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From apartheid to democracy: a historical analysis of local struggles in Phomolong Township, Free State: 1985-2005

Kunene, Phindile Sibongile

2014-01-24
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INTRODUCTION

The area interrogated in this study is Phomolong[1] Township – an African township situated six kilometres from the small town of Hennenman in the northern Free State. Hennenman and Phomolong form part of the Matjhabeng local municipality, which consists of other towns such as Odendaalsrus, Welkom, Virginia, Allanridge and their adjoining African townships. Phomolong Township was proclaimed on the 14th of April 1950.[2] Its establishment was as a result of the relocation of Africans from the centre of Hennenman town. This was in many respects a 'black spot' in the vicinity of a white urban area known simply as Hennenman. The relocation of the old location happened in 1952, the same year in which it was de-proclaimed. Phomolong's history can be traced back from the segregationist policies of the United Party government in the post war era. However, moves to relocate Africans from Hennenman became more pronounced and coordinated after the

This thesis is concerned with the development and evolution of local struggles in Phomolong over a twenty-year period (1985-2005). It traces the early formation of political movements in Phomolong in the 1980s, their ideology, political networks and modus operandi. Moreover, the study examines the structural factors informing local struggles in Phomolong in their nascent years. The interplay between the structural basis, the intra-organisational and subjective dynamics in local struggles is highlighted in this study. The focus on the 1980s allows the researcher to understand how activists perceived and justified their participation in the struggle against apartheid as well as how latter day protests in Phomolong bear the indelible marks of past struggles against apartheid.

[1] There is another township located near Harrismith in the southern Free State that was also called Phomolong. The township has since been renamed Intabazwe.

[2] National Archives, NTS 5749 346/313K, *Memorandum on the new location for Hennenman*, 26 May 1952.

This study forms part of the critical academic work on township politics in South Africa. Seekings distinguishes between two trends in the study of township politics in the 1980s. The first strand is the structural approach, which privileged the political economy of township resistance. It focused on residents' material grievances as the most important factor driving township protest and revolt. This approach was widely reproduced in academic research as well as sections of the left and alternative media in the 1980s. According to this approach, resistance within the townships to the oppression and exploitation of the black working class under apartheid capitalism was the driving force behind the militant resistance to the system of apartheid. As a result, the bus and rent boycotts were interpreted in this fashion. The falling wages and price hikes on rents were the principal reasons behind these boycotts.

Seekings remarks that the weakness of this approach is that it gave little credence to the role of organisations. In other words, the structural conditions in the townships are overestimated and the role of political agency is undermined. Using urban social movement theory, the theorization of township politics often argued that township resistance was a struggle waged by a medley of class forces (black working class and petit bourgeoisie) with the main contention being issues of common social reproduction such as housing, education, transport and health. These were also used as explanatory factors for the upsurge in student and youth political activism during the 1980s.[3]

This structural approach is critiqued for its scant attention to organisational factors. In addition, its analysis was also faulted for treating township residents, especially the youth as passive recipients of structural factors inherited from the older generations. While steering away from voluntaristic notions of political activism and township protest, it is nonetheless argued that the lacuna in structuralist accounts neglects the immediate locality and experience as a crucial ingredient in shaping political activism.[4]

[3] Seekings, J, *South Africa's Townships 1980s-1991: an annotated bibliography*, Stellenbosch Research Unit for Sociology of Development, University of Stellenbosch, 1992, p.5.

[4] *Ibid*, p.16.

The opposite of the structural approach is a school of thought that privileged the role of political leadership and political agency as main factors behind township resistance. Traces of this analysis could be seen in the state's interpretation of political mobilisation and protest in the 1980s, which singled out the main 'agitators' and their organizational groupings such as the ANC and the SACP. The geographic spread of township resistance, the agitation for 'ungovernability' and resistance by the political formations as well as the involvement of accused/trialists in these political formations were taken as bearing testimony to this approach.[5]

The limitations of this line of thinking are that it was largely a top-down interpretation and gave insufficient credit to the material basis of the resistance. The former essentially means that the upsurge in township protest and resistance was seen as the direct result of the influence that the national leadership of the ANC/UDF/SACP had on local residents and activists. The latter was simply an acknowledgement that despite the difficult conditions of social reproduction in townships, these could not by themselves lead to resistance unless accompanied by the conspiratorial workings of organisations such as the ANC/UDF and SACP.[6] In addition, eclecticism has also been evident with some scholars combining both the structural and agency-driven factors into a medley of reasons explaining why townships took to the streets in the early 1980s.[7]

Notably, studies into township politics in the 1980s have been fraught with weaknesses. On the one hand, endeavours to study the politics and social processes in specific townships led to some of these studies being cocooned in the local and thus providing little ground for generalizations. On the other hand, studies on a general level were very poor in terms of empirical grounding and often drifted into speculations. An additional weakness identified by Seekings is that the discourse of township politics provided very little comparative studies of townships in South Africa or international case studies. Local-specific research with its strength derived from rich empirical grounding could have provided a firm basis upon which the

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] *Ibid*.

[7] *Ibid*.

national could be understood. This could have allowed for the theorization of local studies within the framework of constraints and opportunities provided by political economy as well as national political formations.[8]

Although this study is primarily about contentious politics centred in the local state, a great proportion of the findings point to the importance of youth politicisation and political mobilisation in this equation. There has been great interest in young people and collective action and contentious politics under the apartheid system.

Glaser's study on youth political mobilisation makes the point that although the second urban youth generation made its mark on Johannesburg and surrounding areas in the 1930s, it was not until the early 1970s that urbanised African youths exerted their influence politically.[9] According to this analysis, since the 1930s, urbanised youth was the subject of a contest between two competing identities. On the one hand was an identity anchored in education and the schoolyard and on the other hand in the gang and the township. According to Glaser, interaction between these two worlds was seldom, with gang culture remaining largely unscathed by political associations, although there were moments of flirtation between the political groupings and gangs particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. In this context, formal political mobilisation of the youth was almost entirely confined to school going youths and because at this time the school going population was a relative minority as compared to the rest of the township youth population, its political adventures hardly had any big impact. It was only with the expansion of secondary schooling in the early 1970s in Soweto that school-going youth began to assume the frontlines in the struggle against apartheid.

To explain this trend, Glaser draws attention to the unique experience that secondary schools provided. Accordingly, secondary schools had a "unifying influence", drawing together young literate people with similar experiences, frustrations and grievances. Students increasingly became attracted to Black Consciousness ideology, which was transposed through "homeland" universities, expelled ex-students from these universities and Christian oriented formations. The high school experience also

[8] *Ibid*, p.15.

[9] Glaser, C, "Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, 1958-1976", PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, 1994, p. 4.

exposed youths to a variety of extra-curricular activities such as debating and reading of material outside the prescribed syllabus. Additionally, school going youths with parents that commuted to work in order to sell their labour power were often left unattended for most of the day, giving them free reign to explore political ideas and interact with political formations.[10] Under these circumstances, students came to occupy the political vacuum left by the banning of Congress aligned political organisations.[11]

Ndlovu's examination of the 1976 Soweto uprising and the student protests to follow in the decade after this pays particular attention to four main themes. These are the structural changes affecting Soweto; the role of Afrikaner nationalist ideology; educational and epistemological issues; the relevance and centrality of Afrikaans to the uprising; and the role of the South African Student Movement (SASM).[12] Using a medley of sources ranging from archival material to oral testimonies, Ndlovu looks at some of the structural changes that swept the apartheid schooling landscape and their implications for African children. He notes that by 1974, there was an unprecedented politicization of township schools. This politicization was anchored on educational grievances, with young, if few, teachers schooled in the country's "homeland" universities such as Fort Hare, Turfloop and Zululand who were often linked to SASO, providing guidance to the students' political impulses.[13]

For Ndlovu, the socio-economic environment in the townships was also important for student politicization. Some of these factors are pronounced more clearly in Bonner[14] and Pohlandt-McCormick's[15] writings, which point to the shortage of housing for Africans in urban areas in the 1960s, the restriction of rights enjoyed by Africans in urban areas and the deliberate policy to channel resources spent on urban Africans to

[10] *Ibid*, p.127.

[11] *Ibid,* p.4.

[12]Ndlovu, M, S, "The Soweto Uprising: Part 1", in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Volume 2 (1970–1980), Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006.

[13] *Ibid*, p.320.

[14] Bonner, P, *Soweto - A History,* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998.

[15] Pohlandt-McCormick, H, *'I saw a Nightmare'*, New York Columbia University Press, 2007.

the "homeland" like Transkei and Bophuthatswana as key factors in explaining the rise of political consciousness among young people. The passing of the Bantu Homelands Citizen Act in 1970, aimed at stripping urbanised Africans of their South African citizenship, was another dimension. These measures were largely undermined by industry needs for a skilled African workforce, and spawned an interesting cauldron of contradictions between capital and the apartheid state and thus exerting a major influence on the African education policies. Chief among the consequences was the rapid expansion of junior and secondary schooling for Africans. Ndlovu notes that between 1972 and 1974, approximately forty (40) new schools were built in Soweto alone and the number of students attending secondary schools grew from 12 656 to 34 656, an increased by nearly 300%.[16] In addition, the economic recession in the early 1970s spurred on by the increasing oil prices and the drop in the gold price produced a reality of a massive but resource strapped education system for Africans.[17] This led to an assortment of problems, which have been recounted in other texts, such as increased overcrowding and teachers adopting harsher forms of discipline. From his own experience, Ndlovu remembers:

> to ease congestion, some of the Form 1 and Form 2 classes at Phefeni Junior Secondary School were transferred to rented classroom space in Orlando East's defunct Khanya Primary School, next to the Orlando Football Stadium. These makeshift arrangements exacerbated an already intolerable situation as the physical structure of Phefeni Junior Secondary School, had not been adequate in the first place. It was an old primary school building commandeered to accommodate the growing number of junior secondary school students. The original primary school pupils had been transferred elsewhere around the Orlando West precinct.[18]

On this basis he argues that the injustices of the Bantu Education system became more glaring with the expansion of African education.

Ari Sitas develops his analysis of what he calls the "comrade's movement" by challenging two extremes in the analysis of youth political consciousness in the 1980s.[19] He takes issue with the perspective rooted in Durkhemian concept of anomie,

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[16] *Ibid*, p.322.

[17] *Ibid,* 323.

[18] *Ibid*, p.323.

[19] Sitas, A, "The Making of the Comrades' Movement in Natal: 1985-91*", Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.18, No.3, pp.629-641.

which argues that the breakdown in societal norms and values belied the rise of youth political conscientisation and collective action. Sitas also challenges the school of thought that gives privilege to economic factors such as black youth unemployment to locate the roots of youth politicisation during this period. The basis for questioning these approaches is twofold. Firstly, he argues that the structural explanation is inadequate because although the class composition of youth movements during this time was overwhelmingly working class, there was a significant presence of different strata and classes.[20] Secondly, as opposed to being manifestations of anomie, the youth political movement arose as a result of a youth desire to defend and exercise control over geographic and political spaces.[21] Thus this type of activism arose as a result of a desire to generate a different brand of mobilisation and a new kind of defensive organisation. But even with these nuances, what is clear is that youth defined itself as defenders of their communities who used violence to counter state violence and the violence meted out by the KwaZulu Bantustan government.[22] Critically, comrades also defined themselves as children of the oppressed and poor. Sitas also closely examines the militarised subculture predominant in the youth movement during this time and how preforming arts was used to give symbols and meaning to the struggle against apartheid.[23]

Kumi Naidoo's focus is around the obstacles to political unity among different groups of youth people. He argues that youth political consciousness in Durban was influenced by various factors and often; political consciousness exhibited by African, 'Coloured' and Indian youths revealed subtle differences. Boycotts, religious influences, teachers' initiatives and the drive to pursue something constructive influenced the rate at which youth acquired political consciousness. Some of the objective hindrances to youth political organization included repression by the state and the intra-communal violence during this period. The reality that young people from different racial groups had a markedly different social reality under apartheid was another stumbling block. Although unemployment, oppression, poor education

[20] *Ibid*,p.629.

[21] *Ibid*, p.629-630.

[22] *Ibid*, p.637.

[23] *Ibid*, p.634.

and bleak life chances were common denominators for Indian, 'Coloured' and African youth growing up under apartheid and provided the basis for unity against the system, some of the divisions emanating from the structural experience of apartheid and the violence of the time precluded the formation of a united youth movement in Durban.[24]

Monique Marks' study of Diepkloof largely focuses on self-identity and perceptions of young people engaged in the struggle against apartheid. While she also interrogates the impetuses to youth political action and the various factors shaping youth political consciousness in the 1980s, her study is more concerned with what she calls "comrade youth" - how he (and to a lesser extent she) perceives the world around him, motivations and justifications for involvement in the struggles as well as committing various acts including collective violence.[25]

Marks distinguishes between three broad types of youth in the 1980s. In the first instance was the more dominant and highly politicised youth. This youth had as top of its priority social justice and political change.[26] The second type of youth was youth that joined political organisations without an in depth understanding of what political organisations entailed. This youth was largely inexperienced, motivated tremendously by the desire to enact change.[27] Lastly were youths that used the political struggle as a pretext to pursue self-serving activities and gain access to immediate material gains. Marks case study suggests that the two polemical perspectives aimed at the conceptualisation of youth cannot be neatly separated.[28]

In examining the nature of youth consciousness in Alexandra, Charles Carter argues that "comrade identity" carried several features. This included a high moral code, group solidarity and a particular caution when faced with the issue of collective action. In this regard the self-conceptualisation of Alexandra Youth Congress and its

[24] Naidoo, K, "The Politics of Youth Resistance in the 1980s: The Dilemmas of a Differentiated Durban", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.18, No.1, 1992, pp.143-165.

[25] Marks, M, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2000, p.5.

[26] *Ibid*, p.58-61.

[27] *Ibid*, p.52.

[28] *Ibid*.

members was one imbued with liberatory content. AYCO activists could be distinguished from other youth through their discipline and morally towering behaviour. Comrades were barred from engaging in morally reprehensible activities such as drinking in shebeens, stealing and hijackings.[29]

A clear delineation was made between "comrades" and "collaborators" and even protagonists. The enemy, remarks Carter, included the local agents of the apartheid state such as local councillors and municipal police as well as informers and those deemed to be collaborating with the regime. In certain instances, some groupings that fell outside the Charterist tradition were also included in the conceptualisation of "the other". The term comrade embodied both social and socialist connotations. It was used to as a label for politically active and members of youth, student, civic and trade unions. The role of comrades was to mobilise people and conscietise them about their collective problems and oppression and how to overcome these. Comrades were also very hard on those deemed as collaborators and enemies. However, extremely harsh tactics such as "neck-lacing" had to be abandoned and vilified as it surfaced that this was also being used by apartheid police to undermine the legitimacy of the comrades in the township. Comrades often distanced themselves from those known as '*com-tsotsis*', outsiders who came to Alexandra on occasions of funerals.[30]

Few scholars have also explored the rise of youth political consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa's hinterlands. Peter Delius' study on Sekhukhuneland in the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo) draws attention to some interesting dynamics of the rural political economy and changing aspects of traditional authority and how these cultivated a markedly different experience of growing up in the area.[31] The rapid expansion of secondary schooling from the 1960s until the 1980s, a trend seen in the urban areas, was also evident in the rural hinterlands, albeit as a consequence of different initiatives. Newly appointed chiefs who were eager to define their autonomy often saw the creation of separate educational institutions as a means to this end. Parents in the form of villagers and migrants also fundraised to build new schools in

[29] Carter, C, "Comrades and Community: Politics and the Construction of Hegemony in Alexandra Township", South Africa, 1984-1987, PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991, p. 229.

[30] *Ibid*, p.243.

[31] Delius, P, *A lion amongst the cattle: reconstruction and resistance in Northern Transvaal*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996.

this area. As a result of the combination of these factors, between 1977 and 1982, the number of senior secondary schools in Lebowa had quadrupled from 38 to 146.[32] This produced a set of outcomes, which were not entirely positive. Poorly trained teachers, shortage of teachers specialising in maths and science, the increase in brutal disciple meted out by teachers, classroom overcrowding, diminishing resources and squalid infrastructure came to define the schooling landscape in the area. Thus increasingly, education significantly shaped youth experience and narrowed some of the social divisions that previously existed amongst young people.[33] But even so, when the 1976 student uprising occurred and sent shockwaves to other parts of the country, Sekhukhune was relatively quiet, recording only isolated incidents of arson and school boycotts. Furthermore, although the release of political prisoners like Peter Nchabeleng and Nelson Diale from Robben Island played a vital role in raising the consciousness of young people in the area and became important conduits of information - motivating the formation of discussion groups and the recruitment of youths to the ANC's military wing – *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) - it was not until the aftermath of the uprising itself the politicisation of youth in the countryside reached new levels.[34]

According to Delius, the relative political quiescence in some rural areas presented the countryside as an alternative site for education in most parents' eyes. As a result, post the uprising; many migrant workers in the urban areas relocated their children to the rural areas. This was crucial in cultivating a link between youths educated in rural areas and young people who had experienced their early years of education in urban areas. Young people with educational experience in the urban areas were important in transmitting a different sub-culture into these areas. Through important mediums like newspapers, magazines and music, news of political organisation and resistance was spread. [35] Socio-economic strife, which manifested through high rates of unemployment –a particularly unsettling experience for young men, was also crucial in concientising young people. Nonetheless, as Delius notes, the consciousness

[32] *Ibid*, p.142.

[33] *Ibid*, p. 143.

[34] *Ibid*, p.176.

[35] *Ibid*.

exuded by these young people was often of an elementary nature. Importantly, when a youth uprising occurred in the area in 1986, the social agents behind it were in the main, the beneficiaries of the rapid expansion of secondary education in the early 1970s – students and unemployed secondary school leavers.[36]

Lekgoathi's study of Zebediela also looks at how the political changes in the rural landscape aided the process of political conscientisation of young people. The restructuring of traditional institutions like chieftaincy (*bogosi*) from the 1960s, the gradual but growing influence of western institutions and ideas around schooling significantly altered perceptions around the established norms and customs.[37] This change coincided with the expansion of secondary schooling in the area. Under this changed environment, youth became more receptive to new popular culture of resistance in the 1980s. Lekgoathi also demonstrates that the rapid expansion of high schools was also beneficial to female students, with females outnumbering male students by 1982.[38] This expansion also led to a more uniform culture and experience. Previously, although students related in complex, dynamic and contradictory ways, they were divided loosely along geographic lines, with students originating from urban areas on the one hand and those based in rural areas on the other.[39] The growing accessibility of newspapers such as *The Sowetan* and the *New Nation*, the relaxation of influx control regulations which allowed rural youths to sojourn to urban townships to visit their relatives during school holidays and the UDF's influence in the formation of youth structures were all varyingly important factors in igniting youth radicalisation.[40]

Although the above-cited studies provide illuminating details about the rise and development of youth political consciousness in many localities under apartheid, they dedicate little attention to how the state reacted to this youth politicisation and youth collective action outside the coercive measures it employed to quell political

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] Lekgoathi, P, S, "Reconstructing the history of educational transformation in a rural Transvaal chiefdom: the radicalisation of teachers in Zebediela from the early 1950s to the early 1990s", MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1995, p.155.

[38] *Ibid*, p.178.

[39] *Ibid*, p.170.

[40] *Ibid*, p.178-184.

resistance across the country. The state's endeavour to "persuade" young people against participating in youth political movements through establishing counter organisations like the Eagles Club finds only minimal discussion in this literature. There is also no consideration given to how youth political movements interfaced with state sponsored youth groupings whose sole aim was to keep youth away from liberation politics. These gaps are addressed in this dissertation.

The contribution of this thesis lies in four areas explored in the study. Firstly, the thesis traces the history of political mobilisation and protest in Phomolong. Secondly, the study provides a detailed account on the formation and operations of the Eagles Youth Club in the area. This is a novel contribution since the little that has been written about the Eagles Youth Clubs and their operation in the Free State is too general. The politics and local implications of the compromises struck during South Africa's negotiated transition have also received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, the third contribution made by this thesis is that it provides an intricate account of the politics of the transition from white minority rule to democracy using locally focused lenses. Fourthly, the study diminishes the Chinese wall between political movements in the 1980s and the latter day struggles known as service delivery protests. The thesis highlights the continuities and discontinuities during the period of resistance against apartheid, the transition to democracy at local level and the challenge to the new local government architecture as seen through service delivery protests. A combination of structural and subjective factors is used to analyse developments throughout the periods under review.

Motivation for the study

There is currently no historical study of Phomolong Township. However, the history of the white town of Hennenman is narrated in a book called *Die Geskiedenis van Hennenman* (The History of Hennenman), which was published in 1974.[41] This book, which was commissioned by the municipality to celebrate its 50th anniversary, is useful in terms of tracing the development of the white town of Hennenman, its promulgation as a municipality and also provides useful information on the main

[41] Moll, J.C. *Die Geskiedenis van Hennenman: Pioniersjare to 1972 (The History of Hennenman: from its establishment till 1972)*, Hennenman: Hennenman Municipality, 1974.

economic activities of the town and the white local administration until this period. This notwithstanding, the book only gives a moot reference to the black population of Hennenman's township – Phomolong. It is wholly silent on the forced removals and the role and contribution of the black working class to the economy of the town as well as the modes of resistance to white rule and white repression that may have occurred in the period under review.

The account contained in *Die Geskiedenis van Hennenman* is consistent with most white town histories produced under apartheid. Therefore, the first motivation for the study of Phomolong is to provide an account of black people's experiences in the area, with a particular emphasis on the political mobilisation, protest and local state. In this way, the study will uncover the evolution and complexities of black politics in Phomolong from the period of the first notable protest in 1985 until the service delivery protest in 2005. As such, the reasons of studying the black township of Phomolong are similar to those identified by Tshepo Moloi in his study of black townships of Kroonstad in the northern Free State. Moloi maintains that it is important to study the histories of black townships in order to understand "black people's experiences and responses to apartheid from a local perspective."[42] Following Nieftagodien, Moloi argues that studying black local history is important for countering the genre of local urban history, which driven by white municipalities under apartheid, gave premium to white people's experiences and relegated black people to "peripheral actors" and often subjected them to racially biased analysis.[43]

The second reason for studying Phomolong is to counter the urban bias (mainly of the metropolitan areas) that currently exists in the study of black township politics in South Africa. Academic studies that focus on semi-rural towns in the northern Free State are scarce. For instance, Seekings' study of Tumahole Township in Parys illuminates abundant details about the township's socio-political proximity to the then PWV (Gauteng Province) than it does about the township's relationship with its Free State counterparts. By the same token, although Twala's account of the youth

[42] Moloi, T. "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles", *1976-1995*, University of the Witwatersrand, PhD Thesis, 2012, p.8.

[43] *Ibid*. Also see Nieftagodien, N. "The Past of 'The Local' in History Workshop's Local History" in *African Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 1, April 2010, p.41.

movement in the Free State offers a competent analysis of the nature, character and factors driving 1980s youth political mobilisation in the region, it nonetheless exudes some limitations. In its attempt to gauge broader socio-political process in the Free State in the 1980s, it falls into the trap of generalisations without providing adequate details into each of the townships under consideration.[44] Tshepo Moloi's study of the Kroonstad townships of Maokeng and Brentpark can be considered part of the endeavours to fill this gap. Moloi's study of Kroonstad is important in mitigating the urban bias of academic literature, especially since Kroonstad itself was never a major industrial hub and carried many characteristics of a peri-urban locality. Academic studies of the Free State which challenge the bias towards the former Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging/Gauteng while also providing a specific focus on the localities concerned can make a significant contribution in laying the foundation for the study of the political history of the Free State. It is this imperative that drove this thesis.

Lastly, Phomolong Township was chosen as a case study due to the fact that in 2005, the township became the subject of the national discourse on post-apartheid protest. Phomolong dominated the news as yet another small township to embark on what became known as service delivery protests. The service delivery protests in Phomolong were particularly protracted, spanning an overall period of eight months. After these protests, a comprehensive report by the Centre for Development Support (CDS)[45] was published. This report referred to service delivery protests as the "new struggle" in post-apartheid South Africa.[46] This report provides an exceptionally detailed account, useful empirical data and a competent analysis of the 2005 Phomolong service delivery protests. Despite these useful components, the report illuminates little about the historical roots and the complex political dynamics that permeated these protests. As a result, this thesis makes the novel contribution of tracing the historical roots and evolution of the Phomolong Crisis Committee, which

[44] Twala, C. "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s: a viable attempt to reorganize protest politics?" *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, December 2007, p.39-55.

[45] Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, Centre for Development Support, University of Free State, 2007.

[46] *Ibid.*

was the coordinating nerve of the 2005 protests. While this thesis does not completely refute the claims made by studies such as the one undertaken by the CDS, it seeks to demonstrate that there is little "new" in this so-called "new struggle" and that these protests have strong links with Phomolong's past under apartheid.[47] It also argues that in order to understand the roots of these protests, a link must be drawn between local political dynamics and the economic structure of the local state both under apartheid and in the current, democratic dispensation.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to provide a historical study of local struggles and protests during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods in Phomolong Township in the Free State. For this purpose, the study examines the continuities and discontinuities between struggles against apartheid local government and latter day struggles popularly known as service delivery protests. The overarching aim is to ascertain what influence the history and culture of struggle exerted on the 2005 protests in Phomolong. This research makes the case for a synthetic approach to the study of local protests. It uses the study of the local state's economic orientation, social movement theory as well as recent literature on patronage and clientelism to explain the trajectory of local protests in post-apartheid South Africa.

Preliminary Questions

- What is the political history of Phomolong in relation to the struggle against apartheid?
- What are the continuities and discontinuities between apartheid and post-apartheid of local protests and struggles in Phomolong Township?
- What is the relationship between service delivery protests and the historical evolution of politics and political allegiances in Phomolong?
- In what ways does the history and culture of struggle against apartheid influence struggles in the post-apartheid period?
- To what extent is the local state theory useful in understanding the failure of the post-apartheid local state to lead a thoroughgoing transformative and redistributive agenda?

[47] *Ibid.*

- What space does the struggle for collective consumption occupy in Phomolong's history and present reality?
- Are the analytical categories used in social movement theory applicable to the organisational forms characterising service delivery protests in Phomolong?
- What are the structural and intra-organisational/ANC causes of service delivery protests?

Methodology

The Life History Interview

Accounts of protests and struggle found in official state documents under apartheid and in the post-apartheid period pose significant challenges for researchers. The state, its judicial arms and some media often propagated the idea that the mass resistance to apartheid local government and ultimately the regime as a whole was the creation of a few agitators or conspirators located in the ANC and its aligned groupings. Such activists were given delineations such as terrorists or communists.[48] Therefore, while acknowledging that official government documents and certain media reports have been useful for chronology and certain factual information, their bias requires that they be treated with vigilance.

In addition, academia's reading of township resistance in the 1980s has its own contradictions. Having concluded that the apartheid regime was illegitimate and unjust, many scholars became overly cautious in their critique of movements opposing apartheid. As Seekings argues, "pointing to divisions within townships, or to the errors of anti-apartheid organizations, was frowned upon (and sometimes more empathetically denounced). Such a position may have been politically or even morally commendable in the polarized circumstances of the time, but it did not lead to balanced research."[49]

[48] Seekings, *South Africa's Townships 1980-1991: An Annotated Bibliography*.

[49] *Ibid*.

This research made extensive use of life history interviews. In total, thirty (30) life history interviews covering political activists, activists' parents, teachers, principals, and councillors were conducted. A majority of the life history interviews conducted spanned more than an hour. A tape recorder was used for most of the contact interviews, while a few interviews were done telephonically. This choice is primarily because the life history interview as a method of conducting social research is lauded for its ability to enable a better understanding of individuals and communities.[50] Portelli is more vigorous in his praise of the method, arguing that it imparts knowledge about the uncharted terrains and life experiences of the non-hegemonic classes.[51] Hence, the specific method was chosen to acquire firsthand accounts based on activists' self-perceptions for the periods interrogated in this study. This was critical in ascertaining why and how activists and non-activists viewed their actions and the justifications thereof, especially during the 1980s. Conducting life history interviews at this point was valuable in that activists were able to provide more grounded accounts of the period under examination.

Despite its values, the life history interview has some stern critics. They argue that the changes in individual consciousness and ideological disposition over time may serve as a major detractor when using this methodology. In addition, critics argue that some "colouring" may occur resulting in individuals reconstructing memories in order to fit neatly into the confines of political correctness.[52] However, Portelli counters this view in contending that the value of the interview in such cases is in what the interviewee conceals rather than reveals, which in itself gives the interviewee justification about past events.[53] This has been specifically evident in this study. The research interviews that I conducted with the activists from the 1980s offer some insights into past events and reflection from the interviewees. The interviews also display contradictory and yet understandable sentiments of regret and nostalgia. For instance, observations such as *"*because of the spirit then, we did some wrong things but quite correctly if you

[50] Kros, C, Ulrich, N, "The Truth of Tales: Oral Testimony and Teaching History in Schools" in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, Denis, P, Ntsimane, R (eds), University of KwaZulu Natal, 2008, p.91.

[51] Portelli, A, "What Makes Oral History Different", *The Oral History Reader Second Edition*, Perks, R and Thomson, A, London: Routledge1998, p.36.

[52] *Ibid*, p.38

[53] *Ibid*.

think of it then"[54] have been a common feature in the interviews. Therefore, despite being critiqued for its factual fallibility, proponents of the life history interview contend that the methodology compensates for this weakness with a richer account of memories and an intimate involvement on the part of the interviewee.[55] Moreover, this method has enabled the researcher to gain access to personal documents and other material that do not necessarily exist in the public domain.

Notwithstanding its merits, the life history interview posed significant challenges. For one, interviewees had an inclination to downplay events that they thought would be frowned upon in the present. Secondly, activists in the 1980s usually exaggerated their roles and contribution as individuals in some of the political events and processes during that period. It was not uncommon for the researcher to acquire contradictory and exaggerated accounts of the same event or occurrence, each emphasising the "revolutionary" role of some individuals whilst erasing others completely out of the picture.

This cherry-picking of memories was especially evident with regards to the Eagles Club. The Eagles Club's presence in Phomolong in the mid-1980s is sometimes not only understated but also completely obliterated. Such omission has been countered by testimonies from erstwhile Eagles Club members as well as some official government data, its limitations notwithstanding. These have allowed the researcher to probe into the strategies and tactics of the Eagles Club; how and why young people in Phomolong in the mid-1980s joined the Eagles as well as the reasons for their eventual disillusionment with the club.

Finally, studying the 2005 protest in Phomolong through conducting interviews with activists in the Crisis Committee was an essential component of this research. At the time of the research, there was only one academic study of the 2005 Phomolong protests, which contained many limitations.[56] Whilst it is useful in its competent analysis of the causes of the protests, issues such as the form and character of the social agents and organisations involved in these struggles; the generational and

[54] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[55] Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different", p.37

[56]Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, Centre for Development Support, University of Free State, 2007.

gender dimensions of these struggles; the political character of local government in the township of Phomolong and people's changing perceptions of it have mostly evaded its radar of analysis.

As stated earlier, media reports for the latter period have been useful for chronological information; however, much like in the 1980s these tend to overemphasise and dramatise the violence in these protests. Given this reality, the demands and logic of such movements are given only cursory analysis. A sizeable literature from official government and ANC documents, especially at the inception of these protests contain a number of defensive responses. Until recently, the structural factors informing the protests have been virtually ignored within the ANC. In fact, the state asserted often that these protests can be explained via a "third force" and "agent provocateurs". In a parliamentary debate that took place whilst the protest in Phomolong was ensuing, an ANC Member of Parliament had extensively quoted a DA leader in Phomolong:

> People have been unhappy for a long time. We are trying to attract attention to our problems. We are burning tyres and setting barricades, but we are not fighting.[57]

The MP concerned continued:

> … I have never known that a peaceful demonstration is throwing stones at respected community leaders. At least everybody has a right to Freedom of Speech in South Africa. There is no need for stone throwing …[58]
>
> The youth in the past was not given the opportunity to assemble, let alone to formulate ideas. This unacceptable behaviour perpetrated by the DA in the Free State does not come as a surprise but it comes as a reaction by the DA as it has said before the ANC is too strong … We urge the youth of the Free State to engage through relevant structures. We have a caring government which is prepared to address the needs of the people.[59]

By taking this statement at face value one can form inaccurate assumptions about the organisational dynamics of the 2005 protests in Phomolong, even delegitimizing these as merely being desperate attempts by the opposition to gain a slice of the ANC's

[57] *A Debate at the National Assembly following the delivery of President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Address, Cape Town*, 15 February 2005, http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/20091112/50571_1.doc.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Ibid*.

electoral pie. Accounts from those that constituted the Phomolong Crisis Committee and other residents were crucial in averting this potential danger.

Triangulation was used as part of complementing the life history interview. A range of material such as government archives, newspapers and secondary literature have been useful in balancing the life history interviews. The archival research was particularly helpful in filling the gaps about the establishment of Phomolong Township as well as providing useful chronological information about the socio-economic developments in the town of Hennenman and Phomolong Township in its early days. Unfortunately, archives covering the period 1960-1980 were difficult to locate. As a result, the thesis extensively relied on interviews and academic literature to understand events and processes permeating the area during this period. The minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council from 1995-1999 were mainly helpful in this research and have been extensively used in the dissertation. The respondents' personal collections such as old photographs, memorandums and minutes from meetings have also been extensively used in the research. This triangulation does not exterminate the merits of the life history method. As Bozzoli notes:

> Of course the interviewees tend[ed] to romanticise their childhoods, to get dates wrong, to abandon chronology and simply forget. The reading of [the] transcripts has involved the craft of sifting the valid piece of information from the invalid, the weak informant from the strong one. But what source of sociological and historical information does not involve these processes? Can we assume that the witnesses to government commissions of enquiry, or government officials and public figures who write official letters to one another – sources that have all grave respectability required of historians' footnotes – are freer of the sins of bias and distortion than [the life history informant]?[60]

A Gendered Experience

Doing research with a majority of male informants was not an easy exercise. On one occasion, a male interviewee resorted to making explicit sexual advances towards me. These advances were initiated after I conducted an interview with him and he persisted in a manner that suggested a sexual favour had to be the price for the

[60]Bozzoli, B, "Interviewing the Women of Phokeng", *The Oral History Reader Second Edition*, in Perks, R and Thomson, A, (eds) London: Routledge1998, p.157.

interview. After my unequivocal refusal to accede to his demands and following his persistence, I was tempted to drown into fatalism about the possibility to challenge these acts. After speaking to one of my contacts in the area, who holds a great deal of respect in the community, I was able to navigate this problem. His intervention was crucial as it put a stop to the harassment. I am fascinated at how much this experience resembles that of earlier researchers such as Monique Marks.[61] I am still uncertain whether female researchers can completely circumvent it. The reason for this belief is that as much as this experience was shocking and violating, I could still draw parallels between it and my every day encounters with men within the political organisations in which I am currently active. I came to the conclusion that where coping mechanisms can be adopted while in the field, overcoming these problems requires more than the endeavours of researchers, as it is a problem of patriarchal society more broadly.

Interviewing Women

In the 1980s, feminists in the social sciences started engaging in debates about how feminism could be useful in how research is conducted.[62] By the 1990s, a consensus was forged among feminists on how to amplify women's voices in social research.[63] The basis of this consensus was that "'traditional' methods of research and accepted theories of 'knowledge' can (and should) be challenged by a gender-based focus."[64] In an attempt to challenge traditional and male-biased accounts of political activism in research, I made a conscious effort to interview a considerable number of women for this thesis. The life history interview was helpful in light of the manner in which many of the male interviewees generally silenced or downplayed the role of women in political mobilisation and activism. This is illustrated through the following broad characterisation of women's involvement (by young activist men) in the local struggles in Phomolong:

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[61] Marks, M, "Organisations, Identity and Violence Amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth: 1984-1993", MA Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1993, p.28.

[62] See Maynard, M and Purvis, J (eds), *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994 and Wilkonson, S and Kitzinger, C (eds) Representing the Other: A *Feminism and Psychology Reader*, London: Sage, 1996.

[63] See the collection by Roberts, H, *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge, 1981. See specifically Oakley, A, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms?" in Roberts, H (ed), *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge, 1981.

[64] McKenna, Y, "Sisterhood? Exploring Power Relations in the Collection of Oral History", *Oral History*, Vol. 31. No. 1, 2003, p.67.

> [T]he ANC initially was manly; it was mainly manly at that time. When it became popular with the people, it was manly … It was men. We charted the direction. They [women] were not that interested. Some would join because we told them as our girlfriends. But you could see that you are forcing things.[65]

The life history method was important in understanding and critically probing the analysis that suggests that women were "newcomers" in the struggle. Many feminists doing research on women have widely embraced the oral tradition.[66] This method, it is argued, presents great opportunities for gaining insight into women's lives and histories, something that is traditionally obscured or ignored in the dominant scholarship. According to McKenna, the life history interview places the interviewer in a position to test and counter "reigning definitions of what is 'important' and worthy of study."[67]

I have attempted to infuse women's perceptions and memories of their experiences throughout the research. This was also crucial in avoiding the possibilities of misconstruing women's experiences as feminist acts against patriarchal domination.[68] In conducting the research, it became evident that female interviewees were less used to inquisitions into their participation in political movements. Most women were reluctant to be interviewed based on the perception that their life histories did not carry political significance. Some would volunteer to introduce me to male respondents, who, in their view, would provide more worthy insight into the political events and processes in Phomolong. This reluctance stems from women's own understanding of political activism as a masculine paradigm. As Carter notes, although the designation of comrade was extended to include women, it was largely used in a gender biased manner. "[T]he world of the comrade was essentially a male preserve."[69]

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[65] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[66] See for example Sangster, J, "Telling our Stories: Feminist Debates and the use of Oral History", *Women's History Review*, Vol.3, No.1, 1994, pp.5-28 and Gluck, B, S and Patai, D (eds), *Women's Words: the Feminist Practice of Oral History*, London: Routledge, 1991.

[67] McKenna, "Sisterhood? Exploring Power Relations in the Collection of Oral History", p.67.

[68]See Borland, K, "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretative Conflict in Oral Interactive Research", *The Oral History Reader Second Edition*, Perks, R and Thomson, A, London: Routledge, 1998.

[69] Carter, "Comrades and Community", p. 229.

In order to counter this masculine understanding of political activism, I had to make it clear to female interviewees that I was more interested in their life experiences in totality. Furthermore, I extensively adhered to Ann Oakley's advice on interviewing women, which makes a case for applying less structural, less hierarchical and less formal interview strategies. Oakley also suggests that in the process of interviewing women, feminists should emphasise similarities and a shared 'sisterhood'.[70] Although I made extensive use of Oakley's approach in conducting interviews with female respondents, I was also sensitive of the vast critique to her work. I was careful not to over-emphasise similarities between the interviewees and myself as the interviewer as this can often obscure "important differences such as class … and level of education" and "create a situation in which female interviewees are lulled into a false sense of security based on the notion of 'sisterhood' and impart personal information they would not normally reveal."[71]

Men don't cry

Oral historians have long held that the social location of an individual can have a significant bearing on his or her engagement with the interview. One of the most challenging encounters I had as a woman in the field was the experience of seeing men cry. This research was in many respects a challenge to the African proverb about the resilience of men to emotionally laden experiences that are interpreted as a sign of weakness and importantly femininity. On the one hand, this could be considered a sign of trust from the side of the interviewer; on the other hand, interviewees felt embarrassed for expressing such emotions – a factor that might be explained by their socialisation.

There were two occasions where the interviewees cried during the interview session. The guidelines provided by Sean Fields on "sensitively acknowledging" interviewee's pain or trauma proved helpful.[72] In such circumstances, interviewees were presented with the option of pausing or stopping the interview. In the first instance, the interviewee chose to stop the interview altogether, in which case I provided him with

[70] Oakley, A, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms?".

[71] McKenna, "Sisterhood? Exploring Power Relations in the Collection of Oral History", p.67.

[72]Fields, S, "What Do I Do When an Interviewee Cries? Oral History Strategies for Containment and Regeneration", in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, Denis, P, Ntsimane, R (eds), University of KwaZulu Natal, 2008, p.157.

a tissue and allowed him to express himself outside of the interview context. In the second instance, the interviewee insisted that we complete the interview. Because the interview was conducted in his home, he briefly retreated into another room and came back later to continue with the interview. I had to give constant assurance to the interviewees that it was okay to cry, more so because it was an almost automatic reaction from the interviewees to apologise for having expressed such emotions. As such, the interviewees expressed relief that the interviews had allowed them the space to talk freely about their emotions and to acknowledge their memories and experiences as legitimate. In contrast, some of the male interviewees completely barred emotional subjects from the interview by saying; i.e., "don't take me down that emotional journey." I found it best to respect the interviewee's wish of not wanting to delve into their painful and emotional experiences. After this, some interviewees later gave me the option of scheduling another interview or simply chose to confine the conversation to an informal one. In the latter instance, my attentive listening apparently communicated the message that I was also interested in their lives beyond merely completing the research or advancing my academic career.

A Janus-like Identity: Insider / Outsider dichotomy

In the initial stages of my research, a few of my informants conducted their own research about me (including my political activism) prior to the interviews. This had a number of advantages. It was a crucial element in building trust between the interviewer and the interviewee, as through this they were able to ascertain my honesty regarding the research project and my other political activities. The interviewees' knowledge about my political activism was important in several respects. Many felt free in divulging information to me about the political organisations they are involved in, particularly the ANC. This stems directly from the perception that being a 'comrade' not only do I identify with the 'struggle' but that I also share many of their experiences. They also allowed me to sit in a number of their meetings. On more than one occasion, interviewees remarked that they would not share much information if I were in opposition politics.

Additionally, interviewees felt affirmed by the sense of imparting vital knowledge to me as not only a researcher but also part of a younger generation of activists. I had to constantly guard against my own bias and understanding of some issues, a factor

successfully thwarted by using the interviewees' self-perception as an entry point into the research.

This notwithstanding, this insider status had a Janus like appearance. It also presented a significant challenge. My known activism in the political terrain meant that some comrades felt uncomfortable telling me certain things, especially as they weighed this as carrying the potential to impair their political careers. However, this 'insider' role carried no more a danger than my class allegiance, racial and gender identity. Equally, I was also an outsider in many respects. Often times I felt my minimal familiarity with the Free State, Phomolong Township, my geographical origin (Johannesburg), class position and gender gave me an identity of an outsider. But this also had some advantages. Given this distance, interviewees felt that their secrets about subjects as varied as family, perceptions about each other, etc., were safe with me.

Ethical Considerations

All interviews were conducted using a tape recorder with the full permission of the interviewees. The details of the research project, its potential use in future, the reason for the interviews and the interviewee's rights to decline being interviewed were made clear to all the interviewees. There were instances where the interviewees expressed a wish that part of the interview must be confidential. This was usually expressed in the middle of the interview and the solution was to pause the tape recorder until such time that sanction was given to continue recording. Transcripts of the interviews were (are) being sent to interviewees for verification and additional commentary.

An ethical principle that is highly contested in terms of life history interviewing is the principle of beneficence. This means the exploration of the means through which interviewees can benefit from the process of the interview.[73] In this case, interviewees have alluded that they would appreciate an exhibition of some form in the Phomolong Public Library giving a synopsis of the history of the township and its people. Means are being explored to this effect. Interviewees also participated because they argued that placing their voices on record would also put Phomolong on the map of

[73] Denis, P, "The Ethics of Oral History" in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, Denis, P, Ntsimane, R (eds), University of KwaZulu Natal, 2008, p.91; p.69.

government attention for better services. While I am not completely certain as to how this will materialise, the idea that this scholarly work may be used to draw public attention to many places such as Phomolong is not altogether a vain one.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One:

This chapter is concerned with the theoretical framework and the review of the literature focusing on the local state and social movements. The chapter argues that there is a serious need for a synthetic approach which takes into cognisance the local state's economic orientation and its impact on local politics and struggle as well as a study of how associational politics and various structures of the local state contributes to the politics of patronage and clietelism. Its limitations notwithstanding, it also argues that social movement theory is useful in understanding the process of identity formation, framing processes, resource mobilisation and the political opportunity structure for protests.

Chapter Two:

This chapter explores the historical background of Phomolong Township. It traces the history of the township of Phomolong from the old location called *Marantha*. The history of the township is located within the available literature on the historical context of urban restructuring and forced removals in the 1950s. This time frame covers historical events such as the growth of the manufacturing sector during the Second World War, the rapid urbanisation of the African population and the housing shortage that arose in many of the country's urban centres during the 1930s and 1940s. The analysis provided in this chapter forms the historical background for the twenty-year (1985-2005) study of Phomolong Township, which ensues in the rest of this dissertation.

Chapter Three:

This chapter traces the development of youth political mobilisation in Phomolong. It argues that the establishment of Bahale Secondary School as a result of the state education reform strategy in the late 1970s is an important prism through which to locate the formation of the Phomolong Youth Congress (PYCO). The chapter posits

that the belated formation of youth political organisations in Phomolong is due to a variety of reasons. Firstly, Black Local Authorities (BLA) did not face serious opposition in Phomolong as their "social-worker" like roles allowed them to enjoy a cordial relationship with older residents. Secondly, councillors' social lives were intertwined with that of the residents. As a result, the small size of the location meant that councillors were also socially proximal to the residents and shared quasi kinship relations with them.

Additionally, adults in Phomolong were also significantly embedded in the apartheid local state apparatus. Their occupations such as policemen, members of the school boards, prison warders, etc., highly depended on the apartheid local state for survival. The deteriorating socio-economic conditions, an increasingly repressive approach by the BLAs such as evictions of defaulters as well as the influence of national struggles are all factors that explain why eventually PYCO was able to establish support among older residents in Phomolong.

Chapter Four:

This chapter analyses two types of organised forms of counter mobilisation in Phomolong during the 1980s. The first is the Eagles Club and the second is what was referred to as *Bontate*[74], which emerged as a vigilante group in 1986. The chapter shows that many PYCO members, while recognising the need to pursue the politics of liberation, were drawn into the Eagles Club by the material benefits it provided. The chapter further argues that *Bontate* posed serious threats to PYCO's political objectives and organisational presence in the township.

Chapter Five:

This chapter looks at the period between 1990 until 2000. It looks at the politics of transition from white minority rule into a democratic local government system. The constitution of Transitional Local Council as well as the misgivings occasioned by this move is scrutinised. The chapter argues that the local state's neoliberal capitation, the local implications of the compromises struck to secure South Africa's transition from apartheid and the intra-organisational battles within the congress movement are

[74]Meaning the fathers in Sesotho.

crucial factors in understanding the politics of the area during this period. These politics had a significant bearing on local struggles that besieged the local state in this township, most notably the 2005 protests.

Chapter Six:

This chapter is concerned with the 2005 Phomolong service delivery protests. The actual protests, the main grievances informing it as well as a discussion on Developmental Local Government are the main subjects interrogated in this chapter. It argues that the eruption of local protests and the apparent failure of Developmental Local Government cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader politics of contestation within the ANC at a local level.

Chapter Seven:

The main organisation at the helm of the 2005 protests – the Crisis Committee – is examined in this chapter. The chapter posits that the inception, mode of operation and composition of the Crisis Committee reveals interesting dynamics about the protest and resistance in the post-apartheid era. Despite some of its promising aspects and potential to effect thoroughgoing transformation on the local state, the Crisis Committee had a hybrid and fluid political character which can be understood by looking at the interface between structural factors and the historical evolution of political mobilisation in the areas concerned.

Chapter 8:

Chapter eight provides a summary of the entire dissertation and highlights some of the key claims made throughout the study. The study's implications for future research on the local state and protest movements are listed in this chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

"The past is full of protest, but only some protests have left footprints."[75]

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature review of this study. The first section engages a theoretical discussion on the local state as a sphere of reproduction or consumption. The second section covers a review of relevant concepts used in social movement theory. Lastly, the chapter reflects on the implications of the theoretical framework and the literature review on the study of the local state from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa.

This thesis makes the case for a synthetic approach to the study of local protests. It uses the study of the local state's economic orientation, social movement theory as well as recent literature on patronage and clientelism to explain the trajectory of local protests in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Theories of the Local State

The local state is important for understanding the social context within which social conflict and contestation occurs. According to Jensen and Simonsen[76], "the local area, with its specific historical development and local political scene," must be factored into any analysis of social conflict and protest.[77] Furthermore, most social movements have their base in the locality and are often aimed at challenging particular aspects within this geographic space. Therefore, the local state, that is principally the sphere in which the reproduction of labour power occurs, is a critical unit of analysis in understanding the social context within which social and protest movements are born.

The concept of the local state was perhaps most forcefully introduced into the critical studies of local government studies in the 1970s by Cynthia Cockburn in her study of

[75] Clemens, E, S & Hughes, M, D – "Recovering Past protests: historical research on social movements", Kladermans, P& Staggenborg, S (eds), *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.8.

[76] Jensen, J and Simonsen, K, "The Local State, Planning and Social Movements", *Acta Sociologica*, 1981, Vol. 24, No. 4, p.279-291.

[77] *Ibid*, p.282.

a London Borough called Lambeth.[78] Cockburn was largely concerned with the changes introduced in the local government architecture that ensured the ascendance of technocratic and managerial aspects of local government in Britain's Lambeth in the 1970s. Her study laments the apprehension solicited by these changes, especially the argument that central government was clenching its fist and usurping the autonomy of the local state. The basic idea is that these new changes constituted a continuation and improvement of the role of the state in capitalist societies. She perceived the main aim of these changes as an enhancement of state functions in order to safeguard and support capital accumulation.[79]

Cockburn's study refutes the argument advanced by representational theories that the local state is like a vehicle that abides by whoever is steering the wheel. For Cockburn, the local state must be studied in relation to the study of the capitalist mode of production and how wealth is produced and distributed within a capitalist society. According to this formulation, the state in a capitalist society can be understood in several ways. The most important is that the state (including the local state) plays an important role in reproducing the capitalist mode of production. This happens through a reproduction of the productive forces and relations of production. The first aspect of this requires the availability and provision of the capital, machinery and raw materials necessary for production. It also involves the reproduction of labour power. For Cockburn, structures of the local state such as councils are subordinate to these functions and their existence is aimed at reproducing the conditions for capital accumulation, despite electoral expectations. In her own words, "powerful business interests scarcely notice a local council."[80]

She adds that it should not come as a surprise that the connections between the capitalist state and capital are not as overtly beneficial and direct. The main reason for this, according to Cockburn, is that the "dominant class" is divided into fractions with varied interests. The state, in its relationship with these fractions, does not merely play the role of a "secretariat" but rather actively intervenes to ensure that it organises these fractions, satisfying the interests of one against the other at given moments,

[78] Cockburn, C, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People*, London: Plato Press, 1977.

[79] *Ibid*, p.46.

[80] *Ibid*, p.25.

whilst at the same time ensuring that the working class is politically and culturally disorganised. The disorganisation of the working class can only be successful if the state keeps a reasonable distance between the different fractions of capital. In other words, what Cockburn refers to as some form of detached integrity, ensures the perpetuation of the idea that the state represents the 'general will' or the entire nation.[81] Her assertions place her squarely within the instrumentalist school of the study of the state.

Cockburn's analysis of the local state garnered several criticisms. For one, her arguments were critiqued for failing to provide a sound and precise definition of the concept of the local state. This critique emanates from Duncan and Goodwin[82] who assert that the manner in which the concept is utilised lacks theoretical precision. As such, it leaves little wonder as to whether it is merely a radical spin to the concept of local government designed to distinguish it from more 'traditional' views on local government. In fact, the local state and local government as concepts are often conflated to denote the same object of analysis. Cockburn's use of the term draws links and highlights the interface between the local and central state as well as the wider social and economic system. However, despite the term's usefulness in pointing to the variations in state action and class relations, Duncan and Goodwin maintain that the fatigue that informs the lack of conceptual clarity in its use is something that warrants criticism.[83]

This critique is valid, as Cockburn herself admits by pointing out that there is no "ready-made theory of local government"; her endeavour is dedicated more to pondering the questions raised in classical Marxism about the state and to use these as a basis for studying local government in advanced capitalist societies. Throughout her book, Cockburn indeed evades the question of what exactly constitutes the local state.[84]

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[81] *Ibid*, p.47.

[82] Duncan, S and Goodwin, M, "The Local State: Functionalism, Autonomy and Class Relations in Cockburn and Saunders", *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.1, January 1982.

[83] *Ibid*.

[84] Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People*, p.41 .

Duncan and Goodwin are credited for suggesting new ways of using the concept of the local state. For these authors, critical attention must be paid to the state as a particular form of capitalist social relations. Furthermore, they charge that much as this is important, the fetishism about the functions and institutions of local government has led to a neglect of the study of the social relations that give rise to such functions and institutions. A comprehensive theory of the local state should be able to account for differences in local state behaviour at varied historical points as well as identifying social processes that determine outcomes and whether these differ from processes at a national level.[85]

Moreover, Duncan and Goodwin level another criticism at Cockburn's work that she treats the local state as an unchanging and ahistorical entity that is devoid of tools to study the historically developing and changing class relations at a local level. They argue that Cockburn has fossilised Marxist concepts, casting them in stone and using them to depict a picture of the state as a universal and static reality. Their discomfort arises with the perception that Cockburn's analysis is little more than asserting that the "executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."[86] Although many of Cockburn's postulations can prove relevant and accurate when studied in isolation, their limitations rest with the fact that they do not account for variances in state action. Even though her study does certainly take into account the role of class struggle and contradictions in shaping what happens at the level of the local state and the way in which the state can act autonomously from capital, the lacuna lies in the reality that she treats 'relative autonomy' from capital as a mere point of retreat. This is where her crude analysis of state-capital relations reaches its explanatory zenith.

In essence, scholars maintain that this is unhelpful as it tends to depict the state as a God-given (or rather, structure given) hidden hand existing in some unexplained way outside of class society. Duncan and Goodwin are emphatic in the need to study social relations at the level of the local state and urge that although the local state may be an integral part of the entire state apparatus both constitutionally and administratively, it is not *a priori* that social relations emanating at the local state will be a simple replica

[85] *Ibid*, p.86.

[86] Marx, K and Engels, F, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848.

or "scaled-down bits of processes operating nationally."[87] As such, this argument points to a rejection of the notion that the local state is a mere conveyor belt of central state policies and that the relationship between the two is devoid of conflict and contradiction. This critique is strongly articulated by Saunders who opts for a neo-Weberian approach to the local state.[88]

Saunders argues that the state has a dual identity, with the local state and central state performing different functions under the capitalist mode of production. According to the dual state thesis, the local state is mainly charged with the responsibility of consumption. Additionally, he argues that since consumption cuts across class lines and is less driven by profit, the local state is more amenable to being captured by popular classes and is therefore a site for genuine advances. In his more recent work, Saunders further explains the possibilities for progressive advancement entailed in the local state. He argues that:

> [E]xperience of domination and alienation which inevitably characterises the organisation of production in the modern period may, to some extent, be countered in the realm of consumption where there is a real potential for people to exert some degree of control over their everyday lives.[89]

In other words, the local state is more amenable to being captured by different interest groups who can steer it in a direction that is aimed at enhancing their everyday life. According to Saunders, this is in sharp contrast to what marks the central state, which he argues is distinguished by its responsibility over the politics of production and capitalist accumulation. According to Duncan and Goodwin:

> The national state is identified with a classless, corporate state; the local state becomes a pluralist state of conflicting interests and classes. The latter is concerned with consumption, and so displays 'urban politics' – conflict over 'urban' consumption. The national state concerned with production, displays mediation and cooption – a sanitised non-politics.[90]

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[87] Duncan and Goodwin, "The Local State: Functionalism, Autonomy and Class Relations in Cockburn and Saunders", p. 86

[88] Saunders, P, *Social Theory and the Urban Question 2nd Edition*, London: Routledge, 1986.

[89] *Ibid*, p.205.

[90] Duncan and Goodwin, "The Local State: Functionalism, Autonomy and Class Relations in Cockburn and Saunders", p. 86.

Saunders draws largely on Claus Offe's[91] work on the local state who suggests that a distinction must be drawn between the state's role in production and allocation. Accordingly, the allocative function is geared towards meeting the needs for capital accumulation. Therefore, the state is increasingly drawn into a position where it has to engage in production itself and offer those commodities that private capital cannot or will not provide (housing, health, commodities, etc.). These state provided services and functions in the reproduction of labour is what Castells calls *collective consumption*.[92] The question of which social force is favoured by this allocative function will be determined by pressures exerted from outside the state.[93]

Offe's thesis cautions against using deductive reasoning when looking at the role of the state. He argues that in advanced capitalist states there is an emergence of a new strategy championed by capitalist state policy. Quite persuasively, Offe maintains that this strategy demonstrates the inability of the state to raise enough taxation in order to support certain welfare interventions that are geared towards subsidising those sectors of the economy that cannot assume a pure commodity form. He argues that this has led to a situation where the state engages in the "*administrative re-commodification*" of these sectors.[94] This effectively means that the state intervenes to ensure that these sectors of the economy regain some form of exchange value in the market. Saunders refers to the same phenomenon as the move from a *socialised mode of consumption*, where the state assumes a direct role in providing the means of collective consumption to a *privatised mode of consumption* where access to the means of collective consumption is increasingly provided through the market.[95] This situation gives rise to a number of structural contradictions which become the focal point of social conflict and political struggles in many countries.

It is reasonable to suggest that Saunders' use of Offe's work is selective. Despite Offe's critique of simple class reductionism and deductive reasoning that shows little appreciation for empirical study; he does place the mode of accumulation as well as

[91] Offe, C and Ronge, V, "Theses on the Theory of the State", *New German Critique*, No.6, 1975.

[92] Castells, *City, Class and Power*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1978.

[94] Offe's discussion on the fiscal crisis of the advanced capitalist state is inspired by O'Connor's work on the same. See O'Connor, J, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, New York, 1973.
[95] Saunders, *Social Theory and the Urban Question 2nd Edition*, p.222.

class relations at the centre of his analysis of the state under capitalism. Furthermore, one of Offe's[96] most useful interventions relates to his conceptualisation of state power and the limits that the capitalist mode of production places on the use of such power.

Through this analysis, he defines the capitalist state as an institutional form of political power distinguished by three main elements. The first element is that the use of state power is confined within the boundaries determined by the manner in which production is organised in society. As such, political power – exercised by occupants of state power – operates within the context where private property ownership predominates. This means that those with political power do not have the prerogative to decide how the means of production are utilised. This is a decision that lies directly with the owners of the means of production. Secondly, exercising political power and fulfilling the demands of the electorate indirectly depends on the volume of private accumulation. For instance, the state's ability to tax capital affects the extent to which it can provide housing, sanitation, health and education to the electorate. Therefore, taxation as a material resource is necessary to promote most political goals set by political parties in their contestation of state power. The third point that Offe makes is that it is precisely this reliance on the system of private accumulation that results in coinciding interests between the capitalist class and the policies pursued by state managers. As a result, *"every occupant of state power is basically interested in promoting those conditions most conducive to accumulation."*[97]

Consequently, instead of explaining this outcome as a result of some collusion on the part of state managers and the capitalist class or the pressures placed by this class on the occupants of political power, Offe argues that this stems from the quest for survival on the part of the occupants of state power. In this regard, this "institutional self-interest" drives the state to see thriving capitalist accumulation as a necessary condition for its survival. Thus, although in many democratic regimes occupants of state power ascend through electoral contestation, this is but one aspect of the determination of power in capitalist states. The material dependency of the state on

[96] Offe, C and Ronge, V, "Theses on the Theory of the State, p.140.

[97] *Ibid*.

the mode of accumulation means that this has a direct bearing on how power is exercised and sets the limits within which certain things can be realised.[98]

This view has found widespread support amongst theorists of the state, including Ralph Miliband.[99] In sharing the same sentiments, Miliband argues against the neo-Weberian pluralist conceptualisation of power in a capitalist society. He dispels the notion that the state is an entity that is contested by different interest groups who all have equal power to influence it. By implication, no government exercising executive state power can fail to fulfil and realise the wishes of these competing interests. According to Miliband, the first travesty committed by this school of thought is to discard the idea that the state might be a form of an institutionalisation of class relations.[100] This being the case, Miliband is critical of the inability for innovation contained within the Marxist theorisation of the state. He strongly argues that there needs to be a departure from the view that sees the state, especially its executive arm as a mere processing and implementation machine for decisions aimed at strengthening the rule of the capitalist class.[101] In this way, Miliband can be interpreted as directly countering some of the postulations advanced in Cockburn's engagement with the question of the state. Like Offe, Miliband has little patience for those who argue for the jettisoning class as a category through which to analyse social conflict. In the same vein, he argues that in as much as class antagonisms between the two polarised classes in advanced capitalist countries form the contours of social conflict, the importance of other classes (e.g. the middle class) cannot be given a mere figurative reference.[102]

He further argues that bourgeois politicians[103] exercise power within the terms and conditions set by the economic and social system of private ownership and accumulation. He takes issue with the whole notion that occupants of state power are

[98] *Ibid*.

[99] Miliband, R, *The State in Capitalist Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1969.

[100] *Ibid*, p.3.

[101] *Ibid*, p.5.

[102] *Ibid*, p. 17.

[103] Miliband specifies that they are bourgeois in so far as they accept the way in which wealth is produced and distributed in society.

a mere collective which together manages the entire affairs of the capitalist class. Instead, in his view, political office holders consider their actions as part of realising the commonweal – what is good for capitalism is also good for the nation.[104] This commitment to the system of private accumulation does not necessarily mean that politicians see themselves as intervening on behalf of the capitalist class. In reality, he argues that even in instances where the state has intervened and momentarily circumvented the interests of a particular fraction of the capitalist class, this has been motivated by the need to implement some corrective measures in the system rather than to challenge its main tenets.

Saunders' formulations have been revised in a book titled, *Social Theory and the Urban Question,*[105] wherein he makes the admission that production and consumption are dialectically linked in that production influences consumption patterns and vice versa. This is evident in at least two ways: society cannot produce goods that will never be consumed whilst people cannot consume what has not been produced. Admittedly, the social relations of production do place certain constraints on the consumption capacities of different social groups. Despite this revision, Saunders continues to question the link(s) between class and consumption capacity, the changes in the structure of capitalist production and the bearing this has on the provision of the means of collective consumption. To Saunders, the traditional cleavage in society is no longer between capital and labour or owners and non-owners of the means of production; a social rupture has occurred and this has displaced class as the main prism through which to study social conflict.

The rupture alluded to in Saunders' formulation is based primarily on the fact that we are increasingly moving towards "a mode of consumption in which the majority will satisfy most of its consumption requirements through private purchase ... while the minority is cast adrift on water-logged raft of what remains of the welfare state".[106] Subsequently, he argues that life is increasingly shaped by the politics of consumption rather than the more common class divisions arising out of the social relations of production. Accordingly, this division between those who can service their key

[104] *Ibid*, p.75.

[105] Saunders, *Social Theory and the Urban Question*.

[106] *Ibid*, p. 225.

consumption requirements through the market and a minority who remain reliant on an increasingly inadequate and *alienative* form of direct state provision, is perhaps more significant as it has a bearing not only on political alignments but can also determine material life chances.[107]

Even though few studies can contest that the increased privatisation of the provision of the means of collective consumption such as water, electricity, housing and transport has reconfigured the contours of social conflict; many, including this thesis, would challenge the suggestion that "a fault line [is opening up] ... in society, not along the lines of class, nor even along the lines of gender or ethnicity ... but around ownership and non-ownership of the key resources for consumption".[108] Scholars such as Mingione[109] have drawn links between the changing structure of production in advanced capitalist societies and how this impacts on consumption. Mingione's analysis suggests that there is a disintegration of the traditional class system in advanced capitalist societies and that a new process of "social re-stratification" is currently underway. The latter is marked by blurring of class boundaries and the fracturing of class allegiances. New sets of divisions are emerging and these presumably express themselves more in the sphere of consumption than production. The local state thus becomes the locus of social conflict.[110]

Saunders continues to assert what he considers to be an unhelpful and unnecessary reversion to the melancholy of Marxism, arguing that it is unfortunate that many have tried to reduce consumption cleavages as a ripple effect of the exploitation of labour by capital in the workplace. He argues that this is simply reductionism.

> What we are facing here is not a reflection of familiar relations of exploitation and domination but the emergence of new ones. The key difference between the two is ... that whereas the class system is constituted in such a way that a minority excludes the majority from its power and privileges, the divisions arising out of consumption reveal an inverted pattern. The implications of this for an understanding of the distribution of life chances and the development of future lines of conflict and cleavage are enormous, for the more the important

[107] *Ibid*, p. 205.

[108] *Ibid*.

[109] Mingione, E, "Pahl and Lojkine on the State: A Comment", *International Journal of Regional Research*, Vol.1, No.2, March-Dec 1977, pp.24-36.

[110] *Ibid*.

> consumption sphere becomes in people's lives, the more likely they are to see themselves as part of a majority with something to defend rather than (as in the class system) part of the majority with nothing to lose.[111]

He continues,

> The 'haves' are becoming a majority while the 'have-nots' – those who, by virtue of age, education, gender, race or religion cannot achieve private access to key consumption resources – are coming to form a small, fragmented, alienated and isolated ... whose response to their marginalisation may vary from morose to violent and inarticulate reaction.[112]

This thesis argues that although we should eschew narrow and predetermined class reductionism when studying the local state, the assertion by many that the analysis of the local state through the prism of class struggle as outdated is flawed and open to challenge.

Castells and Collective Consumption

Castells, in illuminating his concept of collective consumption, argues that there is a dialectical link between the system of production and the distribution of the products amongst different social groups. According to his reasoning, the traditional cleavages between labour and capital at the point of production find expression in new social cleavages that are directly related to the use of certain collective goods and services. In this regard, struggles for housing, health and recreational facilities feature increasingly as part of the struggles to increase the indirect or social wage.[113]

Castells argues for a need to study the structural factors related to a particular phase of the capitalist mode of production that make collective consumption a burning issue. These he lists as (i) centralisation and concentration of capital and its constant battle against the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, (ii) the socialisation of the productive forces, (iii) the development of the class struggle and the increasing power of labour to bargain even for all aspects of social life, including collective goods and services, and (iv) the massive and decisive intervention of the state into the totality of economic activity.[114] The third and fourth factors are crucial in this equation because

[111] Saunders, *Social Theory and the Urban Question*.

[112] *Ibid*.

[113] Castells, *City, Class and Power*, p. 15 - 22.

[114] *Ibid*, p. 17.

the growing confidence of labour to extend its reach to the sphere of reproduction means that at times capital is more amenable to making concessions at this sphere rather than at the point of production or in relation to matters involving political power. Furthermore, the increased intervention of the state in the sphere of collective consumption, while it is necessary to reproduce the system as a whole, to appease certain capitalist interest and to dampen working class radicalism, is nevertheless a highly contentious issue.[115]

Jensen and Simonsen identify three reasons why collective consumption has a politicising effect. Firstly, because access to collective consumption is partially determined by class membership, access, or lack thereof, can create new and reinforce existing class differences and antagonisms. This, in line with Castells' theorisation, can also open avenues for broader class alliances as consumption problems sometimes affects classes wider than the working class, while also creating the basis for common experiences and collective action. Secondly, decisions affecting the allocation or distribution of the means of collective consumption are more open to public scrutiny, conscious understanding and collective challenge. Finally, collective consumption is centred on the local state and this makes this sphere an arena of fierce contestation. Therefore, when analysing social movements and their political outlook, it is essential to closely examine the development of collective consumption and local environment in which it takes place.[116]

The theses advanced by Offe, Miliband and Castells carry a golden common thread. For Castells, much like the two former scholars, the state's actions in securing the interests of capital whilst simultaneously acting in the interests of the entire system has a politicising effect on popular classes. Castells calls this the *double autonomy* of the state. At this point, the state is identified as a responsible agent whenever there is surplus or scarcity of the resources it is expected to distribute. This places the question of collective consumption squarely within the realm of politico-ideological competition rather than being simply treated in economic terms. It also places the

[115] *Ibid*.

[116] Jensen and Simonsen, "The Local State, Planning and Social Movements", p.282.

issue of power relations at the local level as central and critical in accessing the means of collective consumption.[117]

Saunders defends Castells' concept of collective consumption against a variety of criticisms, including ones levelled by Pahl[118] and Lojkine[119], but at the same time challenges some of its tenets. He argues that many who have critiqued it do so through its misuse. In his critique, he argues that Pahl has failed to grasp the fact that the state's provision of collective consumption serves to politicise the urban crises. He further argues that the appearance of the state provides the inhabitants with a target to blame for the lack or slow pace of accessing goods and services necessary to satisfy collective needs. This is precisely what makes collective consumption distinct from consumption mediated through the market.[120]

Saunders' postulations are challenged when the concept of collective consumption is measured against its purported outcomes. He argues that it cannot be assumed that a crisis in housing provision will lead to an alliance of "anti-capitalists classes" when in fact many people have access to housing or rely on the market for its provision. He points to certain instances where the means of collective consumption, far from bringing different classes together, may serve to undermine interclass solidarity. In articulating this point, Saunders uses the example that the middle class may see the increasing demands of the working class for housing as a direct threat to their property ownership. It is also argued that a crisis of the means of collective consumption that are consumed at an individual level will have a different and less radical bearing on urban protest than a crisis in the provision of the means of collective consumption that are consumed collectively. According to Saunders, this is because where facilities are consumed at an individual or family level; they are often not accompanied by a common sense of collective awareness and deprivation. A crisis in collective consumption will only affect those who do not yet have access to such

[117] *Ibid*, 19.

[118] Pahl, R, "Collective Consumption and the state in capitalist and state socialist societies" in Scase, R (ed), *Industrial Society: Class, Cleavage and Control*, Tavistock, 1977.

[119] Lojkine, J, "Contribution to a Marxist theory of capitalist urbanisation," in Pickvance, C*, Urban Sociology: critical essays*, Tavistock, 1976.

[120] Castells, *City, Class and Power*, p. 15 – 22.

means. Saunders uses this argument to challenge Castells' conceptualisation of urban social movements.[121]

Drawing from Castells' theorisation of the local state, collective consumption and urban social movements and in challenging Saunders' assertions, this study will explore the nexus between the argument surrounding the market increasingly taking over the distribution of the collective means of consumption and where struggles arise, questioning the diminished role of the state in providing collective necessities. It does so through pondering two critical questions: What are the potential pitfalls for blindly applying Castells' formulation on the urban crisis, especially the implications for neoliberal capitalism where the state is increasingly withdrawing from the provision of the means of collective consumption? And, what does this mean for the argument about the politicising effect of state intervention?

The thesis will further illustrate how the manner in which different scholars articulate the role of the local state largely influences how they conceptualise social conflict. This will necessitate engaging different theories of social conflict, particularly social movement theory, principally for three reasons. Firstly, since a detailed analysis of the local state as an arena of social conflict is presented, it is essential that we study different types of social conflicts emanating from the local state and their different theoretical explanations. Secondly, there is a need to ascertain the extent to which the recent South African "service delivery protests" can be explained using the analytical categories applicable to social movement theories. Finally, the assertion that the changing structure of capitalist production has jettisoned the working class as the main actor in history is also interrogated. This thesis inverts this assertion by posing the question; to what extent can these local struggles be interpreted as symbolic of the attenuated state of the struggle between labour and capital? Additionally, is it useful to draw a line between struggles centred on collective consumption and struggles at the factory floor? What are some of the local, specific and historic factors at play in this equation?

Social Movement Theories

[121] Saunders, "Urban Politics, a rejoinder to Duncan and Goodwin", p.186.

A number of attempts have been made to analyse contentious politics and to answer the question around why humans revolt. As such, there are various definitions of social movements. For the benefit of this study, social movements are defined as movements that wage a series of demands or challenges on behalf of a social category that lacks an entrenched presence. Jelin[122] defines social movements as "forms of collective action with a high degree of popular participation, which use non-institutional channels and formulate their demands whilst simultaneously finding forms of action to express them, thus establishing themselves as … a group or social categories".[123] Social movements are usually populated by actors that are marginal to decision-making processes and therefore need to mobilise public opinion as a way of entrenching their presence in society. In most instances, extra-institutional forms of collective action are seen as central to the definition of social movements.[124]

Ballard et al[125] defines social movements as politically or socially directed collectivities that involve networks and multiple organizations which are geared towards changing one or more elements of the status quo.[126] Their definition raises caution about subsuming all forms of resistance and collective action in post-1994 South Africa under this category. The argument advanced in this literature is that not all forms of resistance in this period developed a collective identity nor are all forms of political resistance were necessarily popularly located.[127]

According to Della Porta and Diani[128], social movements are discernible from other forms of collective action as they constitute a distinct social process through which actors engaged in collective action share a collective identity, linked by dense

[122] Jelin, E, "Otros Silencious , Otras Voces, el tempo de la democratization en Argentina", in Calederon, F *et al* (eds*) Los Movementos Sociales ante la crisis*, Westview Press, 1992 – quoted in Escobar, A and Alvarez, S, *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America*, 1992, p.5.

[123] *Ibid*.

[124] Della Porta, D, Diani, M, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999, p.28.

[125] Ballard, R, Habib, A, Valodia, I and Zuern, E, *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid in South Africa*, University of Kwazulu Natal Press: University of Kwazulu Natal, 2006.

[126] *Ibid*, p.3.

[127] *Ibid*.

[128] Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*.

informal networks, and involved in conflicting relations with clearly defined opponents.[129] In this way, social movements differ from other forms of collective action and organisations in that they are not merely the sum total of events and initiatives but encompass the development of a collective identity that is defined by a common purpose and commitment to a particular cause. Actors within social movements view themselves as inextricably linked to others within the same movement.[130]

Tarrow[131] makes a useful distinction between social movement theorisation inspired by Marxist traditions and those inspired by the Durkhemian theory of society.[132] To begin with, Durkehim's assumptions about collective action were to view it as falling outside the orbit of normal and functioning societies. Two strands of this thinking are evident in this theory. The first, residing in a vision of society governed by norms and rules, he argued that collective action resulted from the urge to recompose what is a decomposing society governed by anomie or normlessness. Hence, individuals sought to carve new collective identities by being part of movements. The second strand was more sophisticated in that it departed from the approach that collective behaviour is a consequence of societal breakdown and decay. Instead, the relative deprivation of individuals was a key ingredient in explaining collective action. One of the proponents of this view, Ted Gurr, argued that relative deprivation is a situation whereby actors perceive a disjuncture between what they expect and the capacity of the environment to fulfil these expectations. He adds that relative deprivation only comes into existence once actors perceive their deprivation as a result of some form of interference. Gurr urged for the need to distinguish between collective and personal deprivation, contending that "[f]or given groups, and for some classes of societies, it is possible to identify events and patterns of conditions that are likely to be widely seen as unjust deprivation."[133] It is important to differentiate these "from such

[129] *Ibid*, p. 20-21,

[130] *Ibid*.

[131] Tarrow, S, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 14.

[132] *Ibid*.

[133] Gurr, T, "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence", *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1968, p.253.

unexpected personal frustrations ... which may be relatively common but random incidents in most populations."[134]

Tarrow argues that the traditional Marxist approach to collective action is useful in that it departs from the view that conceives social conflict as a deviation from the normal functioning of society. For this school of thought, conflict is an integral part of society and inscribed in the manner in which different societies are organised. In addition, collective action results from structural developments as opposed to individual choice. It is part of the struggle waged by classes, in particular the working class that seeks to realise itself as a class both objectively and subjectively (in pursuit of its own interests). Its core proposition is that class polarisation is at the heart of collective action. Tarrow proceeds in his analysis by arguing that Lenin's emphasis on the need for a vanguard party as part of the resources needed for collective action, and Gramsci's emphasis on the need to build the cultural hegemony of the working class through organic intellectuals and creating a historic bloc of forces around the working class, are largely inadequate in explaining collective action.[135]

Moreover, Tarrow notes that in all these strands one could locate in Marx what students of social movements later called grievance theory, in Lenin what later became known as resource mobilisation theory, and in Gramsci the identity oriented model of collective action. Tarrow postulates that the caveat in all these approaches is the scant attention paid to the issue of political constraints and opportunities for collective action.[136]

The premise of new social movement theories shares the broad consensus of the inadequacies of classical Marxism in explaining the rise of social protest. Students of social movements found that some of the postulations advanced in Marxian analysis paid scant attention to the issue of political constraints and opportunities for collective action; others urged that the dynamism of the system of capitalism was such that the notion that the working class would be the motive force of historical change is now obsolete. Essentially, new social movements rest on the argument that the changing

[134] *Ibid*, p.254.

[135] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*.

[136] *Ibid*.

and dynamic nature of the capitalist mode of production has rid history of a coherent social actor which can drive the process of social change. As such, formulations that emphasise economic factors are attacked for their economic determinism and for placing conflict at the sphere of production as the determinant of social conflicts.[137]

The notion that other social identities are subordinate to class in terms of their impact on social struggle is fiercely contested by advocates of the new social movement theory. These scholars counter the suggestion of a proletarian revolution; they challenge classical Marxism for its deposal of other forms of identities and the drivers of collective action. Instead, they argue that new forms of collective action arise from identities around race, ethnicity or nationality as opposed to class.[138] This is basically an argument for jettisoning class as the determining factor in the rise of contentious politics. As a result, groups that may undertake contentious politics or rather what has been called "oppositional consciousness"[139] can develop around race, ethnicity or nationality as opposed to class.[140]

Without oversimplifying and overlooking the heterogeneity that exists within the post-Fordist discourse, there is a general consensus on the changes propelled by this new phase of capitalist production. Della Porta argues that the rise of unemployment in many advanced capitalist countries has been coupled with the creation of a "new middle class" which is an offspring of the growth in service sectors of the economy.[141] New intra-class cleavages are on the ascendance, particularly with more increased migration and as more women enter the workforce. Conflicts around gender and ethnicity are seen here as displacing the working class model of collective action. This view of "capitalism at a cross roads" is alleged to have displaced the "old social movement of the passing age" which focused mobilisation on class and nationality.[142]

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[137] Beuchler, S, "New Social Movement Theories", *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 1995, p.441.

[138] *Ibid*, p.441.

[139] Mansbridge, J, "The Making of Oppositional Consciousness" in Mansbridge, J, Morris, A, *Oppositional Consciousness: the roots of Social Protest*, Chigaco: University o Chicago Press, 2001.

[140] Beuchler, "New Social Movement Theories", p.441.

[141] Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*, p.53.

[142] Amin, A, "Post-Fordism: Models, Fantasies and Phantoms of Transition", in Amin, A, *Post-Fordism- A Reader*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing, 1994, p.2.

It is important to note that many theorists studying social movements in Third World countries have taken a different perspective to this, often highlighting the importance of class in these movements. Veltmeyer, who engages in a study of what has been called "new peasant movements" in Latin America, takes issue with the post-modern approach to studying social movements. His analysis argues that class is an important basis for understanding social movements. From this perspective, these "new peasant movements" can be seen as the most dynamic force against neoliberal capitalism in Latin America.[143]

McAdam *et al*[144] suggest that studies of social movements can be discerned along three lines. The first mode of analysis is through looking at the structures and political opportunities and constraints confronting a movement. Secondly, some analysis has tended to focus on the forms of organisation available to collective actors. This has been referred to as the resource mobilisation theory. Lastly, scholars focus on the process through which a collective identity is formed and ideology negotiated. The conventional shorthand for these three aspects is political opportunity structure, mobilisation structures/resource mobilisation theory and framing process.[145] Each of these aspects is explored in this study.

Political Opportunity Structure

This approach looks at the structural conditions that make collective action possible at particular points. It looks at the context in which political mobilization occurs. This school of thought focuses on political variables that make it easier for contentious politics to emerge. Scholars who subscribe to this approach argue that collective action can be aptly explained by the existence of political opportunity. Charles Tilly[146] is considered one of the pioneering theoreticians of this approach. What he called a polity model has been widely used to explain why social movements arise in

[143] Veltmeyer, H, "New Social Movements in Latin America: The Dynamics of Class and Identity", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, 1997, pp.139-169. See also Petras, J and Veltemeyer, H, *Social Movements in Latin America: Neoliberalism and Popular Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

[144] McAdam, D, McCarthy, J, Zald, M, "Introduction: Opportunities, mobilising Structures and Framing Processes-towards a synthetic comparative perspective on social movements" in McAdam *et al* (eds) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

[145] *Ibid*, p.2.

[146] Tilly, C, *Social Movements, 1768–2004*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

certain contexts and not in others. This polity model was seen as being state-centric as it focused on factors such as the extent of state repression (or lack thereof) as a mitigating factor or a political threat to contentious politics.[147]

Later, scholars such as Tarrow have argued for a more comprehensive approach to the political process model.[148] As such, different types of conditions that can be considered conducive to contentious politics have been considered. In the first instance, the relative openness or closure of the political system is a crucial factor in collective action. This factor is often coupled with state of repression which Tilly extensively elaborated in his work. The stability existing in a broad set of elite alignments is also seen as an important variable. The tolerance of dissent and protest among the elites is a crucial factor. This aspect might be aided by the existence of conflict and tension among various elite groupings. The existence (or lack thereof) of political opportunity is contingent upon the above. This approach is credited for paying ample attention to the relationship between social movements, institutional political systems as well as factors that lead to the rise of rather non-institutional forms of political action. What is clear is that when scholars refer to the political process model, factors exogenous to the movement are accorded premium.[149]

This approach is credited for answering the question about why contentious politics develop in certain historical periods and not others. In addition, it is argued that the approach is more receptive to being combined with other strands of social movement theories in order to craft a more encompassing explanation of the rise of contentious politics.

As Tarrow observes:

> People engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around cleavages in society, when they bring together people around inherited cultural symbols, and when they can build on or construct dense social networks and connective

[147] *Ibid*.

[148] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics.*

[149] Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004*.

> structures, then these episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents-specifically, in social movements.[150]

The main critique mounted against this view is that whilst it explains the context under which social movements arise, it does so using factors largely exogenous to the movement itself. Building on this, theorists have argued that the study of the internal dynamics of social movements is therefore crucial to understanding why some movements arise in some contexts and not others despite the existence of similar political opportunity. Furthermore, opportunity structures may or may not limit a movement's ability to mobilize. Thus, they do not necessarily give rise to social movements. The basic contention in most critiques is that no movement can be understood without analyzing the material structure in which it is formed, a point which the political opportunity theorists clearly miss.[151]

Conversely, other critiques allege that the approach pays too much attention to the structural variable that influences the rise of collective action. This is at the expense of studying some of the discursive elements that may influence a movement's strategy and the extent to which it succeeds. Moreover, it is difficult to designate between subjective and objective factors that form part of the political opportunity process. Della Porta and Diani posit that the "cognitive process" is important for the explanation of the emergence of protest. Therefore, activists' understanding of protest and its likely outcome is an aspect that warrants serious attention. In other words, actors engaged in collective action must believe that the political opportunity exists, that they have the power to change things and have identified an adversary in this process.[152]

Another criticism is that the theory lacks analytical precision because there are several of variables that can be used in different contexts to denote the existence of political opportunity. As such, using this approach in different contexts might leave one with an assortment of variables to denote the existence (or lack thereof) of political opportunity such that the approach can lose its specificity.[153] It is useful to note that

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[150] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, p.20.

[151] Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004*.

[152] Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*, p.73-74.

[153] *Ibid*.

whilst other theories are more concerned with pointing out the defects of Marxism regarding the analysis of such movements, others seek to revise Marxism and take into consideration some of the challenges these new developments pose to the broader development of Marxist theory. One of the proponents of the latter approach is Manuel Castells, who has focused on the impact of capitalist dynamics in the transformation of urban spaces. After briefly scanning events of popular protests in various countries, Castells comes to the conclusion that a new form of social conflict is emerging in which struggles over the collective organisation of everyday life take centre stage.[154] Castells posits that issues around collective consumption have become seminally important and increasingly draw the state at the centre of social conflicts. From this perspective, the urban space is increasingly becoming a sphere of conflict, where dominant interests seek to define the agenda and shape this space in line with the goals of capitalist relations of production whilst grassroots movements seek to challenge these impositions and defend popular interests.[155]

The point of departure is that the politicisation of urban contradictions via state intervention leads to the politicisation of the local state. So while the means of collective consumption are necessary for the capitalist system to thrive (i.e. labour must be constantly reproduced), they are often a point of contention because of their non-profitability for capitalists. State provision is usually inadequate. History has shown that because of the intransigence of capital to accede to certain working class demands at the point of production, struggles around collective consumption yield more positive results than the former struggles around production.

> What is more important is that state intervention in collective consumption politicises the totality of urban contradictions, transforms the state into a manager of the equipment of daily life, and globalises and politicises the conflicts which emerge in this sphere. Determined by capitalist contradictions in the reproduction of labour power and modulated by political class struggle underlying national policies, state intervention at the urban level, which attempts to be a regulating element, becomes a new source of contradictions at the level of the popular strata. Thus, it expresses and at the same time accelerates the crisis of the capitalist state.[156]

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[154] Castells, M, *The city and the grassroots: a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements,* Edward Arnold, London, 1983.

[155] *Ibid*.

[156] Castells, *City, Class and Power*, p.43.

From this perspective, contentious politics within the urban space typically arise around several factors. Firstly, there is a struggle around the distribution of goods and services which are necessary for the material reproduction of the working class. In this regard, these movements do inadvertently challenge the logic of the commodification of livelihoods under capitalism. Some of these movements argue that goods and services necessary for material production should be prioritised based on their usefulness as opposed to their exchange value. In the second instance, these movements arise out of the need to protect certain forms of identities that face a threat from increased bureaucratisation and homogenisation. In this regard, Castells, despite placing premium on urban contradictions, does not completely rely on structural factors at the negligence of factors such as identity and culture. Thirdly, such forms of contentious politics aims at giving citizens more voice in everyday government and the autonomy to make decisions about what affects them. All these factors have made it necessary for Castells to argue that these movements carry the real potential for change and thus deserving of the label "urban social movements".[157]

These movements provide the space for change in that they challenge the manner in which capitalist states organise collective consumption. Succinctly, the alliance between urban social movements – comprising of an alliance of anti-capitalist classes and organised labour (as well as communist parties) – can lead to a situation whereby urban contradictions brought on by the profit motive could champion the process for alternative ways of organising society, both at the factory floor and in the sphere of reproduction. The importance of urban social movements derives from two aspects. The first is that they present the possibility for an inter-class alliance, since it is not only the proletariat which will be disadvantaged by a crisis of collective consumption. Secondly, urban social movements open up new arenas for class struggle – the reproductive sphere or local state being the principal arena.[158]

Castells' intervention is aimed at salvaging Marxism from the various critiques levelled upon it. He does this by arguing that although conflict does centre on a number of issues that may not be automatically linked to class contestation, the role that class cleavage plays cannot be completely removed from the picture. Beuchler

[157] *Ibid*.

[158] *Ibid*.

posits that because Castells pays particular attention to the role that the state plays in the rise of urban social movements, his theory is more receptive to what has been called the political opportunities that exist for mobilisation.[159]

As shown earlier, Castells' thesis has caused discomfort amongst many scholars. Saunders warns that Castells is too optimistic about the impact of urban or local state contradictions. Whilst he does not contest the notion that the involvement of the state in distributing the means of collective consumption can give rise to movements that perceive themselves as unfairly treated in this distributional regime, he argues that Castells exaggerates the impact that this may have. Saunders argues that the entire notion of urban social movements is flawed in that it has exaggerated the extent to which anti-capitalist alliances can be forged and collective identities formed.[160]

In support of Castells postulations, it can be argued that people can develop a common sense of deprivation even with regards to the means of consumption at an individual or family level. In the case of the South African low cost housing for instance, a common sense of deprivation can arise in instances where people who have spent years on the low cost housing waiting list are surpassed in getting access to RDP housing by people who have only recently registered for this provision. As will be shown in later chapters, widespread deprivation and the perception that the distributional regime concerning RDP housing and jobs at local government level is riddled with favouritism, corruption and patronage were among the core reasons for the 2005 protest in Phomolong. As will be illustrated further, the state's intervention in providing the means of collective consumption such as housing did certainly have a politicising effect in Phomolong.

However, critics may be right in asserting that it is not in all instances that such a politicising effect leads to the formation of urban social movements. Castells makes this admission when he argues that politicisation may not automatically lead to increased working class radicalism. The contradiction between state intervention and

[159] *Ibid*.

[160] Saunders, *Social Theory and the Urban Question 2nd Edition*, p. 143.

those at the receiving end of this inadequate provision is not a predetermined process and relies on the interface between this and urban social movements.[161]

For a protest action to be considered an urban social movement, it has to be aimed at effecting change in the dominance of capitalist property relations or a modification in the structure of power relations by weakening the establishment or by strengthening the development of working class organisation. Evidently, not all responses to capitalist urban contradictions fall into this category. Most protests actions are more modest in their goals and merely seek to secure minor reforms. In such cases, Castells suggests that we should classify them as protest movements or participation rather than urban social movements which result not in "qualitatively new effects" but in reinforcing existing social relations or in reform. For a movement to result in "quantitatively new effects" rests on whether it builds on the more primary contradiction between capital and labour. It has to appreciate the role of capitalist relations of production in the crisis of collective consumption. It is for this reason that he calls for a link between the urban social movements and the working class movement as a whole. Without this, it will not be possible to fully challenge the system of capitalist economic and political relations, from which the source of the problem arises.[162]

Another criticism levelled at Castells is that his conclusions have serious limitations when applied in contexts other than advanced capitalist societies. Capitalist societies are distinguished by two factors; they are highly industrialised countries which are also governed by private ownership and control of the means of production. According to Miliband, these two characteristics differentiate these countries from others which carry either one aspect of these factors in absence of another.[163] Castells' theory, it is argued, faces explanatory limits when applied to Third World countries where the penetration of the capitalist mode of production is still at its infancy. There is still a huge disjuncture between consumption and production and it is generally accepted that the state has only a limited and incapacitated role to play in the provision of collective needs. As such, mobilisation in this area would require a

[161] Castells, *City, Class and Power*, p.49.

[162] *Ibid*.

[163] Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, p.7.

process of consciousness building as consumption is not nearly as influential in building a common consciousness and identity.[164]

Resource Mobilisation Theory

Another way of explaining the rise of social movements is through the resource mobilisation approach which arose as a challenge to the notion that mobilisation can be explained largely by looking at grievances. McCarthy and Zald[165], as key proponents of this approach argued for a study of social movements that considered the nature of resources available for mobilisation within industrial societies. What they call professional movement organisations that made use of both personal and financial resources available for mobilisation. This school of thought largely focused on the "how" as opposed to the "why" of collective action.[166] It must be noted that the study of social protests through the prism of rational choice theories and the application of terms such as movement entrepreneurs to explain the rise of social movements caused discomfort among many who held the view that the quest for social justice, peace and equality lay at the heart of new social movements. This school is also accused of paying inadequate attention to questions around ideology, identity formation as well as the political opportunities and constraints for mobilisation. Its other caveat is that it does not study the internal dynamics of movements and how actors within social movements perceive their own actions.

Identity Oriented Approaches

In his work titled, *Ideology and Popular Protest*[167], George Rudé suggests that studies of ideology within the Marxist tradition have been haunted by a simplistic scheme of society as comprising of two polarised classes. There is an overriding assumption in much of this work that other classes were in the process of being absorbed as the contradictions between the two warring and antagonistic classes became more defined.

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[164] Marks, "Organisations, Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth: 1984-1993", p.43.

[165] McAdam, McCarthy and Zald "Introduction: Opportunities, mobilising Structures and Framing Processes-towards a synthetic comparative perspective on social movements".

[166] Melucci, A, "The New Social Movements – A Theoretical Approach", *Social Sciences Information*, Vol. 19, No. 2, May 1980, p.199-226.

[167] Rudé, G, *Ideology and Popular Protest*, London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1980.

Rudé also considered the work of scholars of ideology such as Lukacs', who attempted to theorise about the development of ideology among the working class as inadequate. Whilst Lukacs acknowledges the role of class struggle in shaping and elevating the consciousness of the proletariat (through *praxis)*, Rudé critiques him for overly relying on a view of society as consisting of two main warring classes and neglecting the role of the peasantry and other classes in this process. The critique often levelled against Lukacs' formulation is that it invariably accords to such classes a mere "anachronistic" status. Secondly, his formulation is limited because the only way that the proletariat can awaken to a new consciousness is through the inevitable crisis of capitalism. In essence, posits Rudé, the proletariat is reduced to a mere spectator in the theatre of history.[168]

In contrast, Rudé contends that Gramsci's study of ideology is more receptive to the inclusion of other social classes in shaping and creating certain ideologies. He praises Gramsci for overcoming the crude division between 'true' and 'false' ideology as well as laying the ground for a study of ideology not only amongst the main protagonists within industrial societies, but also amongst a wide array of classes in the pre-industrial phase.[169] Although the ruling class ideology enjoys hegemony at given points in time, it cannot be assumed that ideology is the preserve of this class alone. Other classes, which are subject to rule, also have ideologies of their own. According to this formulation, there are two distinctions to be made when studying ideology. The first is the inherent ideology which is based on direct experience, oral tradition and folk-memory and can be accorded the status of the "mother's milk" ideology.[170] This has a corresponding meaning to what Gramsci termed non-organic ideology. The second aspect is derived ideology, which simply means ideas borrowed from others and often assuming the shape of structured thoughts. Examples of these many include ideas contained in The Social Contract, The Rights of Man and Socialism.[171] The transmission of derived ideas is useful for future generations in laying claims and

[168] *Ibid*, p.22.

[169] *Ibid*, p.23.

[170] *Ibid*, p.28.

[171] *Ibid*.

justifying certain struggles.[172] According to Rudé's formulation on popular protests, there is a need to move away from the notion that the two types of ideology are mutually exclusive.

> [T]here is no Wall of Babylon dividing the two types of ideology, so that one cannot simply describe the second as being 'superior' or at a higher level than the first. There is in fact, a considerable overlap between them. For instance, among the 'inherent' beliefs of one generation, forming part of its basic culture, are many beliefs that were originally derived from outside by an earlier one.[173]

This is the basis upon which popular ideology is crafted. Rudé argues that in the final analysis, there are three factors shaping the rise of popular ideology. In summary, these are 'inherent' ideas, derived ideas and the "circumstances and experience which, in the final analysis, determine(s) the nature of the final mixture".[174] Students of social movements have made inadequate use of Rudé's postulations. Some have argued that "ideology is a dry way of describing what moves people to action".[175] The concept of "framing" is more favoured amongst students of social movements than the concept of ideology.

As such, Gamson argues for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of social movements and the formation of collective identities. To him, "frames ... are ways of organising thinking about political issues. One should ask not whether they are true or false ... but about their usefulness in increasing understanding and their economy and inclusiveness in providing a coherent explanation of a set of diverse facts."[176] Proponents of the framing approach argue that grievances and resources needed to engage in collective action are simply not enough to explain how social movements come into being. Thus, McAdam *et al* argue that there is a need to account for the process of creating meanings and beliefs as well as contesting existing ones. The void existing in both political opportunity theories and resource mobilisation theory could be filled through considering how actors engage in a process to create a shared

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[172] *Ibid*, p.37.

[173] *Ibid*, p.28.

[174] *Ibid*, p.35.

[175] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, p.21.

[176] Gamson, W, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action", in Morris, A, Mueller, M (eds), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, New York: Yale University Press: 1992, p.71.

meaning, common identity and the identification of opponents in their quests.[177] Snow and Benford[178] note that whilst many approaches to the study of the construction of collective identities have placed ideology in the periphery, theirs is an endeavour that can be regarded as aimed towards restoring the importance of ideological concepts in a manner compatible with Gramsci and later Rudé.

Furthermore, an observation is made that where ideology is discussed, it is treated in a static and descriptive fashion. In other words, ideology is taken as a preordained reality as opposed to it being constructed socially. The struggle or contest over ideas that is given much accord in both Gramsci and Rudé's work is completely ignored in some of these approaches. According to Snow and Benford, this is a major mistake as social movements are always engaged in the production of meaning and contests over extant meanings; they are not mere passive receptors of structural conditions. These constructions and contestations over meaning(s) may involve building upon pre-existing ideas; transformation of old ideas as well as generating new ones. What social movement theorists call collective action frames are products of this framing activity.[179] Movements engaged in framing also compete against framing done by others including the media, states and opponents in general. Scanning some of the literature on the framing approach leaves one with the conclusion that the search for novelty has resulted in the muddying of conceptual waters in social movement theory. For one, what many describe as a framing process which builds on, or contests the old and merges with the new in the terrain of struggle is strikingly similar to Rudé's distinction between inherent and derived ideology and the "final mixture" that is given premium in his work. Unfortunately, many of these works hardly pay any tribute to Rudé's (or Gramsci's earlier) work. More recently, scholars have argued that this discrepancy is due to the chasm between different disciplines, with social psychology tending to emphasise frames whereas political sociology focuses more on the study of ideology. For instance, Oliver and Johnston[180] contend that there is a

[177] McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, mobilising Structures and Framing Processes-towards a synthetic comparative perspective on social movements", p.45.

[178] Snow, D, Beford, R, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest" in Morris, A, Mueller, M (eds), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, New York: Yale University Press: 1992.

[179] *Ibid*, p.136.

[180] Oliver, P, Johnston, H, "What a Good Idea: Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research", *Mobilisation*, Vol.5, 2000, pp-.

need to move beyond an approach that merely subsumes ideology under the concept of framing. Instead, the study of social movements should encompass both traditions in social psychology and political sociology. For some, the framing process is at the centre of what defines social movements. It is argued that social movements can be discerned by the presence of (or at least attempts to form) a collective identity, a common sense of purpose as well as when individuals perceive themselves as inextricably linked to others.[181]

McAdam and his colleagues distinguish between different stages of framing. These stages outline earlier endeavours of framing which are often predominant at the inception of a movement and later ones that take place once a movement has attained a particular identity and an entrenched set of ideas and meanings.[182] They contend that earlier efforts at framing are often more amorphous and less strategic than later attempts. However, in later stages, framing attempts tend to be constrained by the meaning, collective identity and world outlooks informing the earlier periods. As a result, some prefer to speak of three stages in the social construction of meaning. The first is called the *diagnostic stage* which quite clearly entails the conversion of objects for collective action into social problems, identifying who is affected by the social problems and who is responsible for the situation. The second is the *prognostic* which involves the crafting of different solutions to the problem. The last stage is known as *motivation* wherein actors find ways of legitimising their actions and identifying opportunities for mobilisation.[183] This is equivalent to a "call to arms".[184]

Della Porta and Diani point to a number of factors that can lead to the successful utilisation of frames. Concisely, frames can only be successful if they are credible both in terms of content and emanating from reputable reliable sources; if they touch upon aspects of people's lives which they consider meaningful, coherent and resonate with the target for collective action. It is also noted that building on past repertoires of collective action may be particularly useful as it may provide actors with some form

[181] Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*, p. 21.

[182]McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, mobilising Structures and Framing Processes", p. 16.

[183] Snow and Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest", p.137.

[184] Benford, R, Snow, D, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, 2000, p.617.

of legitimacy and consistency. However, the two warn that reference to the past is a double-edged sword. It can at times induce sentiments of out-datedness and limit the scope of options available to actors. There may be an over-emphasis on acting with established traditions even if this is likely to reduce the movement's successes.[185]

Another scholar who is regarded as one of the key proponents within this approach is Alain Touraine.[186] His work is regarded as a branch of thinking on meanings because of the concept of historicity which he has defined as "the overall system of meaning which sets dominant rules in a given society."[187] The greatest value of his work is that it places premium on studying the subjective aspects of social movements; simply put, how actors within a movement conceive and justify their actions.[188] This strength forms part of the basis for why Touraine takes issue with earlier social movement theorists whose work was confined to analysing the industrial society.

Growing out of the contexts where Marxist ideas were influential in crafting debates about social conflict, it is not surprising that scholars like Touraine have challenged some key assumptions contained in Marxian study of social conflict. From this perspective, the greatest crime committed by this body of intellectual thought is that it "never introduces the image of a historical actor ... one who is governed by normative orientation, a plan ... by a call to historicity."[189] Touraine considers this body of work obsolete in the context of a post-industrial society, or the programmed society as he calls it. He challenges early social conflict theorists, specifically from the Marxist tradition from three angles. Firstly, he sees culture and social conflict as two sides of the same coin, and therefore considers the assertion that social actors are driven to action by objective structural conditions. His second point is that unlike the proletarian movement aimed at wrestling for state power against the bourgeoisie, the contests over state power seldom informs social movements.[190] Finally, he is

[185] Touraine, A, *The Voice and the eye: an analysis of social movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

[186] *Ibid*.

[187] *Ibid*, p.29.

[188] Marks, "Organisations, Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth: 1984-1993", p.58.

[189] *Ibid*, p78.

[190] *Ibid*, p.80.

uncomfortable with the futuristic approach taken by Marxists who see social conflict as part of endeavours to construct a new egalitarian society that decisively breaks with the exploitation and alienation marking capitalist societies. He counters the thinking dominating the industrial era where walls were erected between social conflict and culture, denying any role for social movements.[191]

Touraine is critiqued for conflating the identity of the movement and an individual actor without assessing how the two interact. Additionally, he is critiqued with underestimating the explanatory validity of other branches of social movement theory; i.e., resource mobilisation theory as well as the political process model.[192]

Apartheid, State Reform Strategy and Social Protest

South African scholarship in the 1980s made some attempts to study the local state in African townships. The influence of Castells in studying patterns of state intervention and the politics emerging from this is clearly evident amongst some scholars studying urban social movements during that period.[193] Chaskalson *et al*[194] argue that the conflict and protest characterising the local state under apartheid in the 1980s was reflective of the character of the South Africa political economy during the period. In this sense, in studying the local state during that time, there needs to be an appreciation of the articulation between South Africa's institutionalised racial oppression as well as the capitalist relations of production. Chaskalson *et al* contend that conflict and protest in the local state during the late 1970s and early 1980s revolved around two central demands: the black majority's claims over central state power and demands over immediate reforms aimed at improving social conditions in

[191] *Ibid*.

[192] Marks, "Organisations, Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth: 1984-1993", p.59.

[193] See Boraine, A, "Security Management Upgrading in the Black Townships", *Transformation*, Vol.8, 1989, pp.47-63, Seekings, J, "'Trailing behind the Masses': The United Democratic Front and Township Politics in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Region", 1983-84, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Special Issue: Social History of Resistance in South Africa, Mar., 1992, pp. 93-114, Chaskalson, M, Jochelson, K, Seekings, J, "Rent Boycotts, the State, and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 40, Dec., 1987, p.47-64.

[194] Chaskalson *et al*, "Rent Boycotts, the State, and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South Africa", p.47.

the townships.[195] Much of this work makes the observation that although there was an abundance of literature analysing the rise of urban social movements aimed at contesting the nature of state intervention in organising and providing for the means of collective consumption, there was indeed a need to stretch Castells' analysis a bit further; taking into cognisance the peculiar nature of the South African capitalist state. One of the scholars to issue this caution was Mark Swilling, who argued that the South African state had more in common with authoritarian states in the semi-periphery rather than democratic advanced capitalist states. In this regard, an overreliance on data gathered from studying state contestation in advanced capitalist states would not adequately advance the understanding of a crisis-ridden South African state in the 1980s.[196]

Swilling's analysis draws attention to the fact that South African state structures were characteristic of capitalist domination which entrenched racial and other divisions amongst the working class, separated the sphere of production from the sphere of reproduction and exploited the working class to the maximum benefit of the domestic ruling classes.[197] According to this view, the contestations that ensued in black urban areas in the late 1970s were inextricably linked to the state's implementation of some of the *Riekert* Commission recommendations. The *Riekert* Commission proposed a number of urban policy reforms which included increased, albeit limited, public investment, the deregulation of housing and township development, reform and influx control and the opening up of "intra-township" accumulation as well as the restructuring of local government.[198]

Part of the reform strategy involved greater representation for urbanised Africans. This was to be realised through the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982. According to Swilling, the Act was marked by two main contradictions. Firstly, the idea of increased representation for the African population proved a travesty as this form of

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[195] *Ibid.*

[196] McCarthy, J, Swilling, M, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation", *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, Vol. 25, Cahier 99, Ségrégation spatiale, segregation sociale, 1985, p.381.

[197] *Ibid.*

[198] *Ibid.*

representation was confined to the local state with no tangible relation to representation at the central state level. This deprived the BLA of political legitimacy and made a mockery of the ideal of real and meaningful franchise. The dissatisfaction on the part of many township residents was evidenced by the low voter turnout in the council elections as well as the abound resignations of councillors from these bodies.[199]

Secondly, recognising urban Africans as permanent dwellers in urban areas also meant that the apartheid state now had greater responsibility for the provision of the collective means of consumption. The difficulty about this situation was that these decisions were made within the context of an unprecedented fiscal crisis. As a result, the state was drawn in at the centre of the crisis of collective consumption and thus politicised many urban African townships. The fiscal crisis meant that the inflated needs of the permanent urban African population could only be provided for by shifting responsibility to local authorities and preaching the language of self-sufficiency. The market was also drawn in to mitigate the housing crisis. Hence, the central state absolved itself from meeting the collective consumption needs of urban Africans and placed this squarely at the door of local authorities, who resorted to transferring these to township residents themselves. This move was propagated by the fact that unlike other capitalist countries, the racial form that South African capitalism took was such that local authorities in African areas were deprived of a solid base from which to draw taxes in order to finance development. The absence of viable and rateable property due to lack of industries and businesses in the townships as well as the lack of a significant middle class, were some of the reasons that led to the resource strapped status of many townships.[200]

This situation was exacerbated by the diminishing revenue raised by the state through municipal liquor sales, which was amongst the chief contributors to the local state *fiscus* and the state's reluctance to increase taxes levied from capital. In terms of the latter, the state opted to levy the cost of township development and the provision of

[199] *Ibid.*

[200] Chaskalson *et al*, "Rent Boycotts, the State, and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South Africa", p.50.

the means of collective consumption from township residents, a strategy which proved insufficient given the fall of real wages amongst the African working class and the escalating unemployment amongst this group. Essentially, this falling income and unemployment amongst the African population in townships ruled out the market as a probable provider of the means of collective consumption.[201] This state of affairs solicited various forms of opposition ranging from spontaneous actions to highly organised forms of resistance.[202] Organised resistance took the form of rent boycotts, and as other scholars have argued, could be interpreted as attempts to reshape the state's agenda and redirect it towards meeting the needs of the majority.[203]

Scholars observe that faced with such demands, capitalist states typically veer towards the option of greater subsidisation of the means of collective consumption.[204] Accordingly, Chaskalson *et al* demonstrate how in the 1940s and 1950s the state adopted this approach in order to quell rising white working class militancy. However, this option was no longer viable in the early 1980s for mainly three reasons. Firstly, it was inconsistent with the state's monetary policy which privileged monetarism. Secondly, the idea of the state intervening to play a greater role in providing for the collective needs of the urban black population was at loggerheads with the ideal of apartheid, even in its reformist sense.[205] Thirdly, because it involved cross-subsidisation amongst different racial groups, it would have contradicted the essence of the ideology of separate development.[206]

This study builds on the premise that on the surface there is much continuity between the ways in which "service delivery protests" unfolded in Phomolong in early 2005 when compared to struggles against the apartheid local state as expressed through the BLA in the 1980s. The premise is that protests against the local state in the 1980s

[201] *Ibid*.

[202] Boraine, "Security Management Upgrading in the Black Townships", p.49

[203] Grest, J. and Hughes, H, "The Local State" in *Same Foundations: New Facades in South African Review*, No.1, 1983, p.128.

[204] Chaskalson *et al*, "Rent Boycotts, the State, and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South", p. 50.

[205] *Ibid.*

[206] *Ibid.*

were based on *collective opposition* to high rent and bus fares, shack demolitions, overcrowding and the general deterioration of the conditions for material reproduction in townships. This dissatisfaction and opposition informed councillors becoming principal targets for anger expressed by extra-state political organisations in the 1980s. This thesis accepts that local protests during this period were not disconnected from the political struggles waged elsewhere in the country and at a national level; it nonetheless argues that there is a need for an in-depth inspection on how these interfaced with specific local factors and the effects thereof.

In this regard, the thesis contends that Castells' notion of collective consumption has to be analysed through the lenses of a racially segregated local state. The apartheid local state in South Africa, as some have observed, lacked a "paternalistic tradition" in respect of blacks.[207] The apartheid local state was from the vantage point of the black population infamous for its inadequate provision of the means of collective consumption. An important point to note is that although in the 1980s the politics of the local state were characterised by an outright rejection of a local government system, as the most visible arm of the local state, that was seen as racist, unrepresentative, corrupt and illegitimate; the current spate of protests are geared more towards making the state more efficient in providing for collective needs as well as replacing state managers and personnel who are seen as corrupt and inept.

In addition, the challenge to local government in the 1980s was directly linked to a challenge of the apartheid state itself. It was understood that a successful resolution of local grievances around housing, water, electricity, transport provision, as well as affordable and consistent rents could not be reached unless the entire system of apartheid was overhauled and replaced by a democratic government premised upon the notion of people's power. According to this logic, local problems were both the result of and functional for apartheid and no amount of reforms could address this. This is principally why rent boycotts, election boycotts and non-participation at local government was the modus operandi of the time.

This view prevailed despite various state reforms characterised by both persuasion and coercion. A crucial point made by South African scholarship, most notably

[207] Chaskalson, M *et al*, "Rent Boycotts, the State, and the Transformation of the Urban Political Economy in South", p.55.

Andrew Boraine,[208] is that state reform strategy as contained in programmes such as the Joint Management Centres (JMCs) were by no means establishing the role of the South African local state as a provider of social welfare to the African population. Rather, the provision of the means of collective consumption through various township upgrading schemes in selected 'oil spots' was seen as crucial to the survival of the apartheid state. It was never the state's aim to upgrade all township areas on a grand scale. The apartheid state's strategy was rather targeting hotspots in African townships, leading a process to divide and disorganise existing extra-state political arrangements in these townships. Moreover, such a strategy was certainly not designed to win over the entire African population but to neutralise some forces of opposition by improving conditions within townships and gaining reliable security information about extra-state activities at this level.[209] These schemes included the upgrading of infrastructure and the provision of services such as water, electricity, roads and parks. The idea was also to bolster the role of BLA through propaganda. Inevitably, these reforms were accompanied by increased securitisation aimed at disorganising opposition forces in the townships.[210]

This strategy failed due to several reasons. Firstly, it was at variance with the level of political consciousness that was already prevalent in the townships during the time. The popularity of black councillors could not be bolstered due to the perceptions that they were perceived as puppets for their white masters. Secondly, such upgrading strategies, despite sourcing some revenue from the central state, remained under-resourced. The idea of self-financing remained dominant despite these changes.[211] Boraine argues that whilst these reforms largely failed, they did have a significant impact on the alignment of political forces in African townships.[212]

Thus, the main weakness of this strategy – which aimed to quell resistance against BLA and apartheid through attempting to meet the daily needs of the African population in selected hot spots as well as acquire reliable security information about

[208] Boraine, A, "Security Management Upgrading in the Black Townships".

[209] *Ibid.*

[210] Boraine, "Security Management Upgrading in the Black Townships", p.49

[211] *Ibid*.

[212] *Ibid*.

political organisation within townships – failed because it could not resolve the fundamental weakness of the entire Black Local Authorities' edifice. In the words of Steve Maponyane:

> While the JMC provides money for upgrading, the town councils are still responsible for raising funds to maintain their township. This means collecting rent and evicting defaulters, which earns the hatred of the community.[213]

This study shows that these reforms were not merely limited to township upgrading but also involved the creation of counter organisation in African townships. In Phomolong, this led to the establishment of the Eagles Club, which was aimed at containing the resistance to apartheid by imbuing the African youth with conservative mores and values. As a result, this allowed the state to maintain control over the vision for imminent change. The growing participation of young people in the rent and consumer boycotts and many other activities aimed at paralysing apartheid local government and its entire edifice provided the backdrop for the formation of the Eagles Club and its concerted efforts to attract school going youth. This study shows how these reform strategies also involved some levels of coercion and repression, which included establishing or supporting vigilante groups.

Post Apartheid, State Reform and Protest

Scholars have argued the prevalence of protest in the post-apartheid era is largely due to a neoliberal economic path beginning in the last days of apartheid and reinforced and bolstered by the democratic government. Accordingly, the last few years of democracy have been marked by improved capitalist profitability, immense losses for labour signified by retrenchments and casualisation, and the deepening of poverty, inequality and unemployment. This serves as a backdrop for the rise of social movement mobilization in the post-apartheid period.[214]

Patrick Bond argues that communities struggling in the post-apartheid period are buttressed by the unevenness of municipal services. The politics of privatisation and

[213] Maponyane, S, "JMC's heading for trouble", *New Era*, August 1988, p.9.

[214] Ballard, Habib, Valodia, I and Zuern, E, *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid in South Africa*, p.11.

the ceding into the World Bank's neoliberal mantra has created a post-apartheid local state marked by more continuity than change when compared to its predecessor. This is a local state that is financially hamstrung and ideologically committed to the creation of a minimalist state whose role in development is limited to that of an enabler setting the stage for the private sector to perform "its" tasks. In this regard, the logic that governs access to goods and services is that which emphasises household affordability as a means to ensure capital flows. One of the startling realities of the neoliberal encroachment was the massive cuts in intergovernmental grants which consequently stifled the local state's ability to perform certain allocative functions. In this scenario, local democracy is in essence mediated through the market and in some instances it is judged as simply "too expensive for South Africa."[215]

Looking at the continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid local government, Ruiters draws a rather pessimistic conclusion about the prospects for building robust participatory local government and revitalising civil society. He argues that the South African local government system under the democratic ANC government was confronted with a number of challenges stemming from both objective and subjective factors. Amongst the objective factors constraining the realisation of genuine participatory democracy was the fact that the transitional local government system was still locked in the compromise mode informing national negotiations. This placed a number of constraints on the role of the local state in fulfilling its allocative functions. The major obstacles were still the fact that white councillors had veto powers in transitional councils, white bureaucrats of the old order maintained their jobs in municipalities and budget constraints remained. These hurdles were also compounded by the pursuit of neoliberal policies that placed emphasis on cost recovery principles and the privatisation of services.[216]

Ruiters makes the observation that the neoliberal approach to service delivery was doomed to fail, especially given the emphasis on cost recovery. In the first instance, the structural conditions that made the rent boycotts of the apartheid era so successful were carried through to the democratic period. These include mass unemployment

[215] Bond, P, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal- Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis*, Africa World Press: New Jersey, 2000, p.33.

[216] Ruiters, G, "Municipal Crisis Premonitions" p.333.

which continues to haunt many black families leading to a depletion of family income, and the poor quality of services offered by the democratic state. Amenities such as schools, clinics, libraries and recreation facilities in black townships are still lamentable. To add to this misery, the apartheid spatial location continues to place pressure on black working class wages as transport expenditure is far higher than that spent by whites.[217]

Robinson complements this analysis by arguing that the analytical net should be cast wider in order to assess the impacts of processes such as land pricing and local government financial limits in shaping the racial and class character of cities. Her analysis also points to the fact that the post-apartheid state inherited many burdens from apartheid local government. This means that although there is discontinuity in terms of purpose and vision, the post-apartheid local government has bequeathed the racial domination and class exploitation of its predecessor. With apartheid, racial and class distinction arose because of a variety of reasons. One of these was the health argument that was used as a motivation for segregated urban planning.[218] Another prominent reason was the financing imperative that motivated the clearing of land for more lucrative purposes. The combination of these two phenomena led to its own contradictions. For one, the imperative for order and control led to a concentration of people in shared residential spaces and exposed the same frustrations over poor service delivery that paved the way for political mobilisation against apartheid local government.[219]

In the current era, the same old arguments about public health still dominate in the state's actions of removing slums and squatter camps. The need to create responsible and productive citizens serves as an additional impetus.[220] The result of this is the creation of a subject that either survives through selling their labour power or seeking earnings through the informal economy. Additionally, the post-apartheid state has inherited apartheid's spatial concentration of employment, growth and infrastructural

[217] *Ibid*, p.336.

[218] Robinson, J, "Continuities and Discontinuities in South African Local Government" in *Consolidating Developmental Local Government: Lessons from the South African Experience*, van Donk, M *et al* (eds) Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2008, p.33.

[219] *Ibid*.

[220] *Ibid*, p.34.

investment that was so distinctive of apartheid cities. This further reinforces apartheid's racial segregation with class overtones.[221]

Mzwanele Mayekiso argues that the transitional period had an adverse impact on the ANC's constituency at a local level. The adoption of GEAR led to serious budget cuts in municipalities. Mayekiso's critique is that the post-apartheid local state is biased towards privatisation as a mode through which to facilitate the poor's access to the means of collective consumption and relegates the role of communities and labour in local government to the backburner. In the final analysis, argues Mayekiso, the local state envisages transformation through the neoliberal amplification of local apartheid. He makes the observation that:

> The segregated city will now be cemented along class lines, with a small fraction of black South Africans expected to migrate into white suburbs which in all other respects remain effectively intact. Township livelihoods and informal settlement survival strategies will decay. Gender and generational relations will become more tense under the pressure of the municipal crisis.[222]

This forms the basis for the groundswell of anger and resentment that exists in many black townships today. In other words, protests in communities over the 'commoditisation' of services are typical of the contradiction between neo-liberalism and social justice.[223] Thus, new social movements in South Africa cannot be analyzed independently from their material basis which is a fundamentally neo-liberal approach to service delivery pursued by the ANC government.[224] What these movements have in common with their apartheid predecessors goes beyond the issues raised but also includes the use of similar organising strategies and tactics. For instance, illegal water and electricity connections and rent boycotts have a resonance in the modus operandi of the old epoch. Such practices, much like during the apartheid days have often solicited repression from the state.[225]

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[221] *Ibid*, p.35.

[222] Mayekiso, M, in *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal*, p.371-372.

[223] Bond, P, "South Africa's Resurgent Urban Social Movements: The Case of Johannesburg, 1984, 1994, 2004", *Centre for Civil Society Research Report* No. 22: 1-34, 2004, http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs, p.11.

[224] *Ibid*, p.12.

[225] *Ibid*, p.15.

This being the case, these movements have a significant distinction with their predecessors. Scholars argue that social movements in the post-apartheid period depart from their predecessors in the sense that they do not collectively share a counter-hegemonic enterprise that is geared towards state capture. What is evident is that there are two dominant traditions in this regard. The first is a rights-based approach geared mainly towards the improvement of conditions for the poor, the marginalized or discriminated within the prevailing capitalist order. The problem from this perspective is not so much the inability of capitalism to meet the demands of the poor and ensure a quality of life for all but rather incorrect government or their improper implementation.[226] The second is characterized as the counter-hegemonic strand and this is directed not so much at a particular policy but rather the entire political, social and economic trajectory pursued by the state. Such movements draw largely from class-based ideologies and position themselves against capitalist neo-liberalism, market fundamentalist policies and lay claims for socialism. For some of these movements, collaboration with the state is seen as futile as the latter is considered a principal embodiment and guarantor of bourgeois interests.[227]

In essence, what scholars such as Desai[228] have argued holds true. Support for these movements comes from a multitude of actors. Under these conditions, it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pin these movements down to a particular all-embracing ideology or institutionalised politics. This is what compels Barchiesi[229] to argue that these movements challenge Castells' notion of the possibility of an anti-capitalist intra-class unity. Furthermore, the role attributed to the proletariat in Castells' work fails to find expression in these movements where the structural conditions have displaced the possibility of a homogenous agent of social transformation. These caveats are compounded by the fact that these movements

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[226] Ballard, Habib, Valodia and Zuern "Conclusion: Making Sense of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Voices of Protest", p.398

[227] *Ibid*.

[228] Desai, A and Pithouse, R, *"'But We Were Thousands' Dispossession: Resistance, Repossession and Repression in Mandela Park." Centre for Civil Society, Research Report* Vol.9 Number.: 1-30, 2003, http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs.

[229] Barchiesi, F, "Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa", *Centre for Civil Society, Research Report* Volume. 20, No. 1-41, 2004, http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs.

enjoy fragile alliances with the traditional left and organised labour, rendering the potential for durable alliances outside the locality miniscule. What is laudable about these movements is that they continue the tradition of placing demands that extend beyond the workplace on the state and making the case for the provision of services in a decommodified fashion.[230] In summary, these movements spring from an economic reality that privileges the market as a provider of services. In the same vein, the post-apartheid state is besieged by a reality of unfulfilled expectations and promises as well as a political environment that secures liberal political rights and allows more space for these movements to operate. This makes Castells theory of collective consumption particularly relevant.

The strength of this analysis is that it draws a link between how this neoliberal capitulation has facilitated the rise of new social movements and how the poor are not docile in the face of attacks waged by the state on their livelihoods. The main argument advanced here is that these movements present opportunities for the democratisation of political space and greater advances in terms of laying claims on the state. The greatest strength is that this work undertakes a study of how these movements arose, how they work, their internal dynamics as well as their approach towards the state at both local and national level.

Whilst some of this work is more cautious about asserting that these movements would be the pallbearers for ANC electoral support, many are simply too optimistic, underestimating the ANC's electoral base and its ability to reclaim some concepts on which it held hegemony throughout the struggle against apartheid. These works also pay scant attention to local associational politics, especially the relationship between ANC branches and the local state. These analyses seldom look at how the problems induced by neoliberal globalisation, whilst aiding resistance and counter-organisation, also impede it by making protest and radicalism a costly choice. Beyond studying the specific movements, they provide little information about the histories of the places in which these movements arise.

This thesis shows how local protest in Phomolong occurred in a specific structural context. From the late 1990s, Phomolong residents through various organisations and

[230] *Ibid*, p.22.

correspondence to the Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) were sharply raising their concerns about the local state's mode of "delivering" certain services and the slow pace at which this was done. During this time, Phomolong residents experienced water and electricity disconnections and the newly instituted indigent policy proved unable to counter the spate of disconnections in the township. The local state's expectation and insistence that people have to pay for the services they consume was at variance with the expectations about the role of the democratic local state and the foundations of local state contestations engrained in Phomolong's history. It is argued that questions about how to distribute the resources of the local state and what space should be assumed by collective consumption have been the common thread defining popular mobilisation in Phomolong's history.

The expectation that the local state would assume a greater allocative role grew significantly with the advent of democracy in 1994. Phomolong residents placed a set of demands relating to the provision of the collective means of consumption on the local state. The main difference with the TLCs was that they were not democratically elected, certain expectations accrued to ANC councillors who were, and their failure to live up to promises made the structural context unpopular and resulted in their ultimate removal. The struggle against the TLC as an element of the local state also depicts that different expectations were levelled on ANC councillors, as comrades as opposed to the white local councillors from other parties.

In simple terms, the increased politicisation of the local state found expression around collective consumption matters and the need to remove the local state's implementation agents who failed to fulfil this mandate. The year 2000 was considered an epoch making development, marking the ushering in of a new local government in South Africa. Two notions, which are of centrality to this thesis, informed the new local government architecture. These are participatory local governance and the notion of a developmental local government. These notions are perceived as mutually reinforcing, with community participation in matters of local government being at the centre of driving development at a local level.

Another current of scholarship shifts the pendulum of explaining the roots of local protests in the post-apartheid period to the prevalence of patron-client relations at the

level of the local state.[231]According to Staniland[232], the current local government architecture provides the political parties with a monopoly over the distribution and administration of local government resources. Through this, the possibility of patronage is enhanced and relations which render many residents and civil society organisations dependent on political figures become established. This leads to the demobilisation of civil society and residents on matters of discontent. That is, participation in local government as currently conceptualised in the vision for Developmental Local Government fails to live up to its aims.[233]

To elucidate on this, Staniland utilises the concept of "invited spaces" as he argues that the local state is an invited space wherein the level and nature of civil society participation are determined by the political society. This has the implication of placing councillors at the centre of distributing scarce local resources such as housing and employment. Putting councillors in a situation whereby they are the linchpin in the access to resources inevitably means that certain individuals and organisations will become excluded or included using their loyalty to the incumbent local leader as a yardstick to determine this. Here it is argued that good relations with local leaders/councillors come with a sense of security. It facilitates greater access to the local state and the resources it commands. This limits the space for critiquing and differing with local political leaders. Staniland maintains that local protests that may be framed with a service delivery outlook are spurred by this domination of the political society in the administration and distribution of resources at a local level. According to this view, residents and organisations take it to the streets on the basis that the distributional regime is unfair and the conviction that participation is not yielding the desired outcome. In actuality, argues Staniland, protests usually do not seek to reverse the predominance of the political society in the distribution of local

[231] See Benit-Gbaffou, C, "Are practices of local participation sidelining the institutional channels? Reflections from Johannesburg", *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, Vol. 66/67, 2008, pp.1-33 and Piper, D, Deacon, L, "Party Politics, Elite Accountability and Public Participation: Ward Committee Politics in Msunduzi Municipality", *Transformation*, Vol. 66/67, 2008, pp.61-82; Staniland, L, "They know me, I will not get a job': public participation, patronage, and the sedation of civil society in a Capetonian township", *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, Vol. 66/67, 2008, pp.34-60.

[232] Staniland, "They know me, I will not get a job: public participation, patronage, and the sedation of civil society in a Capetonian township"'.

[233]*Ibid*, p.39.

resources but rather aims to restore this status quo in instances where the sentiment is that it is being undermined.[234]

Staniland considers different reasons for the decline in radical civil society in many of South Africa's townships. He argues that many scholars have missed the point. Whilst it might be true that the state's benevolence regarding the creation of institutional mechanisms where communities can voice out their concerns have served to discredit other forms of informal and more radical expressions; this picture has been significantly altered particularly post 2005 when many townships experienced protests. Furthermore, there is a truism in the assertion that the creation of participatory institutions has often been used as a means to silent dissent.[235]

For this author, the theoretical kernel that best explains this is the political opportunity theory. From this perspective, civil society is defined by the ability to assess the political opportunities and constraints contained in adopting different actions vis–a–vis the local state. Civil society chooses to operate within the ambit of participatory structures provided for in the local state as this guarantees better access to resources and recognition. This stems largely from the fact that councillors are at the centre of the distributional regime such that access to material resources and political space is contingent upon maintaining good relations with the ward councillors.

Moreover, civil society actors also accrue certain benefits from working within the ambit of the local state. This may include jobs, training opportunities and learnerships. By virtue of working within the constraints of the local state, civil society also gets the opportunity to perform the role of a gatekeeper. In this way, they can control who accesses material goods such as food parcels and RDP houses.[236] This is what makes the post-apartheid period different from the apartheid one. In the latter, civil society not only challenged the local state but also posed itself and was increasingly perceived as an alternative to the apartheid local state.[237]

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[234] *Ibid*, p.41.

[235] *Ibid*, p.43.

[236] *Ibid*, p.46.

[237] *Ibid*.

Whilst Staniland has focused on the role of the ward councillors in dispensing patronage and hence having a stake in the demobilisation of civil society at local state level, other commentators focus instead on the relationship between councillors and the local state through the council.[238] The latter analysis contrasts sharply with the former as it highlights the limitations in the powers of the councillor vis-a-vis the local municipal council. Benit-Gbaffou[239] argues that the reason why residents resort to other means which fall outside what she calls "institutional participatory channels" such as the ward committee is because of a variety of reasons. The first is the often exaggerated and yet limited powers of the ward councillor. The argument here is that councillors have limited powers to voice out their constituencies' needs. This is because decision-making powers within the municipal councils are centralised in the political party in control of the respective municipality. Furthermore, councils are organised around thematic as opposed to geographic committees. This means that councillors have little space to voice their ward specific concerns and needs. For instance, even though communities can table their needs through the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) process, the materialisation of such needs is limited by the fact that this process is not accompanied by the associated budgeting.[240]

The strength of this analysis is that it does not subsume everything under the label "social movements". This analysis is more cautious and less optimistic about the possibilities of some of these protest actions, especially what this means for ANC electoral support. The poor accountability system ingrained in South Africa's electoral politics, intra-party tensions as well as the role of local associational politics (ANC branches) vis-à-vis the local government is given central focus in this analysis. An argument is advanced that local government structures and how they operate often serve to smother the rise of radical civil society. Therefore, radicalism is a costly choice, often compromising access to employment and other economic prospects. The emphasis on patronage and clientelism is particularly relevant for this study. This work has helped carve a rich understanding of the workings of local government in the post 1994 period.

[238] Benit-Gbaffou, "Are practices of local participation sidelining the institutional channels? Reflections from Johannesburg."

[239] *Ibid.*

[240] *Ibid*, p.7.

This analysis is not without caveats. Firstly, it provides an inadequate study of these protests and the people that participate in them. It also gives a state centric approach with little information about the self-perceptions of the participants in such protests. Secondly, there is no attempt to draw a connection between the global and the national, specifically how the neoliberal macroeconomic policies have affected the (local) state's capacity to live up to the expectations of its poor citizens. Here, protest is analysed as if it were just an event as opposed to processes aimed at challenging elements of the status quo.

Conclusion

This thesis argues that there is a serious need for a synthetic approach that takes into cognisance the impact of neoliberalism on local politics as well as a study of how associational politics and various structures of the local state aid the politics of patronage and clientelism. Furthermore, it argues that social movement theory is useful in understanding the process of identity formation, framing processes, resource mobilisation and the political opportunity structure for protests.

CHAPTER TWO

From *Marantha* to Phomolong: Forced Removals and the Making of an African Township in Hennenman

This chapter traces the history of the township of Phomolong from the old location called *Marantha*. The history of the township is located within the literature on the historical context of urban restructuring and forced removals in the 1950s. This time-frame covers historical events such as the growth of the manufacturing sector during the Second World War, the rapid urbanisation of the African population and the housing shortage that arose in many of the country's urban centres during the 1930s and 1940s. The chapter contends that the Hennenman local authority faced similar challenges evident in other cities and small towns during the war period. The economic boom experienced in the area changed the social dynamics of the town by leading to an increased influx of the African population. This resulted in housing shortages, squatting and land invasions. Consequently, concerns about the labour control, racial inter-mixing and fears that the situation in areas such as Johannesburg would be replicated in Hennenman permeated ideas about the establishment of the new township. Although sections of the African population in the old location perceived the relocations as progress because they presented real possibilities for homeownership and improved amenities, life in new townships was far from ideal. Residents in new townships were faced with new challenges which included the rising costs of living in the form of house rental and transport costs. The analysis provided in this chapter forms the historical background for the twenty-year (1985-2005) study of Phomolong Township which ensues in the rest of this dissertation.

War-time Industrialisation, Urbanisation and the Housing Crisis

The origins of forced removals, one of the most significant imprints of South Africa's racialised past, has formed an important topic analysed by many scholars and commentators.[241] Over time, scholars have challenged the idea that forced removals

[241] See Van Tonder, D, "First Win the War and then Clear the Slums": The Genesis of the Western Areas Removal Scheme, 1940-1949", Paper presented at the Wits History Workshop Conference. *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid*, 6-10 February 1990; Nieftagodien, N, "The Making of Apartheid in Springs: Group Areas and Forced Removals", MA Thesis, University of the

more fiercely enacted with the legislative backup of the Group Areas Act (GAA) of 1950, were simply a creation of the Nationalist Party's master plan called apartheid. Scholars have shown how forced removals that occurred after the promulgation of the GAA had already been mooted in earlier periods by the United Party government.[242]

The genesis of the group areas and forced removals can be traced back to the period between the early 1930s and late 1940s where the rapid industrialisation witnessed across the major urban centres in the country spurred attendant urbanisation of the black working class. It was during this period that the character of the black working class shifted from a migrant to a more permanent population in the country's urban centres. As a result, the growth of the urban African population became a serious concern for state authorities in the 1930s.

Various scholars have identified the Second World War as one of the major drivers of the country's industrialisation and the consequent urbanisation. At the end of the 1930s, there were approximately half a million Africans in the urban areas. By contrast, during the same period two million Africans were located in the reserves whilst an additional 2.2 million were located in white-owned farms as workers. However, between 1936 and 1960, the African population in urban areas had almost trebled. This radical altering of the population dynamics in South Africa's urban centres was largely due to the changes experienced by the economy during the Second World War. On the economic front, the outbreak of war led to the rapid expansion of secondary industry in most parts of South Africa. Before the war, the economy was still predominantly agriculture and mining driven. However, by 1943 manufacturing had surpassed mining as the biggest contributor to the gross national product.[243] The war resulted in the disruption of the world economy in significant ways and resulted in the increased demand for goods by the allied powers, a factor which compelled the Smuts regime to pursue an articulate policy of import substitution.[244]

Witwatersrand,1995 and Mabin, A, "Comprehensive Segregation: the Origins of the Group Areas Act and its Planning Apparatuses", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, June 1992, p.408.

[242] Nieftagodien, "The Making of Apartheid in Springs".

[243] *Ibid*, p.19.

[244] *Ibid*.

According to this account, shortages of imported commodities led to a stimulation of the manufacturing sector which increased labour demand to cope with an economy geared towards meeting war demands. The armed force already decreased the labour supply to industry and therefore alternative sources of labour had to be explored. The consequence of this growth in secondary industry saw an increase of African urbanisation. According to population statistics, this period was characterized by a rapid increase of the black population. As such, between 1936 and 1946, the number of urban blacks increased from 1,141,642 to 1,794,212 and by the 1960 the figures had doubled to 3.5 million.[245] Apart from the demand for labour, as early as 1936, African males were already drawn to the urban areas because of the poverty and lack of employment opportunities in the reserves. By 1948, African male workers who moved to the cities were increasingly bringing along their families as well.

Of similar significance was the urbanisation of black women during the same period. In his seminal work on the migration of Basotho women in the Rand, Bonner identifies factors that drove Basotho women away from the countryside to urban areas in the 1930s. These factors include the economic depression plaguing the countryside, the zeal to follow migrant partners who migrated in an earlier period as well as the widespread oppression of women who did not enjoy the right to access land, property and even justice. Bonner also shows how beer brewing became the main source of income for these women who, upon reaching the Rand, often learnt with disappointment about their partners' new lives in the city. In the same study, Bonner argues that the repression imposed by local authorities on activity such as beer brewing, which was blamed for giving rise to vice and social decay, did not go unchallenged. Women constituted a dynamic force in challenging state control and impositions.[246]

In the same period, the country saw an increased militancy amongst the black working class through strike action. In 1940, a record of 24 strikes was documented and this was surpassed in 1942 when the country recorded 58 strikes with the participation of 13,000 black workers. This means that strikes more than doubled in a

[245] *Ibid*.

[246] Bonner, P, L, "Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women? Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho Women to the Rand, 1920 -1930" in Walker, C (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, London: David Phillip, 1990.

period of two years. The growing assertion and militancy of the black working class against the repressive clamp down of their economic activity by the state in the same period gave rise to the realisation, among white officialdom, that the claims to equality by the black population would not be easily staved off. The dynamics of this period also impelled amongst government officials and policy makers the notion that there was a need to stabilise the African working class population in order to directly serve the needs of industry.[247]

The connection between the increased urbanisation of African population and the housing crisis that emerged in most localities in the 1940s is a subject that has received the keen attention from urban and labour historians in South Africa. Van Tonder shows that in Sophiatown, this situation led to acute shortage in housing. In this regard, influx into cities led to increased overcrowding, squatting, and the growth of the what Van Tonder terms the "tenant class" which sub-let its property to African families desperate for accommodation in a sprawling urban environment.[248] This crisis was compounded by the fact that most local authorities were not in a position to provide amenities to the African population on a large scale.[249] The rapid urbanisation also exposed the extent to which the UP government's urban policy disregarded the housing needs of the black population in urban areas. Official statistics estimated the housing shortage in Johannesburg at 9,000 units in 1939. Within a decade, the rapid influx into the area resulted in a total of 50 000 black families in need of housing.[250] Countrywide estimations by the Department of Native Affairs in 1947 suggested that there was a national housing shortage of 154 000 family units and 106 000 single units (mainly for migrant men).[251]

As a consequence of the housing crisis, the problems of squatting and land invasions became more common. Land invasions and squatting on white small-holdings in peri-urban areas became a real alternative to sub-tenancy in the 1940s. In places like

[247] Van Tonder, "First Win the War and then Clear the Slums", p. 5-7.

[248] *Ibid*.

[249] Standler, A, "The Politics of Subsistence: Community Struggles in War Time Johannesburg" in Hindson, D (ed.), *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, Vol.3, Johannesburg, 1983, p.53.

[250] Nieftagodien, "The Making of Apartheid in Springs", p.53.

[251] Morris, P: "A History of Black Housing in South Africa", South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981, p.36. cited in Nieftagodien, "The Making of Apartheid in Springs", p.22.

Brakpan on the East Rand, a population between 9,000 and 12,000 Africans lived on the outskirts of the town in small white land holdings. By the late 1950s, the number of people squatting in Brakpan small white land holdings had increased to 23,000 by the late 1950s.[252]

Bonner's study of African urbanisation on the Rand shows how squatter movements spread in the 1940s. An example of this is the squatter movement led by Sofasonke civic leader James Mpanza who in April 1944 led the sub-tenant families of Orlando East to occupy vacant municipal land and built the shanty town known as *Masakeng*. Squatter movements multiplied all over the Rand after 1944 with estimates suggesting that as many as 100,000 people were housed in squatter settlements in the same period. [253] The Sofasonke experiment was replicated by many more similar movements between 1944 and 1946 in areas such as Benoni, Alexandra, Pimville and Jabavu.[254] This provides reasonable ground to assert that the housing crisis was a widespread phenomenon experienced across many areas during the 1940s.

Some local authorities responded to the housing crisis and burgeoning squatter settlements by constructing site and service schemes which were temporary shelters with only rudimentary water and sanitation. This was the case with the Johannesburg City Council which adopted site and service schemes in Jabavu and Orlando. The same local authority also initiated what Van Tonder calls a *controlled* site and service scheme in Moroka in 1947. The Moroka exercise was made available to all Africans and their families who had been working or residing in the area for six months or more. In taking this direction, the local authority acknowledged responsibility to provide housing for 11,000 families.[255] The significance of these squatter settlements was that they were indicative of the birth of modern urban townships and increased *proletarianisation* of the African people in this period. Moreover, squatter settlements also gave birth to a unique political culture dissimilar from the politics of existing older townships. These settlements were beleaguered by a myriad of problems such as

[252] Bonner, P, "The Politics of Black Squatter Movements on the Rand", *Radical History Review*, Vol.46, No. 7, 1990, p.92.

[253] *Ibid*.

[254] Van Tonder, "First Win the War and then Clear the Slums", p.18.

[255] *Ibid*, p.19.

crime, youth delinquency and family instability. These problems could be traced back to the material deprivation from means of collective consumption that these areas suffered.[256]

Squatter settlements and land invasions propelled more state repression and a more forceful policy against mixed locations and squatter settlements. Nieftagodien posits that white officialdom responded to cases of racially intermixed locations and squatter settlements with panic and hysteria. This panic and hysteria could be discerned from the way in which areas occupied by Africans in cities were described as black spots. This label drew on ideas about the racial composition of the areas, their politically unsettling nature as well as the poverty and disease that plagued them.[257]

"Good town planning" as solution to the urban crisis

Throughout the war period, the UP grappled with the advent of African urbanisation and the concomitant housing crisis it generated. A number of steps were taken to remedy the situation. One response was that the Department of Health increasingly became intricately involved in the urban crisis. In the 1930s, this Department appointed the Thornton Committee which was tasked with the investigation of 'irregular' settlements on the outskirts of municipal areas. This trend was significantly entrenched with the rapid industrialisation of South Africa. The committee was chaired by Edward Thornton, who was also chairman of the Central Housing Board, the latter institution having notably contributed to the allocation of segregated housing to different races. The 1940 report produced by the Thornton Committee expressed concerns about widespread 'irregular' urbanisation by Africans. The report also concluded that the 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act already provided mechanisms for the segregation of the African population in urban areas. This was despite the reality that the Native (Urban Areas) Act only had limited impact on most urban areas resulting in wide scale racial intermixing across many cities in the country.[258] The emphasis of this report was more on the need to segregate other population groups, namely coloured and Indian people. The report expressed consternation at racial intermixing. Particularly worrying for the committee, was the observation that

[256] Bonner, "The Politics of Black Squatter Movements on the Rand", p. 94.

[257] Nieftagodien, "The Making of Apartheid in Springs", p.41.

[258] Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.408.

"Europeans were found to be living cheek by jowl with non-Europeans".[259] While these observations were made with conviction, the UP governments' ability to act on them was weighed down by its focus on the war effort.[260]

As part of the strategies to resolve the urban crisis, the government created the Social Economic and Planning Commission (SEPC) in 1942. This commission had two main tasks, namely, post-war reconstruction and the promotion of rapid industrialisation in the country. The SEPC was an interdepartmental non-statutory body chaired by Dr H J van Eck. It produced a number of reports throughout its ten year lifespan.[261] Its first report was published in 1944 which considered 'proper planning' the kernel to resolving the social problems associated with war-time urbanisation in South Africa. This council also spelt out the need for coordination of urban planning, thus presenting racial zoning as a viable solution.[262]

The SEPC's thinking mirrored international trends in urban planning significant in ways. Firstly, it emphasised the need to build coherent communities separated by green belts and "careful" planning to bring the productive (work) and the reproductive (residential) sphere closer together with transport mediating the two. In the South African context, these ideas translated rather easily into planning racially segregated residential areas. [263] Secondly, the SEPC championed a greater and more interventionist role for the state. Nieftagodien makes the observation that the Council's commitment to strong state intervention was reflective of the dominance of Keynesian ideas on the global scale. Notions about equality and redistribution could not be subjected solely to the whims of capital but were all key elements of modernist thinking prevailing in this period.[264]

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[259] *Ibid*, p.413.

[260] Nieftagodien, N, "The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand 1948-1973: The Role of Local Government and Local Resistance", PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2001, p.71.

[261] *Ibid.*

[262] Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.415.

[263] *Ibid.*

[264] Nieftagodien, "The Implementation of Urban Apartheid on the East Rand", p.71.

Many scholars note that in the South African context, these egalitarian currents were lost to the racialised and unequal structure of South African capitalism.[265] In a nutshell, the view that the specific social problems plaguing African locations during this period could be resolved through "good town planning"[266] and stabilising the African workforce in urban areas assumed centre stage. During this period state institutions, primarily the Native Affairs Department, increasingly lent its ears to interest groups advocating for the 'moral' and economic 'upliftment' of urban Africans as the solution to the 'vice' plaguing these locations.[267] An example of the dominance of ideas about state *welfarism* and *'proper planning"* is the case of Sharpeville. According to Vally, the idea of a 'model township' was part of the broader strategy to enforce order and surveillance on the urbanised African population. The desire to quell political resistance among the urbanised African population as well as the complex relations between the local and central state are key to understanding how this strategy unfolded and its impact on the areas it was applied. In the case of Sharpeville, Vally argues that the intentions of the policy were realised as the township was characterised by political quiescence for the better part of its history.[268]

With its strong convictions in state intervention and central planning, the SEPC also recommended the establishment of a "special organisation" with a specific task to coordinate town planning from a national level.[269] While this recommendation was not implemented, the state did nonetheless create two important agencies, namely, the Land Tenure Advisory Board (LTAB)[270] and the National Resources Development Council (NRDC). According to Mabin, these two agencies sowed the seeds for

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[265] Posel, D, "The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s" in Dubow, S and Jeeves, A (eds) *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, Double Storey Books, Cape Town, 2005,p.68.

[266] National Archived Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *G I Nel, Inspector of Urban Locations: Planning of the Controlled Area: North Western Orange Free State*, 14 February 1949.

[267] Vally, N, "The Model Township of Sharpeville: The Absence of Political Action and Organisation, 1960-1984", MA Thesis, Wits University, 2010, p.47.

[268] *Ibid*, p.53.

[269] Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.416.

[270] The LTAB was primarily geared towards administering new legislation providing for stricter segregation of Indians. See Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.416-417.

segregated group areas with their full intent coming to fruition with the promulgation of the GAA in 1950. The NRDC was pivotal in deciding the future of African locations in the northern Free State. The NRDC was chaired by FJ Du Toit who had been a member of the 'Advisory Committee on the Development in the Northern Free State'. His presence was said to enhance the NRDC's expertise meaning that the Council would be populated "by persons now fairly well acquainted with the urban Native housing problem".[271]

The NRDC's technical staff comprised the Planning Officer Dr J H Moolman; an economist Dr FF Winkle; the statistician Mr S van Schalkwyk; industrial engineer Mr G D Louw; civil engineer Mr M Burger as well as the council's secretary Mr J H van der Walt.[272] The Council's main task was to devise measures to deal with the urban 'native' housing problem in the controlled areas and to "warn against the difficulties that had arisen on the Reef in consequence largely of the absence of good town planning."[273] The NRDC had the powers to coordinate the activities of other planning bodies with the result that no township development in controlled areas could take place without its approval. As a result, argues Mabin, the NRDC was largely able to set the pace and direction of racial zoning and determine the future of Africans in places like Welkom, Westonaria, Kinross[274] and as is shown in this study, Hennenman. The powers mustered by NRDC led one of its members to argue that it was the "first regional planning body established in the country with significant, if limited powers".[275] The limited nature of these powers became evident in its narrow jurisdiction over controlled areas, which in practice meant that it could not pursue regional planning in places other than the controlled areas. This means the Council could not influence new plans for already established metropolitan areas and small towns.[276]

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[271] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, G I Nel, *Inspector of Urban Locations Planning of the Controlled Area: North Western Orange Free State*, 14 February 1949.

[272] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 606, 346/313 N, *Establishment of New Location: Municipal Area of Hennenman*, 8 September 1947.

[273] *Ibid*.

[274] Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.418

[275] TJD Fair cited in Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation", p.418

[276] *Ibid*.

In the northern Free State, the "energetic staff"[277] of the Council, along with members of the regional committee undertook studies to look at population growth and distribution trends, businesses, schools, land use and ownership, the organisation of the mining industry and its needs and development plans, labour profile, urban developments and projection of future population growth in controlled areas. These studies were conducted in order to "enable it (the NRDC) to recognise any trends in developments at an early stage and to guide such developments along the correct channels."[278]

Labour Control and the Housing Crisis in Hennenman

The town of Hennenman, wherein the old African location was situated largely conformed to the national picture of rapid African urbanisation. The area also experienced a rapid increase in the African population residing in the area. In terms of the Ventersburg district and Hennenman specifically, the census showed the African population had more than doubled within a fifteen-year period between 1921 and 1936. The lack of census data for the white population group from 1921 makes it difficult to draw an accurate comparison between the growth of the white and African population. However, what is evident is that the white population had grown only by a fraction within the five-year period from 1931 to 1936.[279] In analysing the census results, particularly the increase of the African population in the Ventersburg District which included Hennenman and Virginia, local authorities described the situation as an "anomaly". The local authority also emphasised the need, albeit without specifications, to adopt strict measures to deal with the growth of the African population in the area.[280] This rapid expansion of the African population in the Hennenman area and the Ventersburg District generally occasioned serious apprehensions from state officials in the area.

This steady growth in population continued well into the 1940s. According to a 1946 Census, the total African population in the Ventersburg Magisterial District was

[277] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, G I Nel, *Inspector of Urban Locations Planning of the Controlled Area: North Western Orange Free State*, 14 February 1949.

[278] *Ibid*.

[279] Free State Archives Repository, Bloemfontein, LHM 2/1/2, 14/1/7, *Population Census 1936*.

[280] *Ibid*.

estimated at twenty thousand (20 000).[281] The white population in the same period was only a quarter of this figure. The question of creating an African township became urgent. It is worth noting that the same thinking informed authorities in Welkom and Odendaalsrus. Interestingly, African townships for these three towns were promulgated around the same period.[282]

Comparison of Census figures 1921, 1931 and 1936[283]

Table One: White Population: 1931-1936

White Population	**1931 (yr)**	**1936 (yr)**	**Increase or Decrease**
Males	1,629	1,902	+273
Females	1,468	1,758	+290
Total	**3,097**	**3,660**	**+563**

Table Two: African Population: 1,921-1,936

African Population	**1921 (yr)**	**1936 (yr)**	**Increase or Decrease**
Males	3,959	8,084	+4,125
Females	3,414	6,997	+3,583
Total population	**7,373**	**1,5081**	**+7,708**

[281]*Ibid*.

[282]National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, G I Nel, *Inspector of Urban Locations Planning of the Controlled Area: North Western Orange Free State*, 14 February 1949.

[283]*Ibid*.

The growth in the African population was attributed to the thriving economy in the area during the early 1930s and 1940s. Specifically liable, according to local authorities, was the growth of the cement industry which was evidenced by opening of a new cement factory in the same period, a move which directly propelled the expansion of the three "rural townships" in the area; Hennenman, Virginia and Whites. The cement industry was a major contributor to the economic boom and employed many African workers in construction activity.[284] The size and scale of the construction industry unsettled other industries in the area as it was blamed for labour shortages. This trepidation emanated mainly from local maize farmers who attributed their labour woes to this growing industry. The complaints from white farmers can be interpreted to mean that the demand for African labour was on the increase, a factor that in turn contributed to the exponential growth of the African population in the years to come.[285]

Ironically, local authorities in Hennenman contradicted the white farmers' sentiments about labour shortage as they argued that the thriving farming industry in the area was also liable for the growth of the African population in the area. The understanding within government circles was that the success of the rural rehabilitation scheme which was aimed at increasing maize and food production in the farms was responsible for the 'uncontrollable' urbanisation of the African population by directly inducing labour demand in the farms – a demand which could only be met by the migration of African workers into the town. Another reason cited as responsible for the soaring African migration was the absence of "native townships" in the Ventersburg District.[286] By the mid to the late 1940s, local authorities had no reason to believe that this rapid growth and industrialisation of the town would come to a halt. An official report in 1946 made the following observation:

> This little village has a bright future: it is situated on the main railway line from the Rand to Bloemfontein, and it is about 3 miles from Whites [rail station] which will be the junction for the new railway line to the Orange Free State Goldfields. It is within the bounds of possibility that as

[284] *Ibid*.

[285] *Ibid*.

[286] *Ibid*.

> Hennenman will probably expand in the direction of Whites and that the two places may merge one day.

The optimism about the town's future was lucid:

> [I]n any event, there seems to be every likelihood that Hennenman will grow as an industrial centre owing to its close proximity to the Odendaalsrus gold mining area … The possibility of gold or coal being mined nearer home must also be considered in relation to its future. It already has two big industries adjacent to it viz. Whites Cement Factory and the Anglo-Alpha Cement Factory.[287]

Not only did Hennenman conform to the countrywide experience of rapid African urbanisation during this period, the consequences of such a development were also replicated in the area. The African population residing in Hennenman was largely of a working class orientation with the greater majority working in the cement factories and the maize farms in the area. Other professions in the area included teachers, who were miniscule considering that the old location only had one school that catered for pupils up to standard three.[288] In terms of official population ethnic estimates done in 1946, 92% of *Marantha*'s residents were Sotho speaking with the remainder being Zulu and Xhosa.[289] The ethnic "homogeneity" of the old location was listed as the reason why there was no need for ethic zoning in the new location where Africans were to be relocated. While the predominance of Sesotho speaking people amongst the African population in the old location is indisputable, interviews suggest that official records overlooked another group that became highly integrated in the life of the old location. This group was made up of the African male migrant workers who were employed as chefs in the hotel near Whites railway station. According to the interviews undertaken in this study, these workers hailed mainly from Mozambique. This conclusion is drawn possibly because they spoke Shangaan. These migrant workers intermarried within the old location and became part of its permanent residents that were relocated to Phomolong in 1952. Some of these workers became successful business people. One example is the Mqunu family, which owned a little

[287]National Archives Repository, Pretoria, GES 943, 761/13, *Systematic Inspection of Sanitary and Health Conditions in the Village Management Board of Hennenman, Orange Free State, carried out by Dr. Gerald Mechanik*, June 1946.

[288] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

[289]National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *Town Clerk letter to Department of Native Affairs*, 21 April 1946.

general shop and the choir which brought the much needed entertainment to the African residents of the old location. Arguably, this group was overlooked in the ethnic statistics because of its insignificant size. The town only boasted one hotel and one restaurant. If this group's predominant occupation was as chefs and restaurant staff, perhaps officials considered this group too insignificant to be accounted. The other African business people in the old location were the Ntwagaes who owned a little cafe in the town as well as the Tshabangus and Mosoeunyanas who owned race horses. Horse racing was another favourite past time for the residents of the old location.[290]

The cement industry was the major employer of the African residents in the old location. The two companies that became a central element of the town's evolution were the Whites South Africa Portlands Cement Company (Whites) and the Anglo Alpha Cement Company. The former, which had sizeable operations in Hennenman, was situated near the Hennenman railway line and was the connecting route between Bloemfontein to Kroonstad. This company was formed in 1912 and started producing cement in Hennenman in 1914. The company had two other additional plants in Hennenman known as the *Rietgat* and the *Helpmekaar* plants. Population estimates from 1950 show that Whites had a total of approximately 2 800 Africans residing on the company compounds. The greatest proportion of this number was in the main plant next to the railway line which had 2 500 Africans staying in it. These estimates clearly show the size of Whites' operations which was substantially larger than Anglo Alpha Cement Company which only housed 500 African workers on its property. These figures are not only a proportion of the African workers inhabiting in the compounds but to a large extent their families as well. This is given credence by the fact that the company's health report in July 1947 claimed that only 1 100 African male employees were housed in the company's compounds. The report further stated that the "200 semi-detached houses for married natives together with two blocks of rooms for single natives" were provided.[291]

[290] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

[291] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *Report on the Inspection of Whites on 08 July 1947*, 29 July 1947.

The African population increase in the town resulted in acute housing shortages, which placed pressure on the local authority. The local authority did not cater adequately for the African population in terms of housing and general amenities. Overcrowding of the African population within these cement companies was a major concern for state officials. A report filed by the health department in 1947, after inspecting living conditions in both companies concluded that African workers in these compounds lived under abysmal conditions. The report observed that:

> In the single men's quarters a certain degree of overcrowding occurs ... They sleep in the two tiers of bunks on each side of the rooms with 8 natives per tier or 32 natives per room approximately.[292]

In the same period, the local authority and the cement companies expressed panic at the increased incidents of "squatting of natives in the vicinity of the cement firms."[293] Land invasions and squatting by the African population mirrored the experience on various areas across the country. It is also reasonable to believe that African residents and workers in these companies often flouted company accommodation 'rules'. Although the cement companies provided for "married natives" to stay with their wives in the compounds, some workers extended this provision to other members of their families. For example, Melita Majoe who arrived in *Marantha* from Winberg in 1938 spent the first few years of her stay working as a teacher in the local school for Africans and was accommodated by her sister and her husband at Whites cement factory. It was only later that she acquired her own property and became a stand owner, letting parts of it to tenants who were desperate for accommodation.[294] The women who cohabited on the "married native compounds" along with many women that stayed in the location itself served as cooks in the company kitchens, domestic workers in the white households in the Hennenman where approximately 2 000 "Europeans"[295] stayed and cleaners in the only hotel in Hennenman situated near the Hennenman station (also known as Whites).[296]

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[292] *Ibid*.

[293] *Ibid*.

[294] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

[295] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *Report on the Inspection of Whites on 08 July 1947*, 29 July 1947.

[296] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009

Aside from the pressing situation in the cement factories, African workers who were employed by a tractor company near the old location were also subject to appalling living conditions. The tractor company did not provide proper amenities for its workers for whom accommodation was in the form of tents erected on the company property.[297] This overcrowding was also replicated outside the confines of the industrial areas. Within the location itself, overcrowding was a pronounced phenomenon. From the testimonies gathered it seems that the old location was separated by a fence from the area occupied by the town's white residents. It was rudimentary in nature, with housing for the African population being constructed from corrugated iron, mud and cement sacks produced in the cement factories. The name *Marantha*, so named by its African residents, was revealing of the locations' rudimentary nature. *Marantha* is a Sesotho word meaning rags. The location's former residents argue that it was named so because of the rudimentary nature of the housing in the location.[298] The housing crisis was so acute that the local authority – in an attempt to draw attention to this "uncontrollable situation" – wrote to the Department of Native Affairs in September 1948, and painted a horrid picture of the overcrowding in the area. The correspondence read: "the conditions concerning the housing and overcrowding in the township is (sic) horrifying. At present 4 800 natives are living on 8 morgen of land."[299] Increasingly, relocations were seen as a solution to the urban African housing crisis in Hennenman.

In addition to resolving the housing crisis, the local authority also grew increasingly concerned about the proximity of the Africans to whites in the area. The local authority championed relocations, in spite of the fact that in the cement factories, segregation between the two groups, especially regarding social amenities and housing, was already pronounced. The extent of this segregation was revealed in the report drafted by the health inspectorate which showed that the Whites cement factory had on its premises a separate hospital, cemetery and schools for "Europeans" and "natives". Furthermore, recreational facilities in the form of tennis courts, large hall

[297] Interview with Lisenyane, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[298] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009, and Interview with Diphooko, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[299] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *Report on the Inspection of Whites on 08 July 1947*, 29 July 1947.

for dancing and social events, a restaurant and a cinema were strictly designed only for use by "Europeans" on the premises. In contrast, African workers in the compounds lived under dire conditions. The hospital catering for the African workforce, who were in majority, only had twenty four (24) beds and only one doctor. The rest of the location also lacked adequate amenities. Travelling by foot to the district capital in Ventersburg for medical services, police station and the district court was a common practice for African residents.[300] *Marantha* also had only one water tap servicing the entire African community in the location. This situation often gave rise to problems such as long queues for water and brawls amongst residents over queue skipping.[301] The old location boasted one school which was built by the teachers and residents of the area itself. The school was under the operational supervision of the Methodist Church. It was built from mud and cement sacks. Another school for about two hundred (200) African children was located at Whites Cement Company. This school only catered for children of the married workers living in the company compounds.[302]

Relocating the African population to a place "just far enough"

In response to the burgeoning African population as well as the acute shortage of housing in the area, a decision was made to relocate the African residents of *Marantha* in 1948. The implementation of this decision was delayed by four years as the actual relocations took place in 1952, two years after the promulgation of the GAA. The main factor delaying the relocation was the cost of land for the new township. The Hennenman Town Council made several attempts to acquire cheap land for township development purposes during the first two years after the actual decision was taken. The first option that the local authority pursued was subdivision five of a farm called Zwartpan nr. 572, which came with the price tag of £55 per morgen.[303] This was said to be too expensive. After this, the council explored buying land in a farm called Babiena which was situated not too far from Whites railway.

[300] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106, 346/313 N, *Report on the Inspection of Whites on 08 July 1947*, 29 July 1947.

[301] Interview with Lisenyane, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[302] *Ibid.*

[303] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106 346/313 N, *Report on the Establishment of the Native Location for Hennenman*, 29 September 1948.

This land cost £100 per morgen, a price also considered too high for township development, especially since a thousand houses would have to be supplied in the new township for occupation by the relocated Africans population. Ultimately, the council settled for land in two farms known then as number *114 Fouries Vlakte* and *349 Venters Vlakte* respectively. These farms belonged to the Anglo Alpha Cement Company. The cost of buying this land for the new township was considerably lower than the two options entertained previously as the cement company sold the land for £30 per morgen. This was £25 per morgen cheaper than the price of the land at Zwartpan and £70 cheaper than Babiena. The location of these two farms was advantageous as they were adjacent to each other.[304]

Importantly, this land was located in the further south-eastern part of the town but still in close proximity to Anglo Alpha cement factory. This essentially meant that whilst it was far enough from the white area, it was still considered close enough for the strategic interests of the cement industries in Hennenman.[305] In planning the layout of the town, a committee chaired by the Inspector of Urban Locations and Mr G I Nel, recommended that "the town lands be expanded to include the adjoining areas of Alpha Cement Company and Whites Cement Company and that the layout be so planned that the location serve to provide labour for both the cement companies and any future industries that may be established."[306] In this way, the new location "would be well situated from a labour point of view".[307] Health inspections on the new location also stressed the need to ensure "proper regional planning of the area into industrial business and residential areas."[308] The need for "proper" planning for this new location was considered even more important in light of the assumption that gold would soon be discovered in the area.[309] This, combined with the anticipated growth of the cement industry, meant that the African population in the area could well double over a few years.

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[304] *Ibid.*

[305] *Ibid.*

[306] *Ibid.*

[307] *Ibid.*

[308] *Ibid.*

[309] *Ibid.*

In terms of the actual relocations, residents of the old location remember them as stealthily brutal. Respondents painted the following picture:

> They placed vans and said *haak*. They harassed us. They had built this one (Phomolong) already. They were taking us to this one. We kept hearing that a location was being built but we were not sure what was happening.[310]

Diphooko attests to this version of events and says: "they removed us with lorries, yellow tractors from a company that was based in the town. They removed us by force."[311]

Once the decision to relocate the African population was taken, a series of disagreements arose between the Hennenman Town Council and the Native Affairs Department. The first discord was in relation to the provision of compensation to the African population for the relocation. The Hennenman Town Council held the view that the possibility of compensating the "native" population should be avoided at all cost. In its letter to the NAD, requesting a loan to the tune of £1 500 to cover the relocation costs, the Hennenman town clerk emphasised the need to avoid any move that could lead to the African population demanding "steep" compensation. The town clerk remarked that:

> If all possible steps are taken to acquire the loan, it can have negative influences on the compensation and that, the natives might be inclined to ask a steep compensation, which can bring further difficulties.[312]

This concern about the prospect of African residents demanding high compensation was so prominent among local officials that the council specifically advised that African residents should only be informed about their imminent relocation at the eleventh hour. The Town Clerk urged that the African residents were more likely to be 'reasonable' about the compensation if the relocation caught them off guard. According to the local authority:

> There would be much less difficulties if the township residents are not officially notified of the situation for now. As they might be more reasonable concerning compensation if they are, let's say, not notified of the relocation

[310] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

[311] Interview with Diphooko, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[312] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 5749 346/313K, *Relocation of Costs for New Native Location*, 24 January 1951.

> until 14 days before that time unless an agreement can be reached beforehand.[313]

These sturdy views from the local authority found support from the NAD only in principle. In practice, the NAD took a pragmatic stance on the matter, arguing that the local authority should follow procedure and compensate the relocated African population as far as funding permits. The instruction the NAD gave to the town council was that it:

> [S]hould act in accordance with the memorandum concerning compensation. A list of natives should be made and it should include the amount that they will be paid. This should be sent for ministerial approval.[314]

The NAD further asserted that "[i]t would be in everyone's best interest if a mediator is appointed" and that "[a]ny complaints by natives about their compensation should be reported."[315] These commitments notwithstanding, an argument can be advanced that the compensation of the African population could not have been high given the largely rudimentary properties that African residents utilised as houses as well as the fact that the local authority shouldered the costs for the relocation and provided transport to this effect. The local authority's advice that the relocation of the African population should proceed with perfidy was carried through. Residents in the old township recall that they had simply heard of a new location being constructed and the planned relocation as only rumour. They attest to the fact that they did not pay much attention to this rumour as in their eyes everything carried on as normal.[316]

Half-hearted Resistance to the Removals

Nieftagodien's study of the making of apartheid in Springs points to the fact that mass resistance towards forced removals was not forthcoming. Class and racial tensions were among the main reasons that led to a fragmented response to forced removals. Additionally, popular movements at the time placed only scant focus on the GAA and this undermined their ability to wage a victorious battle against the removals.

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[313] *Ibid.*

[314] *Ibid.*

[315] *Ibid.*

[316] Interview with Diphooko, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

Compounding the situation was the excessive force and repression invested by the state in order to drive the relocations without concerted opposition.

In terms of racial tension in old locations, Van Tonder draws attention to the idea that relocations were often supported by other racial groups. In the case of Sophiatown, he shows how Coloured residents made deputations through the Newclare Ratepayer's Association to the city council to agitate for separate residential arrangements for Africans and Coloureds. The racial tension and incidents of confrontation amongst Africans and White residents over transport services of Sophiatown placed pressure on race relations between the two groupings, leading to White residents tabling demands for the relocation of Africans. White politicians often took up these demands with fervour and tenacity.[317] This account of other racial groups actively supporting racial segregation is not uncommon.[318] Amongst the poor Coloured and Indian populations in the East Rand, relocations and the establishment of racially exclusive group areas found support because this enhanced the possibility of homeownership amongst these groups.[319]

There is insufficient evidence in the case of the removal of *Marantha* to suggest that white residents' pressure on local politicians was one of the factors in the relocation. What can be argued instead is that relations between these two social groups were dynamic and complex. This is reflected in the contradictory accounts provided by the African population about white residents' reaction to the relocations. On the one hand, there are testimonies which argue that relations between the whites and Africans were cordial. From these accounts, the white residents in Hennenman were no more than as "God's people, who lived their own lives."[320] This statement suggests amicable relations premised on a detached interaction between the racial groups. On the other hand, however, there are accounts which draw attention to the discordant relations between the two racial groups. A former resident of the old location describes this situation as follows: "We (Africans) lived with them but they still

[317] Van Tonder, *"First Win the War and then Clear the Slums"*, p.15.

[318] Nieftagodien, *The Making of Apartheid in Springs*, p.150.

[319] *Ibid*, p.8.

[320] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

marginalised us because they were white. They marginalised us like all whites did."[321] This analysis goes further to link the actual relocation of the African population with the intentions and mechanisations of the white residents in the area. Some residents argue that whites largely "oppressed" the African population and were responsible for relocating the African population "so far away."[322]

According to this interpretation, the informal name of the new location *Vergenoeg*, which means far enough in Afrikaans, reflected white sentiments about the relocation.

> The Whites moved us from *Marantha* because we were too close to them. To go to town you would just walk, we were too near so they removed us to Phomolong and said it's *Vergenoeg*. The whites named it *Vergenoeg*.[323]

Another reading is that whites were relieved that the African population was located just far enough from the white town. White officialdom also celebrated that the new location made it possible to locate the African working class at a considerable distance from town without compromising the labour needs of industry. It is also highly possible that the newly relocated African population so coined the new township because of its geographic distance from the major industrial centres and the town itself. This study could not find conclusive evidence to suggest that white residents' pressure on local politicians was a factor behind the relocation. What can be argued instead is that race relations between these two social groups were dynamic and complex. This is aptly reflected in the contradictory accounts provided by the African population about the white residents' reaction to the relocation.

In class terms, the relocations pitted homeowners and lodgers against each other. Lodgers greeted the relocations with delight as they present a real prospect of acquiring a house. New townships also provided the possibility for better amenities. Conversely, homeowners' concerns centred on foregone incomes, as homeowners were also sub-letters who had established a lucrative market with renting out their properties. However limited, relocations were a point of reform for many residents in

[321] Interview with Diphooko, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[322] *Ibid*.

[323] *Ibid*.

old locations and this factor is crucial in explaining the negligible resistance to them.[324]

Similarly, Vally's study on Sharpeville emphasises the role and influence of class location in the resistance to the removals. Resistance of Top Location emerged quite strongly from stand owners in the old location. However, the perspective that the relocations were a significant point of reform for African residents in old locations has been contested by some scholars. Vally argues that although new locations provided improved amenities, in some cases, the difference was not particularly extraordinary. She notes that amenities in the new location of Sharpeville were not remarkably different to those boasted by the old location (Top Location) which boasted a communal hall, beer hall, football grounds and a tennis court. Transport was also considerably cheaper in the Top Location as the place was much closer to industrial areas. Another reason why sections of the old location were reluctant to move was that it was difficult for the state to enforce order and surveillance. The relocations were thus perceived as significantly curtailing the freedom of residents from the state and its repressive arms.[325]

Scholars have made the observation that, despite their abhorrence among the black population, there was very little vigorous mass resistance to the removals. Instead, protests were often voiced through the media and through making representations. For instance, in the case of Sophiatown, opposition to the removal was articulated in the black press through articles and editorial pieces. The removals were condemned on the basis that they were underlined by racist nuances and the drive to racially segregate cities.[326] It is possible that this contestation in the black press emanated primarily from the African middle class which stood to lose lucrative income in the form of tenant rents. However, Lodge cautions against views which simply attribute the resistance to the relocation as merely a reflection of 'elitist' nature of the organisations driving the campaigns against the removals. He argues that in the case of the ANC for instance, a more convincing thesis would posit that the organisation was besieged by the social contradictions that reflected more broadly the class

[324] Nieftagodien, *The Making of Apartheid in Springs*, p.150.

[325] Vally, *The Model Township of Sharpeville*, p.57-58.

[326] Van Tonder, "First Win the War and then Clear the Slums", p.13-14.

composition of the local and national leadership. The class position of the leadership, its socialisation into petty-bourgeois norms and its beliefs made it less enthusiastic to wage a confrontational battle against the state and its measures.[327]

In addition, accounting for the negligible resistance to the relocations was that the absence of a popular mass movement unified in a struggle against the relocations. Nieftagodien posits that although the 1950s were a decade of mass resistance, the GAA found only meek opposition from the popular mass movement of the time, especially the ANC. For the better part of the early 1950s, the ANC's organisational energy was expended on the Defiance Campaign. In the aftermath of the Defiance Campaign, the ANC still lacked a clear and focused strategy that targeted the forced removals. Instead, the approach was to fuse the struggle against the relocations with others struggles such as the struggle against Bantu Education.[328] According to Lodge, a critical reason for the inability of the ANC to wage successful resistance against the relocations was the force deployed by the state to crush any resistance to the relocations. For the state, forced removals in places like Sophiatown which were gleaming political hotbeds, was *sine qua non* to uprooting the seeds of political resistance and radical nationalism that was starting to germinate and blossom in these areas.[329]

Marantha's case largely conforms to the national picture in terms of the negligible mass resistance to the relocation. The lack of a coordinated collective resistance from the African population from *Marantha* reinforces the argument that the possibility of improved housing and amenities largely influenced the response to relocations. The relocation to *Vergenoeg* was welcomed as the old location was largely a rudimentary arrangement with many houses built from mud, sacks and corrugated iron. Residents from the old location describe the latter as:

> "...just mixed up. Houses were made of sacks, it was just mixed up. We first saw proper houses in Phomolong ... There was no way that we were going to refuse because *Marantha* was not a proper place. People had just built what they could … We were given houses (in the new location). We were happy about these houses because they were better than those in *Marantha*. The

[327] Lodge, T, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983, p.109.

[328] Nieftagodien, *The Making of Apartheid in Springs,* p.64-66.

[329] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.110.

> houses in *Marantha* were just made up of sacks and iron. It (*Marantha*) was just a place where we had placed ourselves."[330]

Another contingent that supported the relocations was the employees of a tractor company near the old location. The company had not provided proper amenities for its workers, for whom accommodation was in the form of tents erected on the company property. Mrs Lisenyane whose husband was one of the workers in the company points out that "even the men who worked at the tractors could get houses here in Phomolong. It was better because the tractors had just placed them in a bad way."[331] Therefore, the relocations presented a real possibility for home ownership.

These prospects of a better life lured the targeted populations away from the possibilities of resisting the relocations. Interestingly, these new locations were commonly given informal names by their new residents, reflecting the sentiments of the residents about the relocation. For instance, Sharpeville was informally known as *Kotiesphola*, meaning a place of rest.[332] The same connotations ran through the name *Phomolong*, which was initially coined by the residents and later made official by the local authorities.

The relocation did, however, face some negligible resistance. Landlords in the old location were particularly opposed to the removals. One of the people that defied the relocation was Melita Majoe who had arrived as a young teacher in the old location in 1938. Her disinclination to move was due to the fact that she would be moved from a bigger property in the old location to a two-roomed house in the new township. Majoe owned a sizeable house in the old location and used it to generate revenue by sub-letting it to other tenants, especially teachers in the area. Mr Job Matsipa – the first principal of Sofasonke School in the old location and his successor Mr Moroka – both resided in Majoe's house as tenants.[333] Majoe only moved to the new location in 1954, after she had finished extending her new two-roomed house in the new township. Overall, the resistance to the relocations emanated from the *tenant class*. Its size and influence in the old location precluded it from undertaking any form of a

[330] Interview with Lisenyane, Phomolong, 15August 2009.

[331] *Ibid*.

[332] Vally, "The Model Township of Sharpeville", p.58.

[333] Interview with Melita Majoe, Phomolong, 17 July 2009.

collective opposition worthy of the local authority and the NAD's attention. In *Marantha*, an argument could be advanced that the surreptitious nature of the relocation plans denied the Africans any space to orchestrate a collective opposition to the relocations.

Early Life in Phomolong

Although the relocations were a significant improvement from old and often undeveloped 'black spots' in town, the new locations also presented the African population with new challenges. The high cost of living in the new locations was a struggle experienced by most African residents. These locations were constituted primarily of African wage earners who had low earning power.[334] In the case of the Western Areas Removal Scheme, the African residents who were relocated to Orlando and Pimville were mainly workers who relied on trams and buses to reach workplaces. Although Van Tonder observes that the cost of transport in these new townships was not overwhelming, problems such as overcrowding and long queues for transport were a source of frustration amongst African workers.[335] In addition, the increased clamp down on the landlords by municipal authorities, high bond payments for home owners and high rates and sewage levy fees contributed to the African populations' negative lived experience in these new locations.[336] Under these circumstances, various other means of augmenting income were pursued. Amongst African women in these new locations, beer brewing was by far the most popular activity. Other forms of economic activity included food sale, selling fruit and vegetables and becoming employed as domestic workers in the white suburbs.[337]

While the former residents of *Marantha* lauded the relocation for the enormous opportunities it provided in the arena of housing and social amenities, their experience of life in the new township was fraught with complexities. The new location was a considerable distance from town. As such, residents had to contend with new

[334] Van Tonder, "First Win the War and then Clear the Slums", p.5-7.

[335] *Ibid*.

[336] *Ibid*.

[337] *Ibid*, p.22.

expenses in the form of bus transport and housing rentals paid to the local authority. In terms of transport, the situation in the new location was remarkably different to the one in *Marantha* where people simply walked to town and "didn't need [transport] because the town was near the location."[338]

Adding salt to the wounds was the fact that the local authority was less than zealous to provide for the specific needs of the African population in the new location. The politics around infrastructure development in Phomolong bear testimony to this assertion. Infrastructure upgrading often became a hotly contested issue between the local authority, provincial administration and various central state departments. An example of this is the clash that occurred over the construction of a bridge over the National Road (N1) to enable Phomolong residents to travel with ease between the township and the town area. The construction of this bridge was imperative given that a number of deaths resulted from cars knocking off pedestrians while trying to cross the road leading to town.[339] The local council contested the notion that it had to spend money (£15 000) on the construction of a bridge specifically for "native use". This unwillingness was communicated clearly to the National Transport Commission, the NAD and the OFS Provincial Administration indicating that the "town council of Hennenman is in no way prepared to help with the costs of the bridge."[340]

An investigation commission chaired by one F J du Plessis was appointed to resolve this conflict. The conclusion of this commission was that while it concurred with the local council that the "natives, especially cyclists should be kept off the road" it saw it fit that "all involved parties should be consulted especially on the matter of how much of the cost each community will carry."[341] The local authority's response to these recommendations was recalcitrant. It insisted that the onus to build the bridge was on the National Transport Department and the provincial administration. The correspondence addressed to the NAD communicated the message with these words: "The town council sees it as the National Transport Commission and the provincial

[338] Interview with Diphooko, Phomolong, 15 August 2009.

[339] The reports about the deaths resulting from pedestrians being knocked by moving cars came from the interview. This research was unable to ascertain further details about these incidents.

[340] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 6106 346/313 N, *The National Road Ventersburg to Hennenman and the road from city township Hennenman*, 26 November 1951.

[341] *Ibid.*

administration's duty to supply the bridge or subway over the Phomolong Township's Hennenman-Ventersburg road..."[342]

It further urged that:

> The town council finds it strange that the [it] and the Department of Native Affairs now seem to be part of the issue, apart from the fact that the town council of Hennenman will enjoy access to the Phomolong township and made it clear that they are in no ways responsible for any of the bridges, or changes to the road that may be demanded by the National Transport Commission or any other authority for the crossing of the road through native territory.[343]

As it stands today, Phomolong still does not have a pedestrian bridge enabling pedestrians from the township to cross the national road safely. This attitude sharply contradicts the manner in which the local council championed the construction of an airfield next to the township lands. The construction of this airfield was in response to the importunate demands of Anglo Alpha cement factory. The airfield, which was to accommodate only small aircrafts, was championed on the basis that it would improve transportation for the purposes of the cement industry in the area. The local council insisted that the construction of an airfield near Phomolong was a matter of urgency, even though official reports indicated that larger airfields in neighbouring Welkom, Virginia and Odendaalsrus were in the process of being constructed. Ironically, the local council pledged the financial resources from the "native account" behind the construction of this airfield.

The local council pledged these resources from the "native account" while at the same time insisting that the airfield was for the specific use of industry and the white population of Hennenman who could "reach the airport with ease from the road between Hennenman and Ventersburg, without travelling through the township area."[344] The local authority was also firm that "laws against racial integration would not be transgressed" by the building of this airfield. This example suggests that the interests of the cement industry played a huge part in charting the planning direction of the Hennenman and Phomolong.

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[342] National Archives Repository, Pretoria, NTS 5749 346/313K, 12 April 1957.

[343] *Ibid*.

[344] *Ibid*.

Conclusion

This thesis is concerned mainly with the 1985-2005 period in the evolution of Phomolong Township. Consequently, the specific and characteristic features of Phomolong Township in the 1960s and 1970s fall outside the scope of this thesis. The socio-economic and political dynamics punctuating the township in the period prior the 1985 Bahale Student uprising is a subject that future researchers ought to pursue. It would also be interesting for future research to investigate residents' interaction with the local state as well as the nature and character of the relationship between the local and central state in these periods.

CHAPTER THREE

"Produced in the Best of the Difficulties of those Times": Phomolong Youth Struggles in the 1980s

This chapter discusses the birth and politics of student and youth political organisations in Phomolong. It looks at the education reforms introduced in the 1980s and how they shaped youth and student politics during the same period. Furthermore, the chapter argues that the establishment of a secondary school in Phomolong was a primary factor in the development of a layer of politicised youth and also acted as a site of easy mobilisation. In the past, youth political organisation was stifled by the fact that students were dispersed in boarding schools in other towns. In addition, the chapter provides an account of how student's politics transcended its original focus on schoolyard issues to embrace grievances in the broader community. As a result, this became the catalyst for the establishment of the Phomolong Youth Congress (PYCO).

Contextually, a history of the conditions informing the launch of PYCO, its evolution, ascendance and decline, relations with other formations and organisations within the township's only secondary school and the broader township are key points of discussion in this chapter. The major campaigns in PYCO's history such as the campaign against ritual killings and Black Local Authorities are analysed. The chapter contends that the struggle against black councillors was extremely difficult because councillors were revered by most of the members of the community. Being mainly teachers and businessmen, their class status earned them admiration. The social proximity between councillors and PYCO activists was also a hurdle to the struggle against the Black Local Authorities. Often, councillors were either neighbours or PYCO activists had passed through their tutelage in their early schooling years. Among older residents, councillors held some form of popular appeal and legitimacy as they often carried their roles in ways similar to social workers. This explains why PYCO's campaigns based on collective consumption could not get popular support.

Education Reforms and Student Politicisation

Many scholars have shown how the expansion of the schooling system based on the 1972 reforms provided a fertile ground for the 1976 uprisings and students protests thereafter.[345] In the late 1960s, industrial capital became increasingly concerned with the state of black education, especially the question of how black education would meet industry's needs. This concern was prompted by the recession that began in the early 1970s and the proliferation of monopoly industry, hence propelling a need for more technical and clerical staff. The status quo called for a more focused state intervention geared towards secondary schooling as well as technical training.[346] Education reform strategies in the 1970s were thus aimed at meeting capital's demands for labour. However, this was neither an automatic nor inevitable process but a result of the contest between sections of capital to tilt these reforms to their favour.[347]

Some of the reforms introduced included changing the funding formula for Bantu Education, signalling a move from funding from black taxation to funding directly from revenue funds. This provided the momentum for the expansion of secondary and technical education. It has been argued that the protests that erupted in 1976 and later in the 1980s can be squarely located within the context of a burgeoning secondary education and technical training.[348] Between 1970 and 1980 high schools increased fourfold.[349]

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[345] Hyslop, J, "The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa-1940-1990", University of Natal Press, 1999; Kallaway, P (ed), *The History of Education under Apartheid 1948-1994*, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 2002; Glaser, "Youth Culture and Politics in Soweto, 1958-1976"; Ndlovu, "The Soweto Uprising: Part 1", Delius, *A lion amongst the cattle: reconstruction and resistance in Northern Transvaal*; Lekgoathi, "Reconstructing the history of educational transformation in a rural Transvaal chiefdom: the radicalisation of teachers in Zebediela from the early 1950s to the early 1990s".

[346] *Ibid*, p.135.

[347] *Ibid*, p.34.

[348] *Ibid,* p.135.

[349] *Ibid,* p.167.

Expansion of African Education Since 1960[350]

Year	Secondary School	Matriculants	University
1960	45,598	717	1,871
1965	66,568	1,606	1,880
1970	122,489	2,938	4,587
1975	318,568	9,009	7,845
1980	577,584	31,071	10,564
1984	1,001,249	86,873	30,604

The table above shows that by the 1980s, senior secondary schooling had ceased to be a preserve of the elite. It became a mass phenomenon.[351] This expansion was applauded by capital. Improvements in the education system via the expansion of secondary and technical training were perceived not only as satisfying the need for a semi-skilled black working class but would also significantly stave off political resistance. This was more so after the 1973 labour strikes which originated in Durban. According to this view, the solution to worker power and independent trade unions resided in the improvement of education for the black working class.[352]

Black communities also welcomed this development as it meant that parents were relieved from the strain of sending their children to schools in far flung areas. By the 1970s, boarding schools were political hotbeds with struggles against hostile conditions of education taking centre stage. The politically charged nature of boarding schools around this time was seen by parents as defeating the original purpose of sending their children to these schools. From parents' point of view, boarding schools

[350] Bundy, C, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town, 1985", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 13, No.3, April 1987, p.316.

[351] *Ibid*, p.169.

[352] Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa-1940-1990*, p.169.

were supposed to provide a conducive learning environment for their children and keep them away from politics.[353]

Far from quelling the resistance, the expansion proved to be the breeding ground for protests centred mainly on inadequate learning environment and this included the overcrowding in schools. Teachers became harsher in meting out discipline and order, leading to a student outcry against corporal punishment. As a result, the truncation of the schooling year structure from thirteen to twelve years led to massive overcrowding and thus created the structural conditions that propelled youth into political action.[354] Accordingly, by the 1980s, students had acquired what Bundy, borrowing from what Mannheim calls a "generational consciousness", identified not only by demographic semblance but a common sense of grievance and suffering. The youth also shared a common anxiety over the state of the economy and its ability to absorb labour, especially recent school leavers. In Cape Town, this anxiety was echoed in questions such as "How many of us will find jobs?"[355]

Student Activism in the Free State

Chitja Twala's[356] paper on the emergence of student organisations and youth congresses argues that the 1980s was a turning point in Free State's politics in at least two ways. Firstly, like in many other areas across the country, this decade was a period of unprecedented political radicalization amongst sections of township residents including youth and students. Secondly, it saw the transformation of political culture in the Free State. The latter involved the popularization of the calls for people's power and ungovernability which directly corresponded with the increased state repression through detentions, and enforced using the state of emergency.[357]

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[353]Twala, C, "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s: a viable attempt to reorganize protest politics?", *Journal for Contemporary History* , Vol. 32, No. 2, December 2007, pp.39-55.

[354] Hyslop, "The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa-1940-1990", p.151.

[355] Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town, 1985", p.316.

[356]Twala, "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s", p.40.

[357]*Ibid*, p.40.

There is a consensus among scholars that part of the factors explaining the upsurge in student protests in the 1980s was the rapid expansion of secondary schooling, which posed new challenges and laid the foundation for students' political mobilisation around education grievances. While in most cases education struggles in the Free State were initially channeled towards grievances in the nature and management of apartheid education system, they eventually developed into challenging the apartheid system itself. The 1970s was the genesis of school instability. On the one hand, this was not in an organized fashion. But, on the other hand, it provided the backdrop for the groundswell of school instability that would follow a decade later.[358]

Evidently, examples of student protests in the early 1980s in the Free State are many. Tumahole Township in Parys experienced mass protests led by the student organisation – Tumahole Students Organisation (TSO) – in July 1984 over rent and service charges. In the same month, students in Thabong also initiated protests. The riots and sporadic violence continued in Thabong from 1984 and 1985. As a result, by 1985, most townships in the north-western Free State had experienced some form of political riots and protests. Significantly, townships neighbouring Hennenman such as Khotsong (Bothaville), Meloding (Virginia) and Maokeng (Kroonstad), Monyakeng (Wesselsbron) also experienced a groundswell of political riots in early 1985.[359]

By April 1985, the state listed all Department of Education and Training (DET) administered schools where there had been riots; twelve (12) of the sixteen (16) schools listed were in the north-western bend of the Free State.[360] Media reports on the riots elsewhere, radio and newspaper had a bearing on student political *conscientisation* in various areas in the Free State. Nascent political networks that heavily depended on the role of individual activists were also very important in linking local struggles with broader national activities against apartheid. Seekings and Twala remarked that, "the only secondary school in the northwest not recorded as

[358] Twala, C. and Seekings, J. "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990", in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 4, 1980-1990, South African Education Democracy Trust, Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2010.

[359] *Ibid*, p.788-9.

[360] *Ibid*, p.789.

having had a riot was the one in Viljoenskroon." [361] This means that political activism and riots had deeply penetrated the north-western Free State by this time.

The Bahale Student Protests

Phomolong Township was not left unscathed by the increased tempo of student protests in neighbouring areas. The expansion of secondary schooling in this period saw the establishment of the first secondary school in Phomolong known as Bahale in 1978. Although the provision for a secondary school was pronounced in the 1956 government township plans, it took two decades for the first secondary school to open its doors for teaching. Until this point, Phomolong Primary School catered for students until standard six, after which many students sought schooling in neighbouring towns such as Kroonstad, Welkom and Botshabelo.

In August 1985, Phomolong experienced its first student protest in Bahale when a group of predominantly male students took on the case of the alleged sexual harassment of female students by the then principal of Bahale Secondary, Mr Ntwanyane Molapo. According to the students, information about his sexual harassment cases came to their attention when one of their classmates allegedly was victim to the principal's indiscretions. When the male students discovered this, they immediately took up the issue. Their first course of action was defiance during assembly when they were requested to sing as per the normal routine. At this time, their encounter with formal political organisations waging the struggle against apartheid was non-existent. However, for Mile Fingers, this was a formative experience. In his view many pupils,

> [F]irst saw politics in the name of the school principal who was sexually abusing female students. When he had sex with one of my classmates we decided to unite and take the issue up with the school board and the class monitors. We discovered that this man was still continuing ... in defiance when we would be requested to sing in the school assembly, we would sing *extra-strong, Wilson Extra Strong.*[362]

The surge in student militancy in the Free State was somewhat belated when compared to other areas in South Africa. This belated formation of student and youth

[361] *Ibid*, p.789.

[362] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

political organisation in the Free State has come under scrutiny in academic literature.[363] According to Seekings and Twala[364], the belated formation of youth political structures in the Free State was due to several reasons. The first reason accounting for this reality is the Free State's peculiar political and social landscape. Disparities in levels of development between different regions of the Free State are privileged in this analysis. On the one hand, towns in the north-western part of the region had strong industrial characteristics and their proximity to industrial centres like Sasolburg strengthened the development of trade union activity in these areas. On the other hand, towns in the south of the Free State exhibited largely agricultural characteristics and boasted very little political activity until the 1980s. This factor means that prospects for the development of a strong trade union; outside the north-western Free State was severely limited. These disparities led to disparate levels of political development and networks and difficulties in coordinating the Free State as one region.[365]

The lack of institutions of higher learning, which were "incubators of organised dissent",[366] was the second factor. As a result, the absence of institutions of higher learning in the region meant that the impetus for political organising came from people who studied and became activists outside the regions in places like Turfloop and Fort Hare.[367] Thirdly, most Free State townships were small in size, with only four townships having a population of more than 20 000 people. These were Mangaung (Bloemfontein), Seeisoville (Kroonstad), Thabong (Welkom) and Bohlokong (Bethlehem). Most townships did not have a secondary school and not all secondary schools taught until grade 12.[368] Fourthly, the Free State also lacked a strong and immediate history of protest and resistance that the 1980s generation could

[363] See Twala, "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s"; Twala and Seekings, "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990 and Moloi, "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles, 1976 – 1995", University of the Witwatersrand, Ph.D Thesis, 2012, p.3.

[364] Twala, and Seekings, "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990".

[365] *Ibid*, p.767.

[366] *Ibid*, p.767.

[367] *Ibid*, p.771.

[368] *Ibid*, p.767.

draw on. This does not mean that the Free State did not exhibit organised resistance against white rule – women's resistance to the pass laws in the early 1900s and the founding of the ANC in Bloemfontein stand out as significant political events in the annals of Free State history. [369]

The absence of historic symbols of political resistance may explain why the students in Bahale did not regard their action against the principal Molapo as political. Their understanding was that this action could not have been political since they had not forged any links with national political movements, particularly the United Democratic Front (UDF). The choice of a protest song based on a popular advertisement jingle rather than a liberation song was an indication of the students' lack of politicisation. Accordingly, one testimony notes that:

> [T]hose who came before us, I wouldn't say they were politicians. I wouldn't say they were not. Our brothers, they were not fighting for political rights ... political freedom. They were fighting against the principal who was having sexual relationships with female students in Bahale (high school). We would hear and see these things when they spoke or came running away from the police to hide amongst us in our classes. And the other thing is that there was no liberation song being sung at that time. There was a song for *extra strong* advert that I remember them singing.[370]

Clearly, the mounting objections to the principal's behaviour had not yet become overtly political. Moreover, unlike in other townships, students in Bahale had not yet raised opposition to Bantu Education and the local school administrators. Male students who attended the same class (standard seven) as the female students who were allegedly sexually abused by the principal, as well as a few males from standard eight, attempted to resolve the issue by appealing for a student collective action to confront the principal. To their disappointment, students in higher standards showed no concern for their grievance. Students in these standards cited concerns about the imminent examinations as reason for their non-participation in the protest.[371]

The next step taken by the students was to report the matter to the class monitors and the school board. Approaching these two structures revealed the extent to which the

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[369] *Ibid*.

[370] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[371] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

protest was characterised by poor levels of conscientisation. Structures that were erected by an educational system premised on unequal development of the races were accepted as legitimate bodies that could provide amicable solutions to student problems. According to Mile Fingers, the class monitors' were hesitant to take any action to address the concerns of the students. He explains that this action was specifically linked to their proximity and non-adversarial relationship with the school board.[372]

The school board gave a hearing to the students' grievances and assured them that "they would try and counsel him (the principal) and show him that what he was doing is not right."[373] Upon discovering that the school board was already aware of other similar cases, the students decided to confront the principal in his office, threatening him with violence. According to Fingers, the students resorted to threatening the principal with violence because "the school board had no chance"[374] in resolving the matter. "They were all protecting each other. He had been doing this for some time."[375] The indifference of the school board on the issue thus marked the inception of a new perspective about the role and approach of the student structure towards apartheid educational structures.

The school board reacted to the growing anger and mobilisation by students by permitting the election of student representatives to liaise with it. This was an attempt to diffuse the mounting tension within the school. The election of student representatives was conducted democratically, with students that had attended the school assembly electing those they deemed fit to be in the structure. This structure became known as the Big Ten. It was comprised of ten male students mainly from standard seven and eight of the school.[376] Amongst the members of the Big Ten were Thabo Sethunya; Tshidiso Mokati, Lehlohonolo Motingoe, Moshanyana Rathaba,

[372] *Ibid*.

[373] *Ibid*.

[374] *Ibid*.

[375] *Ibid*.

[376] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

Arrow Daliwe, Kgaki Matshai and Binkie Motsau.[377] The suspension of the principal appeared successful in diffusing the protests.

However, the victory of the Big Ten was short-lived as they soon realised that no action would be taken against the principal. Within a few weeks "Mr Jones" as the principal became known was back and continued with his job as normal. The decision by the authorities to reinstate the principal represents a turning point. For the first time, students became aware of the ineptitude of the system of black education and its unfair nature. The return of "Mr Jones" (so dubbed by his wife and teacher in the same school), marked the initial stages of a significant rupture with the naiveté that informed the students' faith and trust in the system. The school board had chosen the side of the already powerful principal against that of the Big Ten and the female students who accused him of sexual misconduct.[378] The students disrupted classes resulting in the school's closure that lasted most of August 1985. This attracted the attention of the Department of Education and Training, which reacted by expelling the key leaders of the protests. The reasoning of the education authorities was that the student body was averse to resolving the crisis mainly because its leadership was comprised of "*boramerusu*", meaning troublemakers in Sesotho.[379]

Some teachers sympathised with the students, albeit for different reasons. One such was the principal's wife, who was an English teacher at the school. The leaders of the protest perceived her as being sympathetic to their cause as she was amongst the few that opposed their expulsion. She was fiercely against the return of her husband to the school as its principal subsequent to his brief suspension.[380] According to Thabo Sethunya, she was particularly disappointed when one morning whilst delivering her English lesson, she realised that her husband had resumed his duties. Upon this realisation, she wincingly informed her students "Mr Jones is back!" He recalls that, she drew parallels between Mr Jones in George Orwell's Animal Farm[381] (the compulsory text for the standard she was teaching) and her husband. This analogy

[377] *Ibid*.

[378] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[379] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[380] *Ibid*.

[381] Orwell, G, *Animal Farm*, Essex: Penguin Classics, 2000.

communicated the message that the principal represented an oppressive figure and an impediment to the students' self-realisation, equality and freedom.[382]

It would be an exaggeration to claim that her intention in using the Animal Farm analogy was to politicise the students to struggle for their self-realisation in the same manner as the animals in Manor farm did.[383] Nonetheless, although the motives behind her support were also personal, the students considered her support as important. The fact that she could stand firmly on the side of the students against her husband gave the students the assurance that they were on the right path.[384]

The Big Ten – Suspensions and Expulsions

The disruption of schooling in Bahale led to the members of the Big Ten being pursued by the South African Police (SAP). In an attempt to evade arrests, some of the students relocated to places in Welkom and Kroonstad. It was here that they came across the influence of Black Consciousness organisations, specifically AZAPO. The students argue that this was crucial in their political awakening. Mile Finger recalls that:

> When we first built organisations in Phomolong, we had come across a guy named Baguna from Kroonstad. He gave us politics. He was an AZAPO *eintlik*. It was only later on that we came across the Release Mandela Campaign...[385]

The local context, especially the school yard was the first arena of political conscientisation for the members of the Big Ten. Their encounter with formal political organisations came as a direct result of the harsh and repressive state reaction, particularly education authorities and the police. It was the state reaction's through expulsion and ultimately detention that facilitated the links between youth in Phomolong and the national liberation fold. It was only at this point that an understanding developed that the crisis in education and the townships was the design of the apartheid system and no change in this could be conceived unless this was linked with broader struggles to overthrow apartheid. In other words, the impact of a

[382]Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[383] Orwell, *Animal Farm*.

[384] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[385] Interview with Mile Finger, 19 September 2009.

violent and physically dangerous confrontation with state power marked the political awakening of Phomolog's youths. The "[t]eargas, beatings, and detentions" as Bundy points out "provide[d] a crash course in class struggle."[386] During their expulsion from school, members of the Big Ten became fully acquainted with the might of the repressive state apparatus.

> The Special Branch ... would knock here at night and I used to sleep in th[e] sitting room. My grandmother would say I shouldn't open. They would ask about me and I would say here I am, it's me. They would take me but in the car there would be other comrades and I would understand what is happening. They would take us to the police station in Hennenman and beat and torture us until the early hours of the morning. Our backs would be green and you wouldn't be able to sit properly. They thought that by beating us they would make us retreat and give up fearing that treatment. But the beatings only served to motivate us further because we would go to school and disrupt once more.[387]

This would slowly lead to students conceptualising their struggles as part of the broader advancement of the national liberation struggle.

An early encounter with wage labour was another contributory factor to the political conscientisation of the youths in Phomolong. Some members of the Big Ten had acquired early acquaintance with South Africa's racialised capitalism through the 'piece jobs' they carried out in order to remain in school and to supplant the wage shortfalls in their families. This was Tshidiso Mokati's experience. Mokati maintains that his 'piece jobs' as a 'garden boy' in the Hennenman white suburbia gave him a firsthand experience with racism. This immediate experience went beyond the night tales that his mother would narrate to him and his siblings about the hostile treatment she received as a maid for her white employers in Hennenman. He recounts that:

> I found myself working as a garden boy for whites. You would find that sometimes the whites would make coffee for you and bring it in a tray and give it to you in a tin that was carrying jam only having removed the paper covering the tin. She would say 'come take your coffee quickly' and you would just go and take it only to find that the tin is extremely hot and it burns you. They would then laugh at you.[388]

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[386] Bundy, "Street Sociology and Pavement Politics", 321.

[387] Interview with Tshidiso Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[388] *Ibid*.

The genesis of the student protest movements in Phomolong seems to confirm Twala's narrative about the birth of the 1980s youth organisation in the Free State. This account shows that national political organizations had little or no influence in the early stages of student and youth protests. This is because student protests and the formation of student organizations in the early 1980s often erupted spontaneously. Such demonstrations and actions although potent enough to command the attention of the DET, they did not occur under the auspices of any political organization, be it student or youth focused.[389] Phomolong also shared similar traits with townships such as Duduza in the East Rand wherein student protest arose largely out of locally specific factors, often with no connection or knowledge of national organisations such as COSAS and youth congresses. However, as they gradually forged links with organisations in other townships, student organising matured to address and reflect the intricacies between locally specific grievances and the struggle against the entire edifice of apartheid.[390]

Sustainable links with national movements were forged only when four members of the Big Ten including Thabo Sethunya and Tshidiso Mokati were arrested in February 1986. While in detention for twelve days, these youths came across Pat Matosa, who was to become a central figure in Free State politics both during and post-apartheid. Pat Matosa was arrested in isolation in the Hennenman police cells and their first encounter with him was particularly memorable. Through the plumbing pipes in the police cells, Pat Matosa would share his experiences with the young comrades from Phomolong and made a significant mark in their political life. According to Sethunya, Matosa would give the young activists quizzes and lessons about the history of black squatter movements, Sofasonke Mpanza, the Soweto uprisings, etc.

> He would teach us freedom songs. The other thing was that he was conscientising us and also gave me some of his contacts in Lesotho. His commander was in Lesotho. When I left I also had to inform his mother ... that comrade Pat is in detention.[391]

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[389] Twala, "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s*",* p.46.

[390] Seekings, J, "Broken Promises : Discontent, Protest, and the Transition to Confrontation in Duduza: 1978 – 1985", Paper presented at a History Workshop Conference titled *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid*, 6-10 February 1990, p.18-20.

[391]Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

The arrest of the Big Ten members was regarded as an epic moment in the evolution of youth politics in Phomolong. As Sello Sefuthi recalls:

> [When] Sethunya and others came out of jail they had made contact with leaders of the movement. I think it sort of broadened the horizon, that the struggle is global and interconnected with other struggles. You know Hennenman is a small town, a small *dorpie*. I think it was a watershed moment when they came back from jail in 1986. To say, "hey comrades, you must know that your other comrades somewhere in Soweto, wherever are in jails all over the country because of the same issues". Then contacts were opened and we would travel [to] Welkom to meet some of the leaders of the movement...[392]

Seekings and Twala argue that while the arrest of seasoned activists left a leadership vacuum and led to less experienced activists taking over the reigns of leadership; it also aided the establishment of political networks across various areas of the Free State. Detentions forged networks and resulted in moments of solidarity among detainees including through exercises, discussion groups and prison protests such as hunger strikes.[393]

The Origins of the Phomolong Youth Congress (PYCO)

Twala advances the argument that the proliferation of youth congresses in the Free State and all over the country was largely due to the resolutions of the COSAS Conference of 1982. The conference resolved that only students were eligible for COSAS membership and that non-student youth must embark on the process to form youth congresses. To aid the latter, the conference established a commission to investigate the formation of a national youth organization, the culmination of which was the formation of youth congresses in many townships as well as the national South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). He argues that the speed and zeal through which youth congresses were formed is a matter of great fascination, particularly as these were created under conditions of the State of Emergency.[394] The arrest of the four youths followed attempts to launch a youth political organisation called the Phomolong Youth Congress (PYCO) in February 1986. Essentially, the organisers of PYCO were the same Big Ten members whose education had been sacrificed by

[392] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[393] Twala and Seekings, "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990", p.803.

[394] Twala, "The emergence of the student and youth resistance organizations in the Free State townships during the 1980s: a viable attempt to reorganize protest politics?", p.48.

expulsion from school. The organisers did not have any allegiance to congress politics. They were also unaware of the other youth congresses existing in Phomolong's neighbouring townships during this time.[395]

The launch reflected PYCO's eclectic political character. Most of the paraphernalia used for the launch had been supplied by the AZAPO comrades from Welkom. Additionally, some of the comrades who were recent migrants to Phomolong from other Free State towns informed PYCO organisers about the existence of other youth congresses elsewhere in the province.[396] This was a motivating factor to call for the organisation of Phomolong Youth Congress. From its inception, PYCO concerned itself with youth matters such as the lack of sports and recreational facilities and teenage pregnancy. Youth unemployment also featured amongst PYCO's aims. This is important because the Big Ten had only paid a mute reference to it, probably because it was informed by a single issue and had not made significant strides in expanding beyond the school yard.

At its launch, the organisers had invited the then Phomolong mayor, Mr Tsiane, to address the launch. The invitation to the mayor reflected the youth's lack of awareness about the widespread rejection of Black Local Authorities across the country during the same time. Remnants of the naiveté that earlier informed students' trust and faith in the school board were still manifest in the manner in which PYCO approached local government structures. The mayor had been invited to the launch in order to get some buy-in from him about the new organisation which the youth were planning to use to champion development in the township. Accordingly, Thabo Sethunya remarks that:

> We explained to him what our vision was and he agreed with us. He agreed that we should advise them [the Council] on issues regarding community development, youth development in particular.[397]

The idea in this instance was to convince the black Councillors that youth development was a crucial link to the resolution of youth delinquency and teenage pregnancy. Although this may appear strange, the warm attitude towards Councillors

[395] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[396] *Ibid*.

[397] *Ibid*.

was not a factor peculiar to Phomolong. The same trend can be observed from Tshepo Moloi's study of Maokeng Township in Kroonstad. Moloi argues that there are several reasons explaining the absence of sustained political resistance against apartheid structures and their local expressions in Maokeng. In Kroonstad, community Councils also served as a mediator between the Northern Orange Free State Administration Board and the residents. Councillors took the administration board to task on some of the unpopular decision it made and projected itself as a conduit of the residents' grievances. The charismatic nature of the mayor, Caswell Koekoe, was also a factor in the absence of mass political resistance to the Council. According to Moloi, under Koekoe's stewardship, the Council was able to meet most, if not all of the residents' needs in terms of social services such as housing and tarred roads.[398]

Significantly, these social needs were met without increasing rents and service charges, a factor that fuelled fierce resistance in other townships. The ability of the Council to meet these collective consumption needs effectively denied a structural basis from which political movements could mobilize residents. Given the absence of a structural basis from which to mobilize, the struggle against apartheid, argues Moloi, assumed a national character. As such, attacks on homes and properties of Councillors were seen as direct ways to collapse the central government. In other words, councillors were seen as "the immediate representatives of the central government; by destroying them, some sections within the community thought they would bring the central government to 'its knees'."[399]

Moloi posits that this reality is the reason why calls from UDF linked activists for the dissolution of the council failed to garner mass support in Maokeng. The ability of the Kroonstad Community Council (KCC) and later the Town Council of Maokeng (TCM) to insulate itself from popular mobilization by meeting the basic needs of the residents is one of the important factors explaining the relative political quiescence of Maokeng Township until the mid-1980s. The situation only changed in 1989. For that reason, this reality also explains the belated establishment of a civic structure in Maokeng. Older residents, who were after all the rate-payers, had no socio-economic

[398] Moloi, "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles", 1976 – 1995, p.27.

[399] *Ibid*, p.3.

qualms with the Council and therefore no reason to form an opposing force to it. As will be shown later, the Phomolong case exhibits similar traits and characteristics.

At PYCO's launch, Mr Jacobs became PYCO's first president, with Thabo Sethunya as chairperson and Kgaki Matshai as the secretary. It would seem that Mr Jacobs played a vital role in the early days of PYCO. Although testimonies reveal little about this character, it appears that he was born of the radical political tradition of the teaching profession. Having graduated from Fort Hare, Mr Jacobs proved to be an important source of political knowledge for the students. As a History teacher, he enjoyed the respect and adoration of many of his students.[400]

The Special Branch was closely monitoring the activities and the movements of the organisers of the launch. The jubilation at the launch of PYCO attended by approximately one hundred students was short-lived as its leaders were arrested that night. The launch was aborted. The arrest of youth activists participating in the PYCO launch is testimony to the fact that the Free State had come under strict surveillance during that time. By 1986, resistance and organisation had deeply penetrated many areas of the Free State, including even the smaller towns in the southern part of the region. As a result of this increased political activity, a curfew was imposed on 11 magisterial districts in the Free State by June 1986.[401] Moreover, the imposition of the state of emergency in June 1986 yielded increased repression in the Free State, a point demonstrated by the fact there were 405 emergency detainees in the Free State.[402] Although this was only 6% of the national total, it was a significant number considering the political quiescence that marked many townships in the area a decade earlier.

The detention of the Big Ten and PYCO activists put them on a collision course with many parents. The two formations were viewed as robbing students of the opportunity to study. Mile Fingers remembers that his parents disapproved of his activities in the Big Ten and later PYCO, as they wanted him to get an education. Education was seen as an escape route from the poverty in his home. For Mokati, a member of the Big

[400] Jacobs left Phomolong shortly after the arrests and was never seen again.

[401] Twala and Seekings, "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990", p.802.

[402] Webster, D, "Repression and the State of Emergency", *South African Review*, Vol.4, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987, p.151.

Ten and PYCO organiser, the wrath of his family was particularly severe. He was continually told that he is wasting his time through his political activities.

> Parents didn't support [us], more especially myself because I was an academically excelling student. So many people would shift the blame to me saying that I am wasting my time and life by being involved in these things. I should just study because I am intelligent. That was the criticism I received. But I didn't see things that way, I thought I was doing the right thing and that talk didn't even tempt me to stop what I was doing.[403]

He adds that:

> [S]ometimes my mother would go and tell my uncles and they would sit me down to try and convince me that what I am doing is wrong and I should stop. When I would ask them what is wrong with what I am doing? Is it a crime or they wouldn't be able to give me reasons. You know those days elders were always right and they would tell you that you are not supposed to talk back and you should just listen because you are a child.[404]

The discomfort of many parents with PYCO manifested into the formation of a resistance grouping that became known as the "fathers". This is because almost all its members shared paternal relation with the members of PYCO. This group thrived and partially succeeded in dissuading youth from being politically active, especially for most of 1986.[405]

PYCO Campaigns around Collective Consumption

The relationship between Councillors and residents in Phomolong did not develop into an adversarial one. Parents were largely opposed to youth political activity. The generally cordial relationship that existed between adult residents and local Councillors, who were held in high regard in Phomolong, also affected this attitude towards the involvement of youth in politics. This was due to several reasons. As community Councillors, some assumed roles akin to those of social workers. Benjamin Litabe, a Councillor both under the Community Council system and the Black Local Authority, remembers this cordial relationship with adult residents in the following terms:

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[403] Interview with Tshidiso Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[404] *Ibid*.

[405] The next chapter gives a detailed account of the origins of the *Fathers*.

> I had a good relationship with the community. I would even intervene in marital problems. When a wife decided to leave her husband, she would come here in this house to talk about the problems. I even developed a sophisticated way of dealing with these problems. I would tell the woman to cook, just so to teach her the lessons of life. That it is not good to be far from home. We had a good working relationship with Phomolong residents. We were always supporting each other. They would also speak to their children.[406]

Seekings' study of Tumahole Township reveals a similar trend. The Tumahole Community Council, which was installed in 1978, had maintained a reasonable level of legitimacy and support from the township's residents. This was despite its elitist character as the Council consisted mainly of businessmen, shop-owners and taxi-owners. This legitimacy was drawn from successfully performing its role of dispensing justice and patronage. Like their counterparts in Phomolong, Tumahole Councillors operated much like traditional courts, social workers or even marriage counsellors.[407] Seekings demonstrates that a legitimacy crisis befell the Tumahole Community Councils largely because the Council was blamed for rent increases and service charges. This legitimacy crisis was a precursor to the formation of student and youth organisations in the area.

This legitimacy crisis was due the tabling of the Koornhof Bills which resulted in the promulgation of the Black Local Authorities Act of 1982. In addition to responsibilities such as preventing illegal occupation of buildings and trading sites and the maintenance of essential services, water supply, refuse removal, sewerage and roads, the Act provided for the devolution of powers such as housing allocation and the determination of rent increases to local authorities, giving them increased control over extensive resources with diminished accountability to township residents.[408] This forged a gulf between Councillors and residents which was deepened by accusations of self-enrichment and corruption levelled at Councillors. Tumahole residents also blamed the continuous rent increases on the Council, particularly as this occurred at a time of high unemployment, low wages and no corresponding development in the township.[409] Accordingly, the misery of unaffordable rents was simply seen as a

[406] Interview with Benjamin Litabe, Phomolong, 24 July 2009.

[407] Seekings, J, "Political Mobilisation in Tumahole, 1984-1985", *Africa Perspective*, Volume 1, No. 7 & 8, 1989, p.110.

[408] Bonner, P, Nieftagodien, N, *Kathorus: A History*, Maskew Miller Longman: Cape Town, 2001.

[409] *Ibid*.

design of Councillors. Seekings remarks that the Tumahole Community Council's approach to rent increases was perceived as lacklustre with little attempt made by the Council to challenge or resist such increments.

Although parents were critical of PYCO's political activities, their attitude shifted when PYCO started campaigning against the payment of rents for Council houses, township overcrowding and the persistence of the bucket system. The rent increases were one issue that PYCO took up with resounding support from older residents. In 1987, PYCO advanced a case that rents were too expensive for most residents to pay. They argued that people occupying houses in *Putswastena*, which is the oldest part of the township, should not continue paying rents for housing. The contention was that they had been renting the houses since the establishment of the township and they should rightly be given ownership. Benjamin Litabe remembers this campaign well:

> It was mainly rents and the issue of (rooistena) Putswastena regarding home ownership. There was a law that people who stayed for more than twenty-five years in those houses must be given ownership. That law had not yet passed and they decided to take the law into their own hands saying that the houses must be owned by the people.[410]

The fact that rents kept on increasing without a similar improvement in living conditions occasioned many misgivings. It also meant that the site of evictions became ever more common. Mokati describes this situation as aptly when he says that:

> At times you would find that you come home from school and find that your neighbours have been evicted and their furniture is outside in the street. They wouldn't know where they would sleep that night. The reason would be that they owe rent. And the people are many in that house. The non-payment of rent was not by choice. You would find that no one works in that family. Those things didn't sink in well.[411]

An additional campaign point for PYCO was land allocation. The organisation campaigned that the Council must give people more sites on which to build their houses as some areas of the township were becoming overcrowded. Furthermore, PYCO championed the message that the bucket system was a burden inherited from one generation to the next.

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[410] Interview with Benjamin Litabe, Phomolong, 24 July 2009.

[411] Interview with Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

> We come far with the bucket system. When my mother came to Phomolong with her mother from *Marantha* she found the bucket system in place. I was born with the bucket system still being used.[412]

Its members had a particular hatred for this and argued that development must also mean the eradication of the system. Their experience of this was dehumanising and robbed them of their dignity and is elaborately captured by Thabo Sethunya:

> We ... raised the issue of old houses, these ones that were designed like hostels. You would find that houses were designed like hostels and that the night soil collection was a nightmare.
>
> You would have four families sharing the same block – two houses at the back and two at the front. To collect night soil for the families staying at the back, it was necessary to pass through the houses at the front and back again. This was better in the old days as night soil would be collected around three o'clock in the morning.
>
> However, as time went on, night soil was collected in the middle of the day; most times families would be having their meals. If families that live next to each other are not in good terms, then there is no other way but to live with this situation you see. If they are in good terms then the collectors can simply be requested to use the side passage.[413]

Despite the changing and increasingly negative residents' perceptions of Councillors, many still considered themselves loyal servants of the community. They regarded themselves as servants of their communities who operated from the basis of a passion for development.

> There was no electricity in Phomolong. We were the first to put electricity when we were in the Council. Even the high mast lights, we are the ones who put them. Even the shops had no electricity. They would use paraffin.
>
> There were also no taps. Taps were in the streets not in the yards, being shared by many people. We are the ones who put the taps in the yards.[414]

This is an indication that Councillors understood their work as a virtuous occupation. Local councillors also attributed their political woes to the political activities of the youth and blamed PYCO for the shift in the older residents' perception of local authority. For instance, Litabe maintains that adult residents:

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[412] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[413] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[414] Interview with Hendrik Molale, Phomolong, 24 July 2009.

> [W]ere working with [us], the problem was the kids. They wanted a reduction of rents, which [meant] people should stay for free in council houses and not pay. They used to burn tyres on the streets, [and] barricade the roads.[415]

Litabe adds that the resignation of local councillors was also largely due to PYCO's mechanisations.

> When rents would increase they would ... hit us. They didn't want rent increases. We suffered, it was painful, [and] the youth did not want to hear anything. They said we are eating with the Whites! They harassed us until we got out! They removed us![416]

Organising against Black Local Authorities was not an easy task for PYCO. While some councillors were business people, a significant section was from the teaching profession. Thus, parents viewed them as educated and exemplary of the path that their own children should pursue. PYCO members were also not immune from these sentiments. In most cases, not only were councillors their neighbours but many youths who had passed through their tutelage in their earlier years of schooling. For instance, Litabe enjoyed a contradictory relationship with the youths in PYCO. Although they challenged the councillors and questioned their legitimacy, he was the only councillor whom the youth could listen to.

> They would lock the school gates and I was the only teacher that could pass through and open ... Even when the youth was stubborn I would face them and tell them that such and such will never happen. But no other teacher would tell them this, they would kill him. I don't know maybe I was lucky.[417]

Mr Molale, who was a principal in Phomolong primary school, the same school in which Litabe was a teacher was particularly despised by the youth in PYCO. He was the prime target, not only as a mayor but also someone who was "eating with the Whites."[418] PYCO activists even composed a song about him, the gist of which was that he is a mad man and he will go, by hook or crook.

> We used to sing songs against him and we didn't want him. We would swear at them in our songs. We used to swear him and call his mother names. We

[415]Interview with Benjamin Litabe, Phomolong, 24 July 2009.

[416] *Ibid*.

[417]*Ibid*.

[418]*Ibid*.

would pass by his house and the school singing those vulgar songs. You understand he has children and a wife. We used to torment him.[419]

The Student Congress and the Struggle for "Little Freedoms"

The expulsion of the Big Ten led to many challenges and a momentary lull in terms of student activism in Bahale. It also denied the students an organisational expression within the school. However, a new breed of radical students was beginning to organise in the school and formed a student organisation known to them as COSAS in 1988.[420] The launch was a cheerful moment; it lasted the entire day with the students reciting poems, singing and performing drama. Reportedly, the new principal, Mr Kgonyedi, allowed the launch to proceed without any hindrance from the school authorities.[421]

This launch was after all very political, with students wearing black, green and gold t-shirts, the colours of the banned ANC.[422] The poetry session held at the launch in school assembly area was also highly political with Banks Tshabangu reciting poems by Mzwakhe Mbuli[423], whose first album was banned shortly after its release in 1986 by the apartheid authorities. The Student Congress drew its membership directly from the student body in Bahale. Among the leadership, names such as Sello Sefuthi, Banks Tshabangu, "Muthi" Musutu and Theo Masemola featured prominently. Whilst not overtly tackling and debating matters around the Freedom Charter, the Student Congress continued PYCO's focus on local issues. Its class orientation was also evident from its first campaign which advocated for the school authorities to open the school gates during lunchtime in order to allow students to have their lunch at home. Before this, students were only allowed to leave the schoolyard at the end of the school day, with the school gates being locked the entire time.

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[419]Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[420] Although COSAS was banned in 1985, many of the interviewees insist that they launched a body by this name in 1988. Because of the lack of clarity on this question, I will refer to this body as a student congress rather than COSAS.

[421] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[422]*Ibid*.

[423] http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/mzwakhe-mbuli

The rationale for this campaign was that the closure of the school gates during lunchtime was disadvantaging poor students whose families could not pack them "proper" lunchboxes. The Student Congress argued that it was imperative for the school gates to be open during lunchtime in order to give students the choice to leave the schoolyards to have lunch at home. It also argued that the high school is situated in the midst of the township and is a walking distance from all various sections of the township. Thus, open school gates could allow students the opportunity to quickly go to their homes for lunch break and return to school on time. "Muthi" Musutu recollects the origins of the campaign as follows:

> There was a time as gents we decided not to bring *scaftins* (lunchboxes). We had *cherries* at school and they would bring us *scaftins*. So my girlfriend was from an impoverished home and would always bring dry bread without anything. So when it is time to share food I am always the one with dry bread. It continued for some time until I said no gents, this thing of not going for breaks is not fine because I can't bring my pap and milk to school as lunch. If I do that by the time it is 11 o'clock it's already sour or doesn't taste ok.[424]

The gender overtones in the origins of this campaign were glaring because before its inception, male students expected their girlfriends to bring them lunchboxes. Musutu recalls that Kgonyedi was responsive to the demand that school gates be opened during the lunch break, but questioned the students' methods of disrupting classes. Kgonyedi acceded to the students' demand and even reportedly encouraged them to address any other demands they had directly to him.[425]

The Student Congress also started taking up campaigns targeted at female students. Accordingly, a campaign to allow female students to keep their hair as long as they wanted was taken up by the Student Congress leadership. Furthermore, the leadership successfully argued that girls should be allowed to tie their hair with fancy ribbons. The Student Congress lamented that, "girls couldn't have fancy hairstyles as part of the apartheid laws. Women were not supposed to wear this and that."[426] As such, taking up this campaign was crucial in winning the support of female students.

[424] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[425] *Ibid*.

[426] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

However, claims that the campaign was also about fighting "for the rights of women to dignity"[427] are doubtful. As Seekings points out, the gendered division of labour within the school was largely unchallenged by COSAS and student congresses in virtually all places where such existed.[428] The expectation that female students must clean classrooms and toilets was seldom questioned[429] even in the case of Bahale where such was the norm. This campaign that centred on issues around aesthetic appearance and dress codes for female students reflected lower levels of political consciousness when compared to the earlier sexual harassment campaign pursued by the Big Ten.

The Student Congress' campaigns recorded uneven successes. One of the campaigns that faltered was the anti-Afrikaans campaign. The premise of the campaign was a rejection of Afrikaans as a subject in the school. To implement it, the leadership of the Student Congress resolved that all students in Bahale should submit all their textbooks and place them in an open space in the assembly. Once enough textbooks had been collected, the leadership would then torch them in a huge bonfire. The call received widespread support with students from most standards submitting their textbooks to form a heap in the assembly. However, the burning of the books could not proceed as planned.

> The plan was to burn them in daylight when everyone was there. We couldn't go through with it. After about three days they started collecting their books. It was a question of who is going to burn them. Some books got lost but we spoke to the teachers that those who lost their books shouldn't be fined. Kgonyedi understood.[430]

The leadership of the Student Congress attributed the failure to burn the textbooks to their timidity at the time. Although they operated without hindrance from the school principal, none of the student leaders mustered the courage to light the match and burn the textbooks.

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[427] *Ibid*.

[428] Seekings, J, "Gender Ideology and Township in the 1980s", *Agenda*, No.10, p.85.

[429] *Ibid*.

[430] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

Contributing to the doubts around the campaign was that it was questioned by parents who argued the call against Afrikaans was illogical as their children were more fluent and produced better results in Afrikaans than in English. Mosele Mahlatsi's sentiments about the campaign were expressed to her son in this fashion,

> [Y]ou say you don't want Afrikaans but when I look at your results you have passed Afrikaans better than English and you are more fluent in Afrikaans than English. You are just going with the mob which doesn't want Afrikaans ... just look at how good you are in Afrikaans.[431]

In addition, the analysis of the leadership in retrospect was that the campaign was ill conceived and had the propensity to lead to major student failure in the subject. The fact that many textbooks got lost in the process meant that students had to study with a reduced number, a factor compounded by the fact that textbooks were already in shortage even before the campaign.[432]

It seems that the Student Congress was able to carry through its activities without much hindrance from the school authorities. There are several probable reasons as to why this was the case. Firstly, the departure of Principal Molapo served as a warning signal to Kgonyedi. Molapo was compelled to leave the principal's seat after protracted school disruptions. Interestingly, he was promoted to serve as DET inspector. His departure was nonetheless an important measure of student resistance, strength that Kgonyedi avoided testing. Secondly, as emphasised by some Student Congress leaders, Kgonyedi was a "reasonable" man who had a passion for education. He did not want to witness the repeat of the school disruptions and the arrest of students. The third reason is that Kgonyedi was himself an activist and fiercely opposed to apartheid. His approach was that which has been called "strategic resistance" which meant that as opposed to being completely complacent, education authorities such as teachers and principals found more subtle ways of resisting. "Strategic resistance" was pursued by either alerting students to some of the propagandist material in the curriculum or simply allowing minimal student acquaintance with politics of liberation within the schoolyard. This third explanation is held widely amongst former student activists in Phomolong. According to "Muthi",

[431] Interview with Mosele Mahlatsi, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[432] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

> [Kgonyedi] was a politician ... I believe that he was a politician. He was even able to guide us and tell us do this and that. He would tell us that I am putting my job on the line so that you can do these things. I remember on that very same day [of the launch] the police took him and put him at the back of the van. But he was back the following day.[433]

Quite clearly, Kgonyedi's actions can be explained by something far deeper than a fear of history repeating itself or narrow pragmatism. It is probable that his actions and his leniency towards student activism was a reflection of his world outlook with regards to apartheid. Giving a freehand to the Student Congress was one of the ways of staying true to this outlook. He shared this outlook with another teacher, Mr Jacobs. Apart from being the founding president of PYCO at its launch, Jacobs was also instrumental in recruiting new members for PYCO and providing a political space for the students to organise in the school. In June 1989, Jacobs allowed his history lessons to be used to commemorate the events that took place in June of 1976. It was after this that students marched to the Phomolong police station and handed themselves over to the police. Sello Sefuthi and a few others were detained in the police station overnight.[434]

Curiously, the founding generation of PYCO and erstwhile members of the Big Ten held a completely contradictory view about Kgonyedi's bona fides. According to this cohort before being promoted to play the role of principal, Kgonyedi was simply a teacher with no activist leanings. This was supported by the fact that he had never done anything tangible to contribute to their struggles. They describe him as being "like any other teacher." The fact that Phomolong never had a NEUSA branch can be admitted as evidence to its poor record of teacher activism. Moreover, it is important to note that the same generation also led allegations about Jacobs being an apartheid spy. This allegation stemmed mainly from the latter's friendship with a man later suspected of spying for the apartheid police. Jacobs subsequently left the township and never came back.[435]

Kgonyedi's flexibility to student organisation in Bahale had its own disadvantages. As evident from the picture painted above, student organising in Bahale remained

[433] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[434] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom (Riebeekstad), 27 November 2009.

[435] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

parochial and largely apolitical. The absence of a reactionary principal denied the Student Congress a figure of hatred that could become the focus of its campaigns. The success of the organisation during this period was therefore thwarted by its inability to carry out a form of *adversary framing*[436] which meant that the Student Congress did not have a specific target for the students' grievances and discontent.

Violence and Youth Struggles in Phomolong

By 1989, the youths in the Student Congress and PYCO were fully aware of township struggles in other Free State towns. The leading generation that founded the Student Congress also featured in PYCO's leadership and was responsible for carrying out PYCO's major campaigns in this period. Among these youths were Banks Tshabangu, Guras Ntwagae, Kingsley Lempe, Theo Masemola and "Muthi" Musutu. At this point, the two formations – PYCO and the Student Congress – were completely synonymous with a great number of activists who participated in the Student Congress within the schools and also being very active in undertaking some of the key functions of PYCO. Thabo Sethunya, Tshidiso Mokati and a few other founding members of PYCO remained central to the operation of these organisations, even though they were no longer attending school. As Musuthu observes, "the people in the PYCO committee were the same as those in the [the Student Congress] committee".[437]

During this period, youth struggles in Phomolong experienced a shift to focus solely on community issues. This shift was evident when PYCO and the Student Congress led a campaign against a local businessman who was accused of killing a young boy for ritual purposes in September 1989.[438] The boy's corpse was discovered at a dumping site in the township. Allegations were already established that the death of the boy was related to a ritual practice as his private parts were missing. The accused was detained and subsequently released on bail. His release angered the community,

[436] Benford, R, Snow, D, "Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization", *International Social Movement Research*, 1988. Vol. 1, p.200.

[437] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[438] Interviewees insist that the incident must have taken place in September as they had planted trees for Arbour Day a week before the incident.

especially with the bereaved family. Musutu contends that he was particularly distressed by the incident as he personally knew the victim:

> I knew that *laitie* (boy), he was living in the street next to mine. So the *laitie* was buried and the family was very aggrieved. The evidence was very mounting that this man did it.[439]

According to Sefuthi and Musuthu, PYCO and the Student Congress leaders were approached by individual community members who pleaded with them to "sort out" the perpetrator. As Sello Peter Sefuthi relates:

> [T]he community called us and said if you don't do it, we will do it. They said if we don't take action, they would. For the first time then I must confess that I was part of those activities. Very wrong things happened there. [We] [a]ttacked and destroyed. Attacked people, massive property destroyed.[440]

This gave PYCO and the Student Congress leadership a sense of affirmation and confidence about their political role within the township. According to Musuthu, the young activists did not waste any time in taking up the call and viewed this as a critical moment in the struggle against the system of apartheid. According to this reasoning, successfully "dealing" with the alleged perpetrator was going to constitute a "breakthrough in fighting the system" of apartheid.

> [W]e decided that gentlemen; this might be our breakthrough in terms of fighting the system. Let's start with fighting this man as the police are not doing anything and this man [who] is terrorising the community.[441]

Another reason why PYCO and the Student Congress took up this campaign with enthusiasm was because the leadership of the two formations held the belief that the alleged perpetrator was also connected with key figures in the local council, the NG Kerk as well as the vigilante group known as *Bontate*, which targeted political activists in both formations. Thus, PYCO and the Student Congress sourced the resources to undertake this campaign from the bereaved family. The activists sought money for petrol from the bereaved family and set in motion a campaign that would

[439] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[440] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[441] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

see massive destruction of the businessman's property including his house and shops.[442]

> We bought that 20-litre petrol and planned that we are going to destroy everything that is his. We are going to burn his shops, his house and all his property. We made petrol bombs.[443]

In the late afternoon, the youth activists gathered at the entrance of the township and started singing, brandishing the makeshift petrol bombs.[444] Other members of the community in numbers later joined them. The amount of support received surprised some members of PYCO. As one of the activists relates: "When we started singing we were about nine or ten around four o'clock but by the time it was six o'clock the whole township was there![445]

The PYCO leaders and members were there in large numbers. At the forefront leading was Guras Ntwagae, "Muthi" Musutu, Sello Sefuthi, Banks Tshabangu and Ndade Tuto. This campaign was a significant turning point for youth radicalisation and militancy in Phomolong. As the accounts stated above demonstrate, the change in the modus operandi of the two formations was fostered not so much by a deliberate political strategy, but rather by the pressure exerted on the organisations from individual members of the community. This coupled with the support that PYCO and the Student Congress received as the youths marched towards their target, they were awakened to their political hegemony in the township.

Although the campaign fulfilled its immediate task, which was to destroy the perpetrator's properties and business, there were also serious ramifications for this action both at an individual activist level and more broadly at the level of the organisation itself. The activists' inexperience with undertaking violent action of this nature was conspicuous. The incident resulted in one of the comrades being slightly burnt by one of the petrol bombs being thrown into the man's shops. This was later blamed on the fact that comrades did not heed to the instruction given by their

[442] When I started doing the interviews in 2009, the alleged perpetrator's house remained in its burnt state. There was also no occupancy in this burnt house.

[443] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[444] *Ibid*.

[445] *Ibid*.

counterparts in Welkom about how exactly a petrol bomb should be made. Musutu sums up the reasons for ignoring this advice.

> Like when a person tells you that a petrol bomb is made like this. You do it without having seen it before ... People said you must put glycerine, many small gravel stones and eighty percent petrol and shake it; you will feel it warming up. So we saw that as a farfetched way of making it. Maybe it was our lack of knowledge in science. So we put the petrol and a cloth inside, torched the cloth and threw the bottle. It used to light up in the same manner as the paraffin lamp. We thought the way we were told to make it we stood a risk of it exploding in our hands. So by the time I lit the cloth, Papi (Mosala) was there and that's how he got burned. But he wasn't badly burnt; it was just at the back.[446]

Sometime after the incident, a few of the youths were arrested. This included Thabo Sethunya who came under police fire being accused as being one of the leaders in the burning. However, Sethunya was not present when the actual incident took place as his father, a policeman, had kept him locked in a shack inside their yard in order to keep him away from trouble. Sethunya's arrest, in spite of his absence at the actual activity, confirmed that he was identified by the police as a leading political figure in Phomolong. This also included "Muthi" Musutu who was among those arrested. The police came for him the night before his standard eight Biology exam. Musuthu remembers that his mother was especially distressed about his arrest and that she begged the police to bring her son back and allow him to write his exam. He recounts the events on that night in this way:

> The police knocked at the door looking for me. I was surprised because things had quietened down and it was some time after that burning incident. My mother woke me up ... It was still a three roomed house ... I used to sleep in the sitting room. The old lady woke me and told me that the police are looking for me. But she asked them where they were taking me as I was from school ... She said please bring him back, he is writing tomorrow. I was refusing.[447]

Musuthu's apprehension about his arrest was eased when he realised that there were also familiar faces that would join him in detention:

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[446] *Ibid*.

[447] *Ibid*.

> When we got outside there were about six or seven police cars. I heard a voice saying "hey *Softie* come, come". I had some courage, I was not alone. I got into the van and they took us.[448]

Although there were a number of familiar faces arrested in relation to the burning, none of them, except for Musuthu had participated in the actual burning. The detained youths were also accused of committing the similar crime in the neighbouring Virginia and Welkom regions.

> They asked us "who is behind the burning in Welkom?" They said that the pattern of burning in Hennenman is the same as that in Virginia, and those places were burned after Hennenman.[449]

Subsequent to their detention and release, PYCO and the Student Congress activists approached the ANC's headquarters to mobilise assistance with lawyers and funds for bail. Given the embryonic mood for negotiation during this period, some of the senior ANC leaders were naturally impatient with the ongoing youth militancy. Marks makes the observation that the youth that was largely described in heroic and liberatory fashion in the late 1970s and early 1980s, had quickly earned themselves the reputation of an irritating itch to the ANC. The youth was lambasted for its ceaseless interest in the pursuit of violence.[450]

In Phomolong, these sentiments were already shared by youth in the late 1980s. Some started doubting the extent to which the ANC is an organisation of "the masses". Encounters with the ANC national leadership often communicated the message that the youth was an uncontrollable and ill-disciplined force, derailing the imminent change in the country. An encounter with Tokyo Sexwale in the quest for bail assistance with lawyers left Musutu with these feelings.

> I will never forget the harsh words that that man said. He said that we come here cap in hand from Free State wanting money ... we go around burning things as if we are sent by ANC. We are supposed to be in school. There's no money here. I thought, "Sethunya keeps telling us that the ANC helps people, what is going on now?"[451]

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[448] *Ibid*.

[449] *Ibid*.

[450] Marks, "Organisation, Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth 1984-1993", p.206.

[451] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

This was broadly reflective of the changes in the ANC strategy and tactics. These changes found full expression in the 1990s and are discussed thoroughly in chapter five. Thirdly, the detention and continuous police harassment of the activists made activists' parents resentful of the role of PYCO and the Student Congress. Some parents became incensed about Sethunya's influence on their children. He was accused of sabotaging the education of other young people because he had seen his education journey cut short through expulsion from school.

> Our parents were starting to resent Sethunya, saying he is misleading. We were getting arrested, attending cases. So parents would get stressed when we got arrested whilst in school.[452]

In her study of Diepkloof youth, Marks identifies six prominent reasons that young activists used to justify the resort to violence. The first reason was that they were responding to calls earlier made by the ANC to effect change by joining the armed struggle and rendering the townships ungovernable. Secondly, the youth reasoned that the apartheid state itself was a structurally violent entity that entrenched its rule and denied black people political and economic rights through state repression, amongst other things. Thirdly, some of the youth argued that it was impossible to achieve liberation without a violent struggle. Fourthly, political violence was seen as crucial in fast tracking the process of change. Fifthly, young activists made use of political violence largely in defence of their communities from the apartheid state, its structures and collaborators. Finally, political violence was also used to reprimand those outside the "morality" of the comrades such as *comtsotsis*.[453]

Of these six reasons, three were particularly relevant for Phomolong's youth political activists. According to testimonies, the primary reason for the violence used in addressing the alleged perpetrator was to "defend the community" against a man who was considered to be "terrorising" it. This conviction about the youths' responsibility to "defend the community" from "rogue" elements was strengthened when individuals in the community approached them to "resolve" the situation. As such, this campaign won support from community members who rallied behind them en

[452] *Ibid*.

[453] Marks, Organisation, "Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth 1984-1993", p.277-278.

route to the burning of the alleged perpetrator's property. Secondly, activists also insisted on violence as a form of action because, they argued, the state and the police were not willing to act against the alleged perpetrator. Thirdly, the violence was also seen as intricately tied to the idea of challenging the entire edifice of apartheid. The very notion that activists likened this attack to a "breakthrough in fighting the system" bears testimony to this.

Women's Participation in Township Struggles

In many instances, scholars charge that the role of women whilst predominant and visible during times of mass peaceful protests against high rents and related issues, declined with the increase in political violence. It is also argued that the concept of comrade was used in a gender biased manner, often emphasising the importance of men over women.[454] Carter demonstrates that even though the designation of comrade was extended to include women, it was largely used in a gender-biased manner, often speaking of "brother" or fraternal friend.[455] Furthermore, "the world of the comrade was essentially a male preserve ... A gender distinction was viewed as particularly significant when it came to confronting 'the enemy'".[456]

Marks argues that studies often misrepresent the role of (young) women in township politics. She challenges the notion that men often served as protectors for women, shielding them from seeing and participating in certain acts of violence. She shows how some women were participants in acts of violence and their perceptions around these acts. These women, according to both Marks[457] and Carter[458], were an exception rather than the rule, being compelled at times by the 'heat of the moment'.[459] For the most part, argues Marks, "[t]he women comrades mostly appeared to be spectators rather than direct participants in acts of violence".[460]

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[454] Carter, "Comrades and Community", p.227.

[455] *Ibid*.

[456] *Ibid*, p.226.

[457] Marks, "Organisation, Identity and Violence amongst Activist Diepkloof Youth 1984-1993", MA.

[458] Carter, "Comrades and Community", p.227.

[459] *Ibid*.

[460] Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa*, p.104.

However, this analysis cannot be universalised. Seekings' work argues that the heightened levels of political violence in the townships were paralleled by a decrease in the involvement of women. The women's place was more explicitly defined to be in the home rather than in the streets facing the teargas and the 'trauma' of witnessing deaths.[461] The unremitting participation of women in acts of violence was therefore not the norm.[462] For him, women were not only amenable to sympathizing with "conservative populists" but also played roles such as peacemakers or mediators in the violence that wreaked the townships during that time.[463] In contrast, male comrades held chauvinistic and patriarchal stereotypes about female comrades. In this regard, women were seen as timid, fragile and having no capacity to harbour sensitive information. The common thread in all these accounts is that female participation in violence was specifically barred. This was informally viewed as the terrain of male comrades.[464]

There are common threads between what transpired in Phomolong and what is argued in the works of other scholars. On the one hand, older women conform to the role of 'peacemakers' and 'mediators' as described by Seekings. This is more so as older women often in Phomolong participated in the activities of the comrades, helping them to organize through using their own resources and homes as safe haven for comrades'. On the other hand, younger female comrades were visible even as township politics became more violent and the threat of arrest more imminent.[465] Mokeki Sethunya (Thabo Sethunya's mother) recalls how her telephone bill would reach hundreds of rands every month after numerous calls had been made to the organizations in Johannesburg as well as the lawyers for Human Rights Foundation based in Khotso House. She narrates that she would open her home as a safe haven where comrades could hide and evade police harassment and detention. Doing all this was particularly difficult considering that Mokeki's husband was a member of the

[461] Seekings, J, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993, p.83.

[462] *Ibid*, p.83.

[463] Seekings, "Gender Ideology and Township in the 1980s", p.85.

[464] *Ibid*. See also Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa* and Carter, "Comrades and Community".

[465] Interview with Mosele Mahlatsi, Phonolong, 20 September 2009.

South African Police. Her sympathies with PYCO and the Student Congress' political cause resulted in some strain inside her family.[466]

Paradoxically, Mosele also recounts how it was possible that in one family there could exist two contending ideological forces. In this case, one of her sons was a policeman and the other an activist and a member of PYCO. Despite this, she was at times placed in a position where she would have to defend the comrades and plot with them to avoid their arrest from the police. As such, she played a mediator between her two sons on opposite ends of the struggle. These two cases demonstrate that the issue of blood relation did not provide a monolithic experience for young people in the area. Succinctly, it is not all young people that fell prey to "counter revolutionary" organisations as a result of family ties.[467]

Additional roles that women and mothers played included the provision of support to their children in detention, supplying them with food and nursing the wounds they had suffered from police torture. The one such instance was Motseki's funeral. Motseki died whilst in police detention after the consumer boycott of 1989. Given that many of his comrades were in detention, parents in the area rallied and ensured that Motseki was given a dignified funeral; which was also utilized as a political platform. The young female comrades were also at the forefront in organising the funeral. "They coordinated donations and bought groceries and were also leading the choir at the funeral".[468] Later on in 1990, PYCO, which was by now an affiliate of SAYCO, led a land campaign in Phomolong wherein land was allocated to Phomolong residents occupying backyard shacks in the townships. The section in Phomolong that developed as a result of this campaign was subsequently named Motseki Section.[469]

Unlike other places, in Phomolong, women's participation did not decline with the increase in political violence. In 1989 during the consumer boycott, two women were held and detained by the police. In recalling this incident, Sana Mabane remarks that

[466] Interview with Mokeki Sethunya, Phomolong, 22 July 2009.

[467] Interview with Mosele Mahlatsi, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[468] *Ibid*.

[469] *Ibid*.

"at that time when we were arrested some males got scared and said "no we will not get arrested. They started dragging their feet. We continued ..."[470] However, Seekings and Marks' analysis that male comrades always felt the need to intervene and provide special treatment to female comrades remains a correct one. As such, one attests that: "We stayed in jail ... but comrades were really looking after us. Because we were not even eating jail food, they used to bring us food."[471]

The scholars are also correct in arguing that women were more vulnerable to being labelled as informants. Ausi Mapinki who was one of the active women during that time was also subjected to such criticism. This is contested even today. Sana Mabane argues that Ausi Mapinki:

> [W]as alleged [to be] an *impimpi* (informer). She was the one telling the police things ... but I didn't see her that way. She was a strong woman ... during that time when they said she is a spy... she left Hennenman. I am not sure whether she was running away...[472]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Black Local Authorities did not face serious opposition from older residents in Phomolong for much of the 1980s. The "social worker" roles performed by councillors, their social proximity and close interaction with residents, due to the township's small size and quasi kinship like relations with residents are part of the reasons explaining this reality.

As the next chapter shows, adult residents and parents of PYCO activists were also significantly embedded in the apartheid state apparatus, performing roles and functions that highly depended on the survival of the local state. In addition, even in instances where councillors made unpopular decisions like increasing rents, this was done in a consultative manner, with residents being taken along in the decision-making process. Furthermore, residents identified councillors with the social improvements and development in the township since the period of the relocations.

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[470] Interview with Sana Mabane, Phomolong, 22 July 2009.

[471] *Ibid*.

[472] *Ibid*.

These factors explain why PYCO's campaigns against councillors failed to gain mass support, especially among older residents. The absence of a civic organisation in Phomolong during this period is also due to these factors.

This chapter has argued that the 1980s education reforms were primary factors that provided fertile ground for political mobilisation in Phomolong. The expansion of secondary schooling in the early 1980s is an important prism through which to locate the formation of student and youth organisations in Phomolong. The chapter has shown how the establishment of the township's first high school contributed to the development of a layer of politicised youth and also acted as a convenient site for youth political activity. State repression was an important factor for political opportunities and constraints to mobilisation. It was through detention that young activists broadened their horizons about the nature of the struggle they had to confront. While in detention, these youths were awakened to the collective deprivation and misery of black townships under apartheid.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Eagles Club and Counter-organisation in Phomolong: 1985 – 1990

> [T]he Eagles had a long career.… [T]hey were represented in every little town in the Free State.[473]

The previous chapter looked at organisations and activities initially aimed at challenging the elements of the apartheid system such as Bantu Education and the Black Local Authorities, but this eventually extended its reach to challenge the apartheid system in its entirety. This chapter is concerned with political activity in Phomolong that ran contrary to activity pursued by youth in the Youth Congress and the Civic Association in Phomolong. Two sets of organised forms of counter mobilisation are assessed. The first is the Eagles Club and the second is what was largely referred to as *Bontate*[474], a vigilante group which emerged in 1986.

The Eagles were conclusively part of an apartheid reformist strategy aimed at manufacturing consent around apartheid state-led reforms, and containing the resistance to apartheid by imbuing the African youth in (predominantly) the Free State with conservative mores and values, thereby allowing the state to maintain control over the vision for the imminent change. The basic idea was to limit change by merely tinkering with the more controversial elements of apartheid whilst maintaining the logic and tenets of the system. Notwithstanding the aforementioned analysis, this chapter argues that pigeonholing the Eagles Youth Club into a vigilante organisation is too simplistic a view. The Eagles Club became paralysed in its own mould. For the Eagles to assume overtly vigilante tactics would mean shedding a great deal of its original identity and becoming something completely different.

Although each town in the Free State has its own tale about the Eagles Club, this chapter will demonstrate through the Phomolong case, how the structural conditions of poverty and deprivation in the townships led to many activists operating in the anti-apartheid movement to the gateways of the Eagles Club. Furthermore, the decision to move the Eagles Club from the auspices of the Department of Cooperation and

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[473] Du Plessis, L, "Covert Operations: Front Companies" in *The Hidden Hand: Covert Operations in South Africa*, Minnaar, A, Liebenberg, I and Schutte, C (eds), HSRC: Pretoria, 1994, p. 242.

[474]Meaning the fathers in Sesotho

Development to the Department of Education and Training in 1985 was not simply a matter of impulse. The growing participation of young people of school going age in the rent and consumer boycotts and many other activities aimed at paralysing apartheid local government and its entire edifice, provided the backdrop for the formation of the Eagles Club and motivated its concerted efforts to attract this cohort into its ranks.

PYCO activists regarded *Bontate* as a vigilante group. The operation of this grouping in Phomolong began in the months subsequent to the August 1985 school uprisings. Its operations became far more evident in 1986. Not only were its activities in line with apartheid state strategies aimed at diffusing the ensuing resistance in many townships during this time, *Bontate's* modus operandi matched much of the vigilante groups present in many townships from around mid-1980. What is particularly notable about this grouping was that it marked the intergenerational tensions ensuing in Phomolong and many parts of the country during that time. The fact that *Bontate* had a relationship with activists in PYCO contributed to the difficulties PYCO experienced in executing their political campaigns. Finally, there is an argument to be made about how class interests became the underpinning factors for the formation of *Bontate*.

Flying High: The Eagles Club and Free State Politics

> [I]t was strictly a psychological operation … to influence people to act in a certain way. [T]his was done by organising youth camps, leadership camps, various other activities but the underlying motive was to discredit various organizations like the PAC [Pan Africanist Congress] and the South African Communist Party [SACP].[475]

The history of the Eagles Youth Club can be traced to the early 1980s when the Youth Activity Branch of the then Department of Cooperation and Development carried out specific programmes targeted at young children, especially school going and out of school youth. These 'youth development projects' were carried out in liaison with the administration boards and with community councils. Youth activities and projects previously falling under the ambit of the Department of Cooperation and Development were now subsumed under the Department of Education and Training.

[475] Du Plessis, "Covert Operations: Front Companies", p.238-239.

In 1985, the Department of Education and Training was given the mandate to establish youth clubs based primarily in schools.[476] In line with this approach, the Eagles were transferred from the Department of Cooperation and Development to the Department of Education and Training in the same year. During 1986, the Eagles Club was listed as part of the contra mobilisation strategy against liberation organisations. The Eagles fell under the Project Ancor rubric.[477]

The Eagles were first established in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) in 1981 with a membership of only forty young people. By 1985 the Eagles claimed a membership of 16 000 young people located in fifty eight (58) townships across the Free State. In 1991, the year in which the Eagles' operations were terminated, the club boasted a membership of 600 000 youths and a staff capacity of eighty people across the country. The staff was headed by the Eagles Managing Director Dr David Marx from Bloemfontein and his assistant, Lexon December. Given this claimed membership, the Eagles could justify drawing two million rands from state coffers for each year that it was in operation.[478]

Although there might have been elements of government chest thumping with regards to the Eagles penetration of Free State townships in this period, it is suggested that something more sinister underlie these claims. Claiming such a huge membership also guaranteed the clubs huge cash injections from state coffers. The Eagles and linked projects did not only become an exercise aimed at manufacturing consent but were a crucial lucrative meal ticket for those who were awarded tenders for hosting its activities and conducting some of its courses.[479] In fact, the TRC also considered corruption involved in state projects aimed at tilting the balance of forces in the state's favour.[480]

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[476] Phillips, I. "The Eagles Youth Clubs", Minaar, A, Liebenberg, I and Schutte, C (eds), *The Hidden Hand: Covert Operations in South Africa*, HSRC, Pretoria, 1994, p. 252.

[477] TRC Report, "The State inside South Africa between 1960 and 1990", Vol. 2, Chapter 3, p.309.

[478] *Ibid*.

[479] Lodge, T, "Political Corruption in South Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 387, April 1998, p. 165.

[480] *Ibid*.

Although created to stave off resistance against apartheid among black youths, the state nonetheless officially denied any involvement in the operations and funding of the Eagles Club. In fact, attempts were made to create the impression that the Eagles were sponsored by private companies on the basis of the Eagles' support for its much needed developmental programmes targeting black youths. The Eagles public relations machinery attributed the interests of big business in the scheme to the fact that the clubs shared a vision which fought "against communism" and advocated "democracy".[481] It was only in 1991 that the Eagles Club was exposed as the brainchild of the apartheid government. The EYC was designed to diffuse resistance to apartheid and its policies and to weaken support for campaigns aimed at collapsing the apartheid state.

Although largely predominant in the Free State, the Eagles machinery existed in other parts of the country as well. A version of the Eagles Youth Club existed in the Vaal, the South of Johannesburg, through what was known as the Eagles Giant Research project. Plans were made to launch similar clubs in other parts of the country including in the Eastern Province. However, the presence of the Eagles in the Free State was unrivalled elsewhere in the country. Evidence of the prolific presence of the Eagles Club in the Free State is corroborated by sources other than official state documents. For instance, a meeting geared at discussing the launch of the UDF Bloemfontein Area Committee in April 1990 received a report that stated that the presence of the Eagles Club was a significant challenge in several areas of the Free State. Several youth congresses present at this meeting lamented the organisational difficulties they faced as a result of the Eagles' operations. The Reddesburg Youth Congress decried the fact that "more youths [were becoming] members of the Eagles Club."[482] The difficulties posed by the operation of the Eagles in the Free State are evidenced by incidents of clashes between the Eagles and youth congresses in the area. In several cases such as Brandfort and Harrismith, the Eagles were accused of disrupting community meetings convened by youth congresses and civics to discuss

[481]Elize Van Vuuren (Eagles Club Public Relations Officer) cited in Noonan, *They're Burning the Churches*, p. 131.

[482]*UDF Bloemfontein Area Committee Report 29 April 1990*, UDF Archives, AL 243, A 7.3, South African Historical Archives, Wits University.

high rents, evictions and the consumer boycotts. The Eagles Club was also on two occasions implicated in the attacks on Winnie Mandela's home in Brandford.[483]

In 1989 in Ha Rasebei Township in Edenburg, a confrontation between the Eagles and Edenburg Youth Congress escalated into violence. In this case the confrontation was about the Eagles challenging the legitimacy of a consumer boycott which was initiated and led by the youth congress. The Eagles argued that the modus operandi of the boycott demonstrated a disdain for adult residents in the area. Members of the Eagles retorted: "[w]e are not against them, some of us can even join them but the way they do things alienates us [from] them".[484] According to testimonies of the consumer boycott organisers, calls for the boycott were inspired by the fact that the "the [Edenburg] town council … ha[d] been refusing to grant permission for marches, demonstrations and other forms of mass political actions."[485]

It appears that tension between the youth congresses and the Eagles escalated with the implementation of campaigns such as consumer boycotts. The brutality with which such campaigns were enforced often led to discord among many township youths and older residents. The argument that the brutal enforcement of boycotts was orchestrated by self serving people was also common. This was the case where boycotts floundered due to a lack of consultation with the community. The tension between youth congresses and the Eagles was acute. The TRC Report states that "Eagles members themselves were targets of violence by UDF or ANC aligned people".[486]

It is not simple coincidence that the state's strategy was aimed at capturing young people of school going age. As one government official remarked, the fact that African townships had been encroached with widespread resistance to apartheid and that youth of school-going age were "participating extensively" in this resistance was

[483] Phillips, "The Eagles Youth Clubs", p. 257.

[484] *Ibid*.

[485] UDF Archives, AL 243, A 7.1, South African Historical Archives, Wits University.

[486] TRC Report, "The State inside South Africa between 1960 and 1990", p. 310.

a sore point for the regime and mechanisms had to be devised to circumvent this phenomenon.[487]

It is for this reason that the formation of the Eagles youth clubs can be located under the state's 'soft war' strategy which was geared at galvanizing support for the state's reformist measures. Winning the Hearts and Minds (WHAM) approach included popularising the Black Local Authorities, introducing reforms in the sphere of influx control and local government, as well as instituting counter organisational structures to challenge and thwart the resistance engulfing the townships during the 1980s, among other factors. The latter was specifically aimed at challenging the popularity and legitimacy of the civic organisations and the youth congresses in African townships. Accordingly, state officials argued for the intensification of youth development programmes in the context of the International Youth Year in 1985. The idea was to target African townships, as African youth of school going age formed the bedrock of the school late 1970s and a better part of the 1980s.

It is important to recognise that the Eagles Club became prominent in the Free State because of the social milieu that existed in many townships in the Free State and other areas in the Vaal Triangle. With the first major rent boycott having broken out in the Vaal in 1984, the expectation from the apartheid state was that the townships near the Vaal would soon catch on to this fire. This expectation was not off the mark. Tumahole Township had already taken to the streets in the months prior September 1984. Although these protests did not receive as much publicity as the Vaal Uprisings, they proved to be a source of worry for apartheid authorities. Around the same time, the class boycotts which turned violent in Thabong near Welkom provided more rationale for concern. The high participation and the leading roles assumed by young people organised in student organisations and the newly formed youth congress was particularly disturbing to the apartheid state. Therefore, the decision to move the Eagles Club into school yards was informed by the need to counter the presence and influence of COSAS and congress inspired youth organisations.[488]

[487]Phillips, "The Eagles Youth Clubs", p.250.

[488] *Ibid*.

The Eagles Youth Club was founded on Christian National principles and advocated for a negotiated settlement out of South Africa's impasse and strongly opposed the use of violence to overthrow the apartheid regime. The Eagles also advocated for moral regeneration and the reversal of the "social decay" that purportedly devoured black townships. The youth were identified as the patients in this prognosis and were to be the prime target for the Eagles' moral restoration exercise.

Noonan's narrative on the 1980s struggles in the Vaal shows that one of the reasons the Eagles came under suspicion was that despite its rhetoric claiming commitment to restore Christianity principles; the Vaal clergy that overtly associated with liberation politics (such as the Vaal Council of Churches) were marginalised in most of its activities. Instead, as Noonan demonstrates, the Eagles actively marginalised anti-apartheid clergy and worked with "some peripheral church ministers, both black and white, were roped in to give the scheme legitimacy." [489]

The Eagles worked closely with the apartheid security apparatus. According to Phillips, members of the Clubs were encouraged to cooperate with state security structures which were described as "friends" of the Eagles. Cooperation with the security apparatus included giving them information about organisational activity carried out by the activists and identifying political activists. Noonan's account of the recruitment strategy of the Eagles Giant Research in the Vaal shows that it focused on moulding young people into informers for the South African Police (SAP).

> [W]e were invited to a meeting in a building in Vanderbijlpark. This, we assumed, was an authentic meeting aimed at advancing the youth activities in the Vaal area. This meeting was arranged by a white group referred to as "The Eagles". The meeting started very interestingly, but I happened to notice that it was a meeting aimed at securing and grooming future informers. They were to see to it that all formations which rightfully resisted injustice would be crushed from the root. I together with my colleagues in the youth club started to peacefully protest this cruel form of indoctrination. The response we got from the convenors was to say, "I seem to know too much" and that I will pay dearly for [my cheek]. The meaning of that comment is not yet clear to me, but the interpretation was that my days would be cut. The meeting did not come to a harmonious end, due to the fact that we were literally expelled from the building at gun point.[490]

[489]Noonan, *They're Burning the Churches: the Final Dramatic Events that Scuttled Apartheid*, p. 132.

[490] *Ibid*, p.134.

This account is consistent with the Kahn Committee (1991) findings on covert state operations under apartheid. The Committee found that the Eagles clubs were codenamed Project Napper, "a special secret project, described as ... 'another valuable source of information on violence in black townships'".[491] The TRC Report confirmed the Kahn Committee findings by pointing out that in certain areas of the Free State, members of the Eagles Club who served as informants for the State Security Branch were rewarded with regular monthly payments.[492] The Eagles were also guaranteed employment in the police force after matriculation.[493]

Aside from devising a strategy to enhance the state's intelligence capacity, the Eagles organised recreational activities and excursions for its members. The Eagles' were also encouraged to work against popular mobilisation against apartheid and social conditions it imposed on the black working class. Members of the Eagles in the Vaal were tasked to persuade their parents to abandon the rent boycott. The Eagles were further given lectures on "political education of a conservative nature" including culture, communism, the basic history of the ANC and the PAC. This was meant to circumvent the support for political formations like the ANC and the PAC.[494]

As one former active member of Phomolong Youth Congress (PYCO) explains:

> They used to distribute specifically anti-ANC literature. One of these was entitled "Oliver Tambo; the Russian Puppet". The view was that Tambo is a terrorist, a communist and that the Eagles must work to curb the influence of those inspired by him.[495]

Between "nice time" and political activism: The Eagles Club in Phomolong

The Eagles Youth Club was launched in Bahale High School in 1985. Mr Molapo, the school principal, orchestrated its launch in the aftermath of the August school protests. The Eagles was the only Club that was recognised and granted permission to

[491] TRC Report, "The State inside South Africa between 1960 and 1990", p.309.

[492] *Ibid*, p.310.

[493] *Ibid*.

[494] *Ibid*, p.253.

[495] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

organise students within Bahale. The leadership of the Eagles Club constituted predominantly students who were in their final year of schooling. It was introduced to the students as a cultural and education driven organisation, with an emphasis on academic excellence as a precondition for leadership. Most of its leaders were considered intelligent and possessing talents akin to orators. However, its broader membership was recruited indiscriminately and included first time secondary school entrants. Students in their first year of secondary schooling were drawn to the Eagles by the "interesting" debates and educational activities it organised.

> In 1988, I started secondary and that was the year I joined Eagles Club ... [T]he reason I found myself joining the Eagles Club was that it was leading in terms of youth issues in the schools at that time ... It wasn't the question of being used. When you arrive in secondary school you get introduced to new things and get involved without fully knowing, you are just enjoying yourself being part of the debate [and] cultural club.[496]

These debates were renowned for entertaining overtly political questions, especially questions related to the apartheid system: As Tshabangu recalls:

> The school would organise a debate saying: 'South Africa is heading for catastrophe under white minority rule' and the Eagles would defend saying that South Africa is heading for success. Ours would say No! Its heading for catastrophe, apartheid is wrong, it's inhumane, [and] it must be abolished. They were not just innocent debates. They were meant to channel public perspectives and perception about the ANC growing in the area.[497]

In addition to debates and cultural activities, expensive excursions were also designed to serve as a carrot for young people to participate in the Eagles Club. Well aware of the deprivation and poverty that Bantu Education imposed on township schools, the state was at this point bringing in "philanthropists" in the form of the Eagles Club to remedy this situation. The school crises and the youth challenge to the black local authorities were to be diffused by defocusing youths from politics. In the absence of opportunities to pursue educational and other interests in the townships, the Eagles Club appeared initially as a viable alternative to the doldrums of Bantu Education. The Eagles preached the message that "it was *ungentlemanly* to be involved in politics and therefore to be deemed a good young person you must not be part of politics".[498]

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[496] Interview with Sipho Baleni, Phomolong, 20 November 2009.

[497] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[498] *Ibid.*

The excursions to different regions of the country such as the Big Hole in Kimberley, Golden Gate in QwaQwa and Share World in Johannesburg were organised for Eagles Club members.[499] Most young people in the townships were confronted by situations of poverty and underdevelopment. In the case of Phomolong for instance, the Eagles Club was indirectly responding to the demands of the Big Ten on the lack of recreational facilities in the township. Its rhetoric also mimicked that of the latter as it was argued that it was exactly that which would take young minds away from negative things.

> [M]y analysis of the Eagles Club in Phomolong is that it was used as a platform because there would be competitions and these social gatherings and after winning you would be taken to Durban and Share World. We participated in the Eagles Club because I could not go to Durban willy-nilly. The Eagles Club afforded many people the chances that we couldn't have otherwise.[500]

There is definitely a point to be made about how the Eagles Club preyed on the situation of poverty experienced by African youth. As such, denying this would be in complete oblivion to the social and economic hardships that apartheid policies meted out on Africans. Besides what has been extensively documented elsewhere about the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s and its impact on township life, youth in Phomolong also had its fare share of this dilemma. Young people in PYCO and the Eagles Youth Club shared some common traits in their living standards. These included residing in a three-roomed house (which meant that the dining room turned into a bedroom at night) and being from single parent homes where mothers worked as domestic workers in Hennenman. For them, participating in the Eagles Club came with the prospect of experiencing life beyond the confines of the township, albeit for a short period of time, beyond the dusty roads, beyond the bucket system, beyond sleeping in dining rooms and the dilapidated two-roomed houses in *Putswastene* that were (and still are) a landmark of the township.[501]

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[499] *Ibid.*

[500] Interview with Frank Monyamane, Phomolong, 15 March 2009.

[501] *Putswastene* literally means rusty brick. This is the part of the township that was established immediately after the forced removals from the old location.

Testimonies in the TRC point to the fact that the Security Branch paid particular attention to teachers who had a special liking for the Prefect System in order to garner their support for the Eagles Club. In Brandfort, teachers who were identified as sympathetic to the Prefect System were given instructions to strengthen the Eagles and were also enrolled for courses taught by members of the Intelligence and South African Defence Force (SADF) in Roodeval outside Bloemfontein. Students were also sent to an SADF base in Roodeval where they participated in courses focused on discrediting the liberation movements and the struggle against apartheid. These courses also focused on teaching the students strategies for suppressing COSAS and democratically elected SRC's.[502]

Arguably, the need to curb the influence of student and youth congresses in Phomolong became more important in the context of a campaign for the removal of the school principal in 1985. This campaign was initially aimed at countering the alleged sexual abuse of school girls by the then principal in Bahale, but by 1986 it had widened to include the demand for democratically elected SRCs, an official school break where students would be allowed to leave the school yard to eat at home, and a rejection of the school board. These demands also reflected how poverty and structural deprivation shaped youth political consciousness in townships.[503] The Big Ten was a source of concern for the security apparatus which argued that the demands mirrored those advanced by COSAS in other parts of the country.

The Eagles in Phomolong exuded an interesting character. It managed to draw participation from some PYCO activists. There are a number of reasons why this was the case. On the one hand, some activists argued that participation in the Eagles was essential for conveying the anti-apartheid message. Kingley Lempe explains:

> The Eagles Club was there in Hennenman but the fortunate part is that it came at the right time when we had conscientised people. So we used it to send our message as comrades not the message of the government. We used it for social activities that we want to go to Durban or want to do this. Actually we were not doing what they want. We would even come but we never joined. We just

[502] Mphithizeli, Ngo, Nelson, *TRC Amnesty Hearing, Case No. 2422/96*, 02 September 1997.

[503] A more detailed discussion about the Big Ten is in Chapter Three.

> participated in its activities, especially debates so that we could send our message. We went everywhere with the Eagles Club.[504]

Lempe's argument is supported by others who argue that even within the Eagles Club, the labels "comrade" and "collaborator" were extensively used.

> There would be friction between comrades and those we called puppets inside the Eagles Club. They would milk us for information and would sell us out to the police. Many of them were informers. Some would be in our meetings at these trips and he would just stand up suddenly wearing his short pants pretending to be jogging meanwhile he goes to phone the police with 25 cents and give them information about our planned hits on targets.[505]

This notwithstanding, there was never a consensus within PYCO, the main youth organisation in the township (whose members were predominantly students), about the approach of using the Eagles as the conveyor of the liberation message. The participation of activists in the Eagles Club gave rise to serious misgivings within PYCO. The chairperson of PYCO remembers, "I did not want the Eagles Club. I hated it. I hated it".[506] Sethunya's hatred for the Eagles Club was that it provided youth with things that PYCO could never compete with.

In many instances, excursions organised by the Eagles Club would have a high attendance and even within PYCO's ranks there would be those who would not be convinced about the reasons why they should not form part of those excursions. In cases where the PYCO leadership attempted to intervene through patrolling the township so that the buses transporting the Eagles would not leave, "they [the Eagles] would leave around three in the morning sometimes. Under very controversial circumstances, sometimes escorted by police."[507] The fixation with the activities organised by the Eagles Club was seen as a major stumbling block to the struggle for liberation. It was a widely shared view that Eagles Club participants were co-opted to support a counter-revolutionary agenda. Accordingly, the Eagles Club was

> ...implemented as a strategy to channel youths into sport, debates, [and] educational things in schools. They would be bussed from here (Phomolong) to Johannesburg, Sun City with government money. So they could see an element of white goodwill in the sense that they were given some

[504] Interview with Kingsley Lempe, Phomolong, 18 September 2009.

[505] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[506] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[507] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

> entertainment as those people in the Eagles Club, not as black people but black people in the Eagles Club, subscribing to nurturing and defending the white system in the schools.[508]
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> [W]e knew that wherever they [were] they were being used to weaken the battalion that we must have. People that were supposed to be part of us instead of focussing and strengthening us would go to these entertainment things, drawn out of our programmes through funding for them to be all over to pursue entertainment.[509]

The idea that the Eagles Club was a counter-revolutionary structure organised from the upper echelons of the apartheid state was so strong that a song was composed referring to the Eagles Club as an organisation of *izinja;* dogs in IsiZulu. The Eagles Club house in the township was also torched in 1986, with the specific orders for this emanating from the PYCO leadership.[510] Despite this, participation in the Eagles Club was high. Many attest that sometimes there would be up to a hundred students leaving on trips organised by the Club. This number was especially high when compared to the school population in Bahale Secondary at that time. At times the buses allocated for these trips would not be able to carry students to the destinations. Fear of being attacked had some bearing on this situation. Participation in trips also declined around exam time.

Sello Sefuthi, a PYCO activist attributes the high participation in Eagles Club activities to the lack of clarity and consciousness about what the liberation movement sought to achieve in its struggle against apartheid.

> Yes we were burning tyres, throwing stones but the movement had not done enough to conscientise people about the essence and the intensity of the apartheid struggle. After fighting so and so, you wouldn't understand the bigger picture and what it meant to overthrow the entire system. So when these things of fun came it was easy for people to be sidetracked ... Incidentally, you would find that people who were active with us would want to go on these trips.[511]
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> At times of class boycotts leaders would sneak in and write examinations and we would have to remove them physically because the consciousness was not the same then.[512]

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[508] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September, 2009.

[509] *Ibid*.

[510] Informal conversation with Thabo Sethunya.

[511] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[512] *Ibid.*

Sefuthi's testimony raises sharp issues about the extent to which the message of ungovernability found resonance in Phomolong. What his argument suggests is that the struggle for these youth was seen as a short term and event oriented. There was little understanding about how pieces of the liberation puzzle fitted together. This could be an indication of the poor reach that liberation movements, particularly those of the Congress tradition, had in this area. As has been remarked before, Phomolong proves that the UDF was indeed "trailing behind the masses".[513]

Despite PYCO's political rivalry with the Eagles, it seems that violent confrontation between these two groups in Phomolong was minimal. There are several plausible explanations for this. Firstly, the revolving door between the Eagles and activists meant that organisational identity became extremely fluid. It was difficult for PYCO to take on an overwhelmingly violent stance against the Eagles, as many Eagles members were also PYCO activists who openly and simultaneously participated in both organisations. A confrontational stance pursued by PYCO would have been suicidal, as more and more youth joined the Eagles, even if having a "nice time" was their sole motivation.

Secondly, many parents questioned PYCO's leadership and its tactics in the township. Terms such as *baferekanyi*[514] and *bahlohleledi* [515] were applied broadly to describe PYCO leadership. Taking a confrontational stance against an organisation purporting to be a custodian of education and development would not have done PYCO any service. However, some cite different reasons for the minimal confrontation between these two formations. The fear of violence and force, some argue, kept the Eagles at bay. Tshabangu explains:

> [The Eagles] didn't have a strong agenda that if we want to march they will stand in our way. They could have never concluded to stand in our way given their numbers. Given their numbers and our influence. We were so strong. We

[513] Seekings, J, "'Trailing Behind the Masses': the United Democratic Front and Township Politics in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Region, 1983 -84", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.18, No.1, March 1991.

[514] This Sesotho term literally translates into a person who thrives from rowdiness

[515] This means a person who misleads others

> would just be given orders from PYCO and would act on them, that we are going to burn, block roads and nothing will enter the township.[516]

Sefuthi supports this argument:

> No they didn't, they wouldn't [stand in our way]. I suspect it's because of the conditions then. We were very organised. But when we would try to call a school boycott they would come with another agenda ... But they feared us because we were full of madness then it was easy for one to be killed, abducted. Anything that was seen as a symbol of apartheid could be easily...[517]

These assumptions should not be easily dismissed. The influence and central messaging the Eagles had among its membership should not be underestimated, especially its emphasis on peace, justice, negotiation and 'gentlemanly' behaviour. For the Eagles to assume an overtly violent and confrontational stance, it would have had to shed its original identity as an education inspired organisation which championed peaceful resolution of conflicts. This would have compromised its appeal among youth in Phomolong. But there are limitations to this postulation. Threats of violence and death only came to the fore when the Eagles were confronted by angry members of youth congresses in other towns. The Eagles were often confronted by angry youth emanating from the youth congresses and student organisations in areas such as Wesselsbroon, Botshabelo and Virginia. Before this, PYCO strategies such as preventing Eagles' buses from exiting the township had only secured short-lived success. These attacks in areas outside Phomolong were eye opening moments for the Eagles. Some members began distancing themselves from the Eagles after such confrontations.

Sipho Baleni an Eagles Club member in 1988 makes this comment:

> We went to Wesselsbroon on a sports challenge. The last activity when the trip conclude[s] we would usually have a debate and compete. So because of the apartheid and political environment then some youths felt that we were being used by the apartheid government because we are no longer pushing for political freedom as students … But then this thing that happened in Wesselsbroon taught me a lesson, when the youth in that area disrupted our activities. We had left for Wesselsbroon on Saturday and were meant to return

[516] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[517] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

> on the same day; unfortunately we could not come back. It was tense ... we were forced to find ourselves sleeping in the buses, the hall, but the security police were there watching over us.[518]

This Wesselsbroon incident was but amongst many and was instrumental in undercutting the support of the Eagles Club in Phomolong, members withdrew as they for their lives and safety. Furthermore, the fact that confrontation was meted out by youth in other parts of the Free State could have provided proof for those who were reluctant to believe that the Eagles were tied to the apron strings of the apartheid regime. The zeal and commitment of the police to safeguard the lives of the Eagles above the lives of the activists provided additional impetus. This is the kernel to understanding the decline of the Eagles influence in Phomolong.

"Demobilise, depoliticise, disorganise and divide"[519]: Vigilante Activity in Phomolong

Research conducted from the late 1980s focussed on the study of the emergence of new types of violent activity, often in opposition to the activists. This section looks at counter organisation in the Phomolong township from the mid to the late 1980s. This type of organisation has been largely described as vigilante organisation. Charney defines vigilantism as a form of private violence aimed at defending an oligarchic state besieged by popular discontent and resistance.[520] Although vigilante activity in this period carried similar trends across the country, there were important factors that distinguished vigilante groupings from one locality to the other. In the main, the scale and intensity of the activity was contingent upon the level of resistance to apartheid and the challenge posed to the local state by various organisations linked to the liberation movement.[521] The first divergence is with regards to the social base of vigilante activity. In areas where the local state came under severe criticism from older residents, vigilante groups comprised new recruits from neighbouring rural areas and farms; whereas, in areas where local state structures enjoyed support

[518]Interview with Sipho Baleni, Phomolong, 20 November 2009.

[519] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[520] Charney, C, "Vigilantes, Clientelism and the South African State", *Transformation*, No. 16, 1991.

[521] Haysom, N, *Mabangalala: the Rise of Right-wing Vigilantes in South Africa*, Occasional Paper no.10, Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1986, p.12.

amongst a significant portion of the community, vigilante activity was confined to people from the same communities.[522] Vigilante activity was carried out to thwart the influence and operation of youth; student and civic organisations linked to the liberation movements. In many cases, vigilante activity gained momentum largely by manipulating embryonic tensions within the communities and having the concealed support of the state.

Material gain and security often served as an impetus for the formation of vigilante groups. Charney suggests that vigilante activity emerges "when patronage-based power structures [are] threatened from below, preying upon cleavages within the groups in revolt."[523] In this formulation leaders such as councillors, highly dependent on the central state but at the same time increasingly a target of anti-apartheid political activity, used violence in a manner that safeguarded their positions whilst simultaneously and almost automatically fulfilling the central state agenda. This local brokerage role was largely played by a section of the African petite bourgeoisie in the townships. This group was marked by its profound dependence on the local state machinery for its reproduction.[524] According to Charney,

> Local councillors, traders, principals, civil servants, ministers of independent churches and sport club leaders make up tightly connected elite in most townships, distinct in economic, political, gender, and even kinship terms. These men's jobs, business sites, or financing came from the state, and their power and profit from resources which the racial order kept in short supply. The limited local-level patronage these resources afforded was enough to mobilise the cliques active in the low-participation, factional politics of government-created township councils. Understandably conservative, this local state-linked section of the petite bourgeoisie frequently allied with others interested in stability, such as police and chiefs.[525]

The class aspect of vigilante activity is also highlighted by Seekings in his examination of vigilantes' activity in the Free State. He maintains that vigilante activity in the period concerned cannot be divorced from an ongoing process of class formation in the townships. He notes that opposition to 'progressive township

[522] Seekings, J, "Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Links", *Work In Progress*, Vol.40, 1986, p. 27.

[523]Charney, "Vigilantes, Clientelism and the South African State", p.1.

[524]*Ibid*.

[525] *Ibid*, p.10.

organisation' was primarily rooted among 'a group of embryonic capitalists'. This group included shop, taxi and shebeen owners and middle class elements such as teachers, police and local state officials.[526] These categories of people participated in vigilante activity because of their location vis-à-vis the apartheid state. They performed roles and functions in the education system and the local state, and these roles placed them at the epicentre of political conflicts in the townships. According to Seekings, the fact that consumer boycotts undermined the interests of groupings such as taxi and shop owners made these categories of people more inclined to initiate and participate in activities aimed at undercutting the influence and reach of the liberation movement.

Moloi locates the rise of political violence that engulfed Maokeng Township in Kroonstad from the violence ravaging Natal and the Rand from 1989.[527] Violence in Maokeng, Moloi argues, erupted in 1991, because of the absence hostels and squatter settlements – which formed the social basis harbouring social forces behind political violence in other townships.[528] The state latched on to gang rivalry violence in Maokeng and used this to suppress and weaken ANC's political activity and support. It was strongly believed that the apartheid state had a hand in the terror unleashed by the Three Million Gang on supporters of the liberation movement. Consistent with other observations, Moloi argues that the main aim of the political violence was to overturn the process of change evident in most parts of the country. Like in other areas, vigilante activity disrupted campaigns calling for the dissolution of the local council and the resignation of councillors. Curiously, the Three Million Gang in Maokeng operated alongside the councillors, the police and members of the IFP, with the opposing enemy being ANC supporters.[529]

However, it must be noted that while the actions of the vigilantes were wholly in line with the agenda of the state, this should not be seen as the fundamental basis for their

[526] Seekings, "Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Links", p. 27.

[527] Moloi, "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles, 1976 – 1995", p.380.

[528] *Ibid*, p.341.

[529] *Ibid*, p.340.

actions. “Their material interest in stability, a related inclination towards conservatism and fear for their lives and property form[ed] the basis of their violent defence of the status quo.”[530] Both Charney[531] and Seekings[532] demonstrate that vigilante activity in the townships had class identity and class interests as their bases. Effectively, these groups “were distinguishable from the larger professional petite bourgeoisie (teachers, nurses, mainline clergy, etc.), who were better educated, more reliant on salaries, more militant politically, and predominantly female.”[533]

While class interests were important factors behind the formation of vigilante groups, other reasons were also worth noting. Among these, patrimonial relations and the urge to restore patriarchal order featured prominently.[534] Haysom finds that intergenerational tensions stemming from the manner in which the school, consumer and rent boycotts, stay aways and people’s courts were conducted is important in this equation.[535] Youth political activity posed a significant challenge to traditional patriarchal order where young males are supposed to be under the tutelage and direction of the elders. Youth were not only seen as undermining patriarchal authority but workers’ organisations also felt uncomfortable with some of these approaches.

This notwithstanding, the point about material gain is also emphasised in Haysom’s analysis. Vigilante groups were led by people whose claim over resource allocation and decision making was severely threatened by anti-apartheid youth and civic organisations.[536] The positioning of civic and to a lesser extent youth organisations as viable alternatives that could take over the provision of land for housing and various other services in line with the discourse of people’s power heightened the threat to the old guard. Thus, it is not surprising that community councillors were largely implicated in vigilante activity.

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[530]Seekings, “Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Links”, p. 27.

[531]Charney, “Vigilantes Clientelism and the South African State, p. 10.

[532] Seekings, “Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Links”.

[533]*Ibid*.

[534] Haysom, *Mabangalala: the Rise of Right-wing Vigilantes in South Africa*, p.12.

[535] *Ibid*, p.104, 107, 116.

[536]*Ibid*, 123.

In addition to the links and levels of dependence on the apartheid local state and the urge to safeguard their class interests, members of vigilante groups were also defined by family relations. Charney adds that there are five patterns of vigilante activity evident during the late 1980s till the early 1990s. These are patrimonial type; generational vigilantes where older men challenge younger boys in youth organisations; ethnicity based vigilantes the example of which is the migrant labourers in opposition to class based organisations such as trade unions; gangs hired by political leaders and vigilante activity based on communal disputes. [537]

The extent to which these types of vigilante activities are discernible is questionable as most of these possess common threads and interlink in interesting ways. For instance, the violence in Crossroads around this period had intergenerational tensions as well as class survival on the part of the local elites as its undercurrents.[538] Scholars remark that the operational strategies of vigilante groupings were often in line with state desires. This explains the silence of apartheid police in many atrocities resulting from vigilante activity. The collaboration between state structures and vigilantes is demonstrated by the minutes of a meeting between Thabong businessmen and Thabong Town Council. In these minutes, the Thabong mayor indicated that;

> Under the guidance of Council members, patrols were organized and inspired the old axiom 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. All meetings of potential stone throwers and arsonists were broken up with no more violence than the energetic use of sjamboks and the result has been most satisfying. Thabong has been scourged of rowdism and we intend to keep it that way.[539]

Phomolong had its fair share of vigilantism. In the aftermath of the arrest of the top brass of PYCO leadership in 1986, a group of men organised in what the activists referred to as Inkatha imposed a curfew on the township and meted harsh discipline on politically active youth. The Inkatha label is a misnomer considering that only three of these men were conclusively members of Inkatha. The fact that they were given this label may have been influenced by events around the country at that time, particularly the violent UDF/Inkatha confrontation in parts of Natal. PYCO activists were also uncertain about the groupings' links to Inkatha: "I am not sure if they were

[537] Charney, "Vigilantes Clientelism and the South African State", p.11-14.

[538] Haysom, *Mabangalala: the Rise of Right-wing Vigilantes in South Africa*, p.11-14.

[539] Seekings, "Vigilantes and the State: Probing the Links", p. 28.

related to the real Inkatha/IFP. Maybe they were like the Russian Sothos in the mines not necessarily related to the real Russia."[540]

Other than this, the group comprised mainly of the usual suspects in vigilantism. As in other areas, they were a local group concerned with safeguarding its interests which could be largely secured through the local state. The municipal police, councillors, prison warders, 'church elders', businessmen and some members of the school board formed the political base of this group. Interestingly, similar to vigilante action in Crossroads and Ashton in the same period, Phomolong was a case of fathers against sons. These kinship relations explain why the group became known as Bontate – which means "the fathers" in Sesotho. Almost all the youth activists from PYCO, leading and implementing the consumer and rent boycotts, as well as calling for the resignation of councillors were related to the members of this vigilante group.

Bontate and PYCO differed on several issues. One area of disagreement was on the disruption of schooling as a result of PYCO's political activity. As such, *Bontate* portrayed itself as a champion of education, and an enforcer of "discipline" and "respect" amongst youth. This group of '*Bontate'* patrolled the township streets at night with knobkerries and sjamboks and imposed an eight o'clock curfew in the community. The instruction was that no one should be seen roaming the streets and no cars were allowed to enter the township after this time. Mile Fingers recalls:

> They would assault us in the streets at night. Sometimes you would find that I'm in the street with my girlfriend, they would beat me. They just didn't care. At times you would be coming from borrowing a textbook and they would beat you up, with no chance given to you to explain. They were just taking the law into their hands. So we also carried on fighting. Instead of trying to resolve the issue of the school principal, they wouldn't care. They went to the same church anyway.[541]

PYCO came under attack over the tactics it applied in carrying out its campaigns. This experience mirrored many others across the country where youths were seen as irresponsible and motivated by ill intentions. Jonas Sefuthi, father to PYCO activist Sello Sefuthi, explains the discord between adults and the youth in this fashion:

[540] Interview with Mthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[541] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

> If you were talking to another youth they would explain that they were totally right. The others would do those things and firstly they did not consult their parents that they were going to fight and take groceries from you and all those things. It was something that they did for their chances ... And they harassed people, the youth had no respect. They would stand there [at the township entrance], stop people and would break people's things there, that they had bought in town.[542]

Thabo Sethunya, a founding member and leader of PYCO, whose father was highly involved in *Bontate's* operations, argues that the latter was a "reactionary" grouping and a symbol of Phomolong's belated awakening to liberation politics.[543]

> Unfortunately, we didn't have older residents who spoke the language of the movement. We used to envy people in Welkom, Kroonstad and Bloemfontein. There you would find that a person as old as fifty years is speaking the language of the movement. Here it was just us the young ones with one or two old people. People from Hennenman were indoctrinated, they didn't understand politics. It is bad to say it like that but that's how it was.[544]

The kinship relations shared between PYCO activists and *Bontate* made political organisation mostly difficult and weak between 1986 and 1987. This was compounded by the fact that the Eagles made the task of targeting all PYCO activists and supporters effortless. *Bontate* did not only target their sons but the entire PYCO membership.

> The Eagles would give them and the police a list of who are these problematic school-going people who instigate violence at school, in the location and all that. They were that 'koevoet' of theirs which was supposed to suppress rowdiness in the township.[545]

Organisational campaigns such as those targeting people associated with the oppressive local state could hardly continue under these circumstances. Some recall that the targeting of their relatives was a bitter pill to swallow. Sometimes, activists would withdraw from PYCO activities upon learning that their relatives were part of

[542] Interview with Jonas Sefuthi, Phomolong, 12 January 2009.

[543] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[544] *Ibid*.

[545] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

the identified targets. This also meant that in some instances, PYCO members would alert the 'targets' about PYCO's planned activities. Banks Tshabangu explains:

> It made it difficult for us to target our targets. When we would go and hit, we would say Qaba we are going to hit at Boy-boy Qaba's shops ... Qaba's uncle or that comrade Banks we are going to hit at Solly Tshabangu's and I am also a Tshabangu, he is my uncle ... and should it be known that they were targets their relatives would withdraw from the action and we became weakened. It was all part of a strategy.[546]

As a result, family relations came under serious strain. Home was one of the few places where young activists in PYCO could run for refuge. The reality that their fathers and relatives had turned on them made the costs of the liberation struggle particularly high. The night curfew imposed in the township also hampered PYCO political activity such as property destruction and burning happened during the night. *Bontate* patrolled the streets at night, virtually replacing the formal police. Young people were not to be seen roaming the streets after eight o'clock. This hampered organisational nocturnal activity such as burning the homes and properties of those deemed as being part of the system. The rationale for the curfew was to curb violent youth political activity at night. As one activist narrates:

> The reason was that the hits on houses, cars of targets would happen at night. They were closing that space of operation ... Operation must not be there during the night. The plan was that we must be disorganised, we must not have space of coming together.[547]

This clamp-down on political activity leads "Muthi" Musutu to argue that *Bontate* was established to annihilate the (potential) influence of the ANC in Phomolong. "They were anti-ANC using the fight against crime as a pretext. They were anti-ANC. They didn't want it here."[548]

The additional hindrance to PYCO's efficacy in this period was the fact that its leadership was arrested in early 1986 for the protest action organised against the

[546] *Ibid*.

[547] *Ibid*.

[548] Interview with Mthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, 17 September 2009.

school principal. This leadership included the chairperson of PYCO, Thabo Sethunya and its Secretary Kgaki Matshabe. These two leaders had been the only link that PYCO had with similar organisations in Kroonstad and Welkom.

> We received a message whilst in detention that there was this grouping and some of the people that were looking after us in jail were a part of it. So we would continuously tell these prison warders that we are coming, when we come out we are going to deal with you.[549]

> I even told my father who was a policeman and one of the leaders of these men. I told him that I will deal with him. I was young then so I didn't care much about those things of family. I was just following the SAYCO slogan 'Freedom or Death, Victory is Certain'.[550]

When they were eventually released in 1986, *Bontate* had been so effective that many of the loyal members of PYCO had burned all their t-shirts associated with the liberation struggle. A new cohort of activists had to be built in order to challenge *Bontate* and this was to be a daunting task.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history of the Eagles Youth Clubs and their creation as part of the apartheid soft war strategy to stave off political resistance in South Africa's black townships. The chapter has also unpacked the intricacies and complex relationships between the Eagles and PYCO in Phomolong. A range of reasons explaining why young people joined the Eagles Club have been explored in this chapter. What stands out as motivational factors for this are the educational and cultural activities as well as material benefits such as expensive trips outside of Phomolong. The Phomolong case demonstrates that the Eagles might have initially operated without young activists appreciating their connection to the apartheid regime:

> We didn't know that the money was from the Boers. We were still at school and we would just get happy when we would be taken to expensive trips outside. Along the way it showed its political colours.[551]

[549] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[550] *Ibid*.

[551] Interview with Mile Fingers, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

An argument is presented that the Eagles' camouflage was so successful that many township residents participated in its work without having a clear knowledge that this constituted a form of collusion with the apartheid state.[552] As time progressed many PYCO activists noted that many of the people who participated in the Eagles "that we went to Durban and all these places with were not so inclined in the Eagles club, [they] were still inclined in [their] political issues".[553] Many members of PYCO whilst recognising the need to pursue the politics of liberation were drawn into the Eagles Club by the material benefits it provided. The Eagles was an opportunity to frequent luxurious places in and outside the Free State – an opportunity that proved difficult to resist. The Eagles' recruitment machinery was outstanding. By depicting itself as a cultural and education driven organisation, it was able to secure minimal resistance from parents who wished to see their children excelling in school. This manifestation resulted in difficulties for PYCO. In essence, the apartheid state policy of co-opting and depoliticising youth cannot be wholly dismissed as a failure.

The Eagles have left their footprints in Phomolong. The next chapter shows how the history of the Eagles continued to influence leadership contestations in the ANC and the local state well after the clubs stopped operating.

> What created problems in [Phomolong] is to allow space for people who came from a counter revolutionary youth structure to come and replace a generation of young leaders which was produced at the best of the difficulties of those times ... produced by ANC politics. People who were not anywhere to be found ... just replaced us and we were angry and had every right to be angry.[554]

These contestations were prevalent during the constitution of the Transitional Local Council. Although there is a widespread belief that the Eagles worked closely with the police and members of other vigilante organisations, there is insufficient evidence that the Eagles in Phomolong ever became a vigilante group as was commonly known in South Africa during the 1980s. This essentially means that the Eagles Club was trapped in its own historical mould. Having been introduced as an education and developmental youth club, the Eagles proved incapable of assuming a character more sinister than that known to its members. The instances whereby attempts were made

[552] Noonan, *They're Burning the Churches*, 132.

[553] Interview with Frank Monyamane, Phomolong, 15 March 2009.

[554] *Ibid*.

for the Eagles to show its true colours resulted in loss of membership and its quantitative weakening.

An argument has been advanced that the emergence of a vigilante group in 1986 posed serious threats to PYCO's objectives and organisational presence. This was mainly because a significant proportion of the members of this group were related to members of PYCO. This proved to be a hindrance in carrying forth political tasks concerned with property damage and torching. Many a times, PYCO members distanced themselves from these actions once they became aware that one of their relatives was the target. Furthermore, this chapter has dispelled the notion that there was any conclusive link between Inkatha and *Bontate* in Phomolong. Only three of the men in *Bontate* were members of Inkatha. Although the Eagles were a crucial source of information to *Bontate*, there is no convincing evidence that joint operations were undertaken. The sentiment to the contrary stems more from the coalescence of the two's objectives and outcomes of their actions rather than from any concrete proof. Both organisations were aimed at depoliticising the youth in Phomolong and undercutting the influence of PYCO. However, this was pursued through significantly different ways. The Eagles, as Lourens Du Plessis[555] testified, was more of a psychological operation aimed at changing youth perceptions about apartheid. *Bontate* were overtly forceful and violent in approach[556], utilising discipline and the fight against crime as legitimating factors. What lay behind these claims was a desperate attempt to safeguard class interests. Therefore, it was no coincidence that amongst *Bontate* members were municipal police, prison warders, church elders, local businessmen as well as members of the school board in Bahale. These categories also shared common threads of dependence on the local state, its resources and operated in sectors which had come under serious attack from PYCO.

The following chapter will deal with the years in transition between 1990 and 2000. Amongst the epic moments of this period were the Transitional Local Council and the first democratic local government elections.

[555]Du Plessis was a Colonel in the SADF in Port Elizabeth. He was also involved in organising activities that had the same objectives as the Eagles in the Eastern Province.

[556]There were no fatalities that resulted directly from this group's activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Phomolong in Transition – "We had no control and the people's expectations were too high"

> In 1991, it was that thing of go back to school, stop this thing, you are crazy now ... We were trying to re-launch structures of the ANC, COSAS to operate in conditions of legality.
>
> I braved the bullets when it was tough and I was getting tired of these boys who were prepared to throw stones but the movement was also giving clear sense that no, we must stop these things, we are preparing to negotiate, it was CODESA then. It was difficult. There were clear moments when I was labelled a coward because I had to communicate this message ... [that] we must lead structures and rebuild structures of the ANC. We must give negotiations a chance. The ANC has suspended the armed struggle we can't be seen ... fighting and fighting.[557]

The then chairperson of the ANCYL in Phomolong uttered these words, which lucidly capture the complexities presented by the transition from confrontation with the system of apartheid to negotiating a path to democracy. South Africa's transition from white minority rule to democracy was neither linear nor teleological – it was fraught with contradictions. Activists across the country had to navigate this complex political terrain which was rapid, unfamiliar and in some instances alienating. The previous chapter explored the genesis of the Eagles Club and highlighted the intricate relationship between the latter and the local youth political movement in Phomolong. This chapter is concerned with the local politics of the transition to democracy in Phomolong. It posits that the transitional period presented serious challenges for the unity and cohesion of the local movement in the area.

Transitional structures in Phomolong faced challenges on two fronts. Firstly, at a structural level, the manner in which they were constituted and the limits posed by compromises struck at national negotiations limited their ability to forge ahead with a thoroughgoing redistributive agenda. Secondly, the internal polarisation of the local political movement itself, the inexperience with governance and divisions over unfulfilled expectations about the material prospects presented by the local state. As

[557] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

such, this presented a serious hurdle for the unity and cohesion of the anti-apartheid movement in Phomolong. Therefore, this chapter contends that a combination of intra-organisational battles and structural constraints imposed by the negotiated transition as well as the capitulation to neoliberalism was the final mixture that led to instability of successive local government structures in Phomolong.

The Transition in a National Context

South Africa's transition from authoritarian white minority to a democratic and non-racial rule has been a keenly studied subject in academia.[558] For the purposes of this chapter, the period 1989-2000 is considered. The main reason for this periodisation is that these years saw the introduction of changes and developments that carried serious implications for the local state.

On 2nd February 1990, state president Frederick Willem de Klerk made announcements about the unbanning of the ANC, SACP, PAC and other political organisations and the release of political prisoners.[559] These announcements were profound and more far-reaching than had been expected, especially among sections of the white population and opinion makers. [560] The talks that followed this announcement had been preceded by a series of informal discussions between the ANC and various parties in South Africa. The Botha administration initiated talks in 1987 and discussions with the 1988 Slabbert delegation in Lusaka are examples of negotiations preceding the 2nd February announcement. The ANC itself had signalled its willingness to enter into "genuine negotiations" aimed at the "transformation" of the country in its October 1987 statement and the August 1988 Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa.[561]

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[558] See Adam, H, *The Negotiated Revolution: Society and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Johannesburg, 1993. Friedman, S. & Atkinson, D. (eds.), *South African Review 7: The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*, Raven Press: Johannesburg, 1994. Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.) in *South African Review 6: From 'Red Friday' to CODESA,* Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992 and Murray, J, M, *Revolution Deferred: The Painful Birth of Post Apartheid South Africa*, London: 1994.

[559] Lawrence, R, "Introduction: From Soweto to Codesa", in: Friedman, S. & Atkinson, D. (eds.), *South African Review 7: The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*, Raven Press: Johannesburg, 1994, p.8.

[560] Thompson, L, M, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press: New York, 2001, p.245.

[561]Lodge, T, "People's war or negotiation: African National Congress strategies in the 1980s", *South African Review 5*, Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1990, p.48.

There were various factors that led both parties to the table. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it deprived the ANC of the material and moral support it had enjoyed from the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, this collapse robbed the apartheid government of one of its justifications for banning the ANC.[562] As the spectre of communism faded away, so did the threat of South Africa being taken over by communist radicals. Importantly, the demise of the Soviet Union also undercut apartheid South Africa's geopolitical significance to Western capitalist nations.[563]

Furthermore, South Africa was also strategically weakened by the defeat of colonial regimes in Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. The disinvestment from the domestic economy and the scarcity of foreign capital was another factor. The cumulative impact of international isolation, boycotts and sanctions was too great to ignore.[564] But, as MacDonald argues, although these factors were important in pushing the apartheid government to negotiate with its sworn enemy, the kernel to understanding the inclination towards negotiations lies with the relentless mass resistance of the time. With escalating levels of mass resistance, the threat of social revolution and the costs this would carry for white political and economic interests became too real to disregard.[565] Likewise, the persistent military superiority of the government in comparison to the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, led to the triumph within the ANC of a discourse that maintained that armed struggle was used only as a source of pressure on the government and not necessarily as a means to overthrow the apartheid regime.[566]

The main protagonists in the transition – the apartheid government and the ANC – had divergent interests in the negotiation process. The government, concerned about its waning power and the possibility that in the absence of some compromise, South Africa would be plunged further into crisis, went into the negotiations with the aim of

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[562] Macdonald, M, "Power politics in the new South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies;* 1996, Vol. 22, Issue 2, p.223.

[563] *Ibid*.

[564] *Ibid*.

[565] *Ibid*. See also Lawrence, "Introduction: From Soweto to Codesa", p.8.

[566] Lodge, "People's war or negotiation: African National Congress strategies in the 1980s", p.53.

safeguarding white minority interests through power-sharing and the minority right to veto decisions of the majority. This, it argued, would prevent the minority from being subjected to the tyranny of the majority. The ANC's main objective with negotiations was to realise its longstanding commitment to a democratic South Africa, premised on non-racialism and the principle of majority rule. The various negotiation pacts and agreements struck between the two parties from 1990 reflected the interplay between these divergent interests. From the release of political prisoners to the 1994 election, a series of declarations and agreements were struck between the apartheid regime and the ANC as a leader of the national liberation movement. Most notable of these were the Groote Schuur Minute and the subsequent Pretoria Minute. Each of these was concerned with carving a path out of the unworkable apartheid system and the strife that engulfed parts of country.[567]

The Groote Schuur Minute signed on 4th May 1990 made advances to address several issues which were mainly outlined as preconditions for negotiations in the 1988 Harare Declaration of the OAU. These included an end to the state of emergency; withdrawal of the troops from the townships/black residential areas; the release of political prisoners and detainees; an end to political executions; the repeal of security laws; lifting of restrictions on all individuals and organisations.[568] The Harare Declaration stipulated that once the government had met these conditions, then a 'mutually binding ceasefire' on both parties would be negotiated between the ANC, the NP government and the major parties in South Africa's political landscape would enter into negotiations setting the broad principles and practical steps for a peaceful transition to democracy. These practical steps would include the mechanisms for drafting a new constitution and determining the form of interim government. The declaration stressed that only after the adoption; the new constitution would set the pace for the termination of "armed hostilities" on both sides and the lifting of

[567] Collinge, J, "Launched on a bloody tide; negotiating the new South Africa" in Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.) in *South African Review 6: From 'Red Friday' to CODESA,* Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992, p.29-30, p.2. Also see Haysom, "Negotiating a Political Settlement", p.28-29.

[568] *Ibid*, p.9.

international sanctions. Importantly, the Groote Schuur Minute did not resolve on the armed struggle.[569]

In the months that followed, on 6th August 1990, the ANC would assent to the Pretoria Minute and suspend its 30 year armed struggle.[570] The agreement was also a recommitment on the provisions and broad principles of the Groote Schuur Minute. In particular, the essence of the agreement included:

- Setting of dates for the phased release of political prisoners and detainees
- An agreement on the criteria to determine whether exiles and political prisoners were political offenders who qualified for release
- The repeal of aspects of the Internal Security Act, especially sections related to the criminalisation of communism[571]

The suspension of the armed struggle was the most controversial part of this agreement. Analysts argued that this decision was a clear departure from the Harare Declaration, which maintained that suspension of armed struggle was a step that could be taken only once all the elements necessary for peaceful negotiations were in place.[572] According to some commentators, although the ANC leadership presented a façade that this was a sufficiently canvassed position within the ANC's structures, grassroots reaction to this decision betrayed this confidence. Of particular concern was that the suspension of the armed struggle placed the liberation movement on the back-foot, with the state still clinging to its control and political use of repression to suppress and annihilate its detractors.[573]

December 19th, 1991 saw the beginning of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA); in which participants from various political formations agreed to the following key aspects:

- A climate for free political activity
- Necessary constitutional principles to be included in the new constitution
- The future of the "independent" Bantustans – Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei

[569] Haysom, "Negotiating a Political Settlement in South Africa", p.28.

[570] Collinge, "Launched in a Bloody Tide", p.4.

[571] *Ibid*, p.4. Also see Haysom, "Negotiating a Political Settlement in South Africa", p.29-30.

[572] Collinge, "Launched in a Bloody Tide", p.4-5.

[573] *Ibid*, p.5.

- Interim government

The product of this platform was a statement/declaration of intent which stipulated the basic constitutional principles for a democratic South Africa. All parties, except Inkatha and the Bophuthatswana Bantustan, ratified the declaration. The Ciskeian government, which initially objected to the declaration, also assented to it.[574] According to Lawrence, although CODESA could not broker a settlement, its significance resided in the fact that it "planted the seeds of compromise."[575] CODESA resulted in a Declaration of Intent committing parties to an undivided South Africa, peaceful constitutional change, universal suffrage in a multiparty democracy, a bill of rights and the separation of powers.[576] CODESA talks broke down in May 1991, largely because of the government's insistence that more checks and balances should be put in place to limit the power of the majority.

The four months following the breakdown of CODESA resulted in heightened levels of violence and political killings. On 26th September, the Record of Understanding between the ANC and the government paved the way for the Multi-Party Forum that commenced on 1st April 1993.[577] During this period, Communist Party leader Chris Hani was assassinated on April 10th, 1993. The armed members of the AWB also invaded the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park, the venue for the multiparty talks. Despite this, the Multi-Party Forum reached an agreement on several important areas. These were the interim constitution that would be in place until the signing into law of the final constitution in 1996 and 27th April 1994 as the date for South Africa's first democratic non-racial national elections. The ANC's major concession in these talks was what became known as the Sunset Clause, which effectively maintained the apartheid bureaucracy intact.[578]

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[574] Haysom, "Negotiating a Political Settlement in South Africa", p.39-40.

[575] Lawrence, "Introduction: From Soweto to Codesa", p.10.

[576] *Ibid*.

[577] Atkinson, "Brokering a Miracle?: The Multi-party Negotiating Forum", p.13.

[578] Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, p.247-249.

[578] Macdonald, "Power politics in the new South Africa", p.223.

The transitional period which the *South African Review* characterised as an interregnum, a phase in which "the old was dying and the new struggling to be born"; was a fluid and marred with moments of optimism on the one hand and complete gloom on the other.[579] It was also a period marked by escalated political violence that plagued Natal, the East Rand and the Vaal Triangle. Demonstrating the extent of political violence, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) reported that there were 1,403 political killings in 1989. This number was a mere prelude of the worst to come as it was reported that 3,699 were killed in the political violence in 1990, 2,706 in 1991, 3,347 in 1992, 3,794 in 1993 and 2,476 in 1994.[580]

According to Murray, incidents of train massacres, random 'drive-by' shootings, attacks at political funerals, and the systematic assassination of local activists became so commonplace that "they were taken for granted in the townships".[581] Massacres on innocent civilians also became a regular scene in the episodes of South Africa's transition. Among the most painful and politically significant killings were the 1992 Boipatong Massacre, which claimed 45 lives and Bisho Massacre in the same year in which 28 civilians were gunned down by the Ciskei army. Acts of vengeance on the part of the ANC were also common.

Many analysts shared a consensus that the apartheid state had a hand in this violence.[582] Certainly, the elevation of the security apparatus into a de facto cabinet alluded to in the previous chapter was understood to have laid the foundation for the political tumult that ensued during this period. Revelations of state sponsored violence, assassinations and death squads were gradually coming to light after De Klerk assumed office in 1989. The revelations of the Goldstone Commission in November 1992 also fingered the state security apparatus in the political violence.[583] However, it was not until the TRC that the extent and nature of these operations was

[579]Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.) in *South African Review 6: From 'Red Friday' to CODESA*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992.

[580] Cited in Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, p.241.

[581] Murray, *Revolution Deferred*, p. 85.

[582] *Ibid*.

[583]*Ibid*, p.86.

revealed. Therefore, what Nelson Mandela described as a "small miracle" was accompanied by what Mark Shaw calls a "bloody backdrop".[584]

The preceding discussion underlines the fact that the transition to majority rule was a highly unpredictable, fluid and rapid process, with contradictory results at various levels. On the one hand, the process of negotiations was marked by the impression of a willingness to utilise talks as a platform to rescue the country from a brink of a precipice. On the other hand, however, the negotiations were accompanied by levels of political violence and killings unprecedented in the entire history of apartheid. More relevant for this discussion is that developments on the national scale moved at an extremely rapid pace, with local movements being left with no choice but to adapt and catch-up with a process they had little control over.

As such, Sello Peter Sefuthi's words at the beginning of this chapter clearly show how developments around the negotiations, most notably the suspension of the armed struggle, left local movements in a state of flux and bewilderment, sometimes giving rise to polarised perspectives among activists. Equally, the path towards a democratic South Africa had specific implications for the transformation of the local state. The next section will discuss this relatively unexplored subject in detail and with specific reference to Phomolong.

Negotiating a New System of Local Government

Talks unfolding at a national level were preceded by moves towards informal talks between local anti-apartheid structures and white local authorities. In the late 1980s, local civic organisations in big metropolitan cities and small towns moved towards negotiations with local authorities. According to some scholars, the move towards negotiations should be interpreted as part of the broader strategy to end the political impasse of the 1980s.[585] The mounting pressure from communities compelled the local state towards negotiations with the civics.

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[584] Shaw, M, "The Bloody Backdrop: Negotiating Violence", *South African Review 7: The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*, in: Friedman, S. & Atkinson, D. (eds.), *South African Review 7: The Small Miracle: South Africa's Negotiated Settlement*.

[585] Coovodia, C, "The Role of the Civic Movement" in Swilling, M, Humphries, R and Shubane, K (eds) *Apartheid City in Transition*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.334.

The participation of local political groupings in the negotiations was important because it brought about the possibility of resolving the legitimacy crisis that besieged the apartheid local state, financial quagmire confronting many of the Black Local Authorities as well as the defaulting on payments by black residents. The pressure for these local negotiations was also exerted by some of the decisions taken by provincial administrations such as the withdrawal of the crucial bridging finance provided to the BLAs by provincial authorities until August 1990. Participation in these local negotiation forums was welcomed by many civic organisations and by the 1990 approximately 90 civics recorded participation in this process.[586]

According to Murray, these local level negotiations were significant in that some of the bilateral agreements struck in areas such as Bloemfontein, Benoni, Krugersdorp and others, represented the first tentative steps towards normalising relations at a local level.[587] But these negotiations were also significant as they emboldened the civics involved and cast them as indispensable stakeholders in local government transformation.[588] Although significant, these local level negotiations were marred with problems. Despite the initial optimism they elicited, most forums failed to live up to the expectations of black communities in the township. There was little progress on the provision of services to black residents and white local authorities vociferously rejected the cross subsidisation of neighbouring black townships.[589] The complexities of negotiations with white local authorities laid bare some of the weaknesses of the civic movements. Murray argues that in certain cases, civics were "little more than collection of activists"[590], with minimal capacity and skill to negotiate the intricacies of urban policy and transformation. Another challenge to these local negotiations was the stalemate between the state and the civics on the civic demand for the dissolution of BLAs.[591]

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[586] Lanegran, K, "Civic Associations in Transitional Local Government Structures in South Africa", *Critical Sociology*, Vol.22, No.3, 1996, p.122.

[587] Murray, *Revolution Deferred* p.172.

[588] *Ibid*.

[589] *Ibid*, p.173.

[590] *Ibid*.

[591] *Ibid*.

To manage the local negotiating process in motion, the central state subsequently promulgated the Interim Measures Act (IMA) and set broad principles to inform the negotiation process. According to Cloete, this was a reactive piece of legislation geared towards 'catching up' with a process that was already underway.[592] The Act was also critiqued for having little impact on existing local authorities including those that enjoyed neither legitimacy nor support in the townships, and left it to individual areas to determine the powers and functions of their new joint or single local authorities. Moreover, this legislation was considered the state's own initiative at controlling and managing the inevitable process of local government transformation. According to Reid and Cobbett, the state's intention with the promulgation of the IMA was to "protect the sloth and illegitimacy of BLAs and management committees by weighing the odds in their favour."[593]

Critics also charged that the Act had the effect of providing a piecemeal solution to a problem that was crosscutting and national in character. Interestingly, although the Act was widely criticised by progressive civics, many elected to participate in local forums. By 1993, 79 local negotiating forums had been created and 53 administration agreements had been reached across the country.[594] Participation in these negotiations was increasingly seen as complementary to mass political mobilization as a tactic. Civic leaders boasted that "[t]hrough their mass struggles and their involvement in local level negotiations, civics are thus helping to shape the future of local government and … development policies."[595] The turn towards negotiations was also a pragmatic move. Bonner and Nieftagodien argue that in the case of Alexandra, there was a growing recognition that attending to some of the pressing needs of the community necessitated some form of engagement with local authorities.[596]

By the end of 1991, Congress aligned civics had organised themselves into a national body called the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO). This body

[592] Cloete, F, "Local Government Restructuring", *Politikon*, Vol. 21, No. 1, June 1994, p.61.

[593] Reid, G & Cobbett, W, "Negotiating in Bad Faith", in Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.) in *South African Review 6: From 'Red Friday' to CODESA*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992, p.240.

[594]Lanegran, "Civic Associations in Transitional Local Government Structures in South Africa", p.121.

[595] Coovodia, "The Role of the Civic Movement", p.334.

[596] Bonner, P L, Nieftagodien, N, *Alexandra:A History*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008, p.341.

initiated direct discussions with the Minister of Local Government about the transformation of local government.[597] Civics made a few notable demands in these negotiations that included the demand for non-racial municipalities with a single fiscal system, the transfer of ownership of rented houses from the council to the residents, affordable rent and service charges as well as in some cases the improvement of conditions in hostels and squatter settlements.[598]

In March 1993, the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) was established. The LGNF was heralded as a "clear victory" for SANCO.[599] This forum was comprised of an equal number of representations from the statutory and non-statutory bodies. The statutory component was made up of the existing local government representatives, whereas the non-statutory side headed by SANCO included the ANC, SACP and COSATU – organisations that broadly formed part of the national liberation movement. The LGNF is widely praised for setting local government specific legislation for the national Multi-Party Negotiating Process and leading to the promulgation of the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) in 1993. Thus, the LGNF's contribution to the transition was mainly to ameliorate the scant attention paid to local government issues in the national negotiations.[600]

The LGTA spelt out the phases through which the South African local government system would be transformed. Phase one would be the pre-interim phase, which was the period from the promulgation of the Act until the election of the first democratic local government structures. The Act validated the argument advanced by the civics that racially based councils and authorities were illegitimate and therefore should not be given any role in determining the final outlook of the new local government system.[601] During this pre-interim phase, the LGTA gave local negotiating forums three choices in terms of constituting interim structures. The first option was the appointment of a Transitional Local Council which would constitute equal

[597] Mayekiso, M, *Township Politics: Civic Struggles for a New South Africa*, Monthly Review Press, 1996.

[598] Coovodia, "The Role of the Civic Movement", p.337.

[599] Murray, *The Revolution Deferred*, p.174.

[600] *Local Government Transition Act*, Act No 209 of 1993.

[601] Lanegran, "Civic Associations in Transitional Local Government Structures in South Africa", p.122.

representatives from the statutory delegation of the forum with one half that would be made up of existing local government representatives, and the other half would be made up of non-statutory side. This would equitably represent all sectors of the community that did not in the past participate in local electoral processes. As a result, the TLCs took over local government functions.

The second choice was the Transitional Metropolitan Councils that would add an extra tier of governance on top of substructures like the TLCs. The third option was the Transitional Coordinating Committees in which racially based local authorities would institutionalise their cooperation. Many civics across the country favoured the TLC model, especially in smaller areas and opted for the TMCs in large cities. All these transitional structures had a mandate to govern their areas during the pre-interim phase and set conditions for the democratic elections in their areas by November 1995.[602]

The second or interim phase in the transformation of the local government system would be the period from the first local government elections until the local government elections under the final Constitution. The last phase in this process would commence immediately after the first elections under the new constitution and is understood to have reached its finality with the local government elections of the year 2000, which were the first non-racial elections at local government level.[603]

As per the Act, TLCs were expected to perform the following tasks, amongst others:

- To resume services immediately, improve, and upgrade services in black townships'/historically disadvantaged areas.
- To determine interim tariffs in cases where services were not satisfactory until service standards were fulfilled.
- To utilise all resources efficiently and equitably stressing the "one council one tax base" principle.
- Also improve the payment of service charges by residents through upgrading of records, regular accounting to residents, making available effective offices for payment, issuing of receipts, institute equitable and fair default procedures.
- TLCs could, subject to provincial approval, write off some debts.[604]

[602] Cloete, "Local Government Restructuring", p.61.

[603] *Ibid*.

[604] *Ibid*, p.62.

Furthermore, TLCs also stressed cost recovery as an important aspect attached to service delivery. This was so even though sensitivity to poverty and unemployment was stressed.

The stipulations of the LGTA on the constitution of TLCs proved very controversial. The ambiguous definition of the two components expected to form part of the TLC occasioned some misgivings, especially from the civics and other ANC aligned groups' movements. In some instances, civics and local anti-apartheid structures complained that some Nationalist Party oriented organisations were incorrectly given space in the local negotiation forums. The ANC lamented that the statutory side was making attempts to dilute the negotiations by loading the non-statutory component with rate-payers associations that were not historically linked to the anti-apartheid movement. Thus, complaints of exclusion from various organisations were common.[605]

Bekker et al[606] argue the LGTA as a piece of legislation was ambiguous and open to competing interpretations. For instance, in Somerset West in the Western Cape, the provincial government was called in to resolve the impasse resulting from the composition of the TLC. The main contest revolved around the designation of a number of Coloured rate-payers associations. The white local council argued that these associations should form part of the non-statutory delegations because Somerset West did not have a history of a Coloured Management Committee. Hence, it could not be argued that these organisations were part of the apartheid local government administration. However, the ANC charged that these rate-payers associations enjoyed active links and proximity to the white local authority and had never actively supported the anti-apartheid movement. This, according to the ANC, made them unsuitable to occupy TLC seats as part of the non-statutory delegation. The debate was resolved by the provincial government which unilaterally amended the non-statutory delegations and increased the size of the council from 12 to 18.[607]

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[605] Bekker, S *et al*, "Local Government Transition in Five Eastern seaboard Towns", *Politikon*, Vol. 24, No. 1, June 1997.

[606] *Ibid*, p.38-56.

[607] *Ibid*, p.49.

Moreover, although civics scored noteworthy victories in these negotiations, they could not implement some of the agreements struck at the negotiation table. In the case of Alexandra, it was particularly difficult for the Alexandra Civic Organisation to convince residents to pay rents as a sign of commitment and goodwill towards the endeavours to construct a new model of post-apartheid local government.[608] Rent collection proved almost impossible in the case of unregistered squatters. Additionally, residents objected to paying rents on the basis of the lamentable services and conditions of living in the township.[609] In some cases, residents alleged that local negotiating forums were estranged from the residents and their aspirations were also common.[610]

The Launch of the Phomolong Civic Association and the ANC

The year of 1989 saw the revival of civic associations across many townships in the country. This was after years of dormancy owing to the State of Emergency, which was imposed from June 1986. Demonstrating the extent of the state's hardened attitude against civics is the fact that between 1986 and 1988, scores of civic activists were charged with various offences including treason, subversion and sedition. Although producing uneven results across different areas, the repression that followed the institution of the state of emergency undoubtedly crippled levels of organisation in the townships. The impact of detention and charging of civic activists on the life and vibrancy of the civic movement was great and often led these movements to inactivity.[611]

Unorganised metropolitan and homeland areas that did not previously have civics also saw new establishment of these organisations.[612] During this time, civic organisations preoccupied themselves with rallying communities around the squalid conditions in the townships and utilised this as a platform from which to increase pressure on the

[608] Bonner and Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History*, p.342.

[609] *Ibid*.

[610] Lanegran, "Civic Associations in Transitional Local Government Structures in South Africa", p.126.

[611] Seekings , J, Civic Organisations in South African Townships in Moss, G. & Obery, I. (eds.) in *South African Review 6: From 'Red Friday' to CODESA.* Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1992, p.222

[612] *Ibid*.

state and clear the ground for a transfer of power from the white minority to the black majority.[613] Although different trends were exhibited across various townships, the revival and establishment of new civic organisations was a nationwide phenomenon. By 1990, 2,000 civics were in operation across South African townships.[614] Seekings argues that the re-emergence of the civics gathered momentum from the mass defiance campaign initiated in August 1989 as well as the unbanning of political organisations and the release of key political prisoners in February 1990. The revival of the civic movement also coincided with the intensification of mass resistance through the rent and consumer boycott campaigns.

As an example of this intensity, in 1990, rent and consumer boycotts were in place in approximately 49 out of 82 townships in the Transvaal.[615] The civic movement's revival exerted considerable pressure on the apartheid local government system. As a result, by November 1990, 45% of black local authorities' seats in the Orange Free State, 37% in the Cape and 21% in Natal were vacant as councillors buckled under the pressure of mass opposition to their rule.[616] The resurgence of the civic movement paved the way for broad negotiations between the state and the civic movement on local government transformation.

In a move that reflected the general trend during this period, the Phomolong Civic Association (PCA) was launched in 1989. Until this point, Phomolong did not have a history of civic organising. A medley of individuals formed part of the PCA's leadership. Thabo Sethunya, who was by this time a very prominent figure within Phomolong politics, became the PCA's Organiser. Other leaders included Botuki Mathibe who became the chairperson and Jackie Khonziwe as secretary. The PCA drew in a few businessmen in the area. Tuck-shop owners such as Mr Motata and Mr Tshabangu were also part of its leadership. The decision to involve these business people was motivated by the need to galvanise the support of the adult population. Added to this was the notion that these "were influential people" who had some

[613] Murray, *The Revolution Deferred*, p.167.

[614]Seekings , "Civic Organisations in South African Townships", p.222

[615]*Ibid*.

[616] Murray, *The Revolution Deferred*, p.172.

stature in the community.[617] The rationale was that in order to establish support for the civic amongst older residents and thus secure greater impact for campaigns against the BLAs, a change of tactics was necessary. Recruiting people who were previously identified as prime "targets" of PYCO's campaign against "the system" was part of this change in tactics.

The belated establishment of a civic organisation is not a factor peculiar to Phomolong. As Moloi shows, for a variety of reasons, including the popularity of councillors, the latter's cordial relations with elders and homeowners as well as the absence of deep-seated grievances on issues related to collective consumption; the Maokeng Civic Organisation was only launched in 1990. This coincided with the re-establishment of the ANC in the area.[618] However, it must be noted that the absence of a civic organisation in Phomolong does not necessarily mean that there was no political mobilisation around issues that are considered the traditional domain of civic organisations. PYCO did, with limited successes and only scant support from older residents, spearhead political mobilisation on rents and service charges, evictions and the bucket system in the area.

The launch of the PCA was heralded as a major breakthrough in terms of advancing issues affecting the community. Upon inception, the PCA quickly occupied the space for mobilisation around local grievances in Phomolong. The PCA revitalised and continued the rent boycott campaign, which was initiated by PYCO in 1987.[619] It also immediately assumed centre-stage on issues such as rents, evictions, the bucket system and racism in the white town of Hennenman.[620] The civic also led the rent boycott campaign whose main demand was for a R10 flat rate for rents and service charges. What fuelled this demand and gave impetus to the rent boycott was the residents' allegation that the Phomolong Council was corrupt. This allegation was fuelled by the arrest of a council official on a charge of misappropriation of funds.

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[617] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[618] Moloi, "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles, 1976 – 1995, p.452-453.

[619] Residents appear in court for rent boycott, Wits Historical Papers, *AD 1912 (40.15) SAIRR Press Cuttings, Boycotts: Rents and Consumer*.

[620] *Ibid*.

Therefore, the rent boycott was seen as a way of exerting pressure on the Orange Free State Provincial Administration to audit the Phomolong Council financial records.[621]

Lodge advances the argument that rent boycotts were often more successful than other campaigns that communities embarked upon, because the comrades protected the boycotters who were threatened with evictions by the councils.[622] Arguably and more importantly was the fact that many households simply could not afford rents. In this regard, there was often little persuasion needed for participation in rent boycotts. In Phomolong, although the rent boycott had overwhelming support, some residents, fearing the might of the state, defied the boycott by paying their rent accounts in town, out of sight of the comrades in the township. The threat of violence against those that violated the boycott was also a key tactic in securing compliance. As one of the PYCO activist's note:

> If you chose to pay, we would burn your house. The payment office was here in the township. We would go to those that used to collect rents and threaten them about accepting rent money. We told them to turn people back. There were others who were well off and would pay in town. Others were probably loyal and satisfied about the services they received. But the services were not fine.[623]

In addition, the rent boycott intensified due to the state's obduracy towards rent defaulters. The rent boycott in Phomolong was a highly successful campaign as was evidenced by the fact that in 1991, approximately one thousand Phomolong residents appeared in the Hennenman court on the charge of rent defaulting.[624] Eight hundred of these residents were fined twenty rands (R20) each as an admission of guilt fine. The penalty imposed on the civic leadership was harsher. One of the executive members of the PCA, Theo Masemola, was given a R600 fine for the same action. Residents were also made to sign an agreement committing to settle their debts. Instead of conforming to the stipulated terms of payments, residents opted to continue with the rent boycott.

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[621] *Ibid*.

[622] Lodge, *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*, p.71.

[623] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[624] Residents appear in court for rent boycott, Wits Historical Papers, *AD 1912 (40.15) SAIRR Press Cuttings, Boycotts: Rents and Consumer*.

As part of the rent boycott, the civic also called on the Phomolong Town Council to cease the issuing of threatening rent summonses to residents.[625] In response to the rent boycott, the council evicted some residents from their homes and instituted water cut-offs, a move that only facilitated greater unity against councillors. The Phomolong Town Council believed its actions towards defaulters were justified. As one councillor explains:

> They [the civic] were encouraging people not to pay rents. We had problems because we fell short of the budget, as people were encouraged not to pay. We had to cut water but we would have a time schedule for cutting water. Say in such an hour till this time there will be no water.[626]

By early 1990, the Black Local Authority in Phomolong had virtually collapsed. Its collapse was triggered by the resignation of Councillor Benjamin Litabe who was also a teacher in Bahale. Despite his problematic role in the BLAs, Litabe enjoyed the respect of young activists and the residents in the area. His resignation in 1990 spelt the demise of the Phomolong BLAs as activists in Phomolong considered him a "buffer" between the residents and the illegitimate local government system. Litabe announced his resignation at a march led by PYCO and the PCA. PYCO chairperson Thabo Sethunya remarked that Litabe's resignation:

> [He] paralysed the council. It could not function anymore, it collapsed. When he resigned everyone clapped hands. He climbed on top of the dustbin with the police far away from him and he resigned. Others left [or] simply became inactive from council activities.[627]

He continues to explain that although he was part of the BLAs, Litabe was revered among young activists:

> As we fought, we still respected him as a teacher. We respected him as he taught us in primary school. When we protested against councillors he was the only one who resigned and from that day on we welcomed him into our fold.[628]

The collapse of the BLAs was a victory for the local movement in Phomolong. The unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners in 1990 gave

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[625] *Ibid*.

[626] Inte Interview with Benjamin Litabe, Phomolong, 24 July 2009.

[627] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[628] *Ibid*.

impetus to a move to launch the ANC in Phomolong. The local ANC branch was launched in September 1990 with the assistance of Aubrey Mokoena from the Release Mandela Campaign. Once again, Thabo Sethunya assumed a leadership role in the ANC as its Chairperson. The names that also featured in the leadership included Theo Masemola as secretary, Lekoko Mophosho who became the deputy chairperson, Panny Ntwagae as treasurer and "Muthi" Musutu as an additional member. Two members of the executive – Mophosho and Ntwagae – were unionists from the Food and Beverage Workers' Union who worked at Bremmer Milling.

Another figure that formed part of the ANC executive was Ntate Daniel Makgongoane. He was a Phomolong resident who had spent most of his life in the Vaal as a labourer. The fact that he had links to the Vaal made him politically appealing for youths like Sethunya, who drew links between the former and the militancy that defined the Vaal in the 1980s. But more than this, Makgongoane won the hearts and minds of the youth because "he was an elder who was interested in ANC politics. He was brave."[629] Thus, Makgongoane's inclusion in the ANC leadership would bring "credibility" into the organisation and "assist it to appeal to older residents" who were still uneasy with participation in ANC activities. The old community hall that hosts about 500 people was the venue for the launch. The launch of the ANC was seen as the culmination of "fully-fledged politics" in Phomolong.[630] PYCO was also converted into the ANCYL in the area. The leadership of the ANCYL was made up of Sello Sefuthi as the chairperson, Baby Ramabodu as the secretary. Ntebaleng Motjale, Sana Mabane and Banks Tshabangu also featured in the executive of the ANCYL.

Constituting the TLC: "An Indictment to our Generation"

The establishment of the ANC in Phomolong gave rise to divisions in the pre-existing local movement and a sense of exclusion and marginalisation in some quarters. The fissures occasioned by the launch of the ANC were particularly evident with the constitution of the TLC. The constitution of the Hennenman TLC, especially the

[629] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[630] *Ibid*.

representation of the Phomolong community in this council gave rise to several problems. Given that the legislation in the form of the LGTA required the non-statutory membership of the TLC to be constituted of a variety of political groupings that had previously not formed part of the local government system, the ANC branch leadership adopted a strategy that was to become highly controversial and contested.

The main problem was that there was a sentiment among some PYCO activists that the ANC leadership marginalised those that felt that they were the bedrock of youth political activism in the area. According to this perception, the ANC leadership had failed to take young activists from PYCO and imbue a sense of confidence about the challenges that plagued the negotiation process. Tshabangu and other young activists accused the ANC leadership, especially the chairperson Thabo Sethunya, of sidelining comrades who were active in PYCO in favour of people whose history in the anti-apartheid struggle in Phomolong and the Free State was questionable.

The ANC made an undertaking to involve as many formations in the TLC as possible in order to meet the LGTA requirements regarding the constitution of the non-statutory body. As a result, a number of people were fielded to become councillors in the TLC without necessarily having a strong background in the anti-apartheid structures in Phomolong, specifically in PYCO. Another approach was to include comrades within PYCO/ANCYL under the pretext that they were from different organisations such as Dikwankwetla[631] and the PAC, even though the former organisation had no traceable history in Phomolong.

The rationale behind this strategy was that Phomolong did not have an abundance of community organisations and this placed the ANC at odds with the LGTA requirements for broad representation of community formations to form part of the non-statutory side. As one of the TLC members expressly put it:

> [T]he negotiations were across. It was not representing the entire community because it was between Dikwankwetla and many other organisations. So we said we must just negotiate because ... it (the TLC) was not popular, it was not popular ... [T]he main strategy was to use all structures I think because for our representation and negotiations, negotiating for which organization were

[631] Dikwankwetla Party was founded in 1975 by Kenneth Mopeli and ruled over the Qwaqwa Bantustan from 1975-1994. It had pockets of support in other parts of the Free State. The organisation had no history of existence in Phomolong.

> you from. Most of us were coming from the ANC, like people like Musutu he was from Dikwankwetla. There was no Dikwankwetla, it was just strategic planning.[632]

This experience plagued local negotiations process across the country. There was a sense amongst some comrades that the strategy was not well communicated and that the ANC leadership dealt with the constitution of the TLC in a clandestine manner. As Banks Tshabangu argues:

> We understand it was a strategy, in the absence of many community structures. So it was merely a tactic to get more people in the council. It was not really Dikwankwetla, comrades just stole the name. So as a way of getting as much representation they then decided that some comrades would be Dikwankwetla. So when we got the list, we were not informed that it was a tactic. We thought "Muthi" was a Dikwankwetla. Because they did not involve us we called a community meeting saying that comrades are in alliance with Dikwankwetla and raised questions about how this structure was constituted.[633]

It must be noted Tshabangu's justification for opposing the TLC on the basis that alliances were formed with "counter-revolutionary" political formations lacks substance. "Muthi" Musutu, who was fielded as a candidate from Dikwankwetla, was a well-known figure in the politics of the area. He had been a prominent leader of COSAS and a staunch PYCO activist. In Bahale, the same school that Tshabangu attended, Musutu was part of the leadership that led various campaigns aimed at undermining the apartheid education system. Quite clearly, the short sightedness and the haste with which the TLC was constituted and the absence of mass consultation exposed this process to opposition and opportunism.

Tshidiso Mokati, who was one of the prominent members of PYCO, argues that the constitution of the TLC led to serious problems in Phomolong as comrades compromised some of the principles of the struggle. He makes an observation that the appointment of the TLC caused serious divisions among the residents of the township and the founding generation of PYCO. The accusation levelled against Thabo Sethunya and others was that they "became councillors and their focus shifted as they

[632] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

[633] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

were now benefiting to such an extent that we could not measure the extent of our struggle."[634]

The exclusion of some of the influential comrades from PYCO deepened sentiments of marginalisation. There emerged a sentiment that the leadership of the ANC had compromised comrades who were "produced in the difficulties" of the struggle against apartheid, in favour of individuals whose political colours were not visible during the same period. The most controversial figure in the TLC was Jackie Khonziwe who had also recently become the civic secretary. There were allegations that Khonziwe was part of the Eagles Club and had little experience in the structures of the local political movement in Phomolong. Khonziwe's ascendance into the TLC was seen as a direct blow to some of the promising youth activists who were bred by PYCO. Banks Tshabangu held strong sentiments that comrades such as Theo Masemola – a PYCO activist – were more suited for the TLC than Khonziwe.

> [Masemola] was from their generation [founding PYCO generation] but was bitter because he was not included. It was going to be better if they took him instead of Khonziwe because he had sound struggle credentials than Khonziwe. He had his shortcomings but we felt that it wasn't right for somebody coming from elsewhere with a cloud on top of his head, that we don't trust him … belonging to an organisation which was centrally and vehemently opposed to our agenda! Three years down the line he is the man who must lead us!
>
> I still believe even today that that was some of the tactical blunders that the leadership made at that time to allow him to lead when he was fresh from the ranks of a counter-revolutionary structure.[635]

Tshabangu argued that Khonziwe's appointment to the TLC and his election to the leadership structures of the ANC and the civic did not make "generational sense". By this he meant that tenure and experience of different comrades in terms of their participation and leadership of the struggle against apartheid should determine leadership and prominence in the structures of the movement. He explains his position in this way:

> I don't want to prescribe for democracy but even in the ANC we were taught about generational questions. That one generation of leadership breeds another…

[634] Interview with Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[635] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

> I did not have a problem with him being a member of the ANC but I had a specific problem during the difficulties and challenges we had at that time I always had he was not the right person to lead us at that time. I did not want to lead but I was saying there are individuals that should lead before this comrade can lead…
>
> Even now I still say that there are people who can't lead before certain individuals take the reigns of leadership.[636]

Arguably, these contestations suggest that the history of the Eagles Club was easily used to measure the "struggle credentials" of comrades in Phomolong. This was the case despite the fact that there was no compelling evidence pointing to the fact that those accused of participating in the Eagles Club did indeed do so. Importantly however, the contestations also reveal the extent to which the demise of apartheid also bred certain hopes among activists about their prospective roles in the democratic state.

These types of differences on the constitution of transitional structures as well as the leadership of the ANC itself were a factor elsewhere in the country. Moloi's study of Maokeng argues that the elevation of individuals associated with apartheid era local government into positions of leadership in the ANC or in the transitional local state structures caused discord and divisions. In different areas, the rationale for the inclusion of such "questionable" individuals was different. One of the possible reasons that Moloi enlists to explain this move is that in Maokeng, the ANC recruited former apartheid councillors such as Caswell Koekoe in order to establish a bigger footprint of membership in the area. His inclusion was an attractive option because unlike in many other townships in the country, councillors in the area, based on their "record" of service, enjoyed relative legitimacy, especially among the older residents and homeowners. Moloi also adds that it is possible that the ANC reasoned reconciliation would also mean integrating people previously considered enemies of the people into the ANC.[637]

[636]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[637] Moloi, "Black Politics in Kroonstad: Political Mobilisation, Protests, Local Government, and Generational Struggles, 1976 – 1995", p.432.

Cut from the same cloth as the old apartheid councils?

The internal politics of the local movement and the discord around the constitution of the TLC was only a partial reason why the TLC faced a groundswell of opposition from the residents. Another critical point of contention was the fact that, despite cultivating hopes that South Africa was moving in a different direction and that seeds for a rupture with apartheid local government system were now germinating, a radical change in the socio-economic conditions of ordinary people was not forthcoming. New councillors from Phomolong came under fire on two major fronts. Firstly, even at a superficial level, the faces of the local government in this area remained unchanged. Despite the appointment of a few black councillors into the TLC, the apex of the council remained white. This was clearly marked by the fact that the mayor was a white councillor from Hennenman – Calitz. What was especially difficult to accept was that comrades in the TLC had actively contributed to this reality. Tactically speaking, the ANC comrades in the TLC reasoned that it was best to vote for a white councillor from the Nationalist Party as part of the concessions that had to be made in order to secure certain victories. The rationale behind voting for a Nationalist Party mayor was also that this would make things easier in the council and that the NP would be more receptive to the demands tabled by the non-statutory side of the TLC. As a supportive voice for this stance, Thabo Sethunya argues that this was a reasonable decision and that the residents' rejection of the decision was due to their political backwardness more than anything.

> People from Phomolong they came very late in politics. They were not racial, racially aware ... I thought they were fools and I went to nominate another White person and they said I'm joining [the] National Party because the thing is, he was reasonable. He was not difficult ... he was flexible; those are some of the people who assisted us to be successful in ... equal representation.
>
> We said no, it should be strategy meaning we will give them, we give and they will give us something, give and take. So, but the feeling was I should be the mayor. I didn't want to be a mayor, I became a chairperson in management committee ... because I know that the community, I mean with challenges, I felt that it's too early to be mayor and people will be saying who elected me because TLCs were appointed.[638]

The charge that the canvas of the "new" administration had not changed fed perceptions that "the TLC was more or less the same as those old councils of the

[638] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

apartheid period."[639] From this perspective, the election of a Nationalist Party linked white mayor signalled a major compromise on one of the key pillars of the struggle, which was majority rule. According to Tshabangu, the transition had bred hope of a complete break with the past form of local government. As such, there was an expectation that "because we were moving from an apartheid run council, we wanted the TLC completely and immediately … [to] represent a changed picture."[640] He further argues that this reality effectively meant that critical principles of the struggle against apartheid were compromised. Tshabangu explains his argument in this manner:

> They went to the Council and they elected a white man to be a mayor. They said it was a tactic and we said there are certain fundamental principles around which you cannot be compromise[d]. That's what also guided us in CODESA multiparty talks. That there are these central pillars of the struggle which we cannot compromise. Now you can't come with a Council that is supposed to prepare for the first democratic local government elections at its helm being a white mayor from the Nationalist Party.[641]

Tshabangu continues:

> They did not change anything because what we knew they would not change immediately was that a town clerk of the municipality would remain a white person until we have completely taken power. Now you can't have both administrations being run by a white town clerk and remain with the political leadership unchanged in the hands of whites.[642]

The second problem that the TLC faced was that the ANC and the PCA made little progress in advancing residents' demands on rents and service charges. Although there was a cancellation of debt accumulated by residents from years of boycott, the residents' demand for a R10 flat rate was emphatically rejected in the TLC. Therefore, while Phomolong shared the jubilation of many other townships elsewhere in the country around the writing off of municipal debts, the euphoria was short-lived. The flat rate had been one of the mobilising pillars in Phomolong, particularly in the latter years of the anti-apartheid struggle. Comrades in the local state acted contrary to the desires of the residents, as they now had to justify the stance of the local state on

[639] Interview with Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[640] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[641] *Ibid.*

[642] *Ibid*.

the flat rate. In explaining their failure to advance the case for a R10 flat rate, ANC/PCA linked councillors argued that residents could not expect the provision of services and the improvement of township infrastructure without making the adequate monetary contributions to this effect. They also maintained that the nature of the transitional government at local level precluded radical changes. Councillors from Phomolong maintained that their task was simply to pave the way for democratic elections. Thabo Sethunya explains:

> We couldn't change anything but to pave the way for the democratic elections. It was a give and take situation where we had to encourage people to pay R30. The pressure group manipulated this and said that people are unemployed and demanded R10. Whites felt that R30 was too little for services, water and refuse collection. It was difficult. We were defending flat rate and on the other side people were complaining about the lack of services the pressure groups said that we were not democratically elected and that we are self-appointed leaders.[643]

Having conceded inability to advance the demand for a R10 flat rate, Phomolong comrades in the TLC resorted to appeal to the residents' conscience, educated them about their responsibilities as citizens and persuaded them to abandon the rent boycott. With the imminence of the first democratic elections, TLC comrades believed residents had to adopt a new attitude towards the local state:

> We prepared for the government while it's still coming because when we were saying people shouldn't pay rent before in that government, we were saying they shouldn't pay so that we must cripple that government. So, because it is our government that is coming, we must make people to be ready. They must know that they must pay for services rendered and all those things.[644]

Lempe adds that this campaign was well conceptualised in order not to confuse residents and also mark a break with the past government. This meant that residents had to be fully conversant with the workings of local government by ensuring that it is transparent and accountable.

> We were calling communities explaining to them, teaching them what is a budget, telling them, calling them to the hall there, that what is a budget, how will their money work and all those things.

[643] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[644] Interview with Kingsley Lempe, Phomolong, 18 September 2009.

As part of this approach, the council issued municipal account letters requesting residents to arrange for the settlement of their arrears:

> So, we said they must make friendly letters to the community. Each and every community member must get that thing. They must ask the community to pay for services, write to the person that you owe this much. You must come and pay a little bit as it has been agreed that you will pay for this much and then they must write at the bottom what the money is used for. They must know what it's used for so, then these white people instructed a lawyer ... that they should summon members of the community.[645]

According to this approach, residents were to be gradually persuaded to abandon the "culture of non-payment" and be taught about the importance of paying rents. But this could not happen. Sethunya argues that part of the difficulty was that the TLC was an appointed structure and did not enjoy mass confidence in Phomolong: "we were moving from a culture of non-payment, we had no authority to tell people to pay services because we were not elected by the people."[646]

Aside from pressure exerted by groupings and formations such as the Delta Force (named after a popular 1986 film starring Chuck Norris and based on a US military operations unit) and the SACP, activists in the TLC also had their own internal problems. Their inexperience with local government administration complicated matters for the ANC inside the TLC. Most of these activists were young, in their early 20s, with no previous experience with local government. This shortcoming is captured aptly by Musutu's explanation: "we were not knowledgeable; I was young, about 22 and didn't know how to run the administration of the council ... [W]e didn't have that knowledge."[647] Other comrades in the TLC shared this frustration with a lack of experience with governance. Sethunya recollects the experience in this way:

> The day to day running of the Council was a new experience. It was frustrating, very tough. We had no experience, nothing! We used to be in the TLC with white professors, who knew how the administration worked. We only had our activism and experience in the movement. Municipal administration was tough. Sometimes we would flex our political muscles, but it was tough.[648]

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[645] *Ibid*.

[646] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[647] Interview Muthimkhulu "Muthi" Musutu, Phomolong, 17 September 2009.

[648] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

Further complicating the situation was the "ill-discipline"[649] of comrades in the TLC, who chose to "get drunk" instead of performing their roles in the structure.[650] The attendance of TLC meetings by comrades from the non-statutory side was erratic, at times with only Sethunya, Khonziwe and Steve Kamlan honouring them. According to Sethunya, Kgaki Matshai, Kingsley Lempe, "Muthi" Musutu and Langa Phoofolo were particularly guilty of this offence. Under these circumstances, the ANC was always in numerical minority and could not make major strides in the council, particularly on contentious issues relating to the payment of rents and service charges. This was an exasperating experience for Sethunya:

> Other comrades would not attend. They would be paid and go drinking, having a nice time. So this would frustrate us, especially Khonziwe and me. We would caucus positions with comrades but they would not arrive. Comrades attended meetings on rare occasions.[651]

"We are going to take over" – The TLC faces a challenge

In light of these developments, the TLC soon faced opposition to its approach from young activists and earned their wrath. When residents received summonses from the council, it was easy for young activists like Tshabangu to argue that the TLC was no different from the BLAs. Tshabangu began leading an attack on the TLC, charging that comrades had turned their backs on the ethos of the liberation struggle and were instead advancing their own careers. The fact that TLCs were appointed bodies, gave Tshabangu's argument some credence in the eyes of his supporters. As Tshidiso Mokati puts it:

> [D]uring the white councils of apartheid, people were served with rent summonses and would be taken to the lawyers. We would be against these things and would fight them (the BLAs) but the very same people that were amongst (sic) our midst, when they became councillors they began advancing the agenda of the whites to give our people summonses. Once they were in the council and sat on the same table as whites they started agreeing with them to do such things, they couldn't disagree. These things caused divisions and almost crippled our struggle.[652]

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[649] *Ibid*.

[650] *Ibid*.

[651] *Ibid*.

[652] Interview with Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

Mokati's assertion above also enjoyed support in some quarters, with some members of the ANCYL becoming increasingly embattled with the manner in which the TLC was operating.

> [W]e were coming from an era of militancy that there are fundamentals that cannot be compromised. They were saying that we have erased the debt; we said that's fine because that was one of the central demands at that time. But they also said we don't accept flat rate. We said we can't accept that. We say flat rate and they then gave us an interpretation of the law. We said that is an apartheid law, we can't listen to that law, we want flat rate![653]

Tshabangu suggests that the conduct of the comrades in the TLC became at variance with the expectations of the community.

> I understand that they were councillors now earning salaries in the official state council and had to show that they have a code of conduct and they can't speak like comrades. But that's not how we saw them. We saw them as liberation fighters; leaders who must just represent us and bring back a report that says we have advanced what you mandated us to do. Don't come with a report with a white flavour.[654]

Arguably, the decision to reject the flat rate heightened concerns about the composition and the politics of the TLC. This was the beginning of serious divisions within the ANC aligned structures in Phomolong. Tshabangu and others from the same generation reasoned that the only way out of this impasse was to force councillors, who were also ANC members to resign and make space for a new crop of leaders to take over the transitional administration. To do this, the support of the residents was necessary and the uncompromising approach of the council in levying debt aided this objective as residents became convinced that the TLC could never serve their interests. With this backdrop as an advantage, a section of the youth in Phomolong started contesting the legitimacy of the TLC and resolved to bring it to its knees.

> I think that's one of the things that created problems. Until we resolved that we are going to take over. These old brothers they are not doing right – we are just going to fight and take over from them! I think that was a significant turning point in the unity of the structures of ANC in Hennenman.[655]

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[653]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[654] *Ibid*.

[655]*Ibid*.

Banks Tshabangu, who was by this time highly influential in the ANCYL as a part of its leadership, led a group which called itself the Delta Force. This group worked tirelessly in leading an offensive against the TLC. According to Tshabangu, the Delta Force opted to operate outside the ANCYL in order to avoid being reigned in to toe the line by the ANC. Sethunya attests to this and argues that although the Delta Force was made up predominantly of young people who were also members of the ANCYL, they had to mobilise using the name Delta Force as they did not succeed in turning the ANCYL against its "mother-body".[656]

> They couldn't mobilise the youth league because there was political education in the ANCYL conducted by the ANC, the mother-body. The Delta Force had no space in the youth league because we worked hand in glove with the ANCYL. The ANC was also young and the executive were also members of the ANCYL.[657]

The Chairperson of the ANCYL, Sello Sefuthi, had serious differences with Tshabangu over the tactics used against the TLC. Tshabangu was a charismatic leader. His talents in poetry earned him many admirers within the community. Sethunya describes him as a "crowd puller" and a gifted orator. Tshabangu's charisma secured him popular appeal in the community, especially among the youth. Sefuthi describes Tshabangu's mass appeal in this way:

> Banks was a new hero now, one of those young boys. He had never gone to jail, he was known as a leader but never in jail. Well, he didn't have to go to jail. He was one of those who used to call me a coward. He wanted me to address everything and pursue a particular route. When I questioned he would say COWARD! He was a very nice poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli's style and he was getting liked by the students and community then.[658]

The Delta Force labelled the ANCYL's reluctance to mobilise against ANC comrades as cowardice. In Sefuthi's own words:

> It was tough, it was tough. It was difficult. There were clear moments when I was labelled a coward ... I said its fine I had to go to jail, I led missions for attacks … at a very young age. So I wouldn't be bothered by calls of new

[656] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[657] *Ibid*.

[658] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

> energy blackmailing us into being *ill-disciplined (sic)*. I said I'm not going to act out of fear of being named a coward.[659]

Apart from initiating the Delta Force, Tshabangu also orchestrated the launch of the SACP to increase the pressure on comrades in the TLC. Until this point, there was no record suggesting the SACP's existence in Phomolong. However, it does seem that this structure was launched with the sole mandate of rallying the community behind the demand for a flat rate on rent and service charges. As Tshabangu who also became chairperson of the SACP branch explains:

> We formed the Communist Party, then the Communist Party acted as some form of a civic structure because it wasn't talking communism, socialism. It was saying our people want to pay flat rate. So in the process people accrued new debt and the erasure of the previous debt could not mean anything because debt is debt. There is no new debt, old debt, debt is debt! So they had to go through the experience of settling the debt whilst the leadership was fighting each other. The council because it was legal it was not political anymore. They then issued people with summonses. We said bring all those summonses and we threw them at the municipal office and we burnt them.[660]

The narrative of the TLC's rise and fall seems to suggest that genuine community grievances on rents and service charges were used as artillery to advance the agenda of a particular faction within the congress movement in Phomolong and to fulfil the promise of positions in the new local state edifice. This argument has credibility given that some of the active members of COSAS and the ANCYL admit to being recruited to fight the TLC with the condition that they would receive their material benefits once the comrades occupying those seats were deposed and a different breed of comrades take over. Nyathi Madia, then a student in Bahale explains that:

> We were fighting against the TLC led by the likes of Thabo Sethunya and Kingsley Lempe ... Banks used us to lobby for him fulltime at a promise that when he becomes the mayor he will deploy the ANCYL to the municipality ... There was a promise that once he becomes the mayor of the Hennenman TLC, he would hire us. So we became active because we could see that going to school is going to waste our time because when Banks becomes the mayor he will hire us ... I remember we were mobilising that the likes of Sethunya and Kingsley Lempe must step down and finally they did step down...[661]

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[659] *Ibid*.

[660] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[661] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

Madia expatiates further and shows that the tirade against the TLC was not based on personal differences but rather on prospects of material gain:

> It was not that we didn't want them. It was the issue of positioning ourselves. School was not being attended and the problem was that chances were high that we would fail because of the prolonged school boycotts ... we had told ourselves that once they make it there, we will become deployed.[662]

Sethunya concurs with Madia's analysis of the offense against the TLC:

> They were malicious, they wanted seats so they were popularising themselves for election. They were aware that we would only be in the TLC for a year. They were able to mobilise on the flat rate and that people must not pay. They would say "where are the services?" They would say we want the people to pay so that we can get our salaries. They mobilised the youth in the main and the youth controlled the community.[663]

A few conclusions can be drawn from this account. The transition process and the construction of a new local government system was marred with complexities. Making the experience particularly disconcerting was the rapid nature of the transition itself, combined with the inexperience of comrades and the faltering of young activists' hopes of attaining material rewards through occupying the local state. These intricate dynamics did not disappear with the resignation of the comrades in the first TLC. On the contrary, the second TLC elected after the November 1995 elections was confronted with similar challenges.

The Democratic Local Government Elections – The people also "thought their problems were over."

The first democratic local government elections in Phomolong took place on the 1st November 1995, inaugurating the interim phase of the local government system as stipulated in the LGTA. Commentators characterise this as one of the most challenging phases of local government transformation in this country. Ruiters has observed that most analyses of South Africa's transition to democracy focused on national developments such as CODESA, while only scant attention was dedicated to analysing the impact of the national negotiation compromises on developments at the

[662] *Ibid*.

[663] Telephonic interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

local level. According to this perspective, the Sunset Clause compromise signed in 1992 had specific implications for local state transformation and for the struggle to infuse local government with legitimacy. There were four main local level corollaries of the concessions struck at the multi-party negotiations.[664]

Firstly, in a desperate attempt to appease the far right wing, the parties at the multi-party talks included a clause in the Interim Constitution that effectively ensured far higher voting weight for whites in the elections as 30% of local council seats were for existing white local authorities. Combined with their proportional vote, this compromise "guaranteed white *plattelanders* a disproportionate share of power in local authorities."[665] Through this agreement and as will be shown later, "established interests would enjoy far greater local influence than warranted by the numbers they represented."[666]

Secondly, with just a third of the total council seats white councillors were guaranteed a veto-power, which could be used to prevent the passing of budgets for township upgrading and so forth. Thirdly, the Sunset Clause secured white bureaucrats' jobs, and thus leaving the apartheid bureaucracy unscathed. This meant that the face of local government in the immediate post-election period remained white – with white local level bureaucrats interacting with residents from township communities regularly. The white Town Clerk remained integral to the local government picture well into the interim phase/first democratic elections. Fourthly, local government faced some intense budgeting constraints and became more amenable to using neoliberal cost-recovery principles and privatisation programmes. Therefore, it could be argued that the national negotiation compromises and the capitulation to neoliberalism foreclosed major possibilities for the transformation of the local state transformation and precluded its ability to play a redistributive role.

Another controversial issue was the absence of community participation in the selection of ANC councillors, leading in some instances to the proliferation of independent candidates. From this perspective, local government elections ensured a

[664] Ruiters, "Municipal Crisis Premonitions", p.332.

[665] Murray, *The Revolution Deferred*, p.176-177

[666] *Ibid*, p.176.

stalemate due to the relative power that white councillors still mustered. The consequence of this compromise was that it led to a fragmentation of local alliances between the ANC, civics and community residents. In addition, it also limited the possibilities for radical transformation and redistribution at a local state level. A combination of these factors exposed even the most audacious councillors to the danger of being alienated from their primary constituency in communities.[667]

These challenges also confronted the newly elected Hennenman TLC. The elections were held in November 1995 and Mojamme Mosoeu was elected as a mayor with CP de Jager as the town clerk. Mosoeu's election was controversial. Mosoeu had strong links with apartheid local government as he was a former councillor under the BLAs. But activists like Sethunya reasoned that he was a "better alternative".[668] Working with him, it was argued, would have its own benefits, as he was also a teacher who had a "good reputation" in the community.[669] This shows that appealing to older residents, who were relatively conservative, was an important consideration.

According to the ANC list process, which was led by Thabo Sethunya, Steven Ntsala had received the most votes and based on this, he was the preferred candidate to be the mayor.

> Ntsala was having more votes in the list conference. He had too many votes, but when they (comrades) went to vote there, they did not consider those votes. And as a chairperson of this list committee I had told them that a person with popular votes is Ntsala.[670]

The first council meeting after the elections was to elect the mayor but did not meet the expectations of the ANC branch. The ANC planned to make Ntsala the mayor, but because one of their candidates, Ntate Lamane, was in arrears with the Council, the ANC became short of one person to have a majority in the Council. As a result, they decided to engage one of the independent candidates, Mosoeu, to change his registration status and contest under the ANC banner. This would enable the ANC to

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[667] *Ibid*, p.333.

[668] Telephonic Interview with Thabo Sethunya, 06 February 2010.

[669] *Ibid*.

[670] Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.

have a majority of seats in the Council and place it in a better position to advance its own mayoral candidate. But once again, this turned out to be a major miscalculation. The National Party nominated, Mosoeu, an independent candidate that the ANC had just welcomed into its fold. Banks Tshabangu explains:

> The ANC raised the name of Ntsala. Ntsala came in; we had to allow him to sit down. The Nationalist Party funny enough they didn't raise a name within themselves but from our camp. They nominated *Ntate* Mosoeu. We expected him to decline so that the ANC votes don't spilt, because if he didn't then he would certainly vote for himself and we would have a tie. The Town Clerk would then have to put names in a hat and the one drawn would be the Mayor.[671]

He continues:

> So I called a caucus and told *Ntate* Mosoeu that you are aware that the ANC didn't agree on your name so you must withdraw it and everything would run as smoothly as we expected. He said no that's fine… Then we went back to the Council and I was sitting next to him. I was busy knocking his feet telling him Chief withdraw your name...[672]

Mosoeu accepted nomination and thus confirmed his availability to stand as a mayoral candidate, despite the fact that the ANC had resolved otherwise. This resulted in a tie with both parties – the ANC and the NP – getting equal votes. The Town Clerk then had to adjudicate the process by placing the two names – Ntsala and Mosoeu – into a hat and ultimately the name that emerged was that of the latter, much to the disappointment of the ANC comrades in the Council. Banks Tshabangu, who had now become the Chairperson of Executive Council (EXCO), expresses this disappointment vividly when he says:

> What it confirmed for me personally was that it was wrong for the leadership to endorse people into positions who were produced by counter revolutionary politics, because it is not in their culture to serve under the guidance and decisions of the collective. And the decisions of the collective will not favour you from time to time. Sometimes they will favour you, sometimes they will reject you totally and you will be angry but you have to continue serving under the decisions and rules of that collective.[673]

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[671] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[672] *Ibid*.

[673] *Ibid*.

Mosoeu's acceptance of the nomination for mayor translated into the ANC's preferred mayoral candidate, Stephen Ntsala, becoming the Deputy Mayor. An untenable situation confronted ANC councillors in the TLC. With the new mayor feeling alienated from the comrades, his vote in Council, according to Tshabangu, was always swayed in the direction of the Nationalist Party. Councillors from the white residential areas only needed a third to veto crucial decisions such as township upgrading and the passage of budgets that would benefit township residents. This was compounded by the fact that the new mayor always voted with the NP camp in the Council. This situation was not peculiar to Phomolong. Ruiters has written extensively on this subject and posits that white veto power was the principal local level compromise engrained in South Africa's negotiated transition. In Phomolong, this development was particularly pronounced. As Tshabangu explains:

> The faces of the council were a mayor whom we brought into our fold and he betrayed us. The other face was a white Marius [JJ] Calitz our people did not even want to see him! He (Calitz) was seen as an absolute opponent of the interests of our people at that time.
>
> So there was that struggle at that time that people were placed in the hands of people who were not produced by the best of the difficulties of that time in Phomolong.[674]

In light of this reality, a group of young activists made it their "agenda" to remove Mosoeu from his position as mayor. Tshabangu was the principal advocate of this strategy. According to his explanation, the plan was to get enough council members to lose confidence in Mosoeu such that he does not stand a chance when the time for electing a new mayor approached. Mayors were elected on an annual basis during this time. Nyathi Madia, one of Tshabangu's closest allies during this time explains the strategy lucidly:

> Banks mobilised the community against one man and removed him as the Mayor. Banks became the mayor and when we asked why is he (Mosoeu) being removed he responded by saying that he is a member of a white teachers union instead of joining SADTU, so he is confusing the community. He would also de-campaign others saying that they sleep in meetings. This ensured that everyone looks bad in the eyes of the community and he is the only one who can shine.[675]

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[674] *Ibid*.

[675] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

Tshabangu justifies his actions as emanating from a collective decision taken by the youth.

> We agreed that this man is not one of us. So in our secret core of youth I was instructed to unsettle. I did not think that it was personal but understood it within the context of correcting our mistakes. I was sent there.
>
> I had a core in the politics of the youth and in COSAS. So my task was to make sure that come time for re-election in October, he becomes rejected by the people. He was unsettled finally in October 1996 and I was elected the new mayor.[676]

The council's challenges, contrary to expectations, were not ameliorated when Tshabangu became the mayor. On the contrary, as the next section shows, the apprehensions of the Phomolong community increased, with a serious possibility of the democratic local state falling out of favour with the community. In Tshabangu's own words: "In a new democratically elected council we had no control and the people's expectations were high. They thought their problems were over."[677]

Heightened Demands for Collective Consumption

Although Tshabangu led a successful offensive against the first TLC, partly for the reason that it failed to sever its umbilical cord from the old system of local government and lead a genuine transformation process, his administration also began to face a significant challenge on similar grounds. The adoption of budgets in the council, especially pertaining to spending on township upgrading and development was often protracted as white councillors still had considerable powers in the TLC, needing only a third of the council votes to block budget related decisions. Although largely insensitive to his predecessors on this obstacle, Tshabangu now began to understand the real implications of this veto power:

> [A]t that time given the nature of the law, you had to negotiate issues. You could not just place everything to a vote … On key strategic issues such as budget and the service charges and rates we needed a two-thirds majority. This means that one white person would have to vote with us. It was not going to happen as whites voted as a block. The budget would take a long time before it was adopted until we gave in on some of their demands.[678]

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[676] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[677] *Ibid*.

[678] *Ibid*.

To manage this situation, Phomolong representatives had to make some concessions on issues affecting the largely white town of Hennenman:

> So we had to make concessions and say that in the budget R450, 000 would be allocated to renovating street so and so in town. Our people would once again fight against us and say we are still continuing with the trajectory of serving white interests. So people were regrouping against us without looking critically at the context and nature of the law and context within which we were elected without a decisive majority. We couldn't make some decisions without the NP's consensus in some areas.[679]

Under these conditions, black residents had many reasons to believe that the pace of change under a democratic South Africa was less than satisfactory. Phomolong was not the exception in terms of these sentiments. Nationwide, impatience with the pace of change became pronounced. This impatience was often demonstrated through the rent boycotts that were so relevant in the 1980s and remained intact well into the mid-1990s. The *Masakhane* appeal to township residents to break the "culture of non-payment" fell on deaf ears as poverty and unemployment soared. The calls for township residents to pay rents and service charges competed with rising poverty and unemployment, with many township residents surviving on less than R1, 000 per month.[680]

But there were also other reasons why residents could not pay rents. The first reason was that historically, the organisation of the apartheid economy forced black townships to subsidise white residents' rates as black residents worked and bought their goods in white towns. Additionally, white businesses and firms supplemented residential rates by paying rates to white town councils, whereas black townships only depended on municipal beer halls for rates. This injustice became the basis for the rent and consumer boycotts but also motivated the call for unitary cities with a single tax base. In the democratic period, most municipalities did not address this injustice by introducing progressive tariffs that would allow redistribution from white to black areas.[681]

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[679] *Ibid*.

[680] Ruiters, "Municipal Crisis Premonitions", p.336-337.

[681] *Ibid*, p.336.

Secondly, it became increasingly clear that township residents were paying much higher electricity costs than white areas based on the fact that white residents had long ago paid capital charges or costs of installation. On the contrary, capital costs were internalised into black residents' electricity bills because services were newer and infrastructure provision was far more costly in peripheral areas of the metropolis where most black people reside. These costs increased with the installation of pre-paid electricity meters. This second factor played itself out in Phomolong in interesting ways. In 1999, the Hennenman Transitional Local Council initiated the installation of prepaid water meters. Council minutes of the year 2000 give credence to Ruiters' contention that the cost of electricity became higher for black residents than white residents in Hennenman town. Not only were residents expected to finance their electricity upfront, but there was also an expectation that the cost of the provision of such infrastructure would be recovered solely from the township residents. The council was unequivocal that "the implementation of a prepaid meter is provided for in the capital budget with the provision that the cost be recovered from the consumer."[682] According to council minutes, the total cost for the installation of prepaid electricity meters was calculated as follows: R720-00 for a single phase meter with 14% VAT; for a three phased meter residents were expected to pay R1, 650 plus 14% VAT and both the installation of single and three phased meters were accompanied by a consumption cost of 31 cents per kilowatt plus 14% VAT.[683]

The third factor showed that the socio-economic situation of most black residents in many townships had not improved. Furthermore, the 1980s demand that council houses should be transferred to long-term residents was only indolently implemented, with just over one third completed by the late 1990s. At the same time, the pace of delivering low cost housing was extremely slow, with state targets barely met.[684]

The experience in Phomolong was typical of trends in other townships. Only in July of 1999, four years after the first local government elections, did the "future of two-roomed houses" become a serious subject of discussion in the Hennenman TLC.[685] By

[682] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 10 September 2000.

[683] *Ibid*.

[684] Ruiters, "Municipal Crisis Premonitions", p.338.

[685] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 9 July 1999.

that time, land shortage and overcrowding had become an acute crisis in the township. During 1999 alone, the council received applications for housing stands from 138 families. Manifestly, the council demanded that those who wished to occupy the stands would need to pay R300 as an upfront fee, something many residents objected.

The state of the two-roomed houses in *Putswastene* was lamentable and undermined the dignity of the people. As the council itself admitted:

> These houses are semi-detached in groups of four dwellings to one building and have over the years inter alia given problems with the removal of night soil. Normally, family life is impossible.[686]

In the same meeting that discussed the "future of two-roomed houses" in Phomolong, a decision was taken to consult and seek advise from the construction company that upgraded the hostels in Thabong township in Welkom. At this point, the council also resolved to upgrade these houses into units of two houses per building, and the other two remaining families were to be assisted to obtain residence elsewhere. Despite these suggestions, council in fact acted in contradiction to its own observations when residents inundated it with applications for housing stands in extension one – an area that residents believed was reserved for new housing stands. Although the local state expressed the desire to ameliorate the situation confronting residents in Putswastene (two-roomed houses), its true intentions were soon revealed. Council's reaction to the application for housing stands was largely insensitive to the dire need for land and housing in Phomolong:

> The office daily gets requests from residents of the two-roomed houses at "Putswastene" to occupy the stands reserved for them in extension one. They claim that councillors told them at a mass meeting that they might do so. In doing so, they must realise that they will be liable to pay the service accounts on both the new stand and the stand that they vacate. Many of these people are already in arrears and this will worsen the situation.[687]

The possibility of ever resolving township overcrowding and housing shortage was according to the council, a slim one. This was emphasised in the council minutes, which stated that:

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[686] *Ibid*.

[687] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 28 August 2000.

> It cannot be readily accepted that government will subsidise the project soon, if at all because of the administrative problems with regards to the expropriation of already registered stands, consolidation, demolishing and resettlement. All this will put the people involved in jeopardy.[688]

This means that Phomolong residents were faced with the reality of township overcrowding and the bucket system for years to come. The pressing need for housing was also exacerbated by the eviction of residents from what became known as the Basil Read area in 1999. In July 1995, a company called Hatton and Associates applied for a housing subsidy-linked project to build 119 low cost houses in Phomolong. The Free State Provincial Housing Development Board approved this application. The correspondence between the developer and the provincial government shows that the developer indicated that the project would only be partially subsidised, meaning the beneficiaries would be expected to pay an additional amount of R15 000 per house. This would be a top-up amount to the subsidy provided by the state. However, the beneficiaries of the project alleged that they were not informed of these conditions and were under the impression that the houses were fully subsidised by the state. They denied approaching the banks for top-up funding and receiving any form of training on mortgage issues from the banks as required by the Housing Implementation Manual. By 1999, the banks started evicting the occupants of these houses on the grounds that they had been retrenched from various companies and were no longer able to repay their loans.[689] The vacant homes were subsequently rented out to other residents. From the residents' perspective, the housing scheme was problematic in two respects.

Firstly, residents alleged that there was an unethical involvement of one of the councillors Marius JJ Calitz in the scheme. Calitz was accused of having close ties with Hatton and Associates, the company responsible for the housing project. The evictees resented Calitz, especially since they charged that he had personally issued eviction threats to the troubled Basil Read residents.[690] Secondly, the local state's solution to the evictions was to provide the evicted families with land in an area called

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[688] *Ibid*.

[689] *Letter to the Hennenman TLC from the Department of Housing and Local Government, Free State, "Evictions of the Beneficiaries in Phomolong, Hennenman"*, 6 December 1999.

[690] *Memorandum of grievances regarding the Basil Read RDP Project at Phomolong – addressed to Hennenman Mayor Banks Tshabangu*, 14 July 1999.

Extension One. This land was initially made available at R1, 200, a figure subsequently reduced to R400. Residents were disgruntled that they had been moved from brick structures only to be given the alternative of building homes out of corrugated iron. The fact that less than nineteen (19) of the fifty (50) evicted families applied for this relief is evidence that the alternative provided by the local state was taken with little enthusiasm.[691]

The Basil Read experience confirms that the local state was increasingly amenable to drawing in capital to resolve the pressing need for the means of collective consumption in Phomolong. It also shows how, despite the local state's minimal involvement in the project, residents still expected it to resolve the impasse and placed their grievances at its doorsteps and only later resorted to seeking recourse from the provincial government. Opting to involve capital in the distribution of housing meant residents' relations with the banks and the state were defined by their ability to repay the loans. This increased reliance on the market unfortunately placed the political incumbents of the local state at the coalface of the residents' discontent.

The growing emphasis on privatisation and neoliberal cost recovery principles compounded the situation. The increased emphasis placed on cost recovery did not bear fruits as service payments did not markedly improve. By 1995, the percentage of payments in Phomolong remained below 25% of the total registered households in the area and this led to frustrations on the part of the council. This figure had mildly improved by 1996 with 18% being the lowest and 25% being the average in terms of residents' payment of municipal accounts.

ANC councillors also came under criticism, as they were directly responsible for endorsing the lists of households to be disconnected from their water supply due to non-payment.[692] By December 1998, approximately 1,065 homes were receiving a subsidy on service accounts, a figure that increased to 1,422 by May 1999. The spate of water disconnections increased from 25 households in December 1998 to 762 households in March of 1999. These disconnections could be appealed and households could be reconnected. However, the success of these appeals was

[691] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 28 August 2000.

[692] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 21 January 1999.

minimal. The fact that out of 762 disconnected homes in March 1999, only five were reconnected in the same month, leaving many families desperate, demonstrates this reality. Interestingly, the disconnections predominantly took place in the township (Phomolong) and only a few households in Hennenman were affected by this policy. During the same month of March 1999, only 29 households experienced disconnections in Hennenman, a figure that is a mere fraction of the 762 households that suffered water disconnections in Phomolong.[693]

Although the council hoped that these disconnections would result in better payment of municipal debts by residents, this did not materialise. Instead, the council soon realised that another approach had to be taken in tandem with the rather despotic move to disconnect households. Consequently and under the impression that unreliable resident data was also to blame for the lack of payment of municipal bills, the council issued a notice for a tender in the year 2000 for the delivery of municipal accounts, letters and circulars. The terms of the tender stipulated, "The successful tender should also be in a position to gather and supply information on account holders and motivate residents to pay their municipal accounts." Within the same year, Dynamic Enterprise was awarded the tender to perform this function. This proves a crucial point – that access to goods and services offered by the local state rested on the logic of household affordability as a means to ensure capital flows to the local state. Phomolong residents soon came to learn that the local state's allocative function could only be provided to those who could pay for it.

The endemic crisis affecting the road and storm water system in Phomolong made residents increasingly frustrated with their councillors. The state of the streets was deteriorating and their constant maintenance, in the absence of a proper storm water system proved wasteful. The fact that political occupants of the local state in the form of councillors also saw this crisis in the provision of the collective means of consumption as providing a window of opportunity for capital accumulation was also a source of discomfort. The *Thusamotse Community Project* expressly argued this point in a letter addressed to the council:

> The money that had (sic) been spent on maintenance of streets and the massive resolution of the storm water standing as a predominant question requiring

[693] *Ibid*.

> immediate steps towards its resolution, those expenditures and attempts have been and are fruitless as streets are worse and water remains the beast intruder in our homes during even light rains.[694]

The same letter also appealed to the council to abandon the strategy of spending its budget for street maintenance and instead should look into a more 'permanent' solution such as paving the roads, and working with unemployed residents.

> We suggest that council budget for the buying of a machine to produce paving bricks so as to use the bricks to pave the streets in Phomolong and that this item serves annually in our budget. The idea is about ensuring that money used and budgeted for streets and storm water maintenance is redirected towards paving streets in Phomolong by the local residents working with the council as the unemployed.[695]

The residents' logic as expressed in this letter was also shared by the council that "it must be kept in mind that streets and storm water drainage in Phomolong is a problem that needs constant attention and is very expensive at that."[696] Even so, there is no other indication that shows that council ever applied its mind to a "permanent" solution similar to the one proposed by residents through the *Thusamotse Community Project*.

These difficulties were also exacerbated by the downsizing of Bremer Milling Company (currently Tiger Milling), which in the year 2000 was responsible for approximately R500, 000 in wages to Phomolong residents employed in the factory. This was a significant blow as council lost income in the form of rates for water and electricity. Significantly, this meant that unemployment amongst Phomolong residents increased; a factor also aggravated by the decline of mining in the Free State Goldfields region.[697] Coupled with this was the growing perception that the local council had not done significantly enough to aid job creation. A memorandum submitted to the council by a group called the Phomolong Unemployed Organisation made three observations.

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[694] *Letter from the Thusamotse Community project tabled at the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 14 August 2000.

[695] *Ibid*.

[696] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 11 January 1999.

[697] *Minutes of the Hennenman Transitional Local Council*, 8 September 2000.

The first one was that although they expected the "ANC controlled local council" to take the lead in job creation, this had not materialised. The second observation was that there was no visible partnership between the community and the council in terms of job creation. Thirdly and perhaps more importantly, the memorandum noted, "with concern the involvement of the mayor in projects in the township."[698] At this point, there was a growing perception that Tshabangu as the mayor was using his position to enrich himself and those close to him. As a result, one of the demands in the memorandum was the "removal of ANC councillors from projects." A specific warning was issued to Tshabangu that "[t]he people are aware of your corrupt activities and we are going to stop you once and for all"[699] At the same time, those who expected that the ascendance of the likes of Tshabangu into the council presented an opportunity for jobs were increasingly becoming impatient. Nyathi Madia, one of the keen supporters of Tshabangu as a mayoral candidate and one of the instrumental figures behind the removal of the ANC comrades in the first TLC is candid about his unfulfilled expectations:

> [W]e were expecting to be given our positions as these people had taken over. So when I finished grade 12 I was convinced that I have a position there ... [A]fter grade 12 and we were still unemployed in the township ... we mobilised the community against them ... We mobilised the youth against him (Tshabangu). He took it lightly...[700]

As the new mayor, Tshabangu was not naive about the expectation that he would distribute material benefits to those who aided his political ascendance. His analysis is that "in the material conditions in which we conduct struggle maybe others were doing it so that they can benefit once I became a mayor."[701] The service delivery and issues and corruption allegations levelled against Tshabangu would be raised more forcefully in the 2005 protests – a subject discussed in the following chapter.

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[698] *Petition tabled to the Hennenman Transitional Local Council from the Phomolong Unemployed Organisation*, 12 July 1999.

[699] *Ibid*.

[700] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

[701] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history and politics of local government transition and its specific implications for Phomolong Township. The TLCs rejection of a flat rate and the local states' insistence that access to collective consumption must be mediated through the market struck a match that eventually lit a tinder of discontent in Phomolong. It was this discontent that disgruntled activists calling themselves the Delta Force, utilised to unseat the first TLC.

The anticipation that the local state would assume a greater allocative role grew significantly with the ushering of a democratic state as marked by the first national democratic elections in 1994. The chapter also shows that the expectation from the new political incumbents that residents would be patriotic towards the post-apartheid local state and demonstrate this by paying their rates and service charges was at variance with the material conditions facing Phomolong residents as well as the reality that services remained lamentable while transformation and redistribution moved at a snail's pace.

From a structural perspective, it has been argued that the neoliberal capitation and local implications of South Africa's negotiated transition limited the ability of the post-apartheid local state to play a redistributive role. This left councillors to implement policies that were largely unfavourable to their constituencies. This narrative continues well into the final phase of local government transformation in this country. However, in as much as the structural account on the crisis of the post-apartheid local state is a compelling one, this does not offer an exhaustive explanation. The chapter insists that the internal dynamics within the anti-apartheid organisations are pivotal in understanding the post-apartheid local state and political contestations in Phomolong.

Furthermore, the perceived displacement of young comrades who actively participated in challenging apartheid rule in Phomolong and the emergence and dominance of some youths considered "products of counter revolutionary structures" such as the Eagles Club was one of the defining threads of politics and polarization in Phomolong. Those feeling marginalized in an era where the lexicon of governance and negotiation replaced that of the petrol bomb and the *toyi toyi* felt particularly scathed by these developments.

Castells' work on urban social movements is specifically relevant to understanding the politics of the local state in Phomolong during the period discussed in this chapter. Phomolong's case demonstrates that the local state's involvement in collective consumption has a politicising effect. Contention about how the state plays this collective consumption role often leads to the rise of protest movements. In this case, the post-apartheid local state's increased reliance on the market to provide the means of collective consumption contributed to the growth of contentious politics in relation to the local state. However, as this thesis will later argue, far from breeding a revolutionary urban social movement and inter-class alliances capable of tempering with some of the fundamental operations of the capitalist state, the crisis of the local state in post-apartheid South Africa has given rise to modest outcomes. The next chapter further develops the argument advanced in this chapter that while structural context of neoliberal capitalism cannot be wholly ignored, the eruption of local protests cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader politics of contestation in the ANC.

CHAPTER SIX

Post-Apartheid Protest and Resistance in Phomolong

'Service delivery protests' have become an integral part of South Africa's body politic in recent years. Statistics indicate that in 2001, South Africa experienced protests in 90% of the municipalities that were classified as 'failing municipalities' by the Department of Provincial and Local Government. These failing municipalities were identified as requiring assistance and attention from the provincial and national governments. A report from the Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) states that there were about eight hundred illegal and about five thousand legal protests in South African municipalities between 2004 and 2005. Some of the affected areas were Phumelela, Phomolong and Dewetsdorp in the Free State; Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan in the Eastern Cape; Boikhutsong in the North West; Balfour in Mpumalanga and many other places.[702] Recent statistics show that the incidence of local community protests was the highest in the year 2009, with protests becoming increasingly defined by violence and the destruction of public and private property.[703]

This chapter is located in the critical literature on recent local popular struggles which provides rich analyses of the communities concerned and offers a competent examination of the factors driving local protests in the post-apartheid era. However, this chapter adds an important historical dimension that will show how these local struggles are in some ways continuations of the past struggles under apartheid. The redistributive limit of the local state, as a result of South Africa's negotiated transition, is seldom analysed in the recent literature on local protests. The focus on recent community history, mostly confined to the late 1990s, precludes recent scholarship in this area from providing a necessary historical account about why and how post-apartheid local government has been besieged by protests.

The chapter contends that a persuasive analysis of local protests must take into

[702]CDE Focus, *Voices of Anger: Phumelela and Khutsong: Protest and Conflict in Two Municipalities*, Occasional Paper No. 10, April 2007.

[703]Von Holdt, K, "Overview-Insurgent Citizenship and Collective Violence: Analysis of Case Studies", in von Holdt *et al The Smoke that Calls – Insurgent Citizenship, Collective Violence and the Struggle for a place in a new South Africa*, CSVR/SWOP, July 2011.

cognisance, the structural constraints imposed on the local state by the negotiated transition, the regressive impact of neoliberal policy prescriptions on the ability of the local state to perform its collective consumption functions, and how these protests are mediated by intra-organisational dynamics permeating the ANC in Phomolong. Therefore, the eruption of local protests and the apparent ineptitude of the Ward Committee system cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader politics of contestation in the ANC and the alliance at a local level. The key argument in this chapter is that protest in Phomolong has indisputable historical origins and unfolds out of the mode of protest and resistance that can be traced back to the early 1990s.

The New Local Government Dispensation

The first non-racial democratic local government elections in South Africa took place on 1st March 2000. These elections punctuated the final phase of the long process that marked the transformation of local government in South Africa. This was considered an epoch making development, marking the ushering of a new local government system in South Africa. Two notions were emphasized in the new local government edifice – development and community participation. These two notions are perceived as mutually reinforcing, with community participation in matters of local government being at the centre of driving development at a local level. Developmental Local Government is defined as local government that "centres on working with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives."[704] This idea was engrained in the Constitution's advocacy of public participation in order to "provide democratic and accountable government for local communities" as well as to "encourage the involvement of communities in local government."[705]

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 further lends commitment to community participation by making provision for the establishment of ward committees, which are supposed to compromise no more than ten people representing diverse interests

[704] *White Paper on Local Government*, March 1998.

[705] *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No.108 of 1996*, Chapter 7 – Local Government, Section 152 (a) and (e).

within a ward. Ward committees are tasked with making recommendations on any matters affecting their wards and are formally key vehicles for increased and efficient community participation in local government matters, among other things.[706] The Municipal Structures Act also requires the municipality to develop mechanisms to consult the community in performing its functions and exercising its powers.[707]

The Municipal Systems Act of 2000 also mandates municipalities with the task of fostering a culture of community participation that complements the representative democracy. As such, municipalities are expected to provide a conducive environment for community participation through Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), budgetary processes and review performance system.[708] IDPs form the centrepiece of the new system's vision for participatory local government. According to the Municipal Systems Act, IDPs are supposed to perform the following functions:

- Link, integrate and co-ordinate a municipality's sector specific plans;
- Align the resources and capacity of the municipality to the overall development objectives of the municipality, and;
- Form the policy framework on which annual budgets rest.[709]

Under the Municipal Structures Act, three new categories of municipalities were also defined. The first category is a Metropolitan municipality, which covers a large geographic urban area with high population density, extensive development of business districts and industrial areas as well as frequent movement of goods and services. The second category is a two-tier municipal system, which applies in areas outside metropolitan areas. This two-tier system is comprised of District councils and a local council. That is, district councils cover a wider geographic area than local councils and areas of lower population density. As such, local councils, which form the third category, govern over a smaller geographic area and often fall under the jurisdiction of a bigger District Municipality.[710]

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[706] *Local Government Municipal Structures Act of 1998*, Act No. 117 of 1998.
[707] *Ibid*.

[708] *Ibid*.

[709] *Ibid*.

[710] South African Local Government Association (SALGA), www.salga.org.za/pages/municipalities/About-Municipalities

Developmental Local Government and its Challenges

Scathing criticism was levelled at the notion of developmental local government with the advent of local protests in the early 2000s. Some scholars are concerned not so much about the institutional design of local government but the impact of this on local politics and the ability of citizens to organise themselves outside the state crafted system of local government. A key concern with the new local government system is that participatory local government is significantly compromised by the failure to address everyday community organizing. The result of this is a highly technocratic understanding of participation. Likewise, Oldfield cites Davids to raise the argument about whether community participation in mechanisms such as the IDP are meant to increase administrative efficiency or tools for empowering communities by giving them space to voice their views and contributions in the making and implementation of policies affecting them.[711] Oldfield charges that participation is only meant to secure 'slithers of consensus' and not to overhaul the way in which communities interact with the state. From this view, the notion of participatory local governance rests entirely with the state as a gatekeeper for participation. Civil society enters this space as an invited partner as opposed to it inventing its own spaces. This situation increases the likelihood of delegitimizing other forms of participation that fall outside the scope defined by the state. The rise in community protests in recent years can be interpreted in this light.[712]

While there is a broad consensus that the levels of community participation in the new local government system are higher than during the apartheid period, scholars raise a number of questions around the notion of participatory local governance. Proponents of this view suggest that although participation can lead to state democratisation and civil society empowerment, there is an inclination to use the rhetoric of participation to legitimise state actions and policies as well as forge compliance.[713] Therefore, according to this school of thought, the main problem with South Africa's new local government system is that the notion of participation is often viewed in neutral and

[711] Oldfield, S, "Participatory Mechanisms and Community Politics: Building Consensus and Conflict".

[712] *Ibid*.

[713] *Ibid*.

unproblematic terms. As such, there is neither much attention paid to developing the capacity of civil society to participate nor any assessment of the power dynamics at play. In this view, participation should be understood as an open-ended process with no clearly defined teleological ending.[714]

Recent scholarship has begun to point the analytical compass towards the prevalence of patron-client relations at the level of the local state. According to Staniland[715], this can be attributed to the policies that relegate civil society to a subordinate position when compared to the role given to the political society. As it stands, the current local government system provides the political society with a monopoly over the distribution and administration of local government resources. Through this, the possibility of patronage is enhanced and relations that render many residents as well as civil society organisations dependent on political figures become established. In effect, this leads to a tight-lipped response by civil society and residents on matters of discontent. That is, participation as it is currently conceptualised, fails to live up to its aims and instead leads to a situation whereby civil society becomes demobilised.[716]

Furthermore, Staniland utilises the concept of "invited spaces" to elaborate on this point. Accordingly, the local state is an "invited space" wherein the level and nature of civil society participation are determined by the political society. Implicitly, this places councillors at the centre of distributing scarce local resources such as housing and employment; consequently putting councillors in a situation whereby they are the linchpin in the access to resources. Inevitably, this means that certain individuals and organisations will be excluded or included using their 'loyalty' to the incumbent local leader as a yardstick to determine this. Thus, an argument could be made that good relations with the local leaders and councillors may come with a sense of security. Potentially, it could facilitate a greater access to the local state and hence the resources it commands. As a result, this limits the space for critiquing and differing with local political leaders.

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[714]Pieterse, E, "Participatory Local Governance in the Making: Opportunities, Constraints and Protests" in *Democratising Local Government: the South African Experiment*, Parnell, S, Pieterse, E, Swilling, M, Woolridge, D (eds) Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2002, p.14.

[715] Staniland, "They know me, I will not get a job': public participation, patronage, and the sedation of civil society in a Capetonian township."

[716]*Ibid*, p.39.

Furthermore, Staniland maintains that local protests that may be framed with a service delivery outlook are spurred by this domination of the political society in the administration and distribution of resources at a local level. According to this view, residents and organisations take to the streets on the basis that the distributional regime is unfair and the conviction that participation is not yielding the desired outcome. In actuality, argues Staniland, protests usually do not seek to reverse the predominance of the political society in the distribution of local resources but rather aims to restore this status quo in instances where the sentiment is that it is being undermined.[717]

Staniland considers different reasons for the decline in radical civil society in many of South Africa's townships. He argues that many scholars who have attempted to answer this question before have missed the point, because whilst it might be true that the state's benevolence regarding the creation of institutional mechanisms where communities can voice out their concerns have served to discredit other forms of informal and more radical expressions; this picture has been significantly altered particularly since 2005 when many townships experienced protests. Furthermore, there is a truism in the assertion that the creation of participatory institutions has often been used as a means to silent dissent. For Staniland, the theoretical kernel that best explains this is the political opportunity theory. From this perspective, civil society is defined by the ability to assess the political opportunities and constraints contained in adopting different actions vis–a–vis the local state. Consequently, civil society chooses to operate within the ambit of participatory structures provided for in the local state as this guarantees a better access to resources and recognition. This stems largely from the fact that councillors are at the centre of the distributional regime such that access to material resources and political space is contingent upon maintaining good relations with the ward councillors.

However, civil society is not the only actor caught up in this mesh. Residents are also drawn into this distributional regime as their access to certain material resources largely depends on civil society gatekeepers. Hence, making a choice to be involved in "radical politics" that challenge the role of the state and the dominant ANC may result in exclusion from accessing housing, food parcels and job opportunities as a

[717] *Ibid*, p.41.

price. Even in instances whereby protest erupts, this is largely temporary and fades away the moment the distributional regime is restored.[718]

Accordingly, these serve as explanatory factors for the organisational weakness of civil society in certain places. They place serious constraints on the possibility for the emergence of civil society as an alternative to the political society.

> Therefore, whilst they [protests] do place limits upon patronage and malpractice by councillors, civil society and government officials, they appear not to provide an alternative forum for ensuring mass participation in setting South Africa's development agenda.[719]

This marks a rupture with the type of civil society that was hegemonic during the apartheid period. Under apartheid, civil society not only challenged the local state but also posed itself and was increasingly perceived as an alternative to the apartheid local state. There is also reluctance on the part of the councillors to foster thoroughgoing accountability, especially when problems are rife at a local level. Notably, councillors are not passive victims of a constraining structure of the local state. They apply significant agency in responding to the constraints of the local state. As Benit-Gbaffou argues, councillors sometimes opt for using their political networks to surround themselves with people that can secure their political influence locally. It is the latter as opposed to the entire community that are always briefed about local issues and developments. This leads Benit-Gbaffou to the same conclusion as Staniland about councillors being at the centre of encouraging and driving patron-client relations at community level. However, reasons for her conclusion are different to those advanced by Staniland. According to Benit-Gbaffou, this is due to their limited powers and its corollary, which is the reluctance to account to their constituencies, particularly when problems are prevalent. The consequence is that communities develop high expectations about what their councillors can deliver and the failure to meet these expectations leads to the utilisation of "non-institutional participatory channels" such as protests.[720]

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[718] *Ibid*, p.47.

[719] *Ibid*.

[720] Benit-Gbaffou,"Are practices of local participation sidelining the institutional channels? Reflections from Johannesburg", p.9.

Beyond this however, there are other reasons for the lacklustre approach to accountability by councillors. The electoral system, which places the power to choose ward candidates in the hands of political parties, is also cited as a reason. As a result, the councillor's imperative to account to the political party overrides the need to account to their constituencies. Prospects for upward political mobility rely heavily on what upper structures of the party, specifically the ANC Region decide what communities want. The result is sycophancy, whereby councillors merely regurgitate party positions however problematic and no matter how much misery they cause at the community level. Additionally, the incentives for accountability are limited as it still remains the case that people vote for a party as opposed to a particular individual. Hence, the poor performance of a councillor may result in low voter turnout in the next election as opposed to a complete shift in support for the party.[721]

Chief amongst the local government structures that usually come under attack in these protests are ward committees. Envisaged as kernels of democratic participation for communities at a local level; the experience of many communities points to the fact that ward committees have simply failed in achieving this function. Furthermore, Oldfield also takes issue with the ward council system. She argues that whilst the mechanism is meant to ensure and improve community participation in governance processes, it is nonetheless beleaguered by a number of weaknesses. The first weakness is about community representation in the wards. The problem here is that ward councillors very often have an unwarranted determination over who gets elected into the Ward Committee. The second limitation relates to the fact that the councillor plays as a conveyor belt between the community and the council. From this perspective, Oldfield is in agreement with Benit-Gbaffou that the prospects for advancing their (councillor's) constituency's interests at the council level are not only limited by the structural context of the council system but also the fact that councillors can utilise their own discretion. This has several implications. The local state is reduced to an appendage of the national government and its policies. It also means that the state has limited itself to formalised procedures without the desire or the effort to mobilise communities. This is also demonstrated by the demonisation of modes of expression outside those sanctioned by the state. In the final analysis,

[721]Oldfield, "Participatory Mechanisms and Community Politics: Building Consensus and Conflict", p.10.

Oldfield contends that participation is not an apolitical process. The ability to utilize these spaces is contingent upon political networks and access to information.[722]

Yunus Carrim, the current Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, a ministry that is in charge of local government, also attributes the rise of service delivery protests due to the failure of ward committees. He argues that local protests are:

> [A] disaster for our ward committees and our community participation structures. It is a severe indictment of these structures. If these structures were working, those people who are aggrieved would be less prone to violence, less destructive. Although one should not romanticise that either but people are really, really fed up with us...[723]

Piper and Deacon[724] contend that the politicisation of ward committees has resulted in several limitations. The most important manner in which these problems manifest is through inter-party politics where the struggle between different parties at a local level can pose a threat to the smooth functioning of ward committees. Intra-party politics can also determine the extent to which ward committees are able to execute their mandates. Their concern is that partisan ward committees not only undermine participatory democracy at a local level, but carry other far-reaching implications. That is, the very existence of ward committees has annihilated pre-existing forms of civil society. Moreover, partisan ward committee carries little prospects for holding municipal leadership responsible, as party loyalties may override accountability. In the final analysis, it is suggested that although ward committees in the partisan fashion may be useful in terms of mobilising communities, given that political parties are still the dominant mode of mobilisation within the South African politics, their contribution in their current form cannot match that of the established political society.[725]

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[722]Oldfield, "Participatory Mechanisms and Community Politics: Building Consensus and Conflict".

[723]Interview with Yunus Carrim, Johannesburg, 13 December 2009.

[724]Piper and Deacon, "Party Politics, Elite Accountability and Public Participation: Ward Committee Politics in Msunduzi Municiplality".

[725]*Ibid*.

A more radical critique of the notion of developmental local government argues that increased community participation is at variance with the neoliberal economic policies pursued by the democratic government. In this regard, the kernel to understanding local protests is located in an analysis that privileges the politics generated by a neoliberal policy shift beginning with late apartheid and reinforced by the democratic government. Scholars remark that South Africa's democracy has been marked by improved capitalist profitability and immense losses for labour signified by retrenchments and casualisation. This has served as a backdrop for the rise of protests in the post-apartheid period.[726]

One of the proponents of this perspective is Patrick Bond who charges that local struggles in the post-apartheid period are buttressed by the unevenness in the distribution and access to collective consumption. According to this argument, policies anchored on privatisation and ceding into the World Bank's neoliberal mantra has created a post-apartheid local state marked by more continuity of the past tropes than change when compared to its predecessor. The local state under a democratic dispensation is financially hamstrung and ideologically committed to the creation of a minimalist state whose role in development is limited to that of an enabler setting the stage for the private sector to perform certain functions. As such, the logic that governs access to goods and services is that which emphasises household affordability as a means to ensure capital flows. One of the startling realities of the neoliberal encroachment was the massive cuts in intergovernmental grants which consequently stifled the local state's ability to perform certain allocative functions. In this scenario, local democracy is in essence mediated through the market and in some instances judged as simply "too expensive for South Africa."[727]

Alexander[728] argues that the protests are reflective of democracy's unfulfilled promises. To support this claim, Alexander refers to the high unemployment figures and the vast inequalities that have been accentuated under the ANC government

[726] Ballard, Habib, Valodia, and Zuern, *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid in South Africa*, University of Kwazulu Natal Press: University of Kwazulu Natal, 2006, p.11.

[727] Bond, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal- Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis*, p.33.

[728]Alexander, P, "Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests – a preliminary analysis", *Review of African Political Economy* , Vol. 37, No. 123, March 2010, p.25–40.

through a range of neoliberal policy prescriptions. Alexander also argues that political occupants of the local state in the form of councillors have also been drawn into the post-apartheid accumulation regime, and facilitated by the privatisation of municipal services. A considerable number of councillors are business people, who bid upon the same services that they are expected to facilitate. He adds that the inadequate investments in public goods such as housing has produced skills shortfalls resulting in a lack of personnel to provide much needed technical services, especially outside the major urban centres.[729]

The Character of Service Delivery Protests

One of the key conclusions drawn by Von Holdt *et al* is that the rise in post-apartheid protests is also accompanied by a rapid process of class formation. According to this school of thought, the rise of the new elite has a dislocating effect on the "large underclass of the unemployed".[730] This process, combined with the dislocating effects of democracy and accompanied by neoliberal economic restructuring, has given rise to a differentiated citizenship in which despite formal guarantees of equality, the elite is accorded different treatment, rights and privileges. Struggles to "destabilise the differentiated" arise out of this context.[731]

Alexander identifies three possible effects of community protests on the local state and local politics. In the first scenario, the dominant political society simply reacts to these local protests through a range of political manoeuvres which include co-opting protest leadership, removing unpopular councillors, making some cosmetic improvements in the communities concerned and increasing political repression. What impedes the real transformation of the state of local government and service provision at a local level, according to Alexander, is the "conservatism of its economic policies and the current recession." This limits government's actions to emphasise on monitoring, evaluation and skills training.[732]

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[729]*Ibid*, p.37.

[730]Von Holdt, "Overview-Insurgent Citizenship and Collective Violence: Analysis of Case Studies", p.11.

[731]*Ibid*, p.38.

[732]*Ibid*.

The second option is that protests will lose momentum if protracted popular mobilisation and violence is seen as having minimal success. In such a scenario, communities might slip into cocoons of apathy. The third scenario has more positive prospects. In this case, local community protests will give birth to a wave of general and interconnected popular mobilisation against the disappointments of democracy. However, despite his dose of optimism, Alexander stops far short of painting these local struggles with a "revolutionary" brush and argues instead that they are more likely to feed into reformist notions of governance rather than call for a complete overhaul of the system.[733]

Furthermore, Von Holdt *et al* share similar sentiments with Alexander and points to some of the regressive features of these protest movements which include gender and national discrimination (xenophobia) as well as the excessive use of violence to settle political and social disputes. The study cautions that these protests, rather than giving rise to revolutionary outcomes, are more amenable to producing a "precarious society" in which very little is stable. This pessimism is also driven by the presence and leading role of "political entrepreneurs", who utilise popular mobilisation as a means through which to settle political scores and for upward social mobility. The relationship between communities and these political entrepreneurs is often a symbiotic one, with the latter utilising the former's proximity and experience with political processes to air their grievances, whilst political entrepreneurs use mass mobilisation to advance their political battles.[734]

A few scholars have also begun pointing to the central role of the ANC or ANC linked individuals in protests. According to Von Holdt *et al* [735], the protests present little opportunities for autonomous civil society organisations at a local level. The main reason for this is that the ANC at a local level is able to represent itself as both a people's liberator at a grassroots level whilst simultaneously being the political party at the helm of state power.[736] The result is what Von Holdt *et al* call the "subaltern classes" that are denied a vehicle in the form of autonomous civil society organisation

[733] *Ibid*.
[734] *Ibid*.

[735] *Ibid*.
[736] *Ibid*.

through which to channel their grievances and advance the struggle for an equitable citizenship.[737]

Developmental Local Government in Phomolong

The first non-racial democratic local government elections in South Africa took place on 1st March 2000. These municipal elections introduced changes to the local government architecture. A two-tiered municipal system comprising the Mathjabeng Local Municipality and the Lejweleputswa District Municipality were established. In this regard, the local municipality (Mathjabeng) brought together the six towns and their adjoining townships. These are Welkom (Thabong), Odendaalsrus (Kutlwanong), Virginia (Meloding), Allanridge (Nyakallong), Ventersburg (Mmamahabane) and Hennenman (Phomolong). In total, Matjhabeng Municipality hosted a population of more than 400 000 people. As demonstrated in the table below, Welkom and the adjoining Thabong Township formed the biggest part of the municipality with populations of 56,550 and 139,292 respectively. Ventersburg and the adjoining township of Mmamahabane are the smallest in the municipality with populations of only 1,063 and 9,079 respectively. Hennenman and Phomolong rank fourth in terms of population size with 2,962 and 18,148 people respectively. In total, the municipality has 36 wards.[738]

Mathjabeng Population Distribution[739]

Town/Township	**No of houses**	**Population**
Allanridge	465	1,823

[737] *Ibid*, p.11.

[738] *Matjhabeng Annual Report 2007/2008*. These figures are based on the 2000 Census conducted by Statistics South Africa.

[739] *Ibid.*

Nyakallong	4,834	16,842
Hennenman	1,118	2,962
Phomolong	4,591	18,148
Odendaalsrus	3,052	8,654
Kutlwanong	12,735	58,964
Ventersburg	393	1,063
Mmamahabane	2,521	9,079
Virginia	8,217	21,189
Meloding	18,883	73,643
Welkom	21,750	56,550
Thabong	28,003	139,292
Total	**106,562**	**408,170**

In addition to the introduction of the district and local municipality structures, Phomolong and Hennenman, which had previously formed part of the same polity, governed by a single transitional local authority, were now divided into two wards (ward two and three). On the one hand, ward two encompassed the greater part of Phomolong township and was therefore almost entirely comprised of the black residents of the township. On the other hand, ward three consisted of the entire Hennenman town and the oldest part of Phomolong Township. As a result, in the 2000 municipal elections, ward three came under ANC control and the DA won ward two. The ANC candidate in ward two was Sello Ernest Tshabangu (Banks) whilst the DA fielded Zeka Mtutuzeli Watchenton as its candidate. The margins between the ANC candidate and his DA counterpart in ward two were huge, with the ANC winning with 3,654 votes, whilst the DA only secured 70 votes from the area. In ward

three, Johann Edeling from the DA won most of the votes. The margin was only 140 votes as the DA secured 1,628 whilst the ANC candidate Kholeka Mokobori secured 1,488 votes. In these elections, the only two parties that were registered to contest the ward were the DA and the ANC.

The process of consolidating municipalities to form the Matjhabeng Local Municipality and the Lejweleputswa District Municipality gave rise, in some quarters, to a perception that Tshabangu was becoming too influential not only in the politics of the township but the broader Lejweleputswa region. In terms of this configuration, he was also perceived as the single most influential individual coming from Phomolong. Tshabangu was powerful in the sense that not only was he an elected councillor in ward two, but he also became a member of the mayoral committee (MMC) for finance. During this time, he was also the chairperson of the ANC branch in Phomolong ward two and a member of the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and Regional Working Committee (RWC) of the ANC in Lejweleputswa.[740] Banks describes this influence eloquently when he says that:

> [There] emerged a new era of consolidating these municipalities as the TLCs were disbanded. Then there were new politics coming into the play. I was the only one who remained in the Matjhabeng Council in 2000. The other ward was won by a DA councillor, Edeling ... I had massive influence in the municipality but also in the ANC Region as a member of the Regional Working Committee.[741]

Although Tshabangu had made some enemies over time, he still had a loyal following inside the ANC. Attempts to unseat him faltered. In one instance, in the early 2000s Tshabangu was accused of unfairly influencing the hiring process in the Goldfields mines in favour of his associates. But even the masterminds of the campaign concede that it had no real impact. The attempt to unseat Tshabangu was abandoned and "just ended." "Power" argues that these failed attempts gave Tshabangu a sense of invincibility. "I think he then took it for granted that we couldn't do anything when there was fire in 2005."[742] With this attempt to depose him failing to gain a substantial mass backing, Tshabangu appeared impervious. But Tshabangu's fortune would

[740] This is the name of the ANC region and should not be confused with that of the District municipality.

[741] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.
[742] Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

change in February 2005.

The 2005 Protests - "Hiring people who did not struggle"

When protests erupted in Phomolong, some analysts were caught by surprise. It was difficult to understand why such "a quiet place"[743] suddenly dominated the headlines of the national newspapers, drawing in the highest levels of the ANC and the government into the protest. According to the testimonies gathered, the Phomolong protests started in early February 2005 and ended in September 2005 when the ANC councillor Banks Tshabangu officially resigned from the council. At the centre of the protest was the lack of service delivery in the area. Issues that were prominent during this period were the persistence of the bucket system, skills and jobs, the absence of skills transfer in local government development projects, fraud and corruption in the allocation of RDP houses.[744]

In January 2005, in an ANC branch meeting, a confrontation between the chairperson of the ANC and one of Branch Executive Committee (BEC) members ensued. This was a subject about the allocation of jobs in the local municipality of Matjhabeng. Whilst this may seem uncontroversial, the bone of contention in this meeting was not the devastating unemployment figures, which are indeed part of the sore points in many black communities. The area of divergence was rather about how the ANC chairperson Banks Tshabangu who was also the local councillor in the same ward was "privatising employment opportunities"[745], preferring to give jobs to those loyal to him and to those whose "struggle credentials" were questionable. Tshabangu's detractor in this meeting, who posed these confrontational questions, was Montshioa "Ndade" Morake – a member of the ANC BEC. Morake emotively captures this moment when he recounts his version of how the scuffle erupted:

> How we started the war here in Phomolong was when I questioned the councillor who used to keep forms for jobs in his car. I questioned him in a

[743]Mokoena, M, "Phomolong once a quiet township, now in turmoil", *City Press*, 20 February 2005. This characterisation of Phomolong as a quiet place was rather inaccurate given the history of protest and resistance in the area.
[744]Phomolong Community Concerned Group, Memorandum: Service delivery, Phomolong, February 2005.

[745] Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

> meeting about that, asking him why is he privatising the forms for jobs and hiring people who didn't struggle ... and Hennenman is poor. What about the comrades? We as BEC are not working. It was in an ANC meeting. He said who am I to ask him such a question? He is going to deal with me.[746]

Subsequently, another meeting of the ANC BEC convened and in this meeting, the same questions became the dominant subject of discussion.

> I questioned him again that I don't know why you are privatising employment forms and why you are hiring people who did not struggle. That's where the argument started and it almost broke into a fight and people had to stop us. I left the ANC BEC and pointed him with my finger and said this war is not over.[747]

Morake contends that the ANC chairperson and councillor's response was what ultimately spelt his downfall. This was the critical moment when it was decided, "Things will change in Hennenman".[748] Accordingly, Morake reports that he informed some of his comrades that were also suffering the same frustration of unemployment that "it's tough inside the ANC. This thing that we are going to be deployed is not easy. We must just find our own jobs."[749] This realisation and disillusionment led Morake along with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana and Ndade Tshosane to Welkom where the local municipality offices are situated, to seek employment in the local municipality as general workers. Their plight was clearly evident as they hitchhiked their way to Welkom, which is about forty kilometres from Phomolong. Upon arrival at the municipal offices, they came into contact with a Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) responsible for Human Resource, Planning and Development for the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, Kemoitsi Simon Menong who informed them of available posts for general workers in the municipality. Menong then assigned them to a lower ranking official in the municipality regarding the employment forms and issued an instruction that the three must be hired as they were already displaying the eagerness to do the job. The interaction of the three men with the official was to demonstrate just how far Tshabangu's patronage networks stretched and just how exclusionary these networks

[746] *Ibid*.

[747] *Ibid*.
[748] *Ibid*.

[749] *Ibid*.

would become.

The municipal official was reluctant to follow the instructions of the Human Resource Committee chairperson regarding their immediate appointment. He instead asked if the three had consulted their ward councillor (Tshabangu) and whether he had been aware that they are frequenting the municipal offices. The three responded in shock and anger, arguing that the official "can't ask us if the councillor knows that we are here and we won't hear his story because he has consulted the councillor. These are posts for general workers!"[750] This was followed by an instruction to the three that they will get the employment forms in the Phomolong Parliamentary Constituency Office (PCO) in the township. A brief altercation erupted over the official's refusal to offer them a lift back to the township. A hitchhike back to the township meant that by the time the three arrived at the PCO, there was only one form left, which was reserved for someone else. The notice about the vacancy was also in the process of being removed.

Expectantly the three expressed anger over this and reported to the Human Resource chairperson (K.S Menong) the following day. They also confronted Councillor Tshabangu about the selective distribution of jobs in the area. This did not yield any satisfactory answers as the councillor merely claimed ignorance about what they alleged.[751] When confronted by the three men, K.S Menong simply admitted that "gentlemen, I was afraid to tell you that your councillor doesn't want you to be hired. He has submitted a list of names specifying people who should be hired".[752]

The three left the municipal offices, leaving a note for Mr Menong which read: "know that as from today, we are going to fight and change Hennenman."[753] The note also stated the reasons why there would be protests, which included circumstantial evidence about the manner in which low cost houses were allocated to residents who neither applied nor qualified for the subsidy. Furthermore, the note also indicated that "no political head will ever enter Hennenman from that day because he (Menong) has

[750]*Ibid*.

[751]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[752]*Ibid*.

[753]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

failed to address our problems. You must know that this is war!"[754]

The Genesis of the Crisis Committee - "We are going to Change Hennenman Today"

As a result, what followed after this was a protest that would bring the township to a standstill. From that point, the three men started collating evidence that they could possibly use against their councillor in order to drive his removal from office. The councillor became the primary target as he was perceived as central in dispensing patronage and ensuring access or lack thereof to the resources commanded by the local state.

To thoroughly carry out the task of removing the councillor, the three realised that it would be difficult to mobilise residents without a clear compilation of complaints around the slow pace of service delivery and corruption in the area. It would also mean that the three had to convince more people to become involved in the action. The fear was that the three were people known to be historical acquaintances of the councillor, a fact that meant that they were devoid of legitimacy. Pursuing the fight against Tshabangu without co-opting other people meant that they would be perceived only as disgruntled former friends of the councillor. This is what compelled them to approach a few other residents to challenge the councillor. It could be argued that the lack of credibility of the three men in the eyes of Phomolong residents posed a significant political threat and a stumbling block to their goal of overthrowing their former political ally.

The first person to be approached was Papi Qaba, who had recently been suspended from the ANC on Tshabangu's instructions. Another person who has always been a key figure in the politics of Phomolong – Thabo Sethunya – was also approached to form part of the core of leaders that would drive the protests, draft the demands and lead various interactions with the provincial government. Sethunya recalls that:

> There was this comrade Qaba, a comrade from the ANC. They came to my house ... some of them were cheated with their tenders, their cheques, whatever things like that. So, they came to my house, hey comrade we need to talk, we are worried ... I was like bitter with the ANC ... I was still angry

[754] *Ibid*.

with it.[755]

Several people who were allegedly barred from joining the ANC due to the chairperson and councillor's "privatisation" of the membership were also approached. During this time, the ANC's membership recruitment drive was done through recruitment packs, which had to be sourced from either the secretary or the chairperson. This way of administering the membership recruitment system gave unwarranted powers to those at the centre of driving it. Many complained about membership gate keeping and the 52nd National Conference of the ANC also singled this out as one of the biggest contributors to local protests.[756] Recruiters wielded so much power that they could decide who to recruit to the ANC and why. It was strongly believed that "Banks had privatised the membership [using] these recruiter packs and he would give it to people only loyal to him ... so that he remains in power."[757] This membership system meant that many people who identified themselves as ANC members could not actually formally join the organisation as they were in bad terms with the branch leadership. According to Moss Tsolanku,

> [T]he ANC had a privatized membership. You would never receive a membership card. We even wrote letters to the national office and nothing was done. People in Hennenman were pro-ANC by heart. We wanted to form the ANCYL at some point but were blocked by Tshabangu because he had to be the one selecting his people.[758]

This is confirmed by Frank Monyamane who makes the observation that:

> [T]hen they were using this system of recruiter packs so people would recruit only those who agree with them. It's not like now, now you can download membership forms from the website and join. Then you were given a recruiter pack physically and he [Tshabangu] was centralising them. We couldn't join. We couldn't be members.[759]

Many of those who bore the brunt of this exclusive membership selection system later formed part of the Phomolong Crisis Committee.

The Crisis Committee was formed at a community meeting which was aimed at

[755]Interview with Thabo Sethunya, Phomolong, 05 March 2009.
[756]*African National Congress 52nd National Conference Organisational Report of the Secretary General Kgalema Motlhante*, 17 December 2007, http://www.anc.org.za
[757]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, Phomolong, 20 January 2009.
[758]*Ibid*.

[759]Interview with Frank Monyamane, Phomolong, 15 March 2009.

integrating a broader spectrum of Phomolong residents convened on 2nd February 2005 behind Bahale high school. Attendees confirm that this meeting was well attended by Phomolong residents. In the meeting, the Crisis Committee informed residents about the planned actions.

> Initially we were calling meetings behind the school. We informed people that we are going to protest because of these reasons and explained to them what was happening in Hennenman.[760]

In this meeting, a number of residents volunteered to form part of the committee to formulate protest demands and coordinate the community's direct action by applying for marches and organising future mass meetings. This meeting represented a significant turning point in the modus operandi of those who sought Tshabangu's removal. Until this point, people were recruited into a committee aimed at unseating the councillor via personal contacts and networks. However, this meeting in Bahale gave residents some determination over who formed part of the Crisis Committee. According to Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, this is the point when their plans to remove the councillor "came together".[761] The involvement of the broader section of Phomolong residents was the initial step in transcending the parochial identity of the Crisis Committee as a committee of disaffected people. This move boosted the legitimacy of the Crisis Committee.

The meeting was preceded by a rigorous campaign to inform residents about the plans for a mass protest. This involved Crisis Committee members visiting every household in Phomolong to explain their concerns and some of the proposals to get government's attention. This was not only crucial in mobilising community members to attend the meeting but was also instrumental in determining the extent to which community members were prepared to support the protest action. Madikgetla Madia explains this in the following words:

> We moved house to house explaining to people. After we realised that we had strong support we then decided to carry on with the protest ... We asked people. Many supported us; others said "No get out!" We saw that people

[760]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[761]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

supported us in majority.[762]

Collective Consumption - "We were crying about service delivery"

In formulating these demands, the Crisis Committee emphasised demands that would resonate with the broader sections of the community. According to Moss Tsolanku, this was the principal reason for the support of the protest.

> The Crisis Committee placed emphasis on community issues such as incomplete houses, cracked RDP houses that were evidence of poor workmanship, RDP list corruption. The latter meant that those associated with Tshabangu received RDP houses before the people that applied for them in the early 1990s. People could understand when we raised the issues. That is why the township could understand and support the protest.[763]

Mthanjane adds that the issues were broadened so as to maximize support for the protest. Moreover, the Crisis Committee consciously chose to draw an intricate link between what they deemed as poor service delivery and Tshabagu's leadership of Phomolong. Evidently, this was a well-conceived strategy which in Mthenjana's analysis, would not only highlight the Phomolong's plight on service delivery, but also lead to Tshabangu's removal. As Mthenjana explains:

> [W]e even said that we can't just say this is corruption. We strengthened it by merging it with other issues. We said you can see that even here at home we don't have toilets that work, there are no people working. So, meaning his service is poor because we are from Phomolong. [764]

Service delivery issues were important in the protests. Studies reveal that the bucket system was an acute problem in Phomolong. In 2001, only 50.3% of the population in both Hennenman and Phomolong had access to a flushing toilet. Although this figure had increased from 27.6% in 1996, it was still considerably high. The prevalence of the bucket system in Hennenman and Phomolong was also higher than the Matjhabeng. The CDS study argues that the persistence of the bucket system might have been exacerbated by the expansion of the township and the growth of informal settlements. The increase of the percentage of people using a pit toilet or with no

[762]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.

[763]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, Phomolong, 20 January 2009.

[764]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

sanitation at all from 10.6% and 1.9% in 1996 to 13.4% and 3.5% respectively is also attributed to an increase of informal settlements. The percentage of people living in informal housing in Phomolong and Hennenman (28.6%) in 2001 was also higher than the Majhabeng's average of 13.2% during the same period. Although this number was quite high in Phomolong and Henneman, it was still a marked improvement from the 41.3% in 1996. This is perhaps indicative of the fact that some low cost housing was built for Phomolong residents during this time. During the same period, there was also an increase in the number of people relying on public taps to access water. In 1996, the percentage of people accessing water by means of a public tap was 3.4%. By 2001, this number had grown to 13.4%. In addition, although the number of people without access to electricity decreased from 32.2% in 1996 to 22.8% in 2001, the affordability of electricity was a major issue.[765] As shown in the previous chapter, electricity disconnections became rife in Phomolong, especially between 1999 and 2000.

The Crisis Committee linked service delivery challenges in Phomolong with Tshabangu's leadership and called for his immediate resignation. The rationale was that Banks Tshabangu was at the helm of the many developmental challenges in the township and hence any settlement of these without his removal would be futile. The other prominent issues in the memorandum included the provision of free basic electricity, which the memorandum claimed had not been practically implemented. What was described as a "white elephant" sewerage system was also the cause for concern for many residents. The memorandum clearly stated that:

> We are strongly against the white elephant sewerage system that has been put in place in Phomolong. Only incomplete sewerage pipes have been laid into sites without any toilets to flush. The intended purpose of the sewerage system is to eradicate the bucket system. The sewerage project in Phomolong has been dragging for too long.[766]

The persistence of the bucket system was considered a sign that the government was not genuine about protecting citizens' rights to dignity. The experience of many with the bucket system was a dehumanising one. This harsh experience is appositely captured in the words of Sello Sefuthi:

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[765]Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.14-15.

[766]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

> When it's December and the night soil (septic tank) has not been collected, you can just imagine ... when you go to the toilet you will find it rotten with flies everywhere. Some of these top socialite guys usually say that they can't bring their girlfriends to Hennenman because of those terrible conditions. How do you bring visitors to such a place, unless you take them to these middle income houses? [767]

The memorandum also included complaints about nepotism and corruption in the allocation of RDP houses, the lack of information about the IDP project as well as the interference of the councillor in the appointment of workers in the local Matjhabeng municipality. This clearly referred to the role of the councillor granting those close to him favours such as jobs in the local municipality. In terms of the latter, the memorandum lamented the fact that there were still many "Masakhane" houses that remained incomplete or not constructed at all. This was in bridge of the agreement that the council had with the residents in Phomolong. The memorandum further alleged that:

> [T]here are a number of people in Phomolong in respect of whom RDP houses have been built whereas their total earnings exceeds the prescribed monthly income and therefore not complying with the said requirements ... Some people's applications for RDP houses subsidy were approved and the houses were not built for them but were instead built for people who did not apply for the subsidy.[768]

The majority of the demands tabled by the residents were directed at the councillor and his patronage network. In this regard, the memorandum also alleged that Tshabangu was interfering with the allocation of tenders and unduly influencing the tendering process to his favour. It was also claimed that he had "fronted illiterate community members only to find that the councillor is the one benefiting especially in connection with the local hall, RDP houses and municipal service accounts." Based on these allegations, the memorandum demanded Tshabangu's immediate dismissal and that the council must launch investigations to ascertain any corrupt activities regarding the allocation of tenders in Phomolong. The memorandum passionately condemned the interference of the councillor in municipality's employee recruitment process. "A practical example" the memorandum stated "is Mr Motsoi Mfuneli, his

[767]Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, Riebekstad, 27 November 2009.

[768]Phomolong Community Concerned Group, Memorandum: Service delivery, Phomolong, February 2005.

former intimate friend who is now employed by the council." From this standpoint, the residents demanded that "posts from Matjhabeng must be advertised and people must be employed according to the protocol, not by favours."[769]

Aside from the patronage that dominated the allocation of jobs in the municipality, residents also lamented that jobs in the municipality proved difficult to access due to the fact that many could not afford the transport fare to Welkom. This demand was also related to the qualms raised about the demarcation of the municipality, with the memorandum arguing that being placed under the same polity as Welkom (the headquarters of the municipality) meant that Phomolong residents were disadvantaged in terms of access to "jobs, tenders and learnerships" [770], all of which accrued to Welkom.

Another thorny issue involved land redistribution and the council's leasing of vacant land to "white farmers". In this regard, the memorandum called for the:

> Matjhabeng Local Municipality [to] hand over land to Phomolong community ... and stop using some of the farms belonging to the council at Hennenman as a source of generating income by renting them to white farmers.[771]

The Ward Committee was constituted of "yes people"

One of the key concerns in Phomolong during the protests was the extent to which the ward committee in ward three was partisan in nature and singlehandedly controlled by Tshabangu. The widespread perception was that the ward committee was an extension of the ANC branch in the same ward. This was seen as a serious problem as the ANC branch was already perceived to be undemocratic and functioned under the complete control of the ward councillor. This monopolisation of both the ward committee and ANC branch effectively meant that the former was constituted of the councillor's most loyal disciples. The dominant view amongst interviewees is that people who had no capacity nor will to express different views to those held by the councillor occupied the ward committee. Consequently, the manner in which the ward

[769] *Ibid*.
[770] *Ibid*.
[771] *Ibid*.

committee was constituted came into direct conflict with the idea of a broad representation of a multiplicity of actors in the ward. The ward committee and the ANC branch were indistinguishable.

> [M]embers of the ANC BEC were also members of the ward committee. So when the ward committee sits or BEC sits there is no difference. So there's a feeling that power must be centred in the ANC, the ANC is the centre and the ward committee's role must just be to fill in indigent forms for people.[772]

As a result of the councillor's centrality in appointing ward committee members, most felt that the committee was an institution wherein only the councillor's views would find expression. This situation was blamed for the lack of diversity of perspectives within the ward committee.

> [W]e had no ward committees. They weren't there because they didn't exist, that's why I'm saying that it was just the same. That's why I'm saying the councillor was everything. He was the ward committee, [and] chairperson, all these things.[773]

> They didn't know [in] their role they were being controlled. They didn't know their powers but they were just told what to do. [T]he ANC or any political organisation isn't supposed to interfere in these things of the ward committee. So they didn't know their role. It was just people that were decorating.[774]

Tshabangu concedes that the centrality of the ward councillor in appointing the ward committee translates into each individual councillor appointing "his own people" who are "not even people from community based structures".[775] He attests that this malady poses a significant threat to the kind of democratic society that the ANC seeks to build. In his analysis, the over dominance and control of political party interests in the ward committee has come at a direct expense of fostering community participation.[776] Tshabangu elucidates this in this way:

> When we brought about the new South Africa finally, we brought about the

[772]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[773]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009

[774]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[775]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[776]*Ibid*.

> new constitution [and] we said that partisan politics must not cloud our way in trying to build this country. Amongst other things, we have this Ward Committee system that is there to entrench people's participatory role in governance. Now because of power mongering in the ANC, because of the ANC being unable to have the best of the politicised membership, you have people that intrude the ANC for the purposes of leading. They can't distinguish between the two [ANC branch and ward committee] ... that institutions of government must not be politicised.[777]

This scenario undermines councillor's accountability to their constituencies. Scholars list two main reasons that explain the poor levels of accountability by ward councillors. The first reason relates to the manner in which South Africa's electoral system is structured. Incentives for accountability are limited as citizens vote for a party as opposed to individual councillors. Hence, the poor performance of a councillor may result in low voter turnout in the next election as opposed to a complete shift in support for the party.[778] This results in councillors prioritizing accountability to the political party over accountability to their constituencies. There are no means and mechanisms of holding individual councillors to account. Thus, whilst voters may be dissatisfied with their performance, the current local government architecture does not provide ample space for voters to act on their dissatisfaction. Additionally, because of loyalty to the party, a situation whereby individuals who would not ordinarily have been their community's choices still get the majority of the votes as it is the party on the ballot that voters pledge their support for. As Madia argues:

> [E]ven after protests people still vote for the ANC in municipal[ity]. Even the mayor is not wanted but people still love the ANC. They can have a problem with the councillor but not the ANC. They say that these people are ruining the organisation of Tambo and Mandela that was built out of difficulties.[779]

Compounding matters is the reality that prospects for upward political mobility within the ANC relies heavily on networks formed with upper structures of the party. In the case of the ANC, Regional Executive Committees (RECs) plays a crucial role in deciding who ultimately becomes councillor. ANC RECs are perceived as notorious for sidelining candidates nominated by branches who are also more rooted in their

[777] *Ibid*.

[778] Oldfield, "Participatory Mechanisms and Community Politics: Building Consensus and Conflict", p.492.

[779] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

communities in favour of the more politically connected individuals. The result is obsequiousness, whereby ward councillors merely regurgitate party positions however problematic and no matter how much misery they may cause at the community level. In order to secure their interests, councillors also form powerful vertical relationships with members of the ANC serving in upper structures. The majority of the Crisis Committee believed that the networks that Tshabangu was a part of the REC and the PEC aided his prolonged political survival as a leader in the area. Some argue that "the ANC in the region and the province kept blocking the provincial government from acting on the matter" and that Tshabangu was "shielded by the ANC."[780] These words by one of the Crisis Committee activists about this are revealing:

> He was well connected and networked politically. He was ... also in the region so he was powerful and he thought that what we planned to do we would never achieve.[781]

As scholars have begun pointing out, this is not a unique challenge confronting Phomolong but can be observed in many areas that have experienced service delivery protests in the recent past.[782] There is a widespread sentiment that ANC councillors utilise informal and formal organisational networks as a buffer against accountability to residents.[783] Carrim points out, these limited institutional powers is a source of "insecurity" amongst most ward councillors, resulting in the rise of

> a tendency to say instead of engaging with communities to sort of engage with a small number within a community and build up direct links with them, disperse patronage to them so that you can co-opt and contain them and win them over to your side.[784]

In many instances, residents and ANC activists at a local level lament the excessive powers of the ANC RECs in deploying to the local state. Dissent at local level is often silenced by the fact that there is a revolving door between councillors and those occupying leadership positions at regional level. Consequently, argues Maya,

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[780]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, Phomolong, 20 January 2009.
[781]*Ibid*.

[782]Benit-Gbaffou, "Are practices of local participation sidelining the institutional channels? Reflections from Johannesburg" and Staniland, "They know me, I will not get a job': public participation, patronage, and the sedation of civil society in a Capetonian township".
[783]Interview with Zakhele Maya, Johannesburg, 04 March 2010.
[784]Interview with Yunus Carrim, Johannesburg, 13 December 2009.

> When you are raising issues about frustrations at the local level with the REC of the movement, you find that you are actually meeting the same person you are trying to deal with at the local level and right there they start to frustrate issues and processes. You find that the same people are ex-officio members in the PEC and PWC of the ANC. So you generally have that line of frustration and whenever you raise issues as a movement, as an organisation they are not attended to and are reduced to a mere political squabble.[785]

Seen from this angle, the resort to what Benit-Gbaffou calls "non-institutional participatory" channels such as protests are a direct consequence of this reality. As Maya points out,

> [T]he community gets frustrated because branches of the ANC can't address these issues. Not because they don't want to but because materially the conditions and the way the structures are aligned creates those frustrations. And that is why you see this immediate abrupt of protest all the way.[786]

Some residents also believe and argue that leading an ANC branch is more preferable than leading the ward committee. The reason for this conclusion is that leading an ANC branch opens pathways to network and interact with some of the top echelons of the leadership of local or even provincial government. This maximizes opportunities to access patronage in the form of jobs and deployments. Under these circumstances, the political mobility of ANC branch leaders, especially those occupying the top five positions at branch level becomes cemented. By contrast, ward committees are viewed as providing little material incentives. Therefore, this can be understood to provide a good basis to argue that the high levels of contestation within ANC branches and conflicts over material resources emanates from this reality. As one of the leaders of the ANC attests:

> ANC comrades only look for what they are going to get and there's *niks* (nothing) in the ward committee. Even the mayor doesn't take you seriously. If you are in the BEC as the treasurer or secretary or chairperson you communicate with whomever. You can even call the chairperson of the province or the premier or chairperson of the region who is also the mayor. If you are leading in ANC you can access the cell numbers of leaders in upper structures. But if you are just a ward committee member they give you the office numbers. So people of the ANC have started seeing that this

[785]Interview with Zakhele Maya, Johannesburg, 04 March 2010.
[786]*Ibid*.

ward committee is not taken seriously.[787]

Furthermore, what the protest also demonstrated was that there is a complex synergy of relations between the ANC branch, the councillor and the local state. As it stands, the current local government architecture provides political parties with a monopoly over the distribution and administration of local government resources. Through this, the possibility of patronage is enhanced and relations that render many residents as well as civil society organisations dependent on political figures become established. The experience in Phomolong is that membership of the ANC mediates access to local state resources and being in good terms with the councillor maximizes one's opportunities to access local state resources. An ANC membership and good relations with the councillor as opposed to citizenship rights and meritocracy are the primary criteria used when determining who should benefit from the distribution regime. The disregard for meritocracy is demonstrated by the belief that an ANC membership guarantees deployment even when the minimum skills and competency requirements are not fulfilled. Perceptions are that an ANC membership is beneficial in that "you can be deployed as a manager with your standard eight."[788] Likewise, those who are perceived as local power brokers in ANC structures are most favoured by the distribution regime.

Additionally, because of the ANC's locally established reputation as a mediator of access to local state resources, a general expectation of improvement of life prospects with the joining of the organisation has become entrenched. This expectation is fuelled by the fact that even when recruiting new members, it is stressed that an ANC membership enhances one's access to collective consumption, employment, business or skills training opportunities. What the ANC called "rent-a-member" tendency in 2007 was an established practice in Phomolong before the 2005 protests. Not only was there selective recruitment of members, but also reported instances of bought membership, wherein incentives such as better access to the means of collective consumption, jobs and other opportunities were used as tools to attract new membership. Interestingly, even Tshabangu admits that this was a key factor in the political situation in Phomolong.

[787]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[788]*Ibid.*

> You find that people who don't have houses they are approached and encouraged to join the ANC. When a person comes and complains about access to a house they say join the ANC. Should the person say they don't have money please wait till end of the month for me to get my pension they say 'no we will pay for you'. So it is bought membership. Bought in the sense that they pay for it and that its membership based on a desire to access a house, a catering tender or a learnership … They will join so long as those opportunities are there.[789]

The payoffs for possessing ANC membership have a demonstrating effect to those who were still in doubt about joining the organisation.

> [T]he record speaks, everyone who has gone to the ANC his life has changed. Everyone who has gone to the ANC for his own agenda, he has successfully benefited. In three years, people have bought many cars for cash. People who don't have salary advisers. So you don't have a situation where you are talking about a clear environment that objectively presents itself with objective individuals.[790]

Aside from possessing an ANC membership, beneficiaries of the patronage are also expected to lose their "independence" as ANC members and trail the path of those at the command of local state resources and opportunities such as local councillors and in some instance leaders of the ANC at regional levels.

> To get access to state resources and jobs you must have that ANC membership and open yourself to be used. Everything else that is right and proper comes from those people you must serve in the ANC who occupy leadership positions in the branches … Whatever is given here must benefit these people … You will never get anything in this community without being used by the leadership of the ANC in their way.[791]

As observed by other scholars, this situation not only affects the ability of individual residents to take antagonistic stances towards the political occupants of the local state but also significantly thwarts civil society radicalism. Patronage networks in the local state produces a limp-wristed civil society, which eschews challenging the status quo for fear of exclusion from the distribution regime. One of the Crisis Committee participants makes the observation that material "survival" makes it difficult for individuals and local organisations to adopt a stance that is antagonistic or critical of the ANC. According to Nyathi Madia, "people want to take power so therefore they

[789]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.
[790]*Ibid.*

[791]*Ibid*.

don't normally fight the ANC."[792] In actuality, protests usually do not seek to reverse the predominance of the political society in the distribution of local resources but rather aims to restore this status quo.[793] The possibilities for a radical civil society organising around collective consumption is also stifled by the success of the ANC to locally project any attempt to organise outside its ambit as illegitimate and counter-revolutionary. As one observer notes, there is:

> [T]his thing of the ANC that does not see any leadership exercised by any other organisation except the ANC. Now few members of the ANC group themselves together to form SANCO they will be slaughtered immediately. So everybody else must be in the ANC and everybody else must listen to the powers that be in the ANC. Any different motive, any different initiative to establish any other structure ... They are the only ones that must lead and they manipulate all processes that lead to the election of the new leadership. The political space is not open.[794]

"How we won the War" – Events Marking the Protest in Phomolong

At this meeting, residents expressed support for the idea of an urgent mass protest, where a memorandum of demands would be handed over to the mayor of the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, Mr Serake Leeuw. The Crisis Committee moved swiftly to draft protest demands as articulated in the meeting as well as derived from existing knowledge about the crisis of collective consumption in Phomolong and the corruption allegations against Tshabangu.

The first protest march took place on the 4th February 2005. However, permission was not granted for this march.[795] According to Sello Sefuthi, the support for the march cut across different strata and generational groups in the community. He describes this observation with the following words:

> Those ones can fight for their cause ... [T]hose ones can fight ... every day without stopping and have the entire community rallied around them. You

[792]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

[793]Staniland, "They know me, I will not get a job': public participation, patronage, and the sedation of civil society in a Capetonian township", p.45.

[794]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[795]Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.16.

> could go to an 89 year old woman saying No! I support these ones! The professionals, teachers, policemen would say no we support them! [796]

The march was accompanied by a stay-away, meaning that schools would be boycotted and people would not go to work. According to Morake, the support for the stay-away was astounding; with thousands of residents participating in the march:

> [W]hen we marched and there were about eight or nine thousand people that joined the march. The whole township was there! Schools were closed on that day. That's when we handed over our memorandum at the first stop in the township near the police station. We gave them seven days and they delayed response to the memorandum. At two o'clock in the morning we met to plan again.[797]

According to the CDS study, one of the ways in which the protesters demonstrated their dissatisfaction with poor service delivery in Phomolong was by brandishing buckets carrying night soil, pipes and sticks and by barricading the main entrance of the township. The Matjhabeng mayor, Serake Leeuw, addressed the protesters on the first day of the protest, but could not quell the protests as residents felt that his response to their main concerns was unsatisfactory. The main cause of the residents' apprehension emanated from the mayor informing the protesters that the council could not suspend Councillor Tshabangu without due process being followed. The mayor was forced to leave the township with his car being pelted with stones. Police shot rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.[798]

Another mass meeting was convened by the Crisis Committee on the same day to discuss police action and the counter-strategy to police shootings and arrests. In the same afternoon, Tshabangu's house was stoned. Stay-aways and road barricades continued with people not being able to leave the township to go to work. On 6th February, a mass meeting was convened. In this meeting, it was resolved that a bigger mass meeting would be convened in the stadium with the community demanding that the Free State premier Beatrice Marshoff address the protesters. The protests continued on the 7th February with the residents threatening to blockade a national road (N1) which passes through Phomolong to neighbouring Ventersburg unless the

[796]Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, Riebekstad, 27 November 2009.

[797]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[798] Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.16.

provincial government heeded their demand for the premier to address them. This would affect traffic flowing from Johannesburg, Kroonstad to Welkom and Bloemfontein.[799]

Around noon of the 7th February, the then ANC Provincial Secretary Pat Matosa and the Free State local government and housing MEC Benny Kotsoane addressed a gathering of the community in the local stadium. In this mass meeting, Matosa made the undertaking to ensure that the premier would soon visit the township and that the issues raised by the protesters would be attended to. A task team comprising the Crisis Committee and government representatives was constituted. Pat Matosa, Benny Kotsoane (local government MEC) and Khalipha (ANC Regional Chairperson) formed part of the ANC and government representatives. In this meeting, the protesters were told that there was no conclusive proof implicating Tshabangu in any sort of corrupt activity. They were also informed that Tshabangu would not be resigning from the council.[800] Furthermore, Matosa drew the inference that the decision to remove Tshabangu was a political one and one which ANC structures and members would have to decide on.[801] A newspaper report quoted him saying:

> These people are not interested in anything except that Comrade Banks must resign. They wanted us to announce in the stadium where there were people who were not even ANC members that he has resigned. There was also no evidence that could implicate him in corruption.[802]

This response angered the protesters who responded by throwing stones, resulting in the delegation being escorted out of the stadium by the police. Coincidentally, protests also erupted in neighbouring Mmamahabane in Ventersburg around the same time. On 14th February, Free State Premier Marshoff chose to address protesters in neighbouring Ventersburg as opposed to coming to Phomolong. This caused a tumult amongst residents and was followed by the looting of shops owned by Indian and Pakistani traders on 15th February.[803] The looting of shops owned by what protesters called "foreigners" bears testimony to Von Holdt *et al*'s assertion that these protests have some regressive features including xenophobia.

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[799] Mokoena, M, "ANC suspects Role of Boeremag in upheavals", *City Press*, 19 February 2005
[800] *Ibid*.

[801]Mokoena, M, "Phomolong once a quiet township, now in turmoil", *City Press*, 20 February 2005.
[802]*Ibid.*
[803]Botes *et al, The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.17.

The Premier's diversion was crucial in intensifying the protest and fuelling the anger amongst residents. Nyathi Madia describes this result in this way:

> We organised a big, big march that was directed at Marshoff the premier. Marshoff came and instead of coming here she went to Venter and said in the news that the PEC didn't mandate her in Hennenman. The situation became worse and we were waiting for her in the stadium. We incited people saying that these people are disrespecting us telling Marshoff that she must go to Venter instead of Hennenman. So Hennenman was on fire once more and it went on. Marshoff's absence helped to intensify things. We told the people that she is disrespecting us.[804]

Between the 15th and 16th February, nineteen youths were arrested and charged with public violence. A policeman also died of an asthma attack on 15th February. Around this time, Tshabangu's house and family also became specific targets of the violence. Tshabangu's house was initially placed under permanent police guard as there were fears that it would be torched. There was also the fear that he and his family's lives were endangered. These fears were not unfounded as some of the Crisis Committee members admitted that they "wanted to burn his house so it was on police guard."[805] Some members of the Crisis Committee acknowledge that during the protest, strong sentiments against Tshabangu existed amongst them. These sentiments are captured vividly by "Power" when he says: "We didn't want to see him anywhere because we were going to kill him wherever we saw him."[806] Sefuthi's interaction with some of the Crisis Committee members heightened the suspicion that Tshabangu's life was in danger. In his analysis, the protest had moved beyond targeting him as a councillor but to targeting his life and the lives of those who surrounded him. Sefuthi narrates this sentiment in this way:

> I am one person who despite being a leader I can take people somewhere and buy them drinks and dance, I won't drink but I will let them talk and there would be insults, tensions and anger and all that. I could sense that these guys ... I then advised the Security Department of the movement that they are going to kill him. It's a matter of time now.[807]

Tshabangu was forced to flee Phomolong on the 16th February 2005. This was to be his last night in Phomolong until he returned in 2009 after staying in Virginia for

[804]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[805]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[806]*Ibid*.

[807]Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, Riebekstad, 27 November 2009.

three years. Tshabangu's property and belongings remained in the house as the family was whisked away to a safe house in Virginia. His recollection of the events on his last night in Phomolong is quite vivid.

> A helicopter came to my house; seemingly there was advice from the intelligence that I was going to be shot that night. They took my family and said I must remain. They then put me in a hippo...
>
> They had dug a big hole and the hippo was not aware of this. We got stuck in the hole. The small children again were throwing stones and burning tyres. They threw a petrol bomb and the driver was badly burnt. We had to take our clothes so as to stop them from burning. He was burning and we depended on him to run away. So the police had to shoot. They came from the top of the hippo and started shooting and the policeman said shit these people are shooting back...
>
> So by luck we escaped. But the policeman was terribly burnt. We drove past the other street and they came out of their houses and they kept throwing petrol bombs. They were organised that night. We managed to escape being driven by the policeman who couldn't drive. That was our last night in Phomolong, on February the 16th 2005. It was terrible.[808]

But Tshabangu's fleeing the township was not enough for the residents who adamantly demanded his suspension. As a result, although March was largely peaceful with residents patiently awaiting feedback from the task team about the extent to which their concerns would be addressed, this did not last as protests once again erupted on 5th April where approximately 500 youths barricaded the township's main roads.[809] Violence and property destruction took centre stage on 6th April with the public library being set on fire and police being pelted with stones by the residents.[810] The suspension of the councillor was a prominent demand in this eruption of violence. The violence could not be quelled even when the Matjhabeng council resolved to suspend Banks Tshabangu in June 2005.[811]

This followed an earlier disappointment where the Crisis Committee had organised two buses to Welkom in anticipation of a positive council decision to suspend the councillor. The Crisis Committee organised these buses from sponsorship given by

[808]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.
[809]Botes *et al, The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.19.

[810]*Ibid*.

[811]*Ibid*, p.22.

the business forum.[812] From Madia's description, the council sitting was packed that day.[813] Tshabangu was not present at the meeting and this was taken as a sign that he would be suspended on that day. According to testimonies, the community members present in the sitting were also invited for food in the town hall. To their distress the council stopped short of suspending Tshabangu. According to one of the residents present at the gathering in Welkom, this caused uproar amongst the community members present at the sitting. The response was largely destructive. A member of the Crisis Committee offers this explanation:

> We couldn't understand that. We wanted him out that day. The people in the buses started fighting and damaging things in the city hall, cups, glasses, champagne. They tried to stop us but the people were angry and no explanation could work. It was just a mess ... [W]hen we came back we called a community meeting saying that the council is afraid of this guy.[814]

Violence once again erupted and in late June, the council took a decision to suspend the councillor. News of Tshabangu's suspension was greeted with jubilation:

> When Banks' suspension as a councillor was announced, the whole township celebrated and we also celebrated in Welkom. There was champagne there. There was a convoy in town, singing and the whole township went to the stadium.[815]

It could be argued that the council decision to suspend Tshabangu came as a direct result of the sustained pressure that the protest was placing on the municipality. In addition to this was the fact that local government elections were approaching and there was a fear that residents would respond to the council's recalcitrance by punishing the ANC in the ballot. Linked to this was the fact that the protest had attracted attention from the highest levels of the ANC leadership structures. At a national level, the ANC had responded to the protests by deploying Essop Pahad and Smuts Ngonyama to aid the speedy resolution of the protests in order to make way for smooth local government elections.[816] This pressure meant that the leadership of the

[812]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

[813]Interview with Azael Leseba, Phomolong, 15 March 2010.

[814]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[815]*Ibid*.

[816]See Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009 and Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

municipality was placed in the spotlight and made the municipality vulnerable to being placed under administration.

> Those people were forced to act because they were also looking out for their jobs because Mbeki was coming to Mathjabeng and would require a report on Banks. So it was important that Banks be suspended. Because we were pushing that the municipality must be placed under administration. And some of the senior leaders admit now that they were looking out for their jobs. This guy must be sacrificed.[817]

Violence was a defining feature of the protests until Tshabangu resigned on 12th September 2005. Many of the testimonies in this research refer to the protests as some form of a war largely because of its intensity, duration and the high levels of police and intelligence presence during the protest. One of the participants in the protests aptly captures this when he says that:

> It was just war. It was now a daily routine that around three in the morning it starts. It was a normal thing to fight police and chase hippos (military vehicle) around. It went on for months and months. It was normal in Hennenman that a hippo would come and we would chase it throwing stones the whole night. [A]t first it was the police from Welkom and they left, the ones from Bloemfontein came and left and there were also the ones from Natal and they also left. They came with helicopters and motorbikes but it was still the same.[818]

This was confirmed by the then Councillor Tshabangu whose removal featured prominently in the protest demands:

> That violence took about ten months, day and night, twenty four hours. Tyres burning! The police couldn't handle that ... It was terrible. I thought it was going to end, but it got stronger, stronger, stronger and stronger until September 2005.[819]

The violence, according to the Crisis Committee participants and some of the people that led the protest, came as a direct result of police provocation and systematic planning from protesters.

> The strategy was that we had grouped ourselves into sections. So upon entering the township, the police were confronted by a group and the

[817]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

[818]*Ibid*.

[819]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

> fighting would take about an hour. After that they would disperse and the police would progress to Putswastena and come into confrontation into yet another group. So that's how we could sustain it and it was difficult to arrest the people because when you drive a caspir you can't get out, you can only shoot ... because there was one guy who tried to get off and walk and they almost killed him with stones. The other strategy is that we knew that a caspir takes time before it can turn. So you hit with stones as you run, knowing that it will take a long time to turn.[820]

Another strategy that was used in the protests was to place school children in the frontlines of the pickets. The Phomolong protests occurred in the aftermath of the Harrismith protest that took place in August 2004, in which a 17 year old boy was fatally wounded by rubber bullets fired by the police.[821] The Harrismith case provided some lessons for those who strategised the protests in Phomolong. In this regard, children of school going age were placed in the frontlines of the protests. The calculation here was that the public outcry from the shooting of a Harrismith teenager would make the police more reluctant to use brutal force in dealing with protesters in Phomolong, particularly if children in school uniforms were the ones seen at the forefront. This was the concerted strategy of the Crisis Committee. According to Power, this strategy produced the exact results that they anticipated:

> [The] riot police were scared to harass us because we were also using young children, putting them in front so that they should shoot, a person should die and they can get into trouble. So, they quickly became aware that hey, they are playing those tricks of bringing children and putting them amongst themselves...[822]

The extent of the involvement of minors in the protest is evidenced by the number of minors charged on public violence during the protests. For instance, on the 13th April, six minors appeared in the Welkom magistrate court on the charges of public violence. They were later released to the care of their parents.[823] Tshabangu believed that the advice to place school children in the firing line was sourced from members of the police service who were directly providing the Crisis Committee with practical advice on how to prolong the protests.

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[820]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[821]"Teenager dies after Harrismith Protest", *Mail & Guardian*, 31 August 2004, www.mg.co.za.

[822]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[823]Botes *et al*, *The New Struggle: Service Related Unrest in South Africa*, p.20.

> I know for a fact that one of the advices (that they got from the police was that the secret core must use school going children when they attack because the law doesn't permit the police to shoot children of that age. Young children, but they were so strong; you couldn't say they were children. So it was one of the strategies, hence you could find that the police were unable to stop the violence.[824]

As a result, the protests recorded more numbers of arrests. During the first month of the protests, schools were forced to close as students participated in their numbers and people were also prevented from going to work. Consequently, this prompted the involvement of the local Hennenman Business Forum. A combination of these factors prompts one of the protest leaders to argue that "[o]ur war required courageous people. Some even packed their bags in 2005 and left Hennenman. Things were bad by then. People were being arrested in their homes."[825]

Tshabangu eventually resigned as councillor in September 2005. He concedes that his resignation came as a result of the sustained pressure from the protest as well as the ANC's intervention at a national level. He explains the events leading to his resignation in this way:

> [It was] September 2005 when I got a call from the office of the President. He called me to the high office and asked me what exactly the problem is (sic). I explained to the president. Seemingly they found that the information I gave them was corresponding to that they received from the intelligence. So the ANC PEC met. The ANC PEC called me the following morning and told me they are sending some comrades to speak to me. I knew exactly what they were going to tell me but I was ready. Then they said no we are not fighting you, you are still our comrade, and it's difficult to ask you to resign given your contribution. What do you think should be done?[826]

He continues:

> I said I think the last thing to do is to resign. They asked me when are you going to resign? I said now! They said can you do it, I said yes give me the papers. I wrote my letter, faxed it to the MM's (Municipal Manager) office and ANC REC office. Then a Special Council meeting was called to discuss my letter. The people were happy when I resigned...[827]

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[824]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.
[825]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[826] Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[827]*Ibid*.

Conclusion

This chapter painted a picture of the evolving local government system in South Africa and the manifestation of changes associated with this evolution in Phomolong. This chapter has discussed the 2005 Phomolong protests in extensive detail. The contentious issues, leading figures and the key events during the protests have been interrogated in this chapter. The analysis provided in this chapter suggests that the structural basis for local protests under apartheid and in the post apartheid period is replicated across many black townships in South Africa. To deny this would be tantamount to overlooking the corrosive impact of apartheid and neoliberal economic policies on the local state in this country. Thus, the extent to which there are structural economic factors behind local protests is a given. It is in this respect that this chapter has argued that collective consumption has been a critical element of local struggles in Phomolong.

As argued in the previous chapter, Castells' formulation of local struggles provides a persuasive framework for studying the politics of the local state in Phomolong. However, does this reality, the strength of the economic factors in this analysis mean that what transpired in Phomolong was essentially an anti-capitalist struggle geared towards the radical reconstitution of society? This chapter contends that although important, the structural basis for the protests and the dissatisfaction with the local state's allocation of collective consumption was mediated by two critical factors: intra-organisational dynamics permeating the ANC in the area as well as the history and politics of contestation centred around access to the local state and the resources at its behest, such as jobs and deployments. The Crisis Committee, which is analysed in careful detail in the next chapter, will be utilised as a plank to demonstrate the validity of this argument.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"We are not a Concerned Group, We are a Crisis Committee"

The previous chapter examined the 2005 protests – their scale, intensity and causes. This chapter uses the study of the Crisis Committee to analyse the nature of protest politics in post-apartheid South Africa. Social Movement Theory is extensively applied to understand the Crisis Committee's internal dynamics and operations. The chapter argues that the Crisis Committee can only be defined as an urban social movement at the risk of failing to capture its specificity and evolution out of Phomolong's history of struggle and resistance against apartheid; its dynamic and complex relationship with the ANC and the state; as well as its failure to develop a radical critique of the status quo and raise sharp questions about how the neoliberal post-apartheid local state organises collective consumption. Thus, despite some of its promising aspects and potential to effect thoroughgoing transformation on the local state, the Crisis Committee's hybrid and fluid political character and its failure to craft a radical critique of the status quo should induce some scepticism on the part of those committed to a radical transformation of capitalist South Africa. The argument advanced in this chapter is that an analysis rooted in the internal dynamics of protest movements; the historical and structural context from which they arise presents more possibilities for understanding the social conflicts currently taking place in many South African townships. This chapter lays the foundation for this approach by examining the Crisis Committee's internal dynamics and social composition, its relationship with the ANC and the state, individual and collective motivations for joining it as well as its tactics and repertoires of action.

The Social Composition of the Crisis Committee

A discussion on the social composition of the Crisis Committee is important for understanding the different motivations and persuasions of the people who formed the coordinating centre for the 2005 protests. The Crisis Committee was formed by an assortment of individuals and characters. In terms of composition, the membership of the Crisis Committee was exclusively from Phomolong. In total, the members were

fifteen (15). Additional to this fifteen were people who erratically attended the Crisis Committee's daily meetings. Of the fifteen members, four (4) were women, two (2) of whom recused themselves from the committee. Some of the participants in the Crisis Committee were Tshabangu's erstwhile allies who had worked with him as an ANC leader at branch level and a councillor in the municipality.

Two main characteristics were evident in the Crisis Committee's composition. Firstly, the Crisis Committee had a youthful character. A majority of its members were all under the age of thirty-five. Secondly, most of the activists in the Crisis Committee were also unemployed. Sethunya, Power, Nyathi, Azael Leseba, Morake, Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati were among the unemployed members of the Crisis Committee. Some of the participants had also witnessed the impact of neoliberal cost-recovery in the country's institutions of higher learning. For instance, Moss Tsolanku dropped out of his studies at Wits University due to a combination of lack of financial and academic support. Three other members of the Crisis Committee also had a history of incomplete higher education. This was Shambe Tsiane, Frank Monyamane and Movers Mohohlo. Shambe Tsiane is described as a "brilliant" comrade who matriculated from Bahale with distinctions in Mathematics and Science.[828] Monyamane and Mohohlo were renowned for their participation in Bahale's debating activities. They were also members of the Eagles Youth Club in the 1980s. At the time of the protests, Monyamane and Madikgetla Madia, one of the two women who remained in the Crisis Committee, were pursuing their university studies. Curiously, the Crisis Committee attracted the participation of educated young people whose advancement had been derailed through a combination of both financial and academic exclusions from the country's universities.

It is useful to note that although the Crisis Committee did not imagine itself in this way, the fact that all of its participants were drawn from the township meant that they were conversant with the impacts of neoliberal cost-recovery and what an absence of thoroughgoing transformation of the local state in post-apartheid South Africa truly meant. Most of the participants had spent a greater part of their childhoods and young adult life residing in Phomolong. As such, they were all testimonies and witnesses of the limits of neoliberalism as an economic prescription governing the post-apartheid

[828] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

local state. Some of the participants' regular visits to the township earned them the label "township intellectuals". They would often gather in the library to read newspapers and ponder complex philosophical questions about "Marxism, Communism and government strategy."[829] This was not an entirely positive ascription. Some allege that it was often used by councillor Tshabangu to mobilise other township youths against this group.

> Banks used to address community meetings [and] he would say 'there is a group of people who sit in the library, they portray themselves as the intellectuals of the township, they analyse everything, they plan and do all sorts of things.' So when people come from the community meeting they would tell us that Banks was talking about you, saying you are elevating yourselves into intellectuals of the township.[830]

Although most of its members were young, the Crisis Committee boasted the involvement of two experienced activists from the 1980s. These were Thabo Sethunya and Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati. Thabo Sethunya, affectionately known as "Commissar" among younger comrades, is renowned for having cultivated a crop of political activists in the area. Mokati was also in the same generation of activists who went to Bahale high school and became involved in PYCO.

The Crisis Committee comprised almost exclusively, with the exception of Sinde Nhlapo, individuals linked to the ANC, as supporters and members. As "Power" notes, in the Crisis Committee "we didn't choose where a person came from, who was the person, but people knew that we were ANC members."[831] As discussed in the previous chapter, a considerable number of activists in the Crisis Committee lamented the absence of democracy in the ANC. This "absence of democracy" was twofold. On the one hand, Tshabangu was accused of "privatizing" the ANC's recruitment machinery and barring those who differed with him from joining as members. On the other hand, there were some activists in the Crisis Committee whose ANC membership was suspended largely due to Tshabangu's mechanisations. Others such as Morake and Power/Mthenjana also feared that Tshabangu would soon suspend their ANC membership. The main characteristics of the Crisis Committee, particularly the dominance of ANC sympathisers and the unemployed would have a

[829] *Ibid*.
[830] *Ibid*.
[831] Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

huge bearing on its politics.

Why we joined the Crisis Committee

There were several reasons that motivated the participation in the Crisis Committee. One of the activists argues that one of the reasons that drew her to participate in the Crisis Committee was the lack of development in the township.

> I saw that there was no development in Phomolong, no direction. The only changes took place was the expansion of the township and the building of three more schools to bring the total to six. It was the same as when we were young. I realised that Phomolong will not go anywhere unless we change it.[832]

The reality of underdevelopment in the township was a sore point for many of the participants in the Crisis Committee, particularly for those who were born and raised in Phomolong. Accordingly, the decision to form this organ and mobilise for change came after a set of lingering questions were asked. Participants asked themselves: "Where was Phomolong during apartheid? Where is Phomolong now? What has changed? Why? Things have gotten worse ten years after 1994."[833] Practical experience with governance armed some of the participants with the knowledge about how unfair the local state's mode of distribution of services was to the township's poor residents. In recollecting her experiences as a Parliamentary Constituency Officer (PCO) of the ANC in Phomolong, Madikgetla Madia notes that:

> I have seen old grannies trying to pay the little that they had for services that they don't receive. There have been RDP foundations lying without progress in terms of building since 1997. The allocation of RDP homes is done through patronage. I realised that we were sinking deeper and deeper unless we try and save ourselves.[834]

The faltered hopes and broken promises were also instrumental in persuading some to form part of the Crisis Committee. For instance, it is argued that Tshabangu's role in marginalising certain comrades and contributing to the demise of their "political career" was a key factor driving participation in the Crisis Committee.

Thabo Sethunya is used as an example of how the councillor orchestrated the political

[832]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.
[833]*Ibid*.

[834]*Ibid*.

downfall of some individuals. However, Tshabangu does not rule out the fact that his marginalisation of comrades like Sethunya made it easier for him to be a target. To the contrary, his analysis concedes that his fallout with the likes of Sethunya and other comrades from the founding generation of PYCO greatly contributed to his demise. In his words, it was, a "tactical blunder" to exclude this crop of activists when he became mayor and a ward councillor after the consolidation of the municipalities in 2000. Tshabangu also claims that:

> Thabo Sethunya is an example of the pain that divisions have sown ... It had to be personal at some point where we couldn't talk to each other. Where there was this communication that had absolutely broken down. So there was no one to facilitate this communication. In the process emerged new people, now those people have taken over and they don't want to see any of us. [W]hen there were secret meetings to deal with me, no one could have neutralised those meetings.[835]

This account is given credence by other testimonies. Commenting on these hostile relations between the two, Madia notes that:

> The person he [Tshabangu] hated the most was Sethunya. He would lambast him in every platform of the community. He contributed in the demise of Sethunya's political career. Even if he regrets it now, but he contributed. He is the reason why the likes of Sethunya didn't get ahead in politics.[836]

Sethunya's own account confirms these sentiments as he argues that when he was approached to form part of the committee to remove Tshabangu, he was still "angry" and "bitter" with the ANC. The reasons for the participation of Tshabangu's erstwhile allies in the protest are appositely captured by one of the activists:

> There were people who were disgruntled in the Crisis Committee. They were close to him and they worked together and he always promised them jobs and failed to deliver for approximately eight years. He had been in the municipality since 1997. There is nothing that he did to upgrade the lives of people. He used those particular people close to him.[837]

Of these people, Power, Morake and Papi Qaba were central. Power and Morake were particularly distraught about Tshabangu's stranglehold over job opportunities in the

[835]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

[836]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[837]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, 20 January 2009.

municipality. They initiated the idea of a protest in Phomolong largely owing to their belief that the councillor had retarded their job opportunities in the local municipality. One of the participants in the Crisis Committee captures this expressively when he says that:

> We were talking about the role of this man specifically because the region in Mathjabeng told us straight that it's Banks that refused us to be deployed. He told them that the people from Hennenman have jobs already. He used to block everything. We had found the proof after he blocked us from working as general workers in the municipality.[838]

Whilst this account claims that the fallout between Banks and some of his closest acquaintances such as Morake was over jobs and deployments in the local state, a counter narrative argues that Morake in particular came into confrontation with Tshabangu due to rumours of a romantic affair between the councillor and Morake's wife. One of the Crisis Committee participants makes this claim:

> [T]here was Ndade Morake, a BEC member who was not so fine politically but he was also Banks' right hand man. There were rumours that Banks had an affair with his wife and that's what made them fight. He was very close to Banks.[839]

This is highly contested by Morake whose interpretation of this allegation is that it was used as a strategy to diffuse the protest by diverting attention from the contentious issues about service delivery, patronage and corruption and to cast a shadow of doubt over the leaders of the protest. In this regard, the allegation about a sexual affair between the councillor and Morake's wife was meant to portray the Crisis Committee as people who had personal scores to settle with the councillor. Morake recalls that this allegation surfaced when the REC of the ANC intervened in the protest and started asking uncomfortable questions about the corruption allegations made against the councillor.

> The Region intervened and when Banks was questioned if all the allegations are true he responded by saying that I am fighting him because he is sleeping with my wife. He was trying to protect himself and save face.[840]

[838]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[839] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[840]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

According to the interviews, the source of tension between Qaba (who occupied the position of ANC deputy chairperson in the BEC) and Tshabangu was the proceeds of a tender that Qaba had been awarded by the municipality. The fallout also spilled over into the ANC, where Tshabangu orchestrated Qaba's suspension. In the words of one informant:

> When I arrived back here I realised that Banks was fighting with Qaba and he was suspending them in the ANC. There was a sewer project and Banks wanted money ... kickbacks and Qaba refused, it cost millions so they fought about that money ... I realised that it's not nice anymore and the likes of Qaba were speaking out. They couldn't speak out before but the tender money was finished and life was becoming increasingly difficult.[841]

A different testimony confirms that "Papi Qaba had already been suspended from the organization. He was nothing, he no longer existed in the organisation."[842] Another victim of Tshabangu's unfulfilled promises is Sello "Nyathi" Madia, who was instrumental in the removal of the first TLC and unsettling many members in the TLC that was constituted thereafter. Madia's relationship with Tshabangu dated back to the early 1990s when the former was still a student in Bahale. Amongst others, Tshabangu and Madia were involved in the formation of a local soccer team called Action Back and Tshabangu even had an intimate relationship with his cousin. Madia maintains that in exchange for mobilising against the first TLC, Tshabangu had promised to "deploy" Madia in the local council once he became the mayor. These close relations turned sour as the years passed and there was still no deployment. Madia adds that in the immediate period before the 2005 protests, Tshabangu was very hostile towards him. One of the ways that he showed this hostility was by expressing sentiments such as "guys like Nyathi, I will make sure they remain hungry for the rest of their lives."[843] The "hunger" that the councillor promised would be meted out on those who differ with him drove people such as Nyathi to participate in the Crisis Committee.

> [T]he biggest thing that made us fight this person is hunger in the township. I remember when I was still in Jo'burg and the life there was too fast. I realised that there is no survival there. You are always drunk. I still

[841]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

[842]I*bid*.

[843]*Ibid.*

> remember Qaba was still working in Bank City (Johannesburg) and we used to speak and say what should happen is that this man must also give us something to eat because we have been there. Why does he want to eat alone? He eats alone therefore we must come up with a strategy to make him go.[844]

An example of an individual who enjoyed a prolonged political proximity to Tshabangu was "Power" Mthenjana. What motivated him to work towards Tshabangu's removal was that his loyalty to Tshabangu did not result in material rewards.

> We ... started working with him when he was Phomolong's Mayor, but he was holding on to things, holding them to himself. He's an evil person. He thinks he won't be noticed at all if he could give other to lead because he thought that if he's not leading that means he won't be anything.[845]

Another participant in the Crisis Committee, Sello "Nyathi" Madia, also faults Tshabangu for unfulfilled promised about jobs and deployments and confirms that although service delivery was a huge problem in Phomolong, "the idea was to remove this man."[846] In crude terms, service delivery challenges were but a means to an end. Some have argued that the overwhelming focus on the councillor was justified. Sello Sefuthi's analysis of the protests was that Councillor Tshabangu's leadership style and his alienation from township residents were the critical mix that led to his ultimate demise.

> He was one dictator that I have ever known. I have known him from the school days. But mainly the issues there were more about a style of leadership ... and the community saying that *ons is gatvol* [we have had enough] more than service delivery issues.[847]

Some members of the Crisis Committee claimed to be the victims of corruption. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the year 2000, the municipality appointed Dynamic Enterprise as a company responsible for the distribution of municipal accounts and circulars in order to encourage residents to pay their rates. One of the allegations during the 2005 protest was that Tshabangu had been personally pocketing the money meant to be the salaries of the workers who were hired to distribute the

[844] *Ibid*.

[845] Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[846] Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[847] Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, Riebekstad, 27 November 2009.

mail. Tshabangu's account is that the ward committee had provided the council with the names of the people who were going to deliver the mail to Hennenman residents. Paballo and "Power" were the two names submitted to him by the ward committee. According to Tshabangu, this arrangement was made not only in Hennenman but a number of other localities under Matjhabeng's jurisdiction such as Meloding, Kutlwanong and Mmamahabane. The cheques authorising the payments of those responsible were, as a result of complications in the municipality, written in the names of the ward councillors in those areas.

> I wasn't happy with that decision but no one listened to me in the council when I said that this will cause administrative problems. Nevertheless it went ahead in a variety of wards not only in Hennenman.[848]

The "administrative problems" soon surfaced when an allegation was made that the workers had not been paid for months. One of the Crisis Committee members states that:

> [T]he other fallout was with Power and Paballo regarding the accounts for rates that they were distributing. He kept the money for himself. For months Paballo was distributing without being paid for it. Matjhabeng municipality was covering it up.[849]

Curiously, their participation in the Crisis Committee was also a way of addressing the democratic deficit within the ANC. Tshabangu, according to the participants, had to be removed because he monopolised the political space and the local state's resources. As "Power" articulates Tshabangu's domination over political space in this way:

> We were saying we are enough with this councillor 'cause he's the chairperson, he's the secretary, he's the deputy, he is the treasurer! He is all these things! Even our secretary was unable to work. He (Tshabangu) was the one who was supposed to come and take out instructions about letter writing and all those things … He was jack-of-all-trades![850]

Evidently, internal ANC contestations were crucial in building opposition to Tshabangu. Madikgetla Madia was another member of the Crisis Committee with a

[848]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 October 2009.
[849]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, 20 January 2009.

[850]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

long history with Tshabangu. She had served with Tshabangu in the ANC BEC as treasurer. In a rather nostalgic fashion, Madikgetla describes her relationship with Tshabangu as follows:

> I have known Banks forever as my comrade. I grew up admiring him. He taught me all I know and took me under his wings and led me as a good shepherd. I don't know what happened along the way, whether it was because I was popular. When I was supposed to be an MPL [member of provincial legislature] the papers nominating me disappeared. I don't know maybe it was jealousy or fear. He couldn't stand to see me flourish. Maybe I was stupid to think that he'd want me to succeed but I was wrong, things changed.[851]

A member of the Crisis Committee confirms this description when he states that "she worked hand in hand with Banks, she was his right hand man".[852] For Madikgetla, joining the Crisis Committee was almost an automatic decision, as she had grown increasingly disillusioned with Tshabangu's leadership.

> He made promises to people about jobs etc. They said he took people's salaries. I was against his actions. I saw some things when I was at the PCO and I thought if he does bad and I smile tomorrow it will be me. I thought it's not possible that so many people can say the same thing and we say they are lying.[853]

Thus, the Crisis Committee's ideas about the democratisation of the political space were solely limited to the internal democratisation of the ANC and eliminating all hurdles to participation within the ANC. The Crisis Committee spent little, if any time, pondering the question of building a grass roots movement that combined demands about the improvement of collective consumption with the struggle for what Castells calls "political self-determination".[854] The latter concept means giving citizens more voice in everyday government and the autonomy to make decisions about what affects them. In fact, "Power" argues that one of the reasons why the mobilisation for the protest could not take place within the ANC was because the ANC had no democratic and vibrant branches: "We called it the Crisis Committee …

[851]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.
[852]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[853]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.

[854] Castells, *The city and the grassroots: a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*.

because at that time we didn't have active branches. There were no branches here."[855]

Therefore, joining the Crisis Committee was synonymous with restoring democracy inside the ANC.

Crafting a Collective Identity for the Crisis Committee

Social Movement Theory has interrogated the process through which collective actors or movements construct a shared meaning and a collective identity. The concept of framing is crucial in understanding how the Crisis Committee crafted an identity for itself, especially in the face of negative labelling emanating from actors opposed to it such as the state and local ANC leaders. As mentioned earlier, the idea of forming a committee emanated from some of Councillor Tshabangu's closest allies. Those that had ceased to be beneficiaries challenged Tshabangu's exclusive patronage networks. However, in order to conduct a protest that would, in the interviewees' words "change Hennenman", more was needed. An approach to organising about the challenges and discontent of those who initiated the Crisis Committee was required. It was important for the Crisis Committee to develop a mode of organising that would harness the prevailing discontent and, in so doing, transcend its narrow base.

Thus, the *collective action frames* were instrumental in harnessing the collective capability of the Crisis Committee and enable it to reach a wider spectrum of community residents. This is what social movement theorists have defined as collective action frames. According to Gamson[856], the central question about frames is not whether they are true or false but the extent to which they contribute to understanding a set of diverse facts and providing a useful explanation for what the status quo challengers seek to change. Proponents of this approach argue that there is a need to account for the process of creating meanings and beliefs as well as contesting existing ones.

Benford and Snow[857] distinguish between three framing tasks. These are the *diagnostic*, *prognostic* and *motivation framing*.[858] D*iagnostic framing involves* the

[855]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[856]Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action".
[857]Benford and Snow "Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization", p.197-218.

[858]*Ibid*.

conversion of objects for collective action into social problems, identifying who is affected by the social problems and who is responsible for the situation. Prognostic framing is concerned with crafting different solutions to the identified social problems. Subsequently, the *motivation framing* takes place when we find ways of legitimising their actions and identifying opportunities for mobilisation.[859]

In Phomolong, the *diagnostic framing* took place from the time when the three men who had fallen out with Tshabangu decided that "things were going to change" in Hennenman. This was followed by a process of identifying possible adherents to the idea that what was needed to "change Hennenman" was a mass protest. Social movement scholars have called this type of action the creation of a *boundary frame.*[860] Chief amongst the targets were people who had animosity against Tshabangu. Accordingly, a question was asked:

> Which other people has this man stabbed in the back, eaten, that we could probably involve? The first one was Papi Qaba. We approached the likes of Thabo Sethunya and engaged him. We planned. That's when we compiled the whole information about Hennenman. That's where we planned the campaign informing people that we were going to protest.[861]

The *boundary frame is* usually accompanied by a process known as *adversary framing* in which a key target for the grievances and discontent is identified.[862] The blame for the township's longstanding problems was attributed to Tshabangu. The primary analysis at this stage was that the key player in the township's problems and underdevelopment was the councillor; he controlled extensive patronage networks that only benefitted a few people close to him. An analysis by one of Tshabangu's erstwhile allies is apposite:

> Our assessment was that he was greedy. He held political power for too long. He was once a mayor during that time when municipalities were still independent. He was an MM when municipalities were consolidated. People were afraid of him because he had political power and was very greedy ... If he was a trustworthy person, Hennenman could have

[859] Snow and Benford, "Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization", p.137.

[860]Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment", p.623.

[861]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[862]Snow and Benford, "Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization", p.137.

> been very far ahead because he was in charge of service delivery and deployments, everything. He knew that he has a hard heart and he is evil.[863]
>
> Our Councillor was the sort of person who didn't like to see other people progressing in their lives. He wanted to be the only one to shake hands with the top leadership ... He was happy to monopolise things in Phomolong. Developments could only come through him.[864]

In this regard, the *prognostic* task of the framing process came to the conclusion that Tshabangu's removal as councillor and ANC branch chairperson would provide a solution to the township's problems. The central concern in the early stages was about the councillor and how to orchestrate his downfall. The exclusive patronage networks of the councillor resulted in many of his erstwhile allies participating in the Crisis Committee. As chapter five demonstrated, throughout his activism in the Congress structures in Phomolong, Tshabangu earned himself many foes. In this regard, as early as 1996, there were people, albeit few, already contemplating his downfall. The fallout with his close allies in the early 2000s provided an invaluable political opportunity to finally orchestrate his political demise. Many admit, "there were those objective conditions of lack of service delivery. They were there. Not only that but the lack of proper roads."[865] However, a significant part of this reality was now attributed to Tshabangu who had occupied crucial positions in the municipality since the latter part of the 1990s. Although "Banks was not a mayor then"[866], it was argued, "his legacy contributed because he was a former mayor. He was still the most powerful individual left in Hennenman."[867] Additionally, his "conduct" as a leader also came under fierce challenge. He was viewed as divisive, arrogant and indifferent to the plight of his constituency.

The ANC has characterised the estrangement of its leadership, especially at local level, from their constituencies as social distance. Other individuals outside the Crisis Committee also shared the view that Tshabangu was an estranged leader who exuded arrogance and sowed divisions in the community. For instance, Sello Sefuthi, who was also located in the local state, expressed this sentiment about Tshabangu:

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[863]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[864]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[865]Interview with Sello Peter Sefuthi, Welkom, 27 November 2009.

[866]*Ibid*.
[867]*Ibid*.

> [H]e was a *divisioninst* (sic) of the worst sort – extremely divisive. He always finds ways to sow division ... Banks had been a source of divisions ... I am singling this man out. There were personal issues with Banks because Banks is such a leader that would drive with loud music *slowly* in the township?[868]

There is no doubt that those who initially plotted Tshabangu's downfall were cautious of the limitations of crafting a collective action frame solely based on their exclusion from Tshabagu's patronage network. It was upon this realisation that a strategy was developed to integrate other people who enjoyed some distance from the councillor as well as to craft the protest demands in such a way that they began to address issues relating to services, unemployment and poverty in the area. Without this, there would be little distinguishing Tshabangu from his former allies who had crossed the Rubicon moving further away from his influence in the ANC and the local state.

This move is consistent with some of the observations made by Porta and Diani[869] who argue that for frames to have the desired impact, they must be credible and emanate from reputable, reliable and credible sources. Successful collective action frames must also have relevance to aspects of people's lives, which they consider important and meaningful and resonate with the target for collective action. The credibility deficit of Tshabangu's former allies posed a serious political constraint which was overcome by integrating people like Thabo Sethunya, whom although was forced to resign from the first TLC, was still revered by many of the township's residents. Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Moss Tsolanku and Shambe Tsiane were also approached to bolster the committee with negotiation skills and the ability to understand and interpret "complex" municipal documents and processes. The mass meeting outside Bahale was a critical turning point enabling the Crisis Committee to establish a social base in the community.

> The Crisis Committee placed emphasis on community issues such as incomplete houses, cracked RDP houses that were evidence of poor workmanship, RDP list corruption. The latter meant that those associated with Tshabangu received RDP houses before the people that applied for them in the early 1990s. People could understand when we raised the issues.

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[868] *Ibid.*

[869] Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction 2nd Edition*, p.21.

That is why the township could understand and support the protest.[870]

In this way, the Crisis Committee was responsible for articulating residents' apprehensions; proposing solutions for these as well as issuing a "call to arms" through providing residents with motivation for collective action. This task is known as the *motivational frame* which is equivalent to a "call to arms".[871] From this process emerged a convincing narrative that drew upon the history of underdevelopment and poverty in the township. Phomolong residents had to be convinced that the lingering crisis of distribution and access to the means of collective consumption was inextricably linked to the actions of the councillor as a political occupant of the local state who posed a hurdle to the realisation of the development needs of the township residents. Tshabangu's recurrence in Phomolong's history, as a youth activist, an agitator against transitional government structures installed in Phomolong and later as the mayor of the merged Phomolong and Hennenman council gave credence to the postulation that his presence in the township's politics has been destructive. Different generations of township residents could draw on memory and present events to bolster the argument that most of the township's ills could be resolved by Tshabangu's removal as the councillor and the ANC chairperson. The result was that although the protest mainly targeted the legacy of apartheid and the destructive impact of neoliberal policies in terms of organising and distributing the means of collective consumption at a local level, these were solely attributed to only one political occupant of the local state – Councillor Tshabangu. This demonstrated the conspicuous absence of a coherent ideology that could serve as a mobilising cloak for these protests and provides some basis to be cautious about being overly optimistic about the revolutionary possibilities that can be ushered in by these protests.

Collective Action and Counter- framing

The articulation of a coherent opposition to the status quo did not go unchallenged by those who were in power. From the onset the ANC and government formulated what Social Movement scholars have called *counter-framing*[872]*;* namely, a counter critique of the opposition. Official government and ANC documents, particularly at the

[870]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, Phomolong, 20 January 2009.
[871]Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment", p.617

[872]*Ibid*, p.625.

inception of these protests in early to mid 2000 are littered with defensive responses. Until recently, the structural factors informing the protests have been virtually ignored with the ANC and sometimes the state asserting that the protests can be explained via the "third forces" and "agent provocateurs". In a parliamentary debate that took place whilst the protest in Phomolong was ensuing, an ANC Member of Parliament expressed this opinion:

> The youth in the past was not given the opportunity to assemble, let alone to formulate ideas. This unacceptable behaviour perpetrated by the DA in the Free State does not come as a surprise but it comes as a reaction by the DA as it has said before the ANC is too strong … We urge the youth of the Free State to engage through relevant structures. We have a caring government which is prepared to address the needs of the people.[873]

The significance of the ANC MP's attempt to paint the protests as a DA strategy to undermine the ANC's electoral dominance is that it was designed to alienate the protesters and portray the entire leadership of the protest as not only disorderly but also "counter-revolutionary".

The ANC initially dismissed this as the work of a 'third force' and 'agent provocateurs' whose aim was to destabilize the townships and thwart the ANC's power base. Whilst some views within the ANC acknowledged the developmental challenges that lead to these protests, they were also quick to wage a direct attack on the leadership of these protests. In this regard, the leadership of these protests was simply dismissed as "individuals who prey on the poor while pursuing their own selfish interests."[874] Their "barbarism and vulgarity"[875] was mainly dangerous in the context of poor communities as it was "scaring away prospective investors"[876] leading to a "further impoverishment of the same people they profess to represent."[877] Links were drawn between right-wing extremist groups and the leading groups in these protests.

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[873] *A Debate at the National Assembly following the delivery of President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Address*, Cape Town, 15 February 2005, http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/20091112/50571_1.doc.
[874] Khedama, Q, "Push for Power", *Mail & Guardian*, 24-30 March 2005, p.6.

[875] *Ibid*.

[876] *Ibid*.
[877] *Ibid*.

At different moments, the emphasis shifted from completely ignoring the structural milieu under which such protests occurred to taking this into cognisance whilst still being adamant about the illegitimacy of the protests. For instance, the Organisational Report to the 52nd National Conference of the ANC was more candid about the weaknesses of ANC structures at a local level and how this contributed to the "spate" of service delivery protests. It argued that the protests were partly attributable to the weakness of ANC branches in some areas. An admission was made that many of the areas experiencing such protests had been the epicentres of unemployment and "economic depression".

In the Free State, the decline of mining which had a direct and serious consequence on employment levels was particularly to blame for this situation.[878] The same report alluded to the fact that poor levels of participatory democracy resulted in poor communication about development plans and how citizens were to benefit from these. The essence of the contention was that weak ANC branches had left a vacuum that led to "genuine grievances" being exploited "by elements from within the ANC who are unhappy about the outcome of democratic processes." As a consequence,

> ANC structures, those of the leagues or [...] alliance partners [were] 'captured' by disgruntled elements that use[d] them to wage campaigns against the elected leadership of the ANC and/or the public representative. Sometimes these elements emerge [d] as a consequence of dissatisfaction that results from undemocratic practices within the movement.[879]

This line of reasoning was emphasised in the Political Report of the ANC's 52nd National Conference. Protests besieging the local state and the electoral contests for leadership within the ANC were two sides of the same coin. Thabo Mbeki would frankly assert that:

> [T]hose who lost in th[e] immoral battle promptly resurfaced as members of formations of the broad democratic movement, or as leaders of groups of so-called "concerned citizens" to organise and lead public demonstrations intended to discredit members of [the] movement who had been legitimately nominated by our structures and elected democratically to

[878]ANC 52nd National Conference Organisational Report of the Secretary General Kgalema Motlanthe, 17 December 2007, http://www.anc.org.za.

[879]ANC 52nd National Conference: *Opening Address and Political Report of ANC President Thabo Mbek*i, 16 December 2007, http://www.anc.org.za

serve...[880]

Hence, the Crisis Committee as a name arose as an attempt to counter the numerous labels that the group organising the protest was called. Participants in the Crisis Committee argue that ANC leaders attached several unpleasant names to the group. This ranged from allegations that the group was 'white sponsored' and a black extension of the white right wing extremist group – the *Boeremag* to a 'concerned group' of unemployed 'dagga smoking youths'.[881] The then ANC Free State Provincial Secretary made the accusation that the Crisis Committee was funded by the *Boeramag* and was pursuing an agenda to unseat the ANC government.[882] The central message was that these protests were illegitimate and should be denounced as opportunistic and posing a real threat to government "delivering" to its "citizens".[883]

The Crisis Committee rejected being referred to as a Concerned Group and all other labels linked to it. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, participants in the Crisis Committee argued that the label had connotations of criminality and therefore illegitimacy. According to Moss Tsolanku:

> [T]hey told us that this thing is organized by hooligans, dagga smokers and third forces sponsored by rich people. That we are uneducated and we are a concerned group of individuals. That is why we decided to call ourselves the Crisis Committee. They had painted a picture of the Concerned Group which had negative connotations. We said we are not only concerned but want a resolution.[884]

Ndade Morake adds that as the Crisis Committee grew in influence and numbers the ANC began labelling it a 'concerned group'. The reaction was a rejection of the name because:

> [I]t had the connotation[s] that we are criminal elements, they didn't take us seriously that's why they called us a concerned group. So we called

[880]*Ibid*.
[881]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, 20 January 2009; Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[882]Mokoena, M, ANC suspects role of Boeremag in upheavals, *City Press*, 19 February 2005.

[883]Khedama, Q, "Bogus leaders using communities", *Express*, Week 23, 8-10 June 2005, p.13.

[884]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, Phomolong, 20 January 2009.

> ourselves the Crisis Committee and that's how we became known.[885]

Secondly, the label "concerned group" had the effect of defining the protest outside the hegemonic politics of the ANC. The group's demographic profile such as their economic status and the fact that the protest was targeting an ANC councillor were used to discredit the Crisis Committee. Since the majority of the participants were unemployed youths, "[t]hey said it is a committee of unemployed and anti ANC."[886] One of the participants in the Crisis Committee notes that:

> [U]nemployment is unemployment, if you are not working, you are not working. But that you are from the opposition or anti-ANC was not true because most people who were in the Crisis Committee are ANC members.[887]

Tshabangu also made his own attempts to frame the Crisis Committee in a negative light. He suggests that the main reason behind the formation of what he called a "secret core" was his failure to fulfil many of his comrades' "unreasonable expectations". His main charge was that the role of a councillor could be very burdensome in the context of high unemployment and poverty. This results in communities looking towards the political occupants of the local state in the form of councillors to resolve some of their problems, which do not originate at this sphere of government. According to Tshabangu, this conception about what role the local government should play in the lives of ordinary citizens immensely contributed to the generation of discontent among township residents. In this regard,

> [B]ecause other people when you are a councillor in a community, some are not employed they demand that you get them employment, some demand, not by mentioning it that you must get them tenders. In the process, whilst you have not achieved that they expect you to buy them beers when they come to your house and so forth. In terms of social life, we were not meeting, I can't sit in tavern, and I can't acclimatise to that life. So they met and concluded on this agenda. They then tabulated many, many demands.[888]

Gamson suggests that the question to ask with regards to framing is not whether frames match reality or not, but rather we should pose questions about their

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[885]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[886]Interview with Azael Leseba, Phomolong, 15 March 2010.

[887]*Ibid*.

[888]Interview with Banks Tshabangu, Phomolong, 20 September 2009.

usefulness in increasing understanding and providing a coherent set of diverse facts.[889] The same can be said about counter-framing. The key question in this regard is not so much about the truthfulness of the negative ascriptions given to the Crisis Committee but about the utility of these labels in casting it in a negative light. On the one hand, linking the Crisis Committee with extremist right wing groupings like the *Boeremag,* and white dominated political parties like the DA on the other was specifically engineered. This was to undercut the Crisis Committee's support and depict it as motivated by narrow political objectives rather than the genuine struggle to improve service delivery. The attempt was to portray the Crisis Committee as a group of conspirators who took advantage of the real plight of their community. This critique obviously had serious limitations, as the Crisis Committee was more than just a group of conspirators. It enjoyed mass support throughout the months of the protests. If anything, the level and intensity of this counter-framing from the ANC suggests that the Crisis Committee managed to unsettle the ANC leadership at various levels. This is true of various other protests in the country around the same time.

Crisis Committee and Resource Mobilisation

The resource mobilisation approach to the study of social movement argues that the personal and financial resources as well as forms of organisation available to a movement are crucial in its success. This school of thought focuses on *how* collective action unfolds as opposed to looking at the reasons for the rise of social movements.[890] As mentioned earlier, the Crisis Committee was comprised mainly of unemployed people who had no sustainable source of income. At the same time, the Crisis Committee had few avenues through which to mobilise resources. Certainly, the ANC and the local state were not options that could be used for resource mobilisation. Aside from the mass support it enjoyed from the community, the Crisis Committee was isolated at various levels and labelled as 'counter-revolutionary'. At the same time, its work in organising and coordinating the protests, attending meetings with the provincial leadership and sometimes transporting community members to witness council meetings in Welkom wherein Tshabangu's resignation

[889] Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action".

[890]Melucci, A, "The New Social Movements – A Theoretical Approach", *Social Sciences Information*, Vol. 19, No. 2, May 1980, p.199-226.

would be discussed, required significant resources.

The Crisis Committee explored different avenues in response to this need for resources. Critically, the Crisis Committee approached white businesses in Hennenman for financial assistance and courted the support of opposition parties for legal advice. The Hennenman Business Forum was largely useful in terms of supplying the Crisis Committee with funds for transport to attend meetings of the Matjhabeng Council held in Welkom. These meetings were attended en masse by Phomolong residents, particularly when Councillor Tshabangu's issue was on the agenda. As the protest progressed, a number of meetings between ANC and government representatives as well as the Crisis Committee had to take place. The Business Forum financed the transportation to these gatherings. This agreement was a result of a meeting that took place on the 22nd February 2005 between the Crisis Committee and the Business Forum in which the latter complained about the detrimental impact that the protest was having on local business in Hennenman.[891]

Representatives of the business community in Hennenman included construction companies, hardware stores and the local pharmacy in town. In the majority were the small-scale businesses that are an imprint of the business life in the area. Notably, there was one big company represented in the meeting. This was Tiger Milling (formerly known as Bremmer Milling). The controversial businessman who attended the meeting was JJ Calitz. Many residents in the township resented Calitz as he was accused of having a hand in the Basil Read scandal in which a substantial number of Phomolong residents were evicted from their newly occupied houses and left with no other option but to stay in shacks. Three members of the Crisis Committee represented the Phomolong residents. These members were Moss Tsolanku, Azael Leseba and Shambe Tsiane.[892]

It could be argued the counter framing of the Crisis Committee pursued by the ANC was largely aided by the means the former utilised to garner financial and organisational resources for protest. The criticism that the Crisis Committee was "a third force sponsored by whites" emanates directly from this reality. One Crisis

[891] *Minutes of the meeting between the Community of Phomolong and the Business Community of Hennenman*, 22 February 2005.
[892] *Ibid*.

Committee participant argues that such labelling failed to take into account the Crisis Committee's mobilising strategy. Through engaging the Crisis Committee, the largely white business forum could secure some concessions in terms of disruption of business activity whilst the Crisis Committee could secure financial resources crucial to maintaining the momentum of the protest. As one participant indicates:

> We used whites where we could because most whites are business people. When there would be protest marches, people couldn't go to work and business was suffering ... production. So most whites have firms and people who work in those firms are Phomolong residents. So production was suffering and business was suffering because when we would say no one goes to work, no one would go to work. Hence, we even had to meet with the business forum on how to resolve the protest amicably and what they can do for us, for Phomolong.[893]

Commenting on the impact of the protest on white businesses in Hennenman, an activist in the Crisis Committee noted:

> [T]he ANC and the Mathjabeng Council had lost control of the township. The Crisis Committee was in charge, in control. When we would say boycott town, people would boycott. Occupy sites, they would do that. We even told people not to go to work until that seven days has lapsed and Banks is removed and people did exactly that...
>
> [T]he prison warders even had to work double shifts because people were not going to work and no taxis were going to town. We had spoken to the taxi forum and they agreed not to transport people to town. Only hearses and ambulances were working. The people would block the township on both entrance and exit and no one could pass for 24 hours. Even if you were visiting you couldn't come through unless someone from the Crisis Committee gave permission. But no one was going to town; people were not buying in town.[894]

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the business forum's assistance to the Crisis Committee was premised on their recognition of the authority and control that the Crisis Committee as the leadership of the protest mustered. Thus, the rationale of the business forum was that in order to bring the protest to an end, it was necessary to offer material support to help the Crisis Committee achieve its objectives and demands. This contention is supported by the fact that in the same meeting, the business forum also made commitments to put pressure on the Matjhabeng council to

[893]Interview with Azael Leseba, Phomolong, 15 March 2010.
[894]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

meet the demands of the township residents. The business forum further made undertakings to organise workshops around job creation and training jointly with the Crisis Committee.[895]

It is worth pointing out that there was a crucial divergence of views within the Crisis Committee on its resource mobilisation strategy. Serious differences surfaced when some activists in the Crisis Committee were accused of approaching political parties that are considered hostile to the ANC "agenda". This divergence emerged when a Crisis Committee activist, Sinde Nhlapo, who was tasked with communicating on behalf of the Crisis Committee to the media, made an inference that the protest was a clear message to the ANC that its days of electoral dominance in Phomolong are numbered. What made some Crisis Committee members uncomfortable was that Sinde Nhlapo was a leader of the DA's youth structure in Phomolong and was thus seen as "opportunistically" utilising the "platform" that the Crisis Committee afforded him to garner support for the DA amongst the township's residents. According to one Crisis Committee activist, Nhlapo "was a DA member at that time. [H]e was used by DA that DA should claim this strike as theirs."[896] This was not an unsubstantiated allegation as Sinde Nhlapo was extensively quoted in the media as a DA leader who explained that the protest was the residents' way of expressing their disenchantment with the ANC. People have been unhappy for a long time. He was reported saying: "we are trying to attract attention to our problems. We are burning tyres and setting barricades, but we are not fighting." [897]

Crisis Committee activists note that it was such actions that gave credence to the accusation that they were working with forces hostile to the ANC. As one activist elaborates:

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[895]*Minutes of the meeting between the Community of Phomolong and the Business Community of Hennenman*, 22 February 2005.

[896]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009

[897]*A Debate at the National Assembly following the delivery of President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Address*, Cape Town, 15 February 2005, http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/commonrepository/Processed/20091112/50571_1.doc.

> There was a rumour that we are part of the *Boeremag* and we are sponsored by whites and using the equipment of white people. Unfortunately there was an opportunist within the Crisis Committee that went and spoke to the whites and the DA. We became aware and these rich white millionaires wanted a meeting with us. We met with them and heard their agenda. We told them that we are not fighting the ANC to bring it down but to address our crises. We are members of the ANC and we don't want the DA or any other organisation.[898]

The reaction to what was considered detrimental to the long-term interests of the ANC was to minimise the participation of those that carried through similar activities. According to "Power", the fact that the Crisis Committee did not prescribe loyalty to the ANC as a prerequisite for participation in the Crisis Committee rendered the committee vulnerable to influences from other political forces. Furthermore, it is argued that although the Crisis Committee was also formed by the residents in the township, it was widely understood that it was created to fill the vacuum created by the absence of vibrant ANC branches in the area.

> When we said it is Phomolong Crisis Committee we didn't say you were a DA, you were an Inkatha or what. We were saying it's for the residents, it's a committee for Phomolong's residents because there was no branch that existed, but deep down we knew that we were ANC members.[899]

In line with this approach, Sinde Nhlapo was "reshuffled" as the committee's media liaison. The approach taken by the Crisis Committee to keep a political distance from political parties, including the ANC was a novel one considering the dominance of ANC members and supporters within the Crisis Committee. However, as Nhlapo's case demonstrated, this tactical distance from the ANC made the Crisis Committee vulnerable to being accused of being anti-ANC.

The Crisis Committee's resource mobilisation strategy also led it to knock on the doors of some left leaning organisations such as the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA). Several participants in the Crisis Committee approached SOPA and individuals linked to it for legal assistance. According to these participants, SOPA and a few individuals subscribing to black consciousness ideology were approached in order to avert the threats of arrest of residents and activists. In this regard, the

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[898] *Ibid*.

[899] Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

Crisis Committee's resource mobilisation strategy was informed by the need to counter the imminent arrests of its participants who were charged with public violence and malicious damage to property. According to Madia, SOPA's contribution was invaluable as the organisation assisted the Crisis Committee to get acquainted with legislative framework governing the local government system and the scope of action available to residents against their local representative.

> We were explained to about how to remove the Councillor, who has the powers to remove the councillors ... The Municipal Systems and Structural Acts. They told us that the Speaker of the municipality and the Council itself has the powers to remove the Councillor not the MEC for Local Government and Housing. They taught us how these acts work...[900]

The decision to approach these groups was not supported by a majority of activists within the Crisis Committee. The reason tabled for opposing such a move was that this would place the Crisis Committee at loggerheads with the ANC and the "ANC will punish"[901] those responsible for this. These objections notwithstanding, some of the activists proceeded to meet SOPA as they felt that the legal resources that this organisation could contribute would salvage most of them from arrest.

> I remember Benny Kotsoane told us at that time the fighting was going on that we are going to get arrested if we continue with this. I remember we were charged with two something million for malicious damage of property. We could feel that we are going to get arrested and that it's now getting difficult.[902]

The reaction from the majority of the activists who took issue with this approach was to boycott the meetings.

> The likes of Sethunya refused saying these guys will just poison us with their black consciousness English. The likes of Power and Qaba refused ... I remember when I arrived in Riebeeck I was alone and I phoned all of them, three arrived that day.[903]

The divisions and disagreements over resource mobilisation gave rise to uncorroborated accusations that some of the Crisis Committee activists were receiving money in exchange for providing opposition parties with guaranteed

[900]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.
[901]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[902]*Ibid*.
[903]*Ibid*.

presence in the protest marches. Like Nhlapo, these activists were accused of using the Crisis Committee as an avenue through which opposition parties could establish a presence in Phomolong. One of the custodians of this view was Ndade Morake who elaborates that:

> Unfortunately there were three members of the Crisis Committee that were taking money from these organisations and during one of the marches we saw a SOPA flag, we burned it. We told them that we don't operate like this because we are members of the ANC and the ANC will punish us if we operate like this.[904]

Accusations about material benefits were fiercely contested by some of the activists who approached these organisations. Accordingly, Madikgetla Madia argues that these organisations were approached only for the legal assistance they could provide to the Crisis Committee. She adds that the assistance was not sought from those organisations per se but by individuals they knew and respected as part of the community.

> They helped us with lawyers. Intellectuals volunteered to assist us. But we never got any money from the opposition ... We would explain to the opposition parties that this is not about political war but service delivery. We would ask them 'If only we didn't stand up and fight, when were you going to approach us'. We never gave them time.[905]

Nyathi Madia who argues that different political organisations promised them monetary rewards in exchange for the Crisis Committee to align itself to these organisations contests this interpretation. According to Madia, these organisations:

> [P]romised to give us the money and they said we can fetch it from Durban because there was going to be a merging conference between SOPA and BPC. So their strategy was to recruit us and channel Hennenman under SOPA or BPC.[906]

The Crisis Committee's approach to SOPA exposed its ideological short-sightedness. For one, SOPA was not approached in order to establish the Crisis Committee's links with the left or anti-capitalist project in South Africa. Rather, practical concerns such as developing a strategy to evade arrests had more influence on this decision. The fact

[904]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[905]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.
[906]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009.

that the Crisis Committee did not even want to be symbolically (as the burning of the SOPA flag demonstrates) associated with organisations in falling on the left of the political spectrum bears testimony to its ideological limits. This endeavour not to be linked with political parties, including the ANC, created immense internal problems. These differences partly led to the disintegration of the Crisis Committee at a later stage.

"Many faces of the Struggle" - The Leadership Tactics

The protests were sustained, in part, by the leadership and organisational design of the Crisis Committee. There were no hierarchical positions in the Crisis Committee. Leadership positions were assigned and rotated as the need arose. For example, activists took turns chairing meetings of the committee. Collectively, activists in the Crisis Committee would assign roles and responsibilities among themselves. For instance, at regular intervals, different individuals would be delegated to interact with the media and some to organise meetings with different sectors of the community. As one of the activists recounts:

> We told ourselves that inside the Crisis Committee there is no chairperson, no treasurer and no secretary. We did this because the strike was a community strike … We were all leaders. We would just delegate some people to speak to the media. We would caucus all positions.[907]

Another activist explains the rationale behind this tactic:

> We did this to avoid people being targeted. It was also to ensure that there was equality and a balance in terms of information dissemination in the Crisis Committee. If we had a chair then it would have been easy for that person to be targeted.[908]

According to Moss Tsolanku, the only permanent position in the Crisis Committee was that of the scriber. Record keeping and protecting the Crisis Committee's information were the main considerations in taking this decision.

Undoubtedly, the Crisis Committee's tactic in relation to leadership recorded successes. It caused confusion and apprehension in certain quarters, notably among

[907]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[908]Telephonic Interview with Moss Tsolanku, 20 January 2009.

the provincial leadership of the ANC. ANC Provincial Secretary Pat Matosa begrudgingly complained about this "confusion" and raised questions about the "influences" and interests behind the groupings leading these protests. Clearly frustrated by the intensity and protracted nature of the protests, Matosa posed the following questions:

> Where do these unemployed youths get the strategy and financial capacity to organise these marches? This is more than a political issue. There are people behind these mass mobilisations. You cannot find the leaders who you can talk to. From Harrismith to Phomolong, you won't find a leader for these groups. Who are their leaders?[909]

For Matosa, the tactics employed by groups leading such protests were inexplicably sophisticated. The worrying factor, particularly in the case of Phomolong, was that the protests "were mobilized by unemployed youth, who did not have the financial capacity nor possessed the acumen to establish a strategy to organise and sustain the protests."[910] In this regard, the inability of the state to locate the leaders of the protests in Phomolong strengthened the conviction of those who argued that there was a "third force" fuelling the protests in Phomolong. But this confusion was the desired outcome of the tactic employed by the Crisis Committee. Central to this tactic was the idea to confuse the enemy so that the protests are not identified with specific individuals who would then be targeted by the repressive arms of the state. The Crisis Committee avoided the possibility of individual activists being targeted, as they believed that this would break the momentum of the protests.

> We gave each other a chance … We did this also so that they couldn't pin us down. That today it's this one and tomorrow it's that one. That's why they said we were working with some within the intelligence and they could not pin us down. They were looking at the intelligent way in which we were advancing our demands and the way we worked.[911]

This tactic produced the desired results as Morake says: "that's how we outmanoeuvred them; there were many faces of the struggle here in Hennenman." [912]

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[909] Mokoena, M, "ANC suspects Role of Boeremag in upheavals", *City Press*, 19 February 2005.

[910] *Ibid*.

[911] Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[912] *Ibid*.

Another explanation for this organizational design is that the Crisis Committee sought to forge a decisive break with the notions of hierarchy, centralization and individualistic leadership so closely associated with Tshabangu. This would mean that there were democratic concerns that underpinned this division of labour in the Crisis Committee. Ndade Morake suggests that this was a serious consideration that also fortified the Crisis Committee:

> We gave each other a chance ...We would speak over the phone at night. We would listen to each other's ideas and combine these ideas. We would spend the whole day strategising and compiling the documents. These ideas worked for us.[913]

This second conclusion might be too optimistic. The gender dynamics in the Crisis Committee suggests a different narrative.

"A Man's World" - The Crisis Committee as a Gendered Space

Admittedly, the gendered nature of protest and resistance has received only scant scholastic attention. In terms of scholastic work covering the apartheid period, most have only assessed the role of women in the specific acts of collective violence and the times of youth upheaval. Women in the Crisis Committee experienced this space in terms largely defined by their gender. There were initially four women in the Crisis Committee; Madikgetla Madia, Manana Madia, Phamfo Molelekoa and Nkele Malejoane. As the protest escalated and the violent confrontation with the state repressive apparatus intensified, only two women, Madikgetla and Manana, remained in the Crisis Committee. The reasons for the exodus of the two other women, Nkele and Phamfo, reveal some interesting dynamics about the gendered nature of political activism and women's experiences of this. The first woman to leave the Crisis Committee was Nkele who left because of fear of arrest and harassment from the police. The 2005 protest involved a great deal of violent confrontation with the police and activists in the Crisis Committee became primary targets for police harassment and arrest. The description given by one of the Crisis Committee activists is apposite:

> As we were planning, the intelligence was aware. We were discussing that we should disperse because the police can come and raid us. As we were speaking, we saw a hippo passing and the shooting from that hippo started.

[913] Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.

> The police started shooting us and we had to jump fences and assist some of the women in the Crisis Committee to jump the fences.[914]

This gives credence to Seekings and Marks' observation that the increased levels of violence in the townships during the 1980s were accompanied by a decrease in the involvement of women, especially young women who had been very active prior to this change in conditions. In this regard, the unremitting participation of women in acts of violence was therefore not the norm.[915] Nkele's withdrawal from the Crisis Committee demonstrates that the withdrawal of women from active participation in violent protests is not only a phenomenon unique to the apartheid period. Furthermore, the fact that the males in the Crisis Committee felt obliged to assist women to "jump the fences" demonstrates the extent to which men viewed women as timid, fragile and in need of protection from the men.

Nkele's fear of police harassment contrasts sharply with Madikgetla's role during the protest, particularly during times of intensified violence. Madikgetla claims to have played an important role in one instance when the ANC PEC was held hostage at the stadium. Madikgetla tables the reason for the pandemonium that followed in this manner:

> We held the PEC of the ANC hostage in the stadium because they were talking non-sense. I stood up at the stadium and said ..., we won't listen to them. We closed the gates and said no one will leave. I started a song and we held them hostage ... We had a meeting with them before that and what they were saying at the stadium was contradictory to the decisions of that meeting.[916]

The provincial leadership was eventually able to leave the stadium, escorted by police. Madikgetla was also considered a good agitator who could match the "arrogance" of some ANC leaders, forcing them to retreat on certain issues. As she observes: "I was good at disrupting meetings, even when they put us in a corner I would just stand up and say I am leaving. I told myself that I don't care."[917]

She notes that this did not always earn her praise from her family members. Some of

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[914]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.
[915]Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s*, p.83.

[916]Telephonic Interview with Madikgetla Madia, 01 December 2009.

[917]*Ibid*.

her relatives who occupied senior positions in the ANC and the local state made attempts to persuade her to abandon her role in the Crisis Committee enticing her with the possibility of employment in government.

> I have family in the ANC and in the municipality and they would use them to come talk to me to stop. I said I'm not backing down. Marshoff thought I wanted a job and approached me. I said I know I can't work for government. Government doesn't want educated people. Look at how they pay the public servants.[918]

There are other reasons that counted for Madikgetla's important role in the Crisis Committee. Firstly, as an experienced ANC member who led the ANC branch and also served in the Parliamentary Constituency Office for several years, Madikgetla was an indispensible asset to the Crisis Committee. This and her erstwhile political proximity to Tshabangu also meant that she was in tune with the politics and functioning of local government. This knowledge and experience with local government and its politics made her central in negotiations between the Crisis Committee and local government representatives.

> I had a lot of knowledge about the ANC that I acquired in workshops as a political educator for the ANC. There was one instance where I had family problems and I couldn't not go to a meeting where we were meeting the then MEC for Housing and Local Government Joe Mafereka. The meeting couldn't continue because I was not there, they highly depended on me.[919]

Secondly, she was also useful in challenging some of the political occupants of the local state, specifically women who were identified as "arrogant". One of these women was the Executive Mayor of Matjhabeng, Mathabo Leeto. According to Madikgetla,

> Mathabo Leeto ... didn't like me very much. We said no school, no work, no normality until Banks goes. She arrogantly replied that even if we burn houses and burn ourselves, nothing will change. I replied and told her that the cadres of 1976 that died for our freedom must be turning in their graves right now with disgrace from your statement. Struggle heroes didn't die for this AIDS, poverty ... I don't know apartheid but we have a memory. We thought we were voting for a better life but nothing has changed. Blacks do it to each other. The dead are not proud of this ANC and what South Africa is today. She hates me even today. I told her that I don't respect you as a

[918] *Ibid*.

[919] *Ibid*.

> mother, woman and a leader.[920]

Despite Madikgetla's seemingly important role in the Crisis Committee, she still had her own experiences with male chauvinism in the Committee.

> It was not easy working with men. Men take decision and if you come up with something different they look down on you. It was very difficult, a man's world. The Crisis Committee had its own tensions and fights. We would end up being emotional and say '*ja* you think you know all'. Everyone would support the guys' point of view. It was very hard and we would become 30 minutes rivals or enemies. Men would undermine you simply because you are a woman. They would ignore our suggestions but when we meet the enemy camp, the woman always has to step in for things to be fine.[921]

The next woman to leave the Crisis Committee was Phamfo. Unlike Nkele, Phamfo's withdrawal from the Crisis Committee was not voluntary. She was "kicked out" after being accused of being a police informer. The accusation was levelled after she was seen driving in a police car in the company of one the local senior policemen. Madikgetla attributes these accusations to the reality that the Crisis Committee was a patriarchal and male dominated space. The belief that Phamfo was a spy was shared by the majority of the activists in the Crisis Committee, except for two women (Madikgetla and Manana) and one male (Moss Tsolanku).

> Phamfo left because it was a male dominated committee and one day she was seen with Captain Matankule. We had a meeting and the Captain gave her lift to the meeting as she was far. They accused her of being a spy and a sell-out. There were spies within but till this day I still believe that she was not a spy. There were only us the two women (Manana and I) and Moss that were on her side. She was eventually kicked out of the Crisis Committee.[922]

This narrative demonstrates an important point about the Crisis Committee as a gendered space. In this regard, Monique Marks' observation that in instances of political resistance and violence, women were perceived as untrustworthy and unable to preserve sensitive information from those close to them and the police still holds true under present day circumstances. This account also demonstrates the varied and differentiated gendered experience of the different women in the Crisis Committee.

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[920] *Ibid*.

[921] *Ibid*.

[922] *Ibid*.

This experience ranged from accusations of being informers, indispensible negotiators, to peacemakers who were responsible for calming "male egos".

"New rifts" – The Crisis Committee Disintegrates

By the time Tshabangu resigned, the protest had been going on for more than eight months. The interviews suggest that the looming local government elections, scheduled to take place on 1st March 2006 and the fear of losing Phomolong to opposition parties, particularly the DA, were important factors in the ANC's decision to intervene to resolve the Phomolong protests. Therefore, some of the activists in the Crisis Committee posit that local government elections provided them with the ample political opportunity to get maximum attention from the ANC. Apart from concerns about already existing opposition parties, the ANC was also unsettled by the possibility that the Crisis Committee could contest for local government elections.

> They were scared that we will contest the local government elections and the Crisis Committee would win ... The likes of Khalipha and Pat Matosa could see that the ANC is losing grip and the only strategy was that we come inside the ANC and campaign for the ANC in the elections; otherwise the ANC will lose to the Crisis Committee.[923]

The level of influence that the Crisis Committee wielded in Phomolong was a significant threat to the ANC. This was the case even though the majority of the Crisis Committee activists were either members or supporters of the ANC and that those who made attempts to define the protests outside the ambit of the ANC were quickly reigned in. The Crisis Committee maintained this influence even after Tshabangu officially resigned from the Mathjabeng council. There are several factors that account for the Crisis Committee's hegemony, which it maintained even after Tshabangu's removal. Firstly, despite his banishment to Virginia, Tshabangu was still the chairperson of the ANC branch in ward two and was still a member of the ANC REC. Secondly, to the Crisis Committee's dissatisfaction; the corruption allegations made against Tshabangu did not yield any criminal charges. Thirdly, there was still no light in terms of what the municipality was willing to do to resolve the service

[923]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

delivery grievances of the Phomolong residents.

As part of the steps taken to obliterate Tshabangu's influence in Phomolong, some in the Crisis Committee argued that the ANC branch must convene urgent Annual General Meetings (AGM) for both wards in Phomolong so as to allow a new leadership to emerge. This new leadership, it was argued, would enjoy the confidence of the community and be better placed to campaign for the ANC in the local government elections. They also insisted that the Crisis Committee would not be dissolved until these AGMs were convened.[924]

At the same time, the Crisis Committee found itself increasingly divided by material offers presented by various political occupants of the state, especially at a provincial level. Some of the Crisis Committee participants admit to being presented with job opportunities in exchange for sowing divisions in the Crisis Committee and stifling its ability to organise protests and communicate the residents' grievances. In this regard, Bongile "Power" Mthenjana's observation is apposite:

> They phone me, 'Power we have a job for you here. So, we wanted to give this job to someone else, but we think we should give it to you so, that you could assist us by disturbing that Crisis Committee. You should split it. You should bring us all the information that they've been discussing.' We had people who were spies, being bribed by work. We also understood that such things were there...[925]

This is the recollection made by one Crisis Committee activist:

> I remember guys driving motorbikes came here to beg that the elections must go in peace; it was the police and soldiers in motorbikes. They spoke to us nicely that we will deploy you, give you better jobs and so on but just campaign for the ANC.[926]

Madia sarcastically notes that these promises did not yield any results when he says; "[t]hey are still deploying us even now and look how long ago it was! We will give you better jobs just go and campaign for the ANC."[927] This reality was allegedly exploited by some of the participants in the Crisis Committee who utilised their

[924]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009

[925]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[926]Interview with Sello "Nyathi" Madia, Phomolong, 25 October 2009

[927]*Ibid.*

access to government leadership to improve their socio-economic conditions or access government deployments.

> There were people who were using their opportunities to benefit them because when we were going to meetings with these MECs you'd find that when a person was supposed to outline the community's perspective he would tell you that I completed my matric 15 years ago and have been to college. I am looking for a job, in the meeting! We would call him to order. Comrade, you can't come and talk about issues like you are looking for a job when we have come here about a certain issue. So, you find that a person gets upset. When they get upset they get an opportunity to use them against the people. [T]hese things were causing new rifts as they were unfolding like these in-fights.[928]

Further divisions in the Crisis Committee also arose out of the ANC branch election processes. On the one level, Crisis Committee members were caught up in bitter power struggles for positions in the BECs. Some argued that the REC was biased towards certain members of the Crisis Committee whilst being completely opposed to the election of others. Amongst those who laid this charge was "Power" who argued that:

> we found that there was a group of people who were already identified that we are going to appoint him as chairperson, we are going to appoint him as secretary, we are going to appoint him as whatever because they are the ones (the REC) who were processing the AGM.[929]

An environment of mistrust thus permeated the Crisis Committee and rendered it fiercely divided. Accusations about Crisis Committee members leaking sensitive information to the ANC, spreading misinformation about the work of the Crisis Committee and receiving bribes from the ANC leadership became commonplace. Thus, when the AGMs finally took place, only a few of the Crisis Committee members found expression in the leadership. These were Qaba, Morake, Nyathi and Mokati. Some of these members were also nominated to become ward councillors and PR councillors by their respective branches. Qaba and Morake were nominated for the positions of PR councillors. Their names could not find expression after the screening process spearheaded by the REC. Mokati's hopes for being a ward councillor were also thwarted as the REC preferred another candidate Kholeka, arguing that this

[928]Interview with Bongile "Power" Mthenjana, Phomolong, 27 November 2009.

[929]*Ibid.*

would help the branch to comply with gender parity requirements in terms of leadership nomination. The three, Qaba, Morake and Mokati strongly believed that there was foul play in the process and that the real reason why they could not find expression in the ANC local government lists is because of their leadership and participation in the Crisis Committee.[930]

When local government elections ultimately took place, the ANC retained its electoral dominance in Phomolong winning ward 2 with a total of 3,374 votes with the DA only receiving 48 votes. The ANC also won Ward 3 that had previously belonged to the DA with a total of 1,485 votes with the DA scoring closely at 937. The total number of people who cast their votes in ward 2 and ward 3 was 3,511 and 2,599 respectively.[931]

The Limits of the Crisis Committee

The study of the Crisis Committee suggests that analysts should be cautious in asserting the extent to which such protests present prospects for revolutionary change. There are many reasons to be sceptical. Firstly, personalised politics dominated the Crisis Committee and this contributed to an absence of a radical critique of the neoliberal policies pursued by the ANC run capitalist state. As a result, the removal of Tshabangu on the basis that he monopolised the political space and the local state's resources is as close as the Crisis Committee arrived at the question of "political self determination". Its ideas about democratisation of the political space largely revolved around the internal democratisation of the ANC and eliminating all hurdles to participation within the organisation. It spent little, if any time, pondering the question of building a grass roots movement that combined demands about the improvement of collective consumption with the long-term struggle for an alternative to neoliberalism.

Overall, the Crisis Committee had a Janus-like character. It was forward-looking in its ability to organise mass protests, mobilise popular support, in part, around collective consumption issues and outside the organisational machinery of the ANC as the dominant political force in Phomolong. However, it was significantly backward and

[930]Interview with Ndade Morake, Phomolong, 27 November 2009; Interview with Tshidiso "Mzambiya" Mokati, Phomolong, 19 September 2009.

[931]Independent Electoral Commission, http://www.elections.org.za/lgeresults

in certain respects stuck in the institutional politics of the ANC and rejected attempts to define itself outside these politics. These fluid and ambivalent relations with the ANC presents challenges for a left project rooted in challenging the local state and the way it organises collective consumption. The short-term nature of the Crisis Committee's goals and its lack of staying power or longevity are more reasons to be contemptuous.

But the Crisis Committee's impact in reconfiguring Phomolong's politics should not be rashly dismissed. It cannot be simply written off as an *ad hoc* committee that oversaw the technicalities of organising the protest in Phomolong. Activists in the Crisis Committee collectively strategized the protests, approach towards the state and how to galvanise the broader support of the residents. Using a concerted and well-calculated mobilisation approach, which emphasised the structural issues around service delivery, the Crisis Committee was able to galvanise popular support in Phomolong. This support was key in the Crisis Committee's ability to weather the negative ascription attached to it by the state and the ANC. Importantly as well, the manner in which the Crisis Committee organised significantly departed from the ANC's hierarchical structure of organising. Perhaps, this signals real possibilities for participatory democracy and grassroots organising around collective consumption. Equally, the protests also made tangible gains for the Phomolong community. Through the protests, pressure was exerted on the local state which reacted by paving the roads in the township, resuming construction on the new stands for residents of *Putswastene* (two-roomed houses) and placing flushing toilets in some parts of the township. Arguably, state projects like Operation Hlasela[932] are a direct result of the panic induced by these protests amongst political incumbents of the state.

In addition, although the protests made tangible gains on service delivery, they still did not change the neoliberal nature of service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa. Cost-recovery, household affordability and user-pay principles remain firmly intact in Phomolong and certainly elsewhere in the country. In fact, many of the

[932] Operation Hlasela was adopted by Free State provincial government shortly after premier Ace Magashule took office in 2009. The purpose of Hlasela project is to bring together all government departments in an effort to fast track service delivery in the province.

grievances raised in 2005 remain unaddressed.[933] In February 2008, three years since the last protests, for mixed reasons, political and relating to collective consumption, councillors in Phomolong were once again under attack. Schools were boycotted, barricades were erected and stay-aways staged. In 2013, Phomolong was once again in the news for the same reasons that informed the 2005 protests. Clearly, the solution lies in more than just removing unpopular councillors but in a complete overhaul of the neoliberal local state and how it organises and distributes the means of collective consumption. Whether Phomolong will eventually move in this direction is debatable and a burning question that local studies must seriously consider. But it is at least comforting to note that activists everywhere are beginning to ask the similar questions. As Thabo Sethunya despondently notes:

> Things remain the same. Since 2005, nothing has changed. We don't even know what to do anymore, how to mobilise against this. Clearly we need a different approach; I just don't know what this should be?[934]

Conclusion

At a very concrete level of analysis, this chapter has examined the complexities and intricacies of the Crisis Committee as the organisational nerve centre for the 2005 Phomolong protests. There were two major elements that defined the Crisis Committee's social composition: unemployment and interrupted higher education. In this regard, the Crisis Committee attracted people who were both witnesses to and testimonies of the corrosive impact of neoliberal economic policies pursued by the ANC government. The individual and collective motivations for joining the Crisis Committee have also been explored in this chapter. These range from underdevelopment characterising the township to unfulfilled promises for jobs and deployments made by Tshabangu to his erstwhile allies.

Significantly, participating in the Crisis Committee was also perceived as a way of

[933] Whatever improvements made in the aftermath of the protests, evidence is already suggesting that these were done to merely placate Phomolong residents. As things stand in Phomolong, the foundations for the new houses that were meant to provide a solution to the challenges at *Putswastene* have still not been completed and the flushing toilets are in the words of one resident "useless" since they are not connected to a sewer system resulting in sewage spilling onto the township's streets. See (Newspaper article)

[934] Telephonic conversation with Thabo Sethunya, 15 February 2013.

democratising the political space in the ANC. The dominance of ANC politics in the Crisis Committee was evident from its composition, with the majority of the Crisis Committee being ANC members and supporters. The manner in which questions around resource mobilisation and interaction with other political parties such as the DA and SOPA were considered lends credence to the fact that the Crisis Committtee could not sever its umbilical chord from the ANC, nor could it imagine itself outside the hegemonic, if problematic, politics of the ANC in Phomolong.

The chapter has shown how social movement theory can be resourceful in understanding political opportunities and constraints for popular mobilisation and protests; identity formation and framing processes that protest movements undergo as well as the resource mobilisation strategies they pursue in order to advance their objectives. Critically, the chapter has also argued that, although the Crisis Committee's mobilisation starting point was rooted in issues surrounding collective consumption, it does not neatly fit into Castells definition of a social movement. The data presented in this chapter points to the conclusion that protests similar to those experienced in Phomolong in 2005 will have a limited impact in terms of propelling revolutionary change. Therefore, despite some of its promising aspects and potential to effect thoroughgoing transformation on the local state, the Crisis Committee's hybrid and fluid political character and its failure to craft a radical critique of the status quo should induce some scepticism on the part of those committed to a radical transformation of capitalist South Africa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

This dissertation began by tracing the formation of political organisations in Phomolong in the 1980s, their ideology, political networks and modus operandi. The study also examined the structural factors informing local struggles in Phomolong in their nascent years. The interplay between the structural basis, the intra-organisational and subjective dynamics in local struggles is highlighted in this study. In explaining the reasons behind the belated establishment of youth political organisations and the civic movement in Phomolong, the study has argued that this was mainly due to the absence of an acrimonious relationship between older residents in Phomolong and the Black Local Authorities as well as the fact that Phomolong had no high school until 1978. Being located in a region with no institutions of higher learning of Fort Hare and Turfloop's calibre also contributed to this belated politicisation. As some scholars have remarked, universities were "incubators of organised dissent",[935] in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It has also been argued that Black Local Authorities were insulated from stern opposition from older residents for much of the 1980s due to the "social worker" roles they performed as councillors and their social proximity and quasi kinship relations with the residents, facilitated by the township's small size. Adult residents and parents of many PYCO activists were also significantly embedded in the apartheid state apparatus, performing roles and functions that highly depended on the survival of the local state. Additionally, even in instances where councillors made unpopular decisions like increasing rents, this was done in a non-adversarial manner, with residents being timeously informed and given the impression that they were being taken along in the decision-making process. Furthermore, older residents identified councillors with the social improvements and development in the township since the period of the relocations. These factors explain why there was no sustained mass resistance against Black Local Authorities in Phomolong at least until 1989. The belated establishment of the Phomolong Civic Association is also attributable to these factors.

It has also been argued that the expansion of secondary schooling in the early 1980s is an important historical point through which to locate the formation of student and

[935]Twala and Seekings, "Activist networks and Political Protest in the Free State, 1983-1990", p.767.

youth organisations in Phomolong. The establishment of the township's first high school in 1978 contributed to the development of a layer of politicised youth and also acted as a convenient site for youth political activity. Born from the womb of the Big Ten, which was mainly focused on campaigning against the principal's alleged sexual relationships with female students, student politics in Phomolong were initially very parochial and adopted a minimally critical approach towards apartheid education institutions and bodies such as school boards. However, state repression was an important factor in conscientising young activists. It was through detention that young activists broadened their horizons about the nature of the struggle they had to confront. While in detention, young activists developed a collective consciousness against apartheid.

The thesis has argued that the existence of the Eagles Youth Clubs and vigilante group known as *Bontate* also retarded youth political activism in Phomolong. The Eagles formed an integral part of apartheid's soft war strategy aimed at staving off political resistance in South Africa's black townships. The dissertation has argued that the relationship between the Eagles Youth Club and PYCO was intricate and dynamic. A range of reasons explaining why young people joined the Eagles Club have been explored in this dissertation. It has been argued that educational and cultural activities as well as material benefits such as expensive trips that the Eagles afforded its members and participants stand out as the main reasons for participation in the Eagles Club. But the study of the Eagles Club is not only important for the purpose of recording history. The history of the Eagles is a constant presence in the politics of contestation over the local state in Phomolong. For some, participation in the Eagles is used to discern a "politically deserving" comrade from comrades who are historically associated with "counter-revolutionary youth structures". The history of the Eagles Club is also used to measure activists' political credibility and "struggle credentials", as subjective as these terms are. Over time, as political activists realign and alliances get reconfigured, these political memories may wane.

The connection between national negotiation compromises and the ability of the local state to foster a transformative and redistributive agenda has been interrogated in this thesis. The Hennenman TLC was not spared from the contradictions facing many transitional local government structures across the country in the early 1990s. In the newly constituted transitional structures, ANC comrades often found themselves

powerless when faced with the powers that councillors from white residential areas still mustered and the groundswell of discontent brewing in the townships over the slow pace of transformation. Be that as it may, the study has argued that these structural factors do not complete the account. A missing factor in most analyses of local government transition is the internal dynamics within the anti-apartheid organisations during this time. Apart from contestation over the Eagles' legacy, discord also arose based on the failure of successive administrations to keep to the promise of providing jobs and deployments in the local state to some comrades within the ANC. This is the backdrop for the protests that took place in Phomolong in the year 2005. Thus, although collective consumption provided the political basis to mobilise against the first TLC in Phomolong, it was not the only factor explaining why this structure came under pressure. This study therefore contends that a combination of intra-organisational battles, structural constraints imposed by the negotiated transition as well as the capitulation to neoliberalism can all be factored in to explain the instability of the local state in Phomolong. South Africa's transition from white minority rule to democracy was a complex and rapid process. Almost everywhere across the country, activists were bewildered by the process and the new and rapidly evolving political environment that characterised the transition from apartheid to democratic rule. This transition presented serious challenges for the unity and cohesion of the local movement in the area. Two challenges dominated the transition. Firstly, the manner in which transitional structures were constituted and the limits posed by compromises struck at national negotiations limited their ability to forge ahead with a thoroughgoing redistributive agenda. Secondly, the internal polarisation of the local political movement itself, the inexperience with governance and divisions over unfulfilled expectations about the material prospects presented by the local state.

This dissertation has made a contribution to the study of the evolution of local struggles and protest in Phomolong. It has interrogated the continuities and discontinuities between three distinct yet interlinked periods in Phomolong's history. The study of the three periods, spanning twenty years from 1985-2005, points to a few interesting conclusions about the nature of local politics in Phomolong. By looking at the three interconnected periods in Phomolong's history, this thesis managed to highlight the different political figures and personalities that have been a constant feature during the three periods. The evolution of the political roles and responsibilities of these different figures has been traced and with that the different

politics spawned by this evolution. Subjective political rivalry and enmity feature prominently in Phomolong's history. The politics of the area, as this study has shown, revolve around a particular cohort of young people who cut their teeth in political organisations like PYCO and student congresses in high school. Therefore the history of the youth orgnisations and transitional governance structures such as the TLC are crucial to understanding what transpired in 2005 and the different motivations driving the members of the Crisis Committee.

As demonstrated and argued in the study, the new local government system is premised on fundamentally different principles as compared to its apartheid predecessor. The new system is informed by noble ideas such as participatory democracy and developmental local government. However, there are some critical ways in which the two disparate systems are similar. For one, the neoliberal approach pursued towards apartheid's last days has been fiercely championed by the democratic state and gives rise to similar outcomes. Struggles over collective consumption continued to strike a sensitive chord among Phomolong residents in the post apartheid period. But this became more pronounced in the post apartheid period, perhaps because of the weight of expectations placed on the local state to fairly and equitably allocate the means of collective consumption. These expectations, as argued throughout the thesis, were not necessarily pronounced on the apartheid local state because of its racial orientation and bias towards the white population.

The Crisis Committee as the main organisation at the helm of the 2005 protest in Phomolong has been extensively studied in this dissertation. It has been argued that post-apartheid protest is not simply the spontaneous uprising of the people. At the centre of protest is usually a close-knit coordination centre. In Phomolong, this coordination centre was the Crisis Committee. Although it could be argued that the rise of the Crisis Committee can be squarely located within the rising contradiction between the local state's imperative to provide the means of collective consumption and the structural constraints imposed by neoliberalism, political power struggles in local ANC branches and the local state were significant factors in the eruption of the 2005 protest in Phomolong. The dissertation makes extensive use of social movement theory to dissect the internal operations of the Crisis Committee, its composition and the political opportunities and constraints that enabled or inhibited its successes. This detailed analysis of the Crisis Committee, its internal politics as well as its successes

and failures is one of the important contributions of this thesis. This account would not have been possible without the historical approach undertaken throughout this study.

Lessons and Implications for Future Research

The dissertation has made the case for locating the study of local protest within the local state as a sphere of reproduction. It has argued that state provided services in the sphere of reproduction, what Castells calls collective consumption, are important for understanding the reasons why the local state is besieged by social conflict and contestation. Having said this, it appears that this analysis has its own limits. For one, the rise of struggles over collective consumption and the political significance of the local state in advanced capitalist countries coincide with the rise of the welfare state or the extension of state intervention in the sphere of the reproduction of labour. However, a paternalistic tradition towards black communities was a blatantly absent characteristic of the state throughout the period of white minority rule in South Africa. Therefore, a discussion on collective consumption must take into consideration the racial orientation of the South African state prior 1994. Additionally, although social movement theory helps in understanding the operations of movements, the formation of collective identities and the political opportunity structure for protests, the manner in which the theories were developed shows little sensitivity for developing countries. For instance, the dominant theories either make the case for jettisoning class as a category of analysis in the study of social conflict or argue for greater emphasis on the middle class as a driving force behind social protests in recent history.

These trends are not evident in the South African context. Local protests are as much about dispossession as they are about the inability of the local state to meet the collective consumption needs of the unemployed, or what Marxists would call a relative surplus population. This analysis is in line with other studies of conflict in the Third World, which argues that a post-modern approach to studying social movements is inadequate. These studies posit that class is an important basis for

understanding social conflict and argue that some of these movements present the most dynamic force against neoliberal capitalism.[936]

Neoliberalism has undoubtedly contributed to the politicisation of the post-apartheid local state in South Africa. However, there are also limits to blindly applying Castells' theory of social movements within the South African context. Castells' optimism does not match the evolution of protest movements in the history of Phomolong. This means that not all responses to capitalist contradictions at the level of the local state will spawn movements that are principally aimed at changing the way in which property relations and attendant power relations are structured under capitalism.

The post-apartheid state's staunch subscription to neoliberal policies means that struggles anchored around collective consumption are set to grow in significance and frequency. This raises the importance of studying local protests. In doing so, researchers must bear in mind that while dichotomies are useful in stimulating conceptual discussions, their application in concrete situations presents challenges. Relying mainly on activists' self-perceptions, this research has made a contribution towards the study of the social agents participating in service delivery protests. As the study has argued, the Crisis Committee can only be defined as a social movement at the risk of failing to capture its specificity and evolution out of Phomolong's history of struggle and resistance against apartheid as well as its dynamic and complex relationship with the ANC and the local state. Its inability to transcend the parochial politics, which revolved around an individual in the local state and the failure to develop a radical critique of the status quo, means that scholars should be careful about quickly painting these movements with revolutionary brushes. It is more fitting to classify the Crisis Committee and similar movements as protest or participation movements rather than social movements.

However, far from completely dismissing the Crisis Committee, this study has argued that the possibilities for such movements are enormous. Through constant confrontation with state power, especially the repressive arms of the state, the social forces behind these protests may acquire a consciousness that escapes the parochialism and personality based politics that currently define them. Repeated

[936] Veltmeyer, H, "New Social Movements in Latin America: The Dynamics of Class and Identity", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1997, p.139-169.

confrontation with the same institution will hopefully lead to a realisation that no amount of changing of personalities/bourgeois politicians will alter the neoliberal nature of the post-apartheid local state or enable it to adequately satisfy the collective consumption needs of the working class.

In engaging post-apartheid local protests, it is important to interrogate the internal dynamics and social composition of the movements at the helm of these protests, their relationship with the state and dominant political organisations, tactics as well as individual and collective motivations for partaking and leading these protests. The study of the Crisis Committee reveals interesting complexities about the articulation between collective consumption struggles and the historical evolution of political mobilization and protest in Phomolong.

This study has argued that local factors are important in understanding the evolution of local protests. While the inclination to generalise about the study of local protests is understandable, given the semblance of issues driving local protests in post apartheid South Africa, the repertoires of collective action and claims laid on the state, the study cautions against blanket analysis. The local political milieu and history has proved to be an indispensible element in understanding the Phomolong case study such that the conditions evident in Phomolong may not be present elsewhere. In this regard, generalisations should be stretched only in so far as they emphasise the structural socio-economic conditions. And perhaps we may even generalise about the intra-organisational dynamics of the ANC and how these contribute to protests and local struggles. But can we generalise about the historic enmity, political ambition, politics generated by the Eagles Club and faltered hopes about upward mobility through the local state? The conclusion is uncertain. Discounting "the local", which is so important in this analysis, might lead us to wrong conclusions. As the Phomolong case demonstrates, local specific factors play an important role in mediating the structural context.

Lastly, the life history interview was extremely useful in leading this study to most of its conclusions. Would a different approach have highlighted and traced Tshabangu's political woes in 2005 to events that occurred nearly ten years earlier? Would the detailed history of the Eagles Club outlined in this dissertation surfaced through any other research method? Perhaps, but the life history method allowed this study insight

into firsthand accounts based on activists' self-perceptions for the periods interrogated in this study. These self-perceptions led the research to new themes and relatively unexplored subjects such as the history of the Eagles Club, activists' hopes and expectations pinned on the local state transformation process and the inside operations of the Crisis Committee for instance.

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