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Urban identity in post-apartheid Soweto

A case study of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee

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Abstract

This research report is an examination of urban identity in post-apartheid Soweto, using the SECC as a case study of emerging post-apartheid identity. This report argues that the SECC forms a context for the affirmation of a particular set of identities in post-apartheid Soweto. This set of identities is constituted within a very particular relationship to place. Through the everyday activities in the branches of the SECC members of the SECC actively construct themselves and the places in which they live. This report draws on a literature that has considered the emergence of social movements in Latin American and post-colonial cities since the 1980s. This literature argues that social movements contest not only the material conditions but also the cultural and symbolic order of space and the city. The report then considers how the SECC is constituted across different scales. These different scales of movement activity represent a potential tension within the organisation between the leadership and the branches of the SECC. It is in the branches that the SECC exists from day to day, and it is in the branches that a strong sense of place is constructed through the everyday activities of the SECC branch. The report concludes that the everyday practices of the SECC at the scale of the local branches are part of a broader process of remaking place and identity in post-apartheid Soweto.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (coursework) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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Alex Wafer, 18 July 2005

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Chapter 1. Introduction

On 6 October 2004 This Day reported on their front cover of the newspaper that members of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) were arrested after a series of protests directed against the installation of pre-paid water meters in Phiri in Soweto. The installation of pre-paid meters has become the official policy response to the inability of many Soweto residents to pay for basic services. An SECC activist explained to the newspaper reporter:

> In the past residents used to pay an affordable flat rate of R62 for water per month. With the new system residents have to purchase a R20 coupon that buys you 10 000 litres. This is not enough for one household with more than 10 family members (SECC member, quoted in This Day, 06/10/2004:1).

According to the newspaper there were about one hundred protesters; most appeared to come from the nearby communities of Phiri and Dlamini. These numbers would normally be small enough for such an event to go unnoticed but in the past few years there has been rising media interest in what is regarded by some as heavy handed tactics by the local state in dealing with dissenting voices. In this same article the police spokesperson was quoted as saying the march was illegal and the police were deployed to "disperse a rowdy crowd" (This Day, 06/10/2004:1). Such dismissive language is increasingly the stock response to protest events, which fails to adequately explore the root of protest action. The stark image that accompanied the article of three policemen dragging an elderly protestor into a police car casts a striking pose and tells a well-rehearsed story: the battle lines between neo-liberal state policies and privatisation on the one hand, and the poor and marginal victims protesting these policies on the other. Yet this incident is only

one aspect of a story of an organisation made up of many different people from communities across the whole of Soweto. While little more than a hundred SECC members from Phiri and Dlamini protested the installation of pre-paid meters in their local communities SECC members in other areas were attending church services, 'illegally' re-connecting electricity and otherwise living the daily life of Soweto. From day to day the movement is a precarious unity of branches and individuals that construct their identity in the places they live.

The aim of this research report is to examine emerging forms of identity formation in post-apartheid Johannesburg, using the SECC as a case study. The SECC is one of a number of organizations to emerge in post-apartheid South Africa and variously described as 'social movements' (Ballard et al 2004; Mayekiso 2003; Greenstein 2003; Barcheisi 2004). The SECC emerged initially as a local response to electricity cut-offs and the lack of adequate service delivery in large parts of Soweto. With varied success, the SECC has maintained a strategy of protest action that includes marches, media activism and illegal reconnections. In the process, the movement has cultivated a public profile of open antagonism with various levels of state. This was most vividly illustrated by the attempted symbolic disconnection of the Johannesburg mayors' house in 2002 (McKinley 2003). At the same time, the SECC is constituted by a diverse and at times elusive membership. The relationship between branches and the leadership structure, and between the various branches themselves, suggest an organization that is held together by personal relationships, church loyalties, paternalistic relationships and shared experiences of hardship.

I argue in this report that the SECC, along with other post-apartheid social movements, have contributed to the formation of post-apartheid urban identities. I build on the social movements' literature from post-colonial Africa and India, and from Latin America. This literature has considered the emergence of social movements in response to the failures of the developmentalist and post-colonial states. This literature, I argue, offers theoretical tools for understanding urban protest and identity formation in post-apartheid South Africa. Protest action and public disconnections of councillors and the mayor are occasional, sometimes spontaneous, acts of defiance. Within the SECC, branch members live and share the struggles of electricity cut-offs every day and develop strategies and mechanisms to cope. Some of these mechanisms, such as re-connecting electricity, are considered illegal. Others, such as regular branch meetings, are little more than support structures where branch-members share their experiences with each other. I argue that it is through these everyday practices that members of the SECC affirm their identity, at times contrasting the public profile that the leadership of the movement cultivate. Finally I consider the importance of identity and place. The SECC, especially in the local branches, provides a context for shared experiences and meaning of place by which members can understand and affirm themselves in post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Structure of the research report

The research report situates the SECC within a historical and theoretical literature of urban protest in the late twentieth century, most especially in South Africa but also the global south. Chapters two and three argue that the SECC is most usefully understood as an urban based social movement that contests the construction of meaning and daily life in post-apartheid Johannesburg, and the empirical chapters (chapters four and five)

explore the activities and associations that structure everyday life in the branches of the SECC.

In Chapter two I review the literature on urban protest and social movements. Crosley (2002) identifies two distinct academic traditions within social movements' theory: the European structuralist tradition and the American analytical tradition. Whereas the analytical tradition has been mostly concerned with the objective conditions for the emergence and longevity of movements, the structuralist tradition has been concerned with the contradictions within late-capitalist society that social movements (intentionally or unintentionally) expose (Crosley 2002). In Europe the movements that emerged after 1968 did not conform to traditional structuralist and Marxist accounts of social conflict so these 'new' agents were called the New Social Movements (NSMs) (Habermas 1981; Touraine 1984). The NSM theorists attempted to shift the focus of theoretical engagement away from material determinism towards experiences of what Habermas calls peoples 'life-worlds'; the set of understandings and expectations about how the world should be (Habermas 1981). NSM theory influenced theories of social protest in Latin America in the 1980s (Escobar 1995, Phongpaichit 1999). The social movements that emerged in the mega-cities of Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s cut across traditionally held assumptions about class and subjectivity in developing societies. The social movements were a response to both the material as well as symbolic failures of development (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). "Far from the essentialising assumptions of previous political theory (for example that mobilisation was based on class, gender or ethnicity as fixed categories), these processes of identity construction were more flexible,

modest and mobile, relying on tactical articulations arising out of conditions and practices of daily life" (Escobar 1995:120).

Similarly in India and post-colonial Africa social movements and associated protest have been understood as a response to the material and imaginative failures of the post colonial state (Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba 2000; Wignaraja 1993; Phongpaichit 1999). In particular social movements' literature has emerged in response to perceived failures of "western theories of civil society" (Mamdani 2000: 602), a legacy of the colonial state regarded as the space of urban and modern citizenship in opposition to rural and traditional (and backward) modes of life. Yet unlike the NSMs, social movements in these societies emerge in response not to state hegemony but rather the inability of the post-colonial state to occupy a central organising role in society (Chabal and Daloz 1997). Social movements emerge at the interface of the false dialectic between rural/traditional and urban/modern identities (Mamdani 2000). They are usually spontaneous and organic mechanisms of survival and order in a context where expected symbols of social order are absent. Simone calls this symbolically fragmented and disordered social sphere the sphere of associational life where informal relationships and networks structure daily life in the spaces left by western theories of civil and political society (Simone 1997).

In South Africa post-apartheid social movements have mostly been understood within a literature of class struggle in South Africa (McKinley 2003). A number of writers have argued that the social movements represent the re-emergence of the civics of the 1980s, and the voice of radical civil society (Mayekiso 2003). Many of the movements define

themselves as working class organisation, with a socialist or working class ideology (SECC constitution 2000). In some instances a class identity needs to be purposefully constructed: “the notion of the working class is a bit confusing for the unemployed, because they think ‘ah, I’m not working.’ So it’s most important for us to crystallise that identity … this is a conscious thing we try to cultivate” (Ngwane 2003:17). Desai (2001) frames the social movements as part of a new movement of ‘the poors’; the masses who are the victims of neo-liberal government policy. The relationship of working class identity to urban social movements cannot be divorced from the construction of society and the state (Chikhi 2000). In a society such as South Africa, the state and the labour movement are intimately bound together. Masuko (2000:304) further complicates the field by suggesting that trade unions which constitute political movements in the workplace might form social movements in their relationship to the everyday life in poor parts of the city, or in relation to often mythologized rural homelands, which often rely on migrant labour for income. Without denying the significance of working class identities (and he uses the plural deliberately) Haylett (2003:60) has shown that while a working class solidarity can be a purposeful political project the lived experiences of working class identities are particular and never homogeneous. Social movements’ literature in India for example has shown how experiences of class, gender and ethnicity are produced in post-colonial societies as a complex interaction between the post-colonial state and competing discourses of identification, and are often intricately linked to ideologies of nationalism and development (Singh Gill 1998).

While many activists and academics are concerned with the potential of post-apartheid social movements to successfully contest sites of state power and repression (Bond 2004;

McKinley 2003), a small yet significant body of literature argues that these movements do not fit neatly into traditional theoretical models of social agency and conflict (Barcheisi 2004; Dwyer 2004; Greenstein 2003). Khan and Pieterse, drawing on Escobar (1995) and the experience of Latin American social movements in the 1980s, regard post-apartheid social movements as "essentially a social-cultural practice rooted in everyday struggles for survival and 'space', in urban areas increasingly marked by the limited reach of the state" (2004:36). Greenstein further argues that these movements cannot (and should not) be regarded as potential mass-based political organisations. The potential of the social movements lies "not in trying to impose a unity that will meet power with counter power, but by allowing the untidy nature of the social movements to flourish and spread to hitherto unaffected aspects of society" (Greenstein 2003:36). This school of thought, regarding the social movements as partly outside of and contesting conventional explanatory models of social conflict, looks rather to how these movements are constituted in the everyday lived experiences of people and communities.

In chapter three I situate the SECC within a historical context related to struggles over the city and urban daily life. I argue that protest in Johannesburg since the 1980s has been directed at the horizon of the city (and not just the nation state) as a political and social goal, and has been characterised by consistently destabilised subjectivities of race, class and gender. The urban protests that exploded in Johannesburg in the 1980s were directed initially against local manifestations of apartheid (Chipkin 1997). In 1983 the Black Local Authorities (BLAs) were set up by the apartheid regime in an attempt to give limited self-rule to urban black communities (Beall *et al* 2003). Financially bankrupt and morally discredited, the BLAs became the target of protests. These protests gave birth to

the civic movements that began to coordinate local level resistance against the local manifestations of the apartheid system – urban marginality, service delivery and access to the city as a social and political right. These protests were often in the name of the broader national liberation movement (that were at that time banned), but the popular and local character of many of the protests, epitomised in slogans such as 'one city, one tax base', suggest that they simultaneously contested local and urban governance as both social and political horizon (Chipkin 1997).

A number of activists and theorists regarded the civics as offering the institutional form of local government after apartheid (Mayekiso 2003). In this view the civics represented the real voice of the 'community', and the life-blood of the anti Apartheid struggle. In the early 1990s the ANC envisaged a role for the civics in reconstructing urban governance but did not regard them as forming the basis for future local government: "While the civics' are central to the struggle for democratic local government, they cannot be seen as local government structures of the future. These structures will be formed on the basis of votes won by organisations in local elections." (ANC 1990 in Seekings 1997:25) Mayekiso argues that the civic movements were effectively marginalised by the centrist tendencies of the ANC. "Most civics experienced an exodus of high-calibre leaders to the various tiers of government. Civics attempted to remain non-party political and outside of the state, acting as an interface between the community and the state. This was so as to keep the state responsive to delivery processes and accountable to the citizenry" (Mayekiso 2002: 60). Ballard *et al* (2003) argue that the avenues of opposition which the civics had previously occupied were absorbed into a post-apartheid government, leaving spaces of opposition much reduced. State-society relations previously characterised by

antagonism and adversarial opposition were absorbed into a legitimate, development-oriented arena (Ballard *et al* 2003). These arguments "[underestimates] the importance of the changing social and political context. The changing character of popular grievances and the transforming institutional environment both exerted pressure on, and constrained the responses of, the civics" (Seekings 1997:22). The community that the civics claimed to represent was after 1994 no longer the homogeneous entity it had appeared in the 1980s.

In the same chapter I then consider the emergence of the SECC in post-apartheid Johannesburg in the context of debates on urban governance. The RDP embodied a progressive vision of Developmental Local Government (DLG) that would rectify "apartheid created infrastructure disparities" by extending basic services (including water and electricity) and free lifeline tariffs (RDP 1995: sections 2.3.5, 2.6 and 2.7). Bond (2003) argues that post-apartheid policy has tended more steadily towards neo-liberal imperatives, and away from the ethos of the RDP. The White Paper on Local Government (1998) represents well-conceived welfare policies but represents a "demobilisation of civil society" (Bond 2003:45) since it understands the role of local government as merely a service delivery appendage of national government. The shift towards cost-recovery in service delivery was manifest in Johannesburg as iGoli 2002, the "comprehensive privatisation plan for the city" (Ngwane 2003:25). The SECC, along with a number of other social movements, emerged in response to *iGoli 2002* combining public mass action with local community support to mitigate the effects of service cut-offs. While the protests are targeted at the material effects of service cut-offs the chapter argues that like the civic movements of the 1980s, the SECC challenges "not only state

control but also the established left understanding of struggle and politics" (Greenstein 2003:14).

In chapter four I introduce the SECC and trace its trajectory from its emergence in 1999, through the debt moratorium in Soweto in 2001 and the high profile protest action in 2002 and 2003, to the tensions that have emerged within the organization in early 2005. I argue that the organisation is constituted at a number of distinct scales between the everyday lived experience of electricity cut-offs on the one hand and the effort of a small group of activists and academics on the other who struggle to build and mobilise a movement connected to a broader politics of privatisation and disconnections. The SECC exists in a tension between these various scales. I argue that within the SECC different groups operate at, and claim legitimacy through, these different scales of movement operation. I consider also how the SECC has built up a repertoire of protest action which includes public marches, constitutional arguments and 'illegal' electricity reconnections. Such actions are public acts of protest and defiance, but I argue that they are also everyday acts of survival that serve to affirm a sense of identity. In contrast to the activist and academic backgrounds of many in the leadership, the majority of branch scale members articulate their concerns in relation to their daily lives. One concern of the leadership is to educate the branches about privatisation and to show how it impacts upon peoples daily lives (anonymous interview 10/04/2004). Despite these efforts there remains a tension between the activist and academic leadership, and the experiences and expectations of members in the branches. According to the SECC Chairman's Report (2004) "members become involved in various activities but fail to report back to the executive and the forum. Activities are therefore not used to allow the organization to

grow but [as an] individual thing. The organization also needs to develop a mechanism of dealing with the problems from the structures" (SECC Chairman's Report 6 March 2004). This might suggest that the SECC leadership has less power to speak on behalf of their constituency than it acknowledges. The semi-autonomy of the branches may weaken the movement's ability to coordinate and maintain a sense of accountability, but it may also reflect the reality of how people in communities construct their own identity.

Finally in chapter five I explore in detail the relationship between place and the construction of post-apartheid identity. The argument in this chapter is that place, and one's relationship to place, is an important ingredient in constructing urban identity (Keith and Pile 1993; Pile and Thrift 1995; Robinson 2000). Pile argues that "spatiality – as well as temporality – is not simply a passive backdrop against which subjectivity takes place; it is actively constituting the subject's relationship to themself and the world" (1996:141). Investigating the construction of community identity in working class areas in England George Revill has argued that "certainty comes from the means to describe oneself, and security comes from doing this in a way that is shared by the group and unavailable to outsiders" (1993:119). These means are often found in the affirmation of daily life. Hetherington (1998) argues that everyday life offers a potential for resistance that does not exist elsewhere in an individuals engagement with institutions in society. "Structures of feeling are located in everyday life, within the routine practices of ordinary people. Everyday life; the local and the particular; affords some opportunities for resistance that are not often possible to many through the institutionalized worlds of politics or culture" (1998:80). Protest and resistance, and experiences of daily life, are important registers in constructing meaning and a sense of place in the post-apartheid

city. In this way I argue that Soweto is constructed as a register of meaning and legitimacy, especially in relation to other places such as downtown Johannesburg. I argue further that stability and mobility are two strategies that have been separately employed by different groups within the SECC. These strategies reflect the different identities that are contained within the organisation and expose internal cleavages especially of age and gender and their relationship to place.

Methodology

The research report comprises a case-study of the SECC conducted in Soweto, Johannesburg, between 2004 and 2005. The methodology combines a number of qualitative methods to explore the daily activities and associational networks that constitute the SECC at the branch level. Initially I identified and interviewed a number of key leaders within the SECC and its umbrella body the APF. I was subsequently invited to attend a series of public meetings and demonstrations as well as the SECC AGM in March 2004, and I reviewed the SECC constitution and other internal reports and documentation. As part of this process I also conducted a number of interviews with activists and academics with close association to the movement. A number of potential tensions emerged from this process, most notably that certain groups were over represented at different events. The pensioners and women who appear to make up the numbers at the mass rallies and marches through downtown Johannesburg were not equally represented at the AGM for example. The second part of the research process focused on the branch structures and the constitution of the SECC at branch level. Through a series of interviews with branch committees and with ordinary branch members and attending branch meetings, the research report represents an exploration of

the dynamics, personal networks and association life that maintain (or inhibit) cohesion at the branch level. In all cases my entry into the branch structures where I conducted research was dependent on personal and informal relationships. Subsequent reflection on these relationships has proved useful for considering the informal nature of associations and networks within the SECC in general. In addition to constituting the organization at a local level I have explored how the branch structures function as spaces of emotional, institutional and associational support that affirms particular post-apartheid urban identities. It became clear that many of the tensions within the organisation are played out in the branches. The research process included a series of open-ended interviews with branch office-bearers as well as a series of unstructured interviews with branch members. In some instances specific interviewees have been re-visited, and in the case of six of the interviewees regular (fortnightly to monthly) meetings and discussions have occurred over the entire research period.

Interviews

Interviews included formal and structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations but where the 'interviewee' was aware of my research and consented to the interview. Most of the formal interviews were conducted in the early stages of the research process and served two primary functions: they provided crucial information about the structure and ideology of the organisation, as well as providing the entry point into the branch structures where the major component of the research was conducted. These key informants include leaders and spokespeople for the SECC and APF (the umbrella organisation that includes the SECC among others) as well as academic and activist commentators. Although the major research was carried out in

specifically two branch structures a number of these informants have continued to provide valuable support and to give a broader perspective on my research findings.

Unstructured interviews, participation and observation

In the branches I conducted a number of formal interviews with specific branch office-bearers. The bulk of the research in the branches consisted of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participation at meetings and marches, and my own observations of these events and the dynamics that prevailed within the branch over the eight month period that I was there. I relied on the informal networks within the branch to identify potential interviewees. Many of these interviews took the form of accompanying one or other of the branch leaders as they visited the members in their area.

A significant component of the research process has been attendance at meetings and marches. In many of these instances I was either asked not to record what was discussed, or was unable to adequately record activities and events that I observed. This was especially the case at marches, where old women and young men arrive at different times and by different means for instance. As the research process unfolded I realised that this was not arbitrary but linked to the different registers of meaning that the SECC holds for different identities. In these cases I have had to rely on my own observations. This creates methodological problems since the integrity and subjectivity of observations require empirical substantiation. Although I have not recorded my observations directly, they have significantly influenced my subsequent interviews as well as the theoretical literature that I have engaged.

Chapter 2: Urban social movements and theories of the city

> Social movements are objects constructed by the researcher, which do not necessarily coincide with the empirical form of collective action. Seen from the outside, they may present a certain degree of unity, but internally they are always heterogeneous, diverse (Jelin 1992: 40).

> Social movements are 'plural and diversified', 'un-representable and unpredictable', and 'express a qualitatively new level of the struggle, a level in which life itself is the stake' (…) which threaten not only state control but also the established left's understanding of struggle and politics (Greenstein 2003:14).

Introduction

In this chapter I will review the literature on urban social movements particularly as it has responded to urban protest in 'third world' cities. According to Crosley (2002) the social movements' literature can be distinguished between the traditions closely associated with two dominant schools of thought in twentieth century social sciences. The analytic tradition emerged in the USA and Britain and understands social movements as issue-based interest groups that operate within the space of civil society. The question of why and how social movements emerge is answered by their specific issue-based demand and by the strategies, resources and prevailing political opportunities that are either conducive or restrictive to social mobilisation (Crosley 2002). The analytic tradition has been primarily concerned to understand why some movements succeed in leveraging concessions from the state and why others do not (Tarrow 1997). The structuralist tradition on the other hand has its roots in European structuralist and post-Marxist thought, and emerged initially as a response to the social and theoretical 'crises' in Europe after 1968. Della Porta and Diani (1999) and Phongpaichit (1999) argue that the structuralist tradition is concerned with identifying and interpreting the contradictions in

late-industrial capitalist society that cause and produce social movements at a particular point in social history and have been less concerned with the success or failure of individual movements.

The European tradition, especially the literature on New Social Movements (NSMs) (Habermas 1981), greatly influenced the literature on social movements that emerged in Latin America and post-colonial societies in the 1970s and 1980s. Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez (1992) argue that the social movements that emerged in many Latin American cities contested state legitimacy and control over various spheres of life not traditionally regarded as political. Social movements differ from traditional class-based movements not only because they include a wide spectrum of class and cultural identities but because they "extended the 'political space' available to citizens, bringing into the public realm the concerns of 'everyday life' and of the 'personal'" (Hellman 1992:52). In post-apartheid South Africa a small body of literature has argued that social movements challenge the categories of race, class and community; categories which have largely informed South African social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s. Contributions to the literature on post-apartheid social movements have commented on the heterogeneous nature of the social movements (Dwyer 2004; Desai 2002), their potentially radical unpredictability (Greenstein 2003), and their uncomfortable fit into categories of class and community (Barcheisi 2004). Most of these theories for the emergence of social movements in a democratic era consider state policy towards local government as the primary motivating factor, although Oldfield (2002) and Pieterse and Oldfield (2002) suggest that the relationship between communities and various levels of state is complex, and never fully resolved.

Theories of Social movements

The protests that consumed first Paris and then other cities throughout Europe (and later the USA) in 1968 began as spontaneous student uprisings against the world view of what was seen as an 'ancien regime' (Habermas 1981). In the following decade similar protests erupted in cities across the 'third world';: Mexico City, Manila and Santiago de Chile witnessed sometimes violent conflict between police and protestors (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). The issues were articulated differently in each case and represented a respond to different social and economic contexts. The target was in most cases legitimacy of an existing social, political and cultural order. The various attempts to understand these events trace broadly two dominant schools of twentieth century social science enquiry: an analytic mostly North American school, and a European structuralist school. Social movements' literature in the analytic tradition have been concerned with the strategies, resources and prevailing political opportunities that are either conducive or restrictive to social mobilisation, assuming the social conditions that give rise to them to be given and stable (Crosley 2002). The analytic tradition has been primarily concerned to understand why some movements succeed in leveraging concessions from the state and why others do not (Tarrow 1997). Within an analytical tradition social movements are not explained by big societal changes, but by the ability of groups within civil society to mobilize resources and gain political representation within the system. According to Phongpaichit (1999) theorists in the analytical tradition are not interested in why social movement arises; the answer to this question seems to them self evident. The analytic tradition "concentrates on why some [movements] succeed and some fail" (Phongpaichit 1999:4).

According to Della Porta and Diani (1999) because the USA is a strongly liberal society with a tradition of civil liberties, civil society has been the most obvious platform by which to influence and gain access to political institutions in the USA. With a strong tradition of political continuity, civil society mobilisation is somewhat 'depoliticised', and the underlying causes of protest and disaffection are seldom interrogated (Della Porta and Dian 1999). Rather, theorists of civil society have tended to be preoccupied with the strategies and tactics of civil society groups in articulating their interests. In addition there is no strong tradition of organised labour, and while the protests after 1968 did attempt to link up with a broader understanding of the way society was constructed in the interest of certain groups it largely translated into either civil society activism or the disengagement lifestyle of the 1970s (Della Porta and Diani 1999). They argue instead that in the United States, organisations that emerge from protest and social disaffection "rapidly became pragmatic, and were structured, in most cases, as interest groups; (…) in contrast, movements which were antagonistic to the system had a strong countercultural character and were – in many cases – explicitly religious in nature" (Della Porta and Diani 1999).

Most analytic studies of social movements have occurred within three directions of enquiry: theories of resource mobilisation, collective behaviour models, and theories of political system and opportunity. Resource mobilisation theories focus on the ability of movements to leverage resources (whether financial, legal, or human) to articulate their interests and achieve their goals. Collective behaviour models have attempted to understand under what conditions 'rational agents' would mobilise. Political opportunities theories focus on the prevailing political conditions that are either

conducive or restrictive to social mobilisation. All three of these avenues of enquiry have been challenged because they make assumptions about human agency and rationality, and underplay the importance of powerful interests within society that structure not merely political opportunities but also meaning and ideology within society (Crosley 2002). For Crosley (2002) the inherent problem with such models is that they misunderstand the issue of structure in society. The analytic tradition tends to view social movement activity within the sphere of civil society "failing to address properly the differentiated nature of contemporary societies and the plurality of distinct spaces in which struggles are waged (Crosley 2002:170). It is the structuralist tradition that has been primarily concerned with these questions.

New Social Movements

The European structuralist (and post-structuralist) tradition has been concerned with how and why social movements emerge in societies at a particular juncture in history rather than with the individual strategies of success or failure. The structuralist tradition emerged out of a post-Marxist concern with the underlying structure of society and the interests (usually class interests) embedded in that structure (Phongpaichit 1999). For the structuralist tradition 1968 marked an important moment in social history and the theory that it generates. In May 1968 protests erupted across Paris. What began as isolated protests by university students against the outmoded and conservative French university system soon engulfed the entire city. A few days after the student uprisings many of the industrial labour unions joined the students although the powerful French Communist Party refused to support the protests. Within a week the military quelled the protests but the political and social order of Europe had been shaken. With a strong Marxist and

structuralist tradition in the social sciences, with a society preoccupied after the Second World War with the welfare state, and an organised worker history that was central to the creation of post war Europe, the initial response to these events was a pessimistic soul-searching (Crosley 2002). Theories of society attempted to find the underlying structural contradictions that caused these events. Jurgen Habermas argues that the protests of 1968 were a spontaneous response to what he calls the "colonisation of life-worlds" (1981:1). What he means by this is that the protests challenged the pervasive infiltration of the state and late-industrial capitalist institutions into every aspect of both public and private life. The social protests of 1968 represented new forms of social conflict that contradicted the traditional class-based assumptions about society (Habermas 1981). The protests suggested disaffection with the values and mores on both the left and right of the political spectrum. Manuel Castells (1983) has cautioned against overstating the significance of 1968 to French society, but has also argued that the traditional explanations of class conflict as the formative conflict in late-industrial societies seemed suddenly inadequate.

Habermas and Castells have both been influential to theories of social movements in 'third world' cities, and the differences between these two social theorists define the contours within the structuralist school (Harland 1987). Habermas comes from a Marxist tradition strongly influenced by Hegel and the Frankfurt School. There are also elements of the civil society and 'statism' of Max Weber (Scruton 1982). According to Scruton (1982) Habermas consistently expresses dissatisfaction with the "scientism of historical materialism, which undervalues the role of consciousness in human affairs and encourages a naïve and dogmatic positivism, which is both doctrinaire in theory and highly destructive in practice" (Scruton 1982:177). According to Westwood (2002)

Habermas' life project is to understand modernity in relation to the limitations of rational western scientism: "He seeks an alternative account of the social sciences from that within scientism, which cannot offer the discourses necessary for a critical sociology" (Westwood 2002:17). Habermas maintains the importance of the state, especially the state bureaucracy, in reproducing social power-relations within capitalist democracies. He identifies two spheres of power in the state; one is the administrative power of the state, and the other is communicative power located in collective action. Thus for Habermas the state does not merely serve the interests of a certain class, but has a communicative life of its own which mediates between class interests: "What is at issue here is the generation and sustenance of consent in liberal democracy and the relationship between civil society and the state" (Westwood 2002:17). The post-industrial capitalist democratic state exists in a constant and precarious legitimation balancing-act between the interests of capital and the interests of its citizens. The social upheavals of 1968 and the social movements they precipitated represented for the state a 'crisis of legitimation'. The New Social Movements (NSMs) suggested new sources of crisis connected to the colonisation of life-worlds (Habermas 1981). In other words in late capitalist societies the NSMs seemed to suggest that the primary contradiction within society was no longer the exploitation of the working classes by the capitalist classes. Instead the site of crisis is the cultural and social values within society. Manuel Castells has criticised Habermas for offering no distinction between progressive and reactionary social movements, although Habermas has attempted to offer a critical theoretical engagement with society as opposed to identity-based groups which remove themselves from society (Habermas 1981). For Castells social movements also challenge traditional theories of society and

class but are intricately linked to the spatial logic of late capitalism, most especially the capitalist city.

Social Movements and the city

Influenced by the structuralist Marxist Louis Althusser, Castells attempted to situate the city, and particularly urban based protest, within a structuralist Marist account of society. According to Lowe Castells formulated his early position around "a critique of all previous social science approaches to the urban social system." (Lowe 1986:9) Castells dismissed as ideological the accounts of urban sociology that gave precedence to city life as an independent variable in forming culture; what Castells regarded as a fetishisation of the urban form. For Castells the cultural systems of urban life are a product of the capitalist system and not an historical endpoint in the development of modern society (Lowe 1986).

Castells primary conceptual elements are the social relationships of space, and the process of collective consumption (Lowe 1986). Until Castells, conventional Marxist analysis regarded the city as only incidentally the space of bourgeois accumulation and the site of capitalist production. Castells was concerned to interrogate the spatial logic of the late capitalist system. He saw the city not as an incidental component but emerging from the structural demands of late capitalist labour reproduction. While consumption and even production to some extent can occur at a national and trans-national level, the aspects of labour reproduction (that is family, housing, services and other concessions granted to the working classes in exchange for social stability) are organised by the state in the interests of capital. For Castells the capitalist city has developed as the most

effective spatial solution to capital accumulation. The capitalist city is not merely the battle-field for the clash between capitalist and working classes, but contains within it contradictions within late capitalist society (Lowe 1986). For Castells urban protest is not simply a manifestation of broader class conflict. Urban protest can provide the important impetus for broader social struggles. However Castells regards urban protest as revolutionary only if it unites with broader progressive class struggle.

After extensive empirical research in Latin America Castells began to regard urban protest, and the urban social movements that it gave rise to, as revolutionary in itself and not only when part of broader class conflict. “Although class relationships and class struggle are fundamental in understanding urban conflict, they are not by any means the only primary source of urban social change” (Castells 1983:291). Important for Castells is the concept of value and meaning within the urban system, and the urban social movements are at the forefront of contesting this terrain. Castells takes issue with what he termed the “myth of marginality” (Castells 1983:55); the idea that in ‘third world’ cities there is always a homogenous urban poor inhabiting the urban fringe as an a priori product of the urban condition. The myth of marginality is sustained through the artificial conflation of unemployment and economic marginality on the one hand, and the material conditions of the city’s marginal residents on the other.

> The ‘marginality theory’ proposes an explanation of society in which rural migration and ecological marginality appear as unexplained independent variables affecting the cultural attributes of people living in the urban margins, such as psychological anomie, deviant behaviour and political apathy (…) what really matters [is] the internal diversity of the ‘marginal settlement’ and the fact that many of their dwellers came from other sectors of the city and not from impoverished rural areas (Castells 1983:55).

For Castells the urban margins are produced as a particular urban form of late-industrial capitalism. More explicitly, the urban margins are the manifestation of a fundamental contradiction in the late-industrial capitalist system, linked to the role of the state in controlling the sphere of the reproduction of labour through housing and services (Lowe 1986). For Castells the urban margins are a result of the inability of the market economy, through capitalist state policy, to provide for the needs of the urban workforce (Castells 1983). This includes not only the poor and unemployed but also sometimes the salaried and middle classes. In other words, Castells regards these so-called urban margins as potentially heterogeneous and complex spaces. In the urban centres of Latin America where much of Castells empirical work was conducted (Caracas, Mexico City and Santiago de Chile) the observations were similar. The high diversity of household incomes, occupations, types of buildings and the legal and political status of the different settlements suggested that there were methodological problems in assuming the urban margins as a single homogeneous unit. Rather, Castells suggests that the crisis emanated from socio-political processes, and was not "an almost natural catastrophe with its own political consequences" (Castells 1983:60). Castells recognised that the emergence of collective action and protest in the urban areas was not first and foremost class-coordinated, yet "there is no doubt that working class neighbourhoods were the most organised and the most militant on urban issues" (1983:220). Yet the defining character of these movements was not their class identity: "the movement was then a non-class, social movement challenging the structure of a class society" (Castells 1983:220). Castells has been very influential on theories of urban protest in the 1980s in Johannesburg. These two theoretical contributions, by Castells and Habermas, open two

equally important branches for engaging with social movements in 'third world' as well as post-apartheid cities. The first is the recognition of the social and cultural significance of social movements. The second has been to place the urban into the centre of social theory.

Social movements in 'third world' cities

> Writers on cities in poor and post-colonial countries are increasingly drawn to consider the creative urbanity of these places and the people who live in them (…) It is these cultural resources and creative enterprises which transform city space, as much as – or perhaps even more than – political struggle and institutional reform. The imagination, then, is a crucial part of remaking city spaces (Robinson 1998: d7)

While sharing common influences, theories of social movements in the 'third world' reflect the differences in the societies where they emerge. Much of the 'third world' literature falls into either of two theoretical preoccupations, although I argue that both are closely related. The first is the literature from Latin America, where the failure of industrial development in the 1960s generated theoretical critiques of developmentalism and dependency. The late 1960s witnessed mass protests by urban poor in the major urban centres of Latin America, including students, the unemployed and housewives and mothers fed up with inadequate living conditions and the failures of service delivery in the cities (Bennet 1992). For many Latin American theorists the social movements "extended the 'political space' available to citizens, bringing into the public realm the concerns of 'everyday life' and of the 'personal'" (Hellman 1992:52). The second preoccupation has been the post-colonial state. Most post-colonial social movements' literature has come from Africa and South Asia. Post-colonial theorists have critiqued the inadequacy of 'western' theory and the social and institutional legacy of an exploitative

colonial-capitalist project (Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba 2000; Phongpaichit 1999; Wignaraja 1993).

Escobar and Alvarez (1992) argue that social movements' theory in Latin America has gone through a number of phases, corresponding to the changing socio-economic and political realities of the continent and much of the third world in general. The initial and tentative attempts to understand social conflict in Latin America emerged in the late 1960s as a way to understand the position of the so-called 'third world' in the global economy. These early theorists were influenced strongly by the developmentalist and structuralist arguments that had come from the European tradition. Dependency theory was the first real attempt to situate the South into a structural relationship of underdevelopment and dependence with Europe and the USA. It was largely a response to the failed developmental and modernizing policies of the Latin American regimes at the time. From the early 1980s, and responding to the slow and gradual democratisation of societies in Latin America, there emerged a 'theoretical renewal' (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). The economies of Latin America were emerging from a long period of failed Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI). The early 1980s were characterised by tentative steps to democratisation, at the same time as economic liberalisation and sociological factors of mass urbanisation. According to Escobar (1995) the emergence of grassroots and social movements in the 1980s in Latin America was partly linked to an opposition to development. By the 1980s the failure of the Washington Consensus model of development was clear to theorists and politicians inside and outside the 'third world' manifest in the debt crisis which began when Mexico defaulted on its debt repayments in the early 1980s. The result was often massive social unrest in the context of inefficient

and ineffective urban governance. Opposition to the 'development regime' was also about thinking and constructing new identities. According to Escobar: "far from the essentialising assumptions of previous political theory (for example that mobilisation was based on class, gender or ethnicity as fixed categories), these processes of identity construction were more flexible, modest and mobile, relying on tactical articulations arising out of conditions and practice of daily life" (Escobar 1995:200).

While the social movements that emerged in Latin American cities in the early 1980s were concerned with material conditions, theorists of social movements were struck with the relative lack of traditional industrial working-class coordination of these struggles. Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna (1992) argue that Latin American social movements could not be understood within the conceptual frameworks of traditional social science. Social movements, they argue, are neither 'embryos of revolutionary consciousness', nor are they secular civil society interest groups:

> Almost all social movements, in different ways and at different levels of intensity, express a critical position in respect to their dependence on political parties, state institutions or national caudillos (Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992:19).

In Latin America in the 1980s social movements contested very clearly the material conditions of marginalisation, unemployment and poor service delivery. A number of Latin American scholars, influenced by Castells, began to argue that, unlike traditional class conflict however, the site of social mobilisation was the realm of consumption rather than production (Jelin 1990; Hellman 1992). Yet in contesting sites of consumption the social movements found themselves contesting simultaneously the cultural and symbolic order of the city. As social movements made claims about the

material conditions of the city they questioned existing institutional arrangements that governed decisions around collective consumption. More than this, social movements created opportunities for questioning an entire cultural, spatial and symbolic order within the city. The city, spaces within the city, and the cultural and symbolic construction and control of these spaces, were radically questioned through the critique of consumption and distribution within the city. Increasingly there was recognition of the 'micro-politics of everyday life' in constituting meaning within places in the city (Calderon, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992:19).

> Rather than seeing these movements of the poor as being simply about material resources and needs, [Latin American theories] suggest that collective organization and everyday life in poor areas of cities are also about reimagining identities, about using creative cultural capacities to remake the meaning of places and communities. Escobar calls for a 'cultural theory of social movements', in which we pay attention to the wide variety of everyday practices of ordinary people, rather than reading their experiences through the dominant categories of social science (Robinson 1998:D7).

This does not deny the material realities which form the basis for many of these movements to mobilise. Rather, the every day experience of these material realities provides a context for constructing new ways of being in and imagining the world. Social movements were engaged with the reconstitution of meaning at all levels, from everyday life to national development (Escobar 1992). New identities were forged around imagining the end of development as a regime of representation (Escobar 1995). In India and Africa the emergence of social movements and the particular forms of associated protest have been understood in response to the post colonial state (Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba 2000; Phongpaichit 1999; Wignaraja 1993). In particular social movements' literature has emerged in response to perceived failures of 'western'

(Mamdani 2000: 602) theories of society. Mamdani (2000) is critical of the concept of civil society which is so strongly promoted by development organisations. Civil society is a particular legacy of the colonial state, regarded as the space of urban and modern state citizenship in opposition to rural and traditional modes of life. Mamdani criticises this western 'Hegelian' dialectic which posits the contemporary African condition as somewhere between urban and rural, modern and traditional. Urban social movements in post-colonial societies cannot be divorced from the particular construction of society and the state out of an inadequate and incomplete colonial project (Chikhi 2000). Social movements emerge as spontaneous and uncoordinated responses by ordinary people in an effort to construct meaning in the absence of state hegemony, and the inability of the post-colonial state to occupy a central, organising role in society on the one hand, and the reality of post colonial 'modern' state institutions on the other (Mamdani 2000). Social movements emerge at the interface of so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' identities as a kind of 'third space' outside, and subversive of, this dialectic (Soja 2000). Social movements are about 'associational life'; the informal relationships and networks that structure and provide meaning to daily life (Simone 1997). In researching social movements in Zimbabwe Masuko (2000) suggests a complex interaction between so-called modern and traditional worlds. Trade unions which constitute political movements in the industrial workplace often offer spaces to remake social and cultural identities in their relationship to everyday life in poor parts of the city, or in relation to 'mythologised' rural homelands which survive on the income of migrant labour. Experiences of class, gender and ethnicity are produced in post-colonial societies as a complex interaction between the post-colonial state and competing discourses of identification, and are often

intricately linked to ideologies of nationalism and development (Singh Gill 1998:131). The social movements that emerge in these spaces have radically contested these identities. Omvedt (1998) argues that in India many social movements started as local and uncoordinated opposition to individual development projects, and only later moved towards a broader critique of state policies. The movements rejected the development paradigm of the state and called for 'alternative' or 'peoples' development. For example, Omvedt recounts the growth of the women's movement "which evolved from an emphasis on fighting atrocities and violence against women to take up issues of property rights, political power and developmental alternatives" (Omvedt 1998:225).

Processes of democratisation in the 1990s began to shift theoretical engagements with social movements in Latin America and post-colonial societies. According to Phongpaichit (1999) the democratisation process has seen a re-emergence of theoretical discussions around the "globalised world system dominated by the USA" (Phongpaichit 1999:4). As social movements have moved through the so-called 'transition phase' of democratisation they have begun to engage with the state in more co-operative ways. Many of the claims of citizenship rights that the movements engaged with have been taken up as constitutional rights. This has prompted many theorists to view the social movements within the realm of civil-society activism, with the result that theorists have been concerned with how movements can or should mobilise to achieve concessions from the state. Issues of identity are often limited to static conceptions of identity, as in the case of peasant rights or gay rights (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). Social movements in many post transition societies have tended to be understood as organisations with coherent and articulate goals, mobilised around strategic identities. They engage with the

state in a number of ways ranging from co-operation to protest action, and most theoretical engagement has been concerned with how different movements succeed or fail (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). Increasingly social movements are either merging with or establishing themselves as NGOs. A number of recent theories have challenged the very real ideological bias inherent in the construction of civil society as the 'end of ideology' by the World Bank among others. In contesting the limitations of the post-colonial state, and also the new global agenda of civil society, the social movements in post-colonial societies have simultaneously begun to remake and reimagine social life. Against the depoliticised and uncritical arena of civil social enquiry Greenstein (2003) argues that the social movements in post-apartheid South Africa offer a potentially radical antidote.

Social movements in the post-apartheid city

In distinguishing the civic movements of the 1980s from other forms of social mobilisation, Seekings (1996) identifies a difference between popular movements and social movements. Popular movements Seekings defines by their relationship to political institutions, and by attempts to "constitute the 'people' as political actors" (Seekings 1996). The 'popular' movements of the 1980s had very strong links to the traditional working-class organisations such as the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and played a significant role in the anti-apartheid movement. Some of the literature on post-apartheid social movements has been preoccupied with re-invoking a history of anti-apartheid struggle. Mayekiso (2003) considers the persisting uneven development and the unequal distribution of wealth in South African cities an 'urban crisis' around governance and democracy. For Mayekiso

the urban crisis is in part the result of the demobilisation of the civic movements after 1994. Mayekiso argues further that the resolution of the urban crisis may reside in revitalising the culture of the civics:

> Social movements can and should reclaim the political space that was carved under apartheid, which allowed them to play a key role as power players in the development of South African cities (Mayekiso 2003:74).

This is an important recognition of the role that the civic movements played in rethinking the apartheid city in the 1980s (Chipkin 1997), yet it underestimates the ways in which new configurations of identity are emerging in post-apartheid South Africa. In the context of a deregulated economy and increasingly neo-liberal policy with respect to service delivery and urban governance (Bond 2004) a number of writers have considered the social movements in the context of a re-evaluation of working class identity, interpreting the social movements as local working-class struggles against (global) neo-liberal capitalism (Barcheisi 2004; Bond 2004; McKinley 2004). The issue of class remains unresolved in the South African social sciences. This is significant since many of the social movements understand themselves as movements of the working classes, and some movements have adopted an explicitly socialist or working class manifesto (c.f. SECC constitution 2000). Alexander (2004) argues that, although issues such as race and gender are important aspects of social struggle, these issues are not central. For Alexander the centrality of social struggle is the distribution of resources, “about who gets electricity, land, antiretroviral drugs or, indeed, decent pay” (Alexander 2004:31). Yet despite these ideological professions the social movements have had limited success in forging linkages with the traditional working-class organisations such as COSATU and the SACP (McKinley 10/10/2003). Class identity is therefore something which many of the social

movements have tried to actively construct within their membership. Peter Alexander (2003), in an interview with Ngwane of the SECC, states that class is a consciously cultivated identity within the SECC. Despite the recognition that the traditional industrial working class is difficult to invoke in the context of unemployment, casualisation and the complex rural-urban divide in post-apartheid South Africa (Barcheisi 2004) many activists and academics regard post-apartheid social movements as embracing and providing a political space for the articulation of a broader working class definition. In this context post-apartheid social movements are largely interpreted in response to the policies of GEAR and the cost-recovery of services. Activists and academics frequently site the 'broken promises' of the RDP as the cause of popular disaffection (Desai 202; McKinley 2004). Yet there is also recognition among commentators on post-apartheid social movements that these movements are new configurations that do not represent continuity with past organisations, even though many of the individuals might have come from previous struggle movements such as the civics and the trade unions (Bond 2004). The emergence of new avenues of resistance and social mobilisation was recognised not only by academics but also by the government. According to Barcheisi (2004) the ANC government has consistently attempted to criminalise and repress these new configurations of social protest because they expose a threat to its own legitimacy across all scales of state. While such movements have mostly failed to coordinate nationwide protest and dissent, Barcheisi argues that the ANC is particularly vulnerable at the scale of the community (Barcheisi 2004).

There is growing recognition that, through social movements, the notion of class is being questioned and problematised. Increasingly, new categories of social subject and new

organizational forms are contesting that space. Some academics and activists have attempted to redefine the space of the working-class within post-apartheid South Africa to include among others the unemployed, the aged and the indigent (Barcheisi 2004). Others have been willing to explore these "new social subjectivities" as potentially new spaces of power and meaning in post-apartheid South Africa. Desai (2001) has identified the construction of new collective identities in the spaces left by the inadequacy of traditional social science definitions such as class and race. For Desai the social movements are movements of 'the poors'; workers, the unemployed and the marginalised victims of anti-social neo-liberal government policy. Echoing the Latin American social movements' theorists Desai claims that 'the poors' are becoming the most important social force in post-apartheid South Africa (Desai 2003). For Desai the movements of 'the poors' respond directly to the experiences of poverty, service cut-offs and inadequate housing in cities across South Africa, and link these struggles to public disillusionment with state responsiveness (Desai 2003). Yet Dwyer (2004) argues that a term such as 'the poors' does not do justice to movements that are differentiated by uneven experiences of age, gender, and political orientations and expectations. For Dwyer "this heady cocktail of people, ideas, and experiences does not lend itself easily to simple classifications. Participants of the social movements cannot be straightforwardly categorised as having a single, coherent political consciousness or identity in opposition to 'neo-liberalism', and 'globalisation', neither do they have or represent a 'blueprint' - a 'how to' guide to campaigning in the 'new' South Africa" (Dwyer 2004:2).

At an ideological level many of the members of the social movements either reject or are indifferent towards the discourse of larger 'national liberation' struggle. For Khan and

Pieterse (2004), the social movements are instead “a social-cultural practice rooted in everyday struggles for survival and ‘space’, in urban areas increasingly marked by the limited reach of the state” (Khan and Pieterse 2004:36). Greenstein (2003) has argued that the radical potential of post-apartheid social movements might lie in the places from which they emerge, rather than in the traditional spaces of so-called civil society. He argues that these movements represent the struggles of people in their daily lives, and cannot (and should not) be translated into mass-based political organisations. Greenstein (2003) suggests that the social movements may represent the potentially radical element of a civil society that is otherwise reluctant to criticise the state. Similarly for Pieterse and Oldfield (2002) social movements are most often located in the everyday activities of communities and neighbourhoods in the city. Pieterse and Oldfield (2002) argue that the political opportunities and actor capacities available to social movements are shaped by the differentiated economic, political and social fabric of the local and urban environment. This argument goes further, actually situating the emergence of social movements spatially and in terms of scale. They argue that the physicality of the local neighbourhood environment inform the issues around which movements mobilise, and the types of organisational structure of organisations (Pieterse and Oldfield 2002). In chapter five I will consider further the relationship of movement identity and place in post-apartheid South Africa. I argue that through social movements such as the SECC new forms of engagement with the city are experimented with, and new identities are made. In doing this the social movements are part of remaking and reimagining spaces in the post-apartheid city.

Chapter 3: Space, identity and urban protest in Johannesburg

> The process of rethinking Johannesburg, of course, was underway prior to 1994. As far back as the 1980s, with reforms weakening the apartheid state, it seemed possible to remake the city (Tomlinson et al 2003: ix)

Introduction

Post-apartheid social movements have been described as 'new' movements because there is little if any continuity between these movements and the civic movements of the 1980s that defined anti-apartheid urban protest (Ballard et al 2004). The years immediately after 1994 witnessed what has been called a demobilisation of civil society (Bond 2003): the civic movements moved away from an antagonistic engagement with an illegitimate state towards cooperative engagement with a new and legitimate state. Heller (2003) has argued that the renewal of local protest after the second democratic election in 1999 represents a potential renewal of a dynamic civil society. Mayekiso (2003) and Heller (2003) argue independently that this signifies the revitalisation and re-politicisation of the civic movements. Yet the SECC and many of the other more prominent post-apartheid social movements are not affiliated to the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), the umbrella body of civic movements set up in 1992 in response to a changed political context. The SECC maintains a suspicious relationship with SANCO (which it regards as having been co-opted by the ANC) (Ngwane 18/12/2004), and SANCO itself no longer enjoys the same mass support that its constituent organisations once claimed among local communities in the 1980s and early 1990s (Zuern 2004). Despite the new organisational form of post-apartheid social movements, the civic movements provide a historical and theoretical precedent for considering urban protest after apartheid. The struggles of the civic movements helped shape both the institutional and the policy

environment of post-apartheid urban governance and it is this environment that post-apartheid social movements engage in (Mayekiso 2003; Swilling 1997). It is not only the institutional and policy environment that the civic movements influenced. The civic movements provide a precedent for the nature of urban protest itself, and especially its relationship to everyday urban life. For many within the UDF urban protest was based first and foremost in the civics as the rightful representatives of the community. Not initially codified into a coherent strategy, with the demise of apartheid a number of community activists and academics saw the civic movements as a potential model for post-apartheid urban governance (Mayekiso 2003).

In this chapter I trace a history of struggle in Johannesburg beginning in the 1980s and situate the SECC within particular post-apartheid struggles over urban services and governance issues. In presenting this history I argue that urban protest is distinct from nationally defined social and political protest, and that the city has not only been the site of protest but also the target of that protest. During the 1980s very specific meaning and identities were constructed in and through Soweto as a place, especially in relationship to the white city of Johannesburg (Robinson 1997). Protest in the 1980s was directed not only at symbols of broader apartheid repression, but also at more immediate symbols of urban segregation and separate urban administration. Post-apartheid Soweto similarly has a very particular relationship to other parts of the city, the Northern suburbs, and informal settlements on the margins of Soweto. While protest is directed at larger symbols of globalisation, the SECC is most active against local councillors and local government structures. I argue that the history of protest in Johannesburg has been about competing

ideas about local democracy, and has been characterised by consistently destabilised and shifting subjectivities of class, of community, of race and of place.

Protest and the apartheid city

The structure of the apartheid city was based on the control of space through the group areas act (Swilling 1997; Beall et al 2002). Swilling (1997) argues that: "whereas the ideology of racial division was justified in terms of the need for the separate development of the different race groups, in reality the economic relationship between the white and the black halves of the city were similar to a colonial relationship of exploitation and unequal exchange (Swilling 1997:212). The black townships located on the outskirts of apartheid Johannesburg were conceived not simply as black residential areas, but as working-class dormitories to serve the mines and industries in the area. By the 1980s Soweto was no longer the homogeneous working-class dormitory that it was (if it ever had truly been) and although it remained predominantly poor and working class the demographic make up of the area included a number of semi-professional and professional people. Importantly also it included a whole range of unemployed and informally employed (Beall et al 2003b). The transition of the political-economic landscape of Johannesburg from (racial) fordism to post-fordism is manifest in a changing spatial order of the city (Beall et al 2003a). As the economic locus of the city moved north during the 1970s and 1980s, away from the south and east of the industrial and mining era, so the spatial order of inequality became far more complex. According to Beall et al (2003a) after the 1970s it became insufficient to explain inequality in South Africa in terms of race alone. While whites remained relatively wealthy, within black communities there developed high levels of inequality. Beall et al (2003) argue that other

social forces were therefore involved, most especially a changing political economy in Johannesburg. Yet increasing political economy differentiation in urban space was produced in tension with the ideological and symbolic system of racial urban planning, and was manifest in progressively futile attempts by the state at reversing black urbanisation. Beall et al (2003a) argue that in the 1960s the apartheid state cut back on the provision of low cost housing to black urban residents in an effort to limit black urbanisation. In the black areas the state also allowed the private sector to fulfil some of the role of housing provision. According to Beall et al: "in effect this meant that African households became differentiated according to the kind of housing that they could afford (…) the emergence of these differentiated forms of housing in Soweto and Alexandra reinforced class differences in the African population" (Beall et al 2003a:58). By the 1980s Soweto began to be an anomaly within the apartheid city. The economic locus of the city had begun to move north and the demands of this economic shift were increasingly for skilled and flexible labour. The withdrawal of state provision of housing in the 1980s stratified Soweto into a complex of poor fringe shack-dwellers, backyard tenants and urban unemployed, but also an increasingly mobile (though relatively small) black middle-class (Beall et al 2003a). In 1983 the state abolished the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAAB) which had for so long controlled black movement into and within the apartheid cities. The BAAB gave way to the now infamous Black Local Authorities (BLAs) as the mechanism of regulation in the township areas. The BLAs were set up in an effort to give some form of self control to black urban residents who were increasingly resistant of apartheid, but is also regarded as a tacit acceptance that influx control was no longer tenable (Robinson 1997). The new BLAs were self-

financing, drawing their rates from the township residents, while the white northern suburbs often included the industrial and commercial zones within their rates bases (Chipkin 1997). According to Tomlinson et al (2003) the new BLAs were in an 'impossible situation' and from 1984 numerous campaigns arose to boycott BLA elections and structures. While these protests articulated broader political goals, they also focused on the nature and inequality of urban citizenship (Tomlinson et al 2003). The protests were therefore initially locally targeted and spontaneously organised. According to Swilling (1997) it was only later that large-scale organised social movement were able to make a decisive impact on the structures, policies and strategies of both the state and economic institutions.

When these large-scale movements did begin to have an impact the two-stage theory of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) was a powerful galvanising force for what had until the late 1980s been a series of largely uncoordinated urban protest actions (Nzimande and Sikhosana 1991). According to Martorell of the SACP: "the first stage would resolve the national question, which would not fundamentally alter the economic relations (…) whereas the second stage was seen as a stage in which the working class would emancipate itself from capitalist exploitation" (Martorell 1999). The two-stage theory of National Democratic Revolution was premised on the industrialised working class as the vanguard of the anti-apartheid struggle. The alliance between the ANC, the SACP and COSATU was initially theoretically based on an alliance between the working classes and its allies and all struggles against the apartheid system were considered subservient to and in the service of NDR. Although the policies of Alliance have more recently moved away from the two-stage theory, the rhetoric of the NDR remains

prominent within the alliance. According to the ANC website (01/05/2005): “the Alliance is founded on a common commitment to the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution, and the need to unite the largest possible cross-section of South Africans behind these objectives” (ANC website 01/05/2005). The elections of 1994 have therefore tended to construct a certain history of liberation understood as a project of nationally coordinated resistance. The civic movements were part of this broader national liberation struggle but the local nature of struggle for political and social integration into the city was a defining characteristic of the civic movements. According to Beall et al (2003a) the civics were symbolically important in representing the idea of ‘community’ and formed the most basic unit in the anti-apartheid movement. For Beall et al (2003a) this history of ‘grassroots democracy’ is an important and necessary counterweight to other centrist histories of the national liberation movement. In the late 1980s the ANC attempted to establish and maintain central control and guide the national liberation. The civic became subsumed into this history, which conflicted with the everyday activities of many ordinary township residents (Beall et al 2003a). The mantra of “one city, one tax base” was a popular protest call during the early 1980s, and reflects the specifically urban character of many of the protests during the 1980s (Chipkin 1997). The Soweto rent boycotts of 1986, for instance, were a direct response to poor services and rent increases in the township and was eventually joined by eighty per cent of rent-paying households (Tomlinson et al 2003). According to Swilling (1997) by the 1990s hundreds of local community movements had forced local white authorities to the negotiating table. These negotiations were not coordinated, but were local and particular outcomes of the micro-politics of each individual instance (Swilling 1997). For example, in 1991, under pressure

from a failing apartheid city administration, the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber (CWMC) was set up between the local state and community representatives as a forum to begin including excluded sectors of the city into a unified urban citizenship (Beall et al 2003a). The resolution of the Soweto rent boycott and the resulting negotiations from the CWMC was the precursors to unifying the fragmented apartheid local government structure in Johannesburg. The South African political transition that began in 1990 was largely the product of locally constituted social movements driven by workers, students, youth, professionals, women and urban residents (Swilling 1997). While the negotiations at national level began in the early 1990s and culminated in the historic elections of 1994, "similar processes took place at local level that predated the commencement of formal national negotiations in 1990 and which continued well beyond the national settlement and 1993" (Swilling 1997:218). Yet in the negotiations over post-apartheid urban governance structures the civics were ultimately forced to accept a compromised position which tends to mask the local and urban nature of these struggles.

The decline of the civics

With the ending of apartheid, the civic movements that had spearheaded and sustained the anti-apartheid struggle in the urban areas began to experience a decline in their ability to influence policy. The South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) emerged during the last year of apartheid as an umbrella body for many of the civics, and for a time appeared to situate itself as an independent and strong voice of civil society. Yet SANCO did not manage to achieve the support of all civic movements and the failure of the Soweto Combined Civics (SCC) to join SANCO severely affected its legitimacy in Soweto (Tomlinson et al 2003). SANCO maintains a voice in post-apartheid South

Africa, although that voice is regarded by some as being curtailed: its membership is far smaller and disparate than it was in the early 1990s; its close alliance with the ANC is regarded by some as being not independent enough; and it maintains an antagonistic relationship with many of post-apartheid social movements which have emerged in a new political and social climate. Mayekiso argues that the crisis of the civics stemmed from the manner in which they were co-opted into a post-apartheid democratic system. Unlike trade unions, which have a monopoly on mobilisation on the factory floor, the civics contested the same terrain as local branches of the ANC. In attempting to engage with new political circumstances, civics made the grave mistake of assuming elite support (Mayekiso 2003). Lanegran (1996) regards the demise of the civics after apartheid as much a result of new a political terrain as of self-inflicted strategic blunders. Civics not only failed to recognise the new context, but actively made choices about how to engage with the new dispensation. It is these choices which were responsible for the demise of the civics. Lanegran argues that the civics sacrificed institutional autonomy for greater representation in the new political sphere, and ceded legitimacy to the ANC as a political party and to new, racially inclusive local state institutions. Everatt (cited in Beall et al 2003) suggests that this was a calculated decision on the part of the leaders of SANCO, to split the 'political' role of organisation from its 'developmental' role. This concentration on grassroots mobilisation and local-level issues, for Everatt, meant that SANCO marginalising itself from national processes.

The outcome of the negotiations over the structure and make up of local government meant that SANCO took a deliberate decision to remain autonomous from formal political institutions, opting rather to fulfil development roles at the local level. This was

partly forced on them by their lack of influence over formal political institutions. After the un-banning of the ANC many within the UDF believed it was time to disband the movement and support the ANC (Mayekiso 2003). The civic movements found themselves in an uneasy position, having an historic connection to the ANC as a liberation movement, but also a tradition of autonomy. Mayekiso (2003) emphasises the dilemma that members of the civic movements were faced with in terms of loyalties. This led many to move away from the civic movements into local and national government, and into local ANC party structures (Mayekiso 2003). In this way the civic movements gave up the very thing which had leant them their power; their autonomy and their local community embeddedness. At the same time, the ANC government increasingly marginalised the civic movements which represented a potential threat to the power-base of the ANC at the level of the 'community' (Mayekiso 2003:57). While acknowledging the decreasing spaces of autonomous space left open o the civic movements after 1994, Seekings (1996) argues that: "the changing character of popular grievances and the transforming institutional environment both exerted pressure on, and constrained the responses of, the civics" (Seekings 1996:150). While the civics failed to respond adequately to the new dispensation, the nature of the changing political and social landscape after apartheid began to create new urban spaces which contested the singular concept of 'community'. Seekings argument suggests that to focus on the decline of the civics due to their strategic failures ignores the context in which civics emerged in the first place, and the heterogeneous make-up of the people and communities that constituted the civics. Not only had the spaces in which the civic movements operated changed, but the nature of peoples' experiences had changed. Popular and local issues

could be dealt with through a number of channels at the scale of local government. To a large degree disempowerment and poverty have continued in post-apartheid cities, but policy reforms have blunted some of the specific grievances (Seekings 1996). Moreover, the townships are hardly the seeming homogenous places they were assumed to be during the 1980s. The nature of community has changed substantially, becoming far more heterogeneous and fragmented (Beall et al 2003a). Lastly, it is significant that with the ending of apartheid the majority of South Africans felt that something significant had been achieved, and the need to be antagonistic no longer existed, at least in the early 1990s. That is not to say that there were no social grievances, but that the social psyche was far more co-operative with a legitimate government. It is therefore possible to view the emergence of social movements after apartheid as a response to a new set of social and political circumstances and collective feelings of marginality. The debates and negotiations that eventually resulted in the form of post-apartheid local government reflect the relative traditions of the various stake-holders, as well as the relative power of these stake-holders from the early 1990s (Robinson 1997; Beall et al 2003a). On the one hand was the centrist tendency of the ANC and the National Democratic Revolution. On the other hand was the more autonomous tradition of the UDF and the civic movements. At the heart of this disparity, argues Robinson (1997), are competing discourses of what it means to be part of the city. Throughout the process, the centrist tendencies of the ANC eventually won out over the autonomous tradition of the civics, and it is into this environment that post-apartheid social movements emerged (Beall et al 2003).

A number of activists and theorists regarded the civics as offering the institutional form of local government after liberation (Mayekiso 2003). The civic organisations were

regarded as representing the voice of the community, and the life-blood of the anti Apartheid struggle. Since 1990 civics had been engaging local government structures at the local level across the country. This was largely un-coordinated, the process and outcomes reflecting the particular dynamics of each instance. According to Seekings (1996) in the early 1990s many local and provincial officials, lacking both funds and networks on the ground, looked to the civic movements for help in fulfilling these roles. Civic movements were initially important allies for governments, NGOs and private sector in gaining community consent for development projects (Seekings 1996). In this context, and also in some instances because of ideological traditions, the civic organisations were seen by some as the model or pattern of future urban local governance; autonomous bodies representing the community, and speaking for them on issues of local development. This was the basis of the argument for a strong post-apartheid civil society, which was seen as the ultimate seat of democracy, against the state that was necessarily bureaucratic and removed from society (Mayekiso 2003). There was an opposing view of civil society which gained ascendancy from the late 1980s, and represented the centrist tradition of the ANC; civil society was a necessary, but partial, element of a democratic state. This view regarded the civics as important in the fight against Apartheid, and in the potential for ensuring community buy-in for the transition to post Apartheid democracy. There was a need to encourage a culture of constructive engagement with the state, something which the civics had spent a decade or more un-learning. The defiance and urban protest of the 1980s, if it had not managed to bring the Apartheid monolith to its knees, had effectively rendered the local manifestations of it ungovernable. In this regard, the ANC blue-print for post Apartheid local government

envisaged a close relationship between government and the civics, which would act as ‘watchdogs’ for local government. The ANC even envisaged assemblies, convened most likely by civic structures, which would hold local government accountable. However, they did not envisage the civics as forming the basis for future local government (Swilling 1997; Seekings 1996). Despite the organic processes at local level, it was not until after institutional transformation at the national level that local government was purposefully transformed into non-racial post-apartheid structures.

> While civics are central to the struggle for democratic local government, they cannot be seen as local government structures of the future. These structures will be formed on the basis of votes won by organisations in local elections (ANC 1990 quoted in Seekings 1996: 152).

As a result, the local branches of the ANC began to compete for the same terrain as that traditionally occupied by the civics, in many instances emerging out of the old civic structures (Mayekiso 2003). Within ANC circles there was debate about how far entrenched the ANC should become at the local level. Partly out of the traditional roles occupied, and partly as a compromise, a resolution began to emerge; the civics acted on behalf of 'communities' around issues of development, while the ANC represented the political voice of the people. This had partly been precipitated by the already organic negotiations that were under way between civics and local structures of the Apartheid government (Swilling 1997). The ANC was aware that some degree of coordination was needed to ensure that these negotiations advanced the National Democratic Revolution. As late as 1991 the Apartheid regime had shown tendencies towards exploiting this organic process to ensure concessions for white interests in the local structures. In 1992 the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) was established, offering the

civics a larger voice at the same time as allowing the ANC to maintain some control over the process. In 1993 the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) was established. The resulting Local Government Transition Act bore the undeniable fingerprint of the ANC's centrist position. Robinson has suggested that it represented a compromise between the demands of the black majority and the fears of the white minority rather than the demands of communities for new spaces of urban democracy (Robinson 1997). Seekings suggest, alternatively, that the compromise was between the ANC and the autonomous traditions of the civics. The ultimate relative predominance of the ANC is because SANCO could no longer claim their traditional constituency. For one thing, they did not even incorporate all civics in the 'communities'. In Johannesburg, the Civic associations of Johannesburg (CAJ) combined the old Soweto civics (Seekings 1996). Moreover, the changing nature of the 'communities' meant that people could leverage all sorts of new and different strategies and resources. Increasingly, at the local level, traditionally civic terrain was occupied by the branches of the ANC.

> The new democratic local government, believing that they were elected directly to represent the communities and that the political party in government represented the interests of the people, undermined the civic organisations by not recognising them as serious community stakeholders. This frequently caused tension between the ANC and community organisations as the new local government saw itself as a voice of the community and felt that it should not be accountable to civic groups. It believed that it should answer directly to the electorate (Mayekiso 2003:60).

By the local elections of late 1995 and early 1996, the civics had effectively lost power in formal local government processes. The elections were contested and won almost entirely by conventional political parties (Swilling 1997). The spaces in which the civics had operated had changed from the antagonistic politics of the 1980s. The idea of the civics

as autonomous and independent representatives of community interests was not fundamental to the emergence of the civics in the early 1980s, and only emerged later in the context of changed circumstances. Seekings argues that "the civics only developed a strong sense of their own autonomy during the early 1990s" (Seekings 1996). Claiming the spaces of 'the community' or 'civil society' was a conscious choices made in a far more limited and narrow role that lay open to the civics during the contested negotiations over post Apartheid local government. The civics cannot be seen as some inevitable and necessary part of South African society in themselves. The changed environment on the ground has led to the emergence of new organisations; new forms of individual and collective identity are being forged which resist the strictures of older categories and claims of legitimacy. Certainly, the civics made some strategic blunders which ultimately were to contribute to their demise. But these blunders can only be understood in the context of a changed political and social environment, and practices of everyday urban life that constantly reformulates and re-invents itself. The demise of the civic movements and the subsequent emergence of social movements after apartheid offer some suggestions for exploring the formation and articulation of urban identities.

The post-apartheid city

The ultimate outcome of the debates about the future of local government after Apartheid was the set of policies that comprised Developmental Local Government (DLG). Ostensibly conceived as a tool for 'dismantling the Apartheid city', the framework has significant limitations in its effectiveness by the demands for full cost recovery and non-cross subsidisation (DLG, 1997). Patrick Bond has argued, for instance, that the DLG framework represents a 'de-politicisation of local government' (Bond, 2002). The

conceptualisation of DLG was informed by the constitutional requirements for poverty targeting, growth, sustainability and participation (LGWP, 1998). DLG is described as "the dynamic way in which local councils work together with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve their lives" (LGWP, 1998). According to some voices, in reality the DLG structures differ little from the municipal structures of Apartheid, extended to incorporate previously under-serviced areas. The hierarchy of government structures also hinders the ability of DLG to make spending decisions (Beall et al, 2003). The establishment of Metro Councils, which for the first time included the residents of the city into one administrative and political structure, while realising the plight for a non-racist city, entrenched a bureaucratic and corporatist attitude towards urban governance (Beall et al, 2003). Accordingly, the spatial ordering of the city continues to marginalize certain sectors of the urban population. The maintenance of the bureaucratic capacities of the Apartheid state has been an important theme of post Apartheid government, especially in the urban areas. The preservation of the rationalities of modern urban government is seen as crucial to the success of modernisation in the new era (Robinson 1997). The narrow focus on quantitative and cost-effective service delivery (Bond 2002) by local government represents, at least partially, these rationalities of modern urban government. Perhaps more accurately, realising democratic local government was largely a negotiated and compromised process, in most instances a balance between the clear need for a national democratic agenda on one side, and the more conservative white interests as well as the autonomous traditions of the civics in the townships on the other. Moreover, restructuring had to be both viable and serve developmental needs (Beall et al 2003). The RDP embodied an extremely progressive

vision of the role of developmental local government; central to its aims was to rectify "Apartheid created infrastructure disparities" (RDP, 1995). It articulated a coherent strategy for achieving such ambitious targets; in the extension of services, notably electrification and water to those who had been denied, the RDP proposed free lifeline tariffs, cross-subsidisation from areas with higher rates bases, and a National Electricity Fund, underwritten by government (RDP, 1995). Tariff structures were to reflect "relative affordability" (RDP, 1995). Crucial to the success of the RDP was the "democratisation of the state and society" (RDP, 1995). Empowered local governments were to be responsible for delivery of services, for drawing up programmes to extend service networks, and for engaging local communities in dialogue; civil society was to be entrenched in local governance frameworks. Bond, however, has argued that the process of depoliticising civil society was begun even in the conceptualisation of the RDP with the assumption that local government is the most effective tool of delivery (Bond 2002). After the second general election, many of the RDP policies gave way to the policies of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR), regarded by some as a "neo-liberal inspired policy package" (Bond 2000). The Local Government White Paper (LGWP, 1998) embodies a tension between these two sets of policy. The LGWP contains a number of well-conceived welfare policies; section 2.1 clearly articulates the extension of 'good basic services' to all communities (LGWP, 1998), but it carries the proviso of financial viability (Bond, 2000). In effect, the conceptualisation of local government, and the role of civil society, is characterised by local administration with centralised control (Beall et al, 2003). The LGWP has understood the role of local government as a mere service delivery appendage of national government. According to this view, the

approaches to delivery are biased towards privatisation, and ignore 'numerous precedents for municipal democracy' articulated during the 1980's urban struggles (Bond, 2003). Similarly, the Urban Development Strategy (UDS, 1995) is 'biased towards cost-recovery, privatisation, and service delivery reductions' and against cross-subsidisation or government subsidies for municipal service delivery (Bond, 2003).

After 1999 ANC policy shifted progressively towards the more growth-oriented Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy which sought to balance social development, the demands of joining a highly competitive global market and the often conflicting stakeholder interests of the ANC's supporters. GEAR was regarded by some as a 'neo-liberal inspired policy package', though Bond (2000) argues that the depoliticising of civil society began even in the RDP. Arguably, the shifts in policy which accompanied GEAR have had unequal impact in terms of benefiting the majority of South Africans. The poorest 50 per cent of South Africans continue to receive less than 5 per cent of the national income and 45 per cent are considered poor to very poor (Terreblanche 2003). Although GEAR certainly represented, in the context of a financial crisis and the government's desire to bring South Africa more fully into a global market, an attempt to reduce budget deficits and reduce public spending, it remained ultimately "an expression of the balance between the interests which comprise the governing alliance" (Friedman, 2001: 10). According to Hart (2002) GEAR marked the failure of a consensual model of politics in post-apartheid South Africa. In contrast to the inclusivity of the RDP process, she argues, GEAR was the product of: "a team of technical experts whose claim to legitimacy lay in an econometric modelling exercise" (Hart 2002:18). Marais (1998) has argued that such a formulation misinterprets the dynamic nature of

both GEAR and RDP as a complex of policies and institutions. Rather than viewing the RDP as some Base Document, from which the liberators have not remained true, spaces for social engagement emerge within a context of negotiation. In Johannesburg this policy shift was manifested in Igoli 2002. Following the 1997 budgetary crisis of the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, service delivery was re-organised into self-contained 'utility' companies (like City Power) that would have to make themselves financially viable. Local government service provision in water and electricity has shifted to a policy of cost recovery, backed up by the threat and exercise of disconnection of defaulters. This is allegedly because such policies maintain sustainable and affordable pricing regimes in the industry (Clark & Drimie 2002). For Hart (2002), however, the apparent shift of the ANC towards a neo-liberal set of policies, and away from the interests of its mostly poor and working class constituency is not an easy path to trace. For Hart (2002) the outcome of the negotiations over post-apartheid urban governance are "driven neither by the inexorable forces of globalisation nor by a simple sell out, but by complex power struggles within and beyond the ANC and its alliance partners" (Hart 2002:21). In a similar way, the rise of social movements in response to these policies represents a continued engagement with this complex struggle for the city.

Conclusion

> Definitely there is a connection between the struggles of the 1980s and the struggles of the SECC. People say the ANC taught us to boycott (…) but they are not scrapping the debt. I think practically it's the same issues it's just that it's a different political context (Ngwane 18/12/2004).

It is in the context of DLG, and especially the implementation of iGoli 2002, that organisations such as the SECC have emerged. Like the civic movements of the 1980s

post-apartheid social movements have targeted local sites of perceived hardship. Most of the campaigns of the SECC have been targeted against electricity (and water) cut-offs, the installation of pre-paid meters and the policy environment of local government. For the civic movements of the 1980s the concept of the 'community' became a particularly powerful means to legitimise struggle and protest, and it therefore emerged at a particular time of struggle in South Africa (Chipkin 1997). This was especially so in relation to the concept of the National Democratic Revolution which interpreted the anti-apartheid protest at a national scale (Chipkin 1997; Steinberg 1995). The SECC has attempted to also invoke the concept of the community but has had only limited success in galvanising support on this basis. Where the SECC has had success is in terms of speaking to the everyday needs of local Soweto residents around issues of service delivery. In this chapter I have presented a two-part argument. Firstly I have traced a history of urban protest in Johannesburg since the mid 1980s, positioning the emergence of the SECC within a specific set of post-apartheid urban struggles around the city as a horizon of protest. I have argued that the civic movements in the 1980s existed in a tension between nationally defined and locally defined political and social agendas, and that the process of negotiating post-apartheid local government effectively sidelined the autonomous tradition of the civic movements. The conceptualisation of DLG and iGoli 2002 must therefore be seen as a product of a negotiated process which is never fully complete. The SECC have emerged in response to both these policy packages and are placing them into question. The argument that I present is that urban protest in South Africa since the 1980s has consistently challenged what it means to live in and be part of the city. The second part of the argument is that the history of urban struggle has been consistently

characterised by shifting urban identities. I argued that the decline of the civic movements is at least partially due to changing conditions on the ground in Soweto and other townships. The idea of community which had sustained much of the anti-apartheid struggle began to lose its force as changing political and economic conditions offered new spaces for identification in the city. The post-apartheid local government negotiations were not just the result of technical or ideological planning but the complex result on new and changing coagulations of power. The form of the anti-apartheid movement and the legacy of the National Democratic Revolution have meant, however, that there is a pre-occupation with specific notions about class and the state in most of these theoretical engagements, which under-represents the complex interplay of unemployment, race, gender, age and place (to leave some unmentioned) in the construction of what are ultimately unstable subjectivities. Post-apartheid social movements represent the possible emergence and articulation of new permutations of power and identity in post-apartheid cities.

Chapter 4: Urban social movements and everyday life

Introduction

The SECC was formed by the convergence of two processes connected to the implementation of cost-recovery policies and service delivery cut-offs in Johannesburg. In 1999 a series of protest actions occurred in Soweto against electricity cut-offs by state utility Eskom. These protests were initially uncoordinated, but in late 1999 a group of activists in Soweto established a series of public community workshops on the so-called electricity crisis. The workshops were organised to coordinate a response to the policy of cut-offs proposed by iGoli 2002, the municipal reforms which were regarded by the SECC as "a socially unacceptable (…) comprehensive privatisation plan for the city" (Ngwane 18/12/2004). Around the same time a group of activists and academics in Johannesburg began to publicly contest the "neo-liberal inspired policy package" of iGoli 2002 and the model of Developmental Local Government (DLG) which was biased towards privatisation and cost recovery (Bond 2000). In June 2000 a series of protests in downtown Johannesburg were organised by the Anti Privatisation Forum (APF). The APF had been founded in early 1999 as an umbrella body for a number of community-based organisations and social movements protesting the impact of service delivery cut-offs, evictions and urban marginalisation. The APF has accused the policies of GEAR and iGoli 2002 of exacerbating these circumstances (McKinley 2002). The June 2000 marches were intended to coincide with the Urban Futures conference at Wits University. It was at these protests that activists from the newly formed SECC met (and subsequently joined with) the APF. This relationship has continued and has provided institutional and legal support for the SECC in a number of their campaigns. The SECC remains "one of

the most active members of the APF" (Ngwane 18/12/2004) and members of the SECC are also members of the APF. While at a national and even global scale the SECC has cultivated a profile of coordinated defiance of local and national government policies, at the local scale it remains a heterogeneous movement of activists and ordinary Soweto residents that operate in the everyday realities of the branch structures.

In this chapter I argue that the SECC exists in tension between the academic and activist connections to the APF, on the one hand, and the everyday experiences of the mostly pensioner women in the branch structures, on the other. This tension, I argue, is a tension around the politics of scale; between different scales of movement organisation as well as different scales of social and political representation. The SECC has so far managed to balance this tension partly because the branches exist as relatively autonomous structures, but the tension is manifest in the everyday activities of the SECC. Different kinds of protest action characterise and reflect the different scales of movement activity. Most recently this tension between the branches and the more centralised leadership was manifested when the chairpersons of five branches walked out of the SECC AGM in March 2005. I argue also that parallel to this tension within the movement is a conflict with the state and the ANC that exists on a number of scales. The ANC often accuse the SECC of operating without a constituency, because they are not voted as representatives of any community. In so doing, the ANC affirm the local and national levels of state as legitimate scales of representation. The SECC, unwilling or unable to contest these institutions, exist in a tension between the local and the global.

Geographies of scale

Herod and Wright (2002) argue that geographies of scale are fundamental to experiences of place. Yet the conceptualisation of scale, they argue, is always about power. For Herod and Wright:

> [Scale] is the politics governing our perception of the distance between ourselves and the systems of power that enmesh us. How we understand this distance is instantly and always a question of power and geography, and its exploration requires an enquiry into the spatial dynamics linking individual agency to structures of power (Herod and Wright 2002:13)

Scale is not pre-existent, however, but is produced through discourses that contain relationships of power. According to Smith (1984) the production of scale, like the production of space, emerges from a specific set of capitalist spatial imperatives. The significance of this observation, for Smith, is that "scales are not fixed but develop within the development of capital itself. And they are not impervious; the urban and national scales are products of world capital, and continue to be shaped by it." (Smith 1984:147) The scale of the urban and the region, for Smith, is constituted by the territorial division of production and reproduction in the capitalist system. The implication then is that capital requires the fixity of scales, and that the urban, the national and the global scale are part of the spatial logic of capitalism. Gibson-Graham (2002) for example, has argued that the 'global' is often constructed as inevitable and dynamic, as opposed to the 'local', which is presented as weak and static. This implies a naturalised hierarchy of scale, moving from the local towards the global. For Gibson-Graham (2002) challenging the subjection of the local by the global, and subverting the linear hierarchy of scale that moves from the local towards the global, is an emancipatory project.

Yet scale remains a powerful form of social and political discipline, to the extent that the urban, the national and the global scale appear, and are viciously defended, as a source of legitimacy (Smith 1984). Cox (2002) has argued in particular that the relationship between the nation state and global capital are purposely constructed as being naturalised, and that the scale of nation state has become the legitimate scale of political and social representation. Yet in reality the impact of globalisation on the nation state is uneven. Instead of focusing on spatial order, Cox agues that the important point of consideration is the how spatial order is constructed through process. In the case of the nation state, Cox argues that there is a territorial alliance between state and capital, and that other actors constantly struggle to position themselves within or against this alliance (Cox 2002). Political and social struggles, then, are often the struggle over dictating the terms of scale. Scale may dictate the resources that can be leveraged in political and social conflict. This does not imply that the ability to 'go global' is always necessary. The ability to define the 'local' in many instances allows actors to claim legitimacy in a way which may exclude other actors. Yet claiming a particular scale is not always about suppressing the legitimacy other scales. In many instances actors operate across scales, and alliances across scales can also produce socially beneficial outcomes. As Oldfield (2002) illustrates in the case of local state restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa, the intersection between scales can result in either conflict or cooperation. The state may have an institutional capacity at a particular scale that can sometimes enhance the ability of local and neighbourhood communities to achieve certain developmental goals.

I argue that the SECC operates within, and between, a number of different scales. Actors within and outside of the SECC construct themselves within certain scales of social and

political representation because these provide access to specific resources. The leadership of the SECC, for example, operates at the scale of the global in terms of their ideological position against neo-liberal globalisation, but also contest policy and implementation at the scale of the local and national state. The state itself, of course, affirms the scales of local and national state because institutions of democracy and governance are constituted at these scales, and it is from these institutions that it can claim legitimacy. The unwillingness, or inability, of the SECC to contest these institutions has meant that the movement has had to construct legitimacy either at the global (anti-globalisation) scale, or at the local scale. I argue that it has been far more successful in the latter, and that there exists a tension within the movement between the leadership and the branch membership precisely linked to the issue of scale.

A crisis of representation

In 2001 the SECC and the Municipal Services Project, an academic research project with funding from Canada, produced a report on the electricity crisis in Soweto (Fiil-Flynn 2001). The report accepted that considerable inroads had been made into the lack of electricity supply to poor areas since 1994, but "this push to expand access to electricity has been undermined, however, by its lack of affordability" (Fiil-Flynn 2001:1). Contrary to a 'culture of non-payment' which government has partially blamed for the electricity crisis (Radebe 2003) the 'crisis' was affordability rather than unwillingness to pay (Fiil-Flynn 2001). The report found that about 89 per cent of households in Soweto were in arrears, and that in 2001 cut-offs of electricity by Eskom reached a peak of 20,000 households per month. According to a report published by the Helen Suzman Foundation, in order to recover unpaid debts "Eskom sent in special squads to cut off electricity from

households judged to be too deeply in arrears" (Laurence 2002:2). In response to these electricity cut-offs the SECC launched its 'Operation Khanyisa' to reconnect people to the grid. The SECC claims that, within six months, over 30,000 households had been reconnected into the electricity grid (Ngwane 2003). In an effort to resolve what had become a stand-off between Eskom and the residents of Soweto, Eskom announced a moratorium on cut-offs in October 2001. At a meeting held at Eskom headquarters in Megawatt Park on 30 November 2001 Minister of Public Enterprise, Jeff Radebe, proposed a partial amnesty on existing debt, but criticised the SECC:

> The representatives of this committee have proven themselves that they will do anything, including telling lies to the community, in order to realise its political ends. Such people cannot be regarded as the genuine representatives of our people (Radebe 30/11/2001).

In May 2002 Eskom convened a meeting in Soweto and agreed to scrap R1.4billion of debt owed by Soweto residents in return for commitments to future payments. The SECC had been demanding that all arrears be unconditionally scrapped and a return to the flat-rate pricing system that the community had managed to wrest from the apartheid regime in the 1980s (anonymous interview 14/04/2004a). The SECC was excluded from the meeting in May on that grounds that it "does not represent legitimately elected leaders" (Laurence 2002:2). The South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) was, by contrast, a key part of the process, and criticised the SECC for its antagonistic attitude to government, and for misrepresenting ordinary Soweto residents. Donovan Williams, chair of SANCO claimed that:

> No movement can be in an endgame all the time. Communities will do what needs to be done in terms of their lives improving, not for some ideological end (Williams in *Mail and Guardian* 05/05/2003).

The SECC responded that the ANC and its allies (i.e. SANCO) can no longer claim to talk on behalf of the poor and working classes because they represent "the government of the bosses" (Ngwane 18/12/2004). Although they were not present inside the meeting, the SECC maintain that the movement has been crucial in telling the residents of Soweto their rights. University of the Witwatersrand professor Tom Lodge claimed that the SECC does have some degree of popularity and should therefore have been engaged in the interest of inclusivity (Laurence 2002). The involvement of a national minister in the electricity crisis represented to some members of the SECC interference from outside.

> Jeff Radebe came to Orlando. At that time we were very vocal on the ground. We put so much pressure on Eskom that they said they were going to scrap those arrears. This would not have been possible if SECC did not put pressure. Now apparently, government didn't take kindly to that. They sent Jeff Radebe from parliament, to come and address the meeting in Orlando East, where we were protesting. So we had to wait outside. Basically what he was preaching was that we were a bunch of criminals who should be arrested on sight; that we wanted to destabilize the government; that we were encouraging the culture of non-payment. This was not correct. We were merely telling people their rights. Making them aware of what was happening. When he came out of there we picketed outside. He was supposed to go visiting houses but when he saw we were picketing he got to his car and then he decided to change directions (anonymous interview 14/04/2004a).

Ngwane accuses the ANC of using the phrase 'the people have spoken': "to imply that if people voted for the ANC they must support its neo-liberal policies and shouldn't now oppose them" (Ngwane 2003:45). In early 2002 the leadership of the SECC attacked President Mbeki's call for unemployed youth to become volunteers in their communities, particularly police reservists. According to the SECC their members had long been volunteers, reconnecting residents to the electricity grid.

> The difference between Mbeki's volunteers and the SECC volunteers is that if you volunteer for the SECC you are serving the working class community. Mbeki asks you to volunteer but he and his ministers get fat salaries each month. Tomorrow Mbeki's volunteers will be sent to attack the community, they will arrest you if you reconnect electricity for your grannies, and they will escort the sheriff when he comes to evict you from your houses (SECC AGM Chairpersons Report 03/03/2004)

The ANC has consistently denied the legitimacy of movements such as the SECC on the grounds that such movements have no elected mandate. Clearly the ANC views these movements as a threat, partly because it cannot be controlled through the institutions of democracy and governance. This has led to attempts at criminalisation of the movement by members of government as a way of defining and controlling the threat. Minister Radebe has encouraged councillors to take action against the destruction of their property by protesting SECC members who frequently disconnect local councillors' electricity as an act of protest.

> There is no way that government could cooperate with people who are breaking the law on a daily basis. Eskom will immediately lay charges against the destruction of its property (…) I call on councillors whose houses are vandalised to do the same (Radebe 2001).

Yet despite the involvement of national government, the SECC engages most frequently with the state and the ANC at a local (and often neighbourhood) scale. The SECC have not contested elections, but the leadership claim that the movement is the official opposition in Soweto (Ngwane 2003). The exact number of SECC supporters is never clear and support fluctuates according to various protest action and to varying definitions of membership between several hundred card carrying members (anonymous interview 14/04/2004b) and several thousand active members (Ngwane 2003). The SECC claims to

have more than thirty branches across Soweto which confront the local ANC councillors on electricity cut-offs.

> Most of them before they were supporting the ANC, now many of them they support SECC. Because there were summonses which were sent to them by a Joburg Mayor to come and sign for what-what (…) so SECC told them: 'if you go and sign there, you are going to be evicted from your house. So you don't go there, you just come and we are going to burn the summonses'. The SECC they don't speak English to the old ladies because most of them they didn't go to school, but if you explain everything in their language, they are going to understand (anonymous interview 14/04/2004b).

ANC councillors have tended to dismiss the SECC although recently the local branches of the ANC have begun to take the movement more seriously. In the ANC e-newsletter *Umrabulo*, a local ANC member warned: "history bears testimony to the fact that to spark a wave of disenchantment does not require big numbers" (Tankiso in *Umrabulo* 2003). At the scale of city-wide and national state the SECC have attempted to contest the policy regime of the ANC. At the scale of the local confrontations between the SECC and the local ANC councillors contain elements of the micro-politics of place. In Phiri, for example, the local councillor Kunene is antagonistic towards the SECC because, according to local SECC branch members, the councillor is threatened.

> So the councillor is threatened by the SECC. Yeah, they don't talk to us. He says we are a pig, so he can't talk to the pig. So! They [local ANC members] are under pressure of the local councillor, Patrick Kunene (anonymous interview 14/04/2004a).

> So anyway, he doesn't want me to go near to the office. So even if I go they say no, I say I'm coming to pay rent, they say no. You don't want to let me in so I can't give you money anymore (anonymous interview 14/04/2004c).

In the case of Phiri the conflict between the SECC and the local councillor is linked to the limited resources of local communities.

> We distribute pamphlet, then we tell them we are going to meet at Phiri hall. Then we address the community. Then even themselves they state their views. 'No! We don't want this and this, this and that! Let's get the delegates who are going to represent us to the council!' When they go to council, council say no! 'We can't talk to you people, we are going to talk to ANC member only. Not you members of SECC'. Now we are not allowed to meet at Phiri Hall. That is why we are meeting at SGB. [Councillor] Kunene dictates the terms (anonymous interview 04/04/2004).

In other words, the threat to the local councillor is not the same as the threat to the state at national or even city scale. While the ANC is concerned not to lose its support base within local communities, the micro-politics within these local communities does not necessarily reflect a scaled down version of strategies on a national scale, even when the political ends are the same. Antagonism between the ANC and the SECC at a local scale is very often connected to individual personalities and relationships. While some (albeit few) SECC branches maintain a working relationship with their local ANC councillor, councillor Kunene from Phiri is very hostile to the local SECC branch. This has much to do with the fact that Phiri is one of the pilot sites for the installation of pre-paid water meters in Johannesburg. This not only heightens the tension in the area because of regular confrontations between the local council and the SECC, but the councillor himself is under intense pressure from his own superiors within the provincial ANC to make the pre-paid meter system work. While councillors in other areas might regard the SECC as relatively insignificant, in Phiri the SECC potentially threatens the councillors' job. Tensions in Phiri have less to do with broad ideology than with these micro-politics.

Between the local and the global

The SECC constitution refers to the movement as a socialist organisation, as a movement against privatisation, and "a home for the working classes" (SECC constitution 2004:1). According to APF activist Clair Cerruti, the SECC took a vote at their first AGM to write socialism into the constitution of the movement (Cerruti 12/12/2004). At branch meetings and in everyday conversation many older members refer to themselves as the "grannies of Soweto" (anonymous interview 04/04/2004). Concepts of socialism and 'working class' have been variously appropriated by members and leadership alike, leading to a hybridisation of such concepts within the SECC which incorporates the traditional working-class, shop-owners, pensioners, ANC members, and church-goers, to mention only a few. The SECC is a heterogeneous organisation, and the reasons why people join the SECC vary widely. A large part of the leadership of the SECC has previous political experience and many were part of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s. The experience of one of the SECC organisers is indicative:

> I was a member of AZAPO. I started in politics in 1981. We were selling a newspaper during the apartheid years called The Voice; a real black newspaper. That day we didn't know about the ANC or UDF. So now they don't talk about the poor because we've got democracy. There was an ex-comrade; they cut off his electricity in 1999 after the election, and there was no party who could help the people. So we came together, other members of AZAPO, IFP, PAC; we came together to form the SECC. We met in iGoli 2002 at the Wits student strike (…) this is a new fight; I realized we were going to fight again. It is a new struggle (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

This level of activism is most characteristic of the members that occupy positions in the leadership, or who volunteer in the SECC office at the Careers Centre in Soweto. While there is very often a reference to the politics and experiences of the 1980s the issue of

electricity is for many SECC members a new struggle in Soweto not directly connected to older struggles. The struggle for electricity and water is a struggle that is experienced daily by many Soweto residents and their involvement is often the result of experiencing electricity cut-offs.

> After I had been retrenched from work (…) I was cut off for failing to pay my electricity debt. I worked at Pick and Pay. So after Eskom come and cut off our electricity, so after that is when I heard of SECC; in 2001. Someone is a member he told me that no there is an organization, when Eskom switch off they come and switch on. Sure, so the lights they came on again. Then I ask them their vision and their objectives, okay, I became interested, so when Johannesburg Water and its operation came into Soweto to install pre-paid water, we started to mobilize, so that the community must resist prepaid water. After that I was a member (anonymous interview 01/04/2004a).

Both the political activist and the retrenched worker share a common sense of injustice, and have both experienced electricity cut-offs. Nevertheless, these two examples suggest the different scales at which each individual articulates this experience. While the political activist situates the electricity crisis within broader experiences of politics in South Africa, the retrenched worker situates the electricity crisis within the community. This echoes the experiences of many branch members within the SECC branches:

> I got involved with SECC in the year 2000. The reason I got to know of SECC was they were having one of their biggest meetings. And let me go and found out what they are talking about. And what they talked about impressed me so much that later I decided to become part of this organization because it dealt with my problems. Just before that my electricity was cut. And when I went to Eskom they demanded R700. And being an unemployed person it was a struggle to raise that R700. I raised it and I went and I paid. Surprisingly, two days afterwards, they came and cut off my electricity, whereas I just paid R700 two days back. So that made me very bitter and I went back to Eskom and queried that. They promised to reconnect which they did because I put pressure on them. Ever since that day I told myself that was a bad move, paying that R700. I was not supposed to pay that. I was supposed to give it to my

> family. From that day I stopped paying (anonymous interview 04/04/2004).

These micro-politics reflect the scale at which many people in Soweto can articulate their experiences, but they do not simply 'scale up' into broader critiques of policy. At a local neighbourhood scale the micro-politics of everyday life are a complex interaction of relationships from outside and within the neighbourhood. Frequently personal relationships trump other loyalties. In many instances the local councillor is implicated:

> I got involved with the SECC because the problems I am facing (…) to have power. They [the council] promised many things, but they do nothing at all. The councillor promised these things (…) he says he has got a plan (…) but when it comes to it, nothing happens (…) it can be just like you are talking to the wall if you report something alone (anonymous interview 05/04/2004).

This traces in general terms a line of tension between the SECC leadership and the branch members. The SECC exists in a tension between these two scales of experience. Most SECC members do not articulate their experiences firstly as a result of the policies of cost recovery and privatisation, but do hold the councillor in some way responsible. This responsibility varies between being part of a policy regime of privatisation on the one hand, to a personal responsibility based on his position as community representative. The leadership of the SECC deny that ideology is a major tension within the movement, yet it is nevertheless concerned to educate the branches about these concepts, and to show how these broad concepts impact upon peoples' daily lives (anonymous interview 01/05/2004). According to one of the SECC organisers:

> No! There is no distance at all, because we are aware of what is happening. We hold workshops where we teach people about their rights, about privatization, globalization, what does it entail. In fact, when we hold our meetings, our forum meetings, we start with what we

> call political discussion, where we explain these things. And the workshops help as well; and the leadership courses, sending comrades to Cape Town. Then we are asking our comrades when they come back, they must hold a workshop and tell us what was happening in Cape Town (anonymous interview 01/04/2004a)

While this has been an important activity in which the SECC leadership engage, it is not uniformly understood or acted upon. One branch member stated as follows:

> They know something of that [privatisation and globalisation] at the APF. I am still a learner. I cannot tell somebody about it. I can say I am getting help for the level that I am at. Whatever I hear I will cram it (…) it is my pleasure to see that nobody is living in darkness (anonymous interview 05/04/2004).

In this regard, the relationship that the SECC has with the APF is very important. The APF provides "capacity, marches and for moral support (…) and some financial reasons" (anonymous interview 10/02/2004b). Increasingly marches are being conducted under the auspices of the APF. Many of the most high-profile marches and demonstrations are organised by the APF and attended by not only the SECC but also other APF affiliates. The march against the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), for instance, drew a crowd of between 20 and 30 thousand (Martorell 2002). According to one member of the APF leadership:

> The APF spends about half of its budget on transport for marches and meetings. Protest is much easier in a city which is not so fragmented (anonymous interview 08/06/2004)

The SECC branch chair of Phiri maintains that the branches remain the ultimate source of legitimacy, and that marches are planned only after consultation with branch members. The APF features prominently in the ability of branches to organise for marches:

> Basically what we do is we announce at our Forum is that we intend to march, for reasons 123, and if they are interested (…) we get our mandate from the people, we don't tell them what to do. We get our mandate from the people. So if they say it is a good move, then we do it. We organize transport for the people. Mostly APF helps us with providing transport. That is a costly exercise. We help as branches as well, like hiring a taxi (anonymous interview 04/04/2004).

According to a member of one of the local branches, "in this area we are known as Crisis but we are becoming known as APF" (anonymous interview 10/02/2004b). Marches and protest action are increasingly being conducted either under the banner of both SECC and APF, or simply as APF. The importance of the APF for members of the SECC differs between the leadership and the branch members but was illustrated when several branches walked out of the 2005 SECC AGM, concerned with the "centralizing tendencies of certain members in leadership" (anonymous interview 25/04/2005). Yet the group that walked out have been keen to remain within the APF:

> We have spoken to them and we have sent a letter to [APF chairperson John] Appolis. We are only waiting for him to recognise us. They have said that they cannot do this now (…) that we have to speak with Trevor [Ngwane] (…) but they must because we are here. People are going away from SECC (anonymous interview 25/04/2005).

The APF themselves have been ambivalent about embracing this new group. Some in the APF have encouraged the group to reach a compromise with the SECC while others have opted for a more open policy regarding affiliation with the APF. This is suggestive once more of the tension between branches and leadership. The branches need institutional recognition, while the APF, in association with the leadership of the SECC, rely on its member organisations to provide the numbers at marches and protests, numbers which give credence to its claim to represent the people. The relationship is not always so

convenient. In 2001 the APF, with its affiliate members such as the SECC, mooted the idea of contesting local elections. Branch members were not enthusiastic.

> Trevor and the rest of the leaders wanted to form a party from the SECC and the APF. It was going to be called the Mass Workers Party. But the SECC members don't want a party (…) for the elections they have the spoilt ballot campaign (anonymous interview 01/12/2004).

This might suggest that there are limits to the extent to which SECC members identify with the organisation beyond the immediate everyday experiences in the branches.

Branches and everyday life

In April 2004, while carrying a bucket of water from Sinawane across a railway track to her home in Phiri, a pensioner woman fell and hurt her back (anonymous interview 14/04/2004c). The woman was one of perhaps a few dozen people collecting water daily from the neighbouring area of Sinawane. Disconnected for non-payment of water bills, and refusing to allow the council to install pre-paid meters, their households were left without running water. The Phiri branch has bourn much of the brunt of Eskom and the municipalities cost recovery policies. Phiri was one of the pilot sites for the pre-paid meter system for water and electricity. In many ways this experience exemplifies the everyday life of the SECC at the branch scale. The hardship of water cut-offs are connected to policies that are produced at city and national state, but the responses are directed locally, and in this case against the local councillor personally.

> Now she's better now. Last week on Tuesday she went to hospital. We assisted her in getting water. So we started, we don't want pre-paid meters, we can't afford that. They force us. We don't have money to pay that. We don't have work, most of the people. Now there is no water. Today is 23 days with no water. We are still having a meeting. They are

> going to take shit buckets and go to visit the councillor (anonymous interview 14/04/2004c).

Yet it is not only that responses to national scale policies are directed at the local scale. More importantly, the national scale is understood through the local scale. Rather than seeing pre-paid meters as a product of national scale policy, pre-paid meters are seen as a response to the local scale antagonism by the SECC. An SECC branch member from Phiri blames the council for beginning its pre-paid meter pilot project in Phiri thus:

> Maybe it is because we of the SECC started in Phiri; although now we are stronger in other areas (…) maybe to crush the movement (…). The project started at Phiri last year. There is a specific program in Phiri, to make sure that people stand up for themselves, a four month program, regarding water (…) this office has provided Phiri with funds so they can get a bakkie to maybe transport water to those houses which have resisted pre-paid meters. There is no water. Nothing! No water at all! (Anonymous interview 01/04/2004b)

The above quote illustrates the complex interaction of scale within the organisational structure of the SECC. The local branch, and the everyday struggle at this scale, is a source of legitimacy. At the same time, the SECC is coordinated through the head office which is an important resource to local branches. In many ways, the situation in Phiri is a microcosm of that in other SECC branches. For the SECC leadership the struggle in Phiri is an important and symbolic battle, yet outside of the Phiri branch members there are few other SECC members who have directly supported the Phiri residents in fighting pre-paid meters. Commenting on a march in 2004 in Phiri, one of the volunteers at the SECC head office explained:

> So a few weeks ago there was that demonstration in Phiri, when they had the demonstration against the councillors. It is kind of lacking from the other branches but some individuals they come. But I was there, and

> people from Dlamini, and some other branches. But we encourage branches to support other branches, so that what we do must have an impact. That's why we say to our branches support other branches with our campaigns on the ground. We encourage that (01/04/2004a).

Despite this encouragement there remains little interaction between the branches. The nature of everyday life in Soweto is partly responsible for this. Communication and transport are costly luxuries for most members of the SECC. Yet it also suggests that there are limits to the extent to which the branch level members are able to identify beyond their own communities. Communication does exist between some of the branches, and where this is the case it usually hinges around either physical proximity of branches or personal relationships. Branches are relatively autonomous structures, some no more than loose affiliates with the SECC, others consisting of up to fifty or sixty card-carrying SECC members. The difference between the branches attests to the local scale and grassroots nature of the organisation:

> So it also depends on the people in those areas. It is a tough challenge to us as an organization, to make sure that we sustain our branches. You know, I'll just give an example. You know Orlando West is coming, slowly, slowly, slowly. It depends on what kind of people do you get, that are willing to make sure that they build those branches. Sometimes there are internal problems. You know, they fight for positions, after the meeting they collect the money to make sure they sustain the branch. So they fight for that. Also I think SECC is a movement. We leave our branches to do their thing independently. So that's why now we have a program so that everyone must be more strong (anonymous interview 01/05/2004).

In a context where there are few support structures for poor households, and where aspirations are frustrated, the branches of the SECC offer a structure of support to local communities. Branch meetings offer a space where experiences are shared, and are as

important in mobilising the organisation as they are in affirming the members of the community.

> There was no community meetings, community structure, there was nothing at all. The people, if there was something, maybe there was going to be a stoppage of water, the local councillor used to distribute pamphlets to selected houses, not all. Then is when other members of our community tried to form a street community, they said, no, ANC created a street community, other people can't form a street community. We must just leave it as it is, so, there were no community meetings, no nothing, until SECC come along (anonymous interview 01/04/2004a).

> Before the SECC there were some people who tell you to cry to them. But it's the same people (…) they want to make you cool. 'Be cool, everything will be fine'. They cool you down. But until when (…) they don't want people to be wild. Last year I had no power. I went to SANCO to tell my views, but I left in darkness. The SECC asked if I wanted to volunteer. I said yes, to help people (anonymous interview 05/04/2004).

As far as the SECC offers a space of shared support for many Soweto residents, the branch meetings serve an important function and are an important part of branch cohesion. In the Chiawelo branch SECC branch meetings are held in a local church after service on Saturdays. Many members of the SECC in Chiawelo, as in other branches, are regular churchgoers. Branch meetings fill a similar role as the church for some members, and there is often an invocation of similar language to talk about SECC and church:

> Most mornings I go to church. If I don't I feel something. After church I can meet my friend, go to the meeting (…) SECC is physical; church is spiritual. In prayer, they say pray and God will help those who do practical in hand (anonymous interview 05/04/2004).

The majority of SECC members construct their daily lives at the scale of the local branches. It is the experiences of these members that form the basis for the existence of the SECC. The political and legal resources that exist at the scale of the leadership are

fundamental for the survival, and also the collective identity, of the SECC. Yet the everyday experiences at the scale of the local branches can not be simply 'scaled up' as if they represent a microcosm of the struggle against electricity cut-offs.

Repertoires of protest

In 2001 the SECC leadership launched two separate but equally important protest actions. The first was in April 2001 when the SECC leadership attempted to open a case in the Constitutional Court against Eskom and the government regarding the cost of electricity. This was undertaken with the assistance of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at Wits University (www.law.wits.ac.a/cals.shtml 01/05/2005). This is a network that the SECC have secured through the APF. According to a report in the *Mail and Guardian*:

> The residents' constitutional case will centre on the right to free electricity as part of basic services that the government promised, the abuse of human rights as there is no notification before electricity is cut off, and the phenomenally high cost of electricity for the poorest of the poor (*Mail and Guardian* 06/04/2001:11)

In formulating the constitutional case the high-profile Grootboom court-case was presented as a precedent. This case found that "society must seek to ensure that the basic necessities of life are provided to all if it is to be a society based on dignity, freedom and equality". This could potentially include services such as water, sewage and electricity. (Government of the Republic of South Africa vs. Grootboom 2000) Geoff Budlender of the Legal Resources Centre argued that there is no constitutional right to electricity but that residents could sue ESKOM on matters of procedure (*Mail and Guardian* 06/04/2001). Although the case has yet to be presented at the Constitutional Court the networks that were leveraged to conduct the research have continued to benefit the SECC. When members have been arrested for illegal reconnections or for illegal marches

CALS has provided legal assistance, as in the case of the K87. The SECC leadership have long made the claim that electricity should be a right. McInnis (2004) has argued that the emergence of the SECC is the result not merely of materialist and rational explanations of social agency but exists within powerful legal and moral norms in constitutional democracies in the world.

> I would argue that the struggle in Soweto over basic services has emerged from important moral and legal norms regarding recognition being disrupted. These moral and legal norms are not radically separate from underlying economic conditions (…) without strong moral feelings and indignation human beings will not act against the social order. In this sense moral convictions become an equally necessary element for changing the social order, along with alterations in economic structure (McInnis 2004:9).

Despite these legal and normative precedents there is strong sense among ordinary members of the SECC that access to electricity is a right. Many SECC members do not fear reprisal from Eskom or the state and regard acts of reconnection as a right that does not need legal precedent.

> They say it is illegal. They say in law it is illegal to reconnect. But it is a right because electricity is a right. You can't live without electricity (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

The second protest action launched in 2001 was Operation Khanyisa, the project to reconnect houses that have been disconnected by Eskom. The reconnectors have invoked images of urban heroes in some of the local media (*Sunday Times* 02/12/2002) and among international anti-globalisation media (www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2001-11/26klein.cfm). Eskom and government have responded to these images by casting the

SECC reconnectors as dangerous criminals and 'isinyoka' ('snakes in the grass') (*Sunday Times* 02/12/2002). Minister of Public enterprise Jeff Radebe criticised them thus:

> The residents of Soweto have legitimate grievances against estimated bills and service delivery standards. They have a right to organise themselves and call for a redress of these grievances. Our collective failure to respond has allowed an opportunistic element to 'hijack' the situation for its political and criminal agenda (…) the so-called Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, through its Operation Khanyisa, has become part of this criminal culture (Radebe 2001).

Trevor Ngwane, member of both the SECC and the APF, considers the 'illegal' reconnections as an important symbolic act of defiance:

> We turned what was a criminal deed from the point of view of Eskom, into an act of defiance (Ngwane 2003:25).

Many of the reconnectors themselves do not regard themselves as criminals. When asked about the portrayal of reconnectors as isinyoka, one self-proclaimed reconnector explained that the image did not refer to him:

> Isinyoka! That's not us. They are talking about those people who steel cables and don't care about the community (…) what we are doing is helping people (anonymous interview 04/04/2005)

Despite the public attacks there seem to have been few serious attempts by Eskom or the state to pursue the reconnectors. The reconnections have become so commonplace in some parts of Soweto that some claim about 5 000 houses per month are reconnected (anonymous interview 10/10/2004). The SECC reconnectors do not discriminate between SECC members and non-members and one reconnector even claims to have reconnected Moroka police station after they failed to pay their electricity bill in mid-2002 (anonymous interview 10/10/2004). There is a strong sense among members and

reconnectors alike that the 'illegal' reconnections are in fact justifiable in terms of the commitments made to free basic services to all. This is a popularly echoed sentiment among members of SECC, and there are some who claim to have had free electricity for as long as four years (anonymous interview 20/11/2004). In the past, action has been taken against reconnectors, but most reconnectors are not concerned to hide their identity and seem proud of what they do.

> I don't have any trouble from Eskom. If they come I will chase them away (…) we had problems in terms of attack by police before. When we reconnected they would find us but we would tell them no, people need electricity, it is a right. There is no evidence that we reconnected (…) there is no evidence to the judge. Since we had a comrade who was arrested, you know, but all the cases were dropped because there is no evidence. We are trying to get a lawyer dealing with all this (…) she is dealing with the issue of electricity. She helps too much to defend us. There are those individuals who reconnect to make money, but we as an organization we are not involved in that (anonymous interview 01/05/2004).

Nevertheless, in areas where the SECC branch structures are weaker, or where there is no structure at all, reconnectors have often found hostility from local residents. Reconnections require that the house be switched off at the street distribution box for safety reasons. Some locals react sceptically to the reconnectors tampering in the distribution boxes because of the trouble it may cause them, either from temporary loss of power during the re-connection operation, or from potential complications with Eskom. To a degree, some of this hostility is because SECC is not well known in the area. On the other hand, the hostility reconnectors sometimes experience may explain why SECC has little presence in these areas.

> Those people who get upset when we re-connect put themselves high, because they pay. They see no uniform, they think we will make a

> problem for him (…) but if you do right he will realise we are there to help, not to destroy (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

There are other 'isinyoka' in Soweto besides the SECC reconnectors. Self-proclaimed SECC reconnectors are ready to point out a poor reconnection, a sign that it was not done by a member of the SECC (anonymous interview 10/04/2004). In this sense, the reconnectors take pride in what they regard as their job, as something that gives him a sense of meaning on a day-to-day basis (anonymous interview 10/04/2004). SECC reconnectors maintain a strict sense of integrity to their work, and supposedly do not accept money or compensation for what they do. Part of their work is about extending the solidarity and support of SECC, so the reconnectors wear SECC T-shirts while on the job and introducing themselves and the SECC whenever necessary.

> People are scared so we cannot do it in the dark (…) everybody must see who was there. The SECC are here to help you (…) don't hide yourself (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

SECC reconnectors take their orders from the Careers Centre office, which acts as a kind of call centre, taking reports of disconnected houses and passing the addresses on to the various reconnectors, depending on who is closest to the incident. Dale McKinley has referred to this as a "campaign of defiance coordinated via SMS and pre-paid call cards" (McKinley 10/10/2004). The reconnectors do not charge for reconnecting people, at least not officially. However, there have been concerns among some of the reconnectors that they should be receiving some kind of stipend from the Careers Centre office, considering that they offer what often amounts to a full working day of their time for no remuneration (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

> This is not right. We work the whole day, and they expect me to pay for my own taxi-fare. I need something for my stomach; I can't work the whole day with nothing (…) we have raised the issue with them (04/04/2005).

A few times the issue has been raised within the organisational hierarchy of the SECC and has been dealt with through disciplinary action.

> Yeah we've got disciplinary action. When we find you as a member is charging people we suspend you, investigate, when it comes to the crunch, we dismiss you. But also you have a right to appeal. Honesty and discipline! That is why sometimes we use our iron fist to discipline our comrades (anonymous interview 01/05/2004).

Despite the assertion of organisational discipline, the reconnectors remain an uncoordinated and somewhat maverick group of mostly men who operate somewhere between committed activists and unemployed men leveraging limited resources.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the SECC as a movement exists in a tension between the everyday lived experiences of electricity cut-offs and an activist academic critique of these experiences as a product of privatisation and cost recovery policies. Within the leadership of the SECC there are claims made about representation of Soweto residents. In the light of perceived failures at local government the SECC argue that the ANC can no longer claim to represent the people of Soweto. At the same time the ANC claim that the SECC have no mandate, since they are not an elected group. Neither the ANC nor the SECC are coherent and homogeneous organisations, however, and both exist on a number of scales. While the SECC make a public claim to represent the working classes of Soweto, the organisation at the branch level is constituted by various different identities. These identities at times prove elusive even to the SECC.

Chapter 5: Place and identity in the post-apartheid city

> Shack settlements may be spaces of exclusion, of poverty and neglect on the part of the authorities. But they are still part of the city, part of the creative potential of modern urban life. They are places where people build everyday lives, imagine and reimagine themselves, and make homes from which they set out to negotiate – and change – city spaces (Robinson 1998:D7).

Introduction

In this final chapter I consider the identities that are constructed within the SECC and their relationship to place. In post-apartheid Johannesburg the changing spaces in the city, physically, institutionally and in terms of experience and meaning, create the potential for the emergence of new urban identities. Identity, according to Manual Castells, is the source of meaning in people's daily lives. Identity is constructed both through everyday experiences as well as through more purposeful engagements with the world. The engagement of SECC members in the movement is an important source of identity formation. Yet as I have argued in the previous chapter (chapter four) engagement in the SECC is not uniform. More specifically, engagement in the SECC exists at a number of scales between local branch membership and activist leadership. An important register of identity formation, I argue in this chapter, is association to place. At the scale of the local branch membership identity within the SECC is very closely connected to a sense of place. In the first instance this sense of place is a construction of Soweto as a place, especially in relation to downtown Johannesburg. Within Soweto, then, identity is constructed around shared experiences and associations. I argue that the SECC, at least at the scale of the local branch, provides a specific context for these shared experiences of place. However, constructing identity around a sense of place requires being able to

include and exclude. I argue in this chapter finally that the SECC at the scale of the local branches provides a sense of meaning that affirms certain identities and excludes others.

Place and identity

Up to this chapter I have suggested that social movements have contested categories of class, race and gender in post-apartheid South Africa. These categories of social differentiation remain powerful explanatory tools for social conflict. At the same time new and different forms of identity are forged in the post-apartheid city through processes of social conflict and agency. I have argued that social movements are one such space where these new identities are forged. Yet the concept of identity is not clear within much of the social sciences. According to Manuel Castells (1997) identity is "people's source of meaning and experience" (1997:6). For Castells identity is the process of constructing meaning from cultural attributes, whether as an individual or collectively. In other words, identity is a process which is driven by interaction. Castells distinguishes identity from what he calls social roles. Roles also dictate people's behaviour but on their own do not provide sources of self-constructed meaning. Castells argues that identities are always constructed, and that there are relationships of power which strongly influence this construction (Castells 1997). Castells definition of identity is quite narrowly defined within a relationship to dominant power. For Castells there are three primary types of identity: legitimizing identities, resistance identities and project identities. Legitimizing identities are forged through and in the defence of existing dominant social institutions, while resistance identities are forged by actors in positions devalued by the dominant institutions. Outside of this binary Castells situates project identities which are built by actors to redefine their position in society and so shake up the existing hierarchy within

society. It is the latter which ultimately holds the potential for an emancipatory project. However, Castells (1997) argues that in the global economy the local and the global are effectively separate scales for most people. Everyday lives are constructed at the local level even when the powers that determine them are defined at a global scale, thus reducing the potential for the formation of project identities (Castells 1997).

Nancy Fraser (1997) has argued that an artificial distinction exists between identity politics and material distributive politics in the 'post-socialist' condition of late twentieth century capitalism. This has meant that in left circles some regard material and redistributive justice as no longer relevant. Instead she suggests that both these elements can be seen as part of the same emancipatory project and that there is no necessary separation between them (Fraser 1997). Iris Marion Young (2002) has argued that Fraser gives insufficient attention to the existence of difference in societies. Young argues that in reducing social difference to 'identity politics' we essentialise the process of individual and group identity formation. Groups and individuals do not have identities as such, states Young, but construct identities through social positioning (Young 2002). If one understands difference in society as relational then one is able to understand the powers within society that construct difference, which include but are not limited to class, race and gender (Young 2002). The debate between Young and Fraser offers a way to view the construction of identity within social movements, but neither considers the function of place within the formation of identity. In this chapter I argue that place, and relationship to place, is an important ingredient in constructing urban identity (Robinson 1998; Pile and Keith 1997; Pile and Thrift 1995). The relationship between place and identity is a recursive one because while place shapes identity, identity also gives

meaning and associations to places. Pile has argued that "spatiality – as well as temporality – is not simply a passive backdrop against which subjectivity takes place; it is actively constituting the subject's relationship to himself and the world" (1996:141). Hetherington (1998) argues that everyday life offers a potential for resistance that does not exist elsewhere in an individuals engagement with institutions in society. "Structures of feeling are located in everyday life, within the routine practices of ordinary people. Everyday life; the local and the particular; affords some opportunities for resistance that are not often possible to many through the institutionalized worlds of politics or culture" (1998:80). Protest and resistance, and experiences of daily life, are important registers in constructing meaning and place in the post-apartheid city.

> The social spaces through which we live do not only consist of physical things (…) they consist also of those less tangible spaces we construct out of social interaction. The intimate social relations of the kitchen and the interactions from there to the backyard and living room; the relations with neighbours (…) these local spaces are set within, and actively link into, the wider networks of social relations which make up the neighbourhood, the borough, the city. Social space is not an empty arena within which we conduct our lives; rather it is something we construct and which others construct about us (…) and it is always mobile, always changing, always open to revision and potentially fragile (Massey 2000:49)

Massey is arguing here that the spaces in which people live are constructed through human agency. This does not mean that spaces are physically shaped by human effort but that spaces are only understood in terms of shared experiences of those spaces. Significantly for Massey, experiences that are seemingly banal, everyday experiences are very often the most powerful sources of association and meaning within space. Much of this work has its origin in the writings of the French urban sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Michel De Certeau (Hetherington 1998; Crosley 2002; Haylett 2003). Both of these

theorists provide a theoretical basis for a methodology of practice grounded in everyday identities and lived experiences of the city. Crosley (2002) has also been interested in Bourdieu's notion of habitus, because it manages to a greater or lesser degree to synthesise structure and agency, what for Crosley has been a significant cleavage in the social sciences.

The notion of habitus is significant to urban geography because of its spatial references; it is life "grounded in the unity of dispositions", the space in which human action is embodied, and emerges from the lived experiences of each individual and community (During 1993:339). Bourdieu does not negate class; if anything "Bourdieu's is an analysis heavily dependent on notions of class and class fractions" (During 1993:339). Haylett (2003), interested in the ways in which class is lived and experienced rather than merely a causal category, suggests that "Bourdieu provides a way out of notions of class formation that give culture or economics causal and determinate power" (Haylett 2003:61). Class is not an overarching determiner of ones existence in the world, "but is a matter of embodied social practice, unfolding and varying culturally" (Haylett 2003:62). While Bourdieu is concerned primarily with everyday practices and the construction of identities and meaning through these practices, De Certeau (1988) is directly concerned with the spatiality of these everyday practices (Thrift 1996). Thrift argues that for De Certeau human and social practices are always practices in space. More than that, practices are always spatial in that they define and shape spatial symbols. For De Certeau these symbols are unpacked through spatial-symbolic metaphors like walking, pathways and the city. Through the process of moving and acting in space emerges "the possibility of converting one spatial signifier into another" (Thrift 1996:16).

Thrift argues that De Certeau is concerned with ways in which places and people's everyday practices are recursively constituted. In other words, De Certeau believes that everyday practices are what constitute place, and that place is constructed out of the practices of daily life. Place is about active engagement and is not an a priori pre-existing element. De Certeau uses two concepts to explain how agents operate within and so create place; those of strategy and tactic. Strategies are understood by De Certeau as the broader organising principles of space, such as administrative and political power. Tactics on the other hand are the spontaneous and uncoordinated 'interventions' that agents engage the world with. Clearly De Certeau regards tactics as crucial in any project of protest and resistance against the powers of discipline and order. Reading through De Certeau and Bourdieu, Thrift has explored the relationship between structure and agency in more detail (Thrift 1996:78). He is concerned that structure allows little room for understanding the very important factors of human activity that give meaning to peoples lives such as identities, aspirations and human emotions. On the other hand, theories of agency too often ignore the embedded relations of power that very significantly define an individual's engagement with the world.

Thrift argues instead that social activity is discursive; it emerges neither from structural causation nor from independent agency. Rather it exists between the two, which are constantly and recursively in dialogue with one another. Thrift's is a project shared by a number of contemporary geographers, attempting to understand the 'situatedness' of practices of everyday life. People make everyday lives for themselves, negotiated not only through categories of class, race, gender and age, although these categories are

highly significant. In chapter two I argued that the decline of the civic movements in the early 1990s is attributable to changes within working-class township communities, the traditional constituency of the civics. The communities that had formed the backbone of the civics in the 1980s were no longer the stable and homogeneous community they had seemed and that the apartheid struggle had managed to galvanise (Seekings 1997). In the context of a new urban politics these 'communities' have been remade as individuals and groups find new spaces of expression. Some have been more successful than others in claiming new spaces (Mbembe and Nuttal 2005). Most continue to find meaning and order through places and everyday practices in the city. The construction of new urban identities in South Africa does not operate in isolation of powerful forces that constrain and define in many instances the habitus of urban citizens. The continuing spatial inequality of the post-apartheid city, and the lack of resources at local government level, for example, continues to constrain the choices and actions of many South Africans. The SECC emerges into, and responds to, these conditions. Yet the SECC also contributes to the remaking of identities by contesting the powers that control and order (physical and symbolic) spaces in the post-apartheid city. In coordinating communities around the shared experience of electricity cut-offs the SECC reiterates the everyday lives of Soweto residents, and affirms meanings and associations of place in post-apartheid Soweto.

Outside

> Post-apartheid development interventions tend to re-iterate apartheid's urban physical environment. Because segregation in the post-apartheid context is delineated not only by race, but also by class (…) race-class identities continue to be significant political, economic and social markers. Yet, their meanings and residents identities prove more complex. These identities are forged through experiences in the city (and elsewhere), through interaction with the state for resources, and through

> participation in social movements that conform to neighbourhood boundaries, but are also broader in scale (Pieterse and Oldfield 2002:3).

Despite the ending of apartheid, the logic of apartheid town planning continues to have an influence on the physical and experiential conditions of post-apartheid cities (Beall et al 2003; Pieterse and Oldfield 2002). Bond (2002) argues that the conceptualisation of Developmental Local Government (DLG) entrenches the logic of the apartheid city and effectively depoliticises local government. Oldfield (2002) argues rather that "the particular spatial configuration of the post-apartheid city and the spatial and place-based constructions of race and class shape state restructuring and urban transformation, at times facilitating the state's strategies and projects and, at other times, obstructing these processes" (Oldfield 2002:12). Spaces within the post-apartheid city are being constantly remade and re-imagined in ways which both entrench and subvert the legacy of the apartheid city (Mbembe and Nuttal 2004). These changes are not experienced evenly across the city and across different class and identity categories.

> Johannesburg is a different place. It is where the municipal offices are located. It is where Masondo is. It requires transport money to reach, which is not the everyday reality of most people here (anonymous interview 14/04/2004b).

On the other hand Johannesburg is understood to be a place 'outside' of and 'other' to Soweto; Johannesburg is the 'outside' that defines the 'inside' of Soweto.

> We don't encourage linking with the councillors simply because they have turned their back on the people who voted for them in Soweto. Some of them are no longer living around Soweto; they are in the suburbs. We find it very difficult a person who calls himself a leader leaving his people; going to stay in a house in Kensington. Like our mayor, Masondo. People around this area were not impressed that he was a mayor for this area and he is staying there. The same with councillors; the only time they know us if election time is near. Then

> they come and call us comrades this, comrades that. We don't encourage any relationship with such people (anonymous interview 01/05/204).

This 'othering' of Johannesburg is on one hand based on the realities of daily life in Soweto; Soweto is a place defined by its physical and historical relationship to Johannesburg in a very profound way. Transport to Johannesburg is a considerable cost for someone in Soweto with little income. On the other hand the 'othering' of Johannesburg has a much more immediate function; it serves to affirm and reiterate both individual and group identity in contemporary post-apartheid Soweto. George Revill has argued that "certainty comes from the means to describe oneself (…) in a way that is shared by the group and unavailable to outsiders" (1993:119). Soweto is a place imbued with meaning and significance, and within the power dynamics of post-apartheid South Africa this significance is reiterated through positioning it in relation to an 'outside'. While there is an 'outside' and an 'inside' the boundary between the two is permeable. In fact, it is the transgression of the boundary that most highlights the 'inside' and the 'outside'. Many of the SECC protests and marches take place in downtown Johannesburg and the journey from Soweto into downtown Johannesburg highlights this potency of displacement.

> The ANC announced that they would start a program on July 1 2001. On June 30 we all took a kombi to the mayor's house in Kensington and cut off his supply, to remind him that he had to give us free water and electricity the next day. We know him personally because, though he lives in the suburbs now, he comes from Moletsane. In fact he left his mother there. Our movement has many pensioners so this is a humiliation for him. At the time Masondo downplayed the meeting to the press but the next year 2002 when we went to his house again after the mayor's office refused to respond to our demands he was still complaining to us about it: 'you guys, you're undisciplined! It's very bad when you come to my house' (Ngwane 2003:48).

In referring to ‘my house’ the comments of the mayor serve to further distance himself from Soweto, which serves also to de-legitimise his position in council. In this sense Soweto is not only a place that is defined against downtown Johannesburg; it is also a site of legitimation. In coming from Soweto, in making the journey down town to meet the mayor and ask him to explain himself, the members of the SECC simultaneously affirm themselves as the ‘grannies of Soweto’, to which the mayors mother also belongs.

Inside

> In Orlando, Phiri and Chiawelo electricity is important because life is hard without it. It was a dark city before 1994. The promises made by the mayor for affordable services for all (…) the grannies of Soweto have a right to affordable basic services (anonymous interview 08/04/2004).

Soweto as a place is constructed discursively from the outside through its relationship to the city of Johannesburg. Yet the place that is Soweto is at the same time constructed, and given meaning, from within. Soweto, and the meaning and symbolic register associated with Soweto, is never singular. Soweto means different things to different groups and individuals. At the same time there are common experiences and situations that at certain moments provide a coherence and unity of place in Soweto. The SECC have actively attempted to highlight the commonality of experiences of electricity cut-offs inside Soweto as a way of galvanising support.

> The suffering that I have is not just me (…) many people in Soweto are afraid to stand up and say we are like this. Sometimes you can find someone has got six years with no electricity. He doesn’t know where to go, because if you go to Eskom you find out how many hundreds and thousands you must pay. They don’t know where to go. But when you go to SECC they open up peoples eyes (anonymous interview 08/04/2004).

In this regard the SECC have managed to mobilise support around these common everyday experiences. The SECC have recognised that in order to offer any kind of solution to the so-called 'electricity crises' in Soweto residents need to have a feeing of commonality and of shared experiences.

> [Soweto residents] collectively and individually, are being forced everyday to deal with issues individually. My electricity is gone. My water has been cut off. My child hasn't got a uniform. I'm sick now (Ngwane 08/12/2004).

In order to speak to the experiences of marginality and feelings of injustice that many people in Soweto feel the SECC actively construct a narrative that situates these experiences at its centre. This narrative includes the struggle of the 1980s, the broken promises of the 1990s and the fact that Soweto has been overlooked. In the words of Steve Pile, commenting on senses of place in rural England:

> What is at stake here is an appreciation of the intricate and dynamic ways in which narratives of space and self intertwine. These stories are about the ways in which people gain a sense of whom they are, the ways in which space helps tell people their place in the world, and the different places that people are meant to be in the world (Pile 1996:6)

The SECC have attempted to maintain a sense of commonality across the whole of Soweto. Post-apartheid Soweto is not the homogeneous place that it was assumed to be during apartheid. The SECC also acknowledges that communities across Soweto are not the same, and that it requires effort to make people aware of their common experiences. In this sense much of the daily activity of the SECC leadership is spent on their 'door to door' campaign (anonymous interview 14/04/2004b).

> Communities are not the same, including the people. There are those people that are behind us and those people that are against us. They say

> we want to mislead people into not paying; “these people are going to get arrested!” Surprisingly people are joining the cause. Because the language we are talking, they understand it, and some of campaigns like attacking the mayor’s executive housing, getting arrested. They saw us on TV. They know me, I’m in the community; they can interact with me. My house is no longer my private house. People come in and go. They need help; they got problems, so we can be able to solve their problems (anonymous interview 14/04/2004b).

Certainly for the SECC membership the locatedness of the movement inside Soweto is fundamental. Although the SECC has developed a reputation for public protest and marches in downtown Johannesburg, the movement exists within the everyday experiences of life in Soweto. The Soweto-wide operations of the SECC, which include such simple activities as arranging for water to be delivered to households without access, are organised from a small office space at the Careers Centre, a community resource centre near Baragwaneth Hospital. The SECC share the office space with a number of other organisations, including a burial society, a small-business support group and an IT training centre. The Careers Centre itself is a significant place for the members of the SECC, and even if they do not often go there it is here where SECC are based. Pamphlets that need distribution can be collected here, subscriptions forms and membership details are kept here, and mass meetings are frequently held in the hall that is part of the Careers Centre complex.

> The heart of SECC is Careers Centre. The Careers Centre office is an important place for SECC (…) they are here in Soweto. The offices of APF are in town. To leave Soweto to go into Johannesburg depends on finances. But some marches do take place in the city and begin at the APF offices at Auckland House (anonymous interview 05/04/2004).

Yet places are not experienced in the same way by all who inhabit it. In as far as one can argue that the SECC tell a story of Soweto, this story is a very particular one. Moreover,

the story is never told in the same way and is not written down. In other words, while certain sectors of the SECC, and especially within the leadership, understand all residents of Soweto as sharing common experiences in actual fact these experiences are not common. Certainly many, if not most, of Soweto residents share the material impact of electricity cut-offs. But the particular way in which the SECC constructs the story is not commonly shared. One dominant group within the movement is pensioner women, the so-called 'Soweto grannies'. Many of the branches are almost entirely made up of 'Soweto grannies', and marches and protest action in downtown Johannesburg are characterised by several hundred pensioners marching sitting in the middle of the street demanding to see the mayor. According to an SECC member who volunteers in the Careers Centre office:

> I think we must ask ourselves first why most of the members of the SECC are pensioners. It is because it is them who get affected most of the time. As I'm saying, I've said before, most of the people are unemployed. To live depends on Granny's pension. When rates go up the first person who is going to get affected is the granny. And most of the areas in Soweto are owned by pensioners (anonymous interview 10/04/2004).

Pensioners in Soweto are often heads of households and are responsible for looking after grandchildren. Pensioners also, regardless of their personal political affiliations and convictions, were living through the violence of the 1980s and the expectation of the 1990s. The identity of the Soweto grannies is associated with a particular construction of place in post-apartheid Soweto. The SECC have accused the ANC, especially local councillors in Soweto, of taking advantage of the 'Soweto grannies'.

> Councillors they target pensioners. Most pensioners they join SECC, because SECC they fight for them. Today many of them are happy.

> They are relaxed now. But during 2000 they were not relaxed. It was bad (anonymous interview 14/04/2004a).

> The ANC took the grannies to town to give them food parcels so that they agree in everything that they said to them. On Wednesday [councillor] Kunenen said the police will come and people will put pre-paid like it or not. Kunene is still a child (…) the councillor is fighting for his pocket (Phiri branch meeting 14/04/2004b).

Although the 'Soweto grannies' do make up much of the membership of the SECC, and many branch chairpersons are pensioners, their absence from positions of leadership is significant. One prominent member and chair of the Chiawelo branch holds the position of 'Chair of Veterans' (SECC AGM 06/03/2004). Some members of the SECC leadership have been concerned with the lack of youth participation in the movement.

> We must identify what is the problem of the youth, how can we win the youth (…) but so far few have come (anonymous interview 01/05/2004).

For some of the SECC leadership the youth are an important part of the movement and it is important to engage more youth in the movement.

> It is important for the youth to be involved, and it is important for the youth to lead the struggle, so that is why we have a plan, for the youth to be part and lead the struggle. You know, the pensioners, they take part but they are tired, they won't run so they won't lead the struggle. The ANC have resources, they are going to bribe you, with the food parcels, with the free ID; they can do many things (14/04/2004a).

Yet it is not clear that the youth are a feasible target of recruitment. Even though the youth are the grandchildren of the 'Soweto grannies' one of the organisers in the SECC Careers Centre office hinted at a possible reason for the lack of youth involvement:

> We've got branches where we've got youth, but only some of the areas. Us as branches, we don't give youth a chance, to see what is affecting the youth, so, that is the challenge that is facing us. That's why, now, we're trying to when we get youth, to see how to hold that youth. Also

> we must understand that the youth of today is politically ignorant. You know, they like drugs, they like nice times. They are not politically conscious, because they believe the struggle is over. Everything is fine we have democracy. We must identify what is the problem of the youth, how can we win the youth. But so far few have come. I think that, the struggle of Phiri is lived by youth, not pensioners. What else is going to be affected by cut-offs, water pre-paid, evictions, so that is why it is important, but we've got plans, we have a process. They are not politically conscious, having a nice time. When the ANC is starting something for the youth there is Mandoza, there is music. They are not there to listen to Thabo Mbeki, they are there for Mandoza (anonymous interview 01/05/2004).

The SECC leadership are keen to engage more youth in the struggle against electricity cut-offs in Soweto. Significantly most within the leadership are themselves part of the so-called youth. Although membership of the SECC is open to anybody the predominance of pensioners is reflective, I argue, of broader lines of tension inside Soweto around age and gender. The SECC, especially at the level of the branches, offers a support structure to its members. Unlike the youth, most pensioners have few places of support other than the affirmation of their stability and locatedness in Soweto.

Out of place?

The stability, the sense of place, and the sense of history that exists in Soweto proper are a significant resource that members of the SECC in Soweto are able to leverage in constructing new identities. Soweto holds a prominent place in the struggle against Apartheid, for instance. Homes in Soweto are formal, often owned by title deed. By contrast, Tembelihle squatter camp, as it is known, is a place characterised by 'insecurity, poverty, and extreme marginalisation' (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a). Although it has existed since the 1980's, there is little history or mythology that has developed

around the place. People seem to stay for periods of time, and invest little by way of identity or resources in the place. And yet, this tells only part of the story.

> Tembelihle is a squatter camp which was threatened with removal and I think it still is. The interesting thing about that is that a lot of people have been there fifteen or twenty years. Actually a lot of squatter camps are stable communities. [Tembelihle] was built on dolomite ground and the government is now saying the ground is unsafe. It's been a big fight. But you go there and you will find shacks with a fairly developed fruit tree and a garden. They didn't just arrive there and put the thing up (Cerruti 08/12/2003).

The Tembelihle community is poorer and more vulnerable even than communities in the heart of Soweto. At the very margins of the city of Johannesburg, Tembelihle is technically an illegal settlement which occupies technically unsafe land. The residents are under constant threat of removal, just as they were during the 1980s.

> Since they were no longer connecting electricity, we decided to march to City Power [not far from Tembelihle] after the cut-offs. We demanded electricity for every house. But since Tembelihle is not proclaimed they say they can't put infrastructure here. So we needed to liaise with the department of housing (…) but the department are determined not to come to consensus (…) the city council say that Tembelihle is on dolomite and therefore no good for settlement (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a).

Although not a branch of the SECC, the Tembelihle Crisis Committee (TCC) has formed in the area around the same issues and is regarded as a partner of the SECC. Known as 'crisis' among the residents of Tembelihle, the TCC emerged when an organiser of the SECC heard about a march by Tembelihle residents to the council offices, after the council refused to electrify the Tembelihle squatter community (anonymous interview 10/02/2004b). Nevertheless, members of the TCC have in many ways a different habitus from members of the SECC.

> I came here in December 1989. I used to live in Soweto with my uncle, but my mother moved here and I came with her. Since then there was no electricity, but in 2002 with the help of SECC we got electricity from the power lines (…) in December 2003 City Power came to disconnect us. We did not charge to reconnect people, but now most people rely on coal, paraffin, wood, gas etc. These are expensive. The electricity was free before, but we can also pay if we have to (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a).

Although Tembelihle has existed since the 1980s it remains a place of transience. Many people who stay in Tembelihle pass through, and have connections outside of Tembelihle, either in Soweto or in other parts of the city, or in rural areas (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a). There is not the same stability of ownership and residence as in many communities in Soweto. The residents of Tembelihle, like people in Soweto, want access to electricity, but the nature of the local politics is significantly different. On the southern edge of Tembelihle, across a dusty soccer field from a suburb of Lenasia, stands a bland apartheid prefabricated municipal office. It is painted bright orange, because "somebody managed to organise only this paint (…) so we can paint this place (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a). This old municipal office is the only building in Tembelihle that is electrified and a number of the nearby dwellings have supposedly been drawing power from it for some time. On 22 June 2002 a group of unemployed young men marched to the municipal offices, chased away the councillor, and established an autonomous governance structure for Tembelihle (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a).

> 'Crisis' emerged from the Concerned African Masses. We marched on the council offices, but they drew guns on us. This issue went onto Jozi FM. One of the organisers of SECC heard about it and contacted us. At this stage we had no clear way forward. The councillor wanted to buy support. On 22 June 2002, the municipal offices were closed down by the TCC, and we chased the councillor away (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a).

Since then the TCC has occupied the empty two-roomed offices, established a crèche, and have established procedures to record the concerns of community members.

> Here we deal with all sorts of problems in the community. Maybe they are domestic problems that we need to sort out. Sometimes there is crime here. Most of the time it is the problems between the landlords and the tenants (…) we are also dealing with many problems at schools. You can say that the TCC is the authority here (…) There are no official card-carrying members. We measure membership by attendance at the meetings. There are about 50 or 60 regulars (anonymous interview 10/02/2004a).

The council and City Power refuse to electrify the area because they claim the land is on dolomite, and therefore unsafe. With funds from the Human Rights foundation the TCC had the ground surveyed, and believe it to be safe for occupation (anonymous interview 10/02/2004b). Through such actions the TCC can claim some degree of legitimacy and authority in the area.

> The ANC used to have strong support here in Tembelihle, but since Tembelihle Crisis Committee [has been here] they no longer have that support (…) when the ANC wanted to launch its manifesto in Orlando, the local ANC wanted to send a bus there from Tembelihle. But that bus was empty (Anonymous interview 10/02/2004b)

The TCC claims to be a partner organisation of the SECC, and some of the volunteers at the Careers Centre support the TCC. Yet at the marches, members of TCC and other groups from the margins of Soweto are often swamped by the SECC grannies. These are the constituent that are most visible at the marches, although there are others there as well. These others are also SECC members and affiliates although they are sometimes not visible within the seeming dominance of the movement by the ‘Soweto grannies’.

> The SECC hired busses to take the grannies into town; others make their own arrangements. The march was due to begin at ten in the morning, but those from areas far away are arriving as early as seven in the morning. Most came from branches in the SECC not close to the centre; places like Orange Farm, Tembelihle and Vaal. They are the boys (…) by the end there are those who have disappeared. Mostly it is the boys (…) the young men. They do not stay too long. Maybe they have other places to visit in town (…) to drink or maybe to meet someone (anonymous interview 03/03/2004b).

Like the SECC, the TCC are beginning to be known in Tembelihle as the APF (anonymous interview 10/02/2004b). Through the APF the TCC and the SECC are part of the same struggle against electricity cut-offs and the policies responsible for cut-offs. Yet on an everyday level the TCC and the SECC exist within a different habitus. Tembelihle and Soweto are different places, and the identities within them are constructed through different experiences of place. This also suggests why the APF is such an important resource for the SECC and the TCC. On the scale of the local branch there is very little engagement outside of everyday experiences. The leadership, especially the APF, operate at a scale that allows for some degree of coordination and cooperation.

Conclusion

The branch members of the SECC are predominantly the grannies of Soweto. This identity is very powerfully asserted within the SECC at the scale of the local branches. In this chapter I have argued that the identity of the Soweto grannies is closely linked with a very particular construction of Soweto as a place. When the grannies march to the mayors' house their reference to his Soweto childhood and to his mother that lives in Soweto is fundamental to their association to that place. The leadership of the SECC are concerned by the lack of youth involvement within the organisation. I argue, however

that the lack of youth involvement concerns different ways in which place and identity relate. The branches of the SECC affirm a particular set of post-apartheid urban identities and exclude others. The SECC provides a context for shared experiences and associations of place that have meaning to some groups and not to others. In contrast, a place like Tembelihle has different meanings and associations, and the identities that have been forged there are the product of a different habitus. I do not argue that the SECC is an inherently reactive movement confined to defending place and identity. The increasing prominence of the APF within the SECC suggests possibilities to transcend these identities of place. Nevertheless, I argue that the everyday lives of most SECC branch members are intimately bound into, and constructed within, a profound sense of place.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the introduction to this research report I stated that the aim was to examine emerging forms of identity in post-apartheid Johannesburg. The report comprises a case study of the SECC, a social movement that has emerged in Soweto in response to the 'electricity crises'. There is a precedent for such a project, I argue, in the social movement literature from Latin America in the 1980s. More recently, theories of social movements in post-apartheid South Africa have considered emerging forms of urban identity. I have argued in this report that the different scales of operation within the SECC are constituted by, and also productive of, a number of different identities. Specifically, I have argued that everyday activities within the SECC branches are productive of a very particular identity. This sometimes causes tension between leadership and ordinary branch membership. While the leadership tends to operate at a regional and sometimes global scale, many local branches operate at a scale whose horizon is mostly neighbourhood-wide. I argued that everyday activities within the SECC branches are what de Certeau call 'socio-spatial practices'. Everyday activities create meaning and identity that is intimately connected to experiences of place. Post-apartheid Soweto is a place that contains many different meanings for many different people, and the branches of the SECC provide a particular platform for creating and sharing meaning.

I have raised a number of issues in this research report. In the conclusion I will discuss the implications for two issues in particular. The first is the importance of identity to theories of social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. Identity is seldom static, and I argued for instance that the decline of the civic movements in the early 1990s is in

part a result of shifting identities on the ground. The research report has comprised a case study of a single social movement, and only a few branches within the movement. Yet to construct the argument I have situated the SECC within a broad literature, primarily post-colonial and Latin American. The literature calls for a greater focus on the cultural and symbolic significance of social movements, in addition to their political significance. The second issue that I raise in this research report is the relationship between identity and place. In post-apartheid cities places and identities are highly contested and unstable. People make their lives, and find meaning, in the interactions that occur within places. These places are produced by, and in turn productive of, identities and meanings. Social movements such as the SECC are not inevitable, nor have I argued that they are more or less likely to achieve certain social and political goals. They are productive in the sense that they create a context within which a range of meanings and identities are contested and affirmed. It is never certain whether the SECC will continue to exist from one day to the next. Yet in the branch structures a particular sense of place and identity are affirmed.

Social movements and Identity

I began the report by reviewing a literature on social movements. I suggested that there are two dominant traditions within the literature, the analytic tradition and the structuralist tradition. The structuralist tradition has been concerned to understand the contradictions within society that lead to the emergence of social movements. The structuralist tradition influenced the Latin American social movements' literature in the 1980s. The Latin American literature has been interested in the ways in which urban social movements in Latin American cities contest not only material conditions but also social and cultural values in the city. Some theorists regard Latin American urban social

movements as reimagining identities, and using cultural capacities to remake the meaning of places and communities (Robinson 1998). In post-apartheid South Africa a body of literature has begun to consider how social movements are reimagining meaning and identity in the city. I situated the SECC within a history of urban protest in Johannesburg since the mid 1980s, understood in terms of a tension between nationally defined and locally defined political and social agendas. The civic movements did not simply represent the local manifestation of national liberation. They also contested the institutional (and later also the cultural) structure of the apartheid city (Chipkin 1997). The relative loss of influence of the civic movements can be partly attributed to changes within the traditional constituency of the civic movements as communities and individuals adjusted to a new political context. Urban struggle in Johannesburg has been characterised by shifting and unsettled identities. The civic movements had largely claimed their legitimacy on the basis that they represented the community on the ground. However, the construction of 'the community' began to shift as the political and economic context of the country began to shift. Similarly in the post-apartheid city people forge identities that resisted the strictures of broad and easy definition.

A number of South African theorists have attempted to understand social movements in terms of class and the politics of distribution (Bond 2003; McKinley 2002). In some cases this has meant new definitions of class that include the poor, the unemployed and the marginal (Desai 2001). Certainly the SECC has emerged to protest the injustice of service delivery cut-offs as a response to non-payment. Class, and especially its relationship to race, is a powerful source of meaning in most of Soweto. Branch members

of the SECC are poor and black, mostly women. Most people in Soweto are poor and black, but the experience of these conditions is never uniform. In the case of many SECC branch members, I have argued that these conditions are experienced largely through gender and age. Yet people are not only subjects of a number of objective conditions, such as race, class and gender. In the branches of the SECC identities are reiterated through everyday practices and experiences which are only partly defined by class, race and gender. Within the branches of the SECC identities are never settled. This does not mean that identities are consciously constructed, or that individuals have the ability to consciously shape identity. Identity within the SECC is a product of a complex interaction of experience, meaning and choices. While some academics in South Africa have noted that social movements do not fit neatly into categories of class or race (Barcheis1 2003; Greenstein 2002), and that the movements often contest the cultural and symbolic values of the city, very few have explored in any detail the relationship between social movements and identity formation. This research report represents one attempt to fill this gap.

Place and Identity

Identity, I suggested above, is a product of a complex interaction of experience, meaning and choices. It is also powerfully produced through a number of geographical categories: scale and place. In terms of scale, tensions within the SECC are played out between different scales of movement activity, largely distinguished between an activist leadership and the everyday experiences of branch members. Geographies of scale offer different resources to different actors (Herod and Wright 2002). The SECC operates

between a global (anti-globalisation) scale of protest and a local scale rooted in the SECC branches. The SECC leadership have managed to coordinate over thirty branches across Soweto and have developed a reputation for antagonism and conflict with the local and provincial state. The scale at which the SECC leadership operates has allowed it to forge useful alliances and networks such as with the APF, which provides resources and capacity to the movement. In the branches members leverage the resource of locality to affirm their identities. In many branches struggles with the local state is a product of local and personal politics as much as a product of broader politics.

Identity is also produced through place. In post-apartheid Johannesburg changing spaces in the city are productive of new identities. Place and identity are recursively constructed through shared meaning and association in everyday life. The SECC at the scale of the local branches claims legitimacy in terms of its relationship to Soweto as a place. Downtown Johannesburg is a place outside of Soweto and marks the boundary of Soweto. The fact that the mayor lives in Johannesburg but comes from Soweto is very significant to the SECC because it allows the members of the movement to affirm their own situation. The SECC provides a context that affirms the identity of ‘the grannies of Soweto’ within Soweto as a place. Yet to affirm place requires the ability not only to include but also to exclude, and within the SECC the ‘grannies of Soweto’ are also positioned in relation to other identities, such as the young men from Tembelihle Crisis Committee.

Identity in the post-apartheid city

In the report I have shown that, in the case of the SECC, these two sets of literature are connected. The report represents a case study of only one social movement, and is not an attempt to make generalised conclusions about all post-apartheid social movements. Nevertheless, a growing body of literature on post-apartheid social movements has begun to consider how social movements contest traditional categories of race and class. Increasingly social movements are creating new social and political spaces in the post-apartheid city that require new social theories. Another important contemporary literature has considered the social movements as one part of a complex process of urban transformation (Oldfield 2002). In this sense, social movements are themselves neither inevitable nor predictable. Locally constituted networks of power and resources produce in some instances the conditions for social movements that have variously defined political and social objectives. Sometimes they will be antagonistic with local state, and at other times they will forge working relationships. In this sense, the existence of social movements says far more than their longevity or success. The SECC emerged as a response to service delivery failures and have maintained a public profile of antagonism with local state structures. At the same time I argued in this report that the SECC is a heterogeneous movement. While the leadership maintain an ideological position against privatisation of services, many branch members do not share such a position. I argued also that there is a tension within the organisation between the leadership and branch members. The implication of such an argument is not to show inconsistencies within the movement. I argued that the tension was largely around scale rather than around ideology. In other words, the tension within the SECC is to a large degree around how different parts of the movement engage with the world on an everyday basis. This

allowed me to argue that social movements are about identity as much as they are about achieving social and political goals. The SECC is constituted by people unable to pay for electricity, but in this people identify themselves as poor and marginalised. One of the most important ways in which people identify themselves, I argued, is through place.

It is not only people within the SECC who identify themselves through place. In Soweto there are many 'grannies' who are not members of the SECC. In fact, I argued that the SECC membership is relatively small. Nevertheless, the identity of 'soweto grannies' remains a powerful one within much of the SECC. This is an identity that is profoundly linked to experiences of place in the post-apartheid city. No doubt the SECC provides a context through which other and new experiences of place are experienced. At the same time it is possible that the SECC at some point ceases to exist. Already in early 2005, I suggested, there was a threat of a potential split within the SECC. It was interesting to note that this split, although around issues of personality in the movement, only happened in a geographically limited area. The SECC is only a part of shifting spaces and identities within the post-apartheid city.

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Trevor Ngwane 18/12/2004

Members of the SECC Careers Centre Office

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Anonymous interview 14/04/2004b

Anonymous interview 14/04/2004c

Anonymous interview 01/05/2004

SECC Branch members

Anonymous interview 10/02/2004a

Anonymous interview 10/02/2004b

Anonymous interview 03/03/2004b

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