

**The 'Model Township' of Sharpeville: The Absence of Political Action and
Organisation, 1960-1984**

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**A research report submitted to the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of
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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History**

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ABSTRACT

Sharpeville has become a seminal part of South African history and has captured the minds and memories of many, both nationally and globally. While much attention has been placed on the documentation of the events of the 21st of March 1960- the date of the Sharpeville massacre- surprisingly little has been recorded about the history of the township beyond this. This report aims to begin to fill the lacuna in this part of South African history by examining the reasons behind the dearth of political action and organisation in Sharpeville from its formation through to the early 1980s. The report examines Sharpeville as a 'model township', dissects what this concept means and begins to suggest how this conceptualisation affected political organising in the area. The report argues that Sharpeville as a 'model township' experienced political quiescence throughout the 1960s and 1970s which was only punctured by spontaneous political action. The report then goes on to explain and scrutinise the possible reasons for this quiescence.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in History at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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CHAPTER 1

I. INTRODUCTION AND STUDY BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Histories of place are never just a straightforward accounting of ‘the facts.’ Like the life histories with which they are closely intertwined, they are always multiple, contested, deeply politicised, produced in specific contexts, and made to serve the needs of the present.¹

In mid-March 2009, like every year, images and news stories of the commemoration of Human Rights Day abounded. Political parties were vying for ‘ownership’ of the event and the right to commemorate the massacre in Sharpeville.² It was this that sparked in me an interest to look at memorialisation and to examine questions of ownership of memory. After an initial period of research I found that much of this work had been examined with specific reference to the massacre of 1960 in Sharpeville.³ In an attempt to develop an understanding of memorialisation, I began to notice how history is often portrayed as a series of static events, in this case the Sharpeville uprising of 21st March 1960 is highlighted without contextualisation. This type of memorialisation often does not penetrate into the numerous issues and events that interact outside of a simple cause and effect model. It was at this stage that the idea of examining political action and organisation in Sharpeville after 1960 began to develop. In this way, I would challenge not only the static and undynamic dominant version of the history of the uprising and begin to explore dynamics in the township but I would also have an opportunity to begin to address certain lacunae in South African history.

¹ G. Hart, *Disabling Globalisation, Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. University of Natal Press, Natal, 2002, p. 9.

² This continued this year, ‘PAC Slams Malema for Sharpeville Uprising Comment’ <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/article369502.ece/PAC-slams-Malema-for-Sharpeville-uprising-comment>

³ M. Lawrence, *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives: A Case Study on Sharpeville*. MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004.

The iconic status of Sharpeville indicates that the township was a hub of political activity, yet from very early on in the research it became clear that this was not the case and thus my project became an attempt to examine the reasons for this quiescence and to try to explain the absence.

One of these gaps in the South African national anti-apartheid narrative is a dearth of research and historical analysis on the Vaal Triangle. My research situates itself within a growing body of work of detailed studies of South African townships and analyses of local political organisations.⁴ Within this body of work, my aim was to consider the possibility of using developments in a particular township as a lens through which to consider and reflect on broader political processes. In doing so I realised that there are certainly complexities regarding scale, interconnections and the danger of resorting to simplistic causal arguments. Parnell and Mabin (1995) highlight two points that are germane to these complexities when explaining that the consequence of the “...treatment of urban history, where urban development is explained with reference to the ideology of the ruling parties, is that there is no conception of the fact that state policies do not always translate neatly into practice.”⁵ The first point this highlights is the question of how the narrative of the local relates to the broader narrative whether it is national or otherwise. The second point relates to how academics and researchers have interrogated or failed to interrogate the complexities of how central government policy is implemented at the level of a locality.

The complexities of how Sharpeville narratives interact with broader narratives, as well as how central government policies played out have not been considered, since much of the writing on Sharpeville has been centred on the massacre of the 21st March 1960. This massacre has become a critical turning point in South African history and imagination and its effects were far reaching both

⁴ For example, P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1998; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 2001; N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand, 1948- 1973: The Role Of Local Government and Local Resistance*. Ph.D Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2001; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History*. Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008.

⁵ S. Parnell and A. Mabin, ‘Rethinking Urban South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21 (1), 1995, p. 46.

nationally and at a global level. However, while a handful of scholars have studied the township in the period between its formation in 1941 and the massacre of 1960,⁶ there has been no research conducted on Sharpeville in the period following the massacre.

Remembering Sharpeville in terms of a single day or event has led to a certain loss of memory of the history of the area. I argue this from a perspective that considers history as not only about iconic events but as about processes and changing relationships over time. The lacuna in information on the township before and after the massacre, results both from official neglect (pre and post 1994) and from the way in which people's memories have been shaped to place the massacre as the central feature of the history of Sharpeville.⁷

A less teleological and more nuanced history will not only reflect multiple narratives of the past but will also interrogate the relationship between the past and the present, acknowledging that not only does the past inform the present but the present also informs how people imagine and remember the past. This research report aims to uncover memories of and construct a deeper understanding of Sharpeville from after the massacre of 1960, into the first half of the 1980s. There are several subsidiary questions connected to the primary concern.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTION

What were the reasons for the absence of political action and organisation in Sharpeville between 1960 and 1984?

1.1.1. Subsidiary Questions

⁶ For example M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville: A History of South African Townships in the 1950s*. Honours Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985; T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*. PhD Thesis, University of York, 1984; E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1966; P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*. Ravan and Fosatu, 1985; T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*. Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985.

⁷ Shaping of memory is discussed further in the Methodology section (section 1.2)

- What defined Sharpeville as a 'model township', what was the history of 'model townships', and how did Sharpeville as a 'model township' change during this period?
- What effect did Sharpeville being officially promoted and projected as a 'model township' have on political organising in the area?
- How were the issues that made Sharpeville fertile for the mobilisation that took place in 1960, addressed after the massacre?
- What happened to the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) in Sharpeville after the 1960 massacre?
- What were the key political developments during this period, their impact on locally based movements and organisations in Sharpeville, and how far did these reflect the national political processes of the anti-Apartheid movement?

1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section of the report outlines my methodological approach and the nature of this research. Methodological issues proved to be one of the most interesting and challenging aspects of this project, and it soon became apparent that there was little secondary literature on Sharpeville and I would therefore need to rely on interviews and archival material. In designing the research I consulted Strauss and Corbin (1998) as a practical guide for the formulation of my methodology.⁸ I recognised that the qualitative nature of this research would best be addressed by in-depth life history interviews as well as documentary analyses. The intricacies of both of these methodologies are outlined below. I was particularly interested in dissecting and examining the particularly dense concept of a 'model township', which necessitated the inclusion of both empirical and theoretical analyses. I aimed to posit theory and empirical work as linked and not separate processes in the research spectrum. I did attempt to analyse to what extent the empirical research I collected diverged or converged with the theoretical framework used.

⁸ A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research, Second Edition: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Sage Publications, 1998.

1.2.1. Methods of Data Collection

This research utilised various sources and methods to gather information. This was consciously designed in an attempt not only to triangulate the information but also to provide a more textured and layered history. The primary methods of data collection were composed of: i) oral history and in-depth life history interviews with identified participants; and ii) documentary analyses of newspapers, archival material and secondary sources.

1.2.1.1 Oral History and In-Depth Life History Interviews

Since this research grew from the point of considering memorialisation, examining the theory around oral research, life history interviews and the structures of memory was pivotal (and became a key interest of mine). For this reason, I now briefly delve into the theories, challenges and practical considerations that were present during the process of formulating and conducting the interviews.

Life history interviews were essential to this research for several reasons. The first was the absence of both archival material⁹ and secondary literature that focuses specifically on Sharpeville. The second was that the research attempted not only to uncover information about Sharpeville but also to examine why people remember in certain ways. The third broad reason was that since oral histories allow for engagement where the “past has been suppressed, forgotten, and distorted”,¹⁰ life history interviews were used as a way to create the space - both to me as a researcher and to the respondents - to discuss Sharpeville beyond the events of the 21st of March. Since the late 1970s in South Africa, oral history has played a significant role in the growth of social history and engagement with the “lost voices” of history.¹¹

Life history interviews were chosen as a key tool for this research in order to move beyond the salience of the Sharpeville massacre both in the construction of the history of the area but also in the memories of residents. The intention of this report is

⁹ Section 1.2.1.2 Documentary Analysis in this section covers this more fully

¹⁰ P. La Hausse, ‘Oral History and South African Historians’, *Radical History Review*, 46, 1990, p. 352.

¹¹ V. Bickford-Smith, S. Field and C. Glaser, ‘Oral History in the Western Cape’, Special issue of *African Studies*, 60 (1), 2001, p. 5; P. La Hausse, *Oral History and South African Historians*, p.346.

not to undermine the significance of the massacre; rather, it is to emphasise the importance of events both before and after that event.

It is not only in research and the national historical narrative where Sharpeville has been largely invisible outside of the massacre. I found that for many residents and former residents of Sharpeville the massacre was central to their recounting of the history of the area. This is partly owing to the devastation, brutality and significance of the event. Passerini (1992) explores the life stories of those who experienced tragic events and the oppressive regimes of the Italian Fascists, the Nazis and Stalinism.¹² She notes that there are overarching mechanisms that are present in the stories of those living under oppressive regimes such as the effect of feelings of guilt, complicity and victimisation.¹³ She explains these converging sentiments in the following way, "...because the concrete elements of memory are arranged around the same dramatically significant turning-points, and because recollection has two levels: a content-concrete level and a structural-organisational one."¹⁴ The massacre in Sharpeville for many was a dramatic and significant point and this may be a contributing factor to the massacre being placed centrally in people's memories.

However, there were other factors that contributed to the primacy of the massacre in people's stories. Firstly, respondents possibly assumed that the massacre is what I would be interested in as a researcher. Several researchers and academics have conducted research in Sharpeville where the massacre was their primary or only area of interest. Importantly too, journalists cover the commemoration of the Sharpeville massacre every year and enter the township specifically to ask about the events of that day.

Related to this annual ritual, many residents and former residents of Sharpeville appropriate the dominant historical narrative and the way that it identifies the massacre as defining Sharpeville. Respondents seemed to mirror this narrative in their telling of the history of the area rendering the "boundary between what takes place outside the narrator and what happens inside, between what concerns the individual

¹² L. Passerini, *Memory and Totalitarianism*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1992.

¹³ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

and what concerns the group” a very blurry one.¹⁵ This is a concern of memory and there are difficulties with distinguishing between collective and individual memories (which sometimes overlap with public and private memories) both as an individual and as a researcher attempting to sift through stories. Personalising the interview, while realising that the stories were influenced by external perceptions of the area, meant that there was less need for people to reassert general accounts and perceptions. At a very practical level, when people seemed to be simply restating a dominant narrative, I would ask questions relating to their proximity to the event or memory, if they were there and whether they knew people who were present during the massacre. This method encouraged people to engage with the narrative at a personal level and allowed me to begin to filter through the account. The way that people remembered events was also interesting in the examination of memorialisation, so the interviews were not only an attempt to gather information about the past but were also considered “...as windows on the making and remaking of individual and collective consciousness, in which both fact and fantasy, past and present, each has its part.”¹⁶

While acknowledging some of the reasons why people would emphasise the massacre, life history interviews provided a platform for the placement of people’s lives at the centre of the discussion. This allowed for an engagement with the broader history of Sharpeville by both respondent and researcher. I thus attempted to foster a space to discuss their youth, families, schooling, activities, work and other aspects of their lives, while not ignoring the events of March 21st 1960.

While in many cases the life history approach did have the desired effect of broadening the conversation beyond a narrative of the massacre, I still encountered challenges. It required sensitivity to listen and understand people’s recounting of the massacre but still try to steer the conversation away from the specifics of the event. I did this by situating any questions about the 21st of March as far into the interview as possible. I began all interviews with questions that did not use specific ‘questioning words’, for example instead of saying ‘Where were you born?’ I would prompt the respondent with a statement such as ‘Tell me about where you grew up’. This served

¹⁵ A. Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, *The Oral History Reader*, eds. R. Perks and A. Thomson, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 35.

¹⁶ R. Samuel and P. Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*. Routledge, London, 1990, p. 19.

to move away from the journalistic style of interrogation that many members of the community have encountered over the years and thus to show an interest further than the need for a sound bite. This approach firmly placed the respondent and their life centrally at the beginning of the interview and helped to emphasise that the content focus would be very different than that to which most residents of Sharpeville are accustomed.

1.2.1.2 Setting-Up and Structuring the Interviews

Face-to-face life history interviews were conducted with 12 people, and a spontaneous focus group was conducted with nine individuals from the Khulumani Support Group.¹⁷ Of the 12 interviews, nine were conducted in English, while the remaining three were conducted in the vernacular of the region, Southern Sotho. The focus group was facilitated through a combination of English and Southern Sotho. A friend from the area accompanied me to five of the interviews, excluding the focus group, and acted as a translator for the three that were conducted in Southern Sotho.

I began with very specific criteria for choosing interviewees. I wanted to interview people who were of school going age in each of the three decades under examination. This was since I was interested in what types of politics were occurring in schools as in other townships these were the sites of political conscientisation.¹⁸ I was also interested in whether people remembered when they were politicised (if they were) and what the impetus for this politicisation was. Those who were youth in 1976 (the year of the Soweto and other youth uprisings) were also important as my intention was to examine what type of political action happened in the area at that critical time. I was able to speak to people of different ages, the oldest respondent was born in the 1920s (she was unsure about the date) and the youngest respondent was born in 1975.¹⁹ I also aimed to interview members of the PAC in Sharpeville and

¹⁷ The Khulumani Support Group acts as a platform for counselling survivors of the Sharpeville massacre and the families of the victims

¹⁸ For example in Soweto, P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1998.

¹⁹ The youngest respondent was actually born in 1989 and while the brief interview with her was interesting in terms of what it is like to be a young person in Sharpeville at the moment, she asked me to speak with her cousin as he was young in the 1970s and “political” as she put it.

those involved in other political parties organising in the area. I also maintained e-mail communication and direct exchanges with others who have conducted research or have ongoing research projects in Sharpeville.

There are important points to note about the use of different languages in this research. Interviewees were given the choice of any language they were comfortable with. My inability to speak Southern Sotho fluently affected this research in several ways. When I was conducting an interview where the interviewee chose to speak in Southern Sotho, I was accompanied by a friend who acted as a translator. Each of these friends had a relationship with the person being interviewed and this familiarity was beneficial in facilitating an unrestrained and free flowing interview. I provided the friends that accompanied me with a copy of the research proposal, and briefed them before each interview about the focus of my research and the key points that I intended to raise. This exercise was essential as they were familiar with the general structure and I did not constantly need to prompt the people who were being interviewed or the interviewer. However, my inability to speak Southern Sotho meant that the interviews were stilted and it was difficult to maintain a conversation rather than making it a strict back and forth question and answer process. I was particularly aware of this when I consulted the transcripts and realised that there were points where I would have liked to ask follow-up questions or probe certain comments. I also acknowledge that I missed possible nuances and layers of information in the actual interview as well as in the process of transcription. The limitations of language and my attempts to address them are covered more fully in the 'Limitations and Positionality' section of this chapter.

The focus group was unplanned since I was under the assumption that only one member of the Khulumani Support Group would be interviewed. Instead nine members of the support group were present for the interview. At this interview I was not accompanied by someone who could act as a translator, and instead a member of Khulumani assisted. This meant that this translator was not fully briefed on the focus of my research so at times the conversation moved away from where I intended placing emphasis. Furthermore, the translator reinterpreted some of the comments and was provided with a disproportionate amount of time to speak during the interview. In addition, two members of the support group who were able to speak English spoke for

much longer than the other participants as I was able to ask more follow-up questions to them and to follow the flow of their discussion.

Interviews proved extremely difficult to arrange because of several connected reasons. The first is that Sharpeville, as an iconic South African area, has also become a challenging space for researchers. Some researchers who have worked in the area previously have made the interview process problematic by offering informants money for interviews and not providing interviewees with feedback or material after the interview.²⁰ Furthermore, community members were cautious about providing interviews where the researcher would benefit materially from the information and where community members were not remunerated. Along with this, during the period of my research, there was an attempt to embark on a heritage and development project in Sharpeville commemorating the 50th anniversary of the massacre. There were many tensions around this project which seemed to stem from disagreements between the district municipality and the local municipality. This implied that I had to be very clear that I was not involved in the heritage and development project in order to avoid being perceived as being a party to the antagonism. Furthermore, as some of my interviews were set up through the Khulumani support group, I needed to provide proof that I was a student and that the research would be for purely academic purposes.

I found that an effective way to negotiate some of these challenges was to use connections that I already had to people from the Vaal. Friends and colleagues from social movements put me in touch with family members or friends of theirs who either grew up in Sharpeville or were from surrounding townships in the Vaal.²¹ In some cases, as noted above, these friends came with me to the interviews and acted as translators. I remain in contact with several of the respondents when I am in the Vaal

²⁰ A few people relayed to me that foreign researchers had provided interviewees with money and gifts in exchange for interviews. In cases where possible interviewees requested money for an interview, I was adamant that this would not be possible and explained the reasoning. While it was understandable that as a result of privation, monetary requests would be forthcoming, it was my feeling that acceding to this request could compromise the interview partly by further skewing power relationships. It could also lead to a respondent providing me with information they assumed I wanted to hear. I also felt that monetary compensation could compromise the work of future researchers.

²¹ See section 1.3 for substantiation of how my social movements (and broader political) affiliations affected this research.

region. On completion of this report my intention is to return to Sharpeville and the surrounding townships where interviews were conducted and provide respondents with a copy of the report as well as audio and transcribed copies of their interviews.

There are undeniably many practical obstacles when conducting oral research. The omissions and challenges that arise when there are language differences need to be explored and acknowledged. There are also complexities involved in addressing memory as an historian, which include the disjointed nature of experience, the unstructured recollection of memories and the way in which we attempt to conceptualise the world using words.²² However this does not mean that memory should be seen as an insurmountable obstacle to conducting oral research; I would stress that to discard memory would be to discard a large portion of history. What is needed is explicit acknowledgement of the complex dynamics of memory, and a sensitive and probing analysis of these. I acknowledge the obstacles posed by the structures of memory and the particular challenges of oral research. The past, like the present, has many interpretations and ‘realities’ “and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”²³ If we appreciate Portelli’s assertion that oral history “tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*”²⁴ then we can view interrogating silences, omissions and the conflation of private and public memories as essential parts of analysing histories.

1.2.1.3 Documentary Analysis

The archives that I presumed would be useful for this research included: The Vereeniging Municipal Archives (until 1968), The Vereeniging Town Council Minutes, The Orange Vaal Development Board Archives (1968-1977) and The Lekoa Town Council Archives (from 1977). After several months of actively attempting to find this archival material I was eventually informed, to my distress, that the building

²² S. Field, ‘Remembering Experience, Interpreting Memory: Life Stories From Windermere’, *African Studies*, 60(1), 2001, p. 131.

²³ P. Thompson, ‘The Voice of the Past: Oral History’, *The Oral History Reader*, eds. R. Perks and A. Thomson, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 28.

²⁴ A. Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, *The Oral History Reader*, eds. R. Perks and A. Thomson, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 36.

in Sebokeng where these records were kept had burnt down.²⁵ Consulting previous research where these records were utilised showed how critical they would have been to provide a more expansive account of the topic at hand. The loss of the records was only discovered very late in my research process. The late realisation that these archives no longer exist made it difficult to pursue additional fieldwork to attempt to begin to fill the gap left by the absence of these documents.

It was therefore necessary to rely more heavily than initially anticipated on theses and dissertations covering Top Location and Sharpeville which used these archival resources, particularly Matthew Chaskalson's (1985) honours thesis *Road to Sharpeville: A History of Vereeniging's African Townships in the 1950s*²⁶ and Tom Lodge's (1984) PhD thesis *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*.²⁷

The Vaal Teknorama archives located in Vereeniging provided me with municipal information, figures and newspaper articles from the Vaal. These archives however, are not organised and relevant information was often difficult to locate or identify. I have begun to create a very basic inventory of material available at the Teknorama which I will submit to them along with this research report for their archiving. Both the loss of the archives and the disorganisation of the material at the Teknorama indicate how critical it is that resources and expertise be invested to secure, maintain and order archival material in the area.

The Vaal Teknorama archives were useful in that they indicated the importance of consulting the newspapers *Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News*, *Vaal News* and the *Vaal Weekblad* which proved invaluable to this research particularly with regard to discussion around the 'model township'.

²⁵ Neither the Sedibeng nor Emfuleni municipalities seemed to be aware that the records had been destroyed

²⁶ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville: A History of South African Townships in the 1950s*. Honours Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985.

²⁷ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*. PhD Thesis, University of York, 1984.

1.3. LIMITATIONS AND POSITIONALITY

Many of the limitations of this study have been addressed in the research methodology section. In terms of documentary analysis the major challenge was the time and energy expended in attempting to find the relevant archives. When these archives were found to have been destroyed there was not enough time remaining to formulate ways to more effectively address some of the material included in the archives. In order to begin to make up for the absence of archival material I utilised newspaper articles and theses where relevant archival material had been used. I also consulted secondary material on the state's relationship with other townships in order to begin to formulate a more general idea of this dynamic during the period under examination.²⁸

With regard to oral research, challenges posed by language in the interview and transcription processes, effective structuring of the interview so as to provide enough space for open discussion while still maintaining a level of focus, and setting up interviews with relevant people were the prominent difficulties. To begin to address the language challenges, I briefed the translators about the project and what I wanted to highlight in the interview and provided them with the research report proposal prior to the interview. While I am not fluent in Sotho and unable to have a conversation in the language, I am able to understand some vocabulary and certain sentences. In the cases where I did pick up on words and the flow of the conversation I raised them through the translator to emphasise that I was interested and trying to understand. I was also cognisant that in spaces where there were both English speakers and Sotho speakers that I should be cautious of mostly speaking with those who I could communicate with in my first language. I also actively tried to interview people who did not speak English so as to avoid some of the distortions that may be implicit in only speaking to those who were able to converse fluently in English. Furthermore, from the outset of this research I was aware that language would be a challenge and acknowledged that certain nuances and intricacies would be lost as a result of this.

I have already addressed some of the techniques employed in the structuring of

²⁸ For example, P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1998; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 2001; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History*. Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008.

interviews, techniques which primarily centred on the life history method. In order to provide some level of structure to the actual interviews, I prepared a core set of questions that I would have to ask during the interview. Outside of this framework however, I allowed participants the latitude to highlight those parts of the history that they considered relevant. In some cases I did set up a second interview to address some of the omissions that I noticed in the initial interview. Despite this, research required on this topic is far from exhausted and the research would certainly have benefitted from a larger number and broader array of interviews.

Liaising with friends and colleagues in the area and working with them to begin to form networks addressed some of the challenges associated with the setting up of interviews. These colleagues introduced me to members of the Khulumani Support Group who were very helpful in suggesting further people to speak with. As a result of involvement with social movements active in the area, I have established links with people who were able to assist with this research. This does though raise the issue of positionality, which is addressed below.

I acknowledge that while I have always lived in South Africa, my position as a middle-class academic, figures and restrains my observations and perspectives. The reality that participants mostly ‘read’ me as an outsider, both defined as not being from the area but also being defined as ‘other’ (in being an academic and middle-class,) has certainly affected the observations documented in this research. Despite this, there were also times where I was less of an outsider than most researchers since my connections to people from social movements allowed me access to homes and people. In many cases I was introduced as a friend of someone the interviewee was acquainted with, which allowed for a greater level of acceptance. The Khulumani Support Group became familiar with me through a colleague from one of the social movements that has affiliates in the Vaal. Both as somewhat of an ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’, I have been aware from the outset of this research of the dynamics between researcher and participants in co-producing knowledge.²⁹ It is for these reasons that I stress that this report is not a complete articulation of political organising in Sharpeville. This report partially opens up spaces for further questions and in-depth

²⁹ Much of my reading on this has been around feminist literature, see for example V. Taylor, ‘Feminist Methodology in Social Movements Research’, *Qualitative Sociology*, 21, 1998.

research on Sharpeville and hopefully emphasises the need and importance of research on the Vaal.

1.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A set of ethical guidelines, which are particularly important and relevant to studies in the social sciences when conducting interviews, were observed throughout this research.³⁰ A sensitivity and awareness of the tragic event of the Sharpeville massacre was upheld throughout the research. A text which was frequently consulted to clarify these guidelines was Babbie and Mouton (2001) *The Ethics and Politics of Social Research*. These guidelines include strictly voluntary participation where a sensitivity of issues and experiences should be maintained. Participants were made aware of the intent of the research and their confidentiality if they chose was guaranteed. Permission was requested to record interviews and if this permission was denied recording did not take place. Participants will be provided access to the findings and outcomes of the research report.

1.5. CONCLUSION AND REPORT STRUCTURE

In this chapter I have examined the rationale and aims for this research report. I explained that the Vaal has been neglected in South African historical analyses and that Sharpeville has only been considered through an examination of the massacre of 1960. This research thus aims to begin to fill these voids by examining political organisation in Sharpeville after 1960 and by emphasising the importance of contextualising and discussing the township as a ‘model township’. I have also provided a detailed exposition of the methodology used, the reasons for the choice of this methodology and the limitations and challenges involved in conducting the research.

Chapter two discusses the existing literature on Sharpeville and begins to highlight the omissions and gaps in these works that the present research report will

³⁰ Adapted from E. Babbie and J. Mouton, ‘The Ethics and Politics of Social Research’, *The Practice of Social Research*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 2001.

begin to address. The literature review highlights the absence of an examination of Sharpeville after 1960 and indicates the minimal material available on the township prior to the massacre. The chapter also introduces and defines the theoretical concepts used in this report and begins to outline their relevance to the discussion of political organising in the ‘model township’ of Sharpeville.

Chapter three, *The ‘Model Township’ of Sharpeville: “Die Trots Van die Munisipale Amptenare”*, discusses the intricacies around the formation of Sharpeville, which was formed as a ‘model township’, a factor that is often ignored in the ‘sound bite’ treatment with which it is usually considered. I examine the foundations of ‘modern’ townships and stress their origins in the historical context of a rise in state welfarism from the 1930s and the emphasis on increased control, ‘proper planning’ and an attempt at greater order and control of the urban African population. I consider the conditions and possible implications of the ‘model township’, from the formation of the township until the end of the 1970s, for political action and organisation. It is possible to see the ‘model township’ as an attempt to reorganise biopolitics, and I have advanced the view, grounded in an historical discussion, that the ‘model township’ was an attempt to create a more controlled, monitored and self-disciplined urban African.³¹

Chapter four, *Political Action and Organisation in Sharpeville After 1960*, uses empirical evidence to more specifically examine political action and organisation in Sharpeville. I begin by examining political organising in the township prior to 1960. The dominant national anti-apartheid political narrative characterises the 1960s as a period of quiescence during which the large organised anti-apartheid political movements were forced underground. Considered a period of passivity in South African history, its historiography has oftentimes been ignored relative to periods where there were direct and organised challenges against the state. However, the lack of active resistance and political organising in Sharpeville was shown to be so pervasive, it stretched from the 1960s into the 1970s, that to examine this quiescence required a more thorough examination of where some of its roots were. This is relevant since this research seeks to assert that periods of political inactivity should

³¹ The theoretical framework that I have utilised in examining ideas around space and biopolitics is expanded upon in the literature review (chapter two).

not simply be ignored and often it is the analyses and explanations of these silent periods that provide more substantive understandings of both local and national histories. The chapter then goes on to argue that the 1970s in Sharpeville in many ways saw the extension of the quiescence of the previous decade. I discuss the general characterisations of the national anti-apartheid movement and the disjunctures and similarities with Sharpeville during this period.

The research report concludes with a summary of the key arguments advanced, as well as ways in which this research may be expanded upon and areas where more detailed research is critical.

CHAPTER 2

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present and discuss the existing literature covering Sharpeville as well as the contributions I aim to make in examining political organising after 1960. The existing body of work on Sharpeville, while limited, is empirically important and provided a crucial platform from which to begin this research from. Yet, the material on Sharpeville has been almost entirely focused on the massacre of the 21st of March 1960. Other than literature dedicated to the massacre, the following theses are the only literature with an in-depth discussion of Sharpeville, and are considered in this chapter: Tom Lodge (1984) *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*; Matthew Chaskalson (1985) *The Road to Sharpeville: A History of South African Townships in the 1950s*; Mirna Lawrence (2005) *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives: A Case Study on Sharpeville*; and Ian Jeffrey (1991) *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville 1943-1985*.

Other than descriptive accounts of the immediate aftermath of the massacre, there has been no written history of political organising in the township covering the period after March 1960. This research report aims to contribute to the history in two ways. Firstly, I will frame my examination of opposition politics in Sharpeville through a theoretical approach that centrally considers the ‘model township’ and concepts of space and biopolitics. Secondly, I will begin to provide an account of the lack of oppositional politics in the township after the massacre.

2.1. A FOCUS ON THE SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE AND MEMORIALISATION

The introduction to this chapter mentioned that the literature related to Sharpeville almost exclusively focuses on the massacre in 1960. In the same year as the massacre, Ambrose Reeves

(1960), Bishop of Johannesburg, was the first to detail the events of the massacre in *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*.³² Numerous detailed accounts of the massacre followed this initial work.³³ While some authors have contextualised the massacre by discussing the period immediately prior to and following the shootings, emphasis is placed on the events of the 21st March. Philip Frankel (2001) provides the most recent and detailed exposition of the massacre itself as well as the weekend of the 18th to the 20th of March that preceded it.³⁴ He discusses the immediate “reactions” of the ANC and the PAC to the Sharpeville massacre as well as its implications for the initiation of their armed struggles. Frankel notes that the Sharpeville massacre “was not a ‘benign’ atrocity with few political consequences but a nefariously malignant event which instantly transformed the body politic of South Africa”.³⁵ However, he does not interrogate the presence of the ANC and the PAC in Sharpeville after the massacre or other aspects of the township beyond the immediate aftermath.

No literature has framed the massacre within a broader consideration of political organising from the time of the township’s inception. This provides the perception that the township was always a hub of political organising and action and creates what has been called “an illusory atmosphere of political crisis”.³⁶ This report will move beyond considering Sharpeville as defined by the massacre alone and to more closely consider political organising both after and before the event. The focus of Sharpeville as being defined by a single day raises issues of memorialisation and while this research report does not directly and comprehensively examine memorialisation, in the methodology section I have documented the literature consulted on this topic, particularly with reference to oral research and memory.

Mirna Lawrence’s (2004) *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives: A Case Study on*

³² A. Reeves. *Shooting at Sharpeville: The Agony of South Africa*. Victor Gollancz, London, 1960.

³³ B. Sachs, *The Road to Sharpeville*. Dial Press, Johannesburg, 1961; E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1966; H. Tyler, *Life in the Time of Sharpeville: And Wayward Seeds of a New South Africa*. Kwela, Cape Town, 1995;

³⁴ P. Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity, Sharpeville and its Massacre*. Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2001.

³⁵ P. Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity*, p. 5.

³⁶ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of York, 1984, p.10.

Sharpeville focuses primarily on social memory, commemoration and the Sharpeville massacre.³⁷ The aim of the thesis is a discussion of pedagogy of the teaching of history and heritage and specifically how the Sharpeville massacre should be covered in the school curriculum. It discusses issues around ‘ownership’ of the memory of the Sharpeville massacre and the public contestation post-1994, particularly between the ANC and the PAC, about which organisation can lay claim to the initiation of the anti-pass campaign. Lawrence provides an account of how the massacre has been ‘used’ and ‘claimed’ and how this is translated in the school curriculum. Her discussion of monuments in Sharpeville raises interesting questions about how events are publically commemorated. The thesis, however, does not challenge the dominant view that Sharpeville is only remembered for this event. The title, *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives: A Case Study of Sharpeville*, is strongly indicative of this, as the case study is actually of a variety of perspectives of the Sharpeville massacre and not of the township itself. Furthermore, Lawrence does not interview Sharpeville residents but instead interviews students who have learnt about the Sharpeville massacre. Thus while providing interesting insight into heritage and history, she does not build on the oral history of the township itself. Lawrence does not provide details of the formation of the township or an analysis of political organising in the area. The work should be broadly seen more as a heritage studies analysis that aims to provide input on teaching the Sharpeville massacre rather than a historical account.

2.2. THE ‘MODEL TOWNSHIP’ AND THE FORMATION OF SHARPEVILLE

A central argument advanced in this research report is that examining the history and context of Sharpeville as a ‘model township’ provides insight into one of a variety of factors that affected the lack of political organising in the township for most of the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s. The ‘model township’ has been examined by other authors including Noor Nieftagodien (2001) who discusses the East Rand township of Daveyton, and Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien (2001)

³⁷ M. Lawrence, *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives: A Case Study on Sharpeville*. MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004.

who note Vosloorus as one of these townships.³⁸ These authors explain that the majority of these ‘modern’ townships were built in the 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to better control and organise the growing urban African population. Sharpeville as a ‘model township’ highlights important factors regarding the relationship between the local and the national and the interrelatedness of spaces as well as the state’s changing relationship to the urban African population. Following Nieftagodien (2001) and Deborah Posel (2005) I explain the ‘modern’ townships as having partly emerged from the context of increased popularity of state welfarism from the 1930s.³⁹ Furthermore, geographers and urban planners have asserted the importance of ‘proper planning’ in the formation of these ‘model townships’. Alan Mabin (1992, 1997) in numerous papers has identified that the apartheid state consulted international urban planning models to design and build townships for urban Africans that would permit greater surveillance, systematisation and order.⁴⁰

There has, however, been no specific analysis of Sharpeville as a ‘model township’ other than a mention of the title, and there has been no attempt at consulting the literature of ‘proper planning’ or the rise in state welfarism to contextualise the formation of the township. The importance that I have attributed to the formation of the township, detailing why and how Sharpeville was conceptualised and built as well as an examination of the ‘model township’, has not been mirrored by many of the authors considering Sharpeville.⁴¹ Of the literature that covers the formation of Sharpeville none also discusses political organising and action in the area after the massacre. This research will begin to address these shortcomings.

³⁸ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand, 1948- 1973: The Role Of Local Government and Local Resistance*. Ph.D Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2001; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Kathorus*

³⁹ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand*; D. Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s*. in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves (eds) *South Africa’s 1940s, Worlds of Possibilities*, Double Storey Books, Cape Town, 2005

⁴⁰ A. Mabin, ‘Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, 2, 1992; A. Mabin and D. Smit, ‘The Making of Urban Planning, 1900-2000’, *Planning Perspectives*, 12, 1997.

⁴¹ The works that consider the formation of Sharpeville as critical to the furthering of their analysis of the area are only M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*; T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa* and I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville 1943-1985*. MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991.

Of the limited secondary literature on Sharpeville before the massacre, Matthew Chaskalson's (1985) *The Road to Sharpeville: A History of Vereeniging's African Townships in the 1950s* where he posits several reasons as to why Sharpeville was fertile for mass mobilisation by the late 1950s, remains the most thorough.⁴² Chaskalson himself has drawn heavily on Tom Lodge's (1984) *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*.⁴³ Chaskalson argues that the history of land dispossession in the area was a major factor contributing to the rapid growth in support for the PAC in Sharpeville between 1959 and 1960. The history of Sharpeville in the 1940s and 1950s contributes towards filling an important gap in our knowledge of the area and the lead-up to the massacre. It allows us to acknowledge that Sharpeville had a past before the iconic moments of the massacre of 1960. His dissertation mentions some of the features of the township from its formation including the title it was given as a 'model township'.

Chaskalson's material on the early years of Sharpeville has been extremely useful for this research report as he relies heavily on archival material that I was not able to access.⁴⁴ Chaskalson's sole reliance on archival sources however is also a major shortfall of his research. His central points are made through a discussion of the municipality's relationship to the people in the area without an engagement with oral sources. Thus the voices of Sharpeville's residents are largely missing from his analysis. This reliance on archival resources inevitably does not provide as encompassing a history as is possible, and since my research report has placed an emphasis on oral research I will begin to supplement some of the early work on Sharpeville covered by Chaskalson. The only life history of the Vaal Triangle is the autobiography of Petrus Tom (1985)⁴⁵ a resident of Top Location who moved with his family to Sharpeville, but the dearth of oral research in Sharpeville and the Vaal Triangle is stark. Engagement with 'voices from below', through oral research, has been a thrust of social history and as outlined in the

⁴² M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville: A History of South African Townships in the 1950s*. Honours Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1985

⁴³ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan-Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of York, 1984

⁴⁴ A discussion of why I was not able to access archival material is provided in the methodology section of chapter 1.

⁴⁵ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*.

methodology section is critical for considering the ‘lost voices’ of history.⁴⁶ This is particularly important in Sharpeville where there is an ongoing battle over ‘ownership’ of the memory and organisation of the protest in 1960.⁴⁷

Chaskalson’s focus remains to primarily explain why Sharpeville was fertile for the uprising in 1960 and thus the focus of my research report where I undertake to examine the reasons for the lack of political organising in the township is significantly different. While Chaskalson presents a necessary history of Sharpeville before the massacre, his discussion of the aftermath of the massacre is brief and focuses solely on the reaction of the Council. Therefore while there is an overlap in Chaskalson’s work and mine with regards to the early history of Sharpeville, I will proceed from where his analysis ends to explain the evolution of political movements after 1960. Chaskalson alludes to Sharpeville as a ‘model township’ and refers to official documents where this status is mentioned or implied, however he does not substantially engage with the implications and manifestations of the ‘model township’. In this research report I will consider and begin to define the complexities of the ‘model township’ in more detail. In doing so I will not only consider what the official framing of the ‘model township’ was but also the implications and manifestations of this space for those that lived with and in it.

A further contribution to the early history of political organising in Sharpeville was Tom Lodge’s PhD thesis,⁴⁸ which includes a more detailed analysis of Sharpeville than that contained in his book *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*.⁴⁹ In these works Lodge explains the “localised nature of the PAC’s following” through a history and examination of the African population in Vereeniging.⁵⁰ His particular question is: why, if in so many areas of the country the PAC’s anti-pass law campaign failed to gain momentum, did it take off more significantly in Vereeniging and certain areas of Cape Town? Lodge has used extensive amounts of material from the Municipality of Vereeniging and constructs his history of Sharpeville largely to contextualise the failure of the PAC’s anti-pass campaign. Some of Lodge’s findings are mirrored in this research report, namely that the PAC did not have organised grassroots support

⁴⁶ P. La Hausse, ‘Oral History and South African Historians’, *Radical History Review*, 46, p.346.

⁴⁷ M. Lawrence, *An Analysis of a Variety of Perspectives*.

⁴⁸ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*

⁴⁹ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*. Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985, pp. 201-229.

⁵⁰ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p. 10.

in the area at any stage and that the thrust of organising relied on “quality leadership rather than organised mobilisation”.⁵¹ His detailing of the move from Top Location to Sharpeville provides important insight about the formation of the new ‘model township’. He examines Sharpeville as a township with better amenities and increased order relative to Top Location and discusses the housing situation in both townships. Despite the obvious overlaps between this research report and Lodge’s work, Sharpeville is not a central feature of his writing and thus his coverage of political organising in Sharpeville provides more of a general overview to contextualise the PAC’s anti-pass campaign than a specific examination of political organising after the massacre. Lodge is generally more concerned with the PAC as an organisation rather than the formation of place and issues of space. Furthermore, while noting the empirical details of Sharpeville as a ‘model township’ Lodge, like Chaskalson, has not theorised about what this type of township represented beyond an allusion to order and control. Increased order and control is one of the reasons that political organising in Sharpeville was stifled, however it is not always the case that increased surveillance and control necessarily result in a lack of organising. There are various other factors that contributed to political quiescence in Sharpeville for the most part of the 1950s as well as the 1960s and 1970s. However, such an assertion requires an outline of what constitutes quiescence and political action.

2.3. OPPOSITIONAL POLITICAL ACTION AND ORGANISATION

The primary aim of this research is to provide an account of oppositional political action and organising in Sharpeville after 1960. This requires a clarification of what is meant by oppositional politics. What constitutes the political has been debated and dissected across various fields of research for many years.⁵² However in the specific context of this thesis it was important to ask the question of what political action is, as the dominant national narrative has characterized the 1960s as a period of ‘quiescence’. What type of political action was being silenced and was this a fair characterisation of this period? Only in framing what political action and organisation was could I examine the absence or presence of it in Sharpeville and begin to

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 127.

⁵² The quantity and array of literature on ‘the political’ from various disciplines is so vast and diverse that it would be almost impossible to begin to address the complex arguments here.

analyse its character or the reasons for the silence.

Recently, there have been arguments asserting that considering the 1960s as a period of quiescence is unfounded.⁵³ However most of these assertions are based on an acknowledgement of the presence of political parties in exile and on the rise in prominence and increased radicalisation of liberal organisations. It is probably more useful to consider Jeremy Seekings' (1990) definition of quiescence as an absence of direct action against the state, which does not necessarily imply a poverty of political action and organisation.⁵⁴ An important argument contributed by Seekings to the discussion of quiescence is that if one takes a view 'from above' and examines national politics as a whole it probably correctly appears that protest action between 1978 and 1984 was "general and chronic".⁵⁵ However he elaborates that if one considers this period 'from below', from the level of townships, it can be viewed as a period in which people were largely non-confrontational against the state. The extent of this quiescence relative to the 1960s, however, is seen as less severe.⁵⁶ Examining 1978 to 1984, Seekings discusses several routes that allowed for the voicing of grievances in townships in this time of increased political repression, he notes that "Whilst unable or unwilling to directly confront the state itself with the demand for democratic political rights, people nonetheless could utilise a variety of non-confrontational channels for the redress of more immediately pressing local grievances."⁵⁷ The acknowledgement of the differences involved when looking at the national narrative compared to local township politics as well as a confrontation of the sparseness of political action even in the late 1970s in Sharpeville were two critical findings of my research.

However, one of the concerns with Seekings' definition of quiescence is that he does not detail what he means by political action and organisation. Moreover, I believe he is not exact in defining political action as having to occur against the state and does not provide a fuller

⁵³ G. Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP Underground', *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, pp. 601-660; M. Legassick and C. Saunders, 'Aboveground Activity in the 1960s', *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, pp. 661-689.

⁵⁴ J. Seekings, *Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation: South African Townships, 1978-1985*. Ph.D Thesis, Oxford, 1990, p. i

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 17, Seekings discusses how from an historical perspective there are often Marxist or liberal slants which characterise protest as the central factor in resistance.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

explanation of the various levels at which the state operates. With regards to the former point, one of the dangers is that political action may only be defined as *party* political action. Despite my findings that quiescence, defined as the lack of direct action against the state and state apparatuses, extended in Sharpeville through the 1960s into the 1970s, I distinguish between the examination of general political action and that of an examination of specific party political action. Thus while the presence or absence of the ANC and PAC were critical considerations, they were not the sole considerations when exploring oppositional political action and organisation.

How I define oppositional politics, relating to the latter criticism of Seekings includes several points. First, it is important that in this research report I am considering action *against* the state. Further, a body of social movement theory has allowed for better clarification of Seekings' 'state' by outlining the various targets of oppositional politics which often are connected to the state or its apparatuses. One of these definitions of a social movement advanced by Elizabeth Jelin is "collective action with a high degree of popular participation, which use non-institutional channels, and which formulate their demands while simultaneously finding forms of action to express them..."⁵⁸ thus the target can more generally be defined as either parts or the entirety of the social, political and economic system. Etymologically "radical" comes from the Latin *radix* meaning root, thus radical opposition politics can be seen to be politics that challenges parts or the whole of structures and systems- the roots.⁵⁹

In summary, what I consider as political action is not the same as political sentiment and discussion. Thus when referring to quiescence I am not postulating that people were not subjected to state repression nor that they were uninterested in formulating political opinions or organising small meetings. Political action and organisation, while not necessarily party political, in this definition does require a high degree of popular support that both organises and initiates action against subsets or the entirety of interconnected social, political and economic systems. Having established an outline of what constitutes political organising, it should be clear that

⁵⁸ E. Jelin cited in R. Ballard, A. Habib and I. Valodia eds., *Voices of Protest, Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, KwaZulu-Natal, 2006, p. 3.

⁵⁹ W. Brown, C. Colegate, J. Dalton, T. Rayner, C. Thill, 'Learning to Love Again: An Interview with Wendy Brown', *Contretemps* 6, January 2006

politics is not an oppositional pair to quiescence. There is an argument to be made that this is a false dichotomy, that while there may not be any popular organisation against structures and thus quiescence, there is still politics involved in work, housing and various other areas of life. In that context, one is able to examine where politics was occurring even during periods of quiescence—where and how people lived and worked. The following section examines the literature beginning from 1960, considered a period of quiescence throughout the country.

2.4. SHARPEVILLE AFTER 1960

The dearth of material on the Vaal Triangle is consistent with the absence of material considering Sharpeville after 1960. The literature that exists for the period after 1960 does not focus on political organising in Sharpeville. Some of the material outlined above provides an overview of the community in the immediate aftermath of the massacre⁶⁰ but there is only one author that has examined the township in detail, albeit without a focus on political organising, after the massacre.

Ian Jeffrey's (1991) *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville 1943-1985* considers "cultural expressions and community attachment" and the points at which they intersected in Sharpeville.⁶¹ The theory of what communities are and when they emerge is examined through the lens of sporting and musical groups in the township. Jeffrey considers youth gangs, boxing and football clubs and the effect of American consumer culture in Sharpeville. Additionally, Jeffrey does engage with the forced removals from Top Location and the formation of the township of Sharpeville. While there are many related areas of interest between this research report and Jeffrey's dissertation - including an examination of the birth of the township - his dissertation remains embedded in the discourse of cultural studies with an emphasis on questions of identity and community formation. Jeffrey's accounts of cultural

⁶⁰ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa* does examine the PAC's general collapse in the township and others including P. Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity* and M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville* have provided brief outlines of the council's reaction to the massacre.

⁶¹ I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township: Sharpeville 1943-1985*. MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991, p. VIII.

life⁶² after 1960 have situated my discussions of political action and organising within a broader social context, and also helped me refine my definitions; Jeffrey's accounts of various cultural groups showed that these spaces were not devoid of an engagement with politics.

In examining political organisation in Sharpeville after 1960 it is critical that I assess the continuities and discontinuities of organised groups in the area before the massacre. Since the PAC was the main organisation involved in the anti-pass campaign in Sharpeville and since it was relatively more successful in the area than in other parts of the country, the presence of the PAC in Sharpeville post-1960 was a logical starting point. For a significant period of time, there existed an absence of secondary literature on the PAC and autobiographies of its leadership,⁶³ but recently the quantity of literature has been growing.⁶⁴ The primary gap in the literature on the PAC after 1960 is that no author has focused solely on its existence in Sharpeville. However insights can be drawn from the coverage of the movement in other areas.

Like Lodge, authors such as Brown Bavusile Maaba (2004) acknowledge that while the PAC's call for mass protests around an anti-pass campaign was largely disappointing they became a significant political force in areas such as Langa and Sharpeville.⁶⁵ Maaba provides a broad overview of the PAC from the period between 1960 and the failed general uprising of 1963. Using a more distinct geographical setting, Sello Mathabatha (2004) has discussed the PAC and Poqo in the period between 1958 and 1964 with a focus on the organisation in Pretoria. This does not mean however that Mathabatha's evidence of the growth of the PAC in Pretoria and the failure of Pretoria's Poqo cells to realise the planned insurrection in 1963 have not allowed me to generalise around some of the features and failures of the PAC. One of the indicators that it is possible to gather some general features of the PAC at this time is contained in Arianna Lissoni's (2010) study of the PAC in Basutoland in the period 1962-1965. The study

⁶³ A. Lissoni, 'The PAC in Basutoland, 1962-1965', *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1, 2010, p. 1.

⁶⁴ For example, B. B. Maaba, 'The PAC's War Against the State, 1960-1963' and S. Mathabatha, 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, 1958-1964', both in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004; A. Lissoni, 'The PAC in Basutoland', SAHJ; K. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa) 1959 – 1994*. Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Switzerland, 2009

⁶⁵ B. B. Maaba, 'The PAC's War Against the State, 1960-1963'. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 260.

used British intelligence reports of the period partly as way of introducing new documentary evidence to supplement the literature on the PAC.⁶⁶ A point that Lissoni establishes is that despite considering various settings and using different methodologies (Maaba and Mathabatha rely heavily on oral sources) there are consistencies in how the literature characterises the PAC in the early 1960s. Thus, while I necessarily consider the specifics of the PAC in Sharpeville, there are more general characteristics of the organisation that have been identified and mutually supported by various researchers that I also draw upon.

Mathabatha's research in Pretoria, for example, seems to support the argument that I make with regard to the PAC in Sharpeville that the organisation did not develop from a grassroots platform and that they were unrealistically wedded to the idea that 1963 would herald a massive general uprising. Despite the usefulness of Mathabatha's work in this regard, its specific focus on Pretoria means that he does not examine any of the details of Vereeniging and its townships and thus the context specific characteristics of the organisation. Mathabatha makes one direct reference to the PAC in the Vaal Triangle indicating that it was predominantly constituted of young adults, the newly unemployed, school leavers and students.⁶⁷ This observation will be more fully explored in this research report to explain why it was that in 1959 the PAC in Sharpeville was able to garner relatively more support than in other parts of the country. I will however show that the PAC went into crisis in the township and largely disappeared after the massacre of 1960.

Chaskalson, Lodge and Jeffrey have detailed the absence of the ANC in Sharpeville prior to 1960. The findings of this research have established that the absence of the ANC in the area persisted throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The inability or lack of willingness of the ANC to organise in the community will be extrapolated from and examined through the evidence that these three authors present.

⁶⁶A. Lissoni, 'The PAC in Basutoland, 1962-1965', *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1, 2010., in this work Lissoni considers Basutoland a critical setting in which to examine the PAC since it was the site where the leadership attempted to reassemble and oversee internal activities.

⁶⁷ S. Mathabatha, 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria', p. 301.

2.5. THE MODEL TOWNSHIP AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

Sharpeville is interesting beyond the way it has highlighted a problematic of historiography where we consider only 'big events'. Sharpeville allows a lens through which to examine relationships between the local and the national, particularly because one would expect a place this iconic to mirror the national historical narrative and because one might expect a place so remembered for a political event to be a consistent hub of political organising. Yet Sharpeville was neither a place of consistent political organising nor a place where the dominant narrative of quiescence in the 1960s followed by politically intensified black working-class resistance⁶⁸ in the 1970s played out exactly according to the script.

It would be easy to assume that the reason for quiescence in Sharpeville can be easily explained by the causal relationship between increased order and surveillance and the lack of politics. While Sharpeville being designed for order did make organising difficult, it was the combination of this and the fact that for the most part Sharpeville provided a better lifestyle to former residents of the 'old locations', which had a palliative effect on the population.

A constant tension in this research has been how to write a history of a place in time without erring on either the side of a reductive causal argument or a completely ethereal 'unrootedness'. During the course of this research I realised that there were several key points I wanted to make around the idea of space. The first is that spaces and places are not empty receptacles. Places are constructed and they are a product of many contingent and interconnected factors. The second related point is that Sharpeville, like any other space, is not bounded. Because space is fluid and constructed, while for the purposes of research it is easier to create a geographical boundary, this boundary is not 'real': there are multiple processes/interactions that operate across this boundary and influence the political action and organising within the demarcated space. The third point is that while Sharpeville, like any other location, forms part of a larger 'created' space one cannot consider it an example of the larger space- any generalisations require explanation and justification.

⁶⁸ B. Magubane, 'Introduction to the 1970s: The Social and Political Context', *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006, p. 3.

Gillian Hart (2002) describes how history can “convey the ongoing processes through which sets of power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life at different spatial scales constantly rework places and identities.”⁶⁹ She augments Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) views in *The Production of Space* which challenge the dominant perception of Western philosophers who either implicitly or explicitly assert that time takes primacy over space and that space is both an empty and willing receptacle for time. Lefebvre’s work has inspired a wave of new and critical engagement with space. Important to the notion of the ‘model township’, is Lefebvre’s conception of space as a social product, which explains that space “serves as a tool of thought and of action: that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power; yet that, as such, it escapes in part from those who would make use of it”⁷⁰. Hart’s work in KwaZulu Natal has been an important text to allow me to engage with how a certain space does not necessitate a certain politics, and to understand the examination of space and political organising in a South African context.⁷¹

During this research I have been aware of the creation of boundaries and of their fluidity. While tempting for historical research on the ‘local’, Lefebvre has noted that he is not proposing a crude interplay between space and society. Neither is he suggesting that space simply mirrors social structures and is thus a specific reflection of the general. Rather Lefebvre argues for the abandonment of even drawing a distinction between space, society and time, and instead sees them as mutually constitutive or that “each entails the other”⁷². These three concepts as mutually defining are also considered by Doreen Massey (1994, 1995, 1995) whose analysis of space-including *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) *Places and Their Pasts* (1995); *Spatial Divisions of Labour* (1995)- has allowed for ideas of space to be considered more specifically in the context of historical research.⁷³ Massey, like Lefebvre and Hart argues that spaces are not static that they have multitudinous identities and that while they are demarcated, they have no clear inside and outside.

⁶⁹ G. Hart, *Disabling Globalisation*, p. 13

⁷⁰ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p. 26

⁷¹ G. Hart, *Disabling Globalisation*

⁷² Ibid, p. 34.

⁷³ D. Massey, ‘Places and Their Pasts’, *History Workshop Journal*, 39(1):182-192, 1995; D. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994; D. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, Routledge, 1995.

Furthermore, David Harvey's substantial body of work has added to literature on space by arguing that the shift from modernity to postmodernity (from a Fordist-Keynesian system to a flexible accumulation of capital) has changed our perception and experience of space and time.⁷⁴ Harvey notes that those who are able to control the perception of time and space are those who have power. In his examination of space, Harvey discusses how various philosophers and thinkers have considered ideas of space. He notes that Foucault sees the body as the basic building block and root space of society since it is where "forces of repression, socialization, disciplining and punishing are afflicted".⁷⁵ Harvey however has critiqued what he finds to be an otherwise compelling argument of space by Foucault by saying that it still presumes space to be too confined and bounded, as not being "open to human creativity and action".⁷⁶ Sharpeville as a 'model township' highlights important factors regarding the relationship between the local and the national and the interrelatedness of spaces as well as the state's changing relationship to the urban African population. The creation of these townships as a means of control and order have been examined by authors covering other 'model townships'.⁷⁷ However, I would like to contribute to the argument by adding that not only were these townships designed for greater order and surveillance but that people generally accepted the conditions of the new township. One of the possible ways of examining the space of the 'model township' is by using the theoretical framework of biopolitics.

2.6. THE MODEL TOWNSHIP AND BIOPOLITICS

The concepts of biopolitics and biopower may be useful to use as a theoretical framework for examining the 'model township'. The concept of biopower, originally used by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, can generally and simply be understood as the part of life which power controls. Foucault first used the term in his *College de France* lectures (1997) and later in

⁷⁴ See particularly D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1990; Also D. Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. Routledge, 2001; D. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*. Verso, 2007.

⁷⁵ D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 213.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 213.

⁷⁷ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand*; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History*. Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 2001.

written form in *The History of Sexuality* (1998).⁷⁸ Biopolitics refers to power and political action at the site of the individual or the collective body, the activities of life and the ability to control them. Since biopower serves to control entire populations, Foucault considered it critical to the formation of the modern nation state under capitalism and late capitalism. In his words, biopower is “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations”.⁷⁹ Giorgio Agamben (1998) argued that biopolitics is the platform of ‘life’ and the ‘living being’ where political struggles and economic shifts are being staged so “natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of state power, and politics turns into *biopolitics*”⁸⁰. In this framework, there is the conflation of people as *living beings* and people as *political subjects*.⁸¹

Posel (2005) has argued that political intervention at the site of the ‘self’ in South Africa necessitated a new form of state that was reliant on increased spending⁸². While Posel’s argument covers the welfare state in the 1930s and 1940s, the argument can be extrapolated since many of the underlying features of state welfarism, including paternalism and the need to control the African population, persisted well into the Apartheid period. However, Posel’s argument about intervention at the site of the self has not been applied towards understanding the ‘model township’. Outside of research on HIV/Aids, very little South African historical research has utilised or incorporated discussion of biopolitics⁸³. In light of the state’s attempt to create a ‘self disciplining subject’ within ‘model townships’, control of the larger urban African population clearly did not become obsolete; there was still immense focus on influx control and the regulation of the movement of urban Africans.

⁷⁸ M. Foucault, *Society Must be Defended, Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*. M. Bertani and A. Fontana (eds), Picador, New York, 1997; M. Foucault. *The History of Sexuality Vol 1: The Will to Knowledge*. Penguin, London, 1998

⁷⁹ M. Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*, p. 140.

⁸⁰ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, p.10.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² D. Posel, ‘The Case for a Welfare State’, p.74

⁸³ See for example U. Kistner, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life with HIV/AIDS: Bio-Politics South African Style*. Presented at WISER seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 6 February 2003 and C. L. Decoteau, *The Bio-Politics of HIV/AIDS in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. PhD, University of Michigan, 2008.

While Foucault notes that they are both technologies of power over the body, he argues that disciplinary technologies relate to the body in its individualised capacity and regulatory technologies to general biological processes⁸⁴. He explains that disciplinary technologies are easier to implement and include surveillance and training at the site of the individual body. Individuals, for example, are disciplined through institutions such as schools and hospitals⁸⁵. ‘Model townships’ always included greater access to and numbers of schools as well as medical facilities superior to other townships. These techniques were used by the state to colonise ‘the self’ and to use these subjects to act upon and control others. Regulatory mechanisms on the other hand, deal with general biological processes or the population, for example the control of birth rates and death rates. These need more effort because of the greater need for centralisation and consolidation owing to the need to simultaneously control large numbers of people. The regulatory techniques that should be acknowledged in this context include the rental and purchase of accommodation and critically the pressures and influence of the ‘model township’ on sexuality and thus procreation.⁸⁶

It is clear that ‘race’ is an important consideration when examining the wielding of power over bodies. Particularly in a South African context one cannot assume that the control that was exerted over white bodies mirrored the power over black bodies. The chapter on the ‘model township’ (chapter three) will attempt to outline both the similarities and the stark differences between the control exerted over the white population and the African population from the formation of Sharpeville in the 1940s. A few theorists such as Balibar advance the argument that racism was in reality the “crucial phenomenon” that biopolitics attempted to explicate.⁸⁷ It is thus not possible to nominally insert a consideration of ‘race’ into an analysis of biopolitics but to acknowledge that it is intrinsically connected to and part of the biopolitical.

A clearer way to connect biopolitics and racism is by considering colonial occupations in Africa. Thus, relevant to the conceptual framework of this study is Fanon’s (1991) seminal text *The Wretched of the Earth* particularly his accounts of the attempts by the colonial occupation to

⁸⁴ M. Foucault. *Society Must be Defended. Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*. M.Bertani and A Fontana (eds), Picador, New York, 1997, p. 249.

⁸⁵ M. Foucault. *Society Must be Defended*, p. 250.

⁸⁶ M. Foucault. *Society Must be Defended*, p. 251.

⁸⁷ A.L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*. Duke University Press, USA, 1995, p. 21

create a “compartmentalised world” bolstered by police stations and “regulated by the language of pure force, immediate presence, and frequent and direct action; and it is premised on the principle of reciprocal exclusivity”⁸⁸. Fanon speaks of both regulation and self-discipline:

The colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier. In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instil in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order.⁸⁹

With biopower (the power to administer life) there is always an “other to power”⁹⁰. Even though Foucault has used the term ‘resistance’ himself, Hardt and Negri (2009) propose that as a signifier, its associated signified meanings are too reliant on power. That is, naming the ‘other to power’ resistance may not correctly denote its otherness. The best definition for the other that they propose is “an alternative production of subjectivity, which not only resists power but also seeks autonomy from it”.⁹¹ Throughout this analysis of the ‘model township’ I highlight examples of resistance to authorities and control, this does not necessarily denote that all of these struggles were separate from power- its other- but they are examples of how discipline, regulation and surveillance were often not passively accepted or unchallenged.

⁸⁸ A. Mbembe, ‘Necropolitics’, *Public Culture*, 15(1):11-40, 2003, p. 10 explaining Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Weidenfeld, New York, 1991, p. 39.

⁸⁹ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁰ M. Hardt and A. Negri. *Commonwealth*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009, pp. 56, 57.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 56.

2.6.1 The Self-Disciplining Subject

The idea of the self-disciplining subject is reliant upon and flows from Foucault's discussion of biopolitics. Foucault notes that "it is the population itself on which government will act either directly, through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on."⁹² It is these indirect techniques of population control that I consider when examining the concept of the self-disciplining subject. Posel (2005) provided the framework for examining how the creation of some townships as model spaces for urban Africans introduced a new configuration of control and discipline at the site of the 'self'⁹³. While Posel does begin to introduce townships in her description, her work is more concerned with the history and nuances of welfare stateism in South Africa.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain from life-history interviews the level of self-discipline that permeated through Sharpeville from its inception, however, by examining both the subtleties and shades of the interviews as well as newspaper records it is possible to begin to find indications of people practising discipline and control upon themselves. I argue, following on the work of Legg (2005) and others, that it is this idea of the self-disciplining subject that ties together the concepts of space and biopolitics⁹⁴. It does this by considering population not just as the number of people within a place, but rather as the interaction of people with a place. The chapter on the 'model township' begins to explore the intricacies of space and biopolitics in the context of Sharpeville.

2.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the key literature on Sharpeville and has introduced some conceptual tools that will be used to help interpret the nature of political action and organising in Sharpeville

⁹² M. Foucault, 'Governmentality', *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984: Power* (Vol. 3), J. D. Faubion JD ed., Penguin, London, 2001, p. 216-217

⁹³ D. Posel. *The Case for a Welfare State*

⁹⁴ S. Legg, 'Foucault's Population Geographies: Classifications, Biopolitics and Governmental Spaces', *Population, Space and Place*, 11, 137–156, 2005.

from 1960 to the mid-1980s. There are several points that are apparent from both the literature review and the theoretical framework. The first is, to reiterate, there is a dearth of literature on Sharpeville and the surrounding townships of the Vaal. Following from this is the realisation that a gendered and complex history of the area has not been considered, particularly outside of party political contexts. Furthermore, the South African historical narrative has often attempted to draw simple implications between, and generalisations from, the local to the national and vice versa without more substantive reasoning than that the one is a subset of the other. Lastly, the theoretical concepts introduced in this chapter, outside of a small but growing body of work on HIV/AIDS, have not been widely utilised in a South African context particularly to look at the state's relationship to townships. The next chapter on the 'model township' begins to engage the theoretical material covered here as a means to interpret my empirical data, and create an argument about the genesis of political action and organisation in Sharpeville.

CHAPTER 3

III. THE ‘MODEL TOWNSHIP’ OF SHARPEVILLE: “*DIE TROTS VAN DIE MUNISIPALE AMPTENARE*”⁹⁵

INTRODUCTION

While there are several reasons that contribute to explaining why political action was absent in Sharpeville for the major part of the 1950s as well as the 1960s, one of the ways to begin to explain this quiescence is by considering the attempts by the state to create a ‘model township’. I characterise the creation of these spaces as part of the legacy of state welfarism from the 1930s and the escalating attempts, particularly after the introduction of apartheid, to control the African population in urban areas. I will show that a useful way of examining the changing relationship between the state and urban Africans is by using the theoretical framework provided by biopolitics.

I asserted earlier that to examine political organising in Sharpeville after 1960 it is important to examine the place and space that is Sharpeville. The central position that the massacre in Sharpeville has taken in memories and the South African historical narrative could suggest that there was something unique about Sharpeville. A newspaper report in 1965 upon considering the massacre reflected that, “The wonder of it was that it happened at Sharpeville, always regarded as the model South African township”.⁹⁶

In the first part of this chapter I consider the factors that lead to the creation of ‘modern’ townships in the country highlighting the growing emphasis placed on the control and order of the urban African population. I then go on to discuss ‘model townships’ as spaces and to explain why it was that the space of the ‘model township’ of Sharpeville contributed to a political quiescence that permeated far longer in

⁹⁵ Union of South Africa, Commission of Enquiry into the Sharpeville Shootings (Historical Papers, SAIRR, AD1720 Mfm) “Die trots van die munisipale amptenare” (the pride of the municipal authorities)

⁹⁶ Frank Day, *Five Years Later its Still a Model Township*. Rand Daily Mail, March 19 1965.

Sharpeville than in other townships. I have then proposed that biopolitics is a possible theoretical framework through which to consider the 'model township' from. The chapter concludes with a consideration as to whether Sharpeville ceases being a 'model township' after 1960.

3.1. SITUATING THE MODEL TOWNSHIP: THE GROWTH OF STATE WELFARISM AND 'PROPER PLANNING'

In this section I argue that the 'model township' arises out of a discourse of both 'proper planning' and state welfarism. The 'model township' was one part of a broader strategy to enforce greater order on the lives of Africans in urban areas that grew and evolved from many factors including a changing international context, the desire to control urban African resistance and the relationship between central and local government.

To situate state welfarism in South Africa, it is important to consider the global context. In the United States of America and Europe in the context of the years after the Depression and pressure against the liberal non-interventionist state, amongst other factors, opinion was mounting that "[e]conomic and social life would be subject... to much more systematic and comprehensive state intervention, by a state suitably reformed to take on appropriately expanded powers and responsibilities".⁹⁷ At the same time in South Africa there was rapid growth of the number of Africans in the urban areas. This is indicated by figures that between 1936 and 1946 the urban African population grew by 57.2 percent⁹⁸ with a doubling of the number of women in urban areas.⁹⁹

This growing urban population changed in the 1940s from being majority migrant to being more permanently settled.¹⁰⁰ The neglected and dilapidating locations formed in the 1920s were not able to withstand this ballooning and more

⁹⁷ D. Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*, 65.

⁹⁸ D. Posel, 'Curbing African Urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s', *Apartheid City in Transition*, M. Swilling, R. Humphries and K. Shubane (eds), 1991, pp. 20-27.

⁹⁹ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p.28.

¹⁰⁰ P.L. Bonner, 'African Urbanisation on the Rand between the 1930s and 1960s: Its Social Character and Political Consequences', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 1, 1995, p. 9.

permanently settled population. These urban 'locations', which fell under municipal jurisdiction, were ushered in by the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act and were based largely on the 1922 Stallard Report. Posel comments that the formation of these locations "was a model of 'urban native administration...'",¹⁰¹ an administration that still largely considered Africans as temporary sojourners. The locations formed in the 1920s embodied an attempt at a combination of stricter control and surveillance and greater municipal responsibility over living conditions. The locations would depend economically on a native revenue account connected to the white municipality. The early 1930s, in the milieu of the worldwide depression, saw urban African residents of the locations facing crippling unemployment and wage cuts. Evictions were commonplace and many residents, particularly women, turned to illicit liquor brewing and selling. The local administrations, in an attempt to regulate the locations began to clamp down on liquor brewing and to rigidly reinforce permits. The 1925 Native Urban Areas Act installed a permit system around the Reef that had only begun to become more uniformly and actively enforced during the 1930s.

At the same time, resistance to the stricter measures and the hardships of life in the urban areas grew. A critical area of resistance was connected to lodgers' registration and fees. The fees created further economic strain and entrenched control over location residents. The registration and fees were also extended to the daughters and sons of location resident site-holders. It was also women who attacked the imposition of these lodger's permits most vociferously.¹⁰² In fact, in many senses it was urban African women's lives and work that were the most threatening to the state and it was also these women who articulated the fiercest resistance to surveillance and control.¹⁰³

Thus, these locations while being an improvement on the unplanned locations formed early on in the century, still "a familiar tale of overcrowding, impoverishment and unhealthy conditions developed".¹⁰⁴ By the late 1930s with the influx of

¹⁰¹ D. Posel. *The Case for a Welfare State*, 69.

¹⁰² P.L. Bonner, 'Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women? Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho Women to the Rand, 1920 – 1945', *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, C. Walker (ed.), David Philip and James Currey, Cape Town and London, 1990.

¹⁰³ P.L. Bonner, *African Urbanisation on the Rand*

¹⁰⁴ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p.33.

Africans into the urban areas, the state began to more aggressively emphasise the importance of controlling all facets of urban African life. This new form of control highlighted the importance of material stimulation and was in many ways comparable to the logic of state welfarism in Europe and the USA.¹⁰⁵ Certainly in South Africa, this movement towards social reform through top-down regulation also relied on the rhetoric of the loss of ‘morality’ and stability of Africans in the cities, rhetoric which was motivated by state officials and apparatuses, the general white population as well as urban African leaders and the liberal lobby.¹⁰⁶ State institutions such as the Department of Native Affairs with Douglas Smit as secretary, entertained calls from liberals, missionaries, academics, urban African leaders and urban administrators to institute programs of moral and economic ‘upliftment’ for urban Africans.¹⁰⁷ This attempt at ‘upliftment’ did not critique or effectively engage structural inequalities facing Africans, resulting in an attempt to build what has been called a “racialised welfare state”.¹⁰⁸ Despite intentions to the contrary, by the end of the 1930s both the control and ‘upliftment’ of these locations had failed, with the Secretary for Native Affairs lamenting their “deplorable conditions”.¹⁰⁹

The focus on state welfare of urban Africans was given new impetus after the 1938 Conference on Urban Native Delinquency. As the title of the conference suggests, much of the rooting of the newest assertion of the need for ‘upliftment’ of urban Africans arose from concerns around ‘urban native juvenile delinquency’.¹¹⁰ The points made at the conference centered on the faulty and patronising linear argument that it was ‘instability’ that resulted in ‘immorality’ and therefore it was stability that could heal it. The conference stressed decency, family and ‘upliftment’. ‘Upliftment’ in all of these cases included both the moral and economic. Recommendations thus included improved housing, wages, social services and educational facilities in the townships. Along with this, morality was to be ‘uplifted’ by what may be seen as a contradictory appeal to stimulating and reaching out to the

¹⁰⁵ D. Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

individual [man] as opposed to the entire population.¹¹¹ None of the recommendations, however, insisted on an analysis of the racialised availability of social services and property and were thus still attempts at reforms within a white supremacist state. Posel argues that political intervention at the site of the self both contributed to and was necessitated by a new form of state and that this state would be reliant on increased spending.¹¹² The ‘upliftment’ of townships should be expected to come from the national budget as opposed to township residents primarily and directly financing themselves.

In 1942 the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Areas with Smit as chair, cited similar findings as those of the 1938 conference. Amongst the calls for “a progressive policy”, the report also noted that the state should use its “powers of compulsion” over local authorities not willing to implement the recommendations.¹¹³ The impact of the report, also known as the ‘Smit Report’ was diluted in the face of the Second World War and there seemed to be great resistance to dramatic changes in ‘urban Native policy’. Yet the pressure from the central government on local authorities was being foregrounded and by the end of the decade there would be a significant thrust towards the ‘management’ of townships by central government instead of the municipalities.

The Second World War resulted in the need for tackling ‘the urban native question’ appearing simultaneously pressing and overwhelming. During the War there was also a burgeoning secondary industry, with the South African government taking up a more rigorous import substitution policy resulting in increased manufacturing output that grew 5.1% per annum between 1936/7 and 1946/7.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, developments on the Rand during the war, with mine-owners refusing to keep wages in line with inflation (while those in industry did) and the defeat of the African mineworker’s strike in 1946 contributed to large numbers of African workers moving from the mines to the towns.¹¹⁵ The 1940s with its large-scale urban growth and rapid industrialisation can be seen as the decade heralding South Africa’s entry into the

¹¹¹ All of the language appealed to ‘manhood’ and a ‘responsible masculinity’.

¹¹² D. Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p.25.

¹¹⁵ P.L. Bonner, *African Urbanisation on the Rand*, p. 5.

capitalist world economy.¹¹⁶ The moves towards more of a 'welfare state' waned from the mid to late 1940s. The ushering in of apartheid in 1948 resulted in a more explicitly racialised social engineering which, as has been argued, also called for 'making improvements' to the urban native situation, and appropriated ideas of the interventionist state albeit with different political intentions.¹¹⁷ While social-reformers called for social interdependence, the post-1948 state called for increased order and administration.

The 1940s was also the decade when, on the back of extensive industrial growth in Vereeniging, Sharpeville was built. Sharpe Native Township or Sharpeville is located approximately four kilometres west of central Vereeniging in the Vaal Triangle. As industry in Vereeniging grew, especially after the Second World War, the demand for housing and industrial stands grew with it.¹¹⁸ Sharpeville is so closely situated to heavy industry that in 1959 the Mayor of Vereeniging noted that the area is "the premier industrial centre in the Union".¹¹⁹ The decision to construct Sharpeville was taken in 1941 partly to accommodate people being moved from Topville (Top Location or *Toplokasie*) - formed in the 1920s and 1930s in central Vereeniging without the support of the Vereeniging Town Council.¹²⁰ Top Location was considered an unregulated township that was too close to the white town of Vereeniging.¹²¹ The intricacies of housing and the removal to Sharpeville will be considered in the following chapter. What is important to note here is that Sharpeville was built specifically to re-house the population that formerly lived in Top Location and thus from the outset was seen by authorities as a better way of controlling the lives of urban Africans: the Non-European Affairs Department was brazen about their declaration of Sharpeville as a 'model township'.¹²²

The lack of regulation of old locations such as Top Location was partly an example of how the local state was unable to exert full control over Africans moving

¹¹⁶ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid* p.32.

¹¹⁷ D. Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*, p. 66.

¹¹⁸ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 32

¹²¹ *Ibid*.

¹²² Vaal Teknorama Archives, Vereeniging, Box: Sedibeng, Sharpeville, Non-European Affairs Department, *A Few Facts About Sharpe Bantu Town*, 1961.

to the cities during the 1940s, resulting in local authorities being accused of “ineptitude, neglect, and poor judgement as well as being primarily reactive”.¹²³ The Native Affairs Department from the late 1950s, in a process that was initiated earlier that decade, strengthened its position in the state in an attempt to attack local authorities.¹²⁴ This can be illustrated by the public conflicts between the government and municipalities over urban apartheid policies throughout the decade that culminated in the Bantu European Areas Bill of 1960; legislation which Posel has argued was a particularly antagonistic vilification of local authorities.¹²⁵ The final undoing of local white municipalities’ management of urban African townships came in 1973 with the establishment of the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards.¹²⁶ This changing relationship toward the management of urban African townships is critical to outlining the ‘model township’. An emphasis towards central planning and order was heralded by this change in relationship. The new administration boards were accountable to the central government in the move away from the old locations to the ‘model townships’. This development enabled increased and centralised surveillance and order.

The Nationalist Party (NP) did not come into power in 1948 with a ‘grand plan’ that would unfold in a linear fashion. The existence of such a ‘blue-print’ has been criticised, however it is accepted that the NP did emphasise more planning and greater order.¹²⁷ The NP gained support and was victorious in the 1948 elections on the basis of promising to address the concerns of various sectors of the white population over the “lack of order” of and growth in the urban African population.¹²⁸ These concerns, for example, came from industrialists who wanted a more stable, cheap and reliable workforce; white farmers who were concerned about the diminishing agricultural labour-force and white residents who were preoccupied by the so-called ‘demographic threat’ and the involvement of Africans in political

¹²³ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p.22.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Some of these municipalities included Johannesburg and Durban, see N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 5; D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p.247.

¹²⁶ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 5.

¹²⁷ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961, Conflict and Compromise*. Clarendon, Oxford, 1991, p. 5; N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 7.

¹²⁸ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p. 7

struggles.¹²⁹ The NP's emphasis on controlling influx to urban areas was in no way novel; however it was "far more systematic and wide-ranging than any of its predecessors".¹³⁰

The apartheid government began to bolster influx control while allowing families basic accommodation and education to meet the labour demands of the urban areas. This defining of family units was one of the ways that the NP's prioritisation of control was far more assertive than previous governments. Because simple accommodation was largely only available through site and service schemes from the 1940s, and because these schemes necessitated one to be "in family circumstances", many men who had previously worked as migrants in the urban areas began to be joined by their wives from the rural areas.¹³¹ Some who were not accompanied by their partners from the rural areas set up homes with women from the towns. With many wives in the towns, there was less reason to visit or have contact with rural homesteads. In addition, being able to support a family in the town as well as back 'home' was difficult if not impossible for most men, resulting in further alienation from the rural areas.

More than meeting labour demands in terms of numbers, meeting employer's labour demands required creating a reliable and controllable workforce.¹³² 'Family circumstances' meant that not only were men regulated by the confines of their work (needing to be at work for eight hours a day, needing to behave in certain ways in that context, being exhausted when returning home) but that women were in turn regulated in various ways.

The state's realisation that they needed to control African women partly arose from women's critical involvement in political organising and protests in the 1930s and 1940s.¹³³ One of the ways of controlling women was by forcing them to be attached to a man and thus in turn women had to inherit the control that was being

¹²⁹ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 142.

¹³⁰ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p. 8

¹³¹ P.L. Bonner, *African Urbanisation on the Rand*, p. 9.

¹³² P.L. Bonner, *African Urbanisation on the Rand*; D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*

¹³³ P.L. Bonner, 'Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women? Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho Women to the Rand, 1920 – 1945', *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, C. Walker (ed.), David Philip and James Currey, Cape Town and London, 1990.

imposed on men at work. In this way, controlling the spaces where Africans lived can also be seen as an attempt to control women who were not as bound by the regulations of formal employment. In these ‘family circumstances’ women enter into what has been called a “sexual contract” where wives subjugate themselves to husbands in much the same way as male citizens subjugate themselves to the state and its civil laws as well as the confines of formal employment.¹³⁴

The overriding emphasis of order after 1948 saw a thrust towards what Nieftagodien has called a ‘*leitmotif*’ of the apartheid state: ‘proper planning’.¹³⁵ The Group Areas Act (GAA) has been considered both as an attempt at enforcing ‘racial’ segregation and at curbing Indian trade to protect white businesses.¹³⁶ Connected with these aims, Mabin has considered the GAA as a manifestation of the thrust towards ‘proper planning’, which borrowed on facets of international planning policies to restructure the landscape of the country.¹³⁷ He has argued that this was an attempt to assert control over the African population and particularly the urban African population.¹³⁸ Instead of an improvement of social and economic conditions of urban Africans, one could see the aim of the apartheid state as being an increase in control and order.

Despite the numerous policies and measures, the attempt to control numbers of Africans in urban areas failed¹³⁹ and the population grew throughout the 1950s resulting in the movement of some workers to homelands, disallowing Africans to own or lease houses¹⁴⁰ and a move back to ‘self-sufficiency’. The failure of the apartheid state to limit the size of the urban African population in the 1950s has been attributed to the contradictions in the policy itself which allowed for greater

¹³⁴ C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 7 [online] accessed 22 March

2009 <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=jH2KPvZF1L0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+sexual+contract>

¹³⁵ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand*, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

¹³⁷ A.Mabin, ‘Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 18, 2, 1992; A. Mabin and D.Smit, ‘The Making of Urban Planning, 1900-2000’, *Planning Perspectives*, 12, 1997.

¹³⁸ A.Mabin, *Comprehensive Segregation*.

¹³⁹ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁰ Between 1969 and 1974 (inclusive) there was a ban on all non-homeland leasehold registrations.

resistance.¹⁴¹ This failure has partly been explained by “...a misplaced faith in the state’s power to orchestrate and control urban employment patterns.”¹⁴² Despite this, while there were pockets of resistance, until the mid-1960s in most townships, the government’s aims to stifle and stabilise the urban African population was successful.¹⁴³ In Sharpeville, however this stabilisation lasted longer- into the 1970s- and one of the ways of beginning to explain this is by considering the specificities of Sharpeville the ‘model township’.

The government initiated processes to devise more rigidly controlled townships for Africans in the early 1950s. There were numerous ‘model townships’ throughout South Africa at different times, most of which were erected in the mid-1950s and early 1960s.¹⁴⁴

3.2. THE MODEL TOWNSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPACE AND POLITICS

At the core of the formation of ‘model townships’ was the state’s attempt to order urban Africans’ living spaces for greater control and surveillance. Although it cannot be assumed that this intention would necessarily translate into practice, the ‘model township’ of Sharpeville was in fact largely ordered and politically quiet. Chapter four discusses other factors that contributed to the lack of radical opposition politics in Sharpeville until the late 1950s and then throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. These include increased repression, more securitised surveillance and the lack of a history of political organising in the area. However I will argue that the confluence of two factors directly related to the ‘model township’ contributed to the persistent quiescence in the area: firstly, the ‘model township’ being consciously planned for

¹⁴¹D. Posel, *Curbing African Urbanisation*, pp. 20-27. Examples here include the general failure of the labour bureaux system which did not recognise workers’ and employers’ preferences as well as other factors including skill and specific labour requirements and importantly the system did not control the employment of African women in urban areas. The control of women thus fell on the local authorities who, to avoid resistance, were largely tolerant of their presence.

¹⁴² D. Posel, *Curbing African Urbanisation*, p. 21

¹⁴³ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 144.

increased order; and, secondly, because most of the residents accepted and chose to move to the area.

Moving beyond considering places as merely geographic zones was one of the key thrusts of the literature on space and thus provide a theoretical basis for beginning to examine the 'model township'. The literature pertaining to an understanding of space that this research has drawn from has been outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework. Lefebvre's conception of space can contribute to understanding the notion of the 'model township'. This is since a 'model township' can be seen as a social product, as a space.

Following Lefebvre and Hart, it may be argued that space is not merely a setting. While Sharpeville did have borders, a consideration of how demarcations and boundaries are always produced and contested is useful to understand why the 'model township' did not exist in a vacuum.¹⁴⁵ Here I view space rather as having fluid interrelationships between other space-time scales.¹⁴⁶ This research is thus an attempt to achieve what Massey calls:

A way of understanding which, in the end, did not try to seal a place up into one neat and tidy 'envelope of space-time' but which recognised that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces.¹⁴⁷

It has been noted that the majority of 'model townships' were constructed in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, thus Sharpeville, conceived of in 1941, stood as one of the earliest of these townships. Despite the township being conceived of in 1941, it took several years for it to grow into an example of a 'modern' township. This coincided with the national narrative where these 'modern' townships began to flourish from the 1950s then at a large scale in the early 1960s. The director of Non-

¹⁴⁵ A critical text on this is B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1983.

¹⁴⁶ For example an ongoing examination of Sharpeville as related to the national or Sharpeville as related to Evaton but also these in turn as related to Sharpeville.

¹⁴⁷ D. Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, 39(1), 1995, p. 191.

European Affairs I.P. Ferreira, in 1946, was still expressing how the township was not sufficiently developed, but by the late 1950s, it was described as “...an(d) entirely different story. Sharpeville is a model town, planned in accordance with modern town planning standards, providing for business centers, parks and open spaces, playing fields, a swimming bath and a civic centre.”¹⁴⁸

Following the varied organised actions by Africans as an assertion of their place in urban South Africa mentioned earlier, including the formation of squatter movements in the 1940s¹⁴⁹, the NP gave their assurance to the white electorate that it would tackle the perceived *swart gevaar*, with an emphasis on influx control.¹⁵⁰ Partly owing to this, authorities placed immense emphasis on control and order.¹⁵¹ For example, in the 1950s, shanty towns were demolished under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951).

Along with influx control, the creation of ‘modern’ townships became more central and widespread with the ushering in of apartheid.¹⁵² The plans for these regional African townships were articulated in the Mentz Committee’s recommendations.¹⁵³ Between 1949 and 1957 even with deflated values, there was an increase in spending on urban African housing either directly from the central government or through local authorities.¹⁵⁴ The grid-like planning provided superior conditions for surveillance compared to rambling dirt roads of the old locations. These townships were characterized by “starkly parallel and perpendicular streets and regularly spaced houses”.¹⁵⁵ Critically, these houses were able to be numbered and categorised compared to the overcrowded and sprawling housing in old locations. Authorities boasted of the greater amenities offered in the ‘modern’ townships and

¹⁴⁸ *Vaal News*, ‘Phenomenal Development of Sharpeville, 40 000 Population Increase in 20 Years’, 1967.

¹⁴⁹ K. French, *James Sofasonke Mpanza: The Father of Soweto*. Viva Books, 2002; P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History*. Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008, p. 8

¹⁵⁰ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*.

¹⁵¹ Many of the indications of increased control and organisation are outlined in: Non-European Affairs Department, *A Few Facts About Sharpe Bantu Town*, Vereeniging. Vaal Teknorama, Sedibeng: Sharpeville: History: Development

¹⁵² N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 143.

¹⁵³ The Mentz Committee was established in 1952 to make recommendations for the residential housing of Africans in the Witwatersrand and Vaal regions.

¹⁵⁴ P. Hendler, *Politics on the Home Front*. South African Institute of Race Relations, 1989, p. 55.

¹⁵⁵ D. Posel, *Curbing African Urbanisation*, p. 26.

celebrated them as the height of modern urban planning.¹⁵⁶ Many of these new modern townships were heralded as ‘model townships’ with the state lauding their creation of urban-inspired areas instead of slums and squatter camps.

The Mentz Committee, which visited the Vaal region in 1952, recommended the construction of a new township in the area between Evaton and the Iscor Vanderbijlpark Iron Works which at the time was called the N3 dominion.¹⁵⁷ This township would go on to be called Sebokeng and would also become an example of a ‘model township’. The first houses in the area would only be built in 1965.

However, Sharpeville was different in that it was formed before the Mentz Committee recommendations and before the ushering in of apartheid. Sharpeville, as one of the first of the ‘modern’ townships¹⁵⁸ came to be seen as the model for other townships in the Union. The Sharpeville Advisory Board for example saw the township as the prime example of good administration.¹⁵⁹ Sharpeville was “Die trots van die munisipale amptenare” (the pride of the municipal authorities).¹⁶⁰ The township thus stood, at least after its inception, as the authorities’ ideal example of a ‘model township’. The creation of ‘model townships’ and the central government’s desire to oversee and control them was also one of the reasons why there was increased tension between central and local governments from the early 1950s. From the 1953 elections the NP was far more insistent of its place as being the sole keeper of ‘native policy’.¹⁶¹

New townships such as Sharpeville and those ‘model townships’ that came after it, did in actuality signify a betterment of living conditions for Africans. For those who had been moved from Top Location, where in two months in 1946 there were 150 deaths from pneumonia, 85 of gastro-enteritis and 24 of Tuberculosis out of a population of 15 000; Sharpeville with its medical facilities represented a lifestyle

¹⁵⁶ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁷ P. Hendler, ‘Living in Apartheid's Shadow, Residential Planning for Africans in the PWV Region 1970–1990’, *Urban Forum*, vol.3, no.2, 1992.

¹⁵⁸ After taking several years from its inception to truly be embraced for its status

¹⁵⁹ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁰ Union of South Africa, Commission of Enquiry into the Sharpeville Shootings (Historical Papers, SAIRR, AD1720 Mfm)

¹⁶¹ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 149.

improvement.¹⁶² Leaving the old locations for many represented moving away from overcrowding and poor facilities and amenities. When arriving in Sharpeville people were met with a township with six schools, nine churches, two communal halls, a chief's resthouse, a beerhall, a library and a crèche.¹⁶³ Sharpeville was also home to the best banking resources in African townships with branches of Standard Bank and the United Building Society.¹⁶⁴ It boasted municipal sporting facilities comprised of a cycle track, five football fields, four tennis courts, a boxing gymnasium and a stadium with seating for 10 000 people (now called George Thabe stadium- best known for being the venue for the signing of the constitution in 1996).¹⁶⁵

It was certainly not the case that all those who moved to Sharpeville moved willingly; there were nuances to the acceptance of the relocation. For example stand owners in Top Location were able to earn relatively substantial incomes from rack-renting and did not want to lose this revenue.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, while the amenities offered in Top Location were not comparable to those of Sharpeville, Topville still boasted a communal hall, a beerhall, a clinic, football grounds and tennis courts.¹⁶⁷ Compared to other old locations these amenities were significant and the proposed better lifestyle in Sharpeville, for some, was not enough enticement to leave. This can possibly be attributed to the small size of Top Location creating a sense of neighbourliness and as providing social support networks.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, accommodation was cheaper in Topville despite people begrudging the rack-renting system.¹⁶⁹ Transport was also cheaper from Top Location since it was closer to industrial areas and Vereeniging.

Top Location was subjected to much less control than Sharpeville. Less municipal control meant most people were less threatened by constant state surveillance. This lack of surveillance also meant that so-called 'anti-social behaviours' - gangs, unemployed youth, beer brewers and prostitutes could be better

¹⁶² M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 31.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 35.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ V.A. 130/6. Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs

¹⁶⁶ T. Lodge, *Black Politics*, p. 206.

¹⁶⁷ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p.6.

¹⁶⁸ I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation*, chapter 1.

¹⁶⁹ M. Chaskalson *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 34. People paid 15/- per month for a one roomed shack in Top Location and £3 for a four-roomed house in Sharpeville.

sheltered in the sprawling, disorganized streets. Certainly the township faced repression from state officials but numbers of people living ‘unnoticed’ without a lodgers permit in the location reached into the hundreds.¹⁷⁰ In August 1950, a small group led by the Advisory Board member Moses Sheshe with ten stand holders and their tenants resisted removal.¹⁷¹ Sheshe refused to be moved to Sharpeville and when his house in Topville was demolished he moved to Evaton.¹⁷²

It is important to note that initially only those who chose to move to Sharpeville were relocated. Thus in the first years the new township had a population that was there of their own accord.¹⁷³ Despite the fact that some of the later removals were coerced, as well as there being opposition from some sectors, there was also a sense of the new township allowing for a better life. It was not strange that many Africans moving to Sharpeville described it using the nickname *Kotiesphola* the ‘restful place’. One of the indications of this was that municipal officials spoke of the “peace-loving and law-abiding” nature of the African population in the township and the lack of “riots and boycotts instigated by the Bantu” as compared to other urban areas.¹⁷⁴

It was the increased order and surveillance in the ‘model township’ as well as the placatory effect on political organising that Sharpeville with its general provision of a better lifestyle provided, which combined to create a certain ideological hegemony. I argue that partly owing to these two factors, Sharpeville residents, from its inception did not engage in radical politics in the form of direct action. This does not mean that there was no political activity in Sharpeville. The very quiescence which the next chapter considers through lenses beyond the ‘model township’, can be better explained by the kinds of activities people were involved in.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 35.

¹⁷² P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p.21

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.131.

3.3. THE MODEL TOWNSHIP AND BIOPOLITICS

There are various factors that are involved in explaining the lack of radical politics in Sharpeville. I have illustrated how the combination of increased order and control as well as many people embracing the new township may have been one of reasons for the quiescence. One of the ways of explaining this absence, particularly in relation to the 'model township', is by invoking the ideas of biopolitics.

It is useful to outline the core concepts of biopolitics again. Biopower can generally be understood as the part of life which power controls. With biopolitics one is referring to power and political action at the site of the individual or the collective body, the activities of life and the ability to control them. It is the platform of 'life' and the 'living being' where political struggles and economic shifts are being staged so "natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into *biopolitics*".¹⁷⁵ In this framework, there is the conflation of people as *living beings* and people as *political subjects*.¹⁷⁶

Posel has argued that the apartheid state strongly affirmed a biopolitics of population rather than the self, although not strictly ignoring the self.¹⁷⁷ The ideas that Foucault raises regarding self-discipline can be seen as being intertwined with the creation of 'model townships'. The Manager of Non-European Affairs for the construction of Sharpeville's two communal halls noted in 1950 that:

If better recreational facilities could be provided for the residents, they will have something to keep themselves beneficially occupied and many complaints will disappear and less offences will be committed.¹⁷⁸

This quote is pivotal in understanding the way that Sharpeville was designed with the intention to stifle political action. The assumption rests on the premise that if residents are provided with basic provisions and amenities there would be less direct political action and thus the aims of order and control would be more realisable. 'Upliftment', here included improved housing, wages, social services and educational facilities in

¹⁷⁵ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, p.10.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ D.Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁸ M. Chaskalson. *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 36.

the new ‘modern’ townships compared with the old locations. As an illustration of this, the council was relatively effective at providing simple amenities and addressing “grievances of a non-contentious nature”.¹⁷⁹ Examples of this include the provision of free beer for Moshoeshoe day celebrations, the donation of blankets to the ‘disadvantaged’ in winter¹⁸⁰ and the screening of films at a nominal rate thrice a week at the communal hall.¹⁸¹

The state, by creating ‘model townships’, was exercising its power to *make live* since improving life in many ways begins to dispose of unnecessary death (due perhaps to illness and accidents). When one considers that the power relationship between the state and urban Africans ends in death, that “[d]eath is outside the power relationship,”¹⁸² then it is clearer that this loss of power may be undesirable to authorities.

The ‘model township’ was an attempt by the state, as the wuote above demonstrates, to introduce disciplinary techniques and regulatory techniques. These included superior schooling, accommodation and infrastructure in an attempt to create a self-disciplining urban African subject that would be impelled to work, be sexually ‘conservative’ preferably in ‘family circumstances’ and would not resist control over their lives by the state.

Posel has, along with reiterating the underlying aim of discipline and power, called to attention the need to assert difference and classify in order to conflate people as living beings and political subjects, “*Die apartheid-gedagte* (the apartheid idea) offered the promise of heightened discipline, regulation and surveillance: boundaries were to be reasserted and spaces reorganised, the movements of people systematised and contained, races rescued from ‘impurity’, the notion of family rehabilitated and ‘the savage discipline of tribal life’ restored. At the core of this aspiration to order lay a vigorous and thoroughgoing reassertion of racial difference.”¹⁸³ The racialisation

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Vaal Teknorama Archives, Vereeniging, Box: Sedibeng, Sharpeville, Non-European Affairs Department, *A Few Facts About Sharpe Bantu Town*, 1961.

¹⁸² M. Foucault. *Society Must be Defended. Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*.

M.Bertani and A Fontana (eds), Picador, New York, 1997, p. 248.

¹⁸³ D. Posel, ‘What's In a Name? Racial Categorisations Under Apartheid and Their Afterlife’,

which permeated through all facets on life in South Africa, not only allowed authorities to more effectively compartmentalise, it also permitted the type of thinking that allows one 'part' of the population to consider its continued life reliant upon the death (or continued life) of the other and it allows for inferiority to be used as the justification of this. So the life of the white population, which it feels is justified owing to its supposed superiority, is reliant upon the control of the individual and population body of the black population. Particularly under the apartheid state, 'racial' classification and the assertion of difference as well as the observation of these categories and their 'place' and 'role' was thus the scaffolding that held together the new spatial organisation, planning and development and every social interaction.¹⁸⁴ Here, the biopolitical argument is useful since order is being asserted by difference that supposedly accounts for one's 'social standing' in relation to others'. The vital legislation connected with this classification and ordering of difference was the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Act attempted to dispose of the fluidities obviously inherent in attempting to classify people according to 'race', it was a critical attempt at order, surveillance and control, "...every citizen would be subject to one authorised act of racial classification, the result of which would be preserved in the form of an official identity document. All individual classifications were to be assembled in a centralised, national population register - a comprehensive database in which the racial identity of all citizens could be crosschecked against a battery of information about their access to work, social services, accommodation, taxation, marital status etc to ensure that all of these facets of everyday life were appropriately racially bounded and monitored."¹⁸⁵ Once there was a possibility of counting people, of listing them and registering them there was a greater ability to control.¹⁸⁶

It can be argued that the focus on 'model townships', introduced a new configuration of biopolitics, a new dynamic between ontology and politics. In 'model townships' it has been noted that the spatial organization was grid-like; this can be imagined as a physical representation of disciplinary techniques confining families

Transformation, 47, 2001, p. 52.

¹⁸⁴ D. Posel, *What's In a Name?*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 54.

¹⁸⁶ Foucault discusses statistics and biopolitics at length in chapter 10; M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population Lectures At The Collège De France, 1977-78*, M. Senellart (ed), Palgrave Macmillan, England, 2007, Chapter 10.

and individuals to their “little boxes”.¹⁸⁷ When a township is constructed in such a rigid way, individuals are more visible and therefore more noticed by their neighbours, surveillance is inherent in the grid-like organising of the township and need not be as obvious as police vehicles patrolling the street or other forms of overt repression and coercion (even though these did occur). The mechanisms of discipline thus include ‘self-discipline’ in the context of a more watched and visible space. There is thus the convergence of disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms which result in encompassing the sites of the individual body and the population. Disciplinary and regulatory technologies of power need not occur separately. The ‘model township’ is an example of how they can occur simultaneously in order for control and order to be ‘effective’.

3.4. THE FALL OF THE ‘MODEL TOWNSHIP’?

The question of when a ‘model township’ ceases to be one navigates one back to the initial definition of these kinds of spaces. Following the Mentz commission recommendations and particularly after the 1960 massacre, the Vereeniging Town Council resolved that Sharpeville was too close to the business centre and insisted that it be moved further away from Vereeniging.¹⁸⁸ From the formation of Sebokeng in 1965, Sharpeville began to lose its status as the pride of authorities. Sebokeng in turn “was seen as a model of black housing development, containment and, crucially, contentment”.¹⁸⁹ An example of this is that the Bantu Affairs Administration Board for the Vaal Triangle began to construct a sports precinct in Sebokeng including swimming baths, tennis courts and soccer stadia, along with this there was a proposal for the construction of community halls, libraries and a cinema complex to seat 1000 people.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ M. Foucault. *Society Must be Defended. Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*.

M.Bertani and A Fontana (eds), Picador, New York, 1997, p. 251.

¹⁸⁸ I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation*, p. 179.

¹⁸⁹ P. Noonan. *They're Burning the Churches*. Jacana, Bellevue, 2003, p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ *Vereeniging News*. ‘R3/4 Million Required for Sebokeng Project’, 14 June 1974.

Despite this, particularly after the massacre, with measures that authorities described as “pacifying”¹⁹¹ the population of Sharpeville, there was increased surveillance, large numbers of arrests and intensive repression. If one notes that ‘model townships’ primarily signified increased order and control then one could argue that Sharpeville stood as an acute example of this kind of space throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

There were however fewer resources invested in Sharpeville from the late 1950s, the township did not have water-borne sewerage systems and electricity.¹⁹² Even though repression was heightened in Sharpeville, moving residents of the township was not considered as pressing as the “cleansing” of Meyerton and the hostel-dwellers living in compounds in Vereeniging who began to be moved to Sebokeng in March of 1966.¹⁹³ In 1976 M.C. Botha then Minister of Bantu Affairs reiterated that the removal of Sharpeville to Sebokeng could be halted for 20 years if residents continued to finance essential services in the town.¹⁹⁴ In 1979 the Community Council under the leadership of J.K. Mtjila and the Administration Board decided to implement water-borne sewerage systems, a better water supply network and electricity.¹⁹⁵ The electricity network was entirely financed by residents of Sharpeville and would play a role in the dissatisfaction with high rentals that sparked the Vaal Uprisings of the following decade.¹⁹⁶

That the residents of Sharpeville, where the massacre occurred, were not the first residents to be evicted may be indicative of authorities’ realisation of the success of political repression in the township even after 1960. In 1961 the Director of the Non-European Affairs Department boasted that Sharpeville had, in addition to the amenities it had before 1960, a market, shops, libraries a police station and a labour bureau.¹⁹⁷ By 1965 Sharpeville had a swimming bath, cocktail bars and a new post

¹⁹¹ P. Noonan. *They’re Burning the Churches*, p. 11.

¹⁹² E. Nkabinde. *Plan to Make Sharpeville a Model Town*. Vaal News, 26 September 1980.

¹⁹³ I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁴ E. Nkabinde. *Plan to Make Sharpeville a Model Town*. Vaal News, 26 September 1980.

¹⁹⁵ Vaal News, *Massive Plans Afoot for Sharpeville*, 4 May 1979; E. Nkabinde. *Plan to Make Sharpeville a Model Town*. Vaal News, 26 September 1980.

¹⁹⁶ Vaal News. *Sharpeville Residents Pay R40 for Electricity*, 15 May 1981. Vaal Teknorama Archives, Sedibeng: Sharpeville: History: Development

¹⁹⁷ Non-European Affairs Department, *A Few Facts About Sharpe Bantu Town*, Vereeniging. Vaal Teknorama, Sedibeng: Sharpeville: History: Development

office paid for by income generated by the municipal beerhall.¹⁹⁸ There are numerous newspaper articles and photographs that persisted in listing the amenities of Sharpeville with pride after 1964 and into the 1980s.¹⁹⁹ A Rand Daily Mail report in 1965 displayed the headline ‘...Five years later it’s still a model township’.²⁰⁰ The article argues that the township had flourished, using measures such as the building of four more schools since 1960 to make this assessment. It goes on to argue that the Henry Bernstein Chest Hospital is “one of the most modern in the country”.²⁰¹ The “Cape Librarian” paper of the Cape Provincial Library Services said that “this model library of Sharpeville which [sic] is accepted as the prototype of Bantu libraries in the country” and the director of the Transvaal Provincial Library Services called the library the “best African library in South Africa”.²⁰²

The authorities did not decrease repression in the township even when they began to halt development and transfer their praises to Sebokeng. The core definitions of Sharpeville as a ‘model township’, including surveillance, order and repression thus persisted beyond the creation of Sebokeng.

3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide an outline of the growth of the ‘model township’ and how the construction of this space was an attempt at greater order, control and surveillance of the African population. I have argued that while there is no linear causal relationship between a certain space and a certain politics, the convergence of the model township designed for order and people accepting this order is important in contextualising political organisation and action in the area. I

¹⁹⁸ Frank Day. *Five Years Later it’s Still a Model Township*. Rand Daily Mail, March 19 1965; The Star. *Sharpeville Today Five Years After*, March 20 1965.

¹⁹⁹ For example, *Rand Daily Mail*, Frank Day. ‘Five Years Later it’s Still a Model Township’, March 19 1965; *Vaal News*, E. Nkabinde, ‘Plan to Make Sharpeville a Model Town’. 26 September 1980; no author given, *Phenomenal Development of Sharpeville*, 1967, newspaper publication unknown; *Vaalweekblad*, ‘Ligte vir Swart Woongebiede’, 10 April 1981.

²⁰⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, Frank Day. ‘Five Years Later it’s Still a Model Township’, March 19 1965.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

have argued that the 'model township' was a site of both repression and enticement and often this enticement was connected to the need to create a self-disciplining African population. The need for creating this self-disciplining population went further than the state simply wanting to avoid direct resistance against it. It was also an attempt to forge a reliable workforce and to control women. The next chapter will begin to consider other factors beyond the 'model township' that affected the political quiescence in Sharpeville throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

CHAPTER 4

IV. POLITICAL ACTION AND ORGANISATION IN SHARPEVILLE AFTER 1960

INTRODUCTION

I argued in the previous chapter that certain spaces do not necessarily imply certain types of political action or the absence thereof. However, it was the combination of firstly, the extreme order and surveillance in the ‘model township’ and secondly that most people felt that this township was in many ways better than the ‘old locations’ that was one of the factors which affected and constrained political action in Sharpeville. This chapter will outline other factors that contributed to the quiescence in the township for the two decades from 1960. In order to do this I will introduce political action and organisation in Sharpeville in the 1950s and use this as a platform from which to assess organising and action throughout the 1960s and 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s leading up to the Vaal Uprisings.

4.1. THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND SHARPEVILLE

In order to examine the specificities of political organising in Sharpeville and how far they reflected or deviated from the national historical narrative, a discussion of the broader narrative is pertinent. The 1960s are perceived as the golden era of apartheid, this decade saw a general improvement in the lives of the white population and largely successful repression of black movements. Compared to the 1950s with the politically significant bus boycotts and the Defiance Campaign and the period after the watershed moments of working class and student strikes and boycotts in 1973 and 1976, the 1960s have generally been considered a period of quiescence. The decade of the 1960s, due to the repression of radical organising under ‘high apartheid’ and the state’s emphasis on ‘separate development’, witnessed a rise to prominence of local

conservative politicians.²⁰³ In the first half of the decade many townships experienced minor improvements and unemployment decreased, between 1963 and 1964 the council in Sharpeville continued investing nominal amounts of money on services and amenities.²⁰⁴ However, ‘grand apartheid’ also saw the state’s attempts to bolster the ‘homelands’ to the neglect of urban African townships.²⁰⁵ From the mid-1960s Sharpeville residents began to complain of the deterioration of the township, and “Sharpeville stagnated...and the township continued its “dead”, under-developed existence.”²⁰⁶ In general the 1960s have been neglected in historical analyses, partly since archives were not easily available until recently and also since the very lack of large popular struggles has made its examination seem less interesting than other decades.²⁰⁷ This research report hopes to advance the view that the absence of mass struggle does not imply that there is not a rich history worth examining in this period and that the reasons behind the lack of mass struggles are in themselves an interesting area of examination.

From the early 1970s the economic growth the country had experienced which had benefitted white South Africans began to wane.²⁰⁸ The 1970s ushered in a politically intensified period of mass struggles and significantly, beginning in 1973, South Africa saw a growth of black working-class resistance.²⁰⁹ The growing political militancy of the youth also climaxed in the 1976 Soweto uprising. It is not possible to neatly dissect history into decades and the 1970s too were punctuated by the events of 1973 and 1976. The most significant aboveground organised resistance in South Africa in the 1970s arose in the form of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) particularly in secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The Black Consciousness Movement faced severe repression from the state and many of the organisations were not able to function. However, the point remains that in this period it was the resistance of the masses from the bottom, including workers and students that were

²⁰³ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 12.

²⁰⁴ Rand Daily Mail, *Best-designed*, March 19, 1965.

²⁰⁵ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 13.

²⁰⁶ Vereeniging News, R3m Sharpeville Sewerage System has Official Start, 22 June, 1979.

²⁰⁷ N. Nieftagodien, *The Implementation of Urban Apartheid*, p. 12.

²⁰⁸ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, p. 10.

²⁰⁹ B. Magubane, ‘Introduction to the 1970s: The Social and Political Context’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006, p. 3.

particularly important.²¹⁰ The latter particularly, were inspired by the Black Consciousness movement. The deterioration of townships from the late 1960s resulted in more mass based political organising from the mid-1970s which exploded in South African townships particularly in the Vaal in the early 1980s. Motivated by BC, June 1976 saw the first township uprisings since Sharpeville in 1960 and was led by local activists in the townships where it took place. These activists made attempts to broaden their activities beyond disparate townships and to involve workers in particular and Bonner and Nieftagodien note this point as providing “the catalyst for a much broader struggle against the entire apartheid system.”²¹¹

The strike wave from 1973 that involved more than 60 000 African workers as well as a smaller number of Indian workers was the spark that ignited the resurgence of the independent trade union movement.²¹² The independent trade union movement, ushered in from 1973, has been characterised as having three stages.²¹³ Between 1973 and 1976 the unions fought to survive in the context of opposition from both the state and capital. The year 1976 saw setbacks for the independent unions, the period following the uprisings destabilized the unions and contributed to the massive slump in the economy which resulted in large numbers of workers being fired.²¹⁴ Furthermore the state heightened repression against the unions in November 1976 and imposed banning orders on 22 union activists.²¹⁵ The period 1977 to 1979 is what Maree (1987) has characterized as a period of consolidation and rebuilding.²¹⁶ From the 1980s, following the policy change where African trade unions could be recognised, the unions entered a new phase of “black worker militancy”.²¹⁷ The years 1973 and 1976 marked key moments in the upward trajectories of political struggle suggesting an inexorable forward movement. Thus, in general, quiescence was shattered by the mid-1970s and from 1980 to 1986 the country would go on to see the intensification of militant struggles.

²¹⁰ M. Legassick and C. Saunders, *Aboveground Activity in the 1960s*, p. 689.

²¹¹ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, p. 11.

²¹² J. Maree, *The Independent Trade Unions, 1974-1984*. Ravan Labour Studies, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 2.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The national historical narrative notes the 1980s as seeing a growth in popular civic movements and the participation of organic intellectuals and working-class activists.²¹⁸ The United Democratic Front was formed in 1983. The student and workers' movements began to unify in solidarity actions which culminated in regional general strike in the Transvaal in November 1984 led by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu) and the Congress of South African Students (Cosas).²¹⁹ Cosas played a critical role in politicizing township youth in the early 1980s, this training and mobilization would go on to be critical in township struggles in the decade.²²⁰ The 1980s, on a whole ushered in "an intense contestation between township residents and the apartheid state", through what has been come to be known as the "organs of people's power".²²¹

4.2. POLITICAL ORGANISING IN SHARPEVILLE IN THE 1950s

It is useful to examine the 1950s since this decade provides a platform from which to interrogate the later silences. Considering its proximity to the politically vibrant location of Evaton and connections to Johannesburg, which was arguably the central hub of political organising in the 1950s, an absence of political organizing in Sharpeville seems unexpected. Municipal officials are on record praising the Sharpeville population for not participating in the mass movements and political organising present in other parts of the country in the 1950s.²²² Despite the quiescent 1950s in Sharpeville, it was the drastic and rapid changes that occurred in the township in the late 1950s that made a largely politically inactive township transform itself into a site of mobilisation if only for a few months.²²³

The Defiance Campaign, which characterised the mass mobilisation of the 1950s, seemed to show little manifestation in Sharpeville. There is evidence of small actions such as two meetings held in July and September 1952 by the Society of

²¹⁸ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, pp. 1, 11.

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 13.

²²¹ Ibid, p. 13.

²²² T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.131.

²²³ This argument has been suggested by both T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa* and M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*.

Young Africa (SOYA) an affiliate of the All African Convention.²²⁴ While the meetings were reportedly large, SOYA did not seem to play a significant role in future political action in Sharpeville. SOYA like the All African Convention in other parts of the Reef, functioned mostly as a discussion and meeting space rather than a political force. For the next six years after 1953 there did not seem to be any large, organised political action in Sharpeville. Even the extension of passes to women, which sparked outrage in other parts of the country, appeared to generate scant organised action from township residents.²²⁵

Beyond Sharpeville's relative proximity to the effervescence of Johannesburg, the quiescence in Sharpeville in the 1950s is particularly enigmatic considering its closeness to Evaton where bus boycotts were conducted over an extended period of two years. Several of the respondents seemed to agree that even in 1960 it was not Sharpeville that constituted the core of political organizing in the Vaal but rather Evaton. This might be partially explained by the anger against the more strictly enforced visiting permit system instituted in Evaton in 1956.²²⁶ Respondents spoke of the leadership of the 1957 *azikhwelwa* ("we will not ride them") bus boycotts as having come from Evaton.²²⁷ Furthermore they noted that Sharpeville gained its notoriety in 1960 because of the massacre but rather it was Evaton where the political leaders were based. Names such as Nimrod Sejake, Zachius Bothloko "ZB" Molete and Joe Molefi were mentioned to indicate Evaton's leadership strength.²²⁸

Evaton, an "old location" built in 1904 stood in stark contrast to the 'model township' of Sharpeville. Evaton, like Alexandra and Sophiatown, was one of the townships where Africans enjoyed freehold property rights. Before the construction of Sebokeng, Evaton was the largest township in the Vaal Triangle.²²⁹ The township had a renowned social and cultural life and thus has been appropriately dubbed "the Sophiatown of the Vaal Triangle".²³⁰ An older township such as Evaton had a longer

²²⁴ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.131.

²²⁵ *Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News*, 10 October, 1958.

²²⁶ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 32.

²²⁷ The term *azikhwelwa* itself comes from the 1940 bus boycotts see D. Mokonyane, *Lessons of Azikhwelwa: The Bus Boycotts in South Africa*, Nakong Ya Rena (London), 1994, p. 4.

²²⁸ Interview with Mbuyiselo Gantsu, Vereeniging, 13 October 2009.

²²⁹ P. Noonan. *They're Burning the Churches*. Jacana, Bellevue, 2003, p. 14

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 283

period of time, almost half a century more, to build and rebuild its grassroots political bases. In 1943 bus boycotts that started in Alexandra spread to the Pretoria townships of Atteridgeville, Eersterust, and Riverside as well as to Evaton.²³¹ Bus boycotts then reoccurred in Evaton in 1950, 1954, 1955 and 1957. With the combination of a longer existence, a rich cultural and social legacy and consistent political action throughout the 1950s, Evaton was the centre of political action in the Vaal. Furthermore, that Evaton was an “old location” guarded it from some of the increased repression and surveillance present in a ‘model township’ like Sharpeville that was discussed in the previous chapter.

One of the reasons provided for the heightened politicisation in Evaton was the presence of the McCamel church that was supportive of resistance politics. Another factor that contributed to the political awareness in Evaton was that the Wilberforce College (particularly the high school) became a site of conscientisation. Schooling certainly provided fertile ground for the growth of political ideas in African youth especially from the late 1950s to mid-1960s.²³² One of the most prominent schools during this period was Kilnerton College, a Methodist college and boarding school in Pretoria East that some youth from Sharpeville attended.²³³ While most respondents noted that teachers were afraid to disseminate political information, several did note that in subtle ways teachers would suggest the “unfairness” of Apartheid. In the Vaal, Wilberforce College stood as the primary educational site for political development. The college, which was formed by Charlotte Maxeke in 1908 with the support of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, was made up of a primary school, a high school, a teacher training college and a seminary.²³⁴ In 1953 after the formal introduction of Bantu Education, and owing to the AME’s position of not selling land to the Apartheid state,²³⁵ the College became a public institute on private property but was still under the supervision of the AME.

²³¹ D. C. Catsam, ‘Marching in the “Dark City”: Bus Boycotts in South Africa in the 1940s and the Limits and Promise of Comparative History’, *Safundi*, 8, 3, 2007.

²³² S. Mathabatha, *The PAC and POQO in Pretoria*.

²³³ Interview with Molete “Ike” Makiti, 14 October 2009, Sharpeville.

²³⁴ Historic Schools Restoration Project (<http://www.historicschools.org.za/view.asp?ItemID=6&tname=tblComponent2&oname=Schools&pg=front&subm=Other%20Schools>) accessed on the 12 January 2010.

²³⁵ African Methodist Episcopal Service and Development Agency (AME-SADA)

Yet probably the most overarching factor for Evaton's relatively active political movements in the 1950s was that the township had many more years to establish political organisations and a longer tradition of politicised mobilisation. Sharpeville, formed almost forty years later, had been designed for control and order; this was largely embraced by its residents. Thus by 1950, there was no tradition of political organising in the township.

The lack of visible political activity in Sharpeville in the 1950s can be adduced to a number of complex and interrelated factors. The next section will examine these issues beginning with the weakness of political organizations in Sharpeville.

Although political organisation cannot be reduced to political parties, the absence of the ANC in the 1950s has been identified as a factor in the quiescence of the 1950s.²³⁶ Lodge has argued that this can be attributed to the severe and rigid control that employers in the industrial sector of Vereeniging imposed on their workforce, thus preventing trade unions and a resultant base of activists for the ANC.²³⁷ The first residents that moved to Sharpeville from Top Location, moved at their own accord.²³⁸ While forced removals from Top Location did happen, until the late 1950s these occurred over a protracted period. While manifestations of dissatisfaction amongst some of those evicted was likely, the process was gradual enough to forestall and diminish the possibility of a generalised resistance that a large-scale and dramatic eviction might have provoked.

However, after almost a decade of relative stability in the township, several factors combined to destabilise the township and to create an atmosphere fertile for political organising. By the late 1950s political organising in Sharpeville began to take a different trajectory. The heightened political action from 1958 was exceptional in Sharpeville's history and would again fade into quiescence after 1960. This exceptional period of political organizing can be explained by the convergence of several factors outlined below. They include that rents increased throughout the

(<http://www.ame-sada.org/wilberforce.html>) accessed on the 1 January 2010

²³⁶ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*; M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*.

²³⁷ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.132.

²³⁸ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p. 21.

decade, youth unemployment rose, overcrowding and poverty flourished, the rate of removals from Top Location ballooned and police repression remained high.

In order to attract people to Sharpeville, the council spent a significant amount of revenue on housing.²³⁹ While residents generated some of this revenue themselves through the municipal beerhall, the council also diverted money from the Native Services Levy Account to the Native Housing Account.²⁴⁰ The council also began to motivate for the necessity of raising rents to cover the cost of housing (figure 1). From 1952, opposition and grievances over rentals contributed to the dissatisfaction of Sharpeville residents; however this did not lead to political activity. One of the reasons for this is that despite the increased rents, the shortage of housing for African workers meant that in the old locations like Top Location, residents sublet their plots and demanded inflated rents, thus while rentals in Sharpeville were high, they still appeared to many as an improvement on the conditions of Top Location.²⁴¹ Sharpeville became overcrowded and no houses were constructed after the 3163 originally built in 1951 until 1958 when Sharpeville Extension 1 was constructed.²⁴² The houses in the extension did little to combat the overcrowding since people from Top Location immediately occupied many of them.²⁴³ It was not only the absence of accommodation in Sharpeville that caused hardship, the newest houses in Sharpeville where many of the last residents of Top Location were being moved, were also the most expensive.²⁴⁴ The Sharpeville Advisory Board took numerous complaints to the office of the Manager of Non-European Affairs over rent increases.²⁴⁵ There was little leniency towards non-payment of rent and residents who defaulted were locked out of their houses. In addition to the increase in rents, further financial burden was placed on residents in 1959 when bus fares doubled.

²³⁹ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 40.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 52.

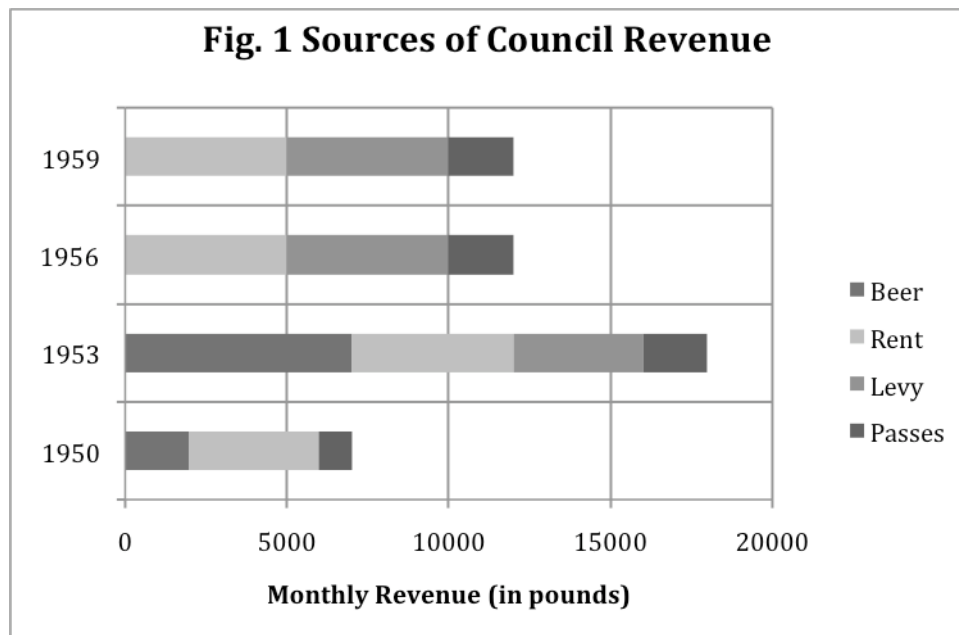
²⁴¹ P.L. Bonner, *African Urbanisation on the Rand*, p. 119.

²⁴² M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*. P. 54.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.134.

²⁴⁵ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*. P. 55.



While there was a sense of exasperation in the township over rentals, this did not translate into any large scale organised resistance for most of the decade.

However by 1958 it was the township youth who were the most outspoken against the housing crisis. The number of youth in Sharpeville grew to surpass both the adult male and female populations in a pattern similar to that found on the Rand. The population breakdown of Sharpeville in 1960 stood at 8655 men, 6843 women and a comparatively large number of 20 863 children.²⁴⁶ Metal companies, the largest employers in Vereeniging, preferred to hire migrant labour.²⁴⁷ One of the impacts of this was the increasingly prominent and growing presence of unemployed urban youth.

By 1959 there were insufficient high school positions to cater for the increasing number of young people who obtained a Junior Certificate pass.²⁴⁸ The metal companies in Vereeniging were cautious about hiring youths for various reasons. This caution was possibly fuelled by factors such as the poverty and overcrowding of the location and the resultant physical weakness and thus perceived lack of stamina of these youth. African youth also had a stigma of *tsotsism* associated

²⁴⁶ Union of South Africa, Commission of Enquiry into the Sharpeville Shootings (Historical Papers, SAIRR, AD1720 Mfm)

²⁴⁷ Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News, 24 April, 1959; M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*. p. 18; T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.133.

²⁴⁸ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.133.

with them which made employers reluctant to provide jobs.²⁴⁹ In 1958, industrialists voiced their concern over these issues to the Vereeniging council by expressing, “concern[ed] over the lack of a sense of responsibility in the rising generation of non-European males who presented themselves for employment.”²⁵⁰ As a corollary, residents of the township were often deterred from seeking employment because of the dangers of working in heavy industry.²⁵¹ By the late 1950s companies like USCO and Stewarts and Lloyds were employing fewer people and the number of unemployed youth had climbed steadily.²⁵²

The low wage levels offered in these jobs in heavy industry also put off township school-leavers.²⁵³ Youth showed their resistance to low-paying and often dangerous work through proselytising against work. For instance, the Berliners (a youth gang without significant direct membership in Sharpeville though their ‘ideological’ position resonated with the ‘majitas’ of Sharpeville in terms of their aversion to employment) held as their motto, “Horses work: people don’t”.²⁵⁴ Many of the youth seemed to attribute their dire situation to racial inequities. Youth gangs by the 1950s constituted an ever-widening proportion of urban African youth, the youth in the townships of Sharpeville and Top Location too began to associate with and become members of these gangs. Petrus Tom explained the youth gangs in the area in the 1950s as being extremely obnoxious and arrogant.²⁵⁵ Their arrogance was particularly concerned with the flouting of public drinking taboos. This made them extremely unpopular with the Advisory Board.

The youth gangs grew steadily throughout the 1950s despite the hostility of older members of the community. They did not organise actions that criticised authority directly, however their presence was perceived as a threat. While the council initially attempted to regulate these youth by providing employment or pre-employment training, industrialists’ aversion to employing youth proved to be too

²⁴⁹ P.L. Bonner. *Family, Crime and Political Consciousness on the East Rand*, p. 401.

²⁵⁰ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 56.

²⁵¹ Ibid, p. 18

²⁵² Ibid, p. 55

²⁵³ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.133.

²⁵⁴ P.L. Bonner. *Family, Crime and Political Consciousness on the East Rand* p. 16.

²⁵⁵ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p.10.

resolute.²⁵⁶ In the early 1950s the Council also attempted to generate its own employment opportunities such as vegetable gardens and vacation employment schemes.²⁵⁷ Since these attempts at creating employment proved to be unsuccessful, the council moved to implement measures to curb the presence of youth gangs. They censored movies at the Sharpeville cinema and regulated the space more strictly. Furthermore, the Council permitted Advisory Boards more power to use corporal punishment towards youth and criminalised the carrying of knives.²⁵⁸ The Council also tried to institute a curfew on African youths but this was overturned by the Native Affairs Department (NAD)²⁵⁹ In the late 1950s, the Council began to severely clampdown on “juvenile delinquency”, as youth unemployment rose they amended beerhall regulations to permit easier searches for weapons, the Council also oversaw a vigilante group set up by the Advisory Board to attempt to curb *tsotsism*. The late 1950s also resulted in the first expulsions of large numbers of African youth to the NAD labour camps.

Tom also notes that the bumptiousness of the youth gangs in the area did not endear them to groups like the Basotho migrant gang, the Russians (*Ma Rashea*).²⁶⁰ The *Russians* moved to Sharpeville and Top Location after a rigid visiting permit system was introduced in Evaton in 1956. The *Russians* became a concern to both the Sharpeville and Top Location Advisory Boards from 1957 and the police were often too afraid to confront them. Indirect methods were considered by the council to suffocate the *Russians* including an attempt to ban compound dwellers from the townships.²⁶¹ This idea was opposed by the Advisory Boards. The threat of major loss of revenue and the proliferation of illegal brewing stopped the Council from introducing the prohibition of all beer sales on a Sunday, but they prevented drinking on the premises of the beerhall on that day. The Council’s greatest attempt at control was to constrict the influx of the “Basotholand” migrants and while residents of Sharpeville and Top Location were largely pleased at attempts to rid the townships of the *Russians*, they did not welcome the greater influx control. The *Russians* did not

²⁵⁶ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*. p. 57.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 58.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 59.

²⁶⁰ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p.10.

²⁶¹ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 61.

however leave as a result of these measures and it was only after 1960 that their presence in the townships diminished.

The influx control measures also targeted “illegal” relatives of residents and the number of police raids increased. The callous police raids were often carried out in a violent fashion and arrests of Sharpeville residents increased as did the onerous admission of guilt fines forced onto the community members. These measures contributed to an increasingly resentful, frustrated, and angry community. In early March 1960, using more direct measures, more than 300 women spontaneously gathered and stoned the location superintendant outside the township offices.²⁶²

Importantly, the *Russians* moved to Sharpeville and Top Location after a rigid visiting permit system was introduced in Evaton in 1956. The *Russians* became a concern to both the Sharpeville and Top Location Advisory Boards from 1957 and the police were often too afraid to confront them. Indirect methods were considered by the council to suffocate the *Russians* including an attempt to ban compound dwellers from the townships.²⁶³ This idea was opposed by the Advisory Boards. The threat of major loss of revenue and the proliferation of illegal brewing stopped the Council from introducing the prohibition of all beer sales on a Sunday, but they prevented drinking on the premises of the beerhall on that day. The Council’s greatest attempt at control was to constrict the influx of the “Basotholand” migrants and while residents of Sharpeville and Top Location were largely pleased at attempts to rid the townships of the *Russians*, they did not welcome the greater influx control. The influx control measures also targeted “illegal” relatives of residents and the number of police raids increased. The *Russians* did not however leave as a result of these measures and it was only after 1960 that their presence in the townships diminished. The police raids were often carried out in a violent fashion and arrests of Sharpeville residents increased as did the onerous admission of guilt fines forced onto the community members. These measures contributed to an increasingly resentful, frustrated, and angry community.

²⁶² T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.134; M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 86.

²⁶³ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*. P. 61.

The slow rate at which Top Location's residents had moved to Sharpeville accelerated in 1959 and in August of that year 3 000 people were moved at once.²⁶⁴ There was not enough housing in Sharpeville to accommodate its own burgeoning population let alone a rapid influx of people from Top Location. The Council thus began to implement forced removals to the reserves and justified these by resorting to explanations of overcrowding and Top Location residents' inability to cover the higher rents in Sharpeville.²⁶⁵ Chaskalson argues that the history of land dispossession in the area was a major reason why the PAC was able to gain support so quickly.

Additionally presaging similar developments in later decades between members of the independent trade union movement and communities, one of the PAC leaders in the area explained that it was not only the history of Sharpeville as being constituted of people forcibly removed from Top Location that made it a site fertile for political organizing.²⁶⁶ It was also that many of the PAC members worked at African Cable and would come into the community and organise.

The PAC began to mobilise in Sharpeville in mid-1959 and quickly established a branch with a membership of 150 people.²⁶⁷ The PAC in the Vaal Triangle, was predominantly comprised of young adults, the newly unemployed, school leavers and students.²⁶⁸ The PAC mobilised in the context of the tightening of municipal controls which had grown in severity throughout the 1950s, intensified liquor raids, increased influx control arrests and prosecutions as well as rising unemployment.²⁶⁹ In October 1959, the opening of the new police station staffed by South African Police meant that municipal police were relieved of policing "criminal" activities and could focus their time purely on raids.²⁷⁰

The increased police raids and the Council's stricter regulatory measures along with increased rents, growing youth unemployment and rapid removal from

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 77.

²⁶⁵ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p.134.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Molete "Ike" Makiti, Sharpeville, 14 October 2009.

²⁶⁷ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 87.

²⁶⁸ S. Mathabatha, *The PAC and POQO in Pretoria*, p. 301.

²⁶⁹ See figure 1.

²⁷⁰ M. Chaskalson, *The Road to Sharpeville*, p. 84.

Top Location to an already overcrowded Sharpeville made the township a hub of dissatisfaction and discontent by the late 1950s. The PAC's anti-pass campaign is considered the key mobilizing force behind the actions taken in March of 1960.

The severity of state repression became acute and pronounced immediately after the massacre. The army disallowed workers from going to work for a week following the shootings and workers in nearby townships went on strike in solidarity.²⁷¹ Albert Luthuli, ANC president, called for a national stayaway and several hundred thousand Africans heeded the call.²⁷² Workers began to return to work on the 30th of March after the mass funeral and the institution of the State of Emergency.²⁷³ A respondent explained the slow movement of the army out of Sharpeville while later acknowledging that there still was heightened surveillance albeit not as conspicuous.²⁷⁴

Those that had been badly injured in the shootings were taken to Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital and were kept under police guard. This police guard lasted for as long as three months and while patients were told they would be returned to their homes, some of these patients were then transferred to prisons. Those injured in Sharpeville were tried for public violence in the Vereeniging Regional Court. Upon returning home, those that had been in prison were met with a Sharpeville where residents were subjected to late night raids and heightened levels of monitoring. The State of Emergency that had been declared on the 30th of March 1960 was in full effect. In total more than 1500 people were arrested across the country. Residents of Sharpeville spoke of how they were under curfew and could not leave the house after seven o'clock in the evening and could not walk in groups of more than two people.²⁷⁵

The fear that was generated in a township quite new to political organising was pervasive and almost every respondent claimed it to be the reason for the quiescence which followed in the next two decades. Children whose parents were

²⁷¹ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, pp. 31, 210.

²⁷² G. Carter, G. Gerhart and T. Karis. *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume III, Hoover, Stanford, 1975, p. 337.

²⁷³ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p. 210.

²⁷⁴ Interview with 'Ma' Mabote, Sharpeville, 13 October, 2009.

²⁷⁵ Interview with 'Ma' Mabote, Sharpeville, 13 October, 2009.

killed struggled to find food or shelter and families of deceased or injured breadwinners were faced with crippling hardship. This fear effectively paralysed political activity and many older members who were either directly or indirectly affected dissuaded youth from participating in political activities.²⁷⁶ That an event of such significance and brutality happened in a township that did not have a history of unrest, probably sent shockwaves resonating throughout the country. Certainly other townships in the 1960s mirrored Sharpeville's relative silence.²⁷⁷

4.3. POLITICAL ORGANISING AFTER 1960

The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 had short, medium and long-term effects on South Africa itself. The massacre resulted in an almost immediate State of Emergency announced on the 30th March and the banning of the ANC and PAC under the Unlawful Organisations Act on the 8th of April. Furthermore, the intensified brutal reaction of the apartheid state against any resistance after the massacre is said to have accelerated the movement toward armed struggle. However, individual Congress members and some outside of the Congress had probably considered the necessity for armed struggle for several years.²⁷⁸ Despite all of these aftershocks of the massacre nationally and globally, the locally specific aftermath both in terms of the impacts on the community and the effects on local organisations has not been addressed. As Tom notes in his autobiography, the tragedy of the shooting, forged a sense of unity in the township.²⁷⁹ Tom explained that the shooting created a sense of "one family" and that gangsterism began to fade, an observation that has been supported by former gang members.²⁸⁰

The PAC retained a presence in Sharpeville after the shootings despite mass arrests and constant persecution. However the party failed to make any organisational

²⁷⁶ Focus Group with Khulumani Support Group, Sharpeville, 14 October, 2009.

²⁷⁷ P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto*.

²⁷⁸ B. Magubane, P. Bonner, J. Sithole, P. Delius, J. Cherry, P. Gibbs and T. April, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle', *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004, p. 54.

²⁷⁹ P. Tom, *My Life Struggle*, p.31.

²⁸⁰ Interview by I. Jeffrey with Petrus Tom, Sharpeville, 12 March 1990 also interview by I. Jeffrey with Sam Ntje (a member of youth gang Bafana ba Kioko), 19 August 1986 both in I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation*, p. 176.

gains partly owing to its failure to establish a community-wide support base before its banning and partly because the organisation had gone into crisis nationally. The banning of the PAC and the failure of the 1963 and 1964 campaigns to result in an overthrow of the state resulted in a general countrywide crisis for the organisation.²⁸¹

Many of the leaders including PAC leaders from Sharpeville left the country mostly arriving in Lesotho, explained “Ike” Makiti a PAC leader from the area who was imprisoned in Robben Island from 1963.²⁸² In the two years following the massacre, PAC members that remained in Sharpeville explained that they organized in cells,

We worked with cells and they will say “This is the message, you will pass it on”. So it was going on like that in the cells. If we wanted to meet, there was a tree down there, we will go there and meet at night. We were building...everything here in the location worked. [There was a] big cell in the location, everybody knew that *oho* they were organisers.²⁸³

However it seemed that not everyone knew that the PAC maintained a presence in Sharpeville and some felt neglected by the organization after it went underground.²⁸⁴ The PAC shifted much of its organizing to Evaton after the Sharpeville shooting.²⁸⁵ What exactly the “cells” in Sharpeville did and how they functioned was unclear. The lack of clarity in the explanation of the cells extended to the rather opaque recounting of what being “underground” meant in practice. There is a possibility that like much of the politics after the massacre the PAC functioned mostly as small disparate discussion spaces with little impact on the broader population.

The repression and subsequent heightened surveillance by the security police had an impact on stifling direct political action against the state in the years after the massacre. This did not translate however into a complete lack of interest and people persisted in discussing political issues in more subtle ways. One of these ways was

²⁸¹ S. Mathabatha, ‘The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, p. 301.

²⁸² Interview with Molete “Ike” Makiti, Sharpeville, 14 October 2009.

²⁸³ Interview with Molete “Ike” Makiti, Sharpeville, 14 October 2009.

²⁸⁴ See for example I. Jeffrey interview with Chris Jana, Sharpeville, 1 March, 1990 in I. Jeffrey, *Cultural Trends and Community Formation in a South African Township*, p. 178.

²⁸⁵ T. Lodge, *Insurrectionism in South Africa*, p. 245

through boxing clubs and Sharpeville clubs' notoriety stretched as far as Kilnerton College in Pretoria.²⁸⁶ Respondents said that the clubs would host speakers such as Dr. William Nkomo, Johnson Mlambo and Dikgang Moseneke and while it is not possible that all of these speakers were actually present in the 1960s, the point is that people retained their interest in political issues despite the lack of organising and remember the spaces as ones where political issues were discussed.²⁸⁷ Sharpeville residents also spoke of football as "where things were happening because it was easy to have meetings" particularly after the shootings.²⁸⁸ One of the issues discussed at these informal meetings of footballers was how to bring people back from exile and how to permit them to leave undetected. Those I spoke to also asserted that these football clubs were dominated by PAC politics.²⁸⁹ Despite this, there is little evidence to prove that any significant organising arose from these clubs. The stories of these clubs can be read both as people needing to assure themselves in the present that they were active during that time as well as a genuine recollection of political interest still being alive at the time.

Throughout the decade Sharpeville remained drenched in the fear that rained down after the shootings. This fear and increased repression (including the banning of the PAC and ANC) stalled the formal organising that had begun to occur towards the end of the 1950s. Furthermore, the varied reasons proffered that Sharpeville only began to become a site of formal organising so late into the 1950s meant that after the shooting the area did not have a substantial grassroots organising tradition to fall back on or build upon. Additionally, the absence of the ANC and the Communist Party persisted throughout the period following the massacre. All of these factors coalesced to make Sharpeville, like the rest of the country, devoid of large scale formal organizing during the 1960s. Clearly, discussions and more subtle forms of political debate persisted. The impact of the massacre in Sharpeville reverberated not only throughout the world - encouraging and hastening the formation of international solidarity groups - but also in local areas such as Evaton and other neighbouring townships.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Molete "Ike" Makiti, Sharpeville, 14 October 2009.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Jeff Sebego, Sharpeville, 29 September, 2009; Interview with Molete "Ike" Makiti, Sharpeville, 14 October 2009.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Jeff Sebego, Sharpeville, 29 September, 2009.

²⁸⁹ See for example Interview with Jeff Sebego, Sharpeville, 29 September, 2009.

4.5. POLITICAL ORGANISING IN THE 1970s

The 1970s as noted in the introduction saw a reawakening of liberation politics throughout the country. The 1970s ushered in a politically intensified period and particularly from 1973, South Africa saw a growth of black working-class resistance.²⁹⁰ The growing political militancy of the youth also exploded in the 1976 Soweto uprising. The most significant aboveground organised resistance in South Africa in the 1970s, what has been called the “central ideological influence”,²⁹¹ arose in the form of the Black Consciousness movement. The Black Consciousness movement did not only have an ideological impact on the 1976 Soweto uprising but also as “a major force in black politics” in general.²⁹² In this period it was resistance at the grassroots level, including workers and students, that was particularly important. The impact and characterization of this national mobilization in some areas challenged and overcame the fear instilled in a previous generation.

In January 1973 60 000 workers downed tools, a mass action that marked the resurgence of independent trade unions in South Africa that embraced the intersection between anti-apartheid and anti-capitalist struggle.²⁹³ The independent trade unions, by 1984, constituted the largest organized section of the black working class²⁹⁴. Despite this, trade unions seemed to be weak in the Vaal throughout the 1970s.

One of the ways in which Black Consciousness manifested in Sharpeville was in the form of the Sharpeville Youth Club (SYC) formed in 1973. Bheki Peterson has highlighted the importance of cultural activities in this period, “as part of the projects initiated by radical oppositional movements, to the negation of the state's myths about South African history and society by presenting alternate historical narratives and

²⁹⁰ B. Magubane, ‘Introduction to the 1970s: The Social and Political Context’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006, p. 3.

²⁹¹ M. MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa*. Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 115.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ D. Hemson, M. Legassick and N. Ulrich, ‘White Activists and the Revival of the Workers’ Movement’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006, p. 244.

²⁹⁴ J. Seekings, *The UDF A History of the United Democratic Front*, p. 62.

hopes.”²⁹⁵ The SYC followed other black performance in the country, a notable amount of which, by 1972, was organised under the Black Consciousness movement—where cultural activities “were accorded a prominent political role within the movement”.²⁹⁶ In Soweto it was organised by the Music, Drama, Arts and Literature Institute (MDALI) and nationally by the South African Black Theatre Union (SABTU).

The SYC leadership included Vusi Tshabalala and Nkutshweu “skaap” Motsau. Most ordinary members believed that they were joining a cultural group which would put on plays, in time however they realized the political motives behind the club. The club did not last for longer than a year and in that time seemed to become loosely affiliated to South African Students Organisation (SASO) in 1974.²⁹⁷ The SYC was strongly influenced by the ideology of BC. One of the former members of the club described its membership as reaching a significant number of 100 people and while he could not recall a regular meeting place, he remembers that the last convention was held at the Sediba Primary School on Seiso Street in Sharpeville.²⁹⁸ On the 21st of March 1974 the Black People’s Convention convened, this is the point from which the Special Branch vigourously clamped down on the organization. The leadership of the SYC from Sharpeville was arrested or exiled by 1975. It has been argued that this was probably the reason for the lack of action in the area in 1976.²⁹⁹ However, BC organisations in other townships such as Alexandra also faced severe repression and yet there were still actions in 1976.³⁰⁰ Thus, in Sharpeville, it was probably a combination of repression, BC being relatively small³⁰¹ as well as there being no political base from which to reconfigure political organizing that led to the silence in 1976.

²⁹⁵ B. Peterson, ‘Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, June 1990

²⁹⁶ B. Peterson, ‘Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, June 1990, 233.

²⁹⁷ Interview with George Motsepe, Tshepiso, 20 October, 2009.

²⁹⁸ Interview with George Motsepe, Tshepiso, 20 October, 2009.

²⁹⁹ G. Houston and B. Magubane, ‘The ANC Political Underground in the 1970s’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006.

³⁰⁰ P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, p. 12.

³⁰¹ Interview with George Motsepe, Tshepiso, 20 October, 2009.

Nieftagodien has noted that “the brutal response by the police to the students’ peaceful march ignited a general revolt across the country.”³⁰² He goes on to show that the impact of the 1976 uprising in Soweto on some townships including Alexandra was immediate, however these student revolts were naturally “local variations that were shaped by local actors and circumstances...the struggles in other places neither reached the same levels of intensity or were as protracted as in Soweto.”³⁰³ In the townships of the Vaal in 1976 there were no mass uprisings. The Chief Director of the Vaal Triangle in the late 1970s, John Knoetze, saw all the townships in the region as a showpiece-the successes of his administration board. In his personal story of the area, Patrick Noonan, retells that “Politicians from Pretoria come to see for themselves and departed suitably impressed”.³⁰⁴

Examining 1978-1984, Seekings discusses several routes that allowed for the voicing of grievances in townships in this time of increased political repression. He notes that “Whilst unable or unwilling to directly confront the state itself with the demand for democratic political rights, people nonetheless could utilize a variety of non-confrontational channels for the redress of more immediately pressing local grievances.”³⁰⁵ Following the 1976 uprising the government promulgated the Community Councils Act of 1977 which in effect shifted certain powers away from Administration Boards to Community Councils. It has been suggested that while Community Councils were largely unpopular, they did provide a certain amount of political space and a platform for mediation between residents and the state.³⁰⁶ The responsibilities of these councils included the maintenance and provision of essential services, the prevention of “squattening” and the allocation of accommodation and trading sites. These councils however still had to answer to the Board but following the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982 and the introduction of Black Local Authorities the localised body became more independent.³⁰⁷

³⁰² N. Nieftagodien, ‘The Soweto Uprising, Part 2, Alexandra and Kathorus’, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)*, Unisa Press, South Africa, 2006, p. 351.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ P. Noonan, *They’re Burning the Churches*, p. 220.

³⁰⁵ J. Seekings, *Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation*, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 70-71

³⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 57-58

The banning of the large political movements allowed local movements to develop almost autonomously. Social movements, especially civic movements, began to enter into prominence from the mid-1970s. Some of these organisations included the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS).

4.6. POLITICAL ORGANISING IN THE EARLY 1980s

From the mid-1970s the political and economic crises saw the state taking measures to reconfigure urban policies including a reform of influx control, reorganising local government, increasing investment in and deregulation of township housing and infrastructure and providing business possibilities in townships.³⁰⁸ The central government maintained that development should be financed by township residents themselves thus by the early 1980s administration boards faced huge deficits. In an attempt to compensate, rents were increased dramatically instead of the taxing of capital or central state subsidies.³⁰⁹

While Sebokeng was being heralded as the new 'model township' in the Vaal from 1965, the service charges which sustained the superior services relative to other townships made up a large portion the 'rents'.³¹⁰ Between 1984-1985 service charges made up 83% of the 'rents' of Sebokeng residents.³¹¹ Rents throughout the Vaal increased by 400% between 1977 and 1984.³¹² While these increases were underway, inflation was diminishing incomes, councillors who relied on rents for finances were perceived as corrupt and unrepresentative and the development that was supposed to be occurring in townships did not seem to be materialising.³¹³ As a result of these factors, the first rent boycotts began in September 1984 in Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Evaton, Boipatong and Bophelong these then spread in the following year to the Free

³⁰⁸ M. Chaskalson, K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 'Rent Boycotts and the Urban Political Economy', *South African Review* 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 54.

³⁰⁹ M. Chaskalson, K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 'Rent Boycotts and the Urban Political Economy', *South African Review* 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 55.

³¹⁰ Ibid, p. 53.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid, p. 56.

³¹³ Ibid, p. 55.

State and Eastern Transvaal townships.³¹⁴ By 1986, the rent boycotts which had been sparked two years prior in the Vaal spread through the townships of the Rand-including in Soweto, Alexandra and Vosloorus.

In the early 1980s local organisations began to appear in the Vaal Triangle that would go on to play a critical role in the rent boycotts from 1984. The Vaal Action Committee (VAC) formed in 1982 led to the formation of the Vaal Organisation of Women (VOW) and by 1983 a Vaal Civic Organisation (VCO) was established.³¹⁵ The Sharpeville Anti-Rent Committee was also established in the first years of the decade.³¹⁶ In the Vaal the boycotts were led by the VCO and the Sharpeville Anti-Rent Committee. The organisations would meet in Sharpeville, Sebokeng and Boipatong prior to 1984 however were forced to go into hiding or face arrest before the boycotts went ahead.³¹⁷ Thus in Sharpeville, like the other townships in the Vaal, the September boycotts went ahead with no formal organisational leadership. Local government including the Lekoa Town Council blamed the boycotts on a few agitators and refused to concede that the rents were too high.

4.7. CONCLUSION

Political organising in Sharpeville for the first eight years of the 1950s did not follow the dominant anti-apartheid narrative and while residents of other townships participated in the defiance campaigns and the bus boycotts, Sharpeville remained relatively calm. It was the rapid confluence of various factors including; the rapid removal of the remaining Top Location residents, overcrowding and unemployment in the township, steep rent increases and the formation of a PAC branch in the township; that precipitated the protests of 1960.

However I have shown that since Sharpeville did not have a sustained history of political organising, once the PAC was banned and went into crisis, there was no

³¹⁴ Ibid, p. 54.

³¹⁵ P. Noonan. *They're Burning the Churches*.

³¹⁶ M. Chaskalson, K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 'Rent Boycotts and the Urban Political Economy', *South African Review* 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 58.

³¹⁷ M. Chaskalson, K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 'Rent Boycotts and the Urban Political Economy', *South African Review* 4, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987, p. 58.

political leadership or organising to rebuild the movement. Furthermore, the massacre resulted in heightened repression and large numbers of arrests that further stifled the possibility of constituting political organisations during the 1960s. Whereas in other townships the 1970s saw an increase in black working-class resistance, Sharpeville on the whole remained silent. There was a presence of ideological adherents of Black Consciousness in the area, however it was violently suppressed before it could build the foundations for any organisational growth. Thus in both 1973 and 1976 when worker and student uprisings punctuated the national landscape, Sharpeville went on being the showpiece of a well controlled African population.

The silence in Sharpeville, while extended and pervasive, was shattered in the early 1980s. Local organisations including the Sharpeville Anti-Rent Committee began to form in the context of dramatically increasing rentals and the perceived ineptitude of counsellors. Along with other townships in the Vaal, it became the starting point for rent boycotts that would spread throughout the country.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at investigating the reasons behind the lack of political action and organisation in Sharpeville after 1960. There have been several issues discussed which are worth reiterating to connect with and conclude the main arguments.

This analysis was framed by an attempt to redress the narrow focus Sharpeville has been given in the dominant historical narrative as only being important as the site of the massacre of 1960. The research also aimed to contribute to the often neglected history of the Vaal Triangle before the uprisings in 1984. The research, from very early on, indicated that there was a lack of political organising in Sharpeville for the most part of the 1950s as well as the 1960s and 1970s. Political organising in Sharpeville did not seem to strictly follow the national anti-apartheid narrative characterised by radical opposition movements in the 1950s and a growth in worker and student political organising in the 1970s. I thus aimed to begin to analyse the reasons for the quiescence in Sharpeville for almost three decades with a brief period of politicisation between 1958 and 1960.

While there are many interrelated factors involved in the lack of political organising in Sharpeville, one of these is the impacts and intricacies of Sharpeville being designed as a 'model township'. The third chapter discussed the 'model township' with a consideration of the genesis of these townships and the historical context they developed in. The fourth chapter made clearer the absence of radical opposition politics in Sharpeville and delved further into the other factors that could explain the quiescence. These included the lack of a tradition of political organising, the absence of the ANC and the Communist Party in the township and high levels of repression.

I have asserted that 'model townships' such as Sharpeville partly grew from a complex global and national move towards state welfarism from the 1930s. In conjunction with this, 'model townships' also evolved from the ideas of 'proper planning' entrenched in the apartheid logic. Attempts at control and order of the urban African population being perceived as having failed in the 1930s and 1940s was one of the underlying reasons for the NP victory in 1948. The NP based its election

campaign around addressing concerns from various sectors of the white population regarding African urbanisation. These included farmers who were facing labour shortages due to the urbanisation of the agricultural workforce, industrialists who wanted a more stable and reliable workforce and white residents who in the context of the politically intensive late 1930s and 1940s feared the *swart gewaar*. Thus the NP came into power through their assertion that they would better organise and control the urban African population.

Sharpeville was conceived of and built, in 1941, at a time in South Africa's history when the urban areas were undergoing intense reconfiguration including a massive industrial boom and a significant amount of African urbanisation. It was one of the first attempts at creating a new 'modern' version of African townships. These townships would become more prevalent and widespread from the late 1950s and early 1960s. I have argued that the 'model townships' were constructed as an attempt to address the large-scale urbanisation as well as the need for a more docile and reliable workforce. The 'modern' townships were attempts at addressing what authorities saw as the uncontrolled and disorganised 'old locations'. Top Location, where many of the residents of Sharpeville moved from, with its rambling streets and general lack of surveillance was considered by authorities to embody everything the 'modern townships' would challenge. The 'modern townships' would be built in a grid-like fashion, with numbered houses, heightened surveillance and would be generally better ordered.

I have however made the argument that despite the space of the 'model township' being designed for better order, this did not necessarily have to translate into a lack of radical opposition politics. The theoretical argument I have advanced is that a certain space does not have a causal relationship to a certain politics. However, in addition to the township having heightened surveillance, many people that moved to Sharpeville, particularly until the late 1950s, saw it as a lifestyle improvement and it was the combination of these two factors that contributed to stifling any direct opposition politics in the area.

It was partly owing to the success of the 'model township' in terms of inhibiting political organising that Sharpeville did not have an active tradition of action and organisation throughout the 1950s. I have explained how until 1958, while

there were dissatisfactions in the township, these were not intense enough to sufficiently destabilise the general order that had engulfed the township for more than a decade. I have also advanced reasons as to why, by 1960, the township was swept by an intensive moment of political organising. These included the mass removals from Top Location from 1958 which had previously occurred at a slower rate, steadily increasing rents and overcrowding, the growing dissatisfaction of unemployed youth and the formation of a PAC branch in the township that was able to harness the dissatisfactions of the community and direct them towards organising and participating in the anti-pass campaign.

I have advanced several reasons as to why, despite the political organising that occurred between 1958 and 1960, this organisation did not persist into the 1960s. A critical reason is that the 1960s saw an extremely high level of state repression throughout the country, including in Sharpeville. The 1960s in South Africa also ushered in an economic upturn and thus some of the grievances regarding unemployment that had sparked dissatisfaction in the late 1950s were tempered. Furthermore, the PAC, which played a critical role in the organising in 1960 was banned and went through an organisational crisis in the early 1960s. The organisation, which did not constitute itself from a grassroots base in the township, was not able to maintain a significant presence in Sharpeville following the massacre. In addition to these factors, since Sharpeville had no consistent tradition of political organising, after the massacre there was no there was no political formation that was able to regroup and reconstitute itself.

There is still a significant amount of research that is necessary in the Vaal Triangle. The township of Evaton with its politically vibrant history remains largely unresearched. Furthermore, this research could be substantiated by interviews with state officials in an attempt to make up for the lack of archives. A more thorough engagement with the intricacies of using biopolitics as a theoretical framework through which to consider South African history may be a highly interesting project. This research report hopes to begin a discussion around the investigation of political organising in the Vaal Triangle, particularly Sharpeville.

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