The data shows that 16% of respondents had a post graduate qualification, 34% had tertiary education, 43% had secondary education, 6% had primary education and 2% had no schooling of any kind.

Therefore, 50% of the respondents had tertiary education. This indicates that respondents had high standards of education, this possibly means that the existence of high levels of knowledge and skills are important for the successful setting up, or managing BEE companies. Therefore, the results prove that the KZN BEE strategy of focussing on skills development as part of empowerment is correct.

### Analysis

Table 1: Question: Has BEE been a Success/Failure in KZN since 1994?

BEE only benefits big companies and a few individuals	18
BEE has been a success	2
BEE is growing slowly	26
BEE is reverse apartheid	2
BEE has yet to create jobs	7
BEE has been a failure	33
Don't know/No comment	15

Table 1 responses show that a feeling of disillusionment about BEE amongst the interviewees with a 33% alluding to the fact that BEE has been a failure in the province. 18% responded that although BEE does exist in the province, however it mostly benefits big companies and prominent individuals. A further 26% think that BEE is growing slowly because there is

lack of effective BEE strategies that include SMMEs in the province. Only 2% said that BEE has been a success in the KZN. The quote below (from an interviewee who opted to remain anonymous) represents a view that encapsulates the general perceptions of the respondent when they were asked to explain their earlier answer:

There are many problems in BEE in KZN. The biggest problem is the arrogance of the politicians and the municipal officials. Many of them are corrupt and look after their brothers and sisters, they give them tenders and in the end all of them get eggs in their faces, but they continue to do it. I have tried to get work from the Department of Public Works, put my company in the data base; they said they will call to give me chances. They called to tell me that my time will come. I called them. They told me to come and check the Tenders that were on the walls. I went, I saw and I tendered. I paid a consultant to help me fill the forms, he did it well, but people told me that I should know how to fill the forms. No one called again, I went to the office, and a few Indian guys were there, talking to the manager. he told me to wait, I waited for over half an hour, I knocked on the door, he told me in isiZulu that he was busy and I must wait. Then I left. I know at least six people in Umlazi who got tenders. These people know nothing, they have no skills, but they get the tenders. How come? I have got nothing, but I have skills, then I approached some companies in Westmead, I told them what I can, they gave me a chance, they were happy. These are White companies, but they do not see me as an African contractor, they see me as someone who can do the job well and cheap. If the government gave me a chance, I could create more jobs, train people, make more businessmen, they have done nothing for me.

It can be seen that although there is a stronger positive feeling regarding the question whether BEE in KZN is growing or in decline, the reasons given for the response has revealed more negative than positive outcomes. Especially, with regards to the big BEE players in KZN.

**Respondents were then asked the reasons for the growth or decline of BEE in the KZN and the results were as follows**

Table 2: Reasons advanced on the growth and decline of BEE in KZN

Whites stalling BEE implementation	1
It has support from the Government	3
There is wider participation of Blacks in the economy	4
BEE has a slow growth	5
Government/ANC	5
It is only urban, not in rural areas	5
There is lack of information	10
BEE is working well for the benefit of the people	13
There is no BEE strategy in KZN	18
BEE only benefits a few individuals and companies	21
Don't know/No comment	35

Again a quick glance shows that more respondents had a negative attitude towards the implementation of BEE. However, it must be noted respondents that advanced negative attitudes were more prepared to elaborate on the perceived reasons when compared to those with positive feelings. Despite that, it still should be noted that 21% believe that BEE benefits the big companies/players and a further 5% believe that the only way to benefit is if one is politically connected.

Table 3: What should Government's action be towards BEE in KZN

There must be genuine partnerships in BEE	4
BEE must be introduced in KZN, because it does not exist now	6
BEE must be monitored by a Commission or a Task Team	7
There must be research on BEE	7
There needs to be good communication and information dissemination	8
Don't know	9
Corruption must be eliminated	11
There must be priority given to rural areas	12
Small companies must be a priority for BEE	14
BEE smmes should be given more contracts	16

There must be financial assistance available	21
There must be training and education for SMME	31

It can be said that the feeling and attitudes of disillusionment are clear in reaction to the question. Thus:

- The feeling that the Government must assist African business and Africans who want to get involved in business, indicates that the high percentage of those respondents who made the statement (N=21%) felt that the government has not in fact acted on this issue adequately. This could be interpreted as disillusionment with the institutions that ought to help the development of African business people (KHULA, ITHALA and the like).
- The lack of training is important as it is well known that SMME, including some of the successful ones lack training on several fundamental tenets of enterprise, especially financial aspects of the business cycle. As one of the most renowned financial providers in the province indicated:

If the government does not become more pro-active on the issue of financial training of the BEE, there are strong possibilities that both the province and the aspirant BEE companies will miss the boat. This is completely against all the legislation in place, the Financial Charter and other realities; the truth is that there are a number of very capable and ambitious business persons who can run and develop a company successfully, they are not given a chance to be financially trained on fundamental issues, like capital sourcing, capital utilisation, banking and financial realities, existing financial possibilities and the like. It is very important for a BEE beneficiary to have brilliant communication skills, outstanding marketing strategies and political contacts. If he/she does not possess adequate financial skills, the job cannot be done, because financial knowledge and information is the A to Z of a new or an established company.

(Interview with S. Njilo, AFRICA VUKANI, 23/7/2005, eThekweni).

- The same can be said of the relevance of research indicated by 7% of the respondents, as a key element in the development and growth of BEE in the province. Scientific research throughout KZN will unleash new and vital information related to the realities facing business and aspirant business persons.
- The issue of corruption and the vital effort to act against it was seen a vital cog in the development of BEE in the province.
- There was a strong belief amongst 14% of the respondents that much emphasis should be placed on prioritising small companies in their effort to further grow and develop BEE.

Clearly, the disillusionment towards BEE policies as they are being implemented is undeniable. And this is from a sample of individuals (businesspersons) that has the same interests as the likes of Macotozoma, Motsepe, Ramaphosa .... Thus their negative attitudes towards the BEE today, cannot be dismissed lightly. There are obviously not a bunch of raving Marxist radicals wanting to bring down capitalism but precisely the people who have most to gain if BEE was implemented properly.

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, there is a strong belief that BEE benefits only a very small number of companies and individuals. Many feel that government has not done enough to help many small Black businessmen who are not as politically connected as the Gauteng based businessmen. Furthermore, many black owners of SMMEs believe that there are high levels of corruption in government. Some respondents to the survey lamented the additional costs that they incurred in the form of bribes so that they could secure government contracts. There are no BEE strategies that target people living in rural areas. In fact, a sizable percent actually feel that BEE does not exist.

Therefore, BEE at this historical juncture is very narrowly focussed and implemented. A broad-based BEE will open new paths of development to large sections of the population. This was one of the most prevalent attitudes and beliefs expressed in the context of this paper. The

broad-based BEE legislation is relatively new and has passed through a variety of implementation phases. Its implementation processes need to be monitored very closely.

Thus a strategy for Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment is necessary to diffuse the resentment, jealousy and anger that has been growing over the last couple of years. The Department of Trade and Industry has seen the need for a broad-based strategy and in March 2003 argued that

our country requires an economy that can meet the needs of all our economic citizens-our people and their enterprise in a sustainable manner. This will only be possible if our economy builds on the full potential of all persons and communities across the length and breadth of this country. Government's objectives is to achieve this vision of an adaptive economy characterized by growth, employment and equity by 2014.

But how will government fulfil its objectives of 'employment and equity by 2014'?

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Social Policy Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **No Women Left Behind: Examining Public Perspectives on South African Police Services' Handling of Violence against South African Women**

**Nirmala Gopal and  
Vanitha Chetty**

## **Introduction: South Africa's Democracy**

Looking back on twelve years of democracy one can credit South Africa with many excellent achievements. South Africa has entrenched a new Constitution said by some to be the most progressive in the world. Detractors have however criticized it for being dated. The protection afforded by the Bill of Rights, has according to Mc Quoid Mason and Dada ( 1999) been influenced by human rights bills in other countries, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other protective international instruments. The Constitution is the highest law in the land, and Common and Customary law must be interpreted, applied and developed in compliance with its provisions thereof.

The Constitutional Court, presided over by world-class jurists, was instituted to interpret and defend the Constitution. Several other institutions give effect to the Constitution, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, the Public Protector, inter alia.

The Constitution guarantees and safeguards the rights, freedom and equality of every citizen, particularly women (and children). The neglect of the said rights, and the consequent neglect and abuse meted out to women and children, can be directly attributed to past legislation which simply forgot about them. Also to blame are culturally defined beliefs and practices

which entrench(ed) their subservience and invisibility. A general climate of violence and mayhem, both leading up to and after democracy, is equally responsible for the position in which women (and children) found themselves, and still do.

It is worth noting that while violence against women continues unabated, paradoxically and ironically, convictions against perpetrators have not seen corresponding increases.

### **Protections Afforded Women in South Africa**

A society can be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable people. Women (and children) who fall into this category are, as in any developing country, almost invisible in economic, political and social domains.

On the positive side, the Domestic Violence Act (1998), the National Crime Prevention Strategy (1996), the Services Charter for Victims (2004 ) and the White Paper on Safety and Security ( 1998), are all State interventions directed at reducing the exceptionally high levels of violence against women.

In addition to this, there now exists at the time of writing, a proliferation of State and non State victim empowerment strategies to ameliorate and minimize the effects of violence, and which provide coping mechanisms for the distressed.

The Victim's Charter of Rights and a schedule of Minimum Standards on Services for Victims of Crime are central to the Victim Empowerment policy in South Africa. The Charter identifies the following seven key rights which may be demanded by victims in their interaction with the criminal justice system:

The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for dignity and privacy

The right to offer information

The right to receive information

The right to protection

The right to assistance

The right to compensation

The right to restitution

Artz and Smythe (2005) argue that while the Victim's Charter represents an important aspirational shift, to what extent at a pragmatic level will it do to shift entrenched criminal justice attitudes and practices.

Until recently in South Africa, the criminal (Artz & Smythe 2005) justice system dealt ineffectively with domestic violence, particularly through the marginalization and dismissal of the severity of gender-based violence. As a result, domestic violence was treated as something that should remain behind closed doors and be remedied by the parties themselves. This view was largely reinforced by police responses, as illustrated by a rural woman's account of domestic violence and marital rape. On reporting the incident to the police she says women are ridiculed by the police who seldom believe that husbands rape. They tell women they are full of s\*\*\*\* and that they are wasting their time. She further claims that even with scars and bleeding the police send you home and tell you to sort it out with him (Artz 1999).

The Prevention of Family Violence Act (Act 133 of 1993) was the first attempt by the legislature to deal specifically with domestic violence. It also finally outlawed marital rape. The Act was, however limited in a number of respects. From a victim's perspective it limited who could apply for protection and the types of abuse actionable, while perpetrators claimed that the process was unfair and potentially unconstitutional. Only individuals who were married, by civil or customary law or those in common law marriages could access an interdict under this Act. This meant that many people in relationships, such as dating couples not living together and same sex partners had to find recourse in other, less accessible, legal remedies such as High Court interdicts. The Act also did not define 'family violence' and judicial officers exercised wide discretion in determining what behavior constituted abuse (Artz & Smythe 2001). Human Rights Watch (1997) maintain that this resulted in differing opinions between jurisdictions about who qualified for an interdict and who did not. Family violence had no clear legal meaning and was left to the determination of individual magistrates and judges, untutored in basic notions such as the cycle of violence or learned helplessness.

This then clarifies for us that regardless of these remedies and initiatives in South Africa, 'gender inequality, both in terms of popular attitudes and the inadequate service offered by the Criminal Justice System

to women, contributes to the high levels of violence perpetrated against them' (National Crime Prevention Strategy). In fact so critical is the issue that gender violence (and crimes against children) is listed as one of the seven priority crimes targeted for action by the NCPS. The NCPS is hailed as a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach to proactive crime prevention which engages Government and civil society in creating a crime resistant society.

### **South Africa's Criminal Justice System**

The reality for women (and children) who suffer neglect and abuse is that the law in action and the law in the books are at odds with one another. While it is laudable to have a world class Constitution, it is of little or no consequence to women if the judiciary, law enforcement, Correctional Services and Department of Social Welfare do not observe the 'spirit, purpose and objective' enshrined therein. In other words theoretically the Criminal Justice System has been redesigned to meet women's needs, but anecdotal evidence suggests a chasm between the two.

The Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project (HRWWRP) established in 1990 to research and investigate violence and discrimination against women in Sub-Saharan Africa, states

women victims of rape and assault in South Africa face a Criminal Justice System that is too often unable or unwilling to assist them in their efforts to seek redress. The police are often callous or disinterested in the treatment of women and the court system is little better.

Dorothy Q. Thomas, Director of the HRWWRP, went on to add that

too often, the treatment they receive when they report rape or other abuse simply traumatizes them further, without offering them any hope of punishing their attackers.  
(<http://www.africaaction.org/docs97/sa9708.hrw.htm>)

The question to be asked is, 'how much has really changed 15 years later?'

### *... Police Services' Handling of Violence against South African Women*

Bearing in mind that official statistics represent only reported crimes and are therefore grossly underestimated, a conviction rate of 8.1% i.e. 4,100 convictions from 50,481 reported cases in 1996, attests to the inability of the justice system to uphold the security, protection and dignity of abused women.

Further problems relate to the inaccessibility of medico-legal services in Black townships and rural areas.

The most recent statistics released by the Minister of Safety and Security (2006) reveal that the picture is in fact worse now. From a report in the Sunday Times it is clear that women and children bear the brunt of crime in six categories namely, murder, attempted murder, rape, common assault, indecent assault, and assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. Women and children account for 58.5% of the 558,325 cases reported in these categories indicating exceptionally high levels of violence being directed at them daily. The dire situation is compounded when one considers that only one person out of every nine who is a recipient of violence/abuse, reports it to the police. (Sunday Times, 1 Oct 2006)

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

Men's violence against women has to be understood in the context of social patterns of gendered power relations - what might be called 'the problem of men'. Men's violence against women is part of men's use of power, violence and control. Men remain the specialists in the doing of violence and violent crime. In the UK about 84 % of all recorded crime is by men; about 97 % of those in prison are men; a quarter of all men are convicted of an offence by the age of 25; and two-thirds of all male offenders are under 30 (Cordery and Whitehead, 1992). About 98 % of assaults reported on spouses are by men to women; and about 25 percent of all crimes recorded and telephone calls logged by the police are 'domestic' assaults by men on women.

Hester, Kelly and Radford (2002) argue that differences in women's positions in relation to the power structures of race, class and sexuality inform the responses to violence against women by the state, professionals and the voluntary sector. They further maintain that while women from all backgrounds are open to abuse, class influences the amount of respect a woman is accorded when dealing with professionals like solicitors, social

workers and psychologists. Radford and Stanko (quoted in Hester et al. 2002) argue that sexual violence is used by men as a way of securing and maintaining the relations of male dominance and female subordination, which are central to the patriarchal social order. They recognize that patriarchy is crossed through and is in interaction with other power structures namely those of race class, age and status regarding disability. They further maintain that these variables shape women's experiences of sexual violence and the response of the police and others. They believe that it is through challenging the patriarchal order by increasing women's autonomy that men's violence must be confronted. MacKinnon (1989) quoted in Hester et al (2002) reminds us that the central feminist explanation for the widespread existence of men's violence to women and children is that it is essential to a system of gender subordination. Much of violence against women, captured by the feminist surveys, remains outside the realm of criminological thinking about crime (Radford & Stanko in Hester et al. 2002). This they further argue is a consequence of attempting to locate feminist definitions based on women's experiences into man-made legal categories. Basically they just don't fit. They also maintain that legal definitions are drawn from dichotomies: lawful as against unlawful; crime and no crime; innocence and guilt; the good polarized against the bad. Women's experiences generally and even more so in relation to violence, are much more complex (Radford & Stanko in Hester et al. 2002). While the most frequent and routinised forms of male sexual violence are shielded from public view, lost in the discourse of dysfunctional families and female inadequacies, what does come to the attention of the public are the crimes of the psychopathic stranger, the deranged rapist or the serial killer. The attention drawn to public danger to women is not however a commentary about the gendered nature of this danger (Cameron 1988; Caputi 1988 quoted in Hester et al. 2002), only that it is dangerous for women to be in public.

## **Methodology Employed in the Study**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to:

- determine the views of the public on how violence is dealt with by the SAPS;

- determine whether survivors who reported incidents of violence to the SAPS were satisfied or not; and
- Determine whether police modus operandi relating to reports of violence had changed or not.

## **Nature of the Study**

The study was qualitative in nature. It was conducted in Adelaide, Eastern Cape, and comprised mainly Coloured, African and White residents. Two were Indian.

Interviews were conducted by the researchers with 100 respondents ie 50 males and 50 females and took approximately three months to complete. The researchers conducted a house to house interview that is they selected 'the closest live persons on hand', until the desired sample size and gender distribution was obtained using availability / convenience sampling. This method was opted for because of time, monetary and safety considerations.

Seventy five percent of the total sample comprised Africans and Coloureds (only two Indians), the remaining twenty five percent were White.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the protocols observed by the SAPS, and it's role in protecting women against violence, two focus group discussions with twenty five percent of the sample were held. Each group comprised between eight to ten survivors. Focus group interviewees were purposely selected (purposive sampling) from the larger population of 100 on the basis of having personally experienced violence, and that they had reported to the SAPS.

The purpose was to generate primary source data from survivors on their experiences.

In addition, three management personnel from the local police station were interviewed in an attempt to ascertain the protocols that police are mandated to observe in response to reported incidents of violence against women, and whether they are observed or not.

There was only one police station serving the area under study and comprised between twenty three to twenty five police personnel. Three of these volunteered to participate in the focus group. The rest were either unable or unwilling to participate.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The area in which the study was conducted was predominantly Afrikaans speaking, thereby presenting a challenge to the researchers whose spoken language is English. This difficulty would have been obviated by using field workers drawn from the local community. This was not done because of the expenses that would have been incurred. It was for this reason ( apart from time, monetary and safety concerns)that a purposive/judgemental sampling technique was chosen for the interviews.

Given the limited usage of the purposive sampling technique, the results can not be widely generalisable, and are therefore applicable to the present study.

### **Findings: Interviews**

An analysis of the responses to the interviews reveals largely negative perceptions of the ways in which police in the study area react to victims of violence.

They also reveal ignorance on the part of victims regarding the protocols the police are expected to observe, although the majority, almost eighty percent, was aware of their own rights. They expressed the view that the SAPS make them feel as though they have no rights when it comes to violence against women and believe that the duly elected democratic Government is failing women dismally.

They challenged the Government to monitor practices at police stations when it comes to the handling of violence against women.

A small percentage, (ten percent) of respondents claimed that police officers are more sympathetic towards them now than in the past. However they added that when they report violence they are encouraged to seek domestic solutions to their problems.

Transport and telecommunication difficulties are further impediments to victims accessing much needed interventions. Most respondents (ninety percent) were critical of the tollfree number provided by the police to citizens to report criminal activities. They argued that in rural areas where the infrastructure for telephone lines does not exist, the tollfree number is redundant. They further claimed that this number cannot be accessed via mobile phones.

The data further revealed that the majority of the respondents, (ninety three percent), both male and female did not trust the SAPS to protect them against violence.

All (100%) of the African respondents claimed that because African police subscribe to cultural beliefs and tradition vis-a vis women, they treat women as subordinates. Violence against women is not then viewed as a crime as one respondent reported, *'They (the police) always refer to the matter to be resolved between the two parties without taking the proper steps to punish the offender'*. Another response in the same vein was, *'The attitude is not that serious in dealing with the scourge as violence against women is normally regarded by most people in the black community as disciplining of women'*.

Ninety six percent of the respondents believed that police officers continue to be gender biased when dealing with women victims from historically disadvantaged groups as is evidenced in the following statement, *'The police are responsible. They are gender biased against black women. They favour the male species'*.

At least 54 percent of the respondents claimed that police officers themselves are guilty of perpetrating violence against their own women thereby making it easier for them to condone such violence. The following statement bears testimony to this concern, *'Even if you have a problem you do not trust them because they are the criminals themselves'*.

Almost a hundred percent of respondents strongly expressed the view that males who had economic buying power bribed police officers and in this way circumvented facing criminal charges.

Most, namely ninety six percent, of respondents reported that the police are slow to respond to issues of violence against women. These are some of the responses,

*'You just phone and get a response and the police do not come soon'*.

*'They tell you they will be there but after many hours they are still not there'*.

*'They are very slow. If a woman reports a case, domestic violence or rape, they take too much time to come and check what happened maybe two hours or the whole day'*.

*'The phone was dropped in a complainant's ear recently'*.

At least 50 percent of the respondents maintained that the apartheid era police were less sympathetic towards males who were perpetrators of female violence and they therefore felt safer. They reported the following:

*'They were very committed to their job. When a woman came to report a case they took it very seriously and they made sure that they did their job effectively'.*

*'They locked up the man who was hitting the woman'.*

An overwhelming majority (ninety one percent) respondents were unaware of the community police forum or its role in dealing with crimes of violence.

At least seventy four percent of women respondents were unhappy at the lack of police patrols in their areas.

Stravrou and Huber (1991) argue that women are particularly vulnerable to certain forms of victimization inter-alia sexual violence. Stravrou and Huber further argue that victimization of women is closely linked with the way they are viewed by their specific community. Similarly Snyman (1986) maintains where there is not much respect for women they are regarded as 'second class citizens'. A perusal of the literature that may be deemed criminal justice system related research shows that concern by feminists on the way the criminal justice system responds to survivors of violence is increasing. Arguably, in South Africa inadequacies in the criminal justice system has created an environment where the different forms of violence are viewed differently for example marital rape is not viewed with the same severity as sexual violence by a stranger. Research has shown that it is relatively easy to commit an offence of sexual violence against women without any severe consequences as sexual violence against women has one of the lowest conviction rates of all serious crimes in South Africa (Snyman 1996; Van Dijk 1996; Camerer; 1996). Offenders frequently evade arrest and conviction and continue to intimidate their victims and the victims' family. Van remove the Van Dijk (1996) points out that helping victims is often not seen as part of the core business of the police or prosecutor. Snyman (1986) contends that empowerment of the victim reduces secondary victimization, encourages cooperation with the criminal justice process, reinforces socially desirable behaviour, acts as a deterrent to offenders and enhances public support for the criminal justice system.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 4th UN Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, identifies violence against women as one

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of its twelve priority areas or critical areas of concern. In each of these critical areas of concern, strategic objectives are proposed, with concrete actions to be taken by governments, the international community and civil society including non-governmental organizations and the private sector in order to achieve these objectives. Governments are called upon to take certain actions in order to address violence against women. These actions include duties to:

Exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons;

Adopt and/ or implement and periodically review and analyze legislation to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, emphasizing the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders;

Take measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence and access to just and effective remedies, including compensation and indemnification and healing of victims;

Provide women who are subjected to violence with access to the mechanisms of justice, as provided for in national legislation, to just and effective remedies for the harm they have suffered;

Inform women of their rights in seeking redress through mechanisms of justice;

Create or strengthen institutional mechanisms so that women can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment, free from the fear of penalties or retaliation;

Create, improve or develop training programmes for judicial, legal, medical and police personnel to sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts of violence so that fair treatment of victims can be assured; and

Allocate adequate resources within the government budget for activities related to the elimination of violence against women.

Findings to this study clearly demonstrate the tensions that exist between state (police) practices and international standards on rights of women. Countries globally are grappling with treating women with the dignity and respect they deserve as is evident by the following statement by Ms. Hodan Addou, UNIFEM Regional Peace and Security Advisor for Africa, in her presentation on 'Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Settings', 'sexual violence and rape are often used as a weapon of war to torture and subjugate women and to tear apart social and familiar structures' (UNIFEM 2006).

Similarly a study of more than 1,300 cases reported to authorities between January 2003 and June 2005, found that violence against women—whether sexual, physical or psychological — affects all branches of Afghan society, regardless of the woman's marital status or her level of education or employment (UNIFEM 2006).

### **Findings: Focus Group Discussions**

The focus group discussions provided insights into the several experiences and difficulties experienced by women when reporting incidents of violence. It should be borne in mind, that though these complaints may appear trivial to those of us who are free of abuse, they create frustrations which are disempowering to women whose self-esteem and self-confidence have already taken a beating due to long-term abuse.

The responses are presented largely in the words of the respondents.

The respondents were selected as a consequence of their experiences with the police in Adelaide.

They ranged in age from 24 to 45 years. They were employed in a variety of occupations such as seamstresses, hotel cleaners, educators, ex policewomen, shop owners, casual labourers and self-employed individuals.

All had between grades 6 to 12 schooling, and were affiliated to various cultural and linguistic groups.

Three held certificates, one in nursing, and two in police training.

Respondents claimed that the police in Adelaide are biased against



### **Findings: Focus Group Discussion with Police Officers**

Unsurprisingly, data from the interviews with the police officers painted a somewhat different picture.

One respondent was critical of the manner in which they as a police service dealt with female violence, by claiming that the majority of officers are either untrained or insensitive toward women victims. He stated there are also some officers who experience tension in apprehending a perpetrator who happens to be a peer.

The other two respondents claimed that given the staffing challenges and inadequate resources within the police station, it does its best to deal effectively with reported cases of violence against women. However they had no control over what happened in cases where officers handle complaints outside of the station site.

They further claimed that all complaints are given equal priority regardless of cultural affiliation.

They also raised concerns at the lack of commitment on the part of the community in getting involved in the police forums. They maintained that although they tried to be as sensitive and accommodating as possible to the needs of the community (in terms of meeting times and venues), the response rate was very poor. They also reported that women were virtually absent in the police community forum. Even when women did attend, they made no verbal contributions. They claimed that in terms of black women's non participation, cultural orientation or pressure is to be blamed. The presence and input of women from all racial groups was minimal.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Sadly, this research demonstrates that abuse of the voiceless continues despite the mandatory introduction of legislation to protect women from abuse and discrimination.

The truth is that we are an unequal society divided historically along racial, ethnic, class and gender lines. The status of women provides fertile ground for discrimination by various institutions in the country, the police being one of them.

Complex cultural factors that elevate the position of men produce unequal power relations that discriminate against women and have

extraordinary consequences. Women and men respondents recognized that the police treat women unfairly, but the discourse stops there.

The police on the other hand are unable to recognize or acknowledge their discrimination against women since their focus appears to be on unfair labor practices in terms of workload, constrained resources and poor salary structures.

The findings clearly demonstrate the disjuncture between policy and practice. This is cause for concern especially in light of the attention that women internationally are receiving in terms of violence committed against them, and our Constitution which inherently guarantees the safety of all citizens, particularly women.

In South Africa as in the rest of the world 'no woman should be left behind'. Policy and practice are not in step with one another. Attitudes are resistant to change and violence generally, and specifically, erodes the democracy and threatens the lives and liberties of hard working, law abiding citizens.

it appears that women, particularly rural women, are faring no better now than a decade ago. If anything, the so-called rights they are perceived to hold may trigger more violence against them by men who see themselves as losing their 'power' over their women.

How can cultural attitudes, ways of thinking and behaving be changed when they have been ingrained historically?

Short term solutions would be more vigilant monitoring of police stations, perhaps by active members of community police forums, ombudsmen or the ICD; revitalization of community police forums with equal buy in by the two sectors involved; names and contact details of individuals to whom legitimate complaints can be addressed being prominently displayed at all stations; naming and shaming of problematic police stations and police personnel; an incentive scheme whereby good performance is rewarded and a demerit awarded for poor performance; protocols in respect of family violence being clearly articulated and stringently implemented; toll free numbers that do indeed fulfill the purpose they are intended to; on going in-service training for police, possibly linked to incentives / promotion. A possible means of ensuring discipline, efficiency within police services is for them to spend three months in the classroom and nine months of every year in the job. These are some of the

several measures which may enhance police performance, and renew communities' faith in the police and the larger judicial system.

In the long term, since women experience problems with violence, it is reasonable to suggest that they first and foremost must find solutions to them. A good start would be in the nurturing of offspring, especially the male children who should be inculcated with respect and love for female family members, which can in turn be generalized to others.

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Criminology Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **‘A World of Darkness’<sup>1</sup>: Polarisation of Prisoners**

**Shanta Singh**

## **Introduction**

Imprisonment, which results in the exclusive removal of an offender from the outside world, is afflictive by the very fact of taking from the person the right of autonomy by depriving him of his liberty. This denial of an individual's freedom is one of the most oppressive infringements of liberation. Secured from the community and populated predominantly with poor, uneducated, and politically powerless people, prisons tend to remain hidden sites of human rights abuses. Prisoners are one of the most vulnerable groups of people in society. The incarceration of offenders can be regarded as a binary of polarisation. Firstly, prisoners are ostracized from society, and secondly they are marginalized in society *if* and *when* they are released from prison. Many prisoners are released into the community with no homes or family to return to. They have no choice but to remain on the streets, thereby exposing them to further crime in order to survive. This lack of reintegration of the offender into society results in the increased rate of recidivism.

The mere fact that offenders have transgressed the law, often results in the belief that they do not deserve to have their rights protected. As a consequence every aspect of their lives is controlled by prison officials. While conditions of confinement differ from country to country and from one correctional facility to another, standards in most countries are appallingly low. With the public principally concerned about keeping

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<sup>1</sup> View on prison life expressed during an interview with an offender on parole, 19 September 2005.

prisoners locked rather than the environment in which they are confined, not much has been done to ease the human rights abuses. In numerous countries the soaring level of official secrecy has resulted in the effective cutting off of information about even the most egregious prison abuses. This article examines the South African prison system, with the specific intention of trying to ascertain how the dynamics of life in prison contributes towards the exploitation, polarization and abuse of one of the most polarized sections of society; viz. prisoners. Prisoners most often come from disadvantaged and marginalized social groups, such as the urban poor, ethnic minorities, new immigrants and substance abusers. Thus the escalation and spread of contagious diseases, becomes rife and the breeding ground for an extensive range of infections, such as tuberculosis (TB), bronchitis and HIV/AIDS. These may be airborne or sexual'y transmitted, as is often allegedly the case among prison populations in South Africa. Of special concern in this paper is the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, which is being increasingly referenced by policy makers, academics and NGOs. Poverty was and still is the basis for the high levels of crime among South Africa's indigent communities, which in turn impacted on the size of prison populations in the country. Overcrowding in South African prisons has therefore become one of the major challenges that officials in the prison service have to confront. Interviews with Correctional Services officials inevitably drew upon the perennial problem of space and capacity in the prisons that they managed.

In this research the researcher explores the abuses that go beyond the basic incarceration of offenders and the reality behind 'closed gates'. Prison life from the viewpoint not only of the officials but also that of the prisoner, how demoralized they are and to what extent the rights they are denied in relation to those enshrined in our legislation is being oppressed, are focused on. The question arises: 'Is there a discrepancy between the rights enshrined in the legislation and the reality in which prison officials react to prisoners?' One of the ideologies of incarceration is retribution viz. 'the guilty deserve to suffer'. This dictum may be a justification for prison officials to have carte blanche in imposing cruel and unfair punishment to inmates within the penal institution. This research also investigates the extent to which prisoners are placed in life threatening situations by the virtue of the refusal of prison officials and Government to recognize the existence of sexual relations within prison walls. Prisoners are exposed to the spread of sexually

transmitted diseases for example HIV/AIDS.

## **Human Rights Legislation**

A criminal justice system which is strong, effective, and enshrines the norms and values set out in international human rights instruments is a cornerstone in any democracy. The protection of the human rights of citizens, particularly law abiding citizens, is the single most important role of a democratic state and to this end this protection is entrenched in our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This is of paramount importance in South Africa for society endeavours to build a popular culture of human rights in lieu of a historically rooted culture of violence and intolerance. According to the South African Human Rights Commission (1998:4) there are three essential principles covered by the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. First, all prisoners shall be treated with respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings; second, there shall be no discrimination on the grounds of, inter alia, race, sex, religion, ethnic origin; and third, the prison system is afflictive by the very fact of the removal of one's liberty and should not, therefore, result in any further derogation of one's rights except those essential for the achievement of a lawful purpose. It further forbids torture and draconian, inhumane, or degrading forms of treatment and provides the right to be free from all forms of violence.

Almost six years after the April 1994 election the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons, the independent office which oversees the treatment of prisoners mainly through the Independent Prison Visitors (IPVs) it appoints, found that conditions in prisons fell far short of the stated aims with regards to basic human rights. Most offenders are eventually released from prison into the community. Often an individual entering prison to await trial for a minor offence might return to the community as a 'hardened criminal' (more aggressive and prone to violence and crime), having been affected by the violence associated with gang rule in prison. It is often said that South African prisons are a breeding ground for criminals because of the inhumane conditions and violence rife in prisons (Flanders-Thomas et al 2002:2). Therefore, over the last decade, prisons have become more difficult places in which to adjust and survive. There is a view held by some that incarceration is designed to accomplish a long term impact to the extent that

the offender may hesitate to revert to criminal behaviour. However, their images of a newfound respect for authority, greater self-control, and resolve to remain law-abiding often conflict with reality (Stinchcomb & Fox 1999: 362-363). The result of lengthy confinement often causes a deep sense of frustration, isolation, and embitterment-hardly feelings that are conducive to effective reintegration into society.

The gross overcrowding in the South African prisons does not support the promotion and protection of the basic human rights of prisoners. According to the Department of Correctional Services (2002:1) overcrowding in prisons has its own effects. It impacts negatively on the rendering of effective rehabilitation programmes, and also on the effective safe custody of prisoners. Prisoners are incarcerated in inhumane conditions. It creates an unsafe working environment for Department of Correctional Service officials. Furthermore it negatively impacts on the maintenance of prison facilities. In order to understand the violations of human rights, as a consequence of imprisonment, human rights, as well as the rights of prisoners as embodied in the legislation will be examined in this article.

Studies in the lives of prisoners require approaches that must conform to official positions and to security issues that are necessary to ensure the sanctity of an institution that is intended to keep criminals apart from the normal civilian population. For this reason any approach that is used to research such a target group must either be unique or must be an adaptation of an accepted framework that has earned a reputation for generating reliable data.

## **Fieldwork**

Fieldwork for this paper began after the arduous task of completing a PhD on overcrowding and related problems in South African prisons. One of the major factors that recurred in the literature surveys and interviews with people from across a range of backgrounds was the alleged prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the abuse of offenders within the penal institution. The regularity of this issue urged me towards wanting to understand this phenomenon in greater depth. The Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP) Annual Report (2004/2005:10) lists a total of 350 611 complaints handled by the Independent Prison Visitors (IPVs). Of this total there were: assaults-

3722 (member on inmate); assaults-4047 (inmate on inmate); transfers-45031; appeals-23652; communication with families- 33822; conditions-15904; food-13439; health care 26262; inhumane treatment-6056. Thus the most common complaint from prisoners for 2004 was about transfers, followed by communication with families, healthcare and appeals.

Department of Correctional Services employees chosen for interviews included prison officials, social workers and psychologists. Visits to the different sections, (Durban Medium A, Medium B, Juvenile Centre and Female), of the Durban Westville Prison, was initially met with a resistance from officials to respond to my questions, but who eventually agreed provided their identities were not revealed. Although prison overcrowding is no new phenomenon and a universal problem within penal institutions, frequent visits to the Westville Prison revealed a very serious overcrowding problem. This was evident in the improvised arrangements to accommodate large numbers of prisoners into the cells. Prisoners complained of the lack of basic necessities like beds, blankets, sheets and toiletries, of being assaulted and treated like 'animals'<sup>2</sup>.

While overcrowding was a glaring reality in the prison, talk about the prevalence of HIV/AIDS within it was cautious among the prisoners but more direct by officials who felt an urge to speak about its existence. It was clear that overcrowded prison conditions could easily contribute towards the spread of HIV/AIDS if allegations of persistent sexual activity among prison inmates are true. An earlier research task focused, only through a literature survey on HIV/AIDS, overcrowding, gangsterism and high risk sexual behaviour in prisons. After its completion in 2004 the researcher decided to transcend the boundary by extending my research within an actual prison. This urge was stimulated by a Ministry of Health figure of 6.5 million people infected with HIV, released in July 2004, making South Africa one of the most profoundly affected countries in the world - with one in seven people being a victim of this pandemic. The researcher focused on post-released offenders with the explicit intention of acquiring at least a cursory understanding of conditions in prisons.

A three page questionnaire formed part of the exercise to learn about

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<sup>2</sup> Visit to the Durban Westville Prison with Criminology 3 students doing the module Corrections in 2004 and 2005.

the offender's criminal history, sexual behaviour, drug use, personal situations prior to incarceration and their knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the intention of allowing the interviewee to answer open-ended questions. This allowed me to gain additional insight into their experiences and the conditions that they were subjected to within prison. Every interviewee was promised confidentiality prior to the commencement of the interview. The use of the case-study method often serves as an important instrument in acquiring such data. Individual case studies also reflect upon how individuals respond to wider societal expectations and pressures (Somekh & Lewin 2005: 33). The data for this paper was derived from an attempt to engage data gathering to present a description of the social life and the understanding of the prison environment and its impact on prisoners in the biggest prison that serves the Durban metropolitan area. Their personal histories, family backgrounds, community surroundings, approaches to life and world views provide a widely encompassing framework for intensive and extensive research on relevant issues. Observations and interviews were done on several occasions after arrangements were made with the prison officials. Although secondary sources were also utilized, the researcher is aware that these are indirect forms of information and there is no guarantee of their reliability.

### **What are Human Rights?**

Human Rights have been defined as 'generally accepted principles of fairness and justice' or 'moral rights that belong equally to all people simply because they are human beings' (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:2). Human rights belong to all people and these rights deal with fairness, justice and equality and therefore have to be protected and promoted. These rights are applicable to prisoners as well.

### **The Rights of Prisoners**

The concept of 'prisoners rights' was not often spoken of in the past as prisoners under the oppressive apartheid system were subjected to gross violations of human rights such as, hard labour for both common and political prisoners.

The perceptions at the time were based not on rehabilitation, but on punishment of offenders (based on the notion of retribution) who had offended society and were justified to be objects of mistreatment (Morodi 2003:1). In South Africa prisons are administered by the Department of Correctional Services. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, (Act 108 of 1996) as amended is also applicable to prisoners.

The recognition of a human rights and prisoner rights ethic in the legal system and correctional system is not a new phenomenon. Kollapen (1995:74) points out that as far back as 1912, in the case of Wittaker and Morant vs Roos and Batemen (1912 AD 92 on 122), the Honourable Justice Innes said: 'True, the plaintiffs' freedom has been impaired by the legal process of imprisonment, but they were entitled to demand respect for what remained'. The fact that their liberty has been legally curtailed could have no excuse for a further illegal encroachment upon it. Gordon (1996:19) postulates that the most acceptable definition of prisoner rights is the principle of the South African Bench: 'A prisoner continues to enjoy all the civil rights of a person, save those that are taken away or interfered with by his lawfully having been sentenced to imprisonment'

Prisoner rights are facilities to which they are entitled according to the law and which are necessary to maintain a minimum subsistence level, for example, the rights to protection of life, food, clothing, accommodation, medical services and legal representation are essential needs (Neser 1993:305). These rights are embodied in the Correctional Services Act No.8 of 1959, the new Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, protected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 and enforceable in a court of law.

There are varying views and differing perceptions of the actual purpose of imprisonment and whether prisoners can, in fact, claim any rights. Some members of society may regard the prisoner as an offender who should have no rights and should be punished. There are factors in prison that still violate prisoners' rights, for example the severe overcrowding in prisons. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) as amended on the 11 October 1996, perceives prisoners' as people constituting part of society and are also entitled to certain fundamental rights as legal entities, even though they are in prison. Although the Constitution

and Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 guarantees certain basic human rights and prisoner rights, this guarantee is by no means absolute.

The Bill of Rights incorporates the all-important Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted in 1957. Some examples of rights contained in the Bill of Rights that are relevant to Correctional Services are:

The right to equality and quality before the law (section 9)

The right to dignity (section 10)

The right to freedom and security of the person (section 12)

The right to privacy (section 14)

The right to a healthy environment (section 24)

The right to health care, food, water and social security (section 27)

The right to conditions of detention that is consistent with human dignity (section 35) (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:17).

Although these rights are stipulated in the Bill of Rights in theory, the reality in penal institutions is a contravention of the law as will be illustrated below. The infringement of these rights is compounded by the rapidly increasing prisoner population and makes the implementation of the Correctional Services Act (Act No 111 of 1998), that guarantees the rights and treatment of those detained in prison, a daunting task for the Department of Correctional Services.

### **The Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination**

Section 9 of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) states that everybody has the right to equality and non-discrimination, which includes the following:

Everyone, including the prisoner, is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, may be taken. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status,

ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

The right to equality and non-discrimination is one of the most fundamental rights. A person's right to be treated equally and not to be discriminated against should not be limited or affected if they are imprisoned (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:31). The scale of sexual activity in prisons is complex to establish because studies must rely on self-reporting. Giffard (1999: 36) points out that in a Lawyers' for Human Rights survey, it was estimated that 65% of inmates in South African prisons participate in homosexual activity. Sexual activities occur through homosexual interaction-creating an unrelenting social stigma to it. My research revealed that inmates are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Offenders are beaten and sexually assaulted.

### **The Right to Human Dignity**

One important aspect of the Correctional Services legislative requirements is Section 35 (2)(e) of the constitution, which states that:

Everyone who is detained, including every sentenced prisoner, has the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, including at least exercise and the provision, at state expense, of adequate accommodation, nutrition, reading material, and medical treatment.

However, the students' as well as my exposure to these conditions was interesting. Each prison cell accommodated three times the number of prisoners for which they were designed. There were up to 60 inmates in cells that were designed for only 20 prisoners. Three beds were placed bunk-style one on top of the other, with only a few inches separating them laterally. Prisoners were unlocked at 7am and are locked again at 3 pm – keeping them confined to their cells for up to 16 hours of the day with the use of only one toilet and one shower per cell. This was a gross violation of the right to inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. Whatever the purpose or reason for the imprisonment of an offender, the

maintenance of the prisoner's right to dignity is essential if there is to be any meaningful application of human rights in the prison context. It is an international principle that the negative effects of imprisonment should be minimised as far as possible. A fine balance has to be struck between the prisoner's rights and the right of society to demand punishment of the offender, and moreover that such punishment must be visibly implemented. Living conditions in prison are important for a prisoner's sense of worth and dignity. Standards of accommodation, personal hygiene, bedding and clothing play an important role in influencing the prisoner's mental and physical well-being (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:34).

The researcher's findings were in keeping with that of The Jali Commission Hearings<sup>3</sup> which revealed that inhumane conditions were being experienced at the St Albans Prison outside Port Elizabeth. Shocking evidence emerged on how prisoners, as a result of overcrowding, were locked in ablution blocks. Manager of St Albans Prison Mr Richard Marcus (SABC 2000:1) stated that gangsterism, which resulted in many assaults of both prison officials and prisoners, was rife. These assaults were difficult to prove and police investigation never resulted in anything. It was also found by the SAHRC (1998:13) that although the Constitution guarantees prisoners the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, the conditions in most of the prisons in their view, fall short of this constitutional obligation. They also stated that majority of the prisons were severely overcrowded and in a serious state of disrepair, not only did they pose a health hazard but also contributed to the high rate of escapes. These inhumane conditions in which prisoners are accommodated contribute, to a very large extent, to the criminality found in the majority of prisons.

Although there has been an international pressure on the treatment of prisoners and progressive steps taken in the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996, there is a continuous trend for prisoners to suffer cruel and inhumane treatment, even death in prison. The South African Prisoners' Organisation for Human Rights (SAPOHR) maintains that conditions in prisons are inhumane and undermined human dignity as enshrined in South

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<sup>3</sup> The Jali Commission is a Commission of Inquiry was appointed on 8 August 2001, headed by Judge Thabani Jali to investigate corruption and conditions at South Africa's prisons.

Africa's Constitution Act 108 of 1996 (iafrica.com 2003:1-2). Those in free society might argue that by stripping the offender of human dignity, imprisonment will make the type of lasting, negative impression that will serve as a strong deterrent to recidivism. On the contrary, instead of making them determined to avoid another prison term, incarceration may leave many inmates accustomed to prison life and resigned to the inevitability of returning to it (Stinchcomb & Fox 1999:363).

### **The Right to Freedom and Security of the Person**

According to section 12 (1) of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), everyone has the right to freedom, and security which includes the right: Not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause; not to be detained without trial; to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources; not to be tortured in any way; and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way.

Interviews with post released prisoners revealed that prisoners, especially the awaiting-trial section (Medium A of the Durban Westville Prison) are subjected to gross human rights violations; for example, all awaiting-trial prisoners returning from court are subjected to being searched naked in full view of everyone. Within a period of seven months one offender was subjected to this humiliation for 32 times. Upon their return from court offenders were required to remain in a cell, referred to as 'a box' that accommodated 180 offenders. Offenders have to stand or sit until the following day due to the lack of space. These conditions deprived them of sleep and exposed them to individuals who appeared to have had a penchant for mocking, belittling and robbing others of everything they had.

Prison officials beat, kicked, punched assaulted prisoners with batons, fists and pistols during a search for weapons. One interviewee stated: 'the entire cell was punished. I was injured in the knee. We were not treated as human beings, but like animals. Wardens do not care about inmates'.

The Amnesty International Annual Report (1998:3), reports that the statutory Human Rights Commission investigated a number of serious incidents of torture and ill treatment of prisoners. The security measures to which offenders and detainees are subject should be the minimum that is needed to ensure their secure custody, and the safety of other prisoners.

South African prisons have a history of harsh and brutal punishments in comparison to international standards. Punishment cells with minimal facilities, prohibition of access to reading material, arbitrary removal of 'privileges', collective punishment for group misbehaviour, isolation cells and straitjackets are used as punishment for a range of offences. There is often an unacceptable level of discretion exercised by prison guards in determining the living conditions of prisoners under their supervision (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:41).

According to the Constitution Act 108 of 1996, the freedom and security of the person, includes the right to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources; not to be tortured in any way; and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way; but in the context of serious overcrowding, these freedoms are very difficult to secure for offenders (DCS Draft Green Paper 2003). Although the Department is obliged to ensure that the prisoner is safe from violation of these rights in reality this is far from being realised.

### **The Right to Privacy**

According to section 14 of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have: Their person or home searched; their property searched; their possessions seized; or the privacy of their communications infringed.

The very nature of imprisonment is that it severely restricts a person's right to privacy through having to share a cell, conditions of overcrowding, constant supervision and searches by prison authorities. Furthermore prisoners are forced to live communally with people not of their choosing, and live their lives in accordance with a strict prison administration (Oliver & McQuoid-Mason 1998:46).

It was further stated by McQuoid-Mason and Dada (1999:71) that:

People detained by the police or prison authorities in prisons, police lock-ups or any other place, retain their basic Common Law and Constitutional personality rights except for their right to liberty and a qualified right to privacy. These rights include the right to bodily security, reputation, liberty and privacy. A prisoner or detainee may

not be deprived of sleep, exercise, clothing and the right to wash or go to the toilet. Furthermore, prisoners and detainees may not be assaulted or tortured.

On the one hand, it is contended by Nxumalo (1997:234), that a convicted person is considered by the courts to have a limited expectation of privacy when incarcerated.

### **Right to Healthcare, Food, Water and Social Security**

Section 27 (1) of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), everyone (including the prisoner) has the right to have access to healthcare services; sufficient food and water; and social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance. The Department of Correctional Services is obliged to provide health care to prisoners. This implies that the health care should be consistent with that provided by the state to other citizens. The provision of food, water and basic healthcare is thus the basic minimum that the State is compelled to provide to inmates.

Overcrowding in South African prisons has become one of the major challenges that officials in the prison service have to confront. Interviews with Correctional Services officials inevitably drew upon the perennial problem of space and capacity in the prisons that they managed<sup>4</sup>. Early twenty-first century figures on capacity in South African prisons is estimated at 113 825, while the actual prison population at the time of research was 187446. In the prison that was targeted for this research, its capacity was 4500 but the actual prison population in May 2005 when the research began was 12 000. This constituted a near 300% over-crowding, making it an inadequate facility for a region that is still characterized by high levels of crime and very high levels of HIV/AIDS infections. An initial visit and overview of the prison revealed expected inappropriate living conditions, especially with inadequate hygiene and ventilation, overcrowding in cells

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<sup>4</sup> On the 28 September 2005 the researcher conducted interviews with prison officials at Westville Medium B Prison. On the 12 October 2005 semi-structured interviews with prison official at Westville Prison was conducted.

and frequent references by officials to high risk sexual behaviour, violence, gang activity and corruption within the prison walls. Sodomy, rape, sexual intercourse and sexual assaults have been reported as regular and normative occurrences in the prisons.

Overcrowded conditions in the South African prisons facilitate an easy spread of communicable diseases among inmates, of which HIV/AIDS has become the most tempestuous and problematic. Reaction to these conditions has been firm, assertive and widespread. For instance, Jacobs (2003:1) suggests that

... the debate on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS not only provides gruesome statistics regarding the scourge in prisons but also seems to imply a criminal dereliction of duty by Correctional Services with grave consequences for society in the medium to long term.

There is a Correctional Services policy on HIV/AIDS to render an effective and efficient HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections health care service to prisoners and to release them back into the community with minimal risk to society. However the policy is not always effectively managed or understood due to the lack of human and financial resources. Although prisoners living with HIV/AIDS are not isolated and in some prisons receive counseling, there is no uniformity regarding the application of Department of Correctional Service's policy. Interviews with post-released prisoners revealed that 'in their world of darkness sex in prison is an every day, every night experience'. Only the strong and daringly brave youngsters have the ability to ward off such advances and often have to do so through dangerously fighting against bigger, tougher and more experienced prisoners. The social stigma of 'a punk' carries with it an image that is fractious and demoralizing to younger and inexperienced prisoners. It sets them apart from those who are able to enjoy hard earned privileges that are sought through brute strength and precludes them from being treated as equals among their inmates. An inability to fight back almost inevitably turns the weaker prisoners into fair game for the prisoners with a predator mentality.

Interviewees revealed that it was not uncommon for prisoners to 'sell their bodies' for sex or bribe kitchen workers with money for better

food. The lack of prison personnel is also a contributing factor to sexual exploitation of weaker and younger inmates. For instance, at night only one prison official is required to guard approximately four hundred prisoners from a single observation post. This is in keeping with the findings of the SAHRC (1998:14), in that the most common complaint of prisoners was that the food ranged from poorly prepared or inedible, to too little or rotten. They also complained that dinner is normally served at 14h00 and no provision is made for evenings by which time everyone is hungry again. One interviewee stated: 'the food is bad; we smoke dagga to keep away the hunger pangs'. South Africa is a country in which socio-economic conditions in certain areas give rise to a high prevalence of communicable diseases, both in the sense of a majority of the population that has a lower than desirable nutrition level and hence is vulnerable to infection, and also in the sense of cramped and inadequate living conditions that tend to fester communicable diseases (DCS Draft Green Paper 2003). This document further states that the crime patterns in South Africa indicate that a large proportion of the prison population come from these very communities. Thus the rate of infection with communicable diseases of prisoners entering the Department is higher than the national average. Overcrowding coupled with the inadequate quantity and/or quality of proper nutritional food level in prisons exacerbates this situation. The Statement from the Heads of Government at the 4<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea States Summit on the Threat of Communicable Diseases, issued at St Petersburg on the 10 June 2002, states that overcrowded prisons with infected inmates and with poor hygiene and sanitation are a dominant threat in the field of communicable diseases in the region. Prison health must be a priority (DCS Draft Green Paper 2003). In reality this is far from being realized.

It was found by the Human Rights Commission (Pityana 1998:3): that prisoners had genuine grievances about their conditions. There were insufficient warders to handle the number of prisoners. The poor conditions were a contributing factor in causing prisoners to become increasingly aggressive and abusive towards warders. Furthermore, rehabilitation programmes were non-existent in most of the prisons in the country. This explains the high rate of criminal activities such as gangsterism, availability of weapons, drugs and other illegal substances. The conditions under which juveniles are kept in most prisons do not create the basis for their

rehabilitation. Due to the problem of overcrowding, the requirement for separation of juveniles from adult prisoners is not always conformed to. The increase in the number of awaiting-trial prisoners has led to serious overcrowding. Many juveniles complained that their section was overcrowded, dark and dirty (SAHRC 1998:31-33).

Thus by being placed in these atrocious, life threatening conditions, one could say that prisoners are given a death sentence as their punishment. In addition, it can be postulated that the environment in which inmates are secluded from the outside, subservient to the staff, restrained by the rules, subjected to the power of other prisoners, socialized into the prison subculture, exposed to diseases and silenced by the lack of public concern, all create conditions of hopelessness, dissatisfaction, estrangement which are considered as fertile breeding grounds. Although all of the above predisposing conditions are contributing factors to the problems and challenges that face penal institutions, the researcher is of the opinion that the severe overcrowding of these institutions not only disrupts the rehabilitation efforts of the system but also threatens the control of prison institutions, thereby burdening the system. As stated previously, problems, which exist in conventional society, are mirrored and often magnified inside prison.

## **Resumé**

The discussion in this paper postulates that according to the Bill of Rights everyone who is detained, including every sentenced prisoner, has the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity. Thus although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 guarantees every sentenced prisoner the right to conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, including the provision, at state expense, of adequate accommodation, the conditions within majority of prisons fall short of this constitutional obligation (SAHRC 1998:13). Numerous prisons in South Africa are overcrowded and in a serious state of disrepair that they not only pose a health hazard but also contribute to a high rate of escapes.

Closer analysis of the various judgments of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court of Appeal on laws that impact on prison overcrowding indicates however, that the courts have not drawn the link

between these laws and the unsatisfactory prison conditions they produce (Van Zyl Smit in Dixon & van der Spuy 2004). To some extent, this 'wearing-down' process of imprisonment affects everyone. South Africa is a country in which socio-economic conditions give rise to a high prevalence of communicable disease, both in the sense that majority of the population has a lower than desirable nutrition level and hence is vulnerable to infection, but also in the sense of cramped and inadequate living conditions that tend to fester communicable diseases (DCS Draft Green Paper 2003).

The conditions inside prison can contribute, in varying degrees, to the risk for HIV transmission, the progression of HIV, and the deterioration in health of a person with full-blown AIDS. While overcrowding, gangs, drugs, and violence are realities of prison life in every country, specific aspects of these issues as they are manifested in South African prisons will have different impacts on prisoners already infected or at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS (Goyer 2003:33). Those with HIV infection are appearing more frequently within institutional populations. Due to the spread of AIDS throughout society, the spread of AIDS is on the increase among inmates, particularly since those convicted of drug offences are likely to be sentenced to prison or jail terms.

It can be postulated that some of the worst human rights abuses stems from the problems associated with overcrowding, and overcrowding can be regarded as one of the main challenges facing the Department of Correctional Services. The various ways to strengthen the criminal justice system and to make it more effective in preventing crime are attained by increasing the access to justice and involving more people in the criminal justice process. Offenders are human beings and ought to be treated in a humane manner. Upon release, the offenders have to re-integrate into society as 'normal' citizens. Therefore, if the offender were treated inhumanely then this would affect his rehabilitation and consequently may lead to recidivism. The imposition of draconian, inhumane or degrading punishment which involves housing inmates in a dark prison cell(s) as a mechanism for discipline or internal offences committed constitutes a serious crime against humanity (Morodi 2003:8). The South African Prisoners' Organisation for Human Rights (SAPOHR) stated that (iafrica.com 2003:1) it would take the government to court for violating prisoners' rights unless it urgently addressed overcrowded prison conditions.

Steps should be taken to develop a different caliber of prison system that would be consistent with the new Constitution and with international norms and standards.

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Criminology Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **Not Yet Uhuru!** **Power Struggles in a neo-liberal University**

**Elias Cebekhulu,  
Evangelos Anastasios Mantzaris and  
Eugenia Nandisa Cebekhulu**

Critical consciousness, they say, is anarchic; others add that critical consciousness may lead to disorder. But some confess: Why deny it? I was afraid of freedom. I am no longer afraid!  
(Paulo Freire 1972).



Workers resorting to the toyi-toyi in defense of their rights at UKZN (picture by Helen Poonen)

## **Introduction**

Not long ago Bourdieu (1988) clearly articulated that the crisis point in academia arises when expectations of stakeholders are disrupted and ordinarily balanced tensions are thrown out of equilibrium. Mantzaris and Cebekhulu argue that in the post merger period social and economic contestation has become an integral part of university life. It is common knowledge that Universities are sites of knowledge, research outreach and contestation. They are sites of transformation, hope and disillusionment. It is extremely difficult to create a clear cut understanding of the exact nature and mission of universities in South Africa and worldwide without taking into account the nature of the social and economic context within which they operate and the social and economic contradictions emanating from the past present and future class and racial inequalities that persist within most societies (Mantzaris & Cebekhulu 2005).

In this historic period of 'mergers', the working class continues to make history, but not in circumstances of their own choice as Marx aptly put it several centuries ago<sup>1</sup>. For example the perpetual 'withdrawal' of workers benefits by management and the skewed allocation of resources have created tension and conflict among stakeholders. Poised on the dividing line between past and future is the workers, a social and class polarisation. One would not understand modern societies if one does not understand the way 'education' is inextricably tied to the most general matters of social structure (Bourdieu 1988). This is captured in the UKZN vision and mission statement of striving to be a premier University of African Scholarship. Contrary to this inclusive noble vision, what has emerged from this 2 year old institution is an absolutely authoritarian and bureaucratic Management backed by Council with no respect for the laws of the country and the well being of all other stakeholders. This perception is also shared by a White Female Deputy Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences Leanna Uys who has advanced the thesis that conflict at UKZN is associated with a strong tradition of authoritarianism by Management which leads to unwarranted submissiveness by other stakeholders (Uys 2005). This is the expressed position of one of the top university managers.

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<sup>1</sup> See Karl Marx on Wages, Price and Profit (1865).

This paper is hopefully a humble intellectual contribution on how the failures of social policy and the lack of meaningful social dialogue have created unwarranted conflict in the new University. It was through *participatory research and observation* of the changing trends in governance that the authors concluded that the failures of social policy at UKZN can be attributed to the lack of transparency, accountability and arrogance of the University Management. This line of argument/hypothesis is also empirically supported by Nhlapho (2005), a Student Representative Council President in the past and a serious intellectual of the future, who has advanced the position that institutional failures at UKZN cannot be understood without reference to the leadership style of management which is characterized by selfishness, corruption and greediness (*bazingela bephethe usawoti*). It is public knowledge that the salary packages of the University Executives Managers far exceed that of State President Thabo Mbeki. Brown (2006) correctly pointed out that increase in participation has done little to balance the rate of participation by socio-economic group. As is the case at UKZN where workers remained polarized in the processes of decision making which affects their future. Our contribution does not attempt to provide the multiple causation symptoms that have led to the present conjuncture, because they are more or less known i.e. Globalisation of Higher Education, but it attempts to suggest remedial strategies. In understanding the 'causal' nexus of conflict at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it needs to be said that conflict is located at the centre of the discourse of governance.

### **The Broken Promise**

Kader Asmal himself stated clearly in 2002 that the merger would be based on access, equity, regional collaboration, and rationalization of programmes (*Star* 12/2/2002). A great deal of optimism emerged when the merger processes at play were publicly declared as the pillars of transformation and massification, according to the existing legislation and the relentless pronouncement of the then Minister of Education. Even the learned started repeating what they heard without digestion. Neo-liberalism, however, a very elusive, yet unmistakably precarious reality, unfolded at a fast pace. 'Left with no alternative', and given the disastrous financial position of the

then University of Natal, the merged institution ultimately became the pillar of rationalization, cost efficiency, managerialism, and outsourcing. Even its very existence shifted from being a 'knowledge society' orientated University to a 'knowledge economy' oriented University. As for Jansen (2002), educational reforms in South Africa since the end of legal apartheid have been lodged clearly and consistently within powerful economic rationales as the overriding motivation for 'transforming' apartheid education. The above analysis reinforces the market approach of profits before people. Van der Walt, Bolsman, Johnson and Martin (2002) argue that not every University can make the transition to a 'market university'; outcomes will depend on the existing resource base of a particular institution, their public image, management competence, political resistance and so forth.

Empirical evidence points to the undisputed fact that the mergers were tried and tested in Germany (First World country), but they were not successful<sup>2</sup>. As aptly said by Saleem Badat (2000), 'We don't have the luxury to settle these issues as the north did in their drive to modernity'. On the downside, the current existing conflict over the issues of governance at UKZN confirms Chinua Achebe's dictum that Africans have a tendency to repeat the history of trial and error (see Achebe 1990).

The West having failed to merge its own institutions opted to sponsor the merger of South African Universities with conditions. One of them was the adoption of a 'College Model' system much used in the West but relatively unknown in the South. As the pressure on the University to 'live within its means' and 'cut its coat accordingly to its cloth' increased, so did the demand for techniques which could facilitate more control over the fiscal crisis of the modern state. Hence the most potent document produced by the highest educational authority of all, the Department of Education (the 'Merger Guidelines') has been thrown into the dustbin of history and replaced by the neo-liberal accounting approach termed 'brake-even'. Desai (2004) in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Nelson-Mbeki regards such exercise as the 'McDonaldisation of higher education'. Fukuyama the postmodernist reactionary philosopher warned us that

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<sup>2</sup> Siphon Seepe on Ingede Conference, 2004.

The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk's one's life for purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle which called forth daring courage, imagination and idealism, will be replaced by economic circulation, the endless solving of problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands (Fukuyama 1992).

The mergers, despite existing legislation and guidelines created institutions that are based on a top down approach, shaped and determined in an unequal way. The Minister should have explained to South Africans why the Universities of Western Cape and Stellenbosch were left untouched while UDW and UN had to merge in the name of 'regional collaboration'. Geographically speaking, the country's map indicates that the Western Cape is as much a region as KwaZulu-Natal. Thus the Western Cape has three universities, while the most populous province in the country, KZN, has the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the remnants of University of Zululand. Lest we not forget that the impending mergers were challenged (*at least verbally and initially*) by Black Vice Chancellors (*Sunday Independent* 17 February 2002). Then there was deafening silence amongst the intellectual elite of the Vice Chancellors. Clearly there was a skewed rationale behind the merger.

Sitas (2004) has argued that universities have been in decline as institutions. This reflects a broader global process of reductions in public spending as monetarism in the West and structural adjustment in the so-called Third World have nudged funding away from most tertiary institutions. Whereas this process has led to a regrouping of universities away from the human and the social sciences, and a rapid needs-driven 'professionalisation', the weakness and skewed and unequal development of many countries in the world's periphery (and in Africa in particular) has led to real constriction on posts, salaries, whole departments and sections. As academics had to move out of their formal employment and earn to subsidise their dwindling incomes, they became party to forms of developmentalism nurtured by aid-related Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and started researching other people's agendas (Sitas 2004).

The collapse of the Berlin Wall did not end the sufferings of the East Germans; instead it created a new society divided by class boundaries and realities. The merger of the former Natal University, a formerly White institution and UDW a formerly Indian institution, which later accommodated and absorbed large number of African students, had both alienated Africans and especially workers to a large extent (Tudge 2004; Ndlela 2005). Despite numerous attempts to 'accommodate' both African students and workers in the new University, they still feel a sense of loss. For the 'natives' private property gate number 1913 have not been breached (see Desai 2004). According to Uys (2005) gated communities, patronage and national standards exacerbate fragmentation. The earlier poses serious threat to African development as a whole. She further argues that powerful lobbies inside the university marginalize 'outsiders' which ultimately lead to an 'us versus them situation'. Castells' argument sum it all in his dictum that universities are subject to 'the conflicts and contradictions of society and therefore they will tend to express and even amplify the ideological struggles present in all societies' (2001: 206).

Makgoba (2004) himself confirms that there is no question that universities in South Africa – no matter how liberal or 'verkramp't' – are products of apartheid and colonization. The key question is how to destroy such legacies through well planned and decisive transformation processes.

### **The Pre-merger Conflict**

The current problems facing the new university are an indication that the planning phase was not properly handled. Such negligence can be attributed to the 'warring factions' of political worlds that emerged between the 'pro Cooper' and 'pro Makgoba' supporters. Incidences such as phone tapping, gossipy and substantial conversations that hit the Sunday press and floor-crossing became the order of the day. Edelman has argued prophetically and metaphorically that our political worlds are segmented, disjointed, focused at any moment upon some small set of anxieties, even though each such issue is part of an increasingly integrated whole. He wrote that in place of the ability to deal with issues in terms of their logical and empirical ties to one another, the language of politics encourages us to see them and feel them as separate (Edelman 1977). Crenson (1971) argued that the political issues are

transitory, episodic phenomena, and because the political life of a community tends to be organized around issues, it tends to be episodic and unordered. The pre-merger rivalries were not related to existing and impeding class polarisation and struggles, but rather on who would be the beneficiary of the 'whole cake'.

In the end, the race for one of the best paid jobs in South Africa was won by Professor MW Makgoba. The 'pay back time' for a good number of ex-Natal University academics/turned managers who after the merger became the 'interim management team' was intact. Their ultimate and expected crowning was followed by months of inactivity, lack of decisiveness and accountability as well as planning. It is one of the hand-picked senior managers (as he was the only short-listed candidate), Peter Zacharias (2005) the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Head of College Agriculture correctly pointed out that the leadership at UKZN lacks personal accountability, self organization, ownership of one's deeds and actions. Decision making activity is channeled and restricted by the process of non-decision making. There is a growing tendency to associate inactivity with progress in a sense that a manager is consequently best when he/she did the least.

### **The Nature of Leadership at UKZN**

Despite Castells' (1998) warning that, as transformation unfolds, the distributional logic has been altered and the barriers, boundaries and fences have been shifted, institutions too, have transfigured, creating a new milieu for movement and settlement. Predictions were made by senior scholars that there will be senior and middle management that will manage the university in a democratic, transparent, fair, accountable, participatory and above human and just manner (Mantzaris & Cebekhulu 2005). However they ignored wisdom, efficiency and credentials, which are very important variables, hence their predictions could be regarded as *shortsighted* (Skilberkk & Gilje 2001). For UKZN, 'structural transformation' brought about a new tyrant university management (*Izindlovu aziphikiswa*) which live in a world located outside the real world. A daily newspaper's headlines (*Mercury* 25/1/2006) that reads 'To some a dictator, to some a *visionary*' pinpoints the structural problems that the UKZN management faces.

Whatever supposes to be collective is transformed into personal, the personal becomes the collective, and the personal is political. The 'Machiavelian' collective style of management is multiplied, but in the end stops at the door of the CEO of the corporation, irrespective of weaknesses in planning, the insidious oversupply of infrastructural over human resources development, financial or academic exclusions, or salary increases.

Using A. Sitas's analysis, Makgoba's assuming leadership at UKZN can be described as follows by the African population at the university and at all levels:

He was the hope of the hopeless and the dispossessed, the poor and the destitute, the meek. And on that rose and rose in strength, in power. He met iron with iron, eye for an eye, he used, as tradition has it, a thorn to remove another thorn from his flesh. He was feared and respected. Everyone fell to his or her knees to thank him or to ask for new favours. He was disturbed when he looked down the hills to see all the people walking on their knee-caps practising for their next encounter (Sitas 2004).

The Sunday Independent newspaper's half page diatribe headlines ('Our Academic freedom must be safeguarded', *Sunday Independent* 22/1/2006) pinpoint some real problems. Clearly management's 'iron hand' approach to governance has not gone unnoticed by the media. Questions as to whether academic freedom is under threat remain unanswered. The University's decision not to approve Desai's appointment is an indication that critical independent scholarly appointments of A rated academics is barred whilst appointment and promotion of dubious candidates continues. The hiding of real freedom of expression and human and intellectual rights issues epitomised in the 'Desai saga' behind legalistic and technicist jargon only damaged the image of the university internationally and nationally as the sober voice of Chris Govender, UDW's Deputy Chairperson of the Council and at present the State Attorney of KwaZulu Natal pointed out recently ('The Vuyo Mbuli Show' SAFM radio Station, 27/1/2006, 9-10 am). The 900 signatories from academics all over the world over the case of Desai is a symbolic and historical incident in defense of academia. Desai is an internationally acclaimed academic and researcher, whose path breaking

book *We are the Poors* has been translated in many languages. Giant intellectuals such as Naomi Klein, I.Shivji, and Noam Chomsky have come to his defense and defense of freedom of expression publicly by signing the petition for his re-instatement at UKZN. Desai was an Honourary Fellow at the Center for Civil society at the University for a number of years , but when he resigned as requested to apply for a remunerated research job that was widely advertised, he was stopped by the University's Vice Chancellor. Professor Makgoba insisted that Desai should first ask the permission from the University Council and 'apologise' for his trade union activities at the then University of Durban Westville before he applies for the research job. Makgoba also called upon Desai to make public his 'separation deal' when he resigned from UDW. Desai made public the deal which was quoted freely in many national and provincial newspapers, but Makgoba insisted on his initial position. The public debate on the issue between the two main protagonists of the saga dented the reputation of the institution both nationally and internationally. The final step in this sorry state of affairs occurred in May 2006 when at a Faculty Board meeting of the College of Humanities , there was an unanimous decision that Desai should be reinstated as an Honourary Fellow at the University.

The Desai case resembles Shelembuze, portrayed by Sitas (2004) as a very versatile person fired for being unable to work with discipline and order. The excuse offered by Management is that we have to distinguish between corporate governance and academic freedom. However the mere thought of the Management class that they enjoy privileged access to government, as well as to the media, leads them to think they are in a position to promote the values that support and legitimize their privileged or dominant position vis a vis the position and privileges of the majority of staff and students. It is the very same context and position that enables them to tolerate only those dissenting viewpoints that do not fundamentally challenge their credentials, actions, duties or omissions and squelch any views that do<sup>3</sup>.

Lecturers and researchers who have been involved in community outreach and research in various informal settlements such as Kennedy Road

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<sup>3</sup> The management defines discourses and restrict individual actions and thoughts.

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and Foreman Road have been intimidated by state agencies and local government leaders while university senior managers tolerate such behaviour on the part of state apparatuses. Research conducted on the Banana City squatter settlement, situated within the Westville campus of the university reveals that the University has reneged on its previous agreement with the informal settlement residents and the city council. The latter had come to an agreement with the leadership of the settlement to develop housing and infrastructure in the area. Before Christmas 2005 the University applied to the High Court to evict four, allegedly new, residents. The case was heard on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in the Durban High Court and it was adjourned as the university had not prepared its case properly. Despite the case being handled by the High Court, the University went ahead and stopped the water supply to this informal settlement. A subsequent case was also adjourned. One need to question where in such a gesture the noble goal of 'community outreach' is, one of the three key objectives of the new university is to be found. All these deeds have not gone unchallenged. There have been individuals, organisations and unions, such as the Combined Staff Association (COMSA) that have questioned and challenged such decisions and actions.

It has been assumed that in any 'civilized society', problems are supposed to be solved by open, rational debate in a harmonious and free societal mode that is governed by laws (Skirbekk & Gilje 2001). Such an important process requires a combination of trust, honesty and tolerance which has never existed at UKZN. There have been a plethora of public questions, both verbal and written that have never been even debated, never mind answered satisfactorily (Cebekhulu & Mantzaris 2004). The culture of robust and rational debate coupled by the respect of the university statute seems to be absent while differing opinions and perspectives are scorned, isolated and sidelined. Thus despite the continuous challenges to management, two years into the merger to even seriously debate the question of salary harmonisation between employees of the two institutions has fallen into deaf ears. Thus it is well known to all that professors and senior lecturers as well as administrative staff working for the previous components (University of Natal and UDW) earn vastly different salaries. How a Senior Professor of ex UDW can earn less than R60-70 000 than his equivalent of the University of Natal?

Freire in his 'Praxis and Education' reiterated this point when he wrote that not only in the universities, but also in secondary and primary schools, education is always a political event. Thus, power is inseparable from education. Those who hold power define 'what education will be: its methods, programme and curriculum, wrote Freire (Freire, P. Praxis and Education, Social Policy File 85/1999). Marx and Engels noted poignantly that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas'. In their view, those who control the production of material wealth in a society also control the production of knowledge, as well as systems (or ideology) and insight, and in this way they control the production of an entire way of life. Thus, a society is highly likely to create a culture that justifies, reinforces, and reproduces the privileges, advantages, and power of its ruling class (Marx & Engels 1970:64). In the case of UKZN, Africans at all levels are sandwiched between the former University of Natal's colonial mentality and the complicated blend of UDW that encompasses South African Indian, multicultural, colonial, as well as liberation and resistance ideology and practice. Their way out of this sandwich will not necessarily lead them into the land of milk and honey, but rather to a collective struggle towards equity and transformation.

The relationship between the University Management and workers is characterised by a silent polarisation where there is no clear cut synergy between key stakeholders and players at the University in terms of consultation, transparency, accountability, full participation, access, transformation and the curriculum. Such synergy could ultimately avoid confrontation, contestation would be confined to widely accepted channels and communication across boundaries would substitute top down directives. The philosopher Rauche (1993) who once said,

My fellow-man is my critic, my judge, my partner in dialogue. In private life, in professional life, on academic and cultural levels, I measure myself by him. I require him as terms of reference. In limiting and negating me, he, at the same time, expands me in that I fulfill myself through him and he affirms me as an individual.

For these processes that will dent polarisation to unfold, the major step forward will be that of a continuum of conscientisation, a dialogical,

dialectical and material process shaped by prevailing circumstances and the vision and mission of the university. Conscientisation is founded on a critical and fundamental understanding of justice, equity, access, fairness and democratic practices advanced and adhered to by knowing subjects, and aspiring to achieve a deepening awareness both of socio-cultural, educational, social and economic realities that shape their lives, and their capacity to transform it (Freire 1973).

### **Workers under Siege**

What happens if you appoint a wolf as a shepherd? A steady downsizing of the flock. The wolf, professing vegetarianism, calls it right-sizing and states his enthusiastic commitment to fattening the remaining sheep (*Terreblanche Mail and Guardian* October 8 to 14 2004). Noting our historical background and the current socio-economic and political context, conflict between parties polarised by financial, economic, administrative, and organisational attitudes, behaviour and goals becomes inevitable. Following the Vice-Chancellor's appointment, the CEO of the institution indicated that 'there will be no duplication of staff in the new University' and after the pronouncement, permanent and contract employees numbers started to dwindle in a serious and protracted process of staff rationalization. Trade unions' right and benefits that have been won through historical struggles such as encashment of sabbatical leave after retirement, staff concessions are under attack, in the name of 'budget cuts' and pure and simple neo-liberal cut back exercises that would make the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund red from envy. However, never in its history of two years has the CEO of the institution and its management delved into the historical roots of what they call 'huge deficit', who was the culprit, how did we arrive at such a situation, what were the measures undertaken for such failures not be repeated, what has happened to those responsible for the debt. As expected, Sitas (2004) argues that in all societies people gather, talk, jest, and resist; they become crowds; their grievances evolve into a strike. This seems to become a habit and a yearly occurrence at the university, and always around a fundamental issue, that of a salary increase. The working population at UKZN has become aware of the extravagant salaries and

subsequent annual increases and bonuses of the top managers and thus is forced to utilise the available legal channels to fight for their rights.

The 2006 salary negotiations were supposed to *start* at 4% as per the agreement signed by management and unions last year. For two months management procrastinated on the matter, by insisting that the Remuneration Committee of the Council did not give them a mandate to move above the 4% increase. Hence the Monday 16 of January 2006 a strike certificate awarded by the CCMA to the 4 unions (COMSA, NTESU, NEHAWU and UNSU) to strike was both fair and expected. The arduous three hour of deliberations exposed the uncoordinated and double-sword strategy of management. On the one hand they 'offered' an extra R8 millions, R3, 5 million for a 'once off payment' and R4, 5 million towards 'normalisation of salary scales'. The offer was rejected unanimously by the four unions, but the CCMA commissioner in his closing statements expressed his surprise to the university team, which included a highly qualified lawyer, an advocate and two Deputy Vice Chancellors, for their overall approach to the hearing. They came to the CCMA without a mandate for meaningful bargaining.

The University needs to be transparent, equitable, fair, accountable, open and based on common humane values if it is to achieve its vision and mission statement. The unions and their leadership have been on record on countless occasions that are prepared to work towards the University's goals as enshrined in the vision and mission statement of the institution. However, simultaneously they have to be vigilant and decisive in challenging injustices, unfair labour practices, through full participation in all decision making organs of the University. It needs to be reiterated that UKZN stakeholders and role players cannot avoid contestation, as it is an integral historical and present reality of every transition. Contestation is the dialectical outcome of the existing social polarisation. However, contestation does not necessarily mean conflict or absolute consensus, but a continuous effort to unite the opposites, whenever possible. Through contestation unity might result, but the road is not a bed of roses.

The relationship between the management and staff ought to have been built on dialogue where all participants mutually co-operate to make the running of the institution as smooth as possible. Since there is an unequal distribution of power, coupled by the lack of common search for truer insight, the vision and mission statement of the university continues to drift

apart. In all fairness, the management regards the latter as not competent enough for co-determination. The mere fact that the Standard Institutional Statute excludes Unions despite numerous requests from being part of decision-making at a Council level signals a skewed power allocation at UKZN. Since the personal is the political, as correctly phrased by Karl Marx, this means that the organizational and the educational are also political. According to Protagoras (481-411 BCE) (in Skirbekk & Gilje 2001) the '*personal is also the measure of all things*', for example, power in the hand of an authoritarian management can easily reverse the gains made by the working class over the years. Clearly the management using their own experiences, their own myopic interest and their own situations, 'stamp' things in their own image.

Politics extends beyond the formal 'political' institutions. Politics never stop once the bill becomes a law. It does not stop in the political process, nor does it cease in the decision-making process (Bardach 1977). Therefore, we need to redefine the boundaries between politics and bureaucracy, and between the decision-making process and the delivery of those decisions. Implementation is therefore simply another form of politics which takes place within the domain of unelected power in the form of management.

## **Transformation**

Promises can create hopes, but unfulfilled promises can lead to disillusionment and frustration. Fewer promises may be made in view of a heightened awareness of the obstacles to fulfillment, but more of them should be kept. The increasing corporatization of management (the adoption of business models of organization and administration of universities) coupled with the social composition of top management are a direct affront to transformatory imperatives. Professor Makgoba himself defended the corporatisation of management recently thus in a recent interview:

There is merit in what people are saying, (criticising the corporatisation of the university), but this has to be put into context. I have studied at the best universities in the world. These institutions have become corporatised. They demand greater accountability of

academics. Universities of old were run by the church or the pope. What would I benefit the country by running an old-style institution? (*Mercury* 25/1/2006).

Such contention goes against the principles of an organisational and logistical parameters of a scientifically run corporation. Which corporation worth its salt and with a budget equivalent to that of UKZN would employ seven deputy vice chancellor's? Corporate entities are generally accountable to shareholders, to whom, is the UKZN management accountable to besides a 30 or so group called the University Council?

In such a context the key conceptual and practical underpinnings of transitive consciousness is of paramount importance. Hence transitive consciousness emerges as the people begin to perceive and respond to the themes and myths that characterise their world. Naïve transitivity, is the initial stage of transitive consciousness and is marked by gross simplifications and generalizations of problems; frail arguments and lack of interest in critical investigation; polemics rather than dialogue; and magical; emotional explanations for problems (Freire 1973). Can the new leadership of the University avoid this path?

To understand the nature of conflict created by the lack of transformation to date, Mills' (1956) argument is relevant. He wrote that 'We must study the available range of social structures, including the historical as well as the contemporary'. The importance of studying and asking questions regarding the crucial significance of history linked us to an awareness that it is vital that we understand how we have come to be where we are now. In essence it will enable informed reasoning as to whether the equity office is really addressing the problems of inequity created by the racial divisions inherent in the historical legacy of apartheid. The view of Devi Rajab, a psychologist and the former dean of student development at UKZN is that 'UKZN can't be a place where people are too scared to discuss their feelings because they are labeled racist' (*Mercury* Wednesday January 25 2006).

The proliferation of racism threatens human rights (Balfour & Cadava 2004). For example racial divisions associated with the former Institutions and clash of personalities was at the forefront of every decision taken regarding the merger. If indeed the 'rainbow nation' is to be realized,

urgent attention should have been channeled towards addressing racism prior and after the merger. Since no attempt was made to bridge the divide line, the organizational culture inherent in the two institutions that comprise the new university remains unchallenged.

Kumar (1988) is of the view that societies can live with their 'contradictions', if not comfortably at least tolerable, for long periods. Incidents of racism were allegedly revealed in the Medical School, but there is deafening silence on the part of management regarding the only one disciplinary case heard. Hence, quite a number of serious questions need to be asked:

- Why the university authorities have not yet released the findings of the disciplinary hearings yet?
- Are there more disciplinary hearings to occur or has the case been forgotten?
- Why was only the Medical School targeted and not other schools and disciplines?
- How many incidents of racism go unnoticed by the authorities?

Sandwiched between the 'rock , steel and a hard place' are hundreds and even thousands of African staff and students who have to daily survive academic, professional and organisational onslaught from all sides of the didactic and professional terrains. Despite the CEO being an African, he is in danger of being seen as a beneficiary of the now infamous 'rent an African' syndrome clearly evident throughout the country.

The battle cry for real equity and transformation cannot be confused with the narrow nationalism of the viewpoint that from the 'ivory towers' of the new institutions, the Bollywood and the Hollywood congregations of power need to be replaced by darker skins. Transformation and equity does not equal the attempts of the African elite to learn to speak Model C English with a Victorian or Gujarati accent or else remains isolated from the circles of power. The deep seated problem at UKZN is that the ideas and values of the dominant class are diffused throughout the University and imposed on the workers (see Gramsci 1971). This needs to change, otherwise a broad based transformation and equity will never be achieved in our lifetime.

## Conclusion

Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth* argues that the national bourgeoisie that will take over after decolonization will try and fit themselves in the shoes of the colonizer. In some instances the national bourgeoisie tasked with managing the native affairs will be worse than the colonizers themselves. Are we not witnessing the fulfillment of such prophecy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal? The contradiction that the university can strike a balance between 'Ubuntu and profit making' remains a contested terrain. Corporatisation at UKZN is synonymous with the increasing neo-liberal new world order and globalization. It is based on the principles of 'balancing the books', maximization of profit and organizational and administrative structures that are hierarchical, inflexible and 'top down'. Such a system is extremely prejudicial to the majority of employees and in favour of a small number of senior managerial elites.

Hence a cloud remains hanging over the future of the new institution. Committing ourselves to the gigantic effort to make UKZN the Premier University of African Scholarship where excellence in teaching, research and community outreach become the foundation of humanity, is not just an imagination. It is up to those who care to transform this imagined into a real community.

## Chronology of Events

## Date

Ashwin Desai part ways with the UDW after a settlement was reached with Professor Ramashala	1997
Kader Asmal publicly stated that mergers would be based on access, equity, regional collaboration and rationalization of programmes	2002
Battle for Vice-Chancellorship of the newly to be formed University of KwaZulu-Natal between Cooper and Makgoba	2003
Professor Mkgoba appointed as interim Vice-Chancellor	2004
Approval of the Terms and Conditions of Employment of UKZN	2004
The Vice-Chancellor announced his intention of Corporatising the university	2004
UKZN Workers strike over wages	2005

Management adopted an authoritarian approach of managing the university	2005
Ashwin Desai is refused an interview for a post due to his 1997 'so-called ban'	2005
Reflections from the University of KwaZulu-Natal on organizational democracy was published	2005
College Model adopted	2005
Intimidation letters written to Academics who were failing to publish	2005
Medical School targeted on racism allegations	2005
Four Banana City informal settlement families taken to the high court by the university	2005
Academic threatened for supporting Abahlali baseMjondolo	2005
Management intentions of the withdrawal of some benefits in the Terms and Conditions of Employment is made publicly	2006
The Vice-Chancellor publicly said Naomi Chomsky is suffering from dementia	2006
Academics all over the world signed a petition on behalf of Desai	2006
Two weeks UKZN Workers strike over wages	2006
Unilateral variations of Terms and Conditions of Employment by management via the 'Matching and Placing'	2006
Mr Fazel Khan charged for dishonesty after the <i>Mail and Guardian</i> airbrushing article	2006

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Social Policy Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **The Clash between Traditional and Modern Systems of Governance in the Durban Metropolis – A Tale of Two Administrative Civilizations**

**Sultan Khan,  
Benoit Lootvoet and  
Evangelos A. Mantzaris and**

## **1 Introduction**

The post-apartheid constitution of South Africa created a three-sphere system of government in which local government is an equally ranked sphere as the national and provincial ones. The idea of an autonomous local government with full administrative and financial management capacities finds its origin in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994. It is in the RDP that the high-priority political objective of empowerment of individuals, communities and institutions was enshrined. These political objectives and principles shaped the Constitution in such a way as to promote civil society's involvement in political decision-making. Accordingly, it was thought that the sphere of local government was best placed for such an initiative.

In the spirit of the RDP, it is at the local level consisting of rural and urban municipalities or other metropolitan structures, that the public authority, communities, economic actors and citizens in general were expected to group together in the most harmonious and efficient manner, in order to identify and implement the means of meeting the communities needs (especially services and infrastructure). It is against this context, that the transformation of local government in South Africa was pursued.

Notwithstanding the spirit of the RDP to empower local communities and empower and enable them to participate in development issues at a local government level, in many provinces and especially in KwaZulu-Natal, the transformation of local government is challenged by another type of institutional and political force in the form of traditional authorities. This opposing forms of modern systems and traditional forms of governance has been an ongoing source of political conflict since democracy and especially in KwaZulu-Natal between traditional leaders and the state on the question of the exact roles and responsibilities of the latter in service delivery at a local government level.

Fuelling the complexity contained in the traditional systems of governance was the extension of the metropolitan area of Durban to include 16 tribal areas just before the 2000 local government elections. It is the only metropolis in the country that encounters traditional leaders in an urban setting. Despite intense opposition from traditional leaders to the Demarcation Board on the inclusion of land that has historically been under their administrative tutelage, the surface area (2297 km<sup>2</sup>) of Durban Metropolitan Region (DMR) was extended by 68% compared to the previous Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA), (1366 km<sup>2</sup>).

The expansion of the metropolis on traditional territory raised pertinent questions on the exact role of traditional leaders as against that of democratically elected councillors at both institutional and political levels, since the major prerogative of service delivery rests with local government. It is against this context that the paper examines the polarization-conflict nexus between traditional and modern forms of governance. The paper traces the cause of the conflict and examines whether this two opposing forms of governing systems can coexist in a co-operative administrative arrangement especially on matters related to service delivery.

## **2 Overview of Traditional Forms of Governance in South Africa**

Indigenous forms of governance and its integration into modern systems of government have thus far proved to be difficult and problematic not only in the African continent, but also more particularly in South Africa. Although most constitutions of African countries make reference to indigenous

systems, in practice these institutions are marginalised, serving merely a symbolic rather than a functional role. More importantly, these institutions are known to be inconsistent with democratic principles of governance, despite their presence long before colonial rule became a historical reality (Ismail et al. 1997:117).

Like the rest of the African continent, indigenous local government in South Africa has been the center of political manipulation and conflict before and after democracy. For example, as early as 1847 the British colonial administration in Natal viewed the tribe as a basic unit to exercise authority and act as an agent of the colonial government. Consequently, Ordinance No.3 of 1849 made provision for the recognition of customary law as long as *'it was not repugnant to the civilised world'*. Chiefs were accorded judicial functions under the control of magistrates, although the extent of their jurisdiction was not specified (Zungu 1997:165).

Sithole (2000), an anthropologist and astute commentator on traditional leadership believes that traditional leadership in Southern Africa is an institution based on kinship rooted on the relationship of blood, fictive or distant between the leader and the people under his authority. Such an assertion is based on a number of writings of liberal historians who have dealt with the issue while concentrating on the Mfecane wars in the early part of the 19th century (Argyle 1978; Wright & Mason 1983). This period is characterised by a pattern of personal, collective and tribal struggles over hegemony, which were in the end instrumental in shaping the historical foundations of the institution of traditional leadership as Kuper (1993) has demonstrated. The period was prone with power struggles amongst groups of people and tribes with the ultimate defeated groups being subjugated by the victors politically and economically.

Sithole (2000) demonstrates that the key element of traditional leadership is the close relation of the leader and his/her people, especially amongst the Nguni people. Thus the leadership succession is shaped by blood kinship as identity, leadership and inheritance passes from father to son. In fact even bourgeois historians have pinpointed the historical reality that the primary concern of traditional leaders during the pre-colonial period was their relationship with their people and not with geographical or land boundaries. Lamband and Thompsons (1989) historical work has demonstrated that boundaries have become an integral part of the traditional

leaders' power struggles only after the colonial conquest and the colonial administration's power plays and interference.

The Black Administration Act of 1927 (section 5(1) a) was the earliest and central legislative mechanism through which traditional leaders were co-opted into a colonial system of government. It empowered the Governor General or the State President to create new tribes, divide existing tribes and demarcate the area occupied by the members of the tribe (Zungu 1997:165-166).

Despite such political power plays on the part of the colonial administration, historical reality confirms that the institution of traditional leadership survived the system of indirect rule, especially in regard to the boundaries of Zululand and Natal, which were shifted continuously according to the political dictates of the ruling colonialist regimes (Duminy & Guest 1989). In fact the colonialists yielded absolute political power over traditional leaders and all indigenous people in their area and subsequently traditional leaders lost control of their economic, military and political affairs of the indigenous population.

The National Party upon coming to power further attempted to regulate the powers and jurisdiction of the traditional leaders. The Black Authorities Act (No. 68 of 1951) reorganized traditional authorities in tribal, regional and territorial authorities. In effect, this Act ensured that traditional leaders were dominant at all three levels (legislative, judicial and administrative) which opened the way for the apartheid regime to consolidate 'reserves' which for some indigenous people had become 'self-governing' whilst for others 'independent' homelands (Ntesebeza 2000:288).

During the period of 'self-government' and 'independent homelands', corruption and repression were features of traditional authority. Many of the problems of corruption among traditional leaders emanated from the lack of accountability, but more especially the salaries they received from the bantustan governments were grossly inadequate. Considering the formal duties assigned to traditional leaders (including legislative, judicial and administrative), their monthly salaries on the average in the 1980s did not exceed more than R700. Given this paltry recompense for their official duties it comes as no wonder that corrupt methods have been resorted to in order to sustain a material standard of living (Tapscott 1997:295).

Beyond their ceremonious duties, an important source of power for traditional leaders was the control and allocation of land. They abused power by charging unauthorised fees to applicants. In addition, they mismanaged state pensions and grants, tribal courts, and migrant labour applications to benefit them materially (Ntsebeza 2000:289). On the contrary, many traditional leaders fulfilled important day-to-day functions including dispute resolution, mediating with state authorities, operating the tribal courts and performing many minor official duties on behalf of the state with a certain level of credibility.

In so far as responsibility for infrastructural development and service delivery was concerned, traditional authorities hardly had any official responsibility (McIntosh 1995:65). Their role was relegated to being a representative for the relevant state department without much decision-making responsibility. In effect, traditional authorities were never empowered to deal with development issues and as such the system encouraged them to participate in party political activities. This is evidenced in KwaZulu-Natal where a substantial number of traditional leaders became members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly which ensured them a parliamentary salary compared to the meagre chiefly stipends which the apartheid regime made them dependent on (McIntosh et al. 1996:341).

It becomes apparent from the foregoing discussion, that the institution of traditional leaders during the colonial and apartheid legacy was largely under-developed, under-resourced and relegated to the periphery of affluent white South Africa. Through a complex set of legislation, the institution was transformed into a manipulative tool through which the 'cultural differences' of the black people were emphasized and used as a basis to balkanise the country. These areas came to be regarded as reservoirs of cheap labour for urban economic centres and mining conglomerates. It must be noted whilst these coercive methods of co-opting the institution of traditional leaders met with some success, many not only rejected co-optation but also took active steps to oppose the system (Discussion Document towards a White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Institutions, 2000:4).

### **3 Transforming the Institution of Traditional Leadership**

#### *Institutional Framework for Transformation*

Currently South Africa has approximately 800 ruling chiefs supported by 1 000 headmen, who when combined have jurisdiction over 18 million people or approximately 40% of the population who are largely rural (Daily News 22/09/2000). The post apartheid government upon coming to power in 1994 provided a new sense of vitality for this institution in Section 12 of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996).

Although the Constitution recognises the importance of traditional leaders, it fails to outline their exact role and function at a local level. Instead, the Constitution states, '*national legislation may provide for a role for traditional leadership as an institution at local level on matters affecting local communities*' (Section 212(1)). The full interpretation of this Constitutional provision is problematic as it suggests that the exact interpretation of what should be the role and responsibility rests with the central government.

It is such ambivalence that has prompted a leading ANC parliamentarian, but above all a traditional leader himself, to scathingly attack his own government in the treatment of traditional leaders. *Inkosi* Pathekile Holomisa had this to say on the treatment of traditional leaders by the ANC government:

One of the ironies of post-colonial Africa is the ease with which its new rulers find comfort within the governance systems of their former oppressors, while they all invariably seem not to know what to do with the indigenous systems that have somehow managed to survive the colonial onslaught. There is usually no debate about whether or not the inherited white man's courts, his Parliament, his executive arm of government or his economic systems should be retained or discarded. The debate is about which Africans must occupy the newly vacated seats of power – political, economic, social and even cultural (*Mail and Guardian* 11-17/02/2000: 29).

This is a direct and undisguised full frontal attack on a government that has attempted through various negotiation forums and legislation to streamline

and smooth power relations between elected representation and traditional leverage of powers, especially in the rural areas that shelter the poorest of the poor and the majority of the victims of apartheid's economic and political brutality, but in the end seems completely undecided on the creation of the proper and acceptable channels that could ease conflicting situations.

Such a reality is patently obvious in the White Paper on Local Government (1998), which avoids taking any strong position on what the new roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders should be within the new democratic order. In fact the White Paper merely highlights what the roles and responsibilities had been like in the old dispensation. In the absence of any new national policy on the definition of the roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders, except for those contained in the White Paper on Local Government, is the only guide. Very broadly, the White Paper outlines the functions of traditional authorities as follows:

- acting as head of the traditional authority, and as such exercising limited legislative powers and certain executive and administrative powers;
- presiding over customary law courts and maintaining law and order;
- consulting with traditional communities through *imbizo* (meeting);
- assisting members of the community in their dealings with the state;
- advising government on traditional affairs through the Houses and Council of Traditional Leaders;
- convening meetings to consult with communities on needs and priorities and providing information;
- protecting cultural values and providing a sense of community in their areas through a communal social frame of reference;
- being a spokespersons generally of their communities;
- being symbols of unity in the community; and
- being custodians and protectors of the community's customs and general welfare.

More specifically, their role in the development of the local area and community under their tutelage include:

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- making recommendations on land allocation and the settling of land disputes;
- lobbying government and other agencies for the development of their areas;
- ensuring that the traditional constituency participates in decisions on development and contributes to development costs; and
- considering and making recommendations to authorities on trading licences (White Paper on Local Government, 1998:96).

An important observation in the White Paper is that traditional leaders do not have direct decision making powers on development issues although some of their roles overlap with municipal functions. In instances where there is an overlap, it is the municipality that has jurisdiction and not the traditional authority. In other words, traditional authorities will be obliged to operate as part of the government in a local government structure.

The existing legislative frameworks politically emasculates traditional leaders, and this is especially true in the case of KwaZulu-Natal, where the political struggles for dominance between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC) have been well known for many years, and the *amakhosi* have been instrumental in providing support for the former at a grass roots level. The vital political role of traditional leaders for the struggle for political power and supremacy between the two largest parties in the KZN Province is adequately documented. Nonetheless, the most obvious terrain of struggle is in the field of service delivery for their constituency, characterized by confrontational antagonism between elected public representatives and traditional authorities (Bank & Southhall 1996). Obviously these struggles are more evident in areas where the traditional authorities support the IFP and where the municipal leadership is ANC-dominated. However, it is widely accepted that the lack of synergy, cooperation and coordination between these key service delivery stakeholders will be a serious impediment of the implementation steps towards development and growth. This is why it is important to examine the institutionalisation of traditional authority as a framework for co-operative governance.

### *Formulating Co-operative Governance Framework*

Although much ambiguity exists on the exact roles and responsibilities of traditional leadership at a local level, provision is made for them to approach and lobby other agencies and spheres of government at both provincial and national levels through the houses of traditional leadership. The 1996 Constitution makes provision for the establishment of a National House of Traditional Leaders subject to relevant national and provincial legislation. The functions of these houses are to advise government on matters affecting traditional leadership, traditional communities and customary law. Interestingly, it is not mandatory for government to seek the House's advice before or during the submission of legislation and policy documents to Parliament.

In keeping with the constitutional provision, six provincial houses were established in terms of provincial legislation passed by the provincial legislatures having consulted traditional leaders. This combined, led to the formation of the National House of Traditional Leaders in terms of the National Council of Traditional Leaders Act of 1998. The national structure consists of 18 members (3 nominees from each of the six provincial houses).

Presently, the chairperson and all members of the National Council of Traditional Leaders are part-time members. The National House continues to lobby to become a full-time body, playing a more significant role in policy formulation and the finalisation of legislation. Legislation is being drafted to provide for the chair-person to be appointed on a full-time basis.

At the national level, the Department of Provincial and Local Government is responsible for the administration of traditional affairs. The provincial houses of traditional leaders interrelate with the provincial administrations responsible for the administration of traditional affairs. However, relationships with government and the functions of the provincial houses differ from province to province.

Insofar as the appointment of traditional leaders are concerned, customary practices within individual communities are taken into account. The provincial government seeks the advice of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders or other functionary before the Premier makes an appointment. Existing regional authorities also make submissions especially in respect of succession of traditional leadership. The number of members of the six provincial houses at present is as follows: Eastern Cape 20; Free

State 15; KwaZulu-Natal 76; Mpumalanga 21; Northern Province 36; and North West 24.

In the post-democratic era, traditional leaders no longer enjoy remuneration or emoluments from their tribes; they are paid in terms of laws passed by central government on a uniform basis, without distinction on the size of the tribe. The remuneration of traditional leaders is regulated in terms of the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act of 1998. This Act makes provision for the remuneration at four levels: King/Paramount Chief level, Chief level, Provincial Houses level and National Houses level. In respect of the latter two, only allowances are paid. A proposal is made by the Houses to make their appointments permanent and paid salaries as full time members. The remuneration of traditional leaders poses serious questions on the nature of the relationship with government and accountability.

It is clear from the discussion that the two key legal documents dealing with the institution of traditional leadership, i.e. the Constitution and the White Paper on Local Government, stipulate clearly that the roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders in the new political dispensation are of no particular importance. The roles identified in the White Paper on Local Government are very similar to those of the apartheid regime. Interestingly, the White Paper acknowledges the important role played by traditional leaders in local government during the previous dispensation, but when it come to defining their exact role in the new political order, it dismisses this in anticipation of a White Paper on Traditional Affairs, which until today is still in its draft stage.

This raises an important question as to whether traditional leaders do in fact have a political role to play in the delivery of services. Considering the fact that the state accords very little importance in defining the roles of traditional leaders and its subsequent attempt at setting up provincial and national structures for traditional leaders in the form of CONTRALESA, is suggestive of conscious attempts on the part of the state to co-opt traditional leaders into a co-operative system of governance or worst, to annihilate them through a series of frustrating and complicated legal frameworks. This in essence, is tantamount to depoliticisation and alienation of traditional leaders. The protracted way the government, political planners and bureaucrats have followed in dealing with the roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders can be perceived as a delaying tactic to progressively and

patiently alienate traditional leaders from their community base and areas so that local citizens end up increasingly identifying with municipal structures and the services they offer so that they stray from the tutelage of traditional leadership structures.

It was such a 'strategic' choice of the government to sideline and alienate traditional leaders that made a senior ANC politician put his traditional leader's hat on and declare that:

An erroneous point of departure [on the part of government] is the notion that if government resources and services are taken away from traditional leaders and are placed at the disposal of politicians then the people will abandon the former in favour of the latter. Besides anything else it is immoral for people to be made to choose between traditional leaders and service delivery – they deserve and are entitled to both.

Local government, like any other level of government, does not own land. In the urban areas land is owned either by the banks, through mortgage bonds, or by holders of the title deeds who have managed to pay off their bonds. In the rural areas tribal or communal land is owned by the tribe as a collective. Despite the fact that under apartheid laws, the state is the legal owner of tribal land, factually and morally the tribes own the land and, unless one is spoiling for a fight, no one can deal with it as he pleases.

Under African tribal law the custody of the land is entrusted in the traditional authority, that is, the head of the tribe and his counsellors. As trustee of the land the traditional authority is required to act at all times in the interests and according to the wishes of the owners of the land, the people (*Mail and Guardian* 11-17/02/2000: 29).

This is one of the reasons that have led traditional leaders throughout the country to build up their own political alliances before and after the 1994 elections. During the first democratic elections in 1994, the support of traditional leaders resulted in a combination of alliances and compromise with the two opposing political parties in KZN (ANC and IFP). CONTRALESA strongly supported the ANC hoping that in return the issue

of traditional leaders would be addressed by the ANC who was expected to be the overall election winner. As the process unfolded, however, the ANC was prepared to deal politically with the traditional leaders only within the framework of the ANC alliance partners and the interim constitution. The IFP with its rural based constituency negotiated a settlement with the ANC, which allowed them three ministerial posts in the government of national unity and a promise to address the issue of traditional leaders (Vawda 2001:1). It becomes apparent, that the system of traditional leadership offered an important and significant basis for a political trade-off between the two competing political parties in KZN. This political trade-off had undoubtedly compromised the position of traditional leaders, which resurfaced during the 1995 local government elections.

### **3 Governance and Service Delivery in the Durban Metropolitan Tribal Areas**

#### *Democratising Local Government – The Process of Demarcation*

The re-demarcation of the boundaries of local authorities was the second most important step in the democratisation of local government in South Africa. This was not only for purposes of democratisation; it was intended for local authorities to carry out their development mandate in the provision of services.

In the discourse on demarcation, competing political and technical factors invariably influence boundary decisions. However, in making such decisions, one needs to be reminded that boundaries are not neutral lines. Often they determine the contours of political power (Cameroon 1999:4). Boundaries influence citizen's access to services and bring into question the financial consequences of such actions.

Bearing this in mind, the Municipal Demarcation Board was required to take the following into consideration when determining boundaries:

- interdependence between communities in the area in respect of settlement patterns, work, commuting, spending patterns and recreation;

- financial viability of the municipality for that area, including a viable tax base for the performance of its functions;
- sufficient financial and administrative capacity of the municipality to perform functions efficiently and effectively;
- topographical, environmental and physical characteristics of the area;
- existing functional boundaries, including tribal authority boundaries, magisterial districts and enumerator areas; and
- existing and future land usage, town and transport planning, including commercial, industrial, residential and recreational and amenity use (White Paper on Local Government 1998:99).

Based on the above principles, demarcation boards were established in the first half of 1994. In KZN the demarcation board became operational in September 1994. The provincial demarcation board had until 31 July 1995 to make its recommendations to the MEC in order to comply with election regulations. Due to the politically volatile situation in the province between the ANC and the IFP (with the IFP enjoying popular support in former traditional areas), the board was instructed to ensure that consultation takes place with every tribal authority (Pillay 1999:207).

Attempts by the demarcation board to set up consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders (*including the amakhosi*) was flawed due to the lack of representivity at meetings, antagonism towards the board, and lack of understanding of the process. Consequently, the demarcation board was unable to secure the views of all stakeholders in the tribal authority areas and consequently made its proposal by the 1 July 1995 so that the election deadlines may be met (Pillay 1999:207).

### *Political Competition to Govern the City*

The Board's proposal for the re-demarcation of boundaries within the substructure level of the City of Durban and those external to it comprising mostly tribal land met with strong opposition from the *amakhosi* and the IFP particularly in KZN. At the substructure level, the two competing political parties (ANC and IFP) accused the other of manipulating the cities boundary

(which was historically segregated by apartheid) in order to preserve their political constituency.

Proposals from the Demarcation Board in July 1995 for the city proposed ten substructures based on 'population balance and community interests rather than economic viability' (Report on the KwaZulu-Natal Local Government Elections, 1996:24). For an example, the Indian areas of Chatsworth, Shallcross, Reservoir Hills and the white areas of Westville and Queensburgh were required to form one substructure along with the African area of Chesterville. In addition the Board also proposed the promotion of purely Black municipalities such as Umlazi (south of Durban) and Ntuzuma/Newtown/Inanda (townships and informal settlements).

The Demarcation Board came under attack by the MEC for Local Government and Housing who charged that historically disadvantaged areas stood no chance of standing on their own financial resources and the proposals made by the Board was tantamount to retaining apartheid style boundaries. The economic viability of the boundaries of the substructures was not only pursued by opposing visions for the best mechanism to deal with poverty, but also by strong overtones of party political interests. Under the ten-substructure proposal, the ANC stood a major chance of winning at least some of the substructures. However, finally, after extensive negotiations, it was agreed to adopt the MEC's proposal (who himself was an IFP member) of six substructures in the metro on the grounds of economic viability (Polunic 1999:77-78).

It may be noted that despite the political contest for the inner city, the demarcation process ultimately confined itself to the primary objective of the exercise to create a sustainable municipality. The compromises reached by the ANC and the IFP were a politically strategic one.

### *Crossing the Boundaries of Tradition: Incorporating Peri-urban and Rural Areas in the DMR*

The outer boundaries of the city was a serious point of political contest between the IFP and the ANC since it involved the inclusion or exclusion of tribal authorities located on the fringe of the metro. These areas were formerly administered by the KwaZulu homeland government and over time became functionally urban in character. The incapacity of the former

KwaZulu government to develop the area due to its communal land tenure status led to these areas being very poorly serviced and underdeveloped.

However, the Demarcation Boards proposals to include a significant portion of land under tribal authority into the metro were rejected by the IFP. The IFP was aware that the ANC support in the metro area was significant and conversely, its own support was rooted in peri-urban and rural areas. The incorporation of large portions of tribal land into the metropolitan area represented to the IFP a potential loss of control and a substantial gain to the ANC (Cameroon 1999:212). Consequently, local government election in KZN was delayed until March 1996 and the matter referred to the Electoral Court for a decision (Jeffery 1997:546).

During the Electoral Court proceedings, the two contesting political parties in a dramatic turn made a final attempt to resolve the matter. The outcome of the discussions led to a compromise, with the substructure boundaries being reworked with formal proclamation of the newly acquired areas being made on the 4 March 1996.

## **5 Competing Service Delivery Roles**

Competing interest in service delivery has been a source of constant political conflict between the state and traditional leaders, which gained increased momentum just before the second local government elections held on 5 December 2000. The most controversial issue that escalated into conflict was the proposed amendment to the Municipal Structures Act (1998) (*Daily News*, November 28, 2000), which aimed to restrict the role and functions of traditional leaders in local government to that of customary law and community matters. This amendment provoked strong opposition from traditional leaders who felt that their functions were being defined no different to that in the apartheid-era (*The Mercury* November 16, 2000).

The Municipal Structures Bill (1998) made no provision for traditional leaders to participate in municipal councils resulting from the demarcation of boundaries that included areas formerly under traditional authority. The Bill sought to give traditional leaders 20% representation on municipal councils, reducing them to a minority (*The Mercury* 22/11/2000). Traditional leaders perceived that the installation of municipal authorities will supersede traditional leadership roles and instead of people seeing them

as agents of development, they will be viewed as part of the clientele system. Basically, traditional leaders could not expect municipal authorities to function and render services in the areas under their jurisdiction without usurping their authority (*Daily News* December 20, 2000).

Another dimension adding to the dilemma of traditional leaders was the controversial issue of service delivery in the newly demarcated areas. Municipal authorities will be expected to exercise control over pieces of land, which owes allegiance to traditional authority systems. This in effect will mean that traditional leaders will be excluded from participating meaningfully in the governance of these areas under their jurisdiction and in the future will have to show political subservience to elected councilors on service delivery matters (*Daily News* October 31, 2000). A direct outcome of this political vulnerability resulted in traditional leaders threatening to boycott the second local government elections since democracy.

The protest of traditional leaders on the Municipal Structures Bill (1998) was eventually heard by the state in the interest of political stability both in the city and the province. Compared to other provinces, KZN had a peculiar political landscape. The Provincial Legislature was dominated by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) under the political leadership of *Inkosi* Dr Buthelezi, who himself is a traditional leader with much influence in the rural areas. On the other hand, the City of Durban is predominantly African National Congress (ANC) in character. Further, the *amakhosi* in KZN are known to have the largest constituency compared to their counterparts in the other five provinces who also adhere to traditional systems of governance.

On the 28 November 2000, the now deposed Deputy President Jacob Zuma together with a special cabinet committee on traditional leaders met with representatives of traditional leaders to resolve their grievance. The state committed itself to define the powers and roles of traditional leaders arising out of the newly demarcated boundaries. A joint committee was established with representatives of the state and traditional leaders. Further, a coalition of traditional leaders was formed comprising the national and provincial houses of traditional leaders, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa and the Royal Bafokeng nation (*Daily News* 12/12/2000).

On the reassurance of the state to address the concerns of traditional leaders and to make constitutional changes to accommodate their roles and functions, local government elections eventually went off on a good start on

the 5 December 2000. Although events leading to the conflict between the *amakhosi* and the State on their role in the delivery of services in the newly incorporated rural areas in the DMR, suggest that the former is a significant political actor, on the contrary, this assumption has proven to be invalid. Looking at the 2000 municipal polls, the ANC received 95 out of the 200 council seats and the IFP only 35. However, when one restricts the analysis to the wards, of the 100 councillor's who were elected by name by the people to represent the ward they belong to, one can see the relative importance of the ANC (61 seats out of 100) is stronger than suggested by the global results.

**2000 Municipal Election Results in the DMR:  
Number of councillors per party.**

	AC DP	AI PP	ANC	DA	EC OP/ EA CE	IFP	IN DE PE ND	MF	NU CO	PAC	Total
<b>Ward specific councillors</b>	0	0	61	29	0	7	1	2	0	0	100
<b>List specific councillors</b>	2	1	34	24	1	28	0	8	1	1	100
<b>Total</b>	2	1	95	53	1	35	1	10	1	1	200

More specifically, when one examines the poll results for the traditional areas incorporated into the DMR, the result is more revealing. In the 16 of the 18 wards in the traditional area, in terms of average votes per ward, there was a two third majority vote for the ANC. This result is intriguing as these areas were supposed to be IFP strongholds and could not be included in the metropolitan area for this reason in 1995/96 (Khan & Lootvoet 2001:170).

The 2000 election results in the tribal authority area begs the provocative question as to whether traditional leaders have lost the battle in exercising their hegemony in what was once their political territory? Whilst it may be premature to make such an analysis, in the face of emerging new mixes in leadership in the traditional areas of the DMR, what is significant is

the dramatic change in political affiliation after the December 2000 elections with a two third majority support for the ANC compared to the IFP. This change in the political landscape of the traditional areas is more likely to marginalize traditional leaders further due to significant loss in political power. Strategically, it is politically expedient for traditional leaders, if they have to safeguard their hegemony, to be seen working in the interest of people through the dominant leadership structure in their area. In the absence of this co-operative relationship, traditional leader risk being far removed from development initiatives promoted by local government.

## **6 Testing out the Maturity of Political Relationship between Traditional Leaders and the State**

After two years of investigation on the institutional frameworks necessary to accommodate the constitutional prerogative of traditional leaders to play a role in governance and service delivery matters, the Provincial and Local Governance Portfolio Committee finally recommended on the 28 October 2003 that the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Draft Bill (2003) be adopted by parliament. This Bill envisaged serving as an initial phase to accommodate the role of traditional leaders in matters of governance.

The process culminated through a wide range of consultative processes with different stakeholders. Not all stakeholders were in agreement with all elements of the draft bill. Traditional leaders in the public hearings argued that the Bill should not proceed into law and that the constitution should be first amended to give traditional authorities the same powers and functions as local government. There were also arguments in favor of the Bill and its aims and objectives. It was argued that in general terms the purpose of the Bill was to deal with the role and functions of traditional leadership in governance.

Currently the passing of the Bill has reached a state of deadlock since technical problems precluded it from parliamentary ratification. The detractors of the process allege that the Communal Land Administration Bill, the Property Rates Bill and the Traditional Leaderships and Governance Framework Bill do not complement each other since the roles are not yet clearly defined. Further the fragmented nature of management of this

institution has brought about greater complexities to bear in the administration of this system. Yet once again the corridors of modern politics are haunted by new challenges in determining the specific role and functions of traditional leadership in different areas, such as customary justice, land administration and welfare. Traditional leaders stressed that the Bill refers only to their 'functions', not 'powers'. Objections were received on finding a role for traditional leaders by allowing traditional councils to serve on land administration committees. The proponents of the Bill believe that it is forward looking and that it supports a role for traditional leadership, not just in the local government sphere, but also in all three spheres of government. This presented a compelling reason why traditional leaders should work within a legislative framework.

In a more placating note, a call for the way forward was made. It called for stakeholders to receive the Bill with an assurance that it will be reviewed over time to take account of the changes taking place as a result of transformation in the institution of traditional leadership. In dispelling the notion that it is not the end of the tunnel for traditional leaders as significant actors in governance and service delivery issues, the portfolio committee urged all stakeholders to appreciate that the processing of the Bill represents a phase in the,

... on-going process of defining the role of traditional leaders in our new system of democratic governance .... All stakeholders should be prepared to compromise in this phase. This does not mean that they cannot pursue their outstanding demands in future' (Provincial and Local Governance Portfolio Committee. Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Bill: Finalisation The Parliamentary Monitoring Group 28 October 2003:3).

While the state tinkers on formulating appropriate statutes to regulate the role and function of traditional leaders, Durban in particular has taken decisive steps to accommodate traditional leaders onto its council, long before the Traditional Leaders and Governance Bill was approved by parliament. Currently, a traditional leadership forum has been established to consult on the development priorities in the tribal areas. Ironically, an ANC councillor acts as a go between the leaders, and the metropolitan council

## *The Clash between Traditional and Modern Systems of Governance ...*

chairs the forum. Traditional leaders already enjoy a monthly allowance of R3 500 per month from the council to cover their administrative costs but as yet do not enjoy formal representation except through the chair of the forum. From this turn of events it appears that traditional leaders are being inducted into the boardroom politics of the council. For the moment, the issue of traditional leaders is no longer being tested out in the rough terrain of the urban hinterland but in the boardrooms of the metropolitan council. At least for now these boardroom novices are being schooled by ANC cadres for the politics that is yet to unfold in the corridors of the city hall.

Although it may appear that traditional leaders have been co-opted into Durban's glittery boardroom politics in the spirit of good governance and service delivery through a forum, it is questionable as to whether this participatory structure is representative of all traditional leaders. In an interview with the chair of the traditional leader's forum that is an ANC councillor, scant respect was accorded for the justification of such an institution existing in the new democracy. The sentiments of this 'city father' are well captured in the following quotation from an interview:

... traditional leaders should not think that they enjoy special privilege due to their status .... Similarly Indians, Whites and Coloureds should be given a similar privilege due to their religious and customary practices. Their 'claim to be special citizens in the country' was looked upon scornfully and those who stay out of the forum were branded the 'mischievous' ones.

With such strong perceptions, the prospect for dissent on governance and service delivery issues is likely to embitter progress made towards co-operative governance.

However, although on the surface it would appear that commendable progress was made towards co-operative governance between traditional leaders and the metropolitan council, the maturity of relationship was tested out once again as the nations geared itself for the third local government elections in March 2006. The KZN agenda for a constitution making process was plunged into controversy during April 2005, once again on the role of traditional leaders and the Zulu monarch in a future dispensation. Some 5000 traditional leaders and their followers protested on the streets of Durban

denouncing the marginalisation of traditional authority in the proposed provincial constitution resulting in it being passed by a one third ANC majority, as the IFP walked out of the process. Whilst one is inclined to believe that the relationship between traditional leaders and modern forms of governance has begun to mature one begins to doubt such an assertion when traditional-weapon clad marchers show open resentment towards democratically elected councillors having more power compared to them. Statements such as '*the indunas and kings are our tradition*' (*Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2005) is a strong indication of the volatility besieging the institution of traditional leadership which is unleashed at politically strategic junctures in order to preserve its traditional hegemony.

## **Conclusion**

Social and political polarisation are not momentary historical abortions, they are affected by a set of material circumstances, activities, struggles and processes. The mission and vision of South Africa's ruling party (ANC) dictated the re-demarcation exercise by the government were the material, political and economic realities of the past had to be redressed in the new democratic dispensation.

One of the creations of this re-demarcation exercise is the eThekweni municipality, which includes urban, peri-urban as well as rural areas, many of which have been historically administered and ruled by traditional leaders. The existing polarisation between traditional authorities and elected representatives is concentrated on a number of issues, one of the most important being service delivery, especially to semi rural and rural communities.

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) and subsequent legislation were instrumental in sharpening the contradictions between the state and traditional leaders as they widened basic ideological rifts existing between equally important institutions, which on many occasions are on an adversarial (if not openly polemical) relationship. These processes of polarisation are galvanised by existing and historically rooted political rivalry between the ANC and the IFP in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, despite the fact that the eThekweni Municipality was easily won by the country's ruling party.

It has been assumed that the state's alienation of the traditional leaders has been seen, perceived or assumed as a deliberate attack on the poor communities served historically by traditional leaders and this could have detrimental results, given the lack of capacity of local municipalities.

Although eThekweni is generally accepted as a financially vibrant and administratively capable entity, widespread protests mainly of informal settlement dwellers, indicates that there are strong possibilities that rural communities disillusioned with the lack of service delivery could be next. This is particularly true, as the article has shown that the incorporation of peri-urban and rural areas into the eThekweni municipality has created a number of highly contentious issues associated with the demarcation process and beyond.

What Bills such as the Communal Land Administration Bill and the Traditional Leadership Governance Bill have done was to alienate traditional authorities further, instead of creating channels and mechanisms that could lead to a 'dual service delivery system', especially in the semi rural and rural communities.

The streamlining of the processes of service delivery to semi rural and rural populations is inextricably connected to a synergic and cooperative plan between all-political role players and stakeholders in the municipality. Nonetheless, the sidelining of traditional leaders can only offer short-term solutions to the burning issue of effective service delivery.

Without creating the necessary channels of communication, cooperation and synergy between traditional and democratically elected leaders, such a reality is a major challenge for the state. Political and social polarisation is today's realities, but tomorrow's dangers.

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Sociology Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Social Policy Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **The Importance of Narratives in South African Policy Work: How to Hear the Voices in a Participatory Democracy**

**Kirsten Trotter**

## **1. Introduction**

Increasingly, the value of the 'narrative' is being recognized as a legitimate means of both gathering and interpreting information in social science. With its roots in literary theory the narrative is now being used in a variety of ways in the realm of public policy. As policy makers seek to better understand the dynamics of the policy process, policy analysts and researchers are exposing the value of the narrative as an instrumental means of providing coherence and structure to the life cycle of a particular policy issue in order to gain a better understanding of the issue. By way of illustrative example a policy analyst or researcher can attempt to gain increased insight into the Tobacco Products Control Act of 1993 by imposing a beginning, middle and end to the entire 'story' – from when the effects of smoking were first acknowledged globally in the early 1960s to the decisive policy action taken in South Africa – namely the 1993 Tobacco Products Control Act. Proponents of this narrative approach to policy analysis would maintain that one has increased ability to understand the policy issue because one can 'see' the whole picture, making it easier to identify policy solutions. This article proposes that narratives have additional value for policy work, particularly in the context of South Africa's participatory democracy. Although numerous avenues for participation exist, it remains a challenge to ensure the 'voices' of the electorate (particularly

those without power) are filtered into the policy decisions made by policy makers; politicians and technocrats. Thus the electorate remains polarized from those in positions of power in terms of their ability to affect the course of various policy processes. It is argued here that the narrative, as a tool, has the potential to give coherence and structure to the 'voices' of South Africa's 'passive spectators' (Mangu 2005), who are located at the opposite end of the participatory continuum, in order for them to feed productively and effectively into the policy process.

Within the context of broader discussions of the various conceptions of polarization – particularly in the South African context, this article intends to expose the particular value this technique has for minimizing polarization within the South African policy processes. Many scholars (Esteban & Ray 1995; Sheshanna & Décornez 2003; Wolfson 1994) agree that polarization means a movement towards the poles on any given issue. For example, low income versus high income groups; liberals versus conservatives; politically active (by virtue of their power) versus the politically inactive (by virtue of their lack of power). Movement away from the 'middle' and towards the poles of this continuum signifies a polarization on a topic. In order for polarization to occur there must also be a concentration or convergence of groups around specific locations on the continuum. This article argues that polarization exists between policy makers, politicians and technocrats and the 'passive spectators' who make up the rest of the South African public.

The argument is largely inspired by various submissions made to a book published by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) entitled *Democracy in the Time of Mbeki* edited by Richard Calland and Paul Graham of IDASA. Primarily, Xolela Mangu (2005) claims that the more we move towards ideas of public administration, the more momentum is gained for the current trend of centripetal policy formation the further removed the policy making process has and will continue to become from the masses, thereby perpetuating the notion of polarization within the South African policy process. Thus, what is discussed in this article is the current existence and consequence of this form of polarization within the South African policy process. The article offers a potential solution in the form of the increased utilization of the narrative in policy deliberation.

## 2. GEAR, HIV/AIDS and the Arms Deal

The processes undertaken to arrive at the single most important piece of policy in South Africa, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), is characterized by a

- (a) history of the journey through [the negotiation process] [that] reveals a uniquely South African characteristic: an obsession with consultation (Ebrahim 1998:4).

During this particular policy making process, civil society was permitted to make submissions to the Court. According to *Certification Judgment* 1996, a total of 84 submissions were received from non-governmental organizations and individuals and 5 from political parties – evidence of vigorous participation in the formation of this policy. Once complete the Constitutional Assembly embarked on what can be described as a massive awareness campaign in an effort to educate people about their constitutional rights and further their participation in the policy process. This ‘massive awareness campaign’ was one of many initiatives by government to promote participation into various political processes. For the new government proof of participation was the first in many steps towards entrenching democracy.

In retrospect, perhaps the expectations held of participation were unrealistic and it is not wholly surprising that large distance has crept in between those that govern the country and those that put them in that position. Indeed, it can be argued that this gulf has been one of society’s own creation, the source of which lies with the decision to institute a representative electoral system based on the idea of party lists. The party list system, according to Fick (2005:152) states that

under this system political parties compile lists containing the names of the candidates they have nominated, ranked in order of preference with the leader of the party topping its list. The lists are closed in the sense that voters are not able to express with his or her vote, any preference for a particular candidate on the list.

Although applauded for its simplicity, inclusiveness and representativity, this system ‘falls short on accountability’ (Fick 2005:152). Essentially,

voters don't know who they are going to get as their elected representative – the party for whom they voted makes that decision. This has perpetuated the public's shying away from engagement with the elected officials. For the uninformed public, identifying who will listen to (and relay) their concerns is extremely difficult. Issues of accountability fuel the development of this chasm. Essentially the elected official is responsible to the party and not to the electorate – after all it is the party that can either put the official on or off the party list thereby promoting or halting their professional careers. As Lodge (2004:2) puts it,

under South Africa's electoral system, elected representatives are directly accountable to their leaders, not the electorate.

Habib *et al* (2005: 175) concur, saying

(w)hen MPs carry out their constituency work they view themselves as political party members rather than non-partisan members of committees.

Furthermore, Jagwanth (2003:14) observes that South Africa's impenetrable bureaucracy has increased the 'skew in favour of centralism'. This has resulted in 'government being too remote from the population and consequently access to government is often difficult', thus perpetuating the polarization between those in positions of power and the general masses. Somewhat more dramatically, Mangcu (2005:77) suggests that the initial culture of consultation and participation no longer exists, with 'democratic discourse reduced to a series of announcements about what the government intends to do'. This is hinted at in the formation processes of the policies discussed below.

The establishment of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, in Mangcu's (2005:75) opinion, appears as though it 'was the result of a series of behind the scenes meetings involving a select group of ANC economists and cabinet with officials from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund'. The policy was presented to political role players as 'not open for discussion'. The controversy surrounding the arms deal offers another example of this centralized style of policy making –

illustrated by Mosiuoa Lekota, the Minister of Defense, with his comment that ‘under no conditions would the government reverse or cancel the programme’ (Mangcu 2005:76).

President Mbeki managed to astound the global community by refuting the connection between HIV and AIDS. After significant interventions by various civil society actors, the High Court ordered the state to provide anti-retroviral drugs to pregnant mothers in state hospitals. In response, the government questioned the legitimacy of a ‘court sitting in judgment of government policy’ (Jagwanth 2003:15) and consequently announced its intention to appeal to the Constitutional Court. In a statement, the Minister of Health said this route was chosen because the ‘judgment gave the wrong answer to the question of who makes policy’ (Jagwanth 2003:15). The Minister elaborated:

If this judgment is allowed to stand it creates a precedent that could be used by a wide variety of interest groups wishing to exercise quite specific influences on government policy in the area of socio-economic rights .... What happens to public policy when it begins to be formulated piecemeal fashion through unrelated court judgments? (Tshabalala-Msimang 2001)

Although the HIV/Aids issue refers in particular to issues around constitutional democracy and South Africa’s legislative framework, the point is valuable. In his conclusion, Mangcu makes a fundamental observation. He says that ‘at the very least, a little more listening, a little more learning would have saved us a great deal of embarrassment over the past few years’ (Mangcu 2005:78). Certainly the task is now to avoid the polarization of the policy process by getting those policy experts and technocrats leading policy formation in South Africa to identify what it is they should be ‘listening’ to and incorporate what they have ‘heard’ into their policy making. As Mangcu (2005) says, ‘(t)he government has to find administrative ways – and not the occasional imbizo – to structure the collective intelligence of the population into its decision processes’ (Mangcu 2005:78). One way to begin to structure this collective intelligence’ is through the use of narratives.

### **3. What is a Narrative?**

The term 'narrative' is, as the term implies, a story. Indeed, as H. Porter Abbott (2002:1) claims,

(w)hen we think of a narrative, we usually think of it as art, however modest. We think of it as novels or sagas or folk tales or, at the least, as anecdotes .... But as true as it is that narrative can be an art and that art thrives on narrative, narrative is also something we all engage in, artists and non-artists alike.

Thus, a narrative is both a story discussing a particular issue as well as an instrumental tool which can be used to better understand a particular issue. When drawing on the instrumental tool conception of the narrative, the actual application can be referred to as 'narrativizing a reality by imposing on it a beginning, middle, and end' (White 1980:2). Thus in applying the narrative to a particular issue, that issue becomes clearer to understand.

- Academics in a variety of disciplines have long turned to the idea of the narrative to better understand aspects of their discipline. For example, the narrative has played an important role in family therapy practices (Burck 2005); understanding the sociocultural, political and institutional complexity around ecosystem change (Armitage 2004) and even for investigating caring in the nursing profession (McCance, McKenna & Boore 2001). Importantly the creation of narratives, within policy work in particular, is a process undertaken for a series of different purposes – one of which is proposed in the discussion that follows.

Emery Roe's seminal work *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice* serves as the theoretical foundation of what is suggested in this article. For Roe (1994), narrative policy analysis, with its roots in literary analysis and critical theory, is a technique recommended for complex, uncertain and highly polarized policy issues. Quintessentially, it was a technique developed to construct meaning from the 'signs' revealed in a narrative (Roe 1994:17), which can accommodate the different perspectives that different readers have of the same issue. The story (narrative) that emerges in trying to accommodate these different perspectives is identified as the *meta-narrative*, which in itself then constitutes a 'new' story (narrative). This meta-narrative remains true to the elements of the polarized

accounts of the issue and makes no judgment about the validity of either. Essentially, the meta-narrative recasts the policy issue in a way that allows fresh consideration of the issue. Further to the meta-narrative, Roe (1994:41) identifies the existence of *counter-stories*. These have the ability to displace the existing narrative by offering an alternative account of a policy issue, 'telling a better story' (Roe 1994:41) Finally, *non-stories* constitute largely circular arguments as they have a beginning but no end – telling us 'what to be against without completing the argument as to what we should be for' (Roe 1994:53).

With this theoretical conception of the narrative in mind, how can participation be construed of as a narrative?

Mangu (2005:75) believes South Africa has lost its way or

at the very least it has produced a bifurcated identity of an active elite that is actively involved in the political and policy discourse, and the general mass of the population who are no more than passive spectators.

One recognizes, however, that the very notion of the 'general mass of the population' (Mangu 2005:75) is complex and multi-faceted. In reality, there lies enormous distinction between different racial groupings, classes and genders – all of whom constitute Mangu's single notion of the 'general mass of the population'. However further unpacking of this goes beyond the ambit of this discussion, which simply aims to illustrate the current (if general) reality of the simple bifurcation between those in positions of power (policy makers, politicians and technocrats) and the general population who do not have the access or ability to effectively influence policy deliberation in South Africa.

Participation, conceived of as voluntary activities through which members of the public, directly or indirectly, share in the legislative, policy making and planning activities of democratic institutions, should allow for the 'voices' of the masses to be heard. For Mangu (2005) this cannot be the case given the increasingly centralized (and consequently less responsive) policy process. Issues raised at a community meeting held with a prospective councilor; motivations behind a 93 year old man from rural KwaZulu-Natal voting in local government elections or individuals submitting commentary

on a proposed policy from the public gallery of the provincial legislature during a formal sitting, all constitute public participation. However, the effectiveness of such participation remains limited because of its lack of coherence, its fragmentation and ultimately its relative silence.

Perhaps if the result of public participation – the ‘voices’ were given structure, such as that offered by narratives, there would be a greater chance of them being ‘heard’, their views being incorporated in policy deliberations. The ‘voice’, in general, lacks unity, making it easy to ignore. The ‘narrative’, on the other hand, offers structure to the ‘voice’ which increases their chances of being recognized and channeled into the policy processes. Thus, it is argued here that policy deliberations on any one policy issue can be increasingly representative and reduce the polarization (between the policy makers, politicians and technocrats and the mass general population) within the policy process if policy makers consider the information revealed through the application of narratives. Indeed, as Roe (1994:17) advocates, the narrative has the ability to construct meaning from the ‘signs’ revealed in a narrative, which can accommodate the different perspectives that different readers (or indeed participating members of the mass general population) have of the same issue. With this in mind, one cannot ignore the impact of the political power game that is played in every arena. This game will ultimately determine who will channel what, and why. This is elaborated on in the discussion that follows.

Although there are a multitude of avenues for public participation in South Africa, this discussion focuses, in the first instance, on participation in the legislative arena.

#### **4. What Avenues Currently Exist for Participation in Policy Formation Processes?**

If, as is suggested here, the search is on for different ways to channel the ‘voices’ (narratives), then it becomes necessary to recognize the avenues that currently exist. The framework for these avenues is provided by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. According to section 59 of the Constitution:

- (1) The National Assembly must

- (a) Facilitate public involvement in legislative and other processes of the Assembly and its committees; and
- (b) Conduct its business in an open manner and hold its sittings, and those of its committees, in public ....

(2) The National Assembly may not exclude the public, including the media, from sitting of its committee unless it is reasonable and justifiable not to do so in a democratic and open society.

This legislated participation is realized through the

committee system in Parliament, initiatives undertaken by individual MPs to facilitate public participation through both party channels and constituency work, and Parliament's outreach programmes (Habib *et al* 2005: 174).

## **5. How Effective are these Avenues?**

The Institute for Democracy's book *Democracy in the Time of Mbeki* acknowledges the progress made towards democratic consolidation thus far. A number of concerns are, however, raised. Included is 'access to the means to participate, such as information about what exactly is going on and how and on what basis decisions are being taken' (Calland & Graham 2005:11). The dominance of English and Afrikaans as languages of preference also presents a barrier to successful participation. Clearly, the poorer, less resourced the citizen, the less likely they will be to participate in various political processes (compounding the polarization taking place in South African society). This conception of 'less resourced' requires considerable unpacking and debates circulate about at which point one can be identified as 'less resourced'. Murray and Pillay (2005:207) go some way to clarifying this by saying it has

less ... to do with whether people are formally free to participate in the public arena and more to do with the ability of individuals to access the courts, government institutions and the media. This in turn depends on the delivery of social and economic goods such as

education, health-care and housing.

Further, by being 'less resourced' they are often consequently less organized, further reducing their ability to successfully access avenues of participation (Habib *et al* 2005). Often, the institutional mechanisms established to channel the 'voices' of the mass general population into the policy process are faulty and ineffective. Certainly, the parliamentary committee structure falls into this trap with 'matters arising in constituencies hardly getting fed into the respective work of the committee in parliament' (Habib *et al* 2005:175). They conclude that the situation is thus far from perfect. If the current institutional environment, while amenable to participation, is not acting as efficiently as it should, then other opportunities need to be found.

As alluded to earlier, political power games are a perpetual feature of the policy making landscape. Indeed, 'filters' exist, too, to ensure certain 'voices' are not heard. No matter how the opinions of the masses are structured – be it in the form of a narrative or not – there is no guarantee it will be considered by the policy experts and technocrats making policy. Even if they are, there is absolutely no guarantee they will be considered by the politicians. It simply may not align with their agenda. What results then, is the dominance of a single, powerful, narrative which excludes other narratives from being heard. For Tshabalala-Msimang, hearing other narratives in the HIV/Aids debate had the potential to set a 'bad' policy making precedent. There are simply too many interest groups, with too many different agendas all trying to influence the policy process. It is important to recognize though that although dominant narratives tend to remain in the hands of the politically powerful, when other interests organize and speak with one 'voice', heard through a single narrative (such as that offered by the Treatment Action Campaign), influence is exercised over the policy making process. Thus, the polarization illustrated in this discussion has the potential to be reduced.

## **6. How Narratives can Embellish the Policy Formation Process**

As Steve Biko (1996:128) envisioned 'In a government where democracy is allowed to work, one of the principles that is normally entrenched is a

feedback system, a discussion between those that formulate policy and those who must perceive, accept or reject policy'. This article argues that it is this 'discussion' that is currently absent.

At present policy experts and technocrats make policy by drawing on particular types of information, 'data'. This 'data' is presented in research reports, in the form of survey results and statistics etc. – in a manner conducive to making measurable 'count, cost, deliver' decisions (Fukuda-Parr 2002:5). However, as Hayden White (1980:4) suggests,

(w)hat is involved, then, is that finding of the 'true story', that discovery of the 'real story' within or behind the events that come to us in the chaotic form of 'historical records'.

Essentially, White is trying to question how the 'truth' (the policy solution?) can be found entirely within sets of documents that present policy issues in a particular guise.

As Mangcu (2005) argues, the formation of GEAR took place behind closed doors with various cabinet ministers and representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who no doubt arrived at the table armed with documents supporting this direction for South Africa's macro-economic policy. The result is a policy document that many feel does not reflect the issues, concerns and needs of the masses. Indeed, perhaps the identification and inclusion of the issues, concerns and needs of the 'mass general population', in the form of narratives, could be a useful means of validating the policy decisions arrived at. After all, the ideas presented by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund may well have been the only alternative available at the time of deliberation, making theirs the most dominant narrative.

This point highlights the argument presented by White (1980:4) who claimed that '(a)s a panglobal fact of culture, narrative and narration are less problems than simply data'. Indeed it is his belief that the information gleaned from narratives can and should carry the same weight as 'data' or information provided by, for example, technocrats when trying to arrive at a policy solution. Nonetheless, although the narrative has the ability to aid in improving decision making based purely on documents and similar 'data',

they are still 'interpretive' – the person uncovering the narrative has to interpret it in order to reveal its value. It is the processes of 'filling' in the blanks when putting various policy concerns into a narrative structure that constitutes this interpretation. For example, if a policy analyst were to ask members of a non-governmental organization advocating for the rights of victims of rape what South Africa's position on this matter was, they would be told a narrative from a very particular perspective. If they were to ask the same question to a politician aiming for re-election, the chances are good the narrative would be different. Thus, policy analysts must extract a meta-narrative that they feel accurately reflects the position of both parties. This undoubtedly involves interpretation but the very act of narrativising can offer insight which is not offered in traditional texts or documents. Utilizing the narrative in this way can reduce the polarization experienced in the South African policy process by, for example, incorporating the views (organized into a structured story) of the non-governmental organization as well as those of the politician up for re-election.

White (1980:3) elaborates saying

(t)he distinction between discourse and narrative is of course, based solely on an analysis of the grammatical features of two modes of discourse in which the 'objectivity' of the one and 'subjectivity' of the other are definable primarily by a 'linguistic order of criteria'. The subjectivity of the discourse is given presence, explicit or implicit, of an 'ego' who can be defined 'only as the person who maintains the discourse'. By contrast, the 'objectivity of narrative is defined by the absence of all reference to the narrator'.

Thus, complete objectivity in dealing with a policy concern is unlikely. Even 'data' contains an element of subjectivity. Although data is generally considered value neutral, depending on its role within a policy or deliberative narrative, the same data can be used to support very different policy positions.

The opportunity that exists for the narrative to take its place in policy processes is identified by Dodge *et al* (2005:286) when they refer to the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences, increasing its profile in public administration and public policy. For them, this 'narrative turn' has

'(o)pened up new pathways for research that focus on *interpreting* social events and understanding the intentions and meanings of social actors, rather than just explaining and predicting their behaviour'.

## 7. Where to Find the Voices

Of course this argument is inconsequential if one is unable to identify what is out there to be 'listened to'. And so one enters the realm of policy theorist John Kingdon (1995). His belief is that ideas, opinions and even policy solutions requiring policy attention are the result of a flow of three sets of interacting processes: *problems* (matters requiring public attention); *policies* (proposals for change based on an accumulation of knowledge) and *political process* (such as elections and swings in national mood). It is only when these processes collide that a concern makes it on to the discussion agenda.

Of particular relevance for this discussion are the *policies* that incorporate his notion of the policy issue stream. Here Kingdon believes ideas, policy concerns and even policy solutions exist 'out there'. This policy stream incorporates policy communities (of which the IMF and the World Bank during the GEAR process as well as the media, would be a part). For Kingdon it is simply a matter of time before these ideas, policy concerns and policy solutions come to the fore. Patton (1997) agrees saying,

(n)arrative analyses of policy argue for the importance of recognizing that public policy dialogues are, indeed, *public* discussions situated in complex discursive, legislative, and socio-political histories. Legislative agendas do not exist in isolation from popular culture and public opinion, and it is argued here, it is necessary to explore the relationships between shifts in public policy and widespread media narratives in order to fully understand the relations of power at work in such social shifts. The political narratives embedded in public policy agendas draw on broader social stories about race and identity, gender and family, class and work, citizenship and nation that are widely available in public discourse.

Perhaps controversially, this article suggests this might not be the case in the current South African context. Are there really policy alternatives 'out there'? Given the absence of policy research institutes and think tanks (IDASA, Human Sciences Research Council and higher education centres like the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Civil Society being amongst the obvious exceptions), perhaps the level of policy research sophistication required to identify the existence of ideas, policy concerns and policy solutions just does not exist.

However, the generation of ideas, policy concerns and policy solutions is not the exclusive domain of policy research institutes and think tanks. As Kingdon (1995) correctly claims, participants in the policy process can be 'inside or outside the government' and can include: political appointees, civil servants, interest groups, academics, researchers and consultants and the media.

## **8. Conclusion**

The intention to seek and incorporate participation in numerous aspects of the political process in post apartheid South Africa was sincere. Increasingly, however, various structural realities (such as the electoral system) have dictated the gradual separation (polarization?) of those in positions of power, from those who voted them into the position in the first place. This tendency towards centralism is briefly illustrated by the policy examples discussed above. What does this mean for policy makers as well the citizens of South Africa? Should and can this issue be constructively addressed? Although the disconnection between the politicians and the people has gradually taken place, it does not mean that the people have ceased voicing their concerns about particular policy issues, discussing ideas in various forums, and potentially even offering solutions to various policy dilemmas. This article argues this kind of political activity can be conceived of as 'voices'. Once identified, these voices can be given structure, in the form of a narrative, in order to encourage coherency and consequently, impact. The 'voices' (narratives) can, and should, be considered as an additional information source for technocrats and policy experts. Of course, there is no guarantee the politicians will listen, with some of these narratives blatantly opposing their agendas (and those of the broader policy community). Surely, though, at the very least the narrative has the potential of becoming a functioning

tool of participatory policy practices in South Africa, and in so doing reducing the polarization that currently exists between those in positions of power and the general population.

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*Kirsten Trotter*

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Policy & Development Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg

Tel: 033 260 5309

Fax: 033 260 5290

trotterk@ukzn.ac.za

# **Hostel Re-development and Emerging Conflict for Housing Tenure within the Umlazi Tehuis in the eThekweni Municipality – A Study of Key Social Polarization Indicators**

**Mxolisi Love Lace Ngcongco and  
Mduduzi Nkosinathi Gladwin Mtshali**

## **Introduction**

The history of urban landscape formation in South Africa accorded pariah status to hostel dwellers although this marginalized, politically volatile and transient community was central to South Africa's capital accumulation. Hostel dwellers in the city, just like their counterparts in mining compounds were socially polarized, isolated from their black township counterparts and alienated from their rural roots. The system of hostel dwelling was entrenched on a vicious and inhumane migrant labour system. It kept black Africans on a constant treadmill making them move in and out of their rural homestead. This resulted in the lack of social permanence, finding themselves in a state of cultural schizophrenia. Segal (1991), Zulu (1993), Ramphela (1993), Goldstone Commission of Inquiry (1993), Sitas (1996) and Elder (2002) have written extensively on the hostel community and the different facet of social polarization, conflict and violence. However, with the re-development of hostels, a new form of social polarization appears to be in the making. On the surface, it appears to be contained in the management of development processes, provision and identification of

viable housing opportunities within the hostel transformation agenda, but underlying these is a deep sense of unease amongst hostel dwellers on their future housing needs.

Housing in the post apartheid South Africa, constitutes an integral part of the government's reconstruction vision in order to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of those previously disadvantaged. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1994) and subsequently the Housing White Paper (1994) recognizes the fundamental housing rights of all citizens. Enormous emphasis exists on the upgrading and redevelopment of state and privately owned hostels in order to promote sustainable and humane living environments. It aims to re-integrate hostel communities into surrounding communities through active participation of hostel dwellers. By the close of 1990, the state set aside R4bn for the conversion of hostels into family centered housing through an independent trust. Despite such a magnanimous gesture from the state, the pace of re-development was blemished by the lack of clear policies both at central and provincial levels of government. In instances where such development was initiated, it was constrained by local leadership crisis, opposition to the privatization of hostel services, increased tariff in basic services and rental, corruption amongst officials, lack of commitment from local and provincial governments in providing alternative accommodation to displaced residents resulting from redevelopment and conflict over wider development programmes both within and outside of the hostel community. It is in this context, that the case study of Umlazi Tehuis provides much insight into the social dynamics of the hostel community, potential for development, and the inherent risk of social polarization. The socio-economic profile of residents and current development dynamics unfolding in the immediate vicinity of the hostel is analysed to identify potential social polarization indicators.

### **Brief Background to the Study**

The South African Transport Service (SATS) established the Umlazi Tehuis hostel during the apartheid era primarily for purposes of accommodating its staff. In 1990 SATS was privatized to form Transnet, which became responsible for all operations of hostel management. Transnet Housing was established specifically to take charge of the different housing stock of the

## *Hostel Re-development and Emerging Conflict for Housing Tenure ...*

para-statal company. Changes in the national road transport landscape resulting in the booming mini-bus taxi industry, reduction in rail commuting and emerging privately owned bus monopolies, forced Transnet to reconsider its subsidized housing and hostel accommodation for its employees. Presently, Transnet is in the process of selling its housing stock to the public as part of its privatization agenda. It has committed itself to transform hostels into privately owned family centered dwellings in keeping with the government's social housing policies.

Tehuis is located at the entrance of Umlazi Township, adjacent to the South Industrial Basin, which is home to the cities main industrial node. The dwelling comprises sixteen self-standing units accommodating 4041 official tenants. Tehuis was the center of political rivalry in the 1980s and early 1990s between its predominantly pro-ANC residents and the neighboring IFP supporters' housed in the adjacent Glebe Hostel. During these political strife years, many older residents left the hostel to live either in neighboring townships and informal settlements. Some were forced to return to their rural homestead. After twelve years of democracy, the Tehuis continues to be inhabited by pro-ANC supporters. Even the ANC councilor for this part of Umlazi is himself a hostel resident.

The hostel is located adjacent to a prime vacant site owned by Transnet. It comprises 14ha of land within close proximity to the Durban International Airport, major transport routes to and from other historically isolated residential areas and located at the entrance of Umlazi township which is home to some 600 000 people. In 2003 as part of the vision to promote local economic development in keeping with the cities Integrated Development Plans, a public-private partnership was entered into revitalizing the township through the construction of a Mega City (shopping mall). Facilitated by the municipality, Transnet entered into a 40-year lease agreement with Proprop, a subsidiary of the parent company and funded by SA Retrail Properties and Martprop to the amount of R150m.

The Mega City development is envisaged to be a one stop service centre with a combination of major retail outlets and municipal service points where people can pay water, electricity and rates bills, and deal with pension and education issues. One of the major rationale behind this development is to undo the historical isolation and marginalisation of townships from service centers and the costs attached to traveling long distances to meet such

necessities. It is estimated that 69% of the residents of Umlazi earn less than R2000 per month and have to add an additional R10-R20 to the monthly grocery bill for travel costs. Working on the assumption that 60 000 households spent approximately R20 per month on travel to access essential items outside of Umlazi it amounts to R14m per annum spent on transport by the community (<http://www.durbangov.za/ethekwini/Council>).

The Mega City development is envisaged to promote sound economic returns on investment. With major chain stores taking up a vast majority of the 30 000m<sup>2</sup> of the surface area of the mall, the economic spin offs from such an investment holds great financial promise according to planners. It is projected that the residents of Umlazi will spend approximately R181.5m per annum at the mall once it becomes operational. With big business fully behind this initiative, the city fathers and mothers are optimistic that this project is a key lever in the creation of equitable access to economic and social facilities, and will generate many direct and indirect jobs within the community. It is anticipated that the mall development is to provide employment to some 1800 people in the locality. On completion of the project, a third of the ownership of this mall is expected to pass onto a black empowerment company. With this vision in hand, development progressed at an accelerated pace and phase one was opened early last year for trade.

At the hostel level, development processes lagged although it initially intended to complement the Mega City development side by side. The origins of development processes commenced with the establishment of a Steering Committee in 2003, comprising the leadership of the hostel community, the office of the local councilor and developers to set in motion future plans for the redevelopment of the hostel. Notwithstanding the complementary development intentions of Transnet, the pace of the Mega City development outstripped that of the hostel. Much time was dedicated in 2004 for a series of consultative meetings with the community to identify their housing needs with no tangible outcomes following these processes. The Mega City development has taken a significant amount of attention away from the plight of the hostel community to the extent that the upkeep of the premises is in a state of neglect and rapid deterioration. In 2005 Transnet and the steering committee undertook an extensive exercise to put in motion redevelopment plans for the hostel, which are on hold pending the provincial governments funding commitment. These delays have resulted in tensions beginning to manifest

itself within the hostel community and anti-development sentiments are becoming more pronounced.

## **Methodology**

This paper is informed by a reanalysis of a database compiled by Transnet, in preparation of transformation plans for the redevelopment of the Tehuis hostel. It contained data on 2389 hostel residents who responded to an applied research survey undertaken in 2004 on the future transformation of the hostel in to family centered housing units. The database was manipulated and reanalyzed by key social indicators that are likely to inform the emergence of social polarization within the Tehuis hostel community. A second set of database was reanalyzed containing qualitative information on the perception of residents on development dynamics on the transformation of the hostel and its surrounds. This database contained information from focus group studies undertaken by Transnet in sixteen hostel blocks. The authors independently undertook further in-depth interviews with sixteen block chairpersons in order to verify the focus group data and gain further meaningful insight on social polarization indicators within the hostel community.

Social polarization is known to result from any number of variables although in most studies income as a single variable is considered a very strong indicator. Income covers a wide range of social activities and is an important determinant of the extent to which people are excluded from these. In this study multiple variables are analysed to assess the potential sources of social polarization. The importance of a multi-variable analysis provides a clearer identification of the nature and degree of volatility to be expected as a consequence of interacting variables. In addition, a multifactor analysis provides a much stronger confirmation of the intensity of social polarization to be anticipated.

## **Social Polarization Indicators within the Hostel Community**

### *Gender*

The general perception of hostel communities is that it is male centred. In the Umlazi Tehuis, 5% of the sample population was females. However, in spite of the poor presence of females in the hostel it is more than likely to pose enormous challenges in the future transformation agenda in finding

gender redress especially in light of being historically excluded from tenancy arrangements. Considering the fact that 73% of the female residents earn less than R500 per month and 14% between R501 – R999 suggests that cumulatively 87% will be excluded from financing and securing permanent accommodation in the hostel in the future. Hence they will be compelled to consider renting housing options and this is likely to be influenced on the extent to which they will be eligible to qualify for accommodation based on the new rental tariffs to be implemented once the hostel upgrade is completed.

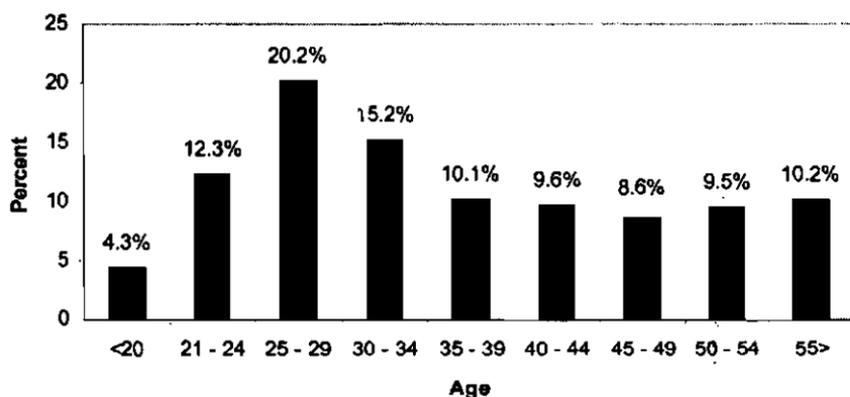
### *Age*

A very youthful population inhabits Umlazi Tehuis. A total of 52% of the sample population are 35 years and below. More than half (54%) of respondents in this category indicated that they would consider long term housing opportunities within the hostel when it arises. This suggests that younger people have a significant interest in securing their long-term accommodation needs in the hostel. However, a deeper interpretation of whether younger respondents present themselves as potentially reliable entrants into the permanent housing market may be viewed skeptically. Generally younger people tend to be more socially mobile compared to the older. Educational advancement, career opportunities and income levels are some of the factors that are likely to influence younger people to be on the move. On the other hand, working on the assumption that younger people are more likely to use their present residential status as a stepping-stone to advance their social and economic status, it is more than likely for them to make varying demands on the hostel housing market resulting in the exclusion of prospective older and married residents. There is a further likelihood of them inflating the demand for renting flat type accommodation compared to family centered ownership housing.

Older persons (50 years and over) made up 20 percent of the sample population. This constitutes one fifth of the total number of potential entrants into the hostel housing market. More specifically, 12% of this population indicated that they would take up long-term accommodation opportunities within the hostel compared to 8% who did not wish to. Considering the fact that this category of respondents constitutes future

retirees, the likelihood of post retirement type of accommodation making a demand on the hostel housing market is likely. Hence any form of mixed housing development catering for different needs is likely to pose enormous competition on a limited housing stock within the hostel. Given this scenario, it is inevitable that conflict will permeate the older and younger generation hostel dwellers.

**Graph 2 Age distribution of respondents**



### *Educational Status*

Cumulatively, 34% of the sample population has acquired educational qualifications below junior primary school level. Of this, 27% of the respondents expressed an interest in pursuing a long-term opportunity for housing in the hostel. Clearly, this category of respondents will be disadvantaged in maximizing their future income potential through well paying jobs given their current educational status. This reduces the prospect of them being potential investors in long-term accommodation in the hostel and the extent to which they could sustain such an investment is precarious. It is likely that this category of hostel dwellers will be excluded from competing in the hostel housing market due to the lack of potential opportunities to maximize their income status.

### *Occupational Status*

A large proportion (75.5%) of the sample population is gainfully occupied with a definitive source of income. Of the remaining, 11.9% of the respondents were unemployed, 10.3% comprised students, and 2.3% were either pensioner, disabled or chronically ill. It is this latter 25% of respondents that are likely to be marginalized in securing long-term accommodation within the hostel community. The chances are that they are at potential risk of being displaced in other alternate forms of accommodation suitable to their peculiar social needs in the city. Nonetheless, the nature of accommodation and its locality will have a bearing on the extent to which they are likely to be socially polarized.

### *Income Levels*

The income distribution of the study population varied significantly with 25% earning below R500 per month compared to 23% who earned above R3000 per month. The remaining 52% are located in between this distribution. Taking all income categories into consideration, the mean income for the total study population amounted to R1 750 per month per respondent. In applying the state subsidisation criteria as qualification for formal housing, 44% of the respondents are unlikely to be eligible since their monthly earnings fall below the national qualifying norm of R1 500 per month. Given the enormous variation resulting from the application of the qualifying criteria for state subsidized housing, it is anticipated that a significantly large number of residents will be excluded from housing ownership opportunities within the hostel.

### *Marital Status*

More than half (52.5%) of the sample population is single. Common law marriages (legal and traditional marriages combined) constitute 45.9% of the sample population whereas 1.6% was either divorced, widows or widowers. Given the almost even split in the distribution between single and married respondents, the likelihood of competition for diverse accommodation types is a potential source for social polarization. Although at face value it might appear that married persons are more likely to consider family centered

accommodation within the hostel compared to their single counterparts, it may be to the contrary. Married persons tend to maintain a much stronger social link with their rural homestead due to family commitments and consequently may prefer single and rental form of accommodation within the city for reasons of proximity and access to their place of work. Hence, a potential exists for both single and married dwellers to compete for non-family centered type of accommodation within the hostel.

### *Family Composition*

The respondents' family composition range between zero to thirteen members and over. The mean number of dependents per household amounts to 5.1 persons per respondent, which is higher than the average household size of 4.2 for the province as a whole. Although it is not possible to conclude on possible pressures that this might exert on the demand for housing type within the hostel given the limited space for expansion, a significant 37% of the respondents indicated that they had other members of their family living with them in the hostel. Given the inaccuracy of records as to who is an official and unofficial tenant resulting from the illegitimate transfer of beds by corrupt officials, it would be a daunting task to ascertain which family member would be entitled to make an official stake for long term accommodation in the hostel. Competition from and among illegitimate occupants (siblings, fathers and sons, uncle, nephews, nieces and other family members) in securing accommodation is likely to bring them into direct confrontation with legitimate occupants.

### *Employment Proximity*

An analysis of the profile of respondents' proximity to employment opportunities revealed that 69.1% were employed in a total of 440 companies distributed in different parts of the study locality. The finding suggests the importance of the hostel location in meeting resident's occupational needs in respect of access to neighboring employment centres. However, a more in depth analysis suggests that just a few companies employ a large number of residents. Of the 440 companies, 11 employed more than half (55.9%) of the hostel population. Hence it can be expected that a strong labour solidarity will permeate the living space of respondents.

These social bonds are further strengthened by ethnic, cultural and biological relationships, promoting a strong sense of community amongst hostel dwellers. Given these complex sets of social factors, an enormous potential exists for high levels of social polarization emerging over future accommodation needs from competing and rival groups. Currently, a quarter (25.3%) of the hostel residents are employees of different Transnet subsidiaries in the vicinity. These are well-paid employees enjoying superior level company benefits and are better placed to compete on the limited hostel housing market. The extent to which this group will be accorded preference for accommodation can be expected to be yet another source of social polarization emerging especially from those who find themselves in a less viable financial situation.

### *Employment Tenure*

More than half (57%) of the respondents are in permanent employment. Respondents on full time contract employment make up 9% of the study population compared to 4% on part time contract. A total of 30% of the respondents engage in employment activity without a formal contract. This has enormous implication for employment tenure and their ability to commit themselves to any form of investment in permanent housing within the hostel unless they are given an opportunity to compete for other forms of social housing within the city. Given the rate of housing delivery in the city and the high levels of backlog, the likelihood of them securing permanent forms of social housing in the immediate future appears remote.

### *Personal Investments*

Contrary to the perception that hostels are characterized by low wage earners resulting in poor personal savings and the absence of employment benefits, the findings in this study suggests that 40.1% of respondents enjoy some form of company benefit and are able to commit themselves to different forms of personal savings. These range from membership to pension funds, group life schemes, medical aid and subscription to company housing subsidy schemes. Nonetheless, within this group, only 9.6% of the respondents enjoyed the benefit of a housing allowance, which is already

committed elsewhere. Personal savings on the other hand exceed company benefits. A total of 55% of respondents have some form of investment either in personal insurance, savings accounts, stokvels and income from property. When one combines the employment fringe benefits to personal savings, the average percent of respondents with some form of long-term personal investment amounts to 47.5% of the study population. This suggests that more than half (52.5%) of the hostel population are likely to be marginalized if personal investment or savings is used as a criteria to secure private housing loans in order to qualify for future accommodation in the hostel.

### **Preferred Housing Type**

Preference for ownership and rental type of housing amongst respondent's was almost equal. In so far as actual housing preference is concerned, 42.4% of the respondents favored family centred homes compared to 39.1% for single sex accommodation. The remaining favored group mixed, individual mixed, group single sex rental and ownership housing types. Given the diversity of preferences it is more likely to impose tremendous demands on the number of housing types possible from the already structurally restricted hostel design. The extent to which housing preferences can be accommodated will be largely dependent on technical possibilities within the existing physical structure of the hostels.

### **Duration and Nature of Stay in the Hostel**

The duration of stay in the hostel range less than a year to more than eleven years. A total of 37.2% of respondents lived in the hostel between 1 – 4 years compared to 32.2% for 5 – 10 years. However, 23.5% of the respondents have lived at the hostel for more than 11 years. The average decline in tenancy per year amounted to 5% per annum as no new tenant was admitted. When one interrogates the duration of stay in the hostel and the potential for social polarization, it is more than likely that each category of residents brings with itself certain elements of inter-generational dynamics. Those who have stayed at the hostel for a longer duration are more than likely to stake a stronger claim for accommodation compared to the younger generation of dwellers. It is expected that older generation dwellers would be

more settled in their working environment, have formed stronger social links with adjacent communities, enjoy greater social bonds and solidarity within the hostel population, and have better access to financial resources due to a longer duration of job security. Compounding the intergenerational dynamics is the added problem of ethnicity. A vast majority (77.2%) of the respondents are Zulu speaking compared to 20% who speak in Xhosa.

### **Current Home Ownership Status**

The study reveals that 41.45% of the respondents already own a house outside of the city compared to 58.55% who don't. Despite this, when respondents were requested to indicate whether they would be interested to secure long-term accommodation within the hostel, an overwhelming 70% confirmed that they would. This suggests a strong level of social polarization emerging from both within the ranks of the homed and homeless for a limited housing stock within the hostel. Considering that the location of the hostel offers lucrative economic opportunities to residents around the South industrial basin, it is likely to be a well sought after social resource. Hence, it will invite strong competition from various contenders for housing, even those that are not technically homeless. This competition if not managed adequately could easily degenerate into conflict of varying proportions between the have and the have nots.

### **Development Dynamics and the Perpetuation of Social Polarization**

The analysis of quantitative data provided a strong indication of potential indicators of social polarization emerging within the hostel community. Further analysis of qualitative data on the perception of hostel dwellers on the Mega City development confirms the emergence of growing antagonism and tensions amongst the community of hostel dwellers towards this project. In this section, these dynamics are examined in some detail to support the quantitative findings.

### ***General Physical Condition of the Hostel***

This issue was raised in all fifteen blocks interviewed. Comments such as: *'we will be neglected because the mega city enjoys greater priority'*; *'we will be dumped on the backyard of the mega city'*; *'they (Transnet) is not interested in us, they want to make money only'*; *'things are falling apart here and they want to talk about the future'*, goes beyond the cynicism expressed by respondents. It illustrates people's frustrations about their living conditions in the hostel and as evidenced, negative perceptions is being formed about the Mega City development project. Of the fifteen blocks interviewed, only four welcomed the mega city initiative and felt that it could impact positively on their future quality of life.

### ***Unclear Perception of the Mega City Development***

Not all residents were clear on the nature of development taking place at the Mega City and the impact this will have on the hostel community. In four blocks, the residents perceived that the mega city development would involve SMMEs originating from the hostel community. Six blocks were excessively preoccupied with the issue of space within the immediate locality of the hostel. Residents stated that they *'cannot imagine how this place [hostel] can be transformed. All the valuable space is taken away and there is hardly any land left around the hostel'*. In one block a resident wanted to know whether *'Checkers will be right by block 9'*, seemingly shocked at the proximity, which is only a few metres away from the hostel. In another, a vendor complained that he would be out of business if his *shebeen* had to compete with a bottle store in the Mega City.

Much confusion exists about who will be responsible for the hostel redevelopment and what would be the role of different stakeholders (Transnet, local government, department of housing and the private sector). Residents in all blocks interviewed were unclear as to who will promote development within the hostel.

Another area that caught the resident's imagination was the pace of the Mega City development. Some of them were surprised to note that a vacant land *'existed yesterday and the next day it was transformed into a concrete jungle'*. This suggests that the pace of physical development was faster than the ability of residents to grasp what the future holds for them.

They have little sense of the impact that this development will have on their lives, and the uncertainty accompanying it. In fact, a fence line dividing the hostel complex and the Mega City construction site is the only appreciable reality that exists in the world of the hostel dwellers. Within months, the world of the hostel dwellers has shrunk into a small backyard amidst the mushrooming concrete buildings of the Mega City.

### *Financial Uncertainty and Future Accommodation Needs*

At the different block meetings, residents widely expressed anxiety about the cost of accommodation escalating in the future. Several reasons may explain the source of this anxiety:

- the potential of the Mega City development inflating the price of properties within the hostel area and its immediate surrounds; and
- whether the long term cost of maintaining the hostel infrastructure will be passed onto tenants or prospective property owners.

The community perceives that they would have to pay for services such as electricity, water, and rates and towards sewerage costs. A widespread confusion exists as to how the cost of bulk services will be determined on an individual consumer basis considering the fact that historically they were accustomed to sharing the costs of communal services.

Concern also exists on whether the unemployed and those in low-income categories will be excluded from qualifying for accommodation. Widespread anxiety was noted on the possibility of evictions and homelessness once the hostel redevelopment project commences. Residents complained about the lack of direction on future relocation plans, the distances they have to travel to their workplace; the type of housing that will be on offer and the indirect costs attached to it.

The lack of information on the nature of housing subsidies that will be available for residents to consider future housing opportunities in the hostel is noted to be a major source of concern and insecurity. Residents are

uncertain as to whether they will qualify for housing subsidies and the criteria that will follow.

Clearly, the community has little information about what to expect about their future, resulting in them not bracing themselves adequately for the inevitable. This must cause the residents untold anguish on their future accommodation stability, leaving them marginalized from the development dynamics and processes unfolding in their living space.

### *Perceptions on Family-centered Housing Opportunities*

Although most residents welcomed the concept of family centered housing, concern was expressed on the actual size of accommodation taking into account the restrictions imposed by the present hostel design and layout. Residents were unable to conceptualise how it will be technically possible to convert the existing dwellings into family centered units. They could not fathom how the limited space in the hostel complex could promote family centered housing, including the benefit of private parking space, drying area for laundry, recreational space for their children and personal toilets and bathrooms. The lack of information on the form that the re-development of the hostel will take clearly leaves residents feeling alienated and helpless about their future.

### *Relocation within the Hostel Complex*

Residents expressed a strong sense of anxiety on the prospect of being relocated to either another block or alternative housing site in the city to meet their accommodation needs in order to make space for the upgrading of the hostel.

The source of this emotional state originated from one or more of the following:

- fear of breaking up long established dependability ties within a block level;
- severance of long established ethnic and cultural relationships;
- fear of coming into contact with other ethnic groups;
- fear of being separated from other members of family living in the same block or within the hostel complex,
- vested interest in the block such as informal business, and

- breaking up of political power bases, labour solidarity and leadership allegiances that have been established over the years at a block management level.

Considering the fact that the survey finding highlights that 37% of the residents have other members of their immediate family living in the hostel, another 55.7% of residents lived in the hostel for the duration of 5-11 years and a further 20% originate from the Eastern Cape, suggests the prevalence of strong social differentiation and solidarity issues likely to emerge within the hostel community. When one considers these factors, the potential for heightened levels of conflict in the future, cannot be ignored. Special concern was also expressed by disabled residents as to whether the re-development will take into consideration their peculiar needs, both physically and financially, which is likely to compound levels of social polarization.

### *Leadership Credibility*

The exact forms of governance structures that will emerge from the transformation of the hostel are another source of potential conflict. It is unclear as to who will be responsible for the management of the hostel community as a whole once it was redeveloped and the form of governance structure that will exist at a block level. Considering the fact that leadership structures exist at each block level, the extent to which future leadership has a role to fulfill, is precarious. Over time, these leadership structures have matured and strong credibility is expressed in their governing capability. Strong confidence is expressed in the leadership of the local councilor and the current block chairpersons. The community is concerned that changes in governance structures is at risk of corrupt practices encroaching onto their social space especially in light of a new value being attached to the hostel and its locality through the re-development process. .

### *Job Creation Opportunities*

Generally residents doubt whether the Mega City development will provide job opportunities for the unemployed within the hostel community both in the immediate and long term. Comments such as *'big developers will take away all the money'*; *'outside contractors will benefit the most'*; *'we will*

*have to compete with the whole of Umlazi for a job although the Mega City is on our doorstep*'; *'we have lots of skills here in the hostel, why don't they want to use it'* suggests a sense of desperation from residents to be the primary benefactors of employment opportunities arising from the Mega City development.

Given the unemployment levels in the hostel, it is not surprising that a survivalist economy has already emerged around the development site in the form of scavenging raw materials (copper, aluminium, steel and other valuable construction materials). One needs to be mindful of the fact that these survivalist modes can expand into the Mega City once it is completed. The hostel environment is already engulfed by social deviance and by virtue of its physical location in the backyard of the Mega City the potential for serving as a nursery for nurturing potential burglars, thieves, informal traders, beggars and other reprobates to ply their activities in the neighboring complex.

### *Space in the Hostel and its Surrounds*

The soccer stadium, which was, once home for many local sport personalities, was demolished to accommodate the Mega City. So was the canteen area and administrative blocks. The demolition of the soccer stadium evoked widespread outcry from younger residents. It was the only recreational space that they had and unceremoniously destroyed by the developers. Older residents felt that a strong piece of history has been razed without recognizing the enormous contribution that this played in the culture, recreational and social life of many generations of hostel dwellers. It was felt that it was a symbol of both oppression and struggle for freedom and destroyed without any form of acknowledgement. One young resident aptly commented that *'in this dormitory, there is nothing we can do after hours and the soccer ground was something that made us forget about the poor living conditions here... it not only kept us healthy to sell our labour to the neighboring capitalists, but also kept us as a community'*.

Mounting concern about the remaining space within the hostel residential area, which has been drastically reduced in size emerged during the interviews. Prospects for developing social infrastructure in the form of crèches, places of worship, open space for children and a recreational field appears remote given the limitation imposed by the present size of the

property. Given the restricted land space, conversion and expansion to family centred housing is unlikely to enjoy much room.

The fact that resident's attention now focuses on the need for outdoor open space as compared to their previous preoccupation with overcrowding within the hostel is an interesting dynamic in need of further analysis. Reasons for this change in shifting perception may be identified as follows:

- Firstly, before the demolition of the administrative buildings, canteen and soccer stadium, it added enormous dimension of vastness to the hostel complex and its surrounds, which psychologically compensated for the single, overcrowded rooms in which people lived.
- Secondly, after the commencement of the Mega City construction site, a set of safety fence borders the immediate surrounds of the hostel complex resulting in a major reduction in the vastness of open space previously enjoyed by the residents. This has redefined space for the hostel residents resulting in a feeling of restriction and being closed in by rapidly emerging massive concrete structures of the Mega City. In essence, physically the hostel is now located in the back yard of the Mega City.

Compounding the restriction imposed by the Mega City development on the living space of hostel residents is the rapid degeneration of the hostel and its surrounds. Overgrown grass, inadequate street lighting, occasional water disconnections emanating from the construction process, collection, storage and processing of building materials retrieved from the demolition sites for recycling, water leaks, poor waste disposal systems are signs of emerging residential blight.

### *Safety and Security*

Since the commencement of the Mega City development, residents complain that security measures in the hostel have been compromised resulting in them feeling unsafe. Intruders tend to have easy access to the hostel through the poorly secured Mega City development site resulting in the frequent theft

of personal belongings. This is in contrast to the previous management of the hostel in which residents lived under strict security conditions. Considering the fact that many of the residents are migrants to the city, it further compounds their feelings of insecurity.

### ***Lack of Development Feedback***

Enormous anger and a sense of insecurity exist amongst residents resulting from the lack of clear feedback on when the hostel redevelopment programme will commence. It is two years since Transnet informed residents about plans to develop the hostel and to date no progress has been noted. Instead, the Mega City development has advanced to near completion stage without any concrete plans for the re-development of the hostel complex. The only concrete outcomes noted in the re-development initiative were the setting up of a series of consultative processes and the establishment of a steering committee to advance the development initiative. Comments such as '*how much consultation needs to take place before development starts?*'; '*are the relevant stakeholders really committed to develop this place?*'; '*how do we know that we can trust Transnet?*'; '*are these not vague promises just to kick start the Mega City development?*'; are illustrations of anger and frustrations prevalent within the hostel community..

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a good measure of the potential for increasing levels of polarization emerging within the TeHuis Hostel. Placing the interest of economic development at the expense of investment in social capital has fueled this. In the absence of decisive and clear directions on the future development of the hostel, negative perceptions on development are beginning to manifest itself strongly amongst residents. The Mega City developments enjoys little or not support from hostel residents and there is little or not evidence to support the prospect of this development impacting positively on their quality of life. Given the restructuring dilemmas faced by Transnet, the likelihood for it to transform its hostels into family centered living quarters including TeHuis appears remote. For the moment the residents of TeHuis are more than likely to be confined to the backyard of the Mega City. The close proximity of the

TeHuis hostel to the Mega City is likely to negatively impact on this ambitious multi-million rand development project although developers, investors and local government perceive differently. The Mega City project is viewed as the panacea to rid Umlazi and its adjacent hostel communities of its economic and social woes. On the contrary, the study illustrates the enormous potential for increasing levels of social polarization emerging both within the TeHuis Hostel, surrounding hostels and the Umlazi Township as a whole. It is only over time that the broader effects of polarization are to be felt.

Social polarisation can be further exacerbated by economic factors both within the hostel and the Umlazi Township as a whole. With big businesses seizing economic opportunities at the doorstep of the Township, small business enterprises are likely to experience major setbacks with capital flowing outwardly into the coffers of multi-national business houses. The effect this will have on formal and informal businesses both in the hostel and the township communities is anticipated to be profound. Considering the type of businesses that will locate in the Mega City business centre and the negligible number of jobs that this will generate, compared to the amount of wealth that will be extracted from the surrounding communities, the poverty gap is expected to widen. The fact that the vast majority of businesses are to be concentrated in the retail and service sector, the skill base of the hostel labour force is unlikely to be in great demand for the Mega City. Competition for markets from informal/small traders both within the hostel and the Township is likely to escalate.

Apart from the anticipated risk of social and economic polarization, the prospect of political polarization cannot be under emphasized. Currently, Umlazi and its surrounding areas generate much of the cities African National Congress votes and it has been a haven for political faction fights. In the past, this community was ravished by political rivalry of unprecedented proportions resulting in many deaths arising from politically related violence. Sections of the community were displaced and many were forced to flee the township. In the post apartheid era, this township has risen to political stability and has made significant development advancements. Considering the fact that service delivery, especially the provision of housing in the city is a strongly contested one by different homeless social

movements, it is only a matter of time that hostel dwellers will also lay claim to their basic right.

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Sociology Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# **The Potential of School Libraries for Promoting Less Polarised Social Relations in the Post-apartheid Era**

**Ruth Hoskins**

## **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to highlight the potential school libraries have in promoting less polarised social relations in post apartheid South Africa. The role of the school library as an integral part of the education system is discussed. Under apartheid school library facilities were available mainly to white children and this was a feature of an elitist and racist education system which helped to reinforce and promote racially polarized inequalities. In the post apartheid era library facilities are being introduced in schools in black areas. These libraries provide skills and help empower black children and create opportunities for them to pursue education and better themselves. The provision of library facilities in black schools is part of a process of democratising educational resources, and is important for promoting a society which is less racially polarised in terms of opportunities and resources. However, education policy makers in contemporary South Africa have failed to recognise the potential of school libraries for helping children from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds to develop intellectual and emotional skills and to empower and better themselves. School libraries continue to be marginalised in many black schools and this has undermined the role they play in promoting less polarised social relations in post apartheid South Africa.

## **Libraries and Democracy**

More (2004) argues that South African libraries come from a painful journey of restricted access, censorship and suppression of ideas and opinions. The

role our libraries were compelled to play pre-1994 was not honorable, especially in relation to the freedom of access to information for all. Library collections were constantly censored and the free flow of information was restricted. As a result the majority of the population was denied access to libraries. The majority of the nation remained ignorant or ill-informed. Library services to black communities in urban and rural areas were non-existent. The collections of the few libraries which existed in the townships left much to be desired. The libraries failed to meet the information needs of that era. The communities, specially the youth of that era, needed information on freedom, democracy and other ideologies. Such information could not be found in our libraries. These libraries were labelled apartheid structures. The transition to democracy made it possible for libraries to be regarded as vehicles for empowerment and change. In the spirit of our new democracy, transformation is taking place in our libraries. Since democracy aims to improve the quality of life for all citizens libraries are now open and accessible to all. Democracy in South Africa will become a hollow process if citizens are not informed (More 2004). Therefore, there is a need for the development of public and school libraries to assist in social transformation.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA 2004) in its statement about libraries and sustainable development emphasises that libraries and information services promote sustainable development by ensuring freedom of access to information. Libraries and information services help people to improve educational and social skills, which are indispensable in an information society for sustained participation in democracy (Asamoah-Hassan 2004). IFLA in its contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society clearly stated that libraries:

Contributed effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom. They encourage social inclusion by striving to serve all those in their user communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability (IFLA 2004).

### **The Role of the School Library**

The progress of a country mainly depends on the education of its citizens. Our school education system is under pressure all the time for continuous

expansion. The challenge on one-hand it to meet the growing demand for school education and on the other, to ensure qualitative viability. It is within this context that school libraries have their own role to contribute to the standard and quality of education. The school library is essential to the development of the human personality as well as the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community (International Association of School Librarianship 2003). The changing role of the school library in post apartheid South Africa indicates that the library being a social institution is set up by society to serve its needs. However, a school library is often considered a routine requirement without recognising its importance in the learning process.

The school library is the heart of the school and can play a vital role in helping the educational system to achieve its goals. It is central to the fulfillment of the instructional goals and objectives of the school and promotes this through a planned programme of acquisition and organisation of information technology and dissemination of materials to expand the learning environment of all students. A planned programme of teaching information skills in partnership with classroom teachers and other educators is an essential part of the school library programme.

Therefore, the value and importance of the school library cannot be overemphasised.

... a well-resourced and well-managed learning resource centre is a vital part of any school. It has a central role in supporting the learning and teaching of all members of the school community.... It supports and enhances the academic and pastoral curriculum and has an important role in promoting policies of equity, inclusion and the raising of achievement (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals 2002).

Since school libraries form an integral part of the education system, they should:

- \* be developed and evaluated as an essential part of the physical resources of the school;

## *The Potential of School Libraries for ... Less Polarised Social Relations ...*

- \* provide adequate resources to ensure the delivery of quality teaching and learning;
- \* offer curriculum support;
- \* support educator development as well as learner achievement; and
- \* focus on improving reading ability (Department of Education 2001a).

The school library provides a wide range of resources, both print and non print, including electronic media, and access to data which promotes an awareness of the child's own cultural heritage, and provides the basis for an understanding of the diversity of other cultures.

The school library functions as a vital instrument in the educational process, not as a separate entity isolated from the total school programme but involved in the teaching and learning process. Its goals could be expressed through the following functions:

**Informational** - to provide for reliable information, rapid access, retrieval and transfer of information; the school library should be part of regional and national information networks.

**Educational** - to provide continuous lifelong education through provision of the facilities and atmosphere for learning: guidance in location, selection and use of material and training in information skills, through integration with classroom teaching and promotion of intellectual freedom.

**Cultural** - to improve the quality of life through the presentation and support of the aesthetic experience, guidance in appreciation of arts, encouragement of creativity, and development of positive human relations.

**Recreational** - to support and enhance a balanced and enriched life and encourage meaningful use of leisure time through provision of recreational information, materials and programmes of recreational value, and guidance in the use of leisure time (International Association of School Librarianship 2003).

Studies conducted in the USA have found that a good school library programme improves learner achievement. In 1993 and again in 1999, the

Colorado State Library and the University of Denver Library and Information Services Department studied the impact of school libraries and school librarians on learner achievement. They found that:

... a school library media program with full-time library media specialist [librarian], support staff, and a strong computer network (one that connects the library's resources to classrooms and labs) leads to higher student achievement regardless of social and economic factors in a community (Lance 2002).

Lance in the International Reading Association (2004) suggested the following recommendations to ensure that the goals of the school library are realised:

- \* Staff school libraries with professional and support staff;
- \* Stock them with current books and licensed databases as well as computers for Internet access;
- \* Fund them to support the schools curriculum;
- \* Adopt flexible scheduling for school library hours; and
- \* Utilise the school computer network to extend the library's programme into every classroom.

### **The South African Education System**

The history of education in South Africa is marked by segregation and inadequate schooling for most black people. In the wake of apartheid, South Africa faced a crisis in black education. In 1991, the per capita spending on white pupils was about four times that for blacks and black schools lacked such necessities as libraries, science equipment, playgrounds, heat, electricity, and indoor plumbing. The standardised curriculum had been attacked for being too academic and Eurocentric, and teachers who were hired to implement the limited goals of Bantu education had meager qualifications (Murphy 1992). Since the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of the Government of national unity, South African society has been involved in a process of comprehensive political, social and economical change, focusing on the establishment of a non-racial democratic

society. Education is considered one of the most important vehicles to achieve not only these political aims but also to make South Africa a leading nation (economic as well as social) in the world (Boekhorst & Britz 2004). This implies a radical change in the educational system. The new system empowered the different provinces but also kept a central role for government. To accommodate this, a national Department of Education and nine provincial Departments of Education were established. The new educational system is in essence outcomes-based. The new education system had also inherited the many problems of a segregated and inadequate schooling system for blacks.

### **The Apartheid Inheritance**

According to Karlsson (2003) studies conducted by the National Education Policy Investigation's Library and Information Services Research Group (NEPI), the Education Policy Unit (EPU) and the government-commissioned School Register of Needs (SRN) found that extremes characterised the school library landscape during apartheid. In 1996 of 26,734 schools 4,502 (16.8%) had libraries (Department of Education 2001b:39). While these libraries were not only in schools for whites, white learners were affirmed and advantaged to a superior extent over learners of other racial groups. But the majority, being black learners, were subordinated and oppressed with negligible or no provision, and coloured and indian learners were less advantaged than white learners but more advantaged than their black peers. Thus, the post-apartheid education system inherited a situation in which eighty percent of all South African schools had no libraries and insufficient learning materials for learners to access the curriculum (Bot, Dove et al 2000).

The *South African School Library Survey* established that less than 30% of South African schools for example had functional libraries (Department of Education 1999). Functional libraries are limited to those schools that have enough resources to fund and manage them. Most schools in South Africa simply do not have the means to run libraries (Boekhorst & Britz 2004). Karlsson further argues that there has been a lack of significant improvements since 1994 in the exemplar of library-based collections, suggesting that social transformation has not reached its full potential yet

and there is much transformative work to be done. The evidence of continuity in the apartheid conditions within the school environment is disturbing for it points to the difficulty of readdressing apartheid inequalities and injustices. However, the school library has the potential for promoting less polarised social relations in post apartheid South Africa.

### **The Potential of the School Library to Overcome Social Polarisation**

Learners who come from poor economic backgrounds and do not receive much intellectual stimulation before they attend school and are often under prepared and disadvantaged (Buddy & Williams 2005:33). School libraries contribute to social transformation since they are the site at which a firm foundation for a reading culture, independent and resourceful learning are laid for the citizenry in their formative years. School libraries have the potential to break down socially polarised and subordinate identities. Kozol (2000) in a study conducted in the South Bronx of New York City found that the school library provided a window of opportunity for children to overcome the barriers that society had forced on them:

... because young children in impoverished sections of our cities need wide-open windows to the world of infinite variety beyond the walls that our society has built around their lives, and there are not too many windows quite so wide as those provided by spectacular resources in a well-endowed school library ... beautiful school libraries developed with the artfulness of skilled librarians-remain the clearest window to a world of noncommercial satisfaction and enticements that most children in poor neighborhoods will ever know. To shut those windows is to close down one more opening to democratic amplitude and one more opportunity to fully realized cultural existence (Kozol 2000:48).

The introductions of library facilities in schools in black areas are important since they provide skills and help black children to create opportunities for them to pursue education and better themselves. South African education fosters a new move to teaching and learning in the context of curriculum transformation. This move is based on 'knowledge construction' as

compared to the old system that emphasized 'knowledge transmission' or 'knowledge transfer'. The rationale for this move is that it is about learners constructing their own understanding as they try to make sense of their own environment (Marlowe & Page 2005). Jonassen (1994) mentions a number of principles that are guidelines to how knowledge construction can be facilitated. These include:

- \* Creation of real-world environments that promote contextualised learning;
- \* Provision of tools and environments that help learners interpret the multiple perspectives of the world;
- \* Provision of multiple presentations of reality; and
- \* Focus on knowledge construction and not reproduction (Jonassen 1994).

A school library has a crucial role in meeting the abovementioned principles through its policies, programmes, resources and strategies that reflect constructivist pedagogy by providing the real-world environment, learning tools, varying interpretations of reality depicted in numbers of resources, and by focusing on the individual's active construction of knowledge. In doing so school libraries provide neutral spaces of equal opportunity and access to resources that empower disadvantaged learners. Karlsson (1996) argued that school libraries in terms of their resources have the potential to break down social polarised and subordinated identities by *firstly* creating equity. Karlsson (1996:18) argues that a school system must have equity if it is to provide opportunities for every child to develop his/her potential and become an adult who participates in the economy of the country and the democratic processes of society. Thus the learning resources available in the school library must be provided in such a way that they counteract the inheritance of the past and create equity for a fair and just culture of learning and teaching.

*Secondly*, in terms of democracy, South Africa is still an emerging democracy, since there are many aspects of our society which must be exposed to democratic principles. Schools that provide school learners with resources must become democratic in their policies and practices. As democratic governing bodies are implemented in schools, library services

should establish advisory committees. Not only will mechanisms of participatory democracy such as democratic governing bodies and committees, ensure that resources are more appropriate to the learning and teaching needs of users in school, but such practices and processes will provide learners with a foundation for their adult lives (Karlsson 1996:18).

*Thirdly*, in terms of social inclusion efforts to improve the quality of learning and to prepare students for their adult and working lives should take account of the need to provide learning resources which support the curriculum and new approaches to learning. Not only must learning resources uphold constitutional values such as non-sexism and non-racism, but they should provide an offering that will expose the learner to critical, divergent and marginalised voices, particularly those that were silent and censored in the past.

The nature of the collection of learning resources should, for example, ensure that gender and other social issues are introduced so that learners develop a more holistic understanding of the nature of society and the ability to think independently and critically (Karlsson 1996:20).

*Fourthly*, in terms of information skills, global developments, such as the internet, require information skills for navigating the various electronic networks. Karlsson (1996) argues that the transformed computerised school library with electronic workstations should become the new learning space in which students acquire and use information skills to broaden their education experience. In order to introduce the necessary changes to the education process, educationalists and librarians need to collaborate in the design of curriculum through which learners will acquire information skills which are transferable skills.

*Fifthly*, in terms of language, culture and nation building, Karlsson (1996:21) argues that in a society characterised by diversity, issues of language and culture are highly emotive and require careful handling in public schools. The school library has a special role to play in this context, especially in the event that most school learners may not be instructed in their first language after the first two or three grades or receive instruction in their cultural practices and religion. The school library therefore provides public schools with an institutional mechanism to cater for diversity in our society. In addition cultural and religious collections could expose learners to resources that have the potential to develop understanding and tolerance

of others. Such collections could be important components for nation-building in our public schools. Thus the provision of library facilities in black schools are part of a process of democratising educational resources, and are important for promoting a society which is less polarised racially in terms of opportunities and resources. However, education policy makers in contemporary South Africa have failed to recognise the potential of school libraries for helping children from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds to develop intellectual and emotional skills and to empower and better themselves.

### **The Continued Marginalisation of the School Library**

Subsequent to the 1994 national elections, many within the education sector invested their energies in developing policy options and drafting policy frameworks that would drive the post-apartheid social transformation to change the inequalities in school libraries. However, in the attempts to transform the inequalities of the past and introduce enriched concepts of education, instability within in the school library system has unfortunately occurred (Zinn 2000).

Since 1994 South Africa has undergone a process of educational transformation. The curriculum, *Curriculum 2005 (C2005)*, implemented from 1997 onwards, is evidence of new ways of thinking about education and learning. These changes, of course come from the need to construct a new integrated system from the fragmented and unequal apartheid education system. But they also represent a response to global pressures. Internationally, there is recognition that the so-called information or knowledge society demands lifelong learners (Hart 2004). The outcomes-based approaches of South Africa's *Curriculum 2005 (C2005)* reflect international trends. It claims to have moved away from rote learning and memorisation. The 2001 *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (Department of Education 2002) lists the following attributes of the learner which reflect, it is claimed, the values and ethos of the constitution: The learner:

- \* has the linguistic skills needed for a multi-lingual and multicultural South Africa;

- \* is curious and ready for scientific and artistic discovery;
- \* can adapt to an ever-changing environment;
- \* has a problem-solving bent of mind;
- \* can gather, analyse, organise, evaluate and communicate information;
- \* is able to take decisions in a complex technological society; and
- \* is equipped for social, political and economic demands for South Africa in our local and global context.

These attributes are echoed in the specific outcomes spelled out for each Learning Area of the new curriculum, as shown by Zinn (2002). The fifth attribute in the above list is of specific interest to librarians as it gives them a foothold in the curriculum. In recent years, the library profession had identified *information literacy* as central to its social mission. Information literacy refers to the complement of skills that enable citizens to recognize a need for information, find information efficiently, analyse it and assess it critically, use it to meet the identified need and to solve problems. In addition, as Zinn (2002:9) points out, all the other attributes in the above list overlap with information literacy. Libraries contribute directly to all of them (Hart 2004). The new school curriculum, with its acceptance of the need for information literacy and its shift to resource-based learning, has given librarians the room to become agents of change. The word 'change' implies a proactive leadership role, in contrast to the more passive supportive role usually assumed appropriate for the library profession within educational circles (Hart 2004:110).

At school level it was hoped that the school librarian would be the best person to mediate information skills. Unfortunately, the rationalisation of school personnel also resulted in the specialist post of school librarian falling away in 1995. Some school librarians became full-time class teachers, while others left the schooling system. Few schools could afford to pay for a school librarian out of their own budgets (Zinn 2000). A recent study conducted by Boekhorst and Britz (2004) which examined information literacy at school level in South Africa concluded that libraries can play an important role in enhancing information literacy at school level. Unfortunately this role is currently undervalued (Boekhorst & Britz 2004). The shift to constructivist approaches by *C2005* which see learning in terms

of active discovery, problem-solving and knowledge construction should provide a more favourable climate for libraries which are the sites where much of this kind of independent learning takes place. This at least is the assumption of many librarians. Whether their understanding is shared by educationists is a thorny question according to Hart (2004). Evidence of gaps in thinking between librarianship and educationists were seen in the review and revision of *Curriculum 2005* from 2000 onwards.

The final report of the C2005 Review Committee states that 'well-resourced' schools are coping well with the new curriculum but there was no mention of libraries (Department of Education 2000). Librarians perhaps would assume the existence of functioning libraries in these 'well-resourced' schools. However, the absence of any mention of libraries in the final revision of C2005 (Department of Education 2002), even after two representations to the Review Committee by LIASA's (Library and Information Association of South Africa) School Libraries and Youth Services Interest Group (Library and Information Association of South Africa 2000), indicates that educationists do not share this assumption (Hart 2004:112). A study conducted by Maepa and Mhinga (2003) investigated the barriers that hinder effective use of the school library by teachers and learners in the Limpopo Province. Barriers included a lack of insight among principals and educators into the educational role of a library. Thus educators themselves do not fully understand the role of the school library within the context of outcomes-based education. These sentiments are echoed by Hart (2004:15) who concludes that:

It is true that Curriculum 2005 is on paper a library friendly system. It expects learners to use a wide range of resources in the course of independent research projects. It therefore should have enhanced the position of the library profession whose libraries provide the sites for this kind of learning. Yet there is consensus among librarians that the position of libraries – school and public – has deteriorated in the last few years. How can this puzzling contradiction be explained? Could it be that educators and curriculum planners just do not share librarians' understanding of what a resource-based curriculum means?

Therefore, educational changes and policies in post-apartheid South Africa have not led to a call for more and better school libraries since educators lack insight into the potential role of libraries in educational and

social transformation in South Africa. This situation is ironic because libraries have the potential to break down social barriers. Kozol (2000) argues that school libraries are a normal part of a democratic society and their marginalisation leads to increased social polarisation:

Denial of these normal aspects [existence of well-resourced school libraries] of a democratic culture to children of the poor cannot be justified as 'prudent stewardship' of public funds or as an unintended consequence of accidental or archaic systems of financial allocation. It is a conscious act of social demarcation: a shameful way of building barriers around a child's mind, of starving intellect, of amputating dreams (Kozol 2000:49).

## **Conclusion**

School libraries are an important part of a democratic society and they play a vital role in social transformation by promoting less polarised social relations in post apartheid South Africa. Ironically the role of the school library in postapartheid South Africa has been further marginalised. Thus educational changes have not led to a call for more and better school libraries since educators lack insight into the potential role of libraries in educational transformation in the country. The absence of clear direction that should have come through policy and a regulatory framework has resulted in conditions in many of the existing school libraries deteriorating further. The lack of national government commitment to policy and guidelines regarding school libraries has further marginalised the important role of the school library in post apartheid South Africa. As a result the potential of the school library to break down social barriers and subordinate identities has been undermined. This situation will continue unless national government, educators and librarians acknowledge the value and importance of well-resourced school libraries and their contribution to educational and social development.

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Information Studies  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# Black Boys with Bad Reputations

Rob Pattman and Deevia Bhana

## Introduction: Polarising Black Boys

In the West in recent years, boys have been the subject of a moral panic fuelled by their apparently poorer educational performances than girls (see Epstein et al. 1998). In South Africa there is also a moral panic about boys, but this centres on black boys and young men and focuses not on educational underachievement (though there is much recent evidence to suggest that black schoolboys are performing more poorly than black girls and certainly much worse than white and Indian boys) but on the presumed anti social and delinquent nature of young black males (Pattman & Khan 2007).

In the sociological literature moral panics are defined as exaggerated reactions to perceived threats to imagined social norms posed by groups polarised from 'us' and cast in the role of 'folk devils'. The effect of a moral panic is to construct a sense of 'us' as against 'them' and to accord the 'other' a minority status as outsiders who fail to integrate socially and threaten 'us' (Hall et al. 1978), even if, as is the case in South Africa, 'they' may be imagined, by whites and blacks as young males belonging to a racialised majority (Pattman & Khan 2007: 40). The poor educational performances of black boys receive little or no publicity, perhaps because this is not perceived as a problem. Concerns about black boys and young men in South Africa draw on deep seated and taken for granted assumptions about this group as 'bad,' and posing enduring threats to safety and well being. These assumptions, Callebert (2007) suggests have been reinforced by white (and black, Indian, and coloured) fears about the proximity of (mainly working class) blacks in the post apartheid era.

We do not want to argue, however, that associations of black boys with 'bad' behaviour are the figments simply of post-apartheid imaginations

faced and fixated with prospects of 'racial' 'integration,' (though there is no doubt that these draw on the paranoia of whites, Indians and blacks in contemporary South Africa.) In interview and ethnographic studies in schools in Durban and South Africa (see Morrell 1998 and 2000; Human Rights Watch 2001; Jewkes et al. 2002; Bhana 2005) and South African townships (see Wood & Jewkes 2001; Selikow et al. 2002) tales of violence and sexual violence have featured prominently, with black boys and young men being constructed as the perpetrators (as well as victims).

Some social commentators such as Jeremy Seekings (1996), have argued that much juvenile delinquency in South Africa has its roots in apartheid and is the expression of black African young men whose identities as the *'shock troops or foot soldiers in the struggle for political change'* have become redundant in the post-apartheid context. Feelings of estrangement and uncertainty for many young (and older) black South African men have been reinforced, as Liz Walker (2003) persuasively argues, by unemployment as well as the emphasis in the new Constitution on women's rights. Violence and sexual violence among young black African men is presented by these writers as a response to such feelings and a way of asserting themselves. Young black African men in Southern Africa have been particularly problematised in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with campaigns and literature addressing them, especially, as people with multiple partners and engaging in forms of sexual harassment and violence.

The bad reputations of black boys emerged as a major theme in a recent interview study we conducted with Grade 11 (16-17 year old) boys and girls in 'racially' differentiated schools near Durban. In mono-ethnic interviews we conducted with black pupils in predominantly Indian and white schools, both boys and girls protested being labelled bad or dirty, and singled out for suspicion whenever any wrongdoing occurred in the school. In a middle class mainly white (boys') school, in a white leafy suburb, the black boys we had requested to interview complained that when they were asked to report to the school office their class teacher's response was: 'Whose car has been broken into?'

Our paper draws on this study, and our focus here is on black boys, notably those with 'bad' reputations in Bafana, a black township school (see below). We wanted to explore whether they saw themselves as bad and how they managed 'bad' reputations. What sorts of relationships did they have

with the school authorities and with other boys and girls? Was being 'bad', a self identification that emerged from what they said and how they spoke about these relationships? Could we get some insight into how 'bad' they were from the ways they performed in the interviews, for example whether they messed about or did not concentrate on the questions? Studies of violence in schools in South Africa have focused, as Chisholm and Napo (1999) note, on 'violence in black schools although it is by no means unique to them.' Indeed we heard stories about forms of emotional and physical violence in all the schools in our study, but we concentrate on Bafana because of the 'bad' reputations of black township boys which we want to investigate from the point of view of the boys themselves, rather than taking such perceptions for granted<sup>1</sup>.

### **Bafana School and the other Schools in our Study**

Our study aimed to investigate, through loosely structured interviews with groups of boys and girls from different 'races', how Grade 11 young people in different racialised schools constructed their identities. We selected four schools, a formerly white boys' and a formerly white girls' school, a formerly Indian school and Bafana, a black township school, from where we draw the pupils to whom we refer in this paper.

Bafana was the poorest of the schools in our study and the contrast between it and the two former white schools we researched was striking. The pupils (and staff) at Bafana were all black African whereas in the formerly white schools there were, along with white children, blacks, Indians and coloureds from relatively affluent families. Where 'racial' mixing has occurred in the 'new' South Africa, it has tended to be confined to specific institutions like schools or universities and occurs between whites and Indians and the most affluent blacks and coloureds. The very fact that Bafana was all black signified, then, its low status, and this was immediately apparent when visiting the school and seeing its lack of material resources. Bafana looked rather like a prison compound with a main building comprising basic classrooms constructed in a rectangle and surrounded by high fences with barbed wire. There was some space between the classrooms

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<sup>1</sup> The names of the school and the interviewees are pseudonyms.

and fences where the children congregated at break times. But there were no wide open spaces and no rugby, cricket, football or hockey pitches, no trees, no buildings with stairs, no long corridors, no assembly halls, no areas to retreat from the large numbers of other people and no library, study areas or computer rooms as there were in the former white schools. Like all black township schools, and unlike most former white schools, Bafana is co-educational, and this, as we found in interviews we conducted in the former white schools, was also regarded as signifying lack of status and lack of academic and sporting achievement.

## **Method**

In our study over thirty group interviews (with usually six participants in each) were conducted (in English) in formerly white boys' and girls' schools, a formerly Indian and a black township school. Teachers in these schools were requested to select young people of differing levels of academic ability and commitment and also (in the mixed 'race' schools) according to 'race', and (in the mixed gender schools) according to gender, for the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English by the authors (Rob, a white British man and Deevia, a South African Indian woman), taped and transcribed.

All the boys we initially interviewed at Bafana (contrary to the 'bad' reputations of black boys) seemed to us to be 'good' pupils who spoke highly about the school and the work ethic. So we decided to ask the teachers specifically for 'bad' Grade 11 (aged 16-17) boys as well as 'bad' girls for two subsequent interviews. While concentrating mainly on the interview with the 'bad' boys, we will draw comparisons with the girls' interview. We were interested not only in *what* our 'bad' boy and girl interviewees said, but also *how* they presented themselves, for example, their emotional tone body language and engagement with us, the interviewers and the other interviewees. We saw the interviews not simply as instruments for eliciting information but as sites in which identities and relations were being negotiated and performed (Frosh et al. 2002).

Rather than focusing simply on how 'bad' they were in the interviews, that is, only asking questions around this theme, we tried to provide a nuanced and multidimensional picture of their lives and identities

by conducting loosely structured and non judgmental interviews with them. In these they were addressed as authorities on and experts about their lives and their relations with others. We encouraged them to set the agenda, picking up on issues which they raised, while covering certain general themes such as their views on school, their relations with boys, girls and adults and people from other 'races,' their orientations to the future etc. (For a more detailed account of this approach to interviewing young people – and young people who have been stereotyped as problematic – see Frosh et al. 2002).

We also interviewed teachers. These were two middle aged black African women, one of whom was responsible for Life Orientation, a subject currently taught from Grade 8 - 10 (aged 12 - 16) which addresses social issues and concerns such as heterosexual attraction and relationships, HIV/AIDS, drinking, smoking and fighting, and the other for Guidance and Counselling of pupils. These interviews also focused on the topic of 'bad boys'.

### **Bad Boys being Good**

The 'bad' boys we interviewed seemed to us surprisingly good. They often took some time to respond to our questions not because of lack of interest or commitment but because they seemed to be trying hard to give thoughtful answers. In fact it was our concentration, and not the boys', which began to waver towards the end of the 70 minute interview as we went into break time. This was because of the loud talking and laughter from a group of boys outside the interview room. Unlike us, our interviewees were not distracted by the noise outside and, at one point, one of the boys seeing that one of the interviewers (Rob) was glancing out the window, got up and told the boys who were making the noise to go away.

We asked them initially what they liked or disliked about school, and when one boy started '*the thing I don't like in this school,*' we imagined he and the other boys were going to talk about their lack of commitment to the school's work ethic and their opposition to the school authorities. However, though they did go on to speak about their concerns about getting into trouble, their concerns mainly arose not from their opposition to the school's academic culture but from their commitment to it. They were

concerned because they were missing valuable school time by being locked out for arriving late, and all of them said they would prefer being beaten for this (a form of punishment regularly administered in the school despite its official illegality in South Africa) so as not to miss lessons. As Shomo said *'it's better getting two strokes of the pipe [being beaten] and it's faster, to make us go in the classroom and get some knowledge.'*

They protested that they could not help arriving late for school because they had to travel far distances and sometimes the taxis were late. Though the Principal, they stressed, was unsympathetic, surprisingly little resentment was expressed towards him, as if the boys deferred to him as a powerful male who was rightfully exercising his authority.

The Principal featured a great deal in their accounts of getting into trouble and was clearly constructed as the key figure of authority whose role was that of watchdog sniffing out trouble. Regarding patrolling the boys' toilets for the smell of dagga smoke and smelling the boys for dagga (though not the girls) in the classrooms, this was literally the case. Smoking dagga or zol was the other thing the boys spoke about for which they got into trouble. Some mentioned boys smoking dagga in the girls' toilets in order to avoid detection by the Principal who either felt the girls' toilets were out of bounds for a man like him or that girls, unlike boys, do not smoke dagga.

### **Girls – a Good Influence**

Their stories of getting into trouble featured either themselves or other boys not girls. And though Shomo claimed *'even girls are smoking at school'* they did not elaborate on this nor did the Principal's focus on boys rather than girls as the main culprits seem to be a bone of contention for them. Perhaps this reflects an assumption that boys were *naturally* more likely to get into trouble than girls. This seemed to be expressed later in the interview when we asked the boys whether they would prefer going to a single sex school. They all said they liked being with girls, and the main reason they gave was that girls were a good influence on boys, helping them to 'concentrate' on their school work, and, as we see in the following passage, this idealisation of girls was linked to a critique of boys in general for being noisy. Though constructing boys as less focused on school work than girls and more

disruptive in class, they were, ironically, demonstrating their own commitment to school work by expressing their preference for girls in class:

Ezekiel: I can concentrate if I'm learning with a girl. I concentrate

Shomo: I think it is right to be boys and girls because when they boys only, hey the boys they interrupt very much, ay.

Rob: They interrupt a lot?

Shomo: Ay, ay, ay

Rob: Do they? Can you give us an example of what they do?

Shomo: When the teacher is in the class, they are making noise and the girls...there is no noise there

Fred felt torn between the company of girls and boys, on the one hand preferring being with girls *'because when I stay with the girls during school time I can't just do wrong things like when I'm sitting with the boys,'* and, on the other, feeling freer with boys to go outside or go to the toilets during lessons he did not like. *'When I'm sitting with the boys, I got a best friend in class...let's go to the toilet and maybe we gonna come back later.'*

## **Opposing Girlfriends at School**

But while constructing boys as different from girls in terms of their commitment to the school's work ethic, they also spoke about relationships with girls in ways which revealed their own commitment to this ethic. For example, when asked if they had any girlfriends, they spoke about the difficulties of sustaining girlfriend relations at school. This was not because they associated having girlfriends with being hedonistic rather than hardworking but as incurring responsibilities and entailing hard work which might conflict with the demands of school work. Ezekiel implies this when speaking about a girlfriend as someone to *'look after'*:

Ezekiel: No, no, no I don't have a girlfriend at school because...I think she will interrupt me during my learning time. I think it is better to have one at my home and when I come back from school, I will look after her.

Shomo: I do have a girlfriend but not here at school.

Rob: right.

Shomo: She lives next my house because at school I can't have a girlfriend and try to concentrate.

Christopher: Ja, I got one girlfriend in school but she knows that I don't have a time here in school for her. I only see her after school.

Fred: Yes, I've got one by my house...when by school I have to concentrate on my school work and not on her.

### **Constructing Boys of other 'Races'**

When asked to compare young people of different 'races' almost all the pupils we interviewed at this school compared blacks with Indians and sometimes coloureds, and we often had to ask specifically about their views on whites. Whites were constructed generally by black students we interviewed at Bafana and in the formerly Indian school in our study, as distant and also idealised figures, reflecting, in part, these black pupils' lack of interaction with them (see Pattman and Bhana forthcoming). This interview proved no exception. The boys focused on Indian boys whom they described as naughty, and on their relationships with them which they presented as being marked by conflict. One boy who had been to a school with blacks and Indians spoke about Indian boys bunking school and getting drunk, another about how some Indian boys he was with blamed him for breaking into a house when they were the culprits, and another about Indian boys stealing his money when he was waiting for a taxi. They were quite clear, however, that they as blacks were most likely to be perceived as trouble makers and that this was because they were the least well off and seen as the most likely to turn to crime. As one boy said, '*they know we do not have a lot of money and what we need is money and they can just say "Ay, it's blacks, it's blacks" ...they think all of us need money, money but they don't care about us.*' It seems likely that by using 'they,' as they did several times in this context, the boys are implying that these are constructions of blacks and crime which are familiar and are commonly held. Significantly it was only when comparing themselves with Indians that the boys complained about being stereotyped as bad. When asked specifically

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about white boys whom they had not really mentioned, they praised them as people who did not get into trouble.

Rob: What about white boys?

Christopher: I can say the white is better because it's not always....they do the wrong things like stealing and whatever, drinking alcohol .....I never heard that the white maybe poke someone, they stole someone's thing...the white poke someone, I never heard that.

Rob : You agree with what he is saying?

Ezekiel: I agree with him because the blacks...they kill people and they make a robbery and the whites cannot make a robbery because there is nothing they are suffering of.

Fred: I can say there is white peoples that is suffering because one day I saw a white person that was sitting in the park and sleeping and seeing this person is not having money, and he was sitting down and looking for the money in the pocket and now we are the same peoples, blacks, Indians and coloured.

David: I can say that whites are the same as us, because you see some white people are more poor than the blacks.

Whites were constructed as very different from blacks and Indians partly for not doing 'wrong things' and this was clearly attributed (not in a critical way) to their lack of 'suffering' compared to blacks. It was the sight of poor, homeless whites that caused Fred and David to revise this view and to suggest that whites were actually the same as Indians and blacks. But Indians and blacks were equated by some of the boys (and differentiated from whites) in terms of their assumed shared, relatively poor economic situations. As one boy said:

I arrived there in Chatsworth [an Indian lower to middle class area] they [Indians] are selling fruits and trying to make money, but when you arrive in Durban, you can see there is no white who is poor ... that's why I think the Indians and blacks are the same.

These boys, however, also implied that Indians were richer than blacks, in a way which made them more aloof, and blacks more likely to be labelled as

robbers and trouble makers. In other interviews which Rob (though, significantly, not Deevia) conducted with black young people at this school, Indians, though not whites, were constructed as affluent and criticised for flaunting this and for being arrogant and snobbish in relation to blacks.

### **Constructions of the Interview**

Though we formulated questions in response to issues which the young people raised, asking them to elaborate on these, and provide illustrations and inviting them to respond to each other, it did not seem like a conversation, more like us asking questions and them responding individually, making little eye contact with their fellow interviewees. They had generally serious expressions, and the only laughter we heard was from the boys outside. The boys took the interview very seriously, partly, it seems, because they saw it as something which would help them in relation to their future and getting jobs. For when asked to reflect on being interviewed the boys spoke about the interview providing an opportunity for them to 'share ideas' and learn important things from 'different' and 'other' people, such as skills for job interviews:

Ezekiel: It's good to share ideas ... with different people because we don't know what to do and maybe the other one, he can tell us which way we must do it.

Christopher: I like because it's helping when you are making an interview and when you want a job, and you mustn't be shy.

They were positive about the interview partly because they had not been 'shy' and been able to 'share ideas' with us, who they constructed as knowledgeable and very different from them. It was not just that we were adults, but white and Indian adults which made us, in their eyes, different from them and added to the importance of the interview. In the interview we conducted with the girls, the girls reflected on how being 'white' made us celebrity figures for the pupils. As one of the girls said: *'We look at white people and we think "Oh my God."'* We were lumped together as white (*'They [the pupils generally] can't see any difference between you, maybe*

*they thought you were both white,* ' one girl explained) presumably because we were being constructed as so different and important, and whiteness tended to symbolise and emphasise this.

## **Comparing the Interviews with the 'Bad' Boys and 'Bad' Girls**

We came away from the boys' interview surprised at how 'good' the 'bad' boys were. We were a little saddened by just how serious the boys had been and how despondent they had seemed about their current and future circumstances and also felt rather flat partly because there had been little interaction between them. A key theme the boys raised in the interview was 'suffering' – the poverty they said black people in their township were experiencing and their concerns about getting jobs and being able to fend for themselves in the future. Indeed this perhaps explained the absence of laughter in the interview and the serious expressions on their faces, and also, the importance they attached to the interview as something which might help them in their uneasy quest to secure employment.

A few days after we had conducted the interviews with the 'bad' boys and the 'bad' girls we could picture the girls, their personalities, what they looked like and where they were sitting, but neither of us could remember the boys in the same detail; in fact we could only remember what two of the boys looked like. For we learnt much more about the different girls' personalities through the ways they interacted with each other and also from the girls' self reflections. Even at the beginning of the interviews when the young people were asked to say something interesting about themselves by way of introduction the girls were much more eloquent than the boys, for example, reflecting on the kinds of friends they had and what they were like with their friends, as well as how they viewed school and particular teachers. In contrast, when asked to introduce themselves the boys provided short cryptic statements of interests such as 'liking football' which did not really mark them out as particular individuals.

Our focus in this paper is on the 'bad' boys we interviewed, and we are drawing on the interview with the girls in order, by way of contrast, to reflect more closely on how the boys construct and present themselves. As we have argued, masculinities and femininities are constructed relationally,

and by comparing the gendered performances of boys and girls in these interviews we are trying to provide a richer account of what the boys are like. The girls seemed to be displaying what Carol Gilligan (1993) refers to as a 'relational' style of identifying and behaving in contrast to the more individualistic and instrumental performances of the boys. Whereas the boys worked hard individually at answering the questions, the girls did not simply respond to our questions but also posed their own. The questions we and they asked blended in with the conversation, and acted as catalysts for the girls engaging with each other. Gilligan argues that once adolescence is reached girls' morality tends to become structured around an 'ethic of care,' at the expense of 'losing voice' and a sense of individuality, whereas boys tend to ignore the desires and needs of others and to make decisions independently. We want to argue, however, that the boys we interviewed, while much less 'relational' than the girls, had a powerful sense of their future (and perhaps even current) duties and obligations as breadwinners, and that this, at least partly, accounted for the boys' relative seriousness as well as their despondency. The significance the boys attached to the interview as a means of helping them prepare for job interviews, reflected, we suggest, anxieties about their futures, made particularly acute by constructing themselves as potential breadwinners in communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment. This seemed to be for these boys, a heavy gendered burden.

In terms of *what* they said, one of the most striking differences was how downbeat the boys were compared to the girls. This was highlighted when they were asked to choose a country they would like to visit. One boy, for example mentioned Ethiopia because '*they are suffering even more than South Africa... they are poor poor... and they need someone to bring them up.*' Another said he would like to go to the US '*to learn how they create money...because I want to learn how...because we are suffering,*' and another to Johannesburg because '*people say life is very easy there...because life is hard this side.*'

When asked which countries, if any, they would like to visit, the girls made no mention of *suffering* in South Africa, and eulogised, instead, with much laughter, about the exotic life styles and food they would like to experience in countries like the US and Mexico. While boys focused on the lack of opportunities available to them, girls were much more optimistic.

When asked about what jobs they wanted to do, all the girls mentioned professions or well paid jobs, such as lecturing, physiotherapy and fashion modelling. Some of the boys mentioned manual jobs like driving and catering, and while others aspired, like the girls, to doing professional jobs, their aspirations were always qualified and tempered by statements about the difficulties of realising these, given how 'hard' life was for people from the black townships.

The 'bad' girls spoke about the things which made girls (and them) bad, and these tended to involve boys, mixing with them or doing things with them like smoking (tobacco) and drinking. One girl, Cindy, *displayed* badness by smiling surreptitiously and looking down when, for example, talking about smoking with boys in the girls' toilets, and also when she said 'guys' when asked why she liked going to nightclubs. This gave rise to lots of laughter from everyone as if she was saying something very naughty. Cindy and the other 'bad' girls seemed to identify more with boys, than some of the other black girls we have interviewed, and envied their freedoms. Prisca, for example, who had been expelled from a 'multi racial' school for smoking spoke about girls and boys having similar sex drives, though she was also critical of girls for not 'carrying themselves' properly and showing their underwear. She also emphasised that both boys and girls were as likely to get beaten with 'the pipe,' pointing out that she was beaten recently for smoking. Janet, the other bad girl who said she used to smoke enjoyed mixing with boys and wished she was one, though not, she said, 'a gangster,' with the implication that this was a common masculine identity.

While partially identifying with boys, these 'bad' girls, however, *performed* very differently from the 'bad' boys in the interviews. The boys did not engage with each other as the girls did, nor did they express the variety of emotions the girls showed – laughter, surprise, disgust, shock, sympathy. The boys seemed rather unemotional, certainly in relation to each other, and even when they were speaking about perceived injustices they spoke in curiously flat and detached ways.

## **Women Teachers Constructing and Deconstructing 'Bad' Boys**

The Guidance and Life Orientation teachers we interviewed preferred calling the girls they had selected for us 'naughty' rather than 'bad,' with the

implication that badness was a feature of masculinity not femininity. While the teachers expressed such essentialist understandings of gender during the interview, they nevertheless challenged gender dichotomies and polarisations of 'good' and 'bad.'

The 'bad' boys originally selected for interview, they informed us, arrived late that day and had been refused admission to the school's premises. So they selected other boys by looking down the punishment register and choosing those who featured for 'bad' things like smoking dagga or arriving late. They described the boys we interviewed as 'bad,' but not as 'bad' as the ones originally selected. Referring to the latter, they said '*only about 10% are really bad.*' Implying that (black township) boys, in general, were not '*really bad*' there was an insinuation, here, that they may be a bit bad. They accorded this small minority much attention when speaking about the lives and identities of black township boys in general, as if they provided markers of masculinity in relation to whom other township boys positioned themselves, (or embodied hegemonic masculine values, Connell 1995). When asked if they thought that black boys (in general) were more likely to get into trouble than people from other 'races,' one of the teachers elaborated on prevailing pressures on township boys to become drug dealers and gangsters.

Yes even in our townships there are people forcing them to do things for them , they start selling this thing [drugs], they start doing it themselves, even their father tells them to do it cos no-one is working at home – how can we get money.

Interestingly, the teacher presents the gangster figure not as irresponsible or pathological, but, on the contrary, as a male breadwinner trying to fend for himself and his family in conditions of poverty and high unemployment.

When we asked the Guidance Counsellor if both boys and girls came to consult her, she replied that they did, and in roughly equal numbers. But the problems they presented were very different and seemed to stem from the polarisation of masculinities and femininities in relation to power, with boys being expected to be powerful as material providers and also sexually in relation to girls as well as being tough and strong in relation to other boys (see Pattman & Chege 2003, on how these identities generate problems for

both boys and girls). The Guidance Counsellor reported that boys' problems relate to the anxieties they feel about selling drugs and engaging in other 'bad' forms of behaviour and not being able to express these anxieties as they try to maintain a veneer of invulnerability and power, whereas girls' problems relate to being made the objects of male sexual desire:

Boys' problems relate to pressures from the community, they may be pressurised by a neighbour to be a merchant and he says he's afraid. A boy says I'm selling and abusing drugs. Girls say I've been assaulted or raped or sexually abused by my father.

The Guidance Counsellor provided a powerful critique of the construction of boys as strong and hard by elaborating on the anxieties they feel. But the boys could only reveal their anxieties, she said, with women:

Boys have been forced by circumstances and the area to be drug merchants and they can't open up to males. Us Africans they've got this fear they have to be strong all the time, they think maybe a male is going to laugh at me, why are you not strong. In counselling sometimes they cry and really open up. As Africans there is this belief they can't cry, they are male.

They seemed to take it for granted that boys could only 'open up' with women, and made this explicit when asked why there were no male Life Orientation teachers or Guidance Counsellors. Indeed the very question made them smile, as if men were unimaginable in these roles. They – the two women we interviewed - were able to do the work they did because, they said, they were like 'mothers' who related much more closely to both boys and girls than adult men, and the pupils felt much more comfortable talking to them about issues like sexuality.

At times [as Life Orientation teachers and Guidance Counsellors] you should act as a mother to them. [the pupils] There are things they can't tell you, you need to give them time .... Some topics men [teachers] can't handle when it comes to life orientation [lots of laughter] people are very shy to talk about it [sex education] openly.

When I have to deal with the topic I talk to them [the male teachers] and they say 'how do you do that, I can't do that.' It's easy for us.

The idea of men teaching sex education and not being able to 'handle it' raised much laughter partly, presumably, because of the contradiction with the assumption that males are strong and capable of handling anything. While challenging the notion of (bad) boys, as strong and hard, they were also making quite fixed associations, between femininity and emotional engagement, care and support, on the one hand, and masculinity and the absence of this, on the other. Taking the former for granted and constructing it as maternal, they were denying the possibility of male teachers demonstrating more caring and empathetic ways of being male. For the boys (and girls) we interviewed it seemed the dominant adult model of masculinity they witnessed and experienced at school was a conventionally powerful and authoritarian one as displayed most dramatically by the Principal. This kind of masculinity, ironically, seemed to have much in common with the 'tough' and 'bossy' hegemonic forms of masculinity which the two female teachers associated with the very bad boys.

## **Conclusion**

While investigating 'bad' black boys, our aim was neither to problematise them nor to contribute to popular discourses which construct the spectre of black violence and danger which so haunt white and Indian imaginations in post-apartheid South Africa. We were concerned not to come across in our interviews as white and Indian experts (even though we were, according to the girls we interviewed, accorded considerable importance by the pupils because of our 'race'). Rather we wanted to centre on the lives and identities of the young people themselves and to encourage them to be reflective and set the agenda. We were also very concerned not to flatten out and homogenise our interviewees. We were interested in pursuing with the girls the different ways of being boys, whether they constructed boys differently, and if so how they related to different boys, and also whether they were different in different contexts. And taking masculinities and femininities not as fixed essences which predetermine gendered forms of behaviour and

values but as identities which are always constructed and performed in relation to each other, we interviewed boys about their attitudes to and relations with gendered and 'racial' Others.

The 'bad' boys we interviewed seemed surprisingly good, speaking about school and work in ways which suggested a high commitment (if not always recognised by the school authorities) to the school's work ethic, as well as displaying conscientiousness and concentration, despite the noise outside, during the interview. In individual interviews with black boys who went to black township schools in KwaZulu-Natal, Danckwerts (2005) also found high levels of commitment to the work ethic, even though, as we also found, the boys constructed themselves as less '*studious*' than girls. She contrasts this with the much more '*casual approach to academic work*' of the relatively affluent white boys she interviewed who went to multi-racial schools, who constructed working hard as 'uncool.' In all our interviews with black boys and girls coming from economically poor backgrounds, we found that much importance is attached to education as a means for self betterment, and even though the 'bad' boys we interviewed were pessimistic about the future, they were still strongly invested in school and the school's work ethic. Far from being immature, irresponsible and hedonistic which is how young men (and notably black young men) in South Africa are problematised, they seemed to be overwhelmed by concerns and anxieties about the future and how they were going to cope.

In contrast to the girls the boys were quite despondent, and this, we suggest, was partly because they were more focused on constructing themselves as actual and potential breadwinners in a community which offered few prospects of decent employment. In a recent in depth interview based study with older teenage boys from different 'race' backgrounds in the Durban area, Morrell (2005) also noted how 'responsible' the black boys seemed to be, speaking about a future in which they imagined themselves as breadwinners looking after their families, in contrast to the white boys who were much more hedonistic and individualistic and did not speak at all about family obligations. Such findings contradict, as Morrell argues, the popular myth of black young men as 'bad,' and also imply, we suggest, that we should focus on the anxieties such anticipated responsibilities generate for black young men (especially in conditions of high unemployment) rather than constructing them as tough and as lacking in feelings. As Gary Barker

(2005) notes, in his work with boys from 'low income' communities mainly in Latin America and Africa, the prospect of no employment 'for many young men' is not only problematic for them economically but also because it undermines their very identities, making them less attractive as potential 'long-term partners' for females and more likely to be seen as bad and irresponsible.

We do not want to argue, however, that violence and sexual violence do not feature prominently in the lives of some black boys whether as perpetrators or victims (of violence *and* being stereotyped as violent). Sexual harassment (usually outside school) of girls by boys and men was according to the teachers we interviewed, a major problem for girls which was raised in counselling sessions, though, interestingly, our girl interviewees, who spoke a great deal about their relations with boys, hardly referred to this. What we do want to argue, based on our current research findings, is that the 'badness' of black boys is complex, contradictory and much exaggerated.

The teachers implied that the very bad boys carried great symbolic significance, as if they illustrated (in an acute form) problems and pressures for boys *generally* in black townships, and embodied toughness and hardness as masculine ideals which influenced *all* black boys in the townships. The very bad boys, however, were constructed by the teachers as a small minority. Furthermore their violence and badness seemed very context specific. The very bad boys, according to the teachers, were violent, though not in the schools, and some of them were not hard and tough with sympathetic female teachers and even broke down and cried. The teachers suggested that the very bad boys, despite (and perhaps also because of) their veneer of toughness and invincibility were extremely anxious and concerned, and that while they did derive status from being naughty in the sense of flouting authority, one of their key motivations for becoming gangsters and drug sellers was to fend for themselves and their families. In other words their badness was not so much a manifestation of pathological irresponsibility, hatred and hedonism (as the badness of black young men in South Africa is more generally understood) but of their desire to be good and responsible breadwinners. The 'goodness' of the 'bad boys', the 'respect' they showed us, their commitment to work (whether working in the interview or working in school) and also their sense of responsibility and

concern about their futures as breadwinners was confirmed in the interview we conducted with them.

The girls' interview, when contrasted with the boys', did not demonstrate lack of voice (as one might expect on the basis of Gilligan's account of adolescent gendered styles). Instead the girls were much better at expressing and asserting themselves and taking the interview in various directions and registered more clearly in our memories than the boys who displayed relative inability to support and engage with each other and us. It seems that there were few models of empathetic and caring masculinities available to boys at school. The girls themselves, even those who were identified as bad and envied boys their freedoms, idealised girls and women as caring and supportive. So did the women teachers we interviewed who could not imagine men as Life Orientation teachers or Guidance Counsellors because they were perceived as simply not possessing the motherly and empathetic qualities of women. While deconstructing the idea of boys as tough and invulnerable by illustrating how even the very bad boys 'cry' and 'open up' with them, the teachers reinforced conventional associations of masculinities with toughness and insensitivity by making it clear that such boys (and boys and young people in general) could only open up with women. It is a matter of concern, we think, that not only are there no men teaching Life Orientation and taking Guidance and Counselling, but that they are constructed as quite incapable of doing this. For how can boys be encouraged to become more relational, supportive and caring of each other (including boys and girls) if these are constructed as feminine qualities and the dominant images of males at school, as we see in their stories featuring the Principal, are of power, authority and control?

What we want to argue for are ways of understanding and working with young black South African men and women which address bad ways of behaving and which link these to particular ways of identifying as and being boys, without problematising and pathologising the individual boys themselves in ways which draw on and reinforce racist associations of blackness with badness. This must involve:

- 1) teachers and facilitators who are young person centred (as we were in the interviews) and who address the young people with respect, as authorities on their lives.

- 2) male as well as female teachers as carers and sympathetic listeners and
- 3) boys and girls working together to break down polarised gendered identities.

Working in schools and youth clubs with black boys and girls, along the lines we have suggested, must take place in conjunction with massive financial investment in black township communities to improve resources such as the schools and to provide job opportunities. Unless this is forthcoming, the suffering which the boys we interviewed so sadly and eloquently displayed, will continue, generating anxieties, lack of self esteem and 'bad' ways of asserting masculinities.

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Sociology Programme  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

# Seasons of drought have no rainbows – An Experiential Note on Poverty and Survival Networks in South Africa

Ari Sitas

**I**  
During the heady days of SA's transition, when the ideas of truth and reconciliation and of the rainbow nation held sway, Alfred Qabula, a black working class oral poet concluded his assessment of the process with a moving poem about the 'restless dead' and warned that 'seasons of drought have no rainbows' (see Brown 1998).

This paper ends the discussion of a manuscript on the 'Mandela Decade' (a sustained ethnography of 400 black working class leaders of the 1980s exploring their experiences during the decade of the 1990s) with the 'disposal of bodies' – one, Qabula's body in Pondoland in October 2002 and of Sibongile Mkhize's in December 2002. In choosing to pay tribute to the 'restlessness' of dying in SA, I want to make a sociological point about the politics of encroachment and the vitality of embedded struggles over livelihoods<sup>1</sup>. The two stories are not chosen because the one was a man and the other a woman, or that the man left a trail of words and died disturbingly and 'noisily', whereas the other died in complicity and silence, or that the one died of a stroke and the other of HIV/AIDS.

What I'm trying to do is to reflect on the plight of all black working class leaders of the 1980s who proved to be 'losers' in the process of a

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<sup>1</sup> For a theoretical elaboration of these points, see Sitas (2002).

profound democratic and neo-liberal transition<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the 51% of their cohort who experienced untold mobility and the 24% who remained 'stuck' in the factories and communities they worked and lived in, this is a cohort that experienced a radical deterioration of their life's chances<sup>3</sup>. The difference in their stories was that Qabula's body was productive, Mkhize's not.

Like most of their cohorts – they celebrated the transition they had hoped for. Like some of their cohorts, they lost their jobs (see Sitas 1996). Like all the others they searched in vain to find employment and/ or to use their 'contacts' in power to get ahead with their lives. Their ability to be powerful mobilisers, brilliant oral communicators proved not to be good enough.

To be brief they both went through three 'emotive' phases. First there was the phase of a 'million contacts and a billion promises' – this was a phase of hope. The second was a phase of *frenetic activity*, a desperate attempt to *valorise* all their 'contacts', 'networks', 'kinship networks', to constitute some kind of informal livelihood. The third was a phase of disillusionment as they had to melt into their cultural formations and their encroachment strategies: survival strategies of the new poor in the country, whilst at the same time becoming a burden to their families and communities.

## II

Qabula, poet, writer, worker leader and liberation activist, passed away in the wards of the Lusikisiki hospital in rural Pondoland. He was barely sixty years old. He died after a long period of frustration and suffering as his body gave up to the strokes that came to paralyse him, that took most of his sight away, that slurred his speech and that brought with them an unbearable burden on his struggling family. Death, his declared enemy in one of his earlier poems won the first round. The 'stunning creature/ Invisible to naked

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<sup>2</sup> The 'winners' and those 'stuck' are dealt with in respective chapters in the forthcoming, 'Mandela Decade' book. For already published parts of the manuscript see [www.global-studies.de](http://www.global-studies.de) under Sitas.

<sup>3</sup> On the transition see also Adam & Moodley (1995); and Bond (1999).

eyes ... / the gate-crawler/ the abyss in the way of our desires/ the rude intruder of sealed doors/ the inventor of orphans ..."<sup>4</sup> won the first round, slowly and with untold cruelty.

For the last six years his links to Durban were decaying: save the occasional visit for a second medical opinion on his deteriorating health, his contact with the city of his 'fame' was becoming a dwindling memory.

There was a brief moment about a year ago when the worlds of the city and the country were to be brought together again – Qabula was convinced by old friends to return and participate in a disabled artist's poetry evening. The moment was tragic: the hall filled up with old comrades and admirers in anticipation of his return. There was a hushed silence when it was his turn to perform from a borrowed wheelchair. When the microphone was placed in his hand, he faced it, shook his head as if to start, shook his head again as if to start with the audience waiting still in silence, observing the mouth for a sprouting word past three minutes of silence, the poet on his right, broke down in tears and that was that. That was his last performance.

In focusing on Qabula we are keying-in on a powerful legacy of words whose sensibility was shaped in the countryside through a cruel Apartheid childhood and through the forests where as a youth he participated in the Pondoland rebellion of 1959. As he stated in his autobiography *A Working Life, Cruel Beyond Belief*,

.... my origins are simple: I was born on the 12 of December, 1942, at Flagstaff, in an area called Bhalasi in Pondoland. It is a harsh and beautiful land - a land of unending green hills and valleys but also a land of poverty, of broken homesteads, of disease and malnutrition .... My ancestors ploughed this land and trailed these hills with cow-dung. They did so from way back, as far as the memory reaches in the clan of Miya; in the lines of Muja, of Sibewu, of Manqadanda, of Eluhluwini, of Sijekula, of Siyalankulandela, of Manciba and of Henqwa. For two centuries their praise-names and their cattle echoed around these valleys ....

And he continued:

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<sup>4</sup> 'Death' in Qabula et al. (1985).

But then came capitalists demanding labour for the mines and tax collectors wanting cash. My father's father refused to work on the mines and became a transport rider: with his ox-wagon he footed the countryside from farm to farm, from the Transkei to Natal, from the Orange Free State to the Cape and back, carrying grain and other products. But he was destroyed by the arrival of the railways. He became a herbalist and consistently refused to go out and work for a wage. He sent my father and his brothers out to work on the mines or in the sugar fields. From then on migrancy invaded our lives (Qabula 1987: 6f).

Throughout his life he kept a harsh peasant's perspective on middle class and urbane pretensions. His creative power, indeed his legacy that will outlast so many pretenders, is and was as an *imbongi* of migrancy and its humiliating conditions. Through his work, the hostel and the compound, the town and the country, the dumping grounds and the factories, the pass laws and the gaol find a profound image-maker and word-spinner.

What always impressed a younger generation of black workers and trade unionists was that somebody in their midst, a 'nothing' and a 'number', a forklift driver at Dunlops could have so much crazy stuff dancing in his head. For him issues were clear cut:

there, at Dunlop's, we made tyres of all kinds, of all sizes, for cars we never drive, for kwela-kwelas that chase us in the townships and belts for bulldozers that demolish our shacks.

And there *was* crazy stuff happening in his head:

there on my forklift, most of the time, isolated from the world, I would spend my working hours composing songs about our situation. I suppose this was my little resistance struggle in my head, zooming up and down to the Base stores and back. When the tunes rolled fast I would work like a maniac, driving my co-workers insane because the materials would pile up fast in front of them. When the songs were slower then I suppose life improved for them! ...

But as he continues,

there in my head: those forests! ... They lingered in my memory ... the source of refuge for the homeless and the frightened .... the Mpondo resisters .... a retreat from the wilderness of the world outside ... the harsh world of beatings and interrogations; the so-called normal world marked with murderous lists of names. And in my head those forests, those songs. And when the metalworkers union got entry at Dunlop I knew that the march through the forests had restarted.

Finding a platform in the growing union movement Qabula let the contents in his head spill out to inspire most of the popular energy which started from Durban to spread into a cultural revolution in the province and by the late 1980s to be happening everywhere in an insurgent South Africa<sup>5</sup>.

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Qabula became instantly the chronicler and oral poet of the emerging trade union movement. Later, he became the chronicler of all movements. His first public performance produced the 'Praise Poem to Fosatu' – a poem infused with swaying forests, metal, rubber, machines and cunning theatrical humour. It was also filled with arrogance and pride. When COSATU was formed, he and Mi Hlatshwayo composed another 'The Tears of the Creator' for the movement's launch at Kings Park in 1986 (Qabula 1985). Through those lines we experience the movement emerging from the 'mole burrowing towards the factories' to a confident class under attack from all sides. His craft was there 'to praise the common people in their extraordinary ability to live and create'. Or, as he also stated in his book

I shall keep praising my brothers and sisters in the factories and shops, mines and farms – and I shall praise no chiefs .... I hope we are known and remembered, not as a breed of nameless numbers but

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<sup>5</sup> See Gunner and Gwala (1994); and Sitas (1986).

as people who dreamed of peace, prosperity, togetherness and freedom from exploitation (Qabula 1987: 32).

As an activist he inspired thousands of black South Africans to pick-up a pen, sharpen their creative energy and talents in defiance of what the 'system', any system, ordained them to be. Soon enough dozens of izimbongi (Madlizinyoka Ntanzu, ubaba Zondi, Gladman Ngubo, Jeffrey Vilane to name a few) brought their talents into the growing confidence of the labour movement (see Gunner & Gwala 1994). What he decried was silence and inaction. But he also decried boastful talk, the 'talk, talk, talkers and the boast, boast, boasters and the Amandla Pty's'. At a personal level Qabula also disliked deeply any sign of industrialism as such, the railway tracks, the highways, the factories, the structures that scarred in his words, Africa's face and that polluted his ears: 'they are making so much NOISE!' he cried in despair in one of his laments on the fate of Africa (Qabula 1987: 28).

We all know that his work has been anthologised, canonised, analysed and debated. Much of all this Qabula appreciation-machine has been rather lazy. Although his contribution started as a mobilising craft, it turned, as the violence of counter-revolution turned ugly and started swallowing everything around him, into a tortured reflection of death and hope. Poems like the 'Small Gateway to Heaven' and his 'Dumping Ground' are some of the best examples of creativity in the years between 1988-1992. And so are his love poems like 'S'thanda' and the list grows and grows the more we gather the traces he left behind. Although his defiant voice continues, it turns into a troubled monologue of anxiety and worry.

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As Qabula has passed on for the 'lands of the high winds'<sup>6</sup> we must not forget that he died in poverty and that his last words on paper, one finished poem and four unfinished ones, were words marked with bitterness. He was deeply disappointed that 'his' revolution was taken over by a world of cellphones and briefcases. As he also discovered that his talents as an oral

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<sup>6</sup> 'Mother' in Qabula (1987).

person were lost in the winds of change, these disturbing poems preceded his self-imposed exile. Truly, none of us was spared in these poems – ‘The Long Road’ was a criticism of everyone on the road to wealth and power, climbing over his back with spiked shoes. His ‘Of Land, Bones and Money’ was one of the most profound expressions of South Africa’s negotiated settlement – reminding his audience of the ‘restless dead’. And as he insisted the ‘seasons of drought have no rainbows’<sup>7</sup>.

He returned to the countryside poorer and determined. His return to Pondoland, to the lands, coincided with his painful and physical deterioration.

### III

Sibongile Mkhize (a pseudonym) was also a worker leader, a performer and a liberation activist. She lost her job as a textile worker following enormous cutbacks between 1995 - 1996. She died six years later at the age of forty-four. She did so after a long period of deterioration as her body slowly at first but with extreme intensity since 2000, gave up to the virus as it methodically destroyed her immune system. She died of ‘pneumonia’. Unlike Qabula there was no cultural formation to claim her.

The gender infractions are there: she was cut off from her rural homestead and her kin because during the civil war she sided with her union and therefore, COSATU, and, therefore with the mass democratic movement<sup>8</sup>. Lovers she had many but her inability to bear children made them all impermanent liaisons. So, cut off from her parental homesteads, cut off from kin, cut off from her job, she started trying to create a meaningful space in her township environment. The informal jobs were many: an informal seamstress, she lost her ability to deliver on contracts because of

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<sup>7</sup> I was not spared either: with my ‘computer, blue briefcase and funny tie parading as an Idi Dada, Bantubonke Holomisa’. His last poems, hurt. The reference to Uganda’s Idi Dada Amin and to the Transkeian homeland’s leader are not something to be associated with however metaphoric. Especially since he took pleasure in saluting me in public like that as well in the days when I was part of the negotiating leadership in the transition.

<sup>8</sup> On the civil war see Kentridge (1987).

her deteriorating physical condition; she started a day care center for others but again she had to get others to substitute for her, she tried recycling waste-products and, the most important rumour was that she was getting into bad company: she teamed up with ex-comrades turned criminals and was involved in bank heists or with other women being part of the A Team<sup>9</sup> that terrorized shop owners in Durban's Central Business District.

There is a video footage of her in a performance of the 1980s sing-crying about having to leave the countryside for the evil city to earn a wage<sup>10</sup>. She had none of the romanticism though of Qabula about the countryside. She saw it more as a degraded, drunken pit of despair. Yet in the city now – no man, no children and her connections to the church fading, her to and fro-ing to traditional healers to heal her of what the hospital could not do much about, sent her into a life of decrepitude. To everyone she was a burden. And the enormous stigma about 'the' disease kept her quiet, until it was not possible.

#### IV

The fact is, is that she could not be turned into a useable element in the encroaching strategies of the new networks of power and/ or the new politics of the poor. To survival networks, she was unreliable; to the 'Catholics' she was an example of the 'unspeakable'; for her gangster friends she was useless and a liability. She attended gatherings called by AIDS and anti-government social movements but she felt that they were outsiders wanting to use her. There was some hope with one of the *inyangas*<sup>11</sup> who claimed he could cure AIDS. He used her as a tout to go and tell people that she was an example of his healing abilities after her first visit. In believing that she was better, she acceded and earned a percentage; in using her oral and communication skills she was effective: in deteriorating further though, she became the *inyanga's* nemesis and instead of the cure-wonder they both boasted she became a known AIDS sufferer to be avoided, shut out,

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<sup>9</sup> These of course are hearsay rumours from other participants in the study.

<sup>10</sup> *Koze Kuphe Nini*.

<sup>11</sup> Traditional healer/ medicine-man.

extradited. We only know she died and her death must have burdened further whoever undertook the burial costs.

## V

Qabula's death followed a different track: the burden of his inactivity and sickness was deeply felt by his wife and children in the countryside. The father, patriarch, revolutionary, hero disappeared into a moaning, tempestuous and demanding weight in their lives. Worst still were the prospects of the wife and her hold onto her household as custom demanded that she would have to be 'given over' to her husband's brother. Such a person did not exist. So she was to become vulnerable to the local chief's power. The disposal of Qabula's body though proved to be 'productive'. The socio-political drama of the burial points to a successful useage of political capital to ensure future livelihoods.

Qabula's non-specific religiosity allowed for maximum unity among the women of the village and the mobilization of the three Christian denominations. His status as a one-time political figure facilitated the support of the bishops of these denominations. The bishops in turn facilitated the composition of a committee of men who would lead the proceedings and visit Durban to symbolically enrol the city and bring its resources back into the countryside. The women formed a guard around the widow and gave her the status of a woman of significant social influence.

The connection to Durban did not achieve much, save the obituaries that appeared in the political organisations' e-mails and public communications. They in turn, were taken over by the commercial press. The Communist Party and the ANC had to quickly decide on a way of honouring the event – an event happening far away from the big cities. The Paramount Chief of the area was the ANC MP (member of parliament) and a leader of CONTRALESA (the traditional leaders' association). He was the customary superior to local chiefs who were to influence the wife's and the household's future.

At the decision of the Chief/MP leader to officiate as an ANC leader, the Provincial Executive which was to the 'left' of his politics, decided that their involvement was necessary. One of its members a formidable woman colonel of the guerrilla days was from Qabula's village.

She had just been elected the executive mayor of the seven district councils that covered most of the north of the old homeland. She was the administrative and political senior of the local mayor. She was to attend.

The problem was that the local area had two mayors – the villager (from Qabula's place) and the townsman from Flagstaff. They were opposed to each other – the one wanted the countryside to swallow the town, the other wanted the town to swallow the countryside. The one was backed by the Communist Party and the ANC left, the other was backed by the chief, the new middle class and the ANC right. The one was for redistribution, the other, for development. Both had to be there.

Hearing that the entire leadership was to be there, the heritage committee spanning the areas around the village, made up of old Pondoland rebels dusted down their Mousers and decided that they could claim the occasion to remind the government that they were promised an income-generating heritage site.

The real power in the village was among Communist Party men who were in the main dismissed miners (close to 400 in a village of 5000) with a lot of time at their disposal. They had taken over from women as the main role players in the rural area now they were unemployed. Although they knew Qabula since childhood they knew him as a co-sufferer and a migrant, they did not realize how much of their hero he was. Their chance was to use the occasion to protest against the neo-liberal policies of the government and to strengthen their hand in local politics. So a vast mobilization around the disposal of Qabula's body emerged.

The burial was an emotive occasion where the singing, the speeches and arguments used the emotive context to create a new balance of promises and compromises. In the process, what was crucial for the kinship structures around the widow was that she gained her autonomy, that she was included in the new promised committees and that she and her children kept their autonomy.

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The two stories exemplify a number of social trends in post-Apartheid South Africa. Alongside the stories of another eighty participants in the 'sustained ethnography' they could provide a remarkable 'experiential mosaic' of the sources of new forms of dissonance and discontent.

By way of conclusion I would like to draw on two of the themes hinted at in the narratives: it is vital to re-assert that people are not spasmodic reflex-responders to social pressures. The radical deterioration of life-chances does not necessarily translate into resistance. Rather they have to be understood within embedded struggles over livelihoods. At a time when sociology is fascinated by 'new social movements' and their 'disembedded-ness' it is vital to explore the sources of discontent in the social and material conditions of everyday life<sup>12</sup>. No internet domain and network can dispose bodies nor are the new poor demanding virtual land and livelihoods within an internet domain. Understanding the politics of encroachment among the socially excluded is but a small step in deciphering class and power dynamics in a society.

Secondly, in a society where health and disease have become an unprecedented pressure affecting critically the reproduction of poorer households, dying has taken on new meanings creating in the way new forms of social tension<sup>13</sup>. Without an understanding of the cultural formations and their histories, the repertoire of actions and strategies available to ordinary people disappear.

Finally, I hope in selecting these two 'stories', I have managed to provide a hint at the sociological drama that is unfolding in South Africa's transition. As the institutions of Apartheid are being reconfigured, new social energies define in Qabula's terms 'seasons of drought' for some, 'rainbows' for others.

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<sup>12</sup> See for example Hardt and Negri (2000) for a discussion that Hardt elaborates as an assessment of the Porto Allegre encounter about the 'new' movements.

<sup>13</sup> The themes of health and disease are explored in my 'Love in the Time of Cholera?' – the extended version is in the [www.global-studies.de](http://www.global-studies.de) site. A shortened version appeared in the *Indicator*, Durban 2001.

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Head of School  
School of Sociology and Social Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

## Book Review

*The Great Trek North: The Expansion of South African Media and ICT Companies into the SADC Region*

by Console Tleane

Braamfontein, South Africa: Freedom of Expression Institute, 2006  
ISBN 0-620-34905-0.

Reviewed by:

Mokong Simon Mapadimeng

Industrial, Organisational and Labour Studies (IOLS) Programme  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Console Tleane's book could not have come at a better time than just over a decade since South Africa has attained democracy following the collapse of the apartheid regime in 1994. What makes this book even better timed is the context in which it has been written defined largely by the calls led by the South African government under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki, in partnership with other leading African states such as Nigeria and Algeria, for the renewal of Africa as captured through the concept of African Renaissance strongly espoused by President Mbeki. Within this discourse, a declaration has been made at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that the latter is the African century.

The book provides a critical assessment of SA's role in the continent, and especially in sub-Saharan or Southern Africa, through specific focus on the expansion of the SA Media, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector into the region. This is accomplished through examination of SA companies that fall within the Media and ICT sector's sub-sectors i.e. broadcast media; print media;

telephony; and the internet, satellite and other electronic communication media. They include broadcasting companies such as the SABC, M-Net, E-TV, Channel Africa, and Multi-Choice; newspaper companies such as *Mail & Guardian*, *City Press*, *Sunday World*, *Business Day*, *Financial Times*, *Beeld*, and *Rapport*; Telkom and Eskom; cellular phone companies Vodacom and MTN; Internet Service Providers (ISPs) such as M-Web and ABSA ISP.

In all these sub-sectors, Tleane finds a common trend in their expansion into the region i.e. defined and characterised largely by the neo-liberal capitalist motives driven by the pursuit of profit for the companies as opposed to a genuine concern with contributing to the development and advancement of the sub-continent as part of the broader project of African Renaissance aimed at ensuring that the twenty-first century is indeed the African century. Hence his conclusion

... a simple understanding of how capitalism functions should be adequate for us to understand that the primary motive for capitalist expansion is not to offer services to other countries, but to make profits, and the media industry is no exception (p. 69).

Tleane finds this pre-occupation with pursuit of profits and domination of markets evident in amongst others lack of concern with promoting local content in news (basically telling the SA story as opposed to telling a 'true Africa story') as well as with developing local skills and capacity in the countries which they do business (often senior personnel from SA is used to run operations and locals are only employed in junior capacities); a rife competition amongst SA companies with foreign-owned companies from USA, UK and Western Europe for market share; tendencies to set up operations and provide services in urban cities e.g. in DRC they prefer to operate in cities of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, which occurs at the detriment of rural areas perpetuating rural-urban divide/inequalities and urban bias; preference to go into stable countries and thus not helping in peace-building efforts in countries riddled with conflicts; the introduction of mainly subscription broadcast channels such as Channel Africa which are outside of the reach of the impoverished masses; the fact that competition amongst foreign-owned and managed companies fails to bring down prices for the

services rendered; and collaborations entered into with some local elites seeking to subvert the already weak regulatory frameworks.

He also finds that SA companies' penetration into SADC countries is facilitated by their technological superiority; lack of media freedom in most of the countries in the region as well as effective independent regulatory framework; comparative advantage of SA in terms of the levels of industrial capitalist development with sophisticated infrastructure and financial resources; and lack of transparency and openness on the part of some SADC and other African countries in areas of broadcasting and print media. Thus he finds that 'a combination of already highly developed industries that had long adopted profit-making operations; the destruction of the economies of the region through the World Bank and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes; the advent of neo-liberal globalisation which forced countries to relax their trade rules ...' have been vital in the expansion of SA companies into the region (see p.119).

The book comprises of three parts with 11 main chapters and some addendums. The first 3 chapters constitute part 1. In chapter 1, Tleane traces SA's expansion into the region back to the colonial times of Cecil John Rhodes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He finds that the expansion has always been capitalist expansion and part of global trends. Chapter 2 elaborates on this by providing a broad overview of SA's economic expansion into region, showing that all key sectors have presence in the region with a single main motive i.e. to take over and dominate markets and maximise profits without regard for protection of natural environment and social responsibility. This confirms one of the scenarios painted by Davies (1992) to whom the author refers, who argued, writing prior to 1994, that in its expansion into the region, post-apartheid SA is likely to adopt the 'South Africa first' approach whereby the state and capital would blindly pursue their narrow interests without regard or sensitivity to the damage such an approach would inflict (see p.19). This point is boldly presented in the subsequent chapters 4-8, which together constitute part 2. These are case-study based and cover some companies in the broadcast media; the print media; the telephony; and the internet, satellite and other electronic media as sub-sectors of the broader ICT sector with presence in the region. In the preceding chapter 3, the author locates SA's expansion and domination in the broader context of globalisation showing how multilateral and international agreements and

standards have shaped exploitative relationships in the region. The remaining Part 3 comprises of chapters 9-11. In chapter 9, the author examines local factors such as lack of capital and support from governments to the local industries that contribute to SA's expansion and the actual role of the latter in the region which he finds to be not just serving as a gateway but also as a competitor for control of markets. This leads to the conclusion he draws in chapter 10, following some careful analysis, that SA is a sub-imperial power of the region. In chapter 11, Tleane not only sums up his findings but most importantly makes suggestions on how to reverse the situation of SA's dominance in the region, and indeed in the rest of Africa, especially as he sees the danger of this current trend of capitalist expansion being likely to continue unless interventions are made to reverse it. His proposed interventions include the need for campaigns against the privatisation and liberalisation of the ICT sector and state control, tightening of the regulatory framework through creation of independent regulator, as well as jealously guarding against the public good, rights and ethos.

A key strength of this book is its scholarly soundness. The analysis and the arguments provided are informed by and based on powerful historical, theoretical and empirical evidence (the latter drawn from case studies done by the author despite lack of time and resources as he acknowledges to further conduct in-depth studies). This can be noticed from Tleane's reference to the historical context and background to SA's expansion into the region as outlined in the chapter 1, his critical review of the theoretical works of relevance to the topic under investigation e.g. Lenin's theory of imperialism, Alex Callinicos' contribution on the concept of sub-imperialism, the notion of middle power as well as Davies' theoretical scenarios of how SA was likely to approach the region in the post-apartheid era (note too his reference to Ibbo Mandaza's work). Perhaps a point of weakness is that Tleane does not present and contribute his own take on the concept of sub-imperialism in terms of considering an alternative concept to best describe SA's expansion into the region. This weakness is common amongst our local scholars who tend to restrict themselves to foreign developed concepts rather than seeking to find new and appropriate locally grown concepts and theories. Notwithstanding this weakness, Tleane's recognition of the shortfalls in the concept of sup-imperialism, arguing that it suffers impoverished definition should however be seen as a point of

strength presenting a challenge of the need to further unpack the concept. What I find to be a further weak point in the book is Tleane's argument that the proposed changes for the SABC Africa channel such as to introduce continuous news and broadcast in English, French and Portuguese are a sign of optimism that could see the channel beginning to tell a true 'Africa story'. My concern with this view, which seems to be pervasive amongst most Africans, including those strongly opposed to neo-colonialism, is that it justifies the perpetuation of colonial domination and fails to challenge colonial languages in Africa. The result is that Africa remains divided along colonial boundaries i.e. Anglo-phone, Franco-phone, and Luso-phone. Entrenching these languages does not augur well for Africa renewal efforts.

This book however is a great scholarly contribution to the understanding of SA's role in the region and indeed the entire continent. It adds a scholarly independent voice to the discourse of African Renaissance and should no doubt trigger further debate on the subject beyond political pronouncements that receive greater mass media coverage. It should prove a valuable source and reference to all those interested in post-apartheid, post-colonial Africa. It is written in accessible language and should be a manageable read to students at school level but also at higher education levels.

# Recently Reviewed South African Life Writing Publications V

Reviews Editor: Judith Lütge Coullie

## List of Publications Consulted

All publications are from South Africa, unless otherwise indicated with \*\*. Most prices are quoted in South African Rands.

Reviews which were originally published in Afrikaans are marked with \* and have been translated into English by Judith Lütge Coullie.

** <i>African Book Publishing Record</i>	<i>Pretoria News</i>
<i>African Review of Books</i>	<i>Rapport: Perspektief.</i>
<i>Cape Argus</i>	<i>Saturday Dispatch.</i>
<i>Cape Argus, Tonight</i>	<i>Sowetan</i>
<i>Cape Times</i>	<i>The Herald, TGIF.</i>
<i>Cape Times, Tonight</i>	<i>The Star</i>
<i>Cape Times, Review</i>	<i>The Star, Tonight.</i>
<i>Femina</i>	<i>The Sunday Independent</i>
<i>LitNet</i>	<i>The Witness</i>
<i>Mail &amp; Guardianonline: Books</i>	<i>Transformation</i>
<i>Outer West Local News.</i>	

## Afrika, Tatamkhulu

*Mr Chameleon: An Autobiography.* Tatamkhulu Afrika. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2005. 424pp. R169.

For all its apparent frankness and passion, the autobiography of the late, acclaimed poet Tatamkhulu Afrika (he changed his name many times) tells

an oblique tale. It is a deeply interesting read, threaded throughout with issues of race, homosexuality and 'friendship' – a minefield of marginality, acceptance and one-upmanship, negotiated with the intense awareness of one who was already a writer at 17. This finely textured, magnificently written account of a life often dark with anger, anguish and self-doubt is crammed with telling observation and poetic compression.

Jane Rosenthal. *Mail & Guardianonline: Books*. October 14 2005. <http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2005/2005oct/051014-texture.html>

The hefty autobiography of Tatamkhulu Afrika is both fascinating and infuriating, awe-inspiring and yet often repellent. It begins with sex and guilt, and he rarely lets up his cardinal preoccupation, the testing of masculinity. On the close connections between Afrika's poetry and fiction and his autobiography one can imagine a pile of dissertations emerging. Born in Egypt, adopted by South African Methodists, Afrika 'crossed over' from white identity to black and converted to Islam. Afrika can write marvellously – he is acutely observant, vivid, and capable of tenderness and humour – but some features of his style are quite awful (his macho verbal gestures – scabrous, often obscene – and some leaden sentence structures and redundancies). Moreover, the severe privations and cruelties he endured, and his profound psychological scarring, make this a harrowing book. All in all, credit to the publishers, Jacana, for taking this on.

Chris Dunton. *The Sunday Independent*. December 4 2005: 17.

### **'Anna'**

*It's me, Anna*. Elbie Lötter, translated by Marianne Thamm. Cape Town: Kwela, 2005. 224pp. R153.

The major theme of this fictionalised treatment of a true story is utterly harrowing: rape/incest compounded by maternal neglect, with a side-serving of child-battering, suicide and murder, all set in a South African family to which South Africans can immediately, if unwillingly, relate. The story,

*Judith Lütge Coullie*

written in the first person, is about the Anna, the daughter of a woman who worked in 'Bantu Administration' department of the apartheid government, and a sergeant in the South African Police. When her parents divorce, her mother's new partner is a repeat rapist of young female children and Anna becomes his next victim.

James Mitchell. *The Star*. September 1 2005.

This book has sold very well since its publication in both English and its original Afrikaans version, and it won the Bookseller's Choice Award. So what was it that annoyed me so much? The story was not very well written, though it was clear and eloquent, giving many of the gory details honestly which, no doubt, helped to sell it. But I began to feel disturbed as the story of child abuse – and the parallel narrative of the adult's revenge - went along. Anna never did shoot her abusive stepfather; her abused half-sister didn't commit suicide. So what else in the story isn't true? Furthermore, the wicked stepfather, who sexually violated his son, stepdaughter Anna and daughter was never confronted, charged or sentenced – he died a free and blameless man. And as the author has chosen to remain anonymous, writing under the pseudonym 'Elbie Lötter', his memory remains so. I have a real problem with her anonymity; not only for the reasons just mentioned but also because it perpetrates the myth that victims of child abuse are somehow tainted. It left me feeling like a voyeur. There's no healing in the book, and while the author has my total, deep sympathy and compassion, I cannot recommend this book.

Beverley Roos Muller. *Cape Times, Tonight*. September 1 2005: 13.

### **Awolowo, Hannah Idowu Dideolu**

*A Memoir of the Jewel*. H.I.D. Awolowo. Ife-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003. 112 pp. \$29.95.

This account of the powerful woman and leader, based on tape recordings, takes the form of a natural conversation, however, the reader is hard-pressed

to form any accurate impression of Awolowo because of poor editing. Consequently, this work constitutes a missed opportunity of disclosing to the world an exceptional figure in Nigerian public life.

Vincent T. Maphai. *The African Publishing Record* 31 (3), 2005: 221.

### **Bailey, Barbara**

*An Eccentric Marriage: Living with Jim*. Barbara Bailey. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2005. 288pp. R175.

Barbara Bailey sees her late husband Jim, proprietor of *Drum* magazine, as a hero because of his contribution to the black press in South Africa. Although we do not come much closer to understanding him, her diary records of how she fell in love with him when she was almost 12 and he was 31 hold the strongest appeal of the memoir.

Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent*. November 13 2005: 18.

### **Bateman, Paul**

*The Million Rand Teaspoon*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006. 256 pp. R133.00.

This book is about Bateman's life-long struggle with drug addiction, not only from his perspective but also from that of his family and close friends. His story takes us from his beginnings in Johannesburg, to London, then back to South Africa to Durban and, inevitably, back to Hillbrow, Johannesburg. I strongly recommend this book for teenagers and their parents for it will serve as a deterrent for would-be drug-users, and educate their parents and families.

Nikki Ridley. *Outer West Local News*. October 2006: 14.

Judith Lütge Coullie

### **Bosman, Herman Charles**

*Herman Charles Bosman: Between the Lines.* Valerie Rosenberg. Cape Town: Struik, 2005. 261pp. R150.

Valerie Rosenberg, who has previously written a biography and made a documentary of South African writer Herman Charles Bosman, says in her preface that she needed to streamline the material and also 'deal with information I hadn't really wanted to find'. The information is unsavoury, to say the least: he was probably the incestuous offspring of his mother and her brother; he killed his step-brother; he himself gave abortions to his wives. The book contains interesting drawings by Bosman and his widow, Helena, as well as unusual photographs. However, Rosenberg – in not giving indexical references to statements or insinuations – lets this biography lack authenticity.

Renée Rautenbach. *Pretoria News*. October 31 2005:16.

### **Cope, Michael**

*Intricacy: A Meditation on Memory.* Michael Cope. Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005. 320pp. R165.

This remarkable South African 'memoir' – inadequate word – is well-named by its author: it could also be called a mosaic, tapestry or kaleidoscope, formed of numerous pieces or threads – people, events, feelings, thoughts (remembered or half-remembered), pieces of information and 'meditations' on many topics including memory itself, Eastern mysticism, South African politics, archaeology, adolescence, broken families and death. Contributing to the complex weave is the large number of photographs and sketches. Cope's prose is ruthlessly honest, metaphor-rich, semi-detached but compassionate. The colourful, often wounded presence of the author's mother, Lesley, helps to provide a persistent thread through this superficially 'bitty' work. It is hard to do justice to the richness of this intelligent, moving, panoramic book.

David Pike. *The Witness*. October 26 2005:12.

Although it's decidedly quirky, Capetonian Michael Cope's intriguing memoir never sacrifices accessibility for the sake of device. Fragmented, the book explores the mechanics of memory, and although some of the academic references Cope weaves into the thread of the work tend to irritate eventually, there are some fascinating theories about what we remember and why. Also satisfying are Cope's beautiful use of language and sometimes captivating evocation of an unconventional Cape childhood.

Stevie Godson. *Saturday Dispatch*. 8 April 2006: 19.

Mike Cope is a man of many parts: novelist, poet, jeweller, martial arts practitioner, devotee of Eastern thought. All these enterprises inform *Intricacy*, for it includes stories, finely delineated sense-impressions, reflections on Buddhist and Hindu practices, all arranged and presented with an attention to detail. Cope is the scion of creative parents (the novelist Jack and painter Lesley), and the book is in part a complex homage to them both. Through fits and starts, we trace the outlines of the author's formative life in the fifties in Cape Town, and the breakup of his parents' marriage when he was six. The tangled family history on both sides, including a host of characters moving around the world, flits ghostlike through these pages. These entrances and exits exemplify the writer's recurring interest in the slippery nature of memory.

The book is divided into nine parts, each broken via inconsequent sub-headings that read like this: 'PART 1: intricacy inelephant hummock polka destroy derelict guest Pliny consensus predisposition bloc forgot beating modern', with each word heading a sub-section. As you can see, there's no obvious connection between these words, and Mike Cope has broken his text into a series of passages – some short, some quite long – that are made to fit these improbable headings. Result? A sense of contrivance, also some frustration. The bitty sub-headings, and the overloading of topics, undermine a book that bursts with insights, flavours, and the moving burden of a son's complex love.

Guy Willoughby. *Cape Times*. January 24 2006: 7.

### **Ebersohn, Wessel**

*In Touching Distance*. Wessel Ebersohn. Parkview: Paper Movie Publishing, 2005. 176pp. R150.

*In Touching Distance* calls to mind two well-loved, nature-tinged reminiscences: Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals* and Henry Thoreau's *Walden*. Wessel Ebersohn's deceptively gentle memoir describes how in 1987 he withdrew with his wife Miriam, their daughters Tess and Liz, and grandchildren Kathy and Sheena 'from Johannesburg's traffic, smog, crime and frantic pace'. They stayed in the depths of the Knysna forest for seven years, in a humble woodcutter's cottage, running a full-time, avian restore-and-rescue operation. If politics prompted the Ebersohns into the forest, they found politics waiting for them there too. All the time they were there, they were under surveillance by the apartheid Security Police, especially after the twice-banned novelist was commissioned to track the terrible political struggles in the townships of Oudtshoorn.

If you've ever found the world too much with you, this quiet, thought-stirring book will resonate in the heart's deep core.

Guy Willoughby. *Cape Times, Review*. August 16 2005: 7.

### **Fairhead, Nigel**

*When all else falls away: Nigel Fairhead's story*. Nigel Fairhead with Marianne Thamm. Johannesburg: Penguin, 2005. 250pp. R110.

Arranged chronologically, this is Nigel Fairhead's candidly told story of how he has battled addictions (mainly to heroin), his years of spiritual exploration in London and India, and his attempts to come to terms with the murder of his wife, Brenda, and daughter in 2000 when on holiday in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Far from depressing, Nigel's book is moving; it is the story of one man's dealing with great loss, and it's inspiring.

Jeanne Viall. *Cape Argus, Tonight*. September 29 2005: 13.

Fairhead's story is an interesting one. The narrative is supported by letters from Brenda, his wife, to her parents in Australia, and this helps to bring a sense of her spirit into the story. Kia, his daughter, was just 11 when she and her mother were murdered while holidaying in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. I found myself getting impatient with the fact that Fairhead kept returning to heroin, and felt that a large part of the story had not been told: how or where do you find the strength to go on after such a loss? Perhaps, to be fair, such questions cannot be answered.

Arja Salafranca. *The Star, Tonight*. October 21 2005: 14.

*When All Else Falls Away* is more than a detailed account of the events which led up to the murder of Brenda and Kia Fairhead. With astonishing resolution and piercing candour the author has made public his immense grief and his life's journey towards learning acceptance of life's lessons, overcoming adversity and continuing to find love, peace and happiness. In deeply personal and poignant chapters, Nigel tells of the frantic search to find his missing wife and daughter. The narrative is enhanced with family photographs, letters written by his late wife, Brenda, colour copies of his daughter Kia's school projects and newspaper reports. The final chapter, a dialogue between co-author Marianne Thamm and a clinical psychologist, is 'a guide for those readers who might need a broader understanding of the effects of trauma'.

Michelle McGrane. *LitNet*. November 22 2005.

[http://www.litnet.co.za/reviews/falls\\_away.asp](http://www.litnet.co.za/reviews/falls_away.asp)

## Hirson, Denis

*We walk straight so you better get out the way*. Denis Hirson. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2006. 168pp. R97.

In 1970 the American painter and writer Joe Brainard published an innovatory work that was to inspire successors across three continents. Titled *I Remember*, in its final form this comprises a thousand-plus short

entries, each beginning with the phrase 'I remember'. Brainard's idea inspired French novelist Georges Perec and South African Denis Hirson, first with his highly successful *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* and now with its sequel, *We Walk Straight*. In his first volume he deals largely with his childhood, in the second volume the story moves into the 'seventies and beyond. It also modifies the Brainard formula more fully and successfully than perhaps any other contribution has done: there is much more consolidation and counterpointing of individual entries and some are much longer and much more 'worked through' stylistically. Hirson still dips into his childhood, but with the worsening political situation in South Africa (his own father was imprisoned by the apartheid state), the tone is often dark and anxious. *I Remember King Kong* was a fine book and *We Walk Straight* is finer still.

Chris Dunton. *The Sunday Independent*. January 8 2006: 18.

In his second volume of memoirs, Hirson departs frequently from the clipped format of the original. Here some paragraphs evolve into smoother prose and, occasionally, distance (or merciful amnesia) takes its toll and 'I remember' becomes 'I don't remember'.

The recollections are as quirky as ever, the observations as sharp and witty, the metaphors as apt, but this is a more sombre work. In his narrative, Hirson does not 'walk straight'; he 'wheels around', reverting again and again to topics close to his heart – journeys, exile, the meaning of home, the nature of freedom.

This captivating book is funny and moving and tender and ultimately tells us more about South Africa and South Africans than many a more obviously serious work.

Pat Schwartz. *Mail & Guardianonline: Books*. January 13 2006. <http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2006/2006jan/060113-boyhood.html>

## Jacobs, Rayda

*The Mecca Diaries*. Rayda Jacobs. Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005. 160pp. R165.95.

This account of her hajj by Cape Town writer, Rayda Jacobs, is part diary, part guidebook and part spiritual memoir. Jacobs is deeply affected by her participation in the spiritual event and, despite severe hardship and illness, repeatedly refers to her good fortune to participate. She also gives the non-Muslim reader a good insight into the rituals.

Ina Randall. *The Herald, TGIF*. September 2 2005: 10.

*The Mecca Diaries* is written as a journal and guidebook; it is simply told, without a climax, a documentation of events, rather than experiences, which lacks personality. I found this a flat read which did nothing to inspire me to perform the pilgrimage.

Fouzia van der Fort. *Cape Argus*. September 29 2005: 13.

### **Kaplan, Jonathan**

*Contact wounds: A War Surgeon's Education*. Jonathan Kaplan. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2005. 288 pp. R151.95.

This autobiography covers the author's experiences in diverse conflict zones in the world. Kaplan exposes corrupt governments, foolish soldiers and children in rags bloated with self-importance, as well as the incompetence of health systems in general. But the book is more than this: it is also a meditation on memory, truth and storytelling. The book recounts experiences in Durban, South Africa, on a kibbutz in the desert in the south of Israel, Madagascar, Angola and Iraq; but it is the psychological journey which makes the greatest impact. The abrupt arrivals and departures of minor characters can be confusing, and Kaplan's chronology is not always flawless. Nevertheless, it is a good story, being both a celebration of medicine as well as a warning about its future.

\* Diane Awerbuck. *Rapport: Perspektief*. May 28 2006: 4.

*Judith Lütge Coullie*

In writing *Contact Wounds*, Jonathan Kaplan set out to explore the influences that led him to volunteer as a combat-zone surgeon. He takes us with him on this journey – from a teenage pilgrimage to Israel to a searing account of the horrors of war in Angola and Iraq. There's no pretentious idealism or indulgent soul-searching, just the unfolding of ordinary events that have added up to an extraordinary existence. And a story told with charming candour and a sprinkling of wry humour.

G.W.B. *Femina*. May 2006: 108.

### **Krige, Corné**

*The right place at the wrong time*. Corné Krige with Peter Bills. Cape Town: Zebra, 2005. 272pp. R184

The autobiography of the 30-year old ex-Springbok rugby captain Corné Krige provided catharsis for Krige, he says. Krige writes candidly about the controversial camp the South African rugby players were forced to attend before a World Cup rugby series. It is no wonder the book is on its second print run.

Maureen Isaacson. *The Sunday Independent*. November 13 2005: 18.

### **Levin, Adam**

*Aidsafari: A Memoir of my Journey with Aids*. Adam Levin. Cape Town: Zebra, 2005. 224pp. R129.95.

Levin was doing pretty well as an award-winning journalist and an about-to-be-published author of *The Wonder Safaris* when he discovered that he was HIV-positive and had developed AIDS. This could be a very depressing book to read, and indeed there are parts that are extremely touching and difficult to read, but instead it reflects an honesty and triumph of the human spirit that is rather uplifting. In this book, which is an important part of the canon of literature on HIV/AIDS in South Africa, Levin tells his story with

style and panache, although underlying the story is the sense that this was a deeply difficult story to tell. Ultimately you should read this book not only because it is an important one, but also because it is a bloody good read.

Jennifer Crocker. *Cape Times*. September 12 2005: 12.

Adam Levin is incapable of producing an ordinary memoir on HIV/AIDS. Most of the time, while his account is almost gruesomely sad, it is also funny. All his life he had been travelling the world to find answers and here he was forced to be still and take a more difficult journey. If you want to know about physical horrors of AIDS, he doesn't spare you, but there's also the loss of self, the way he becomes invisible because people are scared to deal with his pain. It's a fight for survival, but it's also a glorious celebration of life and everything that's worth fighting for.

D.B. *Pretoria News*. August 22 2005: 8.

### **Nuttall, Michael**

*Number Two to Tutu: A Memoir*. Michael Nuttall. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003. 178 pp. R70.

The author, former Bishop of the Church of the Province of South Africa (Anglican), has provided us with his insights and memories of the role he played during the turbulent years of the last quarter of the 20th century when the old apartheid system was dying and a new South Africa was being born. It chronicles the role of Desmond Tutu and the relationship the author had with him, as his right-hand man, during those years. We learn of crises faced, advice given or rejected, and personalities encountered, including F.W. de Klerk, Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Nelson Mandela. Sometimes we are left wishing to know more about the ideas, thoughts and actions of the author himself, but we are glad to have this glimpse of those around him. Nuttall's memoir is an interesting account that should grace the shelves of any serious collector on South Africa.

Paul H. Thomas. *The African Publishing Record* 31 (1), 2005: 221-2.

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### **Simons, Ray Alexander**

*All My Life and All My Strength.* Ray Alexander Simons. Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2004. 378 pp. R160.

Ray Alexander Simons' autobiography, published shortly after her death in 2004, tells the story of her life, from her birth in Latvia to the indignities of old age. But primarily it is the story of an activist who played a prominent role in political and trade union organisation in South Africa. She joined the communist party in South Africa a few days after her arrival in 1929 from Latvia, and founded the Food and Canning Workers' Union in 1941. In 1951, she was banned by the apartheid state, but nevertheless stood for Parliament as a so-called 'native' representative – a seat she was not allowed to take. When her husband, Jack Simons, was about to be forced from his post at the University of Cape Town because of his political leanings, the couple went into exile in 1965, leaving behind their two children. They returned to South Africa in 1990. Ray's energy and courage are inspiring, yet this book left me disappointed because it fails to acknowledge the difficulties and failures along with the achievements, and there is an absence of analysis (for instance, of Stalinism) and self-reflection. Moreover, an element of egotism pervades the narrative, along with some failure to acknowledge the role of others. Furthermore, the indexing is inaccurate.

Jan Theron. *Transformation* 58. 2005: 97-105.

### **Uys, Pieter-Dirk**

*Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting.* Pieter-Dirk Uys. Cape Town: Zebra, 2005. 288pp. R150.

Pieter-Dirk Uys's career is one of the most engaging stories of the recent South African past. Shy scion of an old Cape Afrikaans family, he discovered the theatre in the turbulent '60s, hit the University of Cape Town's drama school running and, in the embattled '70s, he cut his teeth as angry political playwright at Cape Town's legendary Space Theatre. By his own admission, it was the '80s that made him. He discovered his talent for one-man revue and conjured up on stage two extraordinary characters: P.W.

Botha, dictatorial head of the apartheid state, and Evita Bezuidenhout. He traces the bumpy adjustments necessary in the '90s when black-white polarities of the anti-apartheid struggle became redundant.

The book might more accurately be titled *Advertisements for Myself* and on the whole he writes with the too-easy patter of the revue artist. However, the valuable bits are the asides on the craft and art of acting, and he gives some eminently practical advice.

Guy Willoughby. *Cape Times*. October 7 2005: 13.

Veteran satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys's absorbing, often delicious reminiscences afford, for any South African over the age of 50, a brisk walk down memory lane. There is a superb collection of photographs, including Uys in all his guises and disguises. Uys writes honestly throughout, sometimes clinically.

Derek Wilson. *Cape Argus*. October 24 2005: 18.

## Multiple subjects

### **Fox, Justin and Mike Copeland, Cameron Ewart-Smith, Don Pinnock**

*Just Add Dust: Overland from Cape to Cairo*. Justin Fox, Mike Copeland, Cameron Ewart-Smith and Don Pinnock. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004. 244 pp. R120.

This is a travel account of one of the great journeys of the world, the overland trip from one end of the African continent to the other. What sets this book apart from many is that, as South Africans, for decades this trip was unimaginable for the authors. Also unusual, is the fact that this book breaks the journey into four sections, each written by the person who travelled that leg. Invariably some authors are more engaging than others.

These travellers, equipped with a brand-new Land Rover, manage to avoid

*Judith Lütge Coullie*

the potential danger of not interacting with the locals and the book is full of interesting anecdotes about places they visit and the characters they encounter. The book also integrates history into the descriptions of the places they travel.

*Just Add Dust* will be interesting to the armchair traveller and to libraries that maintain collections of travel writing.

Kenneth G. Kelly. *The African Publishing Record* 31 (1), 2005: 27-28.

### **Head, Bessie and Patrick and Wendy Cullinan**

*Imaginative Trespasser: Letters between Bessie Head and Patrick and Wendy Cullinan, 1963-1977.* Patrick Cullinan. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2005. 288pp. R174.

*Imaginative Trespasser* makes it clear that Bessie Head was one of Africa's great letter writers as well as one of the continent's finest novelists. Writing for the most part from Serowe, Botswana, where she lived as an exile from South Africa, to her friends Patrick (a distinguished poet) and Wendy Cullinan, Head describes her life as an alien in Botswana, her struggles to support herself and her child, and her gradual discovery of her own powers. Cullinan's commentary on the letters, and the context he provides, are indispensable to the book which shows Head as both victim (of apartheid and of hostility in Botswana) and as fascinating, acute artist.

Margaret Lenta. *The Sunday Independent*. August 7 2005: 18.

Most of the letters between Head and her friends the Cullinans are not pretty, but then, neither was her life. Cullinan has tried to remain as faithful as possible to Head's writing and tried not to doctor the letters. This book is a useful reference for those studying literature.

Ruth Bhengu. *Sowetan*. September 6 2005: 11.

*Imaginative Trespasser* is a record of the deep and generous friendship that existed between Patrick and Wendy Cullinan and Bessie Head over a period

of almost 15 years, until its sudden and perplexing end in 1977. With the Cullinan's help, in the early '60s Head was able to leave South Africa on an exit permit for the Bechuanaland Protectorate, now Botswana. Cullinan's ostensible objective in compiling and publishing their correspondence is to confirm Head's power as a writer. The letters are intensely moving in their own right as a testimony of a life of extreme privation and anguish, but also of courage and strength.

What makes this book so utterly compelling is that apart from the letters providing access to a great deal of biographical information on Head which otherwise would remain unknown, Cullinan's comments contextualising the correspondence almost palpably enact his own anguished attempts to find clues in the history of their relationship which would explain its shocking and unexpected end. Although the madness with which she had been cursed all those years ago never wandered far from Head, Cullinan commendably refrains from explaining her otherwise inexplicable behaviour in terms of mental illness. In the same way that Head uses writing 'to ease any pain I feel', Cullinan attempts to purge himself of his sense of betrayal (the extent of which only became apparent with the publication in 1991 of Head's letters to another friend, Randolph Vigne); the reader is moved by the lingering doubt that either enjoyed full resolution.

Head was not politically correct, and she was dishonest and prejudiced in some ways, often flamboyantly staging her own life to suit her subjective viewpoints. But whatever her flaws, she was so intensely affected by the suffering and injustice in the world around her that it seemed an almost somatic experience. Rejected by both black and white sides of the racial divide, she nevertheless was clear that she belonged to and was committed to Africa; she wrote, 'Although Africa doesn't happen to need me I need it .... I'm going to descend on this goddamn continent like a thunderbolt'.

Fiona Moolla. *Cape Times, Review*. September 6 2005: 7.

### **Khama, Seretse and Ruth (née Williams)**

*Seretse & Ruth*. Wilf and Trish Mbanga. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2005. 376 pp. R150.

*Judith Lütge Coullie*

This well-researched version of the story of the marriage of Sir Seretse Khama of Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Ruth Williams offers fascinating insights into their famous inter-racial union, which scandalised the world back in the 1950s. Although laced with saccharine, it is worth reading as political history. To say that Seretse and Ruth shook the very foundation of British foreign policy in Africa is no overstatement and each made enormous personal sacrifices in their commitment to each other: Ruth lost her job on the very day the engagement was announced and was disowned by her father and Seretse was prevented from assuming his rightful chieftainship and was forced into exile for five years, although he was ultimately able to play a meaningful political role as president of his country in an emerging democratic order.

Andrea Weiss. *Cape Argus*. January 30 2006: 12.

Authors Wilf and Trish Mbanga, themselves a mixed-race couple, have written a fascinating and empathetic account of the marriage of Seretse Khama, crown prince of the Bamangwato of Botswana to Ruth Williams, a British woman, a relationship that captured the imagination of the world and unleashed a legal and diplomatic crisis that continued for almost two decades. Through meticulous research and access to obscure government documents, the authors shed light on the political intrigue and they uncover a story of duplicity, with the British government as chief villain.

Nalini Naidoo. *The Witness*. December 28 2005: 12.

### **South African, childhood**

*Childhood: South Africans Recall their Past*. Adrian Hadland (ed.). Johannesburg: Penguin, 2005. 256pp. R140.

Personages in this book are from diverse backgrounds: there is the master entrepreneur Raymond Ackerman, writer and academic Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane, singer Miriam Makeba, Winnie and Nelson Mandela and others. Desmond Tutu, however, is conspicuously missing. The stories, taking us back by up to 200 years, tell of hope and the triumph of the human spirit,

even though they emanate from an era filled with anguish, pain and loss. In this book, South Africa's past is given human faces.

Sabata-Mpho Mokae. *Mail & Guardianonline: Books*. September 2 2005.  
<http://www.chico.mweb.co.za/art/2005>

There are rural and urban childhoods. Some writers recall their mothers having to smooth over the dung floors of their huts; others recall their mothers trying to straighten and smooth unruly hair and wearing trim suits. But all are recalled vividly, emotionally and eloquently. If the past is a foreign country, these writers somehow found a way into that past and have brought it all magnificently to life in these excerpts from autobiographies.

Arja Salafranca. *LitNet*. October 10 2005.  
<http://www.litnet.co.za/seminarroom/childhood.asp>

## **South African prisoners on Robben Island**

*Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid. Fran Lisa Buntman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 340 pp. \$23.00.*

Robben Island and its illustrious prisoners occupy a central, even hallowed, place in the chronicles of the South African liberation struggle. Drawing on 90 oral testimonies (71 by a wide and representative sample of prisoners) and other archived documents, Fran Lisa Buntman examines the Island's wider influence on the liberation struggle. She uncovers the history of 'unsung heroes' among the prisoners, letting them speak through interviews, and explores some interesting insights into prisoner attitudes, for example to homosexuality. Despite, or perhaps because of, Buntman's comprehensive coverage of the 1962-92 period there is room for further research. Nevertheless, this is an important book deserving wide readership.

Peter Limb. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31 (3), 2005. 666-668.

*Judith Lütge Coullie*

### **South African women**

*The Closest of Strangers: South African Women's Life Writing.* Judith Lütge Coullie (ed.). Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004. xii + 386 pp. R190.

Judith Coullie's superbly designed and selected anthology of South African women's writing should appeal to the general public as well as to scholars and students in the areas of life writing, post-colonial literature and women's studies. The extracts selected are vivid, varied and intriguing. For anyone new to South African women's writing, the selections are sufficiently brief to provide a bird's eye view of the field. At the same time, they are sufficiently substantial to give an idea of each writer's concerns and style, and thus could act as guides to more focused research. This ground-breaking collection is also ideally crafted to serve as a teaching anthology, as the extracts function as self-contained texts which can be analysed in their own right.

Susan Tridgell. *Life Writing* 3 (1), 2006: 149-151.

## Guidelines for Contributors

**Manuscripts** must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text or both in the text.

Contributors must submit **one computer-generated and three double-spaced printed copies** of the manuscript. The computer-generated copy may be on double density stiffie In Word Perfect 5-6, Word for Windows 6 or ASCII. If accepted for publication, 10 original off-print copies of the article will be returned to the author after publication.

Manuscripts should range between 5000-8000 and book reviews between 500-1000 words. However, longer articles may be considered for publication.

Attach a cover page to one manuscript containing the following information: Author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, unverslty/ institution, telephone/ fax numbers as well as a list of previous publications.

**Maps, diagrams and posters** must be presented in print-ready form. Clear black and white photos (postcard size) may also be submitted.

Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, we use footnotes and not endnotes.

Authors may use their own numbering systems in the manuscript.

Except for bibliographical references, abbreviations must include fullstops. The abbreviations (e.a.) = 'emphasis added'; (e.l.o.) = 'emphasis in original'; (l.a.) or [.....] = 'insertion added' may be used.

The full bibliographical details of sources are provided only once at the end of the manuscript under References. References in the body of the manuscript should follow the following convention: Dlodlo (1994:14) argues .... or at the end of a reference/ quotation: ..... (Dlodlo 1994:14).

The full name or initials of authors as it appears in the source must be used in the References section.

Review articles and book reviews must include a title as well as the following information concerning the book reviewed: title, author, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, number of pages and the ISBN number.

**The format for the references section is as follows:**

Head, Bessie 1974. *A Question of Power*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Mhlophe, Gcina 1990. Nokulunga's Wedding. In Van Niekerk, Annemarié (ed): *Raising the Blinds. A Century of South African Women's Stories*. Parklands: Ad Donker.

Mngadi, Sikhumbuzo 1994. 'Popular Memory' and Social Change in South African Historical Drama of the Seventies in English: The Case of Credo Mutwa's *Unosimela*. *Alteration* 1,1:37-41.

Fanon, Frantz 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Markmann, Charles Lam (trans). London: Pluto Press.

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